



Samuel and Hilda Schutz

Address:

Urbanización Santa Rosa,
Conjunto Residencial Betania,
Manzana 28, Casa # 53,
Cúa, Estado Miranda,
Venezuela, South America

Phone:

011 (58-424) 254-6606 (cell)

Email:

samuelschutz@hotmail.com

Website:

www.samuelschutz.com

Forwarding Agent:

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

Note:

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"I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it."
Matthew 16:18

Together Venezuela

NOVEMBER 2011

CÚA, VENEZUELA

It's A Venezuelan Christmas For SCC

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I couldn't help but smile at a recent Siempre Con Cristo worship rehearsal.

We were rehearsing for SCC's annual Christmas Party, a worship service that is always loud, joyful, packed with special presentations, and topped off with typical Venezuelan Christmas foods. Everything is very Venezuelan...except the music.

In the past, I have fed SCC a steady dose of gringo Christmas carols. They like our carols, but they are not passionate about them. The carols do not reflect the energy and festiveness of a Venezuelan Christmas. Venezuela has their own traditional Christmas music called "gaita" which is considerably more up-tempo than your typical carol.

So at a recent worship rehearsal, as Noel was directing a choir of Venezuelans in singing gaita songs, I couldn't help but smile as I witnessed SCC take yet another step towards the goal of becoming an indigenous church. With the establishment of the three-man committee on November 26th (see last month's newsletter), SCC finally has an indigenous worship ministry. Noel, Elias, and Edwin will have an increased role this December as I continue to support them in their development. And that means this year's Christmas party will have a distinctly more Venezuelan flavor.



Noel (far right) leads a choir in singing Christmas carols and gaitas. Banner-photo: Baker plays the cuatro, a traditional, Venezuelan four-stringed guitar essential for gaita music.

Though Hilda and I will be leaving Venezuela in the spring, our teaching, worship leading, evangelism, and leadership development continue. There remains a great need here in Venezuela and we will work until our departure. Thank you for your continued support during this time and may God grant you a blessed and Merry Christmas.

With Joy in Christ,
Samuel and Hilda

Venezuelan Gaita Music

If you want to hear some gaita music, enter the following links into your web browser:

Niño Lindo:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ink52OZNarA&feature=related>

Cantemos, Cantemos:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rel6BrQuE5M&feature=related>

Un Feliz Año Pa' Ti:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bjvrHFEqavU&feature=related>



Gabrielito Makes His Debut

After two years of on-again, off-again drum lessons, I felt that Gabrielito, 12, was ready to start playing drums for us on Sunday mornings. We currently give him one song a week with the hopes that he will eventually handle the entire set. So far he is doing great. The best part is that every Sunday when he plays, his entire family shows up with cameras, including his father, a gruff and burly non-Christian, who was once even moved to tears.

Left: Gabrielito plays drums for a recent Sunday worship service as Elias rocks the bass and I strum and sing. Right: I complete the sale of the Explorer by handing the keys to Ambar and Edwin.



Mission Vehicle Sold

During November and December in Venezuela everyone has money. People collect their year-end bonuses and “13th-month” paychecks and they spend like crazy. By January, all the money is spent and Venezuela settles in for another 10 months of living paycheck-to-paycheck.

Because of this phenomenon, Hilda and I knew that it would be hard to find buyers for the belongings that we hope to sell when we leave this spring. Therefore, in late-November, we began the process of selling our belongings to the people we know in Cua.

Most items were offered on a “pre-order” basis, meaning that people could buy them now and receive them when we leave in the spring. But some items, such as our Ford Explorer, had to be surrendered at the moment of purchase. And that moment came sooner than expected!

On November 21, we sold the

Explorer to our fellow church members Edwin and his wife Ambar. I purchased the Explorer with mission funds in July of 2007 for \$10,000. Amazingly, after four and a half years of moderate use, I sold the truck to Edwin for \$8,750. And, believe it or not, I gave him a bargain. Such is the strange dynamic of the confluence of currency exchange rates and rampant Venezuelan inflation.

Miscellaneous

- Denise, her husband Beltran, and her daughter Yamilet began attending Siempre Con Cristo in 2007. Already Christians, they began serving right away, leading one SCC’s most successful cell groups. After battling breast cancer for several years, Denise died in her home on November 5.
- As of this fall, Hilda is an official Team Expansion missionary! It is protocol for a new spouse to go through Team Expansion’s application process because we feel that God not only calls individuals to be missionaries, but also their entire families. Husbands, wives, children, they are all “on-the-job” in the overseas missionary experience, which is unlike any other job.

Prayer/Praise Points

- ◆ **Praise** for SCC’s progress towards becoming an indigenous church.
- ◆ **Praise** for Garbielito’s debut on the drums for the SCC worship team.
- ◆ **Praise** for the sale of our Ford Explorer at a fair price to a Christian couple from SCC.
- ◆ **Pray** for the family of Denise after her death.

4112 Old Routt RD, Louisville, KY 40299
1.800.447.0800 | www.teamexpansion.org

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