



Centeno Ministry Update



American Missionary Fellowship

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Fall 2005

My dearest friends,

Greetings in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! My hope and prayer in Christ is that all of you are doing well by his sovereign grace physically, emotionally, and spiritually. It has been a long time since some of you have heard from us. Here is my belated attempt to get all of you caught up.

The demands of family, work, and ministry are all consuming, and only by God's grace are we not consumed. His compassions never fail, Lamentations 3:22. So here we are in Philadelphia by God's grace. We are called to a spirit of steadfastness as we continue to wage the fight against the world, the flesh, and the devil. We here in the inner-city know that none of us can respond to the call of God to serve him without facing opposition, persecution, and the temptation of giving up. Because the work becomes too difficult at times, we say, "Thanks be to Jesus Christ, that in the power of the Holy Spirit we are able to wage a fight against all of these until the work of reaching the lost is done."

I want to thank all of you who have been our faithful and steadfast prayer partners and supporters.

Our daughter Kristie with her husband Bill and children Isaiah, Chloe, and Camille. Bill and Kristie are also missionaries with AMF.





Family Matters

A little bit of family matters. Elsie and I have been going through some physical concerns, especially Elsie, who was in the hospital for some stomach pains and other concerns at the time. The doctors found what they think is the problem, and they put her on a gluten-free diet, and she has been doing much better. My concerns have been high blood pressure, ear infections, and much-needed dental work. I am under some medical attention for these other than that I am doing well.



Top: Our son Jamie, his wife Virgy, and their kids Gideon, Mikayla, Korinn, Fabian, and Jenesis

Middle: Our son Jasin with his wife Luz and son Kayden

Bottom: Our youngest grandson, Judeah Rayne Centeno, just a few months old.



Our ten children and ten grandchildren are doing well physically, and we thank God for it. But you know our concern for our children is that they live God-honoring lives. Some are, and for that we are thankful to the Lord for their continual service to the Lord. But some are not walking as strong in their faith as we have prayed. We are trusting and continue to pray that they would remember from where they have fallen and repent and return to the Lord. It is our hope that they would be reconciled to God. We still have 5 kids living at home Jonathan, 25; Kara, 17; Andrew, 13; Brandon, 9; and Amanda, 7. They keep us very busy.

Pastoral Ministry



Some of the members of the Friday night Bible study.

In February, 2004, I started serving as senior pastor at Wyoming Ave. Baptist Church. The call was to reach out to the community and to help with this transition. As a result, the Lord has blessed and the church has been growing. Of course my style is different from what the church has been used to, but the good grace of God is making all of this possible. We continue to move forward, and we thank the good Lord, Jesus Christ.

We serve a faithful God, and he continues to keep us steadfast, unmovable, always abiding in his ministry. Our Lord Jesus Christ continues to do a great work and



awesome things through the many different facets of our ministry here, as we continue to seek and create opportunities for our community to see our good works and glorify our Father which is in heaven. What a ministry team God has given us! In case you didn't know, our ministry team is made up of internationals Japanese, Scottish, Australian, Pilipino, African, Puerto Rican, Lebanese, and American.

We were blessed to have a skilled work team from a church plant in Michigan serve with us for a week. They ran a football camp for neighborhood kids at our local recreation center and spent the rest of their time laying two new tile floors at the church.



Bobbi Jo, a member of our congregation, who was miraculously healed in June of spinal paralysis. In a wheelchair for many years, she now walks with no assistance. Bobbi Jo has the heart of a servant, and we rejoice for God's healing power.



***Top:** Another picture of our Friday night Bible studies. We have been blessed to see a good, committed group of young Christians new to our church attend these studies.*

***Above:** Pastor Daniel spreading the news that "He is Risen!" during our Easter drama and musical. We had twice our normal attendance and a dozen people commit their lives to Christ during the service. Praise God!*



Pastor Lou with the Captain of the 25th District, where he addresses officers weekly

Law Enforcement Outreach

Our law enforcement support fellowship is doing well as we are having officers from different agencies coming together to study the word and pray together. I have married 5 couples and continue to counsel them and their families. We have 8-10 officers attend our monthly meetings.

On May 16, our ministry and community celebrated National Police Week with a recognition and awards night. We had great food, worship, and an inspirational speaker. Awards certificates, medals, and gifts were contributed by businesses and individuals in our community. Sylvester Johnson, the police commissioner, was one



An officer receives an award at our community celebration of National Police Week



Members of the Law Enforcement Fellowship

of the speakers for that evening and addressed our church and the community, and the law enforcement officers and their families. He told us that police officers can “give a life, take a life, and save a life,” to bring about a better quality of life for the citizens of the city. We had about 60 officers and their families in attendance. Our inspirational speaker was Bill Paige, a law enforcement officer for 22 years, who is now working with Young Life ministries. He gave a powerful gospel challenge, and many were stirred in their hearts as to their calling in law enforcement. Many officers, including many high-ranking officers, continue to comment to me that they have never experienced such an evening.



Training for police clergy and chaplains.



A police officer leading the Law Enforcement Fellowship support group



Rev. Anthony DiBennidetto introducing a suicide prevention training session for officers at his church in North Philadelphia



Maher and Elsie eating dinner at the Muslim food market with a friend

Muslim Outreach / Muslim Bridge Team

On May 21, our Muslim Bridge Team, Church Without Walls, American Missionary Fellowship, and PM Internacional sponsored our first "Responding to Islam"

conference to help inner-city churches who are inundated with Muslims in their community. The event went very well, and we are praying and trusting to have another one in the near future. Maher, the young man who was a Muslim and converted to Christianity, continues to be zealous in his desire to see his own Arab people come to faith in Christ. We both visit the mosque and the Muslim community regularly and have built strong relationships with some of the individuals and families. We continue to



Rebecca and Maher at the Muslim Bridge Team literature table



Attending the mosque's Friday prayer service



Talking with Nasser, the imam of the mosque. This particular conversation was about heaven or paradise and what Islam and the Bible say about it.



Pastor Daniel and Charles, members of the Muslim Bridge Team, engage one of the Muslims after a "Meeting for Better Understanding."

reach out via our literature table, and many respond and are willing to engage us and hear about Christ and our faith.

We also continue to have our monthly "Meetings for Better Understanding" meaningful and respectful talks from both perspectives on specific topics related to our two faiths. This gives us opportunity to present the uncompromised gospel we even had the opportunity to show about an hour of the *Passion of the Christ* at the mosque. The conversation that followed helped to attract some young Muslims to further pursue Maher and myself, and one of those young Muslims has made a confession of faith and trust in Christ. He still needs a lot of discipling, and we ask that you pray for him as we are challenged to help him understand the authority of Scripture and his daily walk and an intimate personal relationship with Jesus Christ. The years he has spent in Islam has confused him on

many issues, but our prayer is that by God's sovereign mercy and grace, he would see completely his freedom and victory through the only way, the only truth, the only life, which is Jesus Christ.

The Meetings for Better Understanding are often audio or video recorded to provide to the mosque and the members of the Muslim Bridge Team. On the television is the Muslim speaker Dr. Safi, and the Christian speaker, Dr. Anees Zaka.



The women of our church had a wonderful opportunity to share a meal and build relationships with Muslim women at the local mosque. Elsie led the women in some ice-breakers (right) and is seen below with the wife of the imam and another woman from the mosque.



The Muslim women prepared elaborately for the visit, bringing examples of clothing and jewelry and other things that give a picture into their culture. By building relationships, Christian women gain trust and the ability to witness where men cannot – to wives and families. Pray that these relationships would grow and Christ would be seen clearly.



Above is a picture of the group that gathered at the mosque. This is just one way that we are working to build “bridges” into the Muslim community to earn the right to present the gospel with our lives and our words.

Practical assistance is another way to reach into the lives of Muslims in our neighborhood. To the right is a group of women from the Muslim Bridge Team planning how to provide English classes for Muslim women.



At the right is a Muslim family that we have had the opportunity to minister to – providing counsel, a place of comfort and rest, and friendship.



Prayer Requests

- Pray for me for much wisdom and discernment as I continue to counsel many of them and address the roll calls each week at the police district. Pray for the young officer who has dedicated her life to Jesus Christ and has stepped out of a life of lesbianism. Thank God she's been growing and standing fast as she continues to seek God through his word and fellowship.
- Pray for Maher and myself in our Muslim Bridge Team as we continue to build relationships with our Muslim neighbors and to seek the opportunities to share Christ with them. Pray for our monthly meetings as we share in this context and that others in the family of Christ would see opportunities to build relationships and share the gospel.
- Pray for our international ministry team at the church as we continue to develop as co-workers in reaching our international community with the gospel of Jesus Christ. Pray for our old

church leadership, that it would continue to grow in prayer and biblical thinking as to how to be a 21st century church for Jesus Christ. Pray that we would continue to grow in unity and vision.

- Pray specifically for our outreach events our Family Fall Festival, our neighborhood Thanksgiving dinner, our Christmas programs, and our Holy Week outreach.

These and many other matters I can lay before you for prayer, but I'm sure that I've given you more than enough to consider and pray about. Please pray for those dear hearts and souls that you are exposed to in the pictures, and may you continue to be his servants as you pray and support and are active for Jesus Christ in your respective communities.

Your brother and sister in Christ,

Luis and Elsie Centeno

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