



AUGUST 2008



Together Venezuela

Special Report

CÚA , VENEZUELA



Venezuela 2008

"I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it."

Matthew 16:18

Address:

Samuel E Schütz

Currently unavailable

Phone:

011 (584-16) 728-3038 (cell)

Email:

sschutz@teamexpansion.org
samuelschutz@hotmail.com

Forwarding Agent:

Team Expansion
c/o Jason Schilling
1071 Southern Ridge Dr SW
Rochester, MN 55902

Note:

Make checks payable to Team Expansion, addressed to my forwarding agent. Do not put my name anywhere on the check. Donations are tax-deductible. Feel free to contact me with questions, news, prayer requests, etc.

Educational Furlough Marks New Chapter In Ministry, Brings November Field Exit

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

It is my pleasure to announce to you that on November 3 of this year I will embark upon a new chapter in my life in ministry as I will leave Venezuela to return to the United States for an extended educational furlough. It is with a heavy heart that I prepare to say goodbye to countless friends and a work which I have been a part of since its beginning. Yet, I am excited for the opportunity to attend seminary and plan to study in a Master of Divinity program.

Attending seminary has been a life goal since the beginning of my missionary service. My original plan was to experience missionary life as an apprentice and then study in seminary before moving to the mission field full-time. Plans changed after my highly successful apprenticeship in Venezuela in 2005. Within a growing community in need of evangelization, God was raising up the Cúa church in powerful ways and there was an immediate need for my help. Thus I postponed my studies to move to the field full-time.

Now after almost three years serving in Cúa, helping to plant the church Siempre Con Cristo, I am at a crossroads in my life both professionally and personally. The SCC music ministry, which I have lead since the beginning, has finally arrived to where there is a growing community of Venezuelan musicians who can take the ministry forward without me. Musicians and worship leaders taught by me have passed on what they have learned to others who are now teaching even others. Likewise the SCC youth ministry, in which I have served a supporting role, is being capably led by Colombian/Venezuelan Dairo Moreno, my roommate Matt Johnson, and a host of early-20's Venezuelan youth leaders who have been raised up within our church.

Personally, I have learned immensely while serving as a full-time missionary. There is no better classroom than real-life ministry. I know that if I were to stay in Venezuela I would continue to learn and grow in many ways. However, I wish to grow in knowledge in ways that I cannot here. I have found Cúa to be an environment non-conducive to rigorous study. And performing the duties of a full-time missionary leaves inadequate time for academics. I also hope to refocus my ministry less on music and more on teaching, preaching, counseling, and pastoral-care. At the moment I find myself free from personal ties to Venezuela. And besides, I will turn 29 on November 11 and my gray matter is not getting any softer.

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Thus, I believe God is leading me to take this next step now.

Upon arrival in America I will begin a period of Home Service during which I will attend a debriefing for returning missionaries, I will report to supporters, and I will make personal arrangements associated with repatriation.

During this time I will also make final decisions regarding which seminary I will attend and will begin the enrollment process. Seminaries which I currently consider attending include Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, California; Bethel Seminary in St. Paul, Minnesota; Lincoln Christian Seminary in Lincoln, Illinois; and Emmanuel School of Religion in Johnson City, Tennessee. Please be in prayer as I evaluate programs and professors. I hope to start studying in March of 2009 at the conclusion of my Home Service.

Completion of a Masters of Divinity will take at least three years. Many things can change in that time but my plan for the future is to return to the mission field after seminary. Through it all I hope to remain a member of Team Expansion. I have truly enjoyed working with them and would likely serve with them upon returning to the field.

At this point I must express my sincerest gratitude to you, those who have sacrificed financially and offered up countless prayers to make our work in Venezuela a great success. You have encouraged me with kind words and you have entrusted me with the stewardship of your kingdom resources. In so doing, you have made it possible for Siempre Con Cristo to grow from 0 to more than 120 people. You have provided for over 100 unbelievers to become baptized followers of Jesus. You have started a work that will continue to grow and expand in the years following my departure. You have invested in the lives of young Christians who are passionate for Jesus and His church and will soon be sent out to plant more churches in Venezuela and beyond. You have established a growing community of musicians who will lead the SCC congregation in heart-felt, high-energy worship. You have done all this in three years of faithful partnership. Thank you.

I hope that you and I will be able to continue this successful partnership during my time of studies and beyond. I ask you to prayerfully consider continuing to support this ministry for the year 2009. Monthly reporting will continue as in the past with ministry reports and financial summaries. I will be in contact with you personally in the coming months at which time we can talk in detail about continuing our partnership.

I covet your prayers through this time of transition. Thank you and may God bless you richly.

In Christ,

Sam

