

PERU

By David Wilson

I first visited Peru in June 1983. An American missionary (Wayne) invited me to train his church in open-air evangelism. Ten years before, he had seen our beach meetings at Ocean City, Maryland. During the training in Lima, we went to the main downtown plaza called San Martin for our very first open-air meeting. A huge crowd immediately gathered, including a policeman with a machine gun. He soon left, but returned with more police officers, all carrying machine guns! Wayne began to lose his liberty in translating for me, but it soon became apparent the policemen were listening. Wayne took courage, and we continued to proclaim the Gospel. It seemed as if the whole crowd was hanging on every word. Many responded and took our literature. The policemen came forward, and I wondered

what was going to happen. They also wanted our literature! Such was the interest that few left, even after the counseling was finished. "Where is your church?" some asked, and "When will you be back?" We returned two days later and saw the same results. Wayne later wrote: "Visitors from our meetings continue to find their way to the church."



PREACHING IN PLAZA SAN MARTIN
LIMA - DAVID WILSON

Returning to Lima in November 1983, I approached the Christian & Missionary Alliance (CMA) leader, Eugene Kelly, who was a missionary from Canada. I asked if I could train some of his people, and he agreed. When we arrived with the team at the main park in the richest part of Lima, we met a boy shouting "No pase... bomba!" People were running, sirens were wailing, and the police were chasing down anyone within reach! It was the work of the 'Shining Path' (Sendero Luminoso), a terrorist movement trying to force communist rule in Peru. Over 69,000 people died or disappeared from 1980 to 2000 as the result of the armed conflict. As we prayed, another bomb exploded around the corner from us. Our church team said that we should leave, but when I pointed out that the street vendors were still doing business, they took courage and stood for the Lord. Providentially, the message that I had prepared was called "Where will you spend eternity?" Many frightened eyes fixed upon me as they heard about the



SAMUEL, OUR FIRST OAC EVANGELIST



SAMUEL REACHING POOR CHILDREN

One who said, "I am the resurrection and the life." God had prepared their hearts, and many came to our platform for counseling. Some later came with us to the church. At another open-air meeting, the whole area was plunged into darkness when the power transformers were blown up. Only the battery-powered light on our sketchboard remained on, illuminating the message of Christ for all to see as it was proclaimed.

Over 150 were trained in Lima: 26 pastors, 100 laypeople, and 30 future pastors at the seminary. Gene Kelly later wrote, "Several teams have been at work in the open-air with good results. The campaign in La Victoria was very good. More than 100 made decisions, many of whom were present at the Sunday services." Years later, Gene would write to me saying that he wished they had used the OAC method more.



DAVID PROAÑO, SUANI & JORGE, AND DAVID WILSON



DRAMA PRIOR TO THE MESSAGE



DAVID PROAÑO IN A SCHOOL

I returned in 1984, and as I listened to the different reports, it became clear that hundreds had responded for salvation and were counseled in open-air meetings led by the pastors I had trained. Again, it was a joy to preach with them in Plaza San Martin and to see the large crowd that continued to grow and grow. Many faces reflected the anxiety in their hearts from living in a land with terrorists. After concluding in a prayer for those who wanted to trust Christ as Savior, scores came to the platform for counseling. Some said, "We need you here again...come back!" Teams did continue to come back, and the Lord continued to bring forth fruit from these outreaches. These were very special days when there was a great spiritual awakening in Lima, and the churches were growing rapidly.

Returning six months later, I found the ministry of evangelism was still flourishing, so I looked for a man who could be our pioneer evangelist to begin an OAC branch in Peru.

When I could not find God's man, and when no other reports came from Lima, I decided not to return, thinking that those trained had stopped.

Thirty years passed. Then one day, I received an e-mail from Samuel, who had traced me through OAC Brazil. He was one of the many seminary students whom I had trained in 1983, and was begging me to return to Peru to start an OAC branch. Samuel was still using the OAC methods of evangelism. He told me that many of those trained had continued on for years doing open-air outreaches and had seen hundreds come to Christ, but now most had stopped. Believing this was a call from God, I invited David Proaño of OAC Ecuador to join me, and we flew to Lima.

It was my joy to meet Samuel again; he was now in his fifties. At the CMA Seminary, I saw others whom I had trained who were now pastors. Amazingly, they recognized me and told of thousands who had been reached through their open-air outreaches. The OAC ministry was held in high esteem, and they welcomed me back. The Lord had worked, but without an OAC branch in Peru with permanent evangelists to provide training, encouragement, and leadership, the open-air ministry had



JORGE PREACHING IN A PLAZA



SUANI GATHERING A CROWD



COUNSELING AFTER AN OPEN-AIR MEETING

slowly declined. Now it was time to revive it again and start an OAC branch with Samuel. As we preached in Plaza San Martin, where I had preached 30 years ago, people gathered and responded as they did before, even though they were of the next generation. Peru was still a harvest field! In one meeting, people stood in light rain to hear the Gospel. Having no vehicle, we traveled in a tiny three-wheeled taxi with all of our equipment. We even went into a school that allowed us to preach the Gospel to 1,400 students, with no restrictions. It was time to start OAC Peru.

Samuel did well training church teams and taking them out on the streets and plazas. The Lord provided a new van and all the ministry equipment. However, because of the lack of financial support, he sadly felt led to accept an invitation to be one of the pastors in a large CMA church. The Lord, however, had been preparing Jorge, a school teacher in Ecuador, who had trained with David Proaño for several years. He and Suani (his fiancée), felt the Lord calling them to Peru, and so in 2016, Jorge and David flew back to Ecuador. Two months later, he returned with his wife Suani as our missionaries to Peru.

The 'Shining Path' rebels had continued their killings in Peru, but the military had finally defeated them by 2013. However, remnants remain, and other groups have formed. In Plaza San Martin, they speak against the government and promote Liberation Theology and Communism. Some even bring false charges against evangelical Christians like us. But the message of Christ goes forth by OAC teams proclaiming Him as the only One who can give us peace and eternal life. Many are still listening and responding. Samuel has trained 25 in a church near Plaza San Martin, and they are coming regularly to this plaza to evangelize.

In March 2017, David and I returned with Jorge and taught a seminar at the same seminary where I had trained students 30 years before. Over 70 attended, including pastors from the interior and students at the seminary. They quickly learned our method of preaching in the open air and became very excited! We then went to Plaza San Martin, but when the police saw 70 of us as a group in the plaza on their security cameras, they sent officers to stop us. The Seminary Dean, who was once a terrorist, called a Christian in a high position, and permission was quickly granted. The police vanished. Some of the pastors preached, people were counseled for salvation, and names were taken for follow-up. Jorge will continue to visit these pastors to further their training and take them out on open-air outreaches.

OAC was registered with the government in 2017, with Samuel, Jorge, and David Proaño on the Board of Directors. It is incredible to think that Jorge and Suani were not even born when I first went to Peru, but God had it all planned. He used Samuel to call me back to establish OAC in this harvest field. Samuel still continues to train and take teams out in the open air. Jorge and Suani are well known to pastors, and as Spanish is their mother tongue, the ministry continues to expand. In the Lord's time, and in His way, He established the OAC ministry in Peru as part of His Great Commission to the Church.



CHIP WELTON PREACHING WITH HIS CANADIAN TEAM