

MISSION: PANAMA

It's Time to Harvest - Now!



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There is no place on earth with more fertile ground to plant the seeds for a great harvest for the Kingdom of Jesus Christ than there is in the Republic of Panama today.

In this SPECIAL REPORT we hope to convey to you:

- the current state of affairs in Panama,
- why it is such fertile ground for doing God's work, and
- what needs to be done so that 'we' can have a direct and immediate impact on the lives of others by sharing the hope, the joy and the blessings of Jesus Christ with this wonderful opportunity that we have before us right now.

To save time and space here, you can get more familiar with the PANAMA CHRISTIAN FOUNDATION (PCF) by visiting the web page listed above. Let us just say this as a means of introduction: PCF was created as a vehicle to put into action, by deeds and by example, the teachings of Jesus the Christ. We find today, far too many 'Christians' talking about the key principals of 'Christianity', yet the 'walk' is not quite up to speed. PCF, as an organisation, puts emphasis on the well known concept that we should be judged not so much by our words, but instead by our 'deeds'.

With that in mind, how many lives can we bless in HIS name and give the glory to God? How can we apply the blessings that we have,

share them with others to help improve their lives and fulfil the law which is: 'to fulfil every debt except but to continue in our love for others?'

This is what drives PCF. The more we can bless others, especially those in desperate need, the more glory we can give to God. In this process, by showing HIS glory to others, we can lead them to HIM, harvest souls and help build HIS kingdom at a time when the earth is increasingly being covered in the darkness of evil. We MUST be the salt of the earth and the 'Light'! This is our task as true Christians.

Why Panama? Here's a little background with some insights:

Panama is a land of stark contrast. Most of the skyline that you see offhand in the city, is new within the last 10 years. It glistens both day and night. For many reasons, Panama City represents incredible wealth as an international commercial and financial hub whose economy has been a leader worldwide with near 10% annual growth the last 5 or 6 years which is the highest in Latin America and far exceeds that of most western industrialised nations.



"Banking and financial services and big public works projects like the subway and multibillion-dollar expansion of the canal have fed the good fortune. Panama City, the

capital, has the tallest building in Latin America, a 70-story Trump hotel and condo tower, and its skyscraper forest [reflects the rush of foreign investment](#), real estate speculation, well-heeled foreign transplants and, American officials have said, some measure of drug money.

But Panama can also lay claim to some of the starkest disparities of wealth in Latin America, [according to the World Bank](#), and the persistent poverty in Colón, an hour's drive from the symbols of wealth in Panama City, remains a glaring, festering example inflaming friction here.

Colón, wedged between a busy port and a handsome cruise ship terminal, is a crowded, cacophonous city of 220,000, with street after street of faded colonial facades and concrete-block buildings with peeling paint and weeds growing out of some upper floors.

"There are hardly any jobs here," said Orlando Ayaza, 29, who works occasionally at the dock. "Not ones with regular salary and benefits that we need here." He has a two-inch scar on his face that he attributes to a policeman's baton during unrest here last year.

When asked why he does not move to Panama City, he touched the dark skin on his arm. "They see this, and you say you are from Colón, and they say, no way," he said. "They think we are all thieves there."

Colón is predominantly black, whereas Panama City's population is more of European descent, and many residents and analysts say they believe that racial discrimination has contributed to Colón's stagnation...." - N.Y. Times: **A Once-Vibrant City Struggles as Panama Races Ahead on a Wave of Prosperity**



So that's a glimpse of 'Colon', the Caribbean port city north of Panama City.

To the east is Darien Province which includes 'The Darien Gap' - a swampland and densely forested area which borders Columbia. There is no passable road which communicates with Columbia. The area is largely populated by indigenous indians of the Embera-Wounaan tribe and the Kuna Yala who live primarily in the San Blas archipelago of islands in the Caribbean and the northern coastal areas of the province. These societies maintain their cultures and traditions of 500 years ago.

Because it is so remote and inaccessible, The Darien Gap is a haven and base for FARC, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Columbia (anti-government rebels) who control large parts of both sides of the border and act as local government.

These people in the Darien Gap and Kuna Yala live in 'primitive lifestyles' by our standards. The funny thing is, I would venture to say that they live more carefree and happy lives than many in the 'civilized' world! They don't have the complexities of life like we do! There is a high concentration of mission and social work in the Darien Province.

Finally, we go the other direction, to the west of Panama City where most of the rural population lives, which is called 'the interior' of Panama.

In the interior we find small towns, beach resort areas, ex-pat residential developments, agricultural economies and an overall mix of just about everything. This is the field the PCF finds is most ready to harvest. So, back to the theme of the contrast between the wealth of Panama City and the poverty of the interior...

World Health Organisation statistics show that nearly 27% of children in Panama live in extreme poverty. We're not talking about what is 'known' as poverty in the north America where even the 'poor' have cell phones, flat screen T.V.s, and tattoos with unlimited soda and chips thanks to the EBT card!

No. In Panama, extreme poverty which is 'normal life' for many, looks like this:



We're talking: no running water, no electricity, dirt floors, no windows to close to keep the bugs or the rain out. We had more than one kid show up to play soccer with us and we had to buy him socks because he had none of his own. The stories are too numerous to mention here and they never end. These are actual photos from PCF.

“Despite the country’s strong economic growth, poverty levels remain high in Panama. Nationwide, according to 2008 data from the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), 28.6 per cent of the population is poor and 11.7 per cent is extremely poor. The incidence of poverty is particularly high in rural areas, where about 45.8 per cent of the population are poor and about 23.6 per cent of rural people live in extreme poverty. Among the indigenous population, poverty rates are even higher. Across the country, more than 80.5 per cent of Panama’s indigenous peoples live below the poverty line, and about 51.9 per cent are extremely poor. Indigenous peoples are also the most rapidly growing segment of the population, with an average growth rate that is more than double that of the country average.” -

- <http://www.ruralpovertyportal.org/country/home/tags/panama>

Many of the most needy children are natives living deep in the jungles or mountains of the interior. Yet, many of them also live in populated areas alongside of working people with means and are easily within reach. They put on their school uniforms (if they can afford one) and go to the local public schools and blend right in. You’d never suspect their living conditions.

Doesn’t it seem a bit odd that a country with such economic growth and concentrated wealth in some sectors, at the same time leaves most of its people in abject poverty?

How can that be? PCF has found some clues... PCF works with several of the public schools in our area and in the mountains where the ANNUAL school budget per student is \$20! That’s a whopping \$20 per year that the school gets from the Ministry of Education (the national government), to spend for the kids on books, paint for the classrooms, art supplies, teachers and plumbing repairs (if they have running water and some schools DON’T!)... You get the idea.

The needs are quite dramatic. In most cases, the people have so little, that if we can give them ‘Anything’, it makes a ‘HUGE’ difference

For example: we provided a pickup truck simply to deliver an old used Queen sized mattress donated from one local lady. We gave it to the family that lives in the tin shack you see on the cover of this report. The mattress is now used by the kid you see sitting on the floor, PLUS about 4 other siblings who all use the same mattress every night! For them, one used mattress changed the lives of the entire family! They could now sleep in 'comfort' and were so happy It's amazing!!

The sad fact is, that the government of Panama does NOT invest in it's own people. The education system is broken. It doesn't work for a modern economy. The successful, growing international economy in Panama doesn't involve common Panamanians for the most part. Panama has instituted a new immigration program to make it easy for foreigners to come in with 'residency' and provide the skilled labor that Panama just cannot provide from its own people.

This is why PCF is focusing so much energy on the schools and our own educational programs to help Panamanians fit into the growing international economy and service sector which services foreigners.

This shot below is taken of a local house near La Cresta Church which is just down the road from the touristic beach resort town of Playa Coronado. It's about an hour drive out of Panama City by car.



PCF sponsors a 'comedor' (dining room) for the people of La Cresta church, which is up on a remote hill off the beaten path. Once a week, kids like this come to La Cresta church for 'the big event'. Aside from getting a hearty meal of rice with beans, chicken, salad and desert, which we provide and cook on premises, we plan songs and games to go along with an important bible lesson for the day. The love and joy we see and get from this weekly event cannot be put into words. God's love is obvious and he freely gives it to all involved!

La Cresta 'Rice Chef'!!



La Cresta 'Beans Chef'!!



So, this is just a very brief 'glimpse' of how so many Panamanians live daily, to give you an idea of just 'some' of the needs which exist.

Let's talk about why I said "Panama is the most fertile ground on earth to plant seeds for the Kingdom of Jesus."

Panama was once subject to Spain and then became a part of Columbia. It actually celebrates 'two' Independence Days! With its roots as a modern country coming from Spain, which has historically been heavily influenced by the Catholic church, Panama society is to this day, still largely influenced by the church where it plays a prominent role in the lives of families and individuals. There is a visible presence as well from the Pentecostal, Baptist and other Protestant churches. This all translates into a societal core belief system which translates into practical terms like these:

- The City of Panama Municipality actually sponsors and promotes a series of life sized Christmas nativity scenes each year in its most central park area. The various scenes depict the complete story of the birth of Christ. Each one telling a part of the story and representing one important element of Christmas. And despite having sizeable Jewish and Muslim communities, nobody complains! Try having your municipality do that in the U.S.A.!
- All of the youth soccer teams join in a prayer circle on the field before and after each game. Christians are respected and honored, not mocked and vilified in public as in 'some' western countries today.
- PCF is actually welcomed with open arms to come into the state public schools and teach the kids bible lessons. Imagine that!

This gives you an idea of the attitude and spiritual 'climate' here. Obviously, this allows us to do things that are simply not even possible in the United States and other countries. This country gives us an open canvass to start painting the love of God wherever we desire!

Most of these churches serve as a social focal point for the poor in the interior. They have very little if anything to work with in terms of resources and thus they become an easy point of entry to help serve the needs of the people. By helping them in various ways, that can then be used as a platform to reach out to those in the area who are not necessarily 'believers', because they all have needs. And through this service, we can help to harvest souls.

For example: PCF has organised drives to donate: clothes, food, toys and Christmas gifts, medical and dental services, computers and electronic equipment (the schools have 'none'!) We are working to educate the leaders of the schools and pueblos about growing and harvesting 'Moringa' trees which provide a super nutrient dense food and natural medicine. These are 'some' of our 'community' activities.

Thankfully, the 'traditional family unit' as a concept is still very strong here. However, the usual societal influences are also eroding that here, as they are everywhere. The rate of young girls becoming single mothers is epidemic and this just perpetuates the poverty cycle.

As a result, the children without father figures have only a desperately poor mother and the inadequate school system to guide them. They are in desperate need of mentoring and guidance. This is where the PCF sports and educational programs are having some impact. PCF is also working to initiate a 'Big Brothers' type of adult mentoring program for the fatherless boys and girls. It's on our 'wish list' right now and we're working towards that.



Panama is only a 3 hour flight from Houston, Atlanta or Miami or 5 hours from Chicago or Newark. We have various direct flights now to Europe. It's central location makes us easily accessible to the world, yet we are in a world of our own as it relates to the modern industrialised countries to the north.

The fast growing economy gives us job opportunities if we can just get Panamanians past their educational deficiencies, and we are trying with our educational programs. Tourism here has now surpassed the canal as the country's #1 source of revenue which is a BIG deal.

This is called O-P-P-O-R-T-U-N-I-T-Y!! We can 'Act'. We can 'Act Now'. And we can 'Get Results Now' fulfilling the great commission!

PCF is committed to three general areas:

A. **Sports:** providing leadership and mentoring to young men and boys to teach principles of success in life. Through our relationships with the players, we provide guidance and support for their educational and family needs so they can advance in life beyond the playing field.

B. **Education:** This is key. PCF brings educational resources into focus and makes them accessible so our kids and adults can take advantage to improve their lives. We try to provide specialised education to aid them in finding and keeping a good job. We also insist that they finish their secondary education.

C. **Community Service:** Working with the kids in schools or adults in job training or just helping to install the values of community service by having young volunteers cleaning up the beaches or parks are examples of teaching important life and

community lessons that all can benefit from.

Through our activities, we develop personal relationships. This is the bridge to reach people with God's love and HIS important message as found in John 3:16.



Beyond the personal relationships developed, PCF is doing things never done before in Panama. PCF is getting noticed and setting the example for others to follow. This attention brings increased demand on our resources and more opportunities for growth. However, as any experienced business manager will tell you, growth has to be managed properly. It cannot exceed your resources or ability to not only keep up, but also stay one step ahead!

The more we do, the more we're expected to do. So, after only one year of activity, PCF has created a model and an example which is being noticed by others throughout Panama. We have a special opportunity to do some very special things in a BIG way all for the glory of God!

Would you pray for us right now?

"Dear Lord Yahweh, with all thanks and glory to your Holy name for the many blessings that you have bestowed upon me, in the name of Jesus, I pray that you bless the work of PCF and protect and provide for all of those who are involved. Please guide them to do your work to share your love with all they come into contact with and to share your blessings in ways that bring glory to YOU and also brings people into a closer relationship with YOU so that we may harvest souls to enter into your Kingdom and that we might be prepared for your glorious return! ...

... Protect us from evil, harden our hearts from temptations and evil, bring us closer to YOU and show us the way to help not only PCF, but all others in this world who are working to bring you glory. In the glorious name of Jesus, I pray. Amen!"

So what does all this mean to you? Where do you come in and play a role? You just did by helping us with that short prayer. Thank you! If you do nothing more than support us with your prayer every day, we know God will provide our needs. Miracles are not new for us.

We hope that this report has provided you with some helpful insights into the needs and opportunities we have in Panama.

All we can ask is for you to get to know us a little better, stay in tune with the important activities PCF is involved in via:

- the Facebook page 'PANAMA CHRISTIAN FOUNDATION',
- the website: www.pcfpanama.org -subscribe to the newsletter
- the YouTube channel: PCF Panama
- pray for us and think about how you might seize this opportunity to make the best use of it for God's glory!

**The righteous consider the cause of the poor,
But the wicked do not understand such knowledge.
Proverbs 29:7**

