

THANKFUL EDITION

NEWSLETTER

Cocal GRACIAS

Volume 3 No. 2
Dec. 10, 2020

CONTENTS:

<i>Cocal News</i>	1,4
<i>Brisas Electric Project</i>	1
<i>Timothy Center</i>	2
<i>News From MLV</i>	2,5
<i>Anner Escalon – MLV Graduate</i>	5
<i>Thankfulness</i>	5,6
<i>Mission Family</i>	6

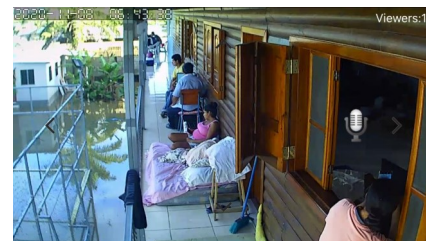
COCAL NEWS! Pages 1,4

Just when we thought things were improving after COVID, Honduras was hit not by one, but two hurricanes in a row. San Pedro Sula and surrounding areas have been severely affected. Villages in Omoa also had major damage. Puerto Cortes has areas that were affected. The neighborhood around the ministry flooded repeatedly and we had families housed in our second level. Kimberly wrote this about the experience:

November 5, is a day I'll never forget. We went to the super-market to purchase food that we could distribute in the centers where affected people were staying. We had cooked a bunch of food and were ready

to go distribute it, when people started showing up at the Ministry asking if they could stay in our upper room. We thought it would be maybe 5 families. We ended up with 23 families, over 75 people. Many were people who had never had contact with MLV. We wanted them to feel welcome and safe in the ministry. We gave them the food we prepared. We continued to serve them for the days they were there. Sometimes we didn't even know how many people there were, and we cooked hoping the food would be enough. We made sure our guests ate first and then us. We asked everyone to take care of MLV since it was open to them. Everyone

collaborated and helped to clean and to distribute food. They were people we had never met before, yet we all worked as a team. We also held services with them. We played and sang worship songs and Shirley from MLV gave the messages. In the second hurricane, we had more people, different than the first group. Our reputation after the first hurricane was that we were the best



Brisas de San Antonio– Electric Project

In September, I had the opportunity to travel back home to Honduras alone. Rina and the kids stayed behind since she cannot leave the county. It was a really good trip. The best for me was to spend time with Brayan and Heidy, our kids again. It felt like old times right away. I sent an email update about the trip, describing how amazing the ministry looked, the things that were accomplished, but I did not share about Brisas de San Antonio. In the last newsletter, we asked for donations for an electric project in a village that was two hours further than Las Flores. We did not receive a specific donation

toward that need, but we did have enough in our operations account that I decided we should help anyway. The board agreed and we sent money for Pastor Juan to give to the community. A center point of my trip was to visit the village and see what had been done. On a Tuesday, Brayan, Heidy and I, drove to Agua Caliente and picked up Pastor Juan and his son Ramon. We then drove to Las Flores, parked the car and hiked past the church. We were then met by members of the destination village on horseback. They had come to give us their horses. Brayan and I

mounted up for a long two-hour hike to the village. As we went through grasslands, forest, jungle, and cliffs, the community expressed how thankful they were for our help. They also showed me the electric cables and where the service started. They showed me the post above the village that had the transformer on it. "From here, to all the houses is where Cocal Gracias helped," they said. I was then taken to the church for a concert with the electronic keyboard, to different houses where they excitedly showed me their fridges. They told me how buying meat before required a two hour trip to a city, buying the meat and sticking it in a cooler. It then had to be eaten

that night or the next morning. Now they could have meat stored in the fridge! They also could drink cold soda. To show their thanks, they surprised all of us with a hen soup lunch! It was delicious. We then took a hike up the hill behind the village for the most spectacular view of San Pedro I have ever seen. It was an honor to be with them and to see how their lives had changed and improved with electric service. I am thankful that Cocal can do projects like this that for us means a small offering, but for them means the world! Thank you Cocal Gracias for changing the living and lives in Brisas de San Antonio.



Timothy Center- A children's Center in Agua Caliente

Our children's center in Agua Caliente was to receive its first short term mission team in March. Our partners, the Southwest Indiana District, were scheduled to come to Honduras, but all flights were canceled when the airport in Honduras closed for COVID.

The team allowed us to keep the project funds and start the construction. We hired a brother in Christ who has done many projects for our ministry over the years to head the construction. In spite of everything that has happened this year, the pandemic and hurricanes, the Timothy Center is now advancing!

Here is what Pastor Juan, as leader of the project, sent: *At the beginning of 2020, we started the construction on our children's ministry, the Timothy Center. It was going well at the beginning, but the pandemic hit us and all construction stopped for seven months. When things started to open back up, we returned to the construction.*

*As pastor, this project has motivated me. The members of the church are also excited, because it is a project we have only dreamed of for our community and now it is becoming a reality in a beautiful way. **We really want to focus on our children, teaching them about God and how to work together, showing them jobs and crafts to inspire them, and keeping them away from drugs and alcohol by giving them a better alternative.***

The people in the village when they see the construction are very excited as well. They are thankful for what God, Cocal Gracias, and we are doing. Even with the hurricanes, we have had a few setbacks, but we are ok. We have advanced and believe that in 2021 we will see the inauguration of the program! That is our faith. Thank you Cocal Gracias and may God bless you!

Timothy Center Highlights:

By year end, we project finishing two classrooms and offices completed, a total of about one-third of the center

In 2021, we anticipate finishing the bathrooms, kitchen, gym, etc.

Add a few modest housing projects for Short term Mission teams

In our documentary film Cocal Gracias that started all of this Hector said, "We believe in a BIG God. So we shouldn't ask him for small things. We should ask him for BIG things." I know that God will continue to bless and honor this vision and we are along for the ride. Already, we have been amazed!

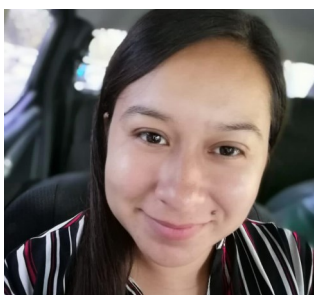
If you would like to partner with the Timothy Center, please specify on your donation. Thank you for your investment in the future of Honduras!

News from MLV pages 2, 5

My name is Jessika Reyes and I am from Tegucigalpa, Omoa. I started classes online in MLV this August. I have learned so much in such a short time. Miss Cecia is patient and she teaches us with dedication. Through online, I get to study with classmates from different places. I also appreciate that MLV takes the time to teach us about God. The bible studies have changed me for the better. I can tell

News from MLV Cont.

that God directed me to be a part of the family of Ministerio la Voz. One time Mr. Brian talked to us about commitment with God and in everything we do (Luke 9:57-62) This really spoke to me because I have not had much commitment toward God or toward projects that I have started. I now have a desire to be closer with God and to seek him each day. I want to obey his word and serve him. I thank God and Ministerio La Voz for everything they have taught me.



My class each Sunday motivates me to want to learn more each time. I am a teacher too and I would like to speak a second language so I can teach my students. The MLV class is excellent. I have learned a lot and hope to continue to second level. Thank you Miss Cesia for the dedication you give and for teaching us with passion, Mr. Brian too. We have learned a lot



in each class. My experience in MLV has been one of the best. Each Sunday I can hardly wait to hear the bible study that Mr. Brian gives us. It is a blessing to hear messages that fill our lives and help us to trust in Jesus the Lord. The bible studies are great to be in because sometimes we are sad, worried, afflicted etc, and we don't know what to do. God is our answer, because without him we fail constantly. I thank God for teacher Brian because he has a gift for giving bible studies. God is transforming and perfecting my life. Bible study helps me in my personal and professional life. I won't forget a teaching about when we are worried and how to leave it in the hands of Jesus. He will lead us to what to do. We can practice giving thanks. I have faith that God will help me reach my goal.—Selenia Escalon



Families living in MLV during Eta



On the way to Brisas San Antonio



Timothy Center 3D mockup

Thankfulness

This last week, as we celebrated Thanksgiving, our staff wrote out what they were thankful for on our Whatsapp Chat. Here are some of their letters: I am thankful to God for the blessings in my life. He has allowed me to grow each day. I am thankful for my family and in the middle of the situations of this year, he has protected us and provided what we need. I am thankful to be a part of

MLV where I can share and learn with each one. I admire your noble attitude. It doesn't matter how much time has passed without us seeing one another, you always transmit joy and I feel like there has never been space between us. I am thankful because we are all on the same page with MLV. I admire all of you. God bless you and what you do, because you all work with your hearts. Love you all, - Cesia Rios, English

Hello, how are you in this beautiful day that God has given us? My thanks is directed first of all to God for his mercy and grace. I am so happy and filled with his love and peace. With all the obstacles and difficulties I have faced, I have learned that God uses them to give me strength and to obtain wisdom. This year 2020 was not like I expected, but God had it all planned out. I am thankful because the joy of

living is still inside me. I give thanks for MLV, COCAL GRACIAS, and THE RUARK FAMILY for each blessing they are in my life and in my family. I am thankful for all people I work with. They are very smart and full of abilities. I pray that your lives are filled with blessings. I am thankful because we went through this year together. I love you all and blessings to each of you. – Vilma Benedit, Computers



Hurricanes Eta and Iota left a path of floods and destruction in Honduras. Cocal Gracias, along with many partners and other organizations is leaving a legacy of help, hope, and love. Thank you Cocal Gracias family for your generosity and faithfulness during this time. You make a difference!

Letter From Pastor Victor Hugo in San Pedro Sula.



Hugo Alvarado

My name is Victor Hugo Alvarado. I am the pastor of the First Church of the Nazarene in San Pedro Sula, Cortes. I am also the administrator of the Center for Basic Education Sinai also in San Pedro Sula. I would like to thank Cocal Gracias, my brother Brian Ruark, and the group that supports him, for the way they have supported the needy families here. They have helped with the basic needs of alimentation and education. I would like to describe the help.

This year, Cocal Gracias gave 12 scholarships for school to children who were otherwise not going to be able to study. They have been able to go to school in our center where we teach them spiritual principles and morality. The scholarships not only provided for the students cost of schooling, but also all school materials they need-

ed, uniforms, shoes, notebooks, textbooks, pencils, pens, etc. This amazing help has been a huge blessing to the children and to the parents who are also very thankful.

During the critical months of the pandemic with COVID-19, so many people lost their jobs because many businesses were forced to close. Many families faced a situation where their income stopped, but their payments and responsibilities did not. It was so critical that many families did not have anything to eat. We received donations from Cocal Gracias that allowed us to provide provisions for these families. We received an offering in April that helped 32 families, and another in May that helped 25 families. It was a huge blessing for those families to receive food for their homes.

Hurricane Eta and hurricane Iota have left our country tremendously affected. The epicenter of destruction has been the outskirts and barrios of San Pedro Sula. In La Planteta, La Lima, Col. Santa Marta, Col. Villas del Rio, Calan, families lost everything: all of their belongings, furniture, and some even lost their whole houses. Again, during this crisis, Cocal Gracias responded by sending an offering that allowed us to feed and provide for the 43 families living in the Central Church in San Pedro Sula.

We also sent provisions to the pastors who were affected like, Sagario Salgado in Calan, Leticia Martinez in Villas del Rio, Arnulfo Perla in Santa Marta, Franklin Matute in La Planeta, and Gladys Hernandez in La Lima.

We are very thankful for Cocal Gracias, and the support it gives to the needy in Honduras. Thank you to all of those who donate and help us. May God bless you!

— Pastor Victor Hugo Alvarado

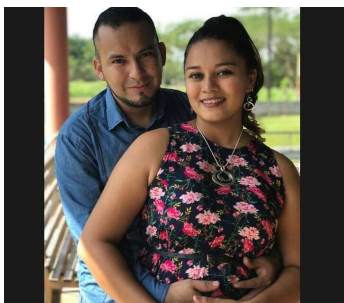


I come from La Planeta. we lost everything. The hurricane caused water that flooded over our roof. I went up on the roof of a two-story house with my daughters. We were in shock to see how cement walls were destroyed. I remember the screams of neighbors who needed help and there was no one to respond. I thank God that I was able to save my four children. I also have my husband. We are thankful to God, but we lost everything. I thank God that here in the central church they have received us and have provided everything that we could need. - Sister Martha Bernardez

Anner Escalon– Ministry Graduate

I am so excited to re-introduce you all to Anner Escalon, a Ministerio La Voz graduate. He is thirty two years old. He lives in Rio Chiquito, Omoa Cortes. He is married to a wonderful woman named Vanessa and they have a daughter named Jimena. Since Anner was small, his family showed him how to work honestly, to dream big, and to fight for his dreams.

He and his family are Christians. He is a graduate in computer science and in forestry. He currently works for the city of Omoa. With a desire to learn English, Anner had enrolled in Ministerio La Voz, which he says, "...Is a place that is dedicated to helping the poor." Anner graduated from MLV in 2015. "With everything I have learned in my life, I realize there is nothing more important than serving," Anner says.



Anner and Vanessa

In the wake of Hurricane Eta, Anner woke to find parts of his village destroyed. Many of his neighbors lost their houses when the river flooded its banks by hundreds of feet and the raging waters swept entire homes away. The affected families moved into the public school with basically the clothes on their backs.

Anner quickly organized and became the point man for a group of villagers that now live in the United States who wanted to help their families and neighbors. Anner sent them a list of the families affected by the hurricane, along with photos

and testimonies. The people in the states began to raise money at their places of work and send money to Anner for relief. I asked him what motivated him to help and he said, "Seeing the need and the destruction had moved his heart and he couldn't just stand by and do nothing." I asked if anything in MLV helped him to respond this way. He told me that the bible studies and the community that we formed inspired him. "I remember that when some of my classmates couldn't pay the bus fee to come to class, you would pay for them. That impacted me, because no one does that. It showed care for others."

With the funds, Anner bought food and organized its preparation and distribution to the families in need. "Many brothers in our community have united and have trusted in us to administer the funds and to help," says Anner. "We are thankful that in this situation, God has allowed us to be more human and to share love with our neighbors."

I called Anner to get a report about Omoa and when I heard about how God was using him to lead relief efforts, I was amazed and proud! Cocal Gracias sent funds to him and he was able to continue the work. I received updates as Anner organized his family and his church to cook meals for the families who lost their homes. He also organized a clothing drive and received donations from almost everyone in the village. I have been so impressed by his heart and his energy. He is an example of the type of leadership we want to see produced in MLV. Anner concluded our talk with, "Thank you Cocal Gracias, for thinking about us and for helping the most needy. Thank you for trusting in us and supporting the work." – Anner Escalon.



Google map to show the houses that swept away. Blue is the neighborhood. Red is how far the river overflowed.



Cocal News Cont.

place to stay. Everyone was talking about MLV and how good it was. We had many new people show up asking to stay. The second time we had 65 people. We saw other organizations collaborate and donate food for us. It was really good to see how God took care of us. I feel good because MLV has so much more value in the neighborhood now. Many people felt love and peace in MLV. It is a place that will help anyone regardless of who they are. -Kimberly Menjivar

Thankfulness Continued

I want to give thanks to God during this difficult year. In the middle of our pain and desperation many amazing things have happened. It has been surprising to see the hand of God and how he acts on our favor. It all started in March when Brian interviewed me and gave me the opportunity to teach music in MLV. I only got to work a few weeks. Then COVID started and it was devastating for my family. Due to the shutdown, we did not have work or even food in our house. It was during this time that Kimberly kept calling me to tell me that our provision from MLV was ready. She would give us a huge bag of food and also an offering for me. This was really a huge help to us. I am thankful for the teachers who gave us their provision bag as well and I was able to help my extended family because they also were in need. During the hardest time, Ministerio La Voz helped us. After all of this, I had the opportunity to study the word of God during the lockdown. Our pas-

tor was teaching us hermeneutics, and this also helped my life. I also was able to meet family members I had previously never met during COVID. I met a sister I had never known. As a family, we have spent much more time together. With the hurricanes, our village of Nisperales was spared flooding because we are up in the mountains, but we did lose electric service for 5 or 6 days. We are thankful that no one was affected. My family is other places, and my MLV family are all ok. I have seen God move and work in the middle of all of this. It leaves me speechless with thanks that I am with God and with you all and that you helped me when I needed it. You gave me a place in your family and I saw God never leave us. I am grateful. God bless - Daniel Martinez, Music



Mission Family News

At this point, we have been in the states almost a year, something we never could have imagined. This has brought enormous challenges to the ministry, to our family, and also great blessing. We are blessed by the friends and family that we have, a wonderful Cocal Gracias board that cares for us, and an amazing MLV staff who carry the banner while we are away. Seeing the ministry move forward in our physical absence has been a blessing. It proves the calling and the vision is in the hearts of those who work with us. They are a wonderful team. It gives me confidence and joy to look forward to opening the Timothy Center. Thank you to our faithful givers who allow us to work and bless others. You are so much a part of this.

We are blessed to have spent so much time with extended family, especially my grandparents who now know their great grandchildren.

Danny turned one in November and we are so thankful to have him in our family. Angeliene and Nathanael are in homeschool with us. Angie is learning fractions, decimals, the body, and five paragraph essays, and Nathanael has learned how to read in Spanish! Rina and I have been attending my old church of Oro Valley Nazarene. We made a contact there who has employed us part time, fixing his properties. So far Rina and I have repaired a fence and painted two houses. It feels good to be active. My heart arrhythmias seem to be controlled by taking potassium and I am feeling much better. Thank you for the prayers and cards. Thanksgiving in the states after 14 years without was very good. Joel and Elda visited us and it was special. We are excited about Christmas and the new year. We believe God has even more surprises and adventures for us. God bless.—Brian

Needs and Opportunities

***DONATIONS:** Timothy Center Construction

***COCAL PARTNERS:** Please visit www.cocalgracias.org/donate

For more needs visit: www.cocalgracias.org/help-us

Cocal GRACIAS



The Rarks

Visit the website!

www.cocalgracias.org

Cocal Gracias, Inc.

P.O. BOX 35552

Tucson, CA 85740

Telephone: Amy Caffarella 619-602-1423

Telephone Brian: 011-504-9954-1727

Email: cocalgraciaspc@gmail.com

Cocal Gracias is an non-profit organization organized in Maryland under the 501(c)3 chapter of the federal tax code, with Nazarene Compassionate Ministry Status. Our mission is to serve and meet needs in Honduras, sharing with the people the good news of Jesus Christ. We do this through our technical school, Ministerio La Voz, where we teach viable trades and skills in áreas such as, English, Welding, Auto Mechanics, Sewing, and Computers. We don't want to just give fish, but teach men and women how to fish. The vision is one of transformation. With God's help, we will transform Puerto Cortes, winning it for the kingdom and to be a light on all of Honduras, Central America, and beyond. It is a big task, but we believe in a big God and we have seen his hand with us. Join with us in praying for the children, the youth, and all the leaders of tomorrow in Honduras, that they will grow in the knowledge of our Lord and in the knowledge of who they are in him and who they are meant to be.

