



Hal & Cheryl Large

Serving in Guatemala

January 2024

It has been a long time since you have heard from me and for this, I ask your forgiveness. Let me catch you up on the events which have taken place since my last letter. I retired from teaching mostly Hispanic sixth-grade children two years ago. That summer both my parents, for whom I was caring, passed away within ten days of each other. A year ago, Cheryl and I began to sense a desire to leave our home by the river in Benton City and move to the mountains. Thus began one of the most intense and refining years of our life.

We came to Dayton, Washington. This is a small farming community, a “throwback town”, with friendly, conservative people. There was a small church that needed pulpit supply. Its pastor had resigned a month earlier, though he still led the music. He was a steward of a Christian camp in the mountains. The camp needed a caretaker and provided a caretakers' house. It seemed to be a perfect place for us to live, in the mountains with beautiful surroundings. We put our house in Benton City up for sale and moved into the trailer my folks had left us, which we parked at the camp in Dayton. I preached several times at the church as we waited for the camp caretakers' house to become available.

We enjoyed our work at the camp. We met wonderful neighbors. I was beginning to meet new people who came to camp. We still had the hope of finding our own permanent home in the mountains. However, within weeks, the refining fire began.

The sale of our house in Benton City was complicated. We were now two hours away in Dayton. We had no place to put the furniture, so I rented a storage unit in Dayton. Five days after moving the furniture to Dayton, a cash offer was made for a *furnished* house. I moved the furniture back into the Benton City house. The woman who made the signed offer never showed up at the closing, and our realtor never collected earnest money. Now we had to move the furniture back to Dayton.

At camp, we quickly realized that the steward was emotionally unstable and abusive to an extreme. The promised caretakers' house was in a terrible state of neglect. I worked hard with a Hispanic friend to get the entire interior textured and painted. We finally occupied the caretakers' house in May. Our beloved goats and chickens could not stay because they would be killed by bears. I found a place for them five miles down the mountain with a dear Christian lady. But milking the pregnant goats twice a day was straining. Then our beloved little terrier was killed by a cougar as Cheryl was hiking with our daughters around our house. I sold our goats.

At camp, the tension caused by the abusive steward made our lives miserable. We realized there was a reason the camp had a high turnover rate with their previous caretakers, four different families within four years. The climax came when, in a fit of rage, the steward fired us although he had no authority to do so, as the camp was run by a denominational board. The board and the camp administrator had hired me. After bringing the camp administrator written testimony from the four previous caretakers of the abuse they had suffered, the steward was allowed to resign, but the

administrator decided to end the existing arrangement with us. We could stay at the caretakers' house till the end of 2023.

Meanwhile, after months of disappointments and frustrations, our house in Benton City was sold in September. Since we arrived in Dayton, we had been looking for a house to buy. It was a daily search that consumed us. We knew and saw every house available in the area. We made offers, even came within a day of closing on a house, only to have every door be closed by the Lord. In November, our friends in El Salvador, with whom we met weekly through Zoom, sent us pictures of a house for sale near their daughter who lived in Guatemala.

During the entire year, we lived in a turmoil of uncertainty and change. I no longer worked at the school. My folks had passed away in 2022. The spiritual oppression surrounding where we lived in Benton City was unbearable. The move to Dayton was a mixture of pleasure and extreme pain. Our hopes for ministry at camp in Dayton were dashed. Our dream of living in the mountains was frustrated. Loss after loss piled on. We clung to the Lord - and to the life we had hoped to find in Dayton. We had no other option.

God was driving us, as a shepherd does his sheep, to where He wanted us to be. It was with blows, and it was relentless. It was done with great pain, suffering and loss. But it was done in mercy and goodness. A shepherd's rod is used to protect the sheep and to return the sheep to the path he has chosen for them. He used His rod with us as He did with the children of Israel, driving them out of Egypt. He had a place in mind for them - a place He had prepared.

In November, we made a two-week trip to Guatemala, with little hope of finding anything there. The house our friends had found did not work out, but we did find the place prepared for us, in Chimaltenango. It is one of six houses in a community of missionaries, carved out of a coffee finca, overlooking the valley below. We met the neighbor, who extended welcoming grace to us. He provided every possible help we would need to begin a new life in Guatemala, to a renewed ministry in Latin America. God had taken us through a year of great refining fire and a rod of painful blows to bring us to Himself as our Beloved Shepherd and to His plan of returning us to Latin America. We closed on the Guatemala house on December 18. The movers come January 15, and we fly out January 30, 2024.

We do not know yet the details of all God has in store for us in Guatemala. There are more ministry opportunities available than I could list here --- from teaching in a seminary, to training and assisting pastors, to service ministries with teams from the States, etc. We do know God has passed us through the only door open to us at the time. In mercy, His rod has protected us and driven us into His plan for life and ministry.

Please pray for us as we go through the losses a move like this requires. Pray for us as we get settled in a new life in Chimaltenango, Guatemala. Pray for us as we listen, with a spirit broken and hungry to hear the voice of our Shepherd, laying our lives at His feet in thankful worship. We are again -

Yours for Souls,
Hal & Cheryl

World Reach • PO Box 26155 Birmingham, AL 35260
world-reach.org • 205-979-2400 • info@world-reach.org