



JUBILEE PARTNERS REPORT

Spring 2023

*“For God has not given us a spirit of fear,
but of power and of love and of a sound mind.”*

– 2 Timothy 1:7

During our first forty years, most of the refugee families we hosted at Jubilee stayed with us for only two months before moving on to a placement coordinated for them by a resettlement agency. Over the past five years, however, it has become more common for us to provide a home for and share life with an immigrant family or individual for up to six months or more, depending on their legal needs and family situation. Not only does this timeline offer some stability and consistency for residents, it also gives us great joy to see significant growth and the beginnings of recovery, especially in young children who have come to Jubilee after traumatic experiences such as domestic abuse.

One such family with us now is single mother Carmen, from Central America, and her four children (names changed for privacy). Carmen arrived at Jubilee last September and was pregnant with her now youngest son, who was born in time to portray baby Jesus in our Christmas pageant. Carmen has been actively involved in many aspects of our community life including Sunday evening worship, Monday morning women’s support group, and Friday potluck suppers. When we asked her if she would like to share her story in our newsletter, she was very happy to receive this opportunity to speak about what God has done in her life and how God continues to provide her with strength for “un montón de cosas” (so many things). Her story begins:

“When my mother married my father, they were both very young. She married him to escape from home because her father beat her, but she ended up with a husband who beat her too. My parents are Christians, but they have very bad tempers. I was the fifth of nine children in my family. When one of us misbehaved, my father beat us all, especially the girls. He told us we were not as valuable to the family as boys were. He beat us because of any little thing, for example, jumping around when we were at church.

When I was thirteen years old I left home because my father beat me and didn’t give me money or clothes, not even a skirt or shoes for school. He only bought clothes for the boys. My mother helped me find work as a maid, but they didn’t pay me much because I was just a girl.”



Carmen enjoys a yarn craft at our recent field day with Jubilee residents and Comer neighbors.



On Carmen's porch, Eunjung (a volunteer since fall) helps her lighten up for the spring with a ten-inch haircut!

After several years alternating between working a new job and living at home for a few months, Carmen was sixteen and pregnant. Her mother strongly advised her to conceal the pregnancy, saying, "You know how your father's temper is." Therefore, several years later when she was pregnant again, Carmen hid from both her parents, living with her employers and later an older sister. Eventually, Carmen did reconcile with her mother and asked her to care for her son while she looked for work in Mexico.

During this period of working and traveling between home and Mexico, one of Carmen's relatives who had already immigrated to the U.S. gave her contact information to a male friend who was quite a few years older than Carmen. They began a long-distance relationship by phone. Meanwhile, Carmen was realizing that it was not possible to make enough money in Mexico to support her son, so when this man offered to pay her travel expenses to the U.S., she accepted.

"When I first arrived in Georgia he was so nice to me, but then after a few months I saw what he is really like. He is addicted to alcohol and has a very bad temper, especially when he is drinking, which he often does with his friends. When he first started to abuse me verbally and physically, I had this dream in my mind not to have babies with him."

There are many common patterns in cases of domestic violence. For example, as was the case with Carmen's boyfriend, the abuser initially appears to play the role of a savior. Later, when the victim realizes she is in a relationship with someone she does not really know, there are many complications because now they have children together, and the victim often feels like she is doing the right thing by keeping the family together. Inter-generational trauma, the passing down to younger generations the traumatic effects of the past (on either or both sides of the family) is also common in relationships of domestic violence, just as Carmen saw her own father abuse her mother, herself, and her sisters throughout her childhood.

Carmen's first five years in the U.S. and in this relationship had been dangerous and traumatic for both her and her children, and although we will now transition into sharing some about their growth and recovery these past months, the lifelong effects of trauma such as they have suffered cannot be overstated.

We are so thankful for our volunteers who provide countless hours of child care for Carmen and other single mothers. Playing by the sandy stream that flows past the giant bamboo forest is a popular outdoor activity. Meanwhile, their mothers enjoy the time to cook, clean, study, or rest.



In the life of Carmen’s oldest son Pablo, schoolteachers have been instrumental in reaching out to this boy who has only just begun to speak although he is now six years old. Before she came to Jubilee, Carmen says:

“Pablo’s teacher called me because she was concerned about his behavior. I started to explain our situation to her, and then we had a meeting at the school, and that’s what began the process of the police moving us to a shelter [where she stayed a few weeks before coming to Jubilee].”

The contrast with feedback from Pablo’s current teacher at Comer Elementary is such an encouragement:

“Now, he can express himself, and it helps enormously in figuring out what supports he needs. I have seen tremendous social skills growth. He’s interacting with his peers and learning to play with others at recess and centers time.”

Here at Jubilee, Joanna Hoyt, a volunteer who has known the family since their arrival writes:

“When I met Carmen and her children I was shaken by the weight of grief and fear they were all visibly carrying in their different ways. Sometimes I still feel that way, but it’s also been challenging and inspiring to see them finding constructive ways to live with their hard memories, to open up and keep growing. I see Pablo learning to speak up and not to hit when angry or afraid, to ask for positive connection (“You read me book?” “You give me HUG?”), and to try out a way of being a Big Strong Guy that features helping with the work and the younger kids rather than pushing people around or away. I see the toddler who at first stood in the corner and stared warily, coming out to explore and build and dance and engage with the world, and shifting from silence to a wild loud laugh and a soft crow of delight. I’ve heard Carmen persistently working on learning English, and also speaking softly but intensely about the times when she found no love and the ways in which she has come to feel God’s love and the love of her neighbors. One day when school was out and we had a field day for the kids and parents, I saw her twirling and laughing, looking as happy and unguarded as her toddler now sometimes does. She and her family give me hope in the power of love and healing that remains in our souls through the hardest times.”



Another gift Carmen has given us is the experience of walking with her through her baptism and the dedication of her children. When she expressed a desire for baptism, Christina Dyck (our current worship team leader) reached out to our friend Pastor Lee Adams at nearby Carlton Baptist Church (we decided January was too cold for a baptism in our pond!). When we asked Pastor Lee to reflect on the experience he said:

“When I got the call, there was no way I was going to pass up the opportunity. We had seen previously how much life and joy having our Karen [one of many Burmese ethnic minorities] neighbors worship with us had brought to our congregation. I knew having Carmen there would do the same again. It was a privilege and joy for me. We wanted her to feel like she was at home, even with the language barrier. My wife makes the slides and bulletins, and she wanted to go the extra mile and make sure all our Spanish-speaking visitors understood the service. We wanted them to feel like a part of our family.”

Again in her own words, Carmen shares highs and lows from her time at Jubilee these past six months:



Steve holds "baby Jesus" at Carmen's baptism.

Bottom right: Lorraine carries one of the babies in her traditional cultural style.

"I decided to be baptized because God has blessed me in many ways. He has always been with me even though I have been through many things and sometimes still have depression. He has heard all my prayers. I didn't have the love of my parents, but God said to me, "You are my daughter. I am with you." Here also in my relationships at Jubilee I have received the love like that of parents, siblings, uncles, aunts, and grandparents: love and care like I have never had before.

My children's behavior is still very challenging for me. Pablo often behaves badly indoors. He hits his brother and sister as well as adults. He often has nightmares. But school has been really good for Pablo. He always wants to go and gets up, gets dressed, and gets his backpack. I pray that my children will stop fighting and that they will love each other and respect people."

Life for Carmen and her children is presently very much day by day, one step at a time. None of us know where Carmen will go after her time at Jubilee or the exact nature of how early trauma will continue to impact the life of her and her children for years to come. We do know, however, that God will continue to use Carmen's faith and strength as an encouragement to us all. Her closest neighbor, Jubilee volunteer Eunjung Kim has been praying for and with Carmen and made for her kitchen wall a beautiful

bilingual calligraphy sign with Jeremiah 29:11 -- "For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, 'plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.'"

from the people of Jubilee



Who we are

Jubilee Partners is an ecumenical Christian service community in northeast Georgia. We offer hospitality to refugees, asylum seekers, and other immigrants who have fled violence or persecution.

We are a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization; donations are thus tax-deductible.

Your donations and support of our work are most appreciated.

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**Left: Al Lawler celebrated his 80th birthday this year!
Above: Chou presents her homemade dumplings to celebrate the Chinese New Year.**

**Below: Friends Fabian and Lourdes sell bracelets at the local Farmer's Market.
One of the women prays for Ruth and Chuck at our Easter sunrise service.
One of the kids greets Sadie, the donkey.**



View Jubilee's newsletter in color online at www.jubileepartners.org!

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What do we do on a warm February day with two babies, three toddlers, nine young children and no school? Have field day and get out the parachute, of course!