

# mission:world

## NEWS

## WALKING WITH PASTORS IN BOLIVIA

By Gerson Orellana  
ChangeMaker in Panama

**M**y name is Gerson Orellana, and I have served in church planting and pastoral accompaniment across different contexts in Latin America, including Costa Rica, the Peruvian Andean highlands, and Panama. Within this ministerial framework, during the month of December, I undertook a pastoral accompaniment visit to Bolivia, with the purpose of listening and walking alongside pastors and leaders from our association, creating spaces for dialogue and support amid the everyday challenges of ministry.

This experience in Bolivia serves as an example of a type of pastoral accompaniment that I believe is necessary and valuable not only for one specific country, but also across other contexts in South America, where many pastors serve faithfully and sacrificially, often with limited opportunities to be intentionally heard and pastorally supported in a close and relational way.

The focus of this visit was not programmatic or structural, but relational. The goal was to foster safe and open spaces for honest conversation, where pastors could freely

express their burdens, concerns, and ministry realities. Through attentive and respectful listening, conversations naturally moved beyond public ministry matters to include personal, family, and emotional aspects that are frequently carried quietly by those in pastoral leadership.

During one of these pastoral conversations, a local leader was able to open his heart with deep transparency, even reaching an emotional breaking point as he shared situations he had carried in silence for an extended time. Moments like these serve as a reminder that pastors are also human beings...called to serve, yet equally in need of care, understanding, and companionship along the journey. Scripture exhorts us clearly: "Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ" (Galatians 6:2).

Rather than offering quick solutions, the emphasis was placed on being present, listening with empathy, and walking alongside one another in the process. This kind of pastoral accompaniment highlights the importance of clear, close, and healthy communication, where active listening not only brings understanding, but also strengthens trust, connection, and shared responsibility within the body of Christ.

Time spent together also allowed for a broader understanding of the ministerial context in which the work is taking place in Bolivia. There is a genuine love for the Gospel and a sincere commitment to serving God's people, alongside challenges that are common to pastoral leadership throughout our region. This reality is not unique to Bolivia, but reflects a broader South American context, reinforcing the need for intentional pastoral visits focused on encouragement, presence, and long-term support.

The Word of God reminds us: "The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit" (Psalm 34:18). This truth became evident throughout the visit, affirming that pastoral care extends beyond teaching and leadership, and includes the simple but powerful act of walking alongside one another, especially in seasons of weariness and strain.

This journey reaffirmed the conviction that close and consistent pastoral accompaniment is not a secondary element of ministry, but a real and necessary component for the spiritual and emotional health of those who serve. Investing time in listening, supporting, and strengthening pastors contributes not only to individual well-being, but also to the long-term stability and faithfulness of the work across the region.



Pictured L to R: Salomon Lino Ramos, Eduardo Duran Pacheco, Lander Mano Diez, and Gerson Orellana Porras



# THE DIRT STORY

By Clinton Morris  
Church Planter

*This story belongs to all of us—Clinton and DeAnna, and our kids Max, Paxton, Bear, Cat, Fox, and Owl.*

**F**or a long time, our ministry felt like seed in a pocket—good seed, prayed over seed, seed with a clear destination—but never quite finding the right soil to receive it.

We knew what we were called to do. We knew the kinds of people God had placed on our hearts. We knew the rhythms of presence, hospitality, and long obedience that had shaped our ministry for years. What we didn't have was dirt that would let those things take root and stay.

When God called us back to the mission field in January of 2024, Indianapolis felt like fertile ground. It made sense. Nerd Culture (gamers, artists, creators, online communities) has always been a place where relationships form around tables, shared worlds, and long conversations. Indianapolis is home to Gen Con, the largest board game convention in the United States. With our history of church planting and our love for board gaming culture, it felt like the heart of the field.

So we prepared like farmers with a map.

We raised support. We prayed. We searched. For nine months, from October 2024 through June 2025, we looked for a home that could serve both our family and the ministry God was calling us to build. We placed offers on 17 houses. Four were accepted. Every one of them fell apart under inspection or circumstance. One revealed nearly sixty thousand dollars in unexpected damage. Another quite literally needed to be bulldozed and rebuilt.

At the time, it felt like obstruction.

In hindsight, it was mercy.

By June, we stopped searching and started fasting. We asked God for what Scripture calls a Macedonian call—clear direction that didn't come from our preferences or plans. I expected that call to come from Indianapolis. Instead, it came from Jonesboro, Arkansas.

Locals, both believers and unbelievers, began asking a question that caught us off guard: What if you stayed?

Every time someone said it, something in me froze. This wasn't the plan. This wasn't the map. But when my wife and I finally sat down and talked honestly, we realized something surprising...people wanted us here.

My final test of obedience was simple. I reached out to my pastor, Andy Neal, who was in Africa at the time with close friends of ours. I sent a short message: "What if we're supposed to stay?"

I expected resistance. Instead, he replied, "That changes some of the conversation, but not everything."

That was enough.

Agreeing quickly with God has become one of the clearest markers of obedience in our lives. We didn't fully understand what staying would look like, but we knew ignoring the invitation would be disobedience.

So we began planning again. This time, not with a map, but with open hands.

This is where the dirt is: Jonesboro, Arkansas.

Jonesboro isn't a small town anymore. With over 80,000 people in the city and nearly 140,000 across the metro—along with nearly 18,000 students at Arkansas State University—you can feel the constant movement beneath the surface. This is a city shaped

by faithful churches and steady pastors, and that's something to celebrate. The gospel has deep roots here. But growth and turnover mean the mission field keeps shifting, even when the church landscape looks full. Many people are not hostile to faith; they're simply outside the relational reach of our congregations.

Within days, we were looking at homes in Jonesboro. We narrowed it down to two. Both would work. One was situationally better. We prayed not just for a house, but for a neighborhood...a place where Christians were needed, where relationships could grow slowly, and where our family and ministry could remain stable.

We bought the house and moved in September 2025.

In October, I was approved to add 625 square feet to the home, expanding it from 1,250 to 1,875 square feet. On paper, it looks like construction. In practice, it's cultivation. Two hundred square feet gave our four girls room to grow. The remaining space became something far more flexible—a living room that can transform into a ministry space, working in tandem with our dining room and current living room to create nearly 700 square feet dedicated to hospitality, training, prayer, and mission. We are praying that this addition will be complete by February 2026.

These are the seeds we're seeing in our neighborhood:

**Across the street on the left** is a family of seven. Their kids regularly wander over to our house. Their two-year-old bangs on our door asking for fruit. DeAnna has begun building a relationship with the mom through a simple book swap. They've talked about reading the same books and discussing them together in the future.

**Across the street on the right** is a work-from-home dad with several kids. Two are the same age as ours, and a few are older. We met after our vehicles were broken into, which gave us a chance to talk. Since then, an ice storm created another opportunity to connect, and there are already plans forming for time together this summer around their backyard pool.

**To our right** are two roommates who breed pit bulls. One of them is a video gamer. We've begun getting to know him.

**To our left** is a retired Christian couple who are car enthusiasts, especially proud of their bright yellow classic Mustang. We've had many conversations with them. When we needed to remove small trees along the property line in order to upgrade our electrical service, it ended up benefiting them as well—the trees had been dropping pollen and debris onto their cars for years. During a recent ice storm, our family helped shovel their driveway.

**Two doors down on the right** lives an older woman who has a strong fear of men. DeAnna has spent time talking with her in the front yard. I was later introduced.

**Three doors down on the right** is a couple with a live-in son. We're still getting to know them, and winter weather has limited interaction so far.



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## HOME

By Candra Barnett

Missionary to Romania

A few years ago on furlough, I was walking through Conway's historic district, admiring some of the old, well-kept houses with beautiful yards full of giant flowering bushes and trees. In my heart welled up a desire that I unsuccessfully tried to ignore. I wanted a house and a beautiful yard with bushes so huge they obviously were planted long ago. I thought about planting such bushes in my own yard back in Romania in front of my rented duplex, but I quickly came to the realization that such bushes take years to get to the size I admired, and we were moving in just a few short months.

I absently wondered, "Will I ever live in a place long enough to grow giant bushes and trees in the yard?" It is a question I've pondered before. I had just moved into my little duplex a few months prior, knowing I would be moving to a new area soon. Since that walk, I moved two more times on the mission field. I have often asked myself, "Just how much is it wise to invest here?"

Such a small, silly desire, for giant bushes, and yet it made me think about the subject of home. This subject always comes to mind when I'm in the States on furlough. Maybe because it's in America that I'm the most confused about where exactly that is. People keep asking me, "When are you going home?" I can do nothing but stare at them with a vacant expression and wonder, "What do they mean exactly by home? Home to the mission house I'm staying in while I'm on furlough? Home to my parents' house? Home to Romania? Where is home?" For a missionary, "home" can become a tricky subject. I've been known to call multiple places home at the same time, even in the same sentence!

But all this talk of home begs this question: "Is it right for us to invest in places called homes that are all temporary anyway?" The beginning chords to "This World is Not My Home" start to play through my head. Is that true? Is that a biblical idea or just a song? What does Scripture have to say about our home? Abraham is praised in Hebrews for leaving his home and wandering in a place he did not know, for he sought a greater city (Hebrews 11). Again and again through Scripture we see this picture, that Christians are

sojourners and exiles headed to a better place (1 Peter 2:11-12).

And yet, I am also reminded of the exiles in Jeremiah who were exhorted to "Build houses and live in them; plant gardens and eat their produce...seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare" (Jeremiah 29:5,7).

Jeremiah was letting the exiles know they would be there a while, that they should get comfortable and invest where they are. So as exiles, some of us need to get comfortable. We may be in a town or city for some time here on this earth. Others, like Abraham, may never settle in one place for very long.

So where is our security in all this uncertainty? As always, in Jesus, who goes to prepare a place for us. And he prepares a place much better than I ever could. The giant flower bushes I drooled over will look like dandelions one day next to the home prepared for me.

But in the meantime, when this snow thaws, I'm planting rose bushes. Even if I never see them reach their full potential. Even if I have to move and someone else gets to enjoy their flowers. After all, even wandering Abraham planted trees under whose shade he would never sit (Genesis 21:33). So I will seek the welfare of this city until God calls me to the next one. Because ultimately, I am heading to "a city that has foundations, whose builder and maker is God" (Hebrews 11:10).



### *The Dirt Story continued*

**Two and three doors down on the left** live women who attend church together. We don't yet know where, and we continue to be present in their lives.

One of our goals this year is to learn the names of every household on our street. There are twenty-four homes. We currently know ten. We are praying for each one. Some interactions have come through shared needs.

Before the winter storm in January, we bought more bananas than we needed. We were also given additional bananas. As they ripened, we remembered my grandmother Jane, who is now with the Lord, often baked "friendship loaves" for her neighbors. We followed in her footsteps, baking small loaves and bringing them to nearby homes to spread the love of Jesus through warm baked goods.

We've also begun spending time at the local library, where we discovered a number of existing events—book clubs, game nights, and community gatherings. We plan to participate in these regularly.

While we continue working on our house, I've been attending local game events. Through those gatherings, we've met people who are open about personal hardship and receptive to prayer.

At the same time, we began forming 4 Spaces Network, the nonprofit structure that will serve as the epicenter for future ministry launches. Something sturdy enough to

support growth, yet simple enough to adapt to real people, real neighborhoods, and real conversations.

Finding good soil doesn't mean the work is finished. It means the work can finally be done slowly.

That is the heart behind 4 Spaces Network—not to replace what faithful churches are already doing, but to come alongside them by helping everyday believers rediscover their lives as places of mission. You can learn more about that work at 4-spaces.org.

It's also why I wrote 4 Questions: Spiritual Habits to Recapture Christlike Friendship. The book exists to give language to this kind of long, relational presence and to help others who sense a call to stay where they are and love faithfully over time. It's available on Amazon here: <https://www.amazon.com/dp/B0GGBQPKDZ>.

We are sent and supported through the Baptist Missionary Association of America, and we are grateful for those who pray for us and partner with us as this work continues.

For now, we remain here, tending the soil God has placed in front of us and trusting Him with what grows.

"For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek" (Romans 1:16).



# FROM FEAR TO FAITH IN EL SALVADOR

By Emily Brantley  
Lifeworld  
lifeworld.org

In El Salvador, there was a time when the streets Josue Yair Guzman called home echoed with the sounds of fear. Gang violence ruled the neighborhood, turf wars drew invisible lines through city blocks, and families learned to live cautiously—always aware that danger could erupt without warning. For many young people growing up in that environment, the future felt limited, even predetermined. Survival was the goal. Hope felt fragile.

But God was quietly at work, writing a different story.

Josue was one of those young men shaped by his surroundings, yet protected by a growing sense that his life held more than what he saw around him. In the midst of chaos, he found himself drawn to service—starting with a humble role at a Lifeworld Community Radio station. At first, his work was simple: helping where needed, learning equipment, supporting programming behind the scenes. It didn't feel glamorous, but it mattered.

What Josue didn't realize at the time was that God was using those small, faithful steps to prepare him for something greater.

As the years passed, Josue's life continued to change. He married, began raising a family, and stayed committed to the work God had placed before him. Through Lifeworld, he began producing short radio programs called Learning from Jesus. These messages—clear, Scripture-centered, and filled with grace—were broadcast into homes and neighborhoods just like the one he grew up in. The same streets once dominated by fear were now hearing words of truth, hope, and redemption.

The voice that once quietly assisted in the background became a voice that spoke directly into the hearts of listeners.

Today, Josue's role has expanded far beyond what he first imagined. He now leads the community radio station, overseeing programming that reaches both local listeners and audiences online. Through social media and digital platforms, his encouragement and teaching continue to point people to Christ—far beyond the limits of a single neighborhood.

But the transformation didn't stop with the airwaves.

God also called Josue to shepherd people face to face. In a community once marked by gang control, a mission church was planted. Where fear used to dictate daily life, children now gather to sing songs about Jesus, learn Scripture, and experience safety within the walls of a faith-filled community. Adults who once felt trapped by hopelessness are now hearing the gospel, professing faith in Christ, being discipled, and learning what it means to belong to the body of Christ.

Josue's story is not just about personal success or leadership—it is a testimony to what God can do when one person says yes. Through obedience, perseverance, and faith, God transformed a young man's willingness to serve into a ministry that is reshaping an entire community.

From radio waves to church pews, from fear to faith, Josue's life stands as a living reminder: God specializes in redemption. He takes ordinary people, places them exactly where they are, and uses them to accomplish extraordinary things.

If God could take a young man like Josue—raised in a neighborhood defined by violence—and use him to lead a local radio station, impact lives through online programming, and plant a church in a once-frightened community, what might He do with your life if you fully surrendered it to Him?

