

*While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and Mary gave birth to her firstborn, a son.  
She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger because there was no room for them in the inn. -Luke 2:6-7*

Dear Friends,

The young mother came to my door. A baby was wrapped tight on her back and a little girl with shining eyes held her hand. I was struck by her beauty. She was dressed in worn faded traditional Quiché dress that spoke hardship but her dark brown eyes, full lips, and beautiful jet-black hair pulled back, showed a quiet dignity.

I had met Tona, years ago when someone informed me, "There is a poor widow living in a small house that is falling down." So, taking a bag of food, Javier and I went to investigate.

The widow was Tona's mother. She lived with Tona and her daughter, a sweet toddler, named Alicia. The mother, haggard and timid, looked much older than her 50 years. She spoke only her Mayan Quiché, so we conversed with Tona in Spanish.

The small one-room, dirt-floor house made with boards haphazardly nailed together was no match for the strong winds and rains that pelted and entered the room through the cracks. The roof's rusted corrugated tin sheets leaked. I looked around the stark room with only wooden planks on a platform for a bed, a blackened pot hanging from the wall, clothes folded and sitting in a makeshift wooden shelf and took a deep breath.

We visited a while and before leaving, I asked, "Can we help you with something?" "Our church is helping us. So, no, but thank-you," she responded. I nodded my head, we gave them the groceries, said good-bye and walked away, resigned.

That was then. This time when I asked, "How can I help you?" She said, "Could you help us build a new house – ours won't last much longer?"

"Do you own the land the house is on?" I asked.

"Yes, the land is my mother's inheritance."

"Do you have a legal document of ownership?"

"No," she said. "Moreover, my uncle wants to evict us and claim the land as his."

Tona and her mother were extremely vulnerable. I knew Tona had recently given birth and the father of the child had abandoned them; she and her mother were supporting themselves and two small children; they were illiterate and very poor. The funds needed to hire a lawyer, plus maneuvering the required paperwork and travel to legalize the land would be impossible for them to do alone. Moreover, the greedy relative like a wolf crouched at their door was ready to pounce.

"Before we can help you with a house, you need to get a deed to protect the land," I explained.

"Forget the house," she said. "Please help me get a deed."



I called Javier Gonzalez, our country on-site administrator. Javier mobilized and like most things in Guatemala – *obtaining a registered land deed wasn't easy.*

First, Tona's grandfather had to sign a legal document releasing the designated one-acre of land to her. The grandfather lived in Cunén, Quiché, 7 hours away. Tona had never traveled out of the village, so, we sent a woman friend to travel with her and her mother to Cunén. There, they hired a lawyer, and then Javier and Tona communicated with him via Javier's cell phone. We paid the lawyer via a bank in Playa Grande. The long-distance process involved lots of halts, starts, and jumping through hoops that were crazy-making but *finally*, a year later, Javier received a call from the lawyer. "The deed is registered! I'll fed-ex it to Playa Grande. Pick it up there!"

When Javier presented Tona with the prized legal document she exclaimed, "Oh God! Thank you, Javier, thanks to the sister (Kathy). Finally, my deed has arrived! I am so happy because now I feel that the land is mine! My uncle can no longer take it from us!"

This Christmas, Tona, Alicia, baby Mayli, and her mother will build a fire, and will cook the traditional tamales. Under the roof that still leaks, and with the cold air that still blows through the cracks of the walls they will eat this special meal together, celebrating a birth. But more... their feet will now stand on land that is theirs. And much like another mother of long ago, who sheltered in a humble dwelling lit by a star, this vulnerable little family will know that God is with them – Emmanuel has come.

The people of Santiago Ixcán, the Board of Directors, and I wish you a very blessed and graced Christmas! We are grateful and humbled by your generosity that allows us to continue to walk with the materially poor ones in the Ixcán jungle.

Sincerely,



Kathy Snider



### Mission Update:

We plan to build a new house for Tona and her family when the rains stop and the land is dry enough to begin construction.

Kathy will return to Guatemala on December 5th until the end of January 2020. Marlane Peterson is still with us.

Ixcán Creations is in the midst of our busy holiday season. Please consider purchasing a gift that will make a difference. Beautiful handmade jewelry and weavings are for sale at Tienda Marleny. Call – Mary Kay Tokach 701-226-4868 for information and to shop. There will be an Open House on December 14th and 15th from 1:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m. at 1007 20th St. S.E. Mandan.

### OUR MISSION STATEMENT

Ixcán Ministries is a Christian lay mission serving as a ministry of presence with the Maya people in the Ixcán jungle of Guatemala. We act as a bridge between cultures for the exchange of gifts to transform lives and society.

Ixcán Ministries is a 501(c) 3 organization. Your contributions are tax deductible.

Contact us or send a donation to:  
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