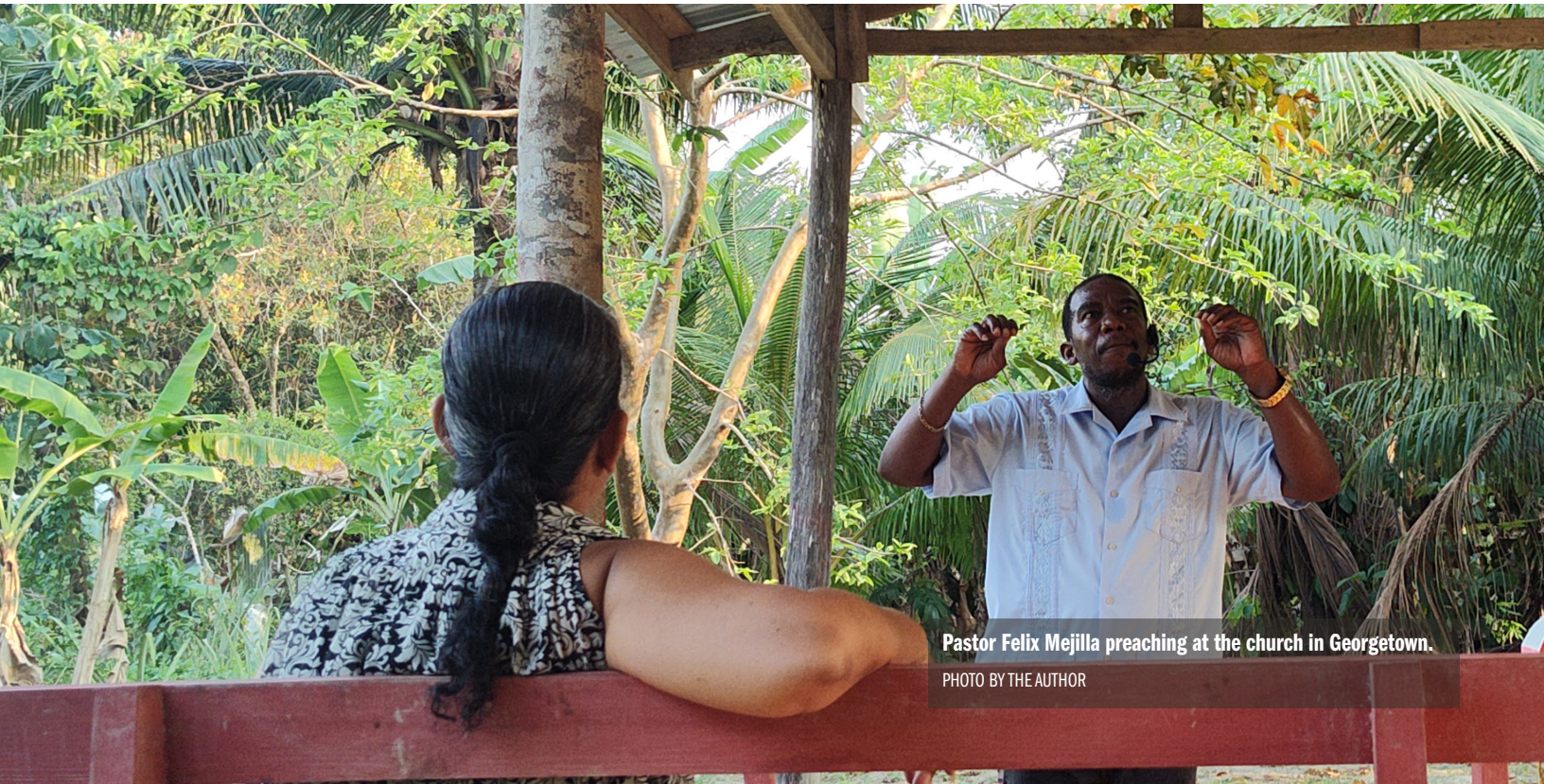


MESSENGER

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER & PRAYER GUIDE



Pastor Felix Mejilla preaching at the church in Georgetown.

PHOTO BY THE AUTHOR

IT'S NOT ABOUT THE MONEY by Tim Groff

In Nehemiah 3:1, Eliashib the high priest and his fellow priests “sanctified” the work they were doing. That’s in the King James version — but what does “sanctified” really mean? Looking at the same verse in the Easy-to-Read Version (one I often use in Belize with our young people there), it says: “They prayed to make the gate holy to God,” and “They prayed to make all this work holy to God.”

Do you ever imagine that your work is holy and set apart for God? Do you pray that way? How would that affect your attitude toward the people around you and the goals

you’re attempting to accomplish together?

When God made the world, he said, “It is good,” and this includes the work we are each assigned to do — and the people we’re working beside. I’m a missionary doing leadership development in Belize. I think my work is sanctified — holy to God. Your work is something very different, but you should also see your work as holy and set apart for God.

You may be familiar with the Parable of the Laborers, in which the landowner goes back repeatedly throughout the day, inviting work-

ers. “For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire workers for his vineyard. He agreed to pay them a denarius for the day and sent them into his vineyard...” (Matthew 20:1, NIV)

Inevitably, especially for those of us working in ministry, we imagine ourselves as some of those who started the work early in the day. The day ends, and the pay is distributed, a good amount of pay for a good day’s work. The laborers hired first only really complain when they’re not given extra, but the owner will have none of that: “... Take your pay

and go. I want to give the one who was hired last the same as I gave you....”

And this is the God we serve — one who wants to bring everyone into his vineyard to partner with him in the good, sanctified work he has for us to do together. Instead of imagining ourselves as having “worked all day in the scorching heat,” let’s find ways to remember that we’re working in our God’s vineyard — partnering with one another to accomplish the good work he’s set before us! And remember: it’s not about the money!

Julie and I have been serving in leadership development among the Garifuna people of Southern Belize for the past 10 years with EMM. We’ve been working in close discipleship with Terry and Kendra Nunez, a Garifuna couple from Hopkins.

“Mr. Tim,” Kendra said a few months ago. “My sister and I would like to provide the noon meal for pastor Felix and his family on Sundays.”

Pastor Felix and his family have been traveling about one hour in one direction to visit Georgetown weekly, and recently started a Sunday morning service under a shed roof there.

Kendra and Terry are excited; they have a passion to move from Hopkins to the village of Georgetown, where Kendra grew up. There has never been a stable evangelical church presence there, and they want to partner with Pastor Felix in Kendra’s home village.

“Wow, that’s a great idea”, I said.

“Could you sponsor us?” she asked. “It would cost about \$60 a week.”

That translates to \$30 U.S. dollars a week for pastor Felix’s family’s Sunday lunch. (The Belize dollar is pegged at 2-to-1 against the U.S. dollar.) Felix would generally bring 5–7 people with him, a plate of food would cost about \$5 each, and that cost seemed very reasonable to me. Let’s do the math: \$30/week x 4 = about \$120 a month.

“Yes!” I exuberantly agreed. “Let me check with my wife and Pastor Felix,” I prudently amended.

Julie agreed with me about the plan, so I called Pastor Felix.

Pastor Felix Mejilla and I go way back to the beginning of my time here. He pastors a Garifuna-language church not far from my house. In those early years in Belize, I taught his two sons to play guitar, and they taught me my first Garifuna language song.

Almost two years ago, Felix stopped at my gate in his taxi and honked the horn. I came out and sat with him as he described his church’s first outreach to Georgetown, and he wept, telling me about the spiritual hunger he sees among his people there. For a full year, Julie and I drove our vehicle with Felix and his family to Georgetown on Sunday afternoons to begin a weekly service there. Since that time, the people of Georgetown have requested that their service be held in the morning. Julie and I cannot travel there regularly anymore since our Dangriga church meets during that same time frame and requires our van. Pastor Felix prioritized the Georgetown service and shifted his Dangriga church service to the evening. The burden of the cost of transportation has fallen on him and his family since that time. They eat breakfast

early on Sunday before traveling the one-hour distance south.

When I called him about the Sunday meal plan, he came in his taxi and sat with me in my yard to discuss the particulars.

“Mr. Tim,” he said, “I appreciate what you’re trying to do here, I really do. But I wonder if you would give me the money for fuel instead. We can go hungry, but we can’t go without fuel.”

His words impacted me because I know the burden of the cost of fuel in Belize. While U.S. consumers enjoy a glut of supply, Belize has a small population and economy and imports all refined fuel, naturally making the costs much higher. Gas is never less than \$5 a gallon and usually closer to \$7.50 a gallon in U.S. dollars.

I agreed without hesitation.

Pastor Felix’s phrase: “We can go hungry, but we can’t go without fuel,” perfectly emphasizes the point of my message. It’s not about the money.

We’re so honored to be partnering in Belize with co-workers in God’s vineyard who know it’s not about the money — it’s about the joy of doing what God has placed before us to do. And while it’s not about the money, money is required.

We are thankful to EMM and our Mission Support Team for helping provide the support and structures necessary to continue our work: To identify, disciple, and release the next generation of leaders among the Garifuna in this beautiful place. Thank you!



Tim Groff, and his wife, Julie, serve with EMM in Belize providing leadership development.

Early EMM work among the Garifuna people began in 1951 in Honduras. In 1960, EMM began ministry in Belize, and many years later, initiated a radio program. As a result of the program, Garifuna believers in Dangriga requested a Bible teacher, which led to EMM investing specifically among the Garifuna community in Belize. The Garifuna are an indigenous people group descended from both West African peoples who were enslaved and the Arawak people of St. Vincent. After the Garifuna people were forced to leave St. Vincent, they went to Roatan, Honduras,

and later along the coasts of Belize, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua. Prior to evangelical mission work among the Garifuna people, they were largely a least-reached people group with less than one percent being Christian, and suffered discrimination and persecution. Today, there are Garifuna communities throughout the United States, and there are many LMC churches comprising ethnically Garifuna people.

JANUARY DAILY PRAYER

CENTRAL ASIA

- 1 | Please pray for EMM workers serving in Central Asia. Ask God to use them as a light to many people and that His name would be known.
- 2 | Pray that the believers in Central Asia would be strong in their faith and have many opportunities to share about the grace of God in their lives.
- 3 | Pray for the Advance team that arrived in Central Asia last month.
- 4 | Pray for God to send workers to the field to work in business for transformation and teaching English in Central Asia.
- 5 | Pray for more workers to join EMM and serve both short-term and long-term in Central Asia.
- 6 | Pray for God to continue to prompt young men and women to explore a call to missions through a mission internship with EMM in Central Asia.

SOUTHEAST ASIA

- 7 | Praise the Lord for the EMM Southeast Asia team members, who are from all over the world, including Central and South America, Canada, and the U.S. Pray for them as they utilize the wide variety of skill sets that they possess in various countries, including Vietnam, Cambodia, and Thailand.
- 8 | Pray for the right individuals to join Jeremy and Jennifer's* ministry for displaced refugees in Thailand. Many people have crossed the border with Myanmar, escaping 80 years of civil war. Pray for the right partners to emerge as they provide holistic support to refugees that provides healing to their bodies, minds, and souls.
- 9 | Pray for the EMM regional retreat at the end of March. Pray that it would be a positive and impactful time together as a team.
- 10 | Pray for the 7 short-term team members who have joined the team in Thailand. Pray for the additional team members who will join in northeast Thailand.
- 11 | Pray for God to continue to prompt young men and women to explore a call to missions through a mission internship with EMM in Southeast Asia.

LANCASTER, PA.

- 12 | Give thanks to God for his provision during the previous year. Ask him to call his people into their mission roles and to release the resources for the task.
- 13 | Pray for God to call volunteers for the programs at Neighbors Community Center, at Hub450, our building in Lancaster, PA.
- 14 | Give thanks to God for the provision of a house for Advance housing and other hospitality needs. Ask for EMM staff to have wisdom for improving its usefulness and for gifts of financial, human, and material resources to make the repairs.
- 15 | Pray for Afghans who are living in Lancaster. Pray for them as they continue to adjust to life in the United States.
- 16 | Pray for the Congolese who live in Lancaster. Many Congolese refugees are categorized as women at risk. Pray that God would provide protection and resourcing for them.

CENTRAL EUROPE

- 17 | Pray for the deaf community in the Czech Republic. Pray that God provide compelling resources that interest them, for them to be able to understand and receive his love for them.
- 18 | Join Jan Heindel in prayer for a smooth transition back to Prague and reengagement there. Pray for conversations with pastors about how she can partner with them to provide spiritual care for others.
- 19 | Pray for God to call workers to join and strengthen the team in Germany.
- 20 | Pray for God to continue to prompt young men and women to explore a call to missions through a mission internship with EMM in Central Europe.
- 21 | Pray for Albanians living in Germany, the majority of whom are Muslims. Their beliefs stem from conversions in the 14th century. Pray that Christ would be presented to them in an invitational way.

WEST AFRICA

- 22 | Pray for the Jola-Fonyi people in The Gambia. Pray that they would be given the meaningful opportunities to learn about Jesus and to worship him.

- 23 | Join Jon and Heleen Yoder in prayer that God would call mature believers to Sierra Leone to support local Christians with Bible teaching and discipleship.

- 24 | Pray for individuals and families to be called to join the work of leadership development and church planting in West Africa.

- 25 | Pray for God to continue to prompt young men and women to explore a call to missions through a mission internship with EMM in West Africa.

- 26 | Pray for the Bassa people in Sierra Leone. They are an agrarian group, growing cassava, yams, eddo, and plantains. Most live in Liberia, with a smaller group living in Sierra Leone and Côte d'Ivoire. Pray that God would provide their crops and spiritual fruit in their lives.

OTHER PARTS OF THE WORLD

- 27 | Join J.C. Ebersole in prayer for a ministry working among the Makua tribe in Mozambique, a large, formerly unreached, Muslim group, has planted hundreds of churches. They are seeking collaboration with All-nations Association of Bible Schools to begin four Bible training centers. Pray that God will provide the venues, teachers, finances, and everything needed to start these schools.

- 28 | Join Tim and Julie Groff in praising God that they had a safe trip to Honduras and were able to connect with fellow missionaries there. Through the training they received, pray that local church members find new vision for connecting with neighbors and family who need to experience the transformational power of the Spirit.

- 29 | Join Peter Sensenig and Christy Harrison in prayer for open doors for Chad, and for wisdom for the future. Pray also for a seminar that Peter is teaching this month at their French church about reaching out to Muslims.

- 30 | Join Jennifer Weaver in prayer as she wraps up her life well in the U.S. and for a good transition to France. Join her in thanking God for an opportunity to connect with YWAM Provence.

- 31 | Join Phil and Linda Gottschalk in praising the Lord that they are able to teach at the Baptist Theological Institute in Bucharest, Romania. Pray for Linda as she teaches church history, and for Phil as he teaches theology and ethics.



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A big thank you to the more than 770 individuals, churches, and businesses that have contributed to the EMM Impact Fund in 2025. These gifts have provided the foundation for all EMM workers and partners to share the Good News of Jesus among 12 unreached people groups.

The Impact Fund goal for 2026 is \$1,465,076.

We appreciate your prayers and financial support, which are essential to EMM's ongoing work.



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