

A vibrant sunset scene over a desert landscape. The sky is filled with soft, colorful clouds in shades of orange, pink, and purple. A bright sun is visible in the upper left, casting a strong glow and creating a lens flare effect. The foreground shows rolling sand dunes in warm, golden tones. The overall atmosphere is peaceful and majestic.

Extraordinary Miracles Bring Joy



A song that often comes to mind is the old favorite “*Count Your Blessings*.” What a great reminder for us to stop, look around, and see what God is doing in our lives and church communities.

We know that the extraordinary miracles talked about in the Old and New Testaments were needed to confirm the Word of God before the scriptures were compiled for our edification. In Act 19:11-12, Luke wrote about the extraordinary miracles performed by Paul, “And God was doing extraordinary miracles by the hands of Paul, ¹² so that even handkerchiefs or aprons that had touched his skin were carried away to the sick, and their diseases left them and the evil spirits came out of them.”



But the question is, does God still perform extraordinary miracles? Amen, He does!!
Ephesians 3:20 -21 states, “Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than
all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be
glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever!
Amen.”

While we can't expect the kinds of wonders that Paul performed here in the 21st
century, we can see the Lord working beyond our understanding and expectations.
The Metropolitan Church has experienced those wonders.

The Expansion of Believers at Milla Ocho in Panama City

- Recently, I was thinking about the beginning days of what is now the Iglesia de Cristo Metropolitana. In 2008, my father-in-law Walter Leonard returned to Panama from California where he and Dolores served the Spanish-speaking Christians and community. Walter was not well, and many thought he had returned to Panama to live out his few last days. He moved to Brisas de Golf, a suburb of Panama City, and immediately started inviting people to his home to learn the Good News. Before long, there was a congregation of the church meeting at his house – a congregation of 25 members.



Walter & Dolores Leonard



Sunday worship at Instituto America High School

When Walter and Dolores could no longer accommodate the congregation in their home, the members decided to rent space at a public school – Instituto America. From there, we began reaching out to our neighborhood, to other areas of Panama City, and the country as a whole. Like the early church in Ephesus (Acts 19:9-10) who met in a school, allowing all the Jews and Greeks who lived in the province of Asia to hear the word of the Lord, we took advantage of that time and the congregation grew to about 60 members.

This is truly miraculous! Walter passed away in 2009, but we continued sending out ministers, working with other congregations, and preparing men and women for the ministry through the School of Biblical Studies.

Meeting in a public school building was always a stopgap measure, and in 2012 we found some centrally located land that would allow us to build. The land cost \$150,000 and we did not have the money. But God miraculously provided, and the land was paid off in 2 years. We started worshipping in a temporary structure, but we needed a building, so we decided to build in sections. Much like the widow and the oil pots in 2 Kings 4:1-7, we knew God would fill our needs. And He did!



Sunday worship at the church property in Milla 8, San Miguelito, Panama

Over the last several years, God has been faithful! We have lost some families because they've had to move to other places, but in the midst of tribulation (especially Covid), we have grown.

Some of the families that have had to leave include Fredy and Aida who, with their daughters, moved to Algarrobos in Chiriqui, Porfirio and Crimilda and their eight children who moved to the Embera village in La Bonga...



Fredy & Aida Mojica and their daughters



Porfirio & Crimilda and their children

Justo Santo and Aracelys and their seven children who moved to Bocas del Toro, and Lazaro and Wendy and their family who moved to Texas.



Justo & Aracelys and their kids



Lazaro & Wendy Muñiz and their children

We've also suffered from the death of our brother Wendell Watson and sister Desideria Pedroza. Both were setbacks for us.



Desideria Pedroza



Wendell & Amanda Watson



However, even in this, God has been so amazing. Indeed, at this location, the congregation has grown to 120 members with 12 different ministries.



Samuel Chamí 's baptism at the San Juan River- La Bonga

One example of God's blessings is Porfirio and Crimilda who shared the gospel with Samuel in La Bonga. This is their first fruit!! Porfirio and Crimilda had to leave Panama City because of the cost of living here, and we encouraged them to move back to their village. Now they are diligently serving God there, and we are seeing the possibilities of more people being brought to Christ.



Yasmin Sanchez & Christopher
Calero

One of the ministries that Betty and I prayed about the most was the Youth Ministry. Over a year ago, my son Raul Jr. and his wife Jennifer decided to step down from leadership in this ministry. We immediately began the search for replacements – a couple who would be able to minister to the young men and women of this congregation. We even looked outside of Panama for a suitable replacement.

However, God has miraculously provided for us with Yasmin Sanchez and Christopher Calero. This is a beautiful couple from our congregation, and they have been leading the youth group and doing a wonderful job. Yasmin is a delight to work with the girls and now we have a strong youth group that is growing and growing! We even have more girls in the group than in the past! God answered from within our midst! These are the wonders!! Please pray for this couple.

Healing

- Praying for the miracle of healing is one of the most precious works of the church. Our sister Diana Madrid had cataracts in both eyes; however, a group of medical missionaries from Denver, CO, has been able to come once a year for the last fifteen years and they were able to perform surgery on Diana's eyes. Now, she is able to see! Recently, she was able to come to church where we all rejoiced with her.
- Her husband Arquimedes also had cataracts in both eyes; last year, one was removed, and in January, the other was removed. Both Diana and Arquimedes were nearly blind but because of God, they can see. Arquimedes loves to preach the word to as many people as can gather – and both of them love to do mission work – especially with the indigenous people. Now, they are back to being able to do what they love in service to God.



Arquimedes & Diana Madrid



Diana & Luis Ortega

We also praise God for the healing miracles for our sister Diana. Diana and her husband Luis Ortega are wonderful members of our congregation. For two years, Diana had been under dialysis, and at times, we and her doctors worried that she would not survive much longer. According to her doctors, the statistics for the type of dialysis she was taking show that only one out of 10 survived. However, Diana's 25-year-old brother donated a kidney to Diana, and the surgery was performed three months ago. Last Sunday, March 3, she worshipped with us after two years. We all were in tears when she spoke to the congregation – we praised God in our tears of gratitude! We were so surprised when we saw her enter the building. When she walked in, I was in the middle of teaching the adult Bible class and just had to stop and rejoice.

JOSIAS Youth



- In Acts 2, Peter preached a message that pierced the hearts of thousands. He called the people to obey – people who had supported the death of Jesus just 50 days earlier. What a wonderful day!
- The youth convention experienced a similar day – we shared the gospel with the 126 young people who attended and in these three days of activity, Feb 9-13 kids were baptized by listening to the gospel based on the book of Acts: *Learning Jesus' True Doctrine*.
- On the last day, everybody's hearts were pierced – and those who had not been thinking about baptism decided to obey the gospel



We cannot describe what we saw.

On the first day, five were baptized.

On the second day, four more were baptized.

On the third day, 15 were baptized!

In fact, almost all the non-Christians who attended the national youth retreat were baptized. And several recommitted their hearts to the Lord. This was truly miraculous, and we praise God for this!

The members and families at the Metropolitan Church of Christ greatly rejoice in the Lord because 7 out of the 24 youth that were baptized during the 2024 Youth Convention are now members of our local congregation. Praise God!

Building

- As we mentioned before, we have been blessed with so many donations – both from individuals and congregations. We now have an enclosed building where we can worship, have Bible classes, and host gospel meetings.
- The project isn't finished. We know there are more building plans for the future. But we have been so grateful for the miracle God has provided!! We cannot believe what He has done for us through you! At the beginning of this journey, some dear brothers asked us to proceed with caution. They felt this project was far too big for us. While this felt a bit like pouring cold water on our burning desire, we trusted in the God who can raise the dead back to life. Surely, this project was just a wave of His hand! Jeremiah 32:27 says, "Behold, I am the LORD, the God of all flesh: is there anything too hard for me?"



With so much negative in our world, wars and elections and threats of worsening economies, it is refreshing to stop and be amazed by all that God is doing in our midst. We serve an active, miraculous God – one who is working in our lives yesterday, today, and forever.

Thank you for being such a huge part of God's outpouring of blessings on us. We are so thankful for all you are doing and all that you continue to do. May God bless you richly.

Dios te bendiga

