



Joseph and Angel

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Lifelong Commitments

On the 3rd of September of this year, Angel Santiago from Mexico and Joseph Matthias from the U.S. made their lifelong commitments to the Servants of the Word.

Angel was born in 1985 in Mexicali, in the Baja California state of Mexico, and has three sisters and two brothers. His parents raised him in the context of a strong Christian community (the Sword of the Spirit's Verbum Dei community) which was fertile soil for his missionary vocation.

He studied law at the University of Baja California, graduating in 2007. He served for a while in the university outreach in Mexicali, and this is where the Lord in-

vited him to a more radical life. In 2008 Angel went to live with the brothers in Monterrey, Mexico, serving university students and high school youth.

Angel is very sociable and enjoys running and camping. He is currently helping to man our temporary household in Mexicali.

Joseph was also born in 1985—in Ann Arbor, Michigan, the youngest of four siblings. His parents now live in nearby Jackson, Michigan.

Joseph studied music composition at Interlochen Arts Academy, a high school for musicians and artists, and graduated from the University of Michigan in 2007 with a degree in Russian language and Literature.

After a brief stint at a local franchising company, Joseph began serving full time in University Christian Outreach (UCO), first by helping introduce Asian international students to Christ, and later took on more supervisory and teaching responsibilities as UCO Ann Arbor has grown.

Joseph composes worship songs for our prayer times in the Servants of the Word, and is also working on an epic poem on biblical themes, titled In “Nimrod’s Day.”

We thank God for these brothers and invite you to join us in praying that the Lord will raise up more men like them.

From the Presiding Elder

Dear friends and family,

Greetings from India, where I am visiting for the second time this year to assist communities in this growing sub-region of the Sword of the Spirit. India has a relatively small Christian population—approximately 2%—in a huge country of 1.2 billion people. In the midst of this challenging situation we see substantial opportunity for growth.

Through this newsletter we want to share with you some highlights since our previous newsletter—things for which we are immensely grateful.

One of the greatest highlights took place this past September when two men made life-long commitments to the Servants of the Word—Angel Santiago from Mexico and Joseph Mathias from the U.S. Angel joins the growing number of Latin American men who are finding their vocation in our brotherhood, and Joseph is bucking the trend in first world countries where few men are choosing to live this kind of consecrated life. We do not take this lightly and we invite you to celebrate with us. We are also seeing growth in the numbers of new men investigating our life in most of our regions. A clear example is the addition of five new affiliates in Lebanon, bringing to twelve the total number of Lebanese involved in the brotherhood.

On the mission front, we rejoice in the success of two large youth events in which many of our brothers were closely involved. This past May the first Asian Regional Kairos Conference was held in the Philippines with over 700 young people gathering from across Asia. A similar event of over 800 youth was held in Costa Rica with young people from across Central and South America. It is a great privilege for our brothers to be involved in the conversion and formation of the coming generations of leaders—leaders for our work, for the church, and for the wider society.

In response to the growing mission among young people in Grand Rapids, we have purchased a house there. Our brothers have been involved there in university outreach and community development in recent years. We have also sent out three men to run a temporary household in Mexi-

co—six months in Mexicali and six months divided between two other locations in Mexico. In addition to these mission households we have completed a major structural addition to our brotherhood center in Chelsea, Michigan—built to prepare for the days when we will need to care for aging or infirm brothers.

Finally, this year marks the 25th anniversary of Servant Systems, our Michigan-based software development company. Over the years, anywhere from two to eight Servant of the Word brothers have been employed in this company which also has eight to ten additional employees. Servants Systems has provided substantial financial support for our life and mission. In addition it has provided an excellent environment for our brothers who have worked there.

As you can see, we have ample reason to thank the Lord for

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a very good year. We are also, of course, thankful for the many family and friends who have supported us with prayer and financial contributions. As our mission opportunities grow, so do our needs for this kind of support. As we send this newsletter we are also launching what will be an annual appeal to help fund our mission (for details, please see page 5). We look forward to your continued generosity.

As I close, let me wish all of you a blessed and grace-filled Christmas!

I remain your servant in Christ,

Kenneth J. Noecker

Ken Noecker

Kairos in Asia and Latin America

In May of this year the first Kairos conference for Asia took place. Kairos, the federation of Sword of the Spirit youth outreaches across the world, invited young people from India, Malaysia, the Philippines and many other places in Asia to gather for a five-day conference in Manila. In spite of long distances, 700 participants aged 15-25 showed up, and they experienced unity in Christ across cultures, language barriers and denominational backgrounds.

The conference combined workshops, fun activities and plenary sessions, all intended to broaden the vision of those young people and to equip them for discipleship and mission in their local outreaches.

One highlight was the keynote address by Jean and Peter Barbara. Jean is the current president of the Sword of the Spirit, and his son Peter has just finished a three-year stay with the brothers in London. Their joint address highlighted the trans-generational nature of our Sword of the Spirit communities.

Our brothers were very involved. Joseph Piquero was the main organizer of the event, and many of our brothers helped out, most notably in the two-week households that preceded

the conference. Students who participated in those households experienced community first hand and had a chance to grow in discipleship and leadership skills.

A similar event took place near San Jose, Costa Rica, in July, with people from Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua and even Portugal and Spain. Four of our Latino brothers had moved to San Jose the previous fall, in part to help plan and organize this large event. Kairos is well developed in that region, with centers in Ecuador, Costa Rica and Mexico.

Every four years, the Kairos outreaches in Latin America, Spain and Portugal pull together for a large conference, normally drawing around 800 youngsters. Just as in Asia, such events help build an international identity and encourage smaller groups to remain faithful to their call.

Kairos has been organizing these events for 15 years now, and the fruit is clearly visible in a new generation of leaders taking their places in our work, all over Latin America and beyond.

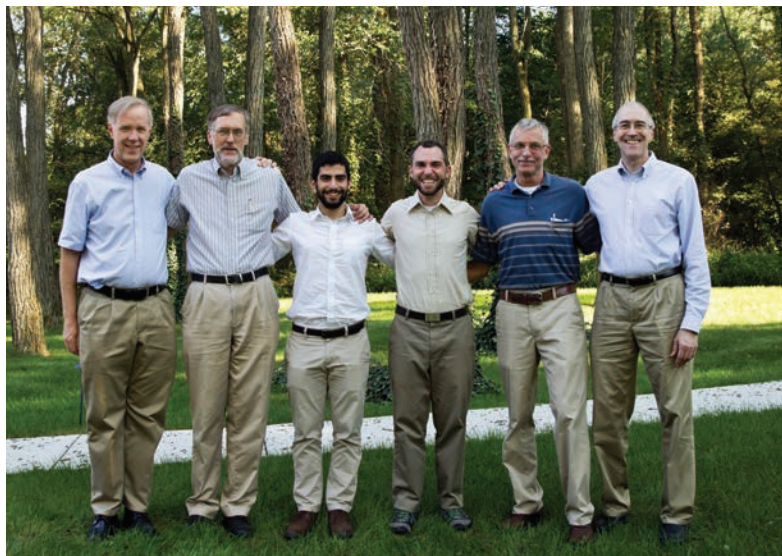


A New House in Grand Rapids and the Remodelling of the Brotherhood Center

Since 2009, we had rented a house in Grand Rapids, Michigan, USA, which has served as a home for our brothers and a base of operation for our campus outreach. As it became clearer that we would be serving there longer term, we began looking for a property to purchase. Though the brothers had a house in mind, there was a difficulty with zoning (several unrelated single people in the same house in an otherwise family neighborhood). Providentially, we were introduced to a man who was able to explain our special circumstances to government officials and obtain zoning approval on our behalf. Shortly after receiving the approval, we proceeded with the purchase of the property, finalizing the purchase on August 31 of this year.

We consider it a great blessing to be able to look after all our brothers, even as they age.

During the previous year (2014) we expanded and remodelled one of the two Brotherhood Center houses in Chelsea, Michigan. We have wanted for a while to make provision for older brothers, as their needs change and their health deteriorates. The living quarters of the house were completely remodelled and expanded, adding a basement, six new bedrooms, and a screened-in porch. We also installed an elevator and made some rooms handicap-friendly. Our need for such facilities is not yet acute, but they have already been put to good use by various brothers convalescing from surgery. We consider it a great blessing to be able to look after all our brothers, even as they age.



Our brothers working at Servant Systems: Don DeSmith, Bruce Franson, Carl Bashir, Brian Lalonde, Dick LaCroix, Larry Hunt.

Servant Systems: 25th Anniversary

In the late 1980s, one of our brothers, Ted Kennedy, proposed to the elders that he should enter secular employment. He was gifted in many areas, and by that time had streamlined our brotherhood internal accounting.

He took a position with a local computing firm, and then, in 1990, he and another brother, Larry Hunt, started Servant Systems (SSI). A key break came when a franchise company was looking for software and found out that Ted and Larry were ready and able to develop it. This project put SSI on the map, and to this day their main work is with franchise information systems.

Since then, two other brothers, Bruce Franson and Don DeSmith, joined SSI and have taken it to new levels. The company now employs around 12 people, including some additional Servants of the Word. Up until recently the company has used space in our Brotherhood Center in Chelsea, Michigan, but growth has recently required them to procure additional local office space.

We are very grateful for Servant Systems. It affords our brothers a chance to be “monks in the marketplace,” while providing valuable income for our life and mission.

Temporary Households in Mexicali and Beirut

In September of this year, three brothers set off from Monterrey, Mexico, to Mexicali, another city in the northwest of the country. Mexicali is the home of Verbum Dei community, and our brothers will be hosting a “temporary household” in the city until the end of December. The main purpose of such households is to afford university-aged men the opportunity to live with us, even if only for a short time and thus get used to the “disciplines of a disciple” such as regular prayer times, common meals, and doing household chores.

But they are also able to see brotherhood life first hand, and so ask themselves whether they should consider it for themselves. Temporary households are a great opportunity to also impact locations where there are currently no permanent Servant of the Word households.

We are grateful for the growth in that difficult part of the world and we look forward to what the Lord has in mind in the future.

Another such place is Beirut, Lebanon. David Quintana, Juan Carlos Aragon and Martin Steinbe-reithner spent a month there this past summer and hosted some fifteen men for a summer program of discipleship and mission. Currently ten affiliates live in Lebanon. And three Lebanese brothers are stationed in our houses in other countries. We are grateful for the growth in that difficult part of the world and we look forward to what the Lord has in mind in the future.

If you would like to support us, either:

- Make out a check to the Servants of the Word and mail it in the enclosed envelope
- Visit our website and donate at **servantsoftheword.org/donate**

All donations to the Servants of the Word are tax-deductible in the United States and may be gift-aided in the United Kingdom.

