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Dear friends and family,

A few weeks ago a visiting Colombian brother spoke at our Sunday meeting here in Ibagué. He drew our attention to the life of king Amaziah in 2 Chronicles 25. He was a king who “did what was right in the eyes of the LORD, **but not wholeheartedly**” (v.2). How wholehearted is our devotion to Christ? “Blessed are they who keep his statutes and **seek him with all their heart**” (Ps 119:2). We are called to “make music **in your heart** to the Lord” (Ef 5:19) - true worship goes beyond singing theologically correct hymns; to do “the will of God **from your heart**” (Ef 6:6) - which is more than correct behavior; to “love one another deeply, **from the heart**” (1 Pet 1:22) – a love that will of necessity express itself in tangible ways. Together with this brother I (Philip) wrote a one page ‘**vitamin**’ about king Amaziah, illustrating what happens when we serve the Lord “but not wholeheartedly”.



Family: We have now lived 4 months in Ibagué, and our flat and surroundings begin to feel like home. We have now visited most of the brothers and sisters in their homes, which has helped us feel part of the local congregation. Anneke has been granted a 3 year visa, and both of us now have a Colombian ID card and driving license. This also helps us feel more settled. Steven and Vikki (our daughter) and 4 grandchildren returned to The Netherlands after living 4 years in Peru and 2 years in Bogotá. The health of the children was their main consideration. It was sad to see them leave, but we have peace knowing it was the right thing to do. Currently we plan to return to the Netherlands for a 5 week break sometime in September and October 2024.



Regional work: The year begun with involvement in the Bucaramanga youth camp. It was an encouraging time and we enjoyed the beautiful Colombian scenery as we drove 9 hours there and back. January is a good time to make some planning for the year, especially the travels and some larger commitments. In discussion with event organizers, we agreed to visit Pereira 5 times to help with FEB (for a week of Bible teaching), help in a couple of conferences and study days.



An interesting new initiative is to help with a monthly 3 hour workshop in Puerto Boyacá (4 hour drive from





here) for elders and brothers and sisters in some form of leadership. Participants are also invited from other assemblies in the River Magdalena valley. The first one is next Tuesday. A well-functioning leadership team is fundamental to assembly and ministry growth.

Local work: We do our best to spend most of our Sundays here

in Ibagué. It helps us integrate, enjoy fellowship with the existing brothers and sisters and be part of welcoming new visitors. Towards the end of last year, we had our Sunday morning service in a farm instead of our usual rented hotel room. It was a very good opportunity to invite family and friends. About half the group were non-regulars! In January Anneke welcomed 15 sisters to our flat to discuss how to set up monthly meetings for women. There are many ideas and also enthusiasm to set that in motion. Philip now forms part of the team of elders, 6 men, meeting monthly to evaluate how the assembly meetings are going and looking for future opportunities. Pastoral visitation in homes and some method to disciple new believers are also fundamental to personal and assembly growth.

New meeting hall? Since November we have been searching for a house which could be purchased to create a more stable meeting place for this congregation in Ibagué. It needs to be a central place, where anyone living in Ibagué can reach it with one bus fare. Last week we agreed the purchase price for a very well located old house. Currently we have about 1/3 of the 72.000 euros needed to purchase it. With some minor changes it can be made temporarily functional. When the Lord provides the additional construction funds, it will be demolished and rebuilt in order to create a meeting room where some 100-120 people can sit. If you or your congregation would more information about this important project or you would like to contribute financially towards it, please get in touch. We will be very happy to hear from you.



Thank you for taking the time to read this letter. Our thanks too to those of you who regularly pray for us and support us and the work we are doing here.

Philip & Anneke

