

Gonçalves Family Newsletter
Highlights of 2016
A Special Year!



On August 3, 1976, Phyllis arrived in Brazil! In those days, without all of the modern technology of e-mail, Facebook, Skype, etc., and even international phone calls were difficult – no one really believed she would arrive on the scheduled day. But four of her college friends – Bryan Gibbs, Max Lucado, Gloria (Adams) Holmes, and Mark Aldriedge, were at the Congonhas airport to greet her. They were in São Paulo as summer interns. They said “If Phyllis said she is arriving, we’d better go to the airport to pick her up!” And sure enough, she showed! That which should have been a two-year mission experience with the São Paulo Mission Team, has become now a 40-year experience and counting! Praise God! Congratulations, Phyllis!

This year we also celebrated 20 years of ministry here in Itu. When we first arrived, the Itu church was a small group of Christians of less than 30 people. We now have two congregations in Itu, and we’ve been instrumental in starting congregations in Cabreuva, Salto, Tatui, and Sorocaba – 6 congregations in all. On any given Sunday, today there are more than 400 people worshipping! Praise God for the progress of the Gospel in our region!

Another highlight of 2016 was our yearly medical campaign – CURA. From July 18-22 over 800 people were seen. This surmounts to 2,500 medical procedures. As a spinoff of the campaign, we now have a team that goes weekly to the Vila Progresso neighborhood where the campaign is held to tutor children and serve their families. On December 10th, a team of more than 30 people from our congregation went in and changed roofs, painted homes, did electrical wiring, and all kinds of odd jobs for needy families. You can access the video on the FB page – Igreja de Cristo em Itu - <https://www.facebook.com/cristoemitu/> for more information. This was the weekend we call “Blessed to be a Blessing”.

Our leadership training seminar, “Semeadores”, August 19-21, was another exciting time. Two of our finest young ladies spoke: Ali Kaiser and Fabíola Nísius; Jonathan Menezes, who is a theology professor from FTSA – Faculdade Teológica Sul Americana (South American Theological University); Bryan Gibbs from Abilene; and Antenor – Itu. The theme for the weekend was Sowing Grace.

Phyllis and I had the wonderful blessing of going to Portugal to serve the churches in Porto and Lisbon the first couple of weeks in November. While we were there, Phyllis spoke to the ladies, I taught Sunday School, preached, and we met with the awesome church leaders. It was a great experience to see the healthy mix of Portuguese, Brazilian, Cuban, Angolan, and other nationalities coming together to worship God. Phyllis and I are looking forward to our next trip to Portugal in November 2017. This time we will be taking couples from Itu who want to go and bless our wonderful brothers and sisters in that beautiful country. Anyone from the U.S. who would like to partner with us in this campaign is welcome!

Finally, the greatest highlight of 2016 for us took place on Tuesday of last week. Our daughter, Ali, and her husband, Mark Kaiser, who have a vibrant ministry here in Brazil, came over to our house for lunch. During lunch, they announced that Phyllis and I will be GRANDPARENTS!! WOOHOO!!! They say I was jumping up and down, crying, and at the same time screaming "I am going to be a vovô!!!"

Ok, get hold of yourself, Antenor. This kid will need a normal grandfather!

Hope you and your family have a very Merry Christmas.

I already received the best present ever!

God bless you!

Antenor and Phyllis

In keeping with Itu's fame for "everything in Itu is bigger and better", here we have the tallest Christmas tree in Brazil!!

