# Merry Christmas

We hope these pictures give you a glimpse of what life and ministry have been like for us this past year.

We returned to a city that was quite different from the one we left. There have been major improvements to public parks and historical sites in an effort to boost tourism and civic pride. Guayaquil is much cleaner, prettier and safer than it was when we left in 1999.

Guayaquil's "New Look"

Summer Teams doing "ministry"

We were blessed to have several work teams visit us this past year. They engaged in a variety of ministry opportunities, including Vacation Bible School, teaching English, and doing construction.

We sent some team to multiple work sites in two poorer neighborhoods, where they helped remodel the homes of folks attending the Rosa de Sarón church plant.

Summer Missionaries aren't immune to "tropical diseases." Although battling amoebas, these young people from Twin Oaks PCA in St. Louis still helped put on a two-day youth sports camp.

After attending a school for Missionary children in San José, Costa Rica last year, Benjamin and Allison happily returned to the "home school" environment. They followed "the Guayaquil calendar year," with classes beginning in early April and continuing until the end of January. Benjamin is finishing eighth grade, Allison is finishing sixth. Field trips and special events helped them form friendships with other home-schooled kids. Here's a picture from their field trip to Domino's Pizza (yum!),

Homeschoolers' Field Trip

The Lord blessed us with an art teacher for Benjamin very close-by. His interest in art remains high, and he's blessed with ability and a vivid imagination. He also took tennis lessons in the park, and continued with his drums "off and on." He is on a worship team at church, playing drums every other Sunday.

Allison was delighted to be able to return to Pam Studio, where she studied ballet and jazz. She earned a mark of "Highly Commended" in her Royal Academy Grade Four exam.

Allison in outdoor performance

**Allison & María (ballet friend)**

We got us a Golden Retriever puppy this Summer and named her, "Cooper." She loves playing ball and going for walks, and she's very friendly.

"Cooper"

**Decorating San Agustín for Christmas**

For the Christmas season, several ladies joined with Peg in making Jesse Tree ornaments for Christmas devotions. Ladies and children joined together to decorate San Agustin for Christmas. Families worked together to put on an end-of-the-year dinner party that was lots of fun and plenty of good things to eat!

Our year in "ministry" got busier as the year progressed. One of the later developments was a college-age girls' "English-learners' Bible Study" which Peg began on Thursday evenings near the campus of the University of Guayaquil. That came about because some female students came to the men's English Bible study and asked to be included. Rather than us change what we were doing to accomodate the ladies, we just gave the ladies their own study with Peg and teacher.

**Prayer Requests**

- Pray that the folks at San Agustín will capture a vision for evangelism and discipleship, and will grow in their love for one another.
- Pray that God will super-abound in resources (human and otherwise) for growing the ministry of the Guayaquil Church Planting Team.

*Ron & Peg Benjamin & Allison Smith*