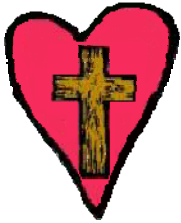


# Jack & Janine Swanson's "CHILE CONNECTION" January and February 2009



Iglesia Cristiana "JESÚS es El Camino"  
(The "JESUS is The Way" Christian Church)

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## *JANUARY'S WOMEN'S RETREATS*

¡¡GUAU!! Translated into inglés—Wow!! This year's retreat for women from the Chilean Christian Churches/Churches of Christ is over. That hardly seems possible, given the year-long planning, work, prayer, communication, and coordination that went into it. We first of all need to thank our Father for his oversight—sometimes I (Janine) wondered if we could handle it!! We did—but we couldn't have done it without your prayers and the helping "Gringas." A church in Oregon and our supporting church in Vero Beach, FL gathered and sent skin care and other beauty products. Many thanks--las Chilenas *loved* the many special gifts!!

Our location was a Salvation Army retreat center near Santiago, complete with a large meeting room, large dining room, well-equipped kitchen, and dormitory style rooms with baths with hot water (not always a "given" commodity in Chile). What more could anyone want?? OK—we also had a great swimming pool to cool off in each day with the 30+ daily temperatures (for you in Fahrenheit mode that means 86+ degrees). The retreat itself centered on five main sessions about interior beauty taken from Scripture—including forgiveness, love, and putting on Christ's beauty. Presenters included Vicci (Lake Orion, MI), Esther (Manteno, IL), Dion (Gresham, OR) and Wilma Cross, a missionary based 35 years in Santiago with YWAM (Youth with a Mission). She also helped a lot in translating.

In addition, there were workshops on several topics, many of them repeated various times. We had our very own chiropractor, Stacie (Grayville, IL), who was surprised at the level of stress-related problems the women had. We had individual and group sessions on sexual abuse identification and how to proceed with such problems led by Vicci (estimates of abuse in Chile range between 60-80% of all women—either physical, sexual, or emotional). All of the women discovered their "season" of the year with Dion, who helped them choose their best personal colors. Lorena helped with our "mall" of donated clothes to find just the right outfit for each woman. Barb (Manteno, IL) taught about our diet and dental care, Tammy and Sharon (King, NC) talked about taking care of our health, Daniela stretched our "pesos" from the beginning to the end of the month, Frankye (King, NC) worked with structuring our days, and Glenda (Grayville, IL) talked on setting aside our time with God. Whew!! Couple these workshops with the variety of translators we needed, and we had our hands full.

Several Gringas gave their testimonies—very impacting for everyone—Suzanne, Doris (both from Gresham, OR), Julie (Manteno, IL) and others already mentioned above. Connie (Gresham, OR) and Karina painted our nails, and Ursula gave our hair a new look. Several guys helped in the kitchen turning out great meals for us, and four girls helped with serving.

Personally, for me it was a lot of work to prepare, but the results were well worth it. All of us went home praising God for His working in helping us to better reach out and heal and encourage others. Everyone left the retreat a *more beautiful woman* ready to serve God. I think my brain is back to functioning normally—whatever that is!! I can now concentrate on getting caught up with my usual work of finances, planning the children's home, and finishing the construction so we can start receiving abandoned children.

## From 2008 into 2009....

### ...IN THE CHURCH

- 2008 saw the continued solidifying of the church's leadership team of six. The main praise is that each feels part of the group; the main challenge is and will continue to be their commitment of time in healthy ways that lead the church forward. While several of these men have been active in the church in different ways, it is the investment of time during the week in the church's outreaches—namely, visiting and follow-up—that has been absent. At this point, the team is meeting weekly to prepare to enter March and the year of 2009. Please pray for personal conviction to take hold of the men in this group. Also pray for my and Oscar's ability to mentor and encourage them in the right way.

One main change in structure that the leaders are focusing on during these summer months is much more of an emphasis on house groups. They won't eliminate Sunday school or Sunday service, but the groups will gather weekly, replacing the men's, women's, and teen groups' meetings. The leaders themselves will first form a group to be trained in March and Oscar and Jack will continue to meet weekly with house group leaders into the future. There are many details in development at this point and other dynamics that can only be addressed through practice. We know that adjustments will need to be made, but we see much potential and good in the approach itself. Oscar will do much of the initial leading, as he has had some extensive experience in groups in his former church setting. ***The group structure will represent a main focus of effort, prayer, and energy for Jack and for the leadership of the church in 2009.***

- House groups should also help strengthen marriages and families, along with healthy relationships in general between members. To the extent that newcomers are invited and welcomed, the groups will also serve as an outreach tool to others. Study, prayer, and fellowship will be regular, key components of each group.
- 2008 also saw some good interactions and initiatives within our neighborhood. These included encounters and presentations in our local plaza and street (VBS, Independence Day, special events sponsored by our neighborhood board, and Christmas were main ones), which in turn concluded with closing ceremonies and/or presentations at the church building. Our worker Juan made and permanently installed replacement basketball hoops and boards at our local plaza.

One other special effort needs to be mentioned. In 2007, Jorge (he and his family are church members and they also live in one of the ministry property houses) began going to the plaza on many Sunday afternoons to play soccer with children, teens, and older youth who were "hanging around". While in the States that year for the NMC, Janine mentioned the outreach to our supporting church in Assumption, IL, who

donated \$100 to be used by Jorge in this effort. Through these games he has met many of our neighborhood's male youth.

As the end of 2008 approached, he came up with an idea to host a soccer tournament in January 2009, with an open invitation for any teams (boys of 10 to 16 years of age) to participate. They paid a fee, which in turn paid for trophies, etc. Jorge used the \$100 to pay for nets, paint (for striping the court), colored jersey pinnies and a ball. The tournament lasted five weekends and drew twelve teams from the area—teams made up of many youth who otherwise use drugs and get into trouble. We then hosted the awards ceremony at our church site, which included a short Christian encouragement that pointed toward Jesus. In the process of hosting the tournament it was possible to also meet other adults who give of themselves to area youth.

- Important teaching-related efforts continued to fall short in 2008 of where they need to be. While the house group structure will address some of these needs, they can't totally fill the gap. Key examples include periodic special marriage events, and new member classes for those new to the church. Likewise, a better approach to discipleship in 2009, for both teens and adults, is needed-- one based in serving and in outreach. In that regard, we are pleased and grateful to welcome a new member to the mission team and church this year. Her name is Cecily Hall and she plans to be with the church until the beginning of December. A 2007 graduate of Texas Christian University, she has had experience with youth counseling, along with having participated in a year-long, intensive discipleship program.

CHILE CULTURE POINT- For Chileans, the term summer is synonymous with "take a step back and disconnect". Beginning with Christmas and ending for most with preparations toward the end of February for children, teens, and young adults to re-enter their studies going into the month of March, it is the one time of year when "the whole world", as Chileans put it, is allowed to relax. This is in part due to culture, as many workers are not afforded the possibility of taking vacation time when they want. It's also the ideal time to at least get away to the beach, which Chileans can do by bus relatively inexpensively. Summertime is also ideal for retreats, many offered by Christian-based groups and churches at a low cost to those who can't afford them. It's seen as a time to "re-group", re-fortify and to enjoy festivals and other special events.

### ....WITH THE CONSTRUCTION

These past years through our newsletters you have seen that our workers have continued to make slow, but steady progress on the development of the ministry property, centering on the construction of one 2-story multi-purpose building (in which the church regularly meets) and two 2-story duplexes (four houses, in total). The houses will be used, Lord willing, to receive and work with abandoned children. In 2008, the upstairs areas of both duplexes were finished and furnished with beds, leaving the downstairs space of three of four houses to complete.

In July, 2008, we moved to a different rental house to live—a larger home that provides ample space and also good, needed office to work out of. The offices were formerly located in the second floor of the rear house on the ministry property, with the intention to move them out when God provided an opportunity to do so. Needed repairs and improvements to the new rental house have been extensive (more so than originally foreseen when we moved in). This has necessitated much time on the part of Juan and Carlos, our workers, and while they were still able to make progress at the ministry property, we are behind last year's projections of seeing that construction finished.

With revised expectations of finishing with the construction and built-in cabinetwork by September, we continue to look forward to that day when we can call the municipal inspector to sign off on the project. In the reality of mission work, even good things sometimes “get in the way” of or postpone normal routines, such as the above-mentioned house repairs, when Juan repaired the plaza basketball equipment and when both he and Carlos helped repair and put together needed props for the recent women’s conference.

One U.S. supporting church has had to cancel plans to come and help with ministry and with our construction this year due to the impact of the present economic crisis. Should any of you churches and/or individuals be able to come and help in 2009, please contact us so that we can discuss details and answer your basic questions. Main construction work needing to be done involves plastering, dry-walling, painting, rough and finishing carpentry work, and building kitchen cabinets.

### ....AND WITH INTERNSHIPS

2008 saw the arrival of three interns and visits from two families and one young-adult church group. As mentioned above, Cecily is already here in 2009 and at least two other interns are set to arrive for two to three months at mid-year.

Should anyone be interested in joining them or in coming at some other time during the year, or if you know of someone in the church who might be interested, please see our website, [www.chilemission.org](http://www.chilemission.org), and on its main page click on the link to INTERNSHIPS/CHILE VISITS. In there is an additional link to our mission handbook, which explains our approach to and goals of the internship experience, along with details and information related to it. In addition to the link to the handbook, there is an additional link to an application/information sheet to complete and E-mail back to us. There are several choices of available internships out there, hosted by a variety of organizations. Ours is very economical in comparison and very well-rounded and complete in many ways. This will be our tenth year of hosting interns and we have learned valuable lessons in each of those nine prior years! Seriously, we look forward to receiving and hosting this experience—please come and join us!

*With gratitude and in service alongside you,*

*Jack and Janine*



*Group photo of most of those attending*



*Our precious retreat "Gringas", on an outing*



*Cecily (on the right) with new friend, Fabiola, in southern Chile*



*Group photo of several of the soccer tournament participants*