



December 1, 2021

Dear Ministry Partner,

Warm greetings in this happy season! May the Lord who is good all the time bless your life and your loved ones as He has for many years. May this be another sweet season of rejoicing in His goodness as our Good Shepherd!

Life on this side of COVID is exploding—with a most encouraging set of ministry developments . . . from Russia to South America and beyond!

➤ *To the natural eye, they may look like coincidences—but I sense in my spirit that **these are divine appointments**. . . .*

A dear friend on our ministry's board, sensing the possibility of a divine appointment, introduced me to a man named Paul from Russia, who is finishing his Master of Theology degree at Dallas Seminary. I was eager to see where God would lead this, so I eagerly accepted the opportunity to talk with Paul and his father, Peter, president of Moscow Bible Seminary.

I naturally asked if they knew of Kyiv Theological Seminary in Ukraine. Certainly they did. I named the friends we partner with at the seminary—who, as it turns out, are also known to Paul and Peter. Both father and son were surprised to learn that we've been working with Kyiv Seminary for 21 years!

They were amazed at our results in Ukraine—so many churches planted since we began serving there—amazed, but also a little sad: They wished we could be saying the same about their seminary! The theme of this conversation might be summed up in one simple, heartfelt question: *Why didn't you tell us about this sooner?*

We soon discovered that we are all connected in several high-trust ways. The seminary president made three significant statements:

I trust the leaders you've been working with.
I trust the seminary you and I have both graduated from.
I trust you—and want us to walk together in our service to the Lord.

Bottom line: He invited me to come teach a course on evangelism and church-planting, and to meet the students most likely to succeed in the evangelism and church-planting.

This was no coincidence! Their seminary has satellites all around Russia—which would be wonderful platforms for **multiplying churches throughout that enormous country . . . a country that urgently needs to know God!** Your prayers and giving could propel our ministry all across Russia!



Meanwhile, I've just returned from teaching in Spain, where I saw wonderful new students and new growth in several extension centers. Your prayers and giving are still making a tremendous impact in Spain.

No coincidences! We're making wonderful breakthroughs in the northernmost cities on the border with France . . . and as far south as the Canary Islands, off the southernmost coast of Morocco.

➤ **But then came perhaps the most astonishing divine appointment of the season. . . .**

A graduate from our program phoned me about a videoconference of 15 pastors in **Venezuela**. Theirs is a story of overwhelming hardship, suffering great losses in the transition from what was once a very prosperous country to a place of massive devastation since the takeover by Hugo Chávez.

The broken economy has led to incredible austerity measures, drastic scarcity of goods—and the grief and pain of COVID. Venezuela today is not even a pale shadow of its former self.

The Zoom conference with the pastors was **a desperate SOS**. They are floundering, with no idea what disaster to expect next. They need someone to help them hope. They're asking for help in casting a vision for a better future so they can minister to a population staggering through layers of darkness.

When they heard that World Link—when we began serving there—helped Cubans to minister by providing them with a monthly stipend of \$20, they were stunned. Twenty dollars a month in today's Venezuela sounds fantastic—like a dream come true.

Governments from the U.S. to Europe are advising travelers to avoid Venezuela because the desperate economic need has unleashed an unprecedented wave of violent crimes and kidnappings. The Venezuelan government itself can make no guarantees of anyone's safety—warning that the consequences of any travel are assumed by the traveler!

But *all of this adds up* to an amazing opportunity for spreading the Gospel!

I remember a similar scenario when God first called us to Cuba. There were doubts about security for Americans in the country. The regime was not recognized by the U.S. government, and it was illegal for ordinary Americans to travel there. The U.S. embargo cut off most commerce.

And yet look what God has done through us in Cuba over the years!

Could God do the same for Venezuela?

The ministry team and I will pray about it and study the question in detail. But already I feel a glimmer of hope. For one thing, I'm a "Latin American," with a physical look and language that gives me a lower profile than people of other nationalities. (I always believed the Lord camouflaged me for a reason!)

- **Is this a time for fear? No.**
It's a time to think of the fields that are white unto harvest!

Back when we were considering going into Cuba, a major foundation actually told us that there were already “too many” ministering in Cuba. They were actually prepared to give us \$2 million if we *didn't* go into Cuba, but focused our efforts exclusively on Spain!

I often think back over that episode and rejoice that, by God's grace, I was not even tempted to take their cynical, shortsighted offer. The harvest in Cuba has been among the greatest victories I could have dreamed of!

In His Great Commission, Jesus called us to go into all the world, to make disciples of all nations. There was no asterisk, no footnote, no qualifier sending us only into situations deemed “safe” in the natural.

The Great Commission is followed by the great commitment—*His* commitment! He sends us—but He will be right there with us! As my seminary professor Dr. Tom Constable taught me, the biblical expression “to the end of the age” (in the original Greek: *pasas tes hemeras*) literally means “the whole of every day.” Jesus promised to be with us every day forever (Matthew 28:18-20): through the whole of every day, until the end of the age.

“Lo, I am with you always,” Jesus declared in the most quoted promise of the entire Bible (more even than Psalm 23).

This great commitment is specifically given to those who would go and fulfill the Great Commission. It makes powerful sense. Jesus knew that we were being “sent as sheep in the midst of wolves.” So He calls us to be “shrewd as serpents and as harmless as doves.” But he does not send us like sheep into the midst of wolves all by ourselves. He is with us always, every day through the whole of the day!

- I believe we should go into Venezuela—but this is not about my opinion, or anyone else's opinion. God wants us to go. And I am willing. But as I go, you play a crucial role in prayer and giving. I go representing you. You are in it; you are the *sending* part of the equation. And Jesus goes with us. This is God's idea!

Fear is natural. When I was to go into Liberia in the midst of the Ebola crisis, fear was everywhere. The people there were afraid. British Airways cut off flights. A Moroccan airline was the only way in. The known factors were enough to make your skin crawl—and the unknown factors were even more frightening, because no one knew where this epidemic would stop, or how many would die in the process.

Yet today, hundreds of churches are thriving. The church-planting movement has burst beyond the borders of Liberia into Sierra Leone. The locals are now doing the work entirely on their own! *What if fear had restrained us?*

It only took a season of faith—and participation—from you and me. Yes, it was a very tense moment, but it was an opportunity to choose faith instead of fear. Now, because you and I chose faith over fear, eternity will never be the same.

The choice is always between faith and fear. But since God is with us, faith is the choice at every juncture. “You are from God, little children, and have overcome them,” 1 John 4:4 states, “because greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world.”

We’re entering a season of celebration . . . for many, their favorite time of year. This celebration will forever be about the birth of One who was born *not just to us*, but to the whole world.

For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us;
And the government will rest on His shoulders;
And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.
There will be **no end to the increase** of His government or of peace,
On the throne of David and over his kingdom,
To establish it **and to uphold it** with justice and righteousness
From then on and forevermore.
The zeal of the Lord of hosts will accomplish this.

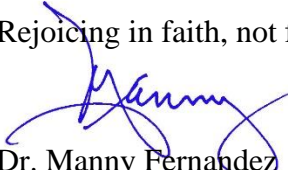
—Isaiah 9

God meant for Christmas to last all year long, every single year. True Christmas brings the Savior and the message of God’s love and salvation to a world of needy sinners. The heart of the Gospel is that God shows His love towards us — and that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

- For this cause, I humbly ask for your best possible Christmas gift today, to reach out to the lost throughout the world. Together, through our partnership, we are working to take the good news to everyone — the news of the One who was born to die . . . so that the world might live.

I hope to hear from you soon. And may God bless you and grant you the joy of the season as you have served Him and continue to serve Him still! Merry Christmas!

Rejoicing in faith, not fear,



Dr. Manny Fernandez

P.S. I am so grateful for your desire to see the lost reached. Your Christmas gift today will keep alive and ablaze the heart of Christmas all year long. This is what God has had in mind since He promised in the beginning that a Savior would come to deliver us!