

In the Beginning....

The Ecuador VIM team departed JFK Friday, Jan. 8th to travel to Quito, Ecuador. We will be in Ecuador until the 19th, leading a Vacation Bible School and painting Emmanuel UMC in Quito. We ask for your prayers as we prepare to share the wonderful love of God with the children in Quito. Please also pray that we will share joyful fellowship with our Ecuadorian brothers and sisters in Christ as we paint together.

As we prepared to board our plane at JFK, 4 of us were called to the flight assistants' desk. We were upgraded to business class because the airline had overbooked economy class. We were grateful for the extra leg space, but I must admit the team who traveled in economy class laughed a lot and seemed to make friends easily, with passengers seated around them. Doug Sturm struck up a friendship with a vivacious 4 year old!

Here's some photos of our journey thus far.



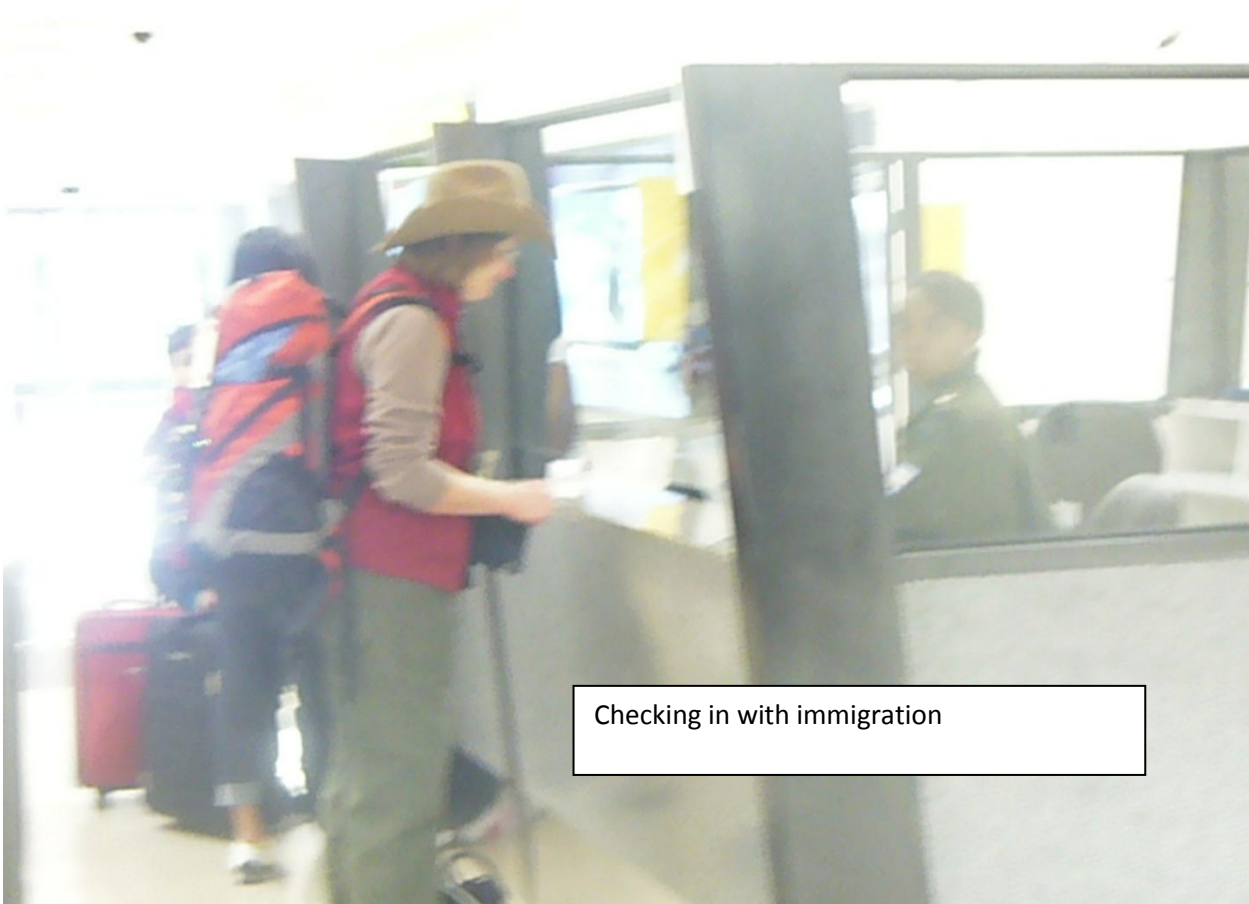
Arrival in Guayaquil, Ecuador



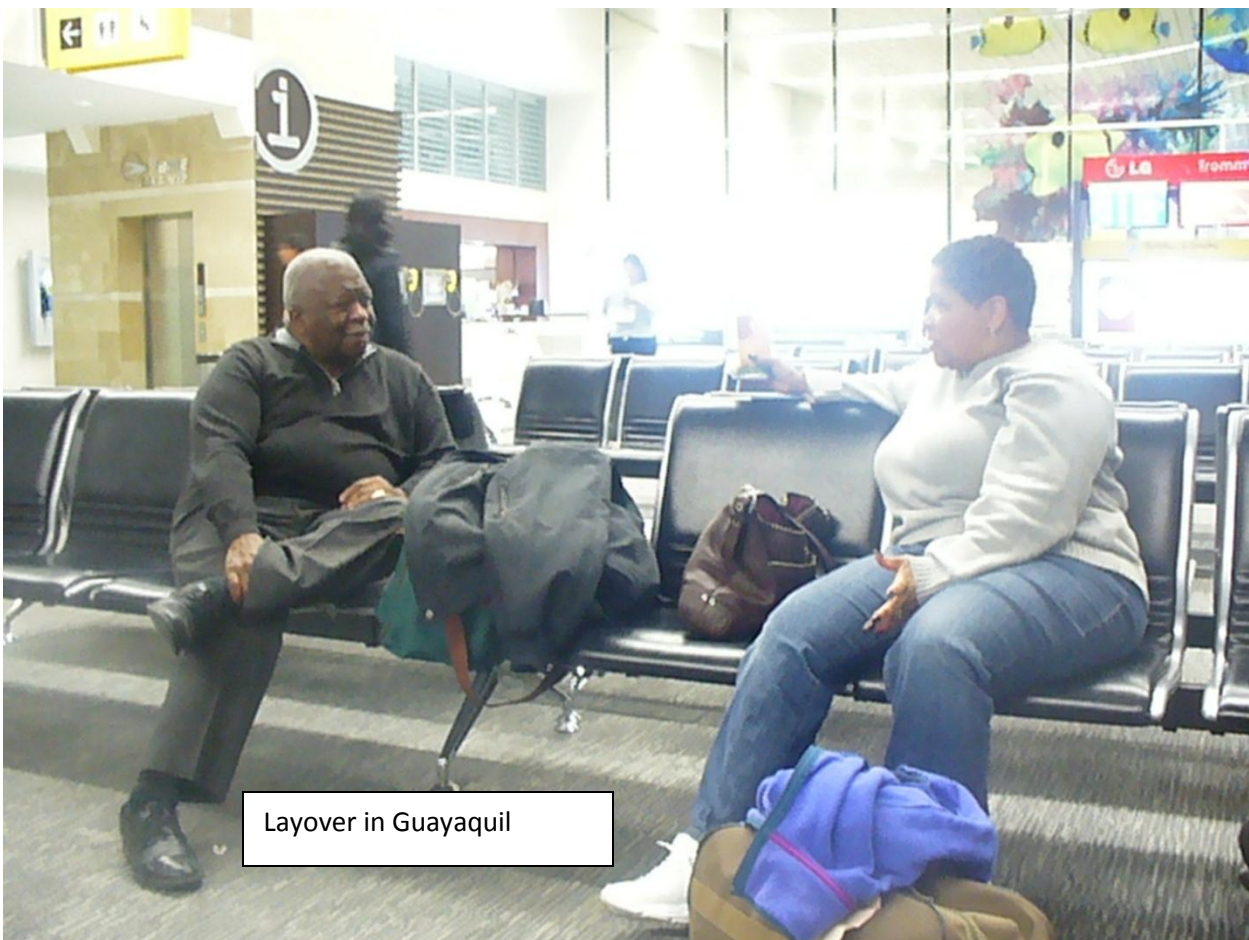
New York Immigrants 😊



Checking in with immigration



Checking in with immigration



Layover in Guayaquil

Saturday, Jan. 9th.

We began our day, and our days working in Ecuador, at 7:30. We were serenaded awake by Oscar Destruge, on guitar, which was much more pleasant than the sounds of an alarm clock. After breakfast, we met in the sanctuary of Emmanuel for morning devotions. We are fortunate to be able to be housed in Emmanuel. The church is also the conference center for Ecuador's UMC, and there are small dormitory rooms available for our stay. We also have the use of a conference room, and that's where we went after devotions.

Doug planned some team building activities that helped us know each other, and we spent some time developing the foundation for our fellowship.











Bishop Solomón Cabezas Almeida talked about the state of Ecuador and the United Methodist Church in Ecuador. We learned about the history of evangelical churches in Ecuador, and the growth of the United Methodist Church. Oscar presented Bishop Cabezas with a team Tshirt.





Rev. Ramiro Balceca, the pastor of Emmanuel UMC, talked about the children's program in which we will work. He has a 5 year vision plan with goals to raise funds and navigate political hurdles, in order to minister to the children.

A word about the children's program: 40-50 at risk children come to Emmanuel 2 mornings during the week. They receive homework help, a Bible lesson, and a hot lunch. They arrive at 10 AM and leave to go to school at 1 PM. Pastor Ramiro is very happy that the children will be able to be ministered to all 5 days this week. We are also happy about that & want to thank all of you who contributed funds for our trip, since part of those funds will pay for the daily lunch.



After lunch, we toured the colonial city of Old Quito. We saw the contrast Bishop Cabezas talked about: the poverty of the people and the churches that are filled with ornate, gold décor.





















We had dinner with the bishop and pastor Ramiro at the top of the El Panecillo mountain which overlooks the city of Quito. This is where the famous angelic virgin Mary, with wings, is located. The legend is that she protects the city while it sleeps. We felt very comfortable knowing this, and also because Senor Luchito, our security person, did such a great job watching our backs.



Sunday, Jan 10th

Happy Birthday to Lorraine DeArmitt!

Today we worshiped with the congregation of Emmanuel UMC. What a blessing we received!









Rev. Arturo Maine preached, Daniel Espitia joined the praise band, and Oscar Destruge played guitar and interpreted for us. The entire team led the congregation singing "They will Know We Are Christians By Our Love", in both English and Spanish. The congregation of Emmanuel UMC is a very loving body of Christ. Passing the peace of Christ without words is a powerful way to experience God's presence in each one of us.

After worship, we traveled to the equator for lunch. While there, we stood with 1 foot in the northern hemisphere and 1 foot in the southern hemisphere for pictures. Some of the team shopped and others climbed to the top of the equator monument







It is now the end of the day. We have planned for our day with the children tomorrow, and we are excited as we anticipate ministry with God's people in Ecuador.