Reforestation: Ecuador  By Alfredo Merino

We continue to make progress in the Fundación Brethren y Unida project sponsored by the Global Food Initiative in Tabacundo, Ecuador. Tabacundo is 60 kilometers northeast of Quito. We are working with approximately 50 students from the Tabacundo National School, as well as 14 local farm families. To date we have installed a model community orchard, and our plan is to install a total of six community orchards.

Every Friday afternoon we meet with the students of Tabacundo to provide forestry and agro-ecology training. We also continue working with participating farm families, as we supply them with plants, seeds, manure, and labor. Our activities will continue throughout 2018.

We thank you very much for your support, and enjoy the photos!

Aquaponics System: Haiti

In December (2017), a small group of Global Food Initiative (GFI) volunteers from the US and from Eglise des Freres d’Haiti (Church of the Brethren in Haiti) joined forces at the Brethren Guesthouse and Ministry Center in Croix des Bouquets to install an aquaponics system. The team was led by David Young of Capstone 118 from New Orleans, La. David previously installed similar aquaponics units in New Orleans, and Lybrook, N.M. Other group members included representatives of the National Committee of Eglise des Freres d’Haiti, a green infrastructure specialist from the University of the District of Columbia, Harris Trobman, former Peace Corps volunteer in fisheries, Peter Barlow, and GFI manager, Jeff Boshart.

The aquaponics unit consists of two growing beds for vegetables, two 400-gallon in-ground water tanks for the fish (tilapia), and a designated solar panel and battery to run a pump. The project was funded by a $4,892.50 GFI grant, along with gifts from Montezuma Church of the Brethren in Dayton, Va., and North Manchester Church of the Brethren in Manchester, Ind., as well as several New Orleans-based organizations, and other special donations to the GFI. This unit will be monitored and evaluated as a prototype for other units that may be built in the future.
Nutrition Program: China
By Eric Miller

You’ai Care, a GFI partner in Pingding, China, recently hired Ms. Meiying Liu to manage the nutrition program for hospice and cancer patients. Previously she volunteered with the organization and now also serves as volunteer coordinator. She has sourced yogurt from a local producer and helps to deliver and feed the yogurt to patients as part of her work with the program (pictured). Ms. Liu is a cancer survivor herself. When diagnosed with cancer 20 years ago, she had a positive attitude even though she was prepared for the worst. At that time, she began volunteering with an orphanage and the Cancer Prevention Association where she has continued to volunteer ever since. Church of the Brethren members Ruoxia and Eric Miller are volunteers with this project.

To Alter Your World: A Book Review

In To Alter Your World: Partnering with God to Rebirth our Communities (available through Brethren Press), co-authors Michael Frost and Christiana Rice provide food for thought for churches wishing to become change agents in their communities. In the past few decades, Christians have founded intentional communities aiming to engage the culture and change the world, with mixed success.

According to the authors, at times these attempts have felt more like a colonization than a collaboration. Frost and Rice encourage their readers to be aware that God is already in the process of giving birth to new life. The role of the church is to become like a midwife. Midwives coach and comfort, encourage and exhort, but they aren’t the ones giving birth—God is.

Seeking the leading of the Holy Spirit and truly understanding community needs, through relationship building, is crucial to transforming communities. Transformation may look like a community garden, or a pre-school ministry, or something altogether different. The book gives real-life examples of what happens when a church gives up control and allows God to birth something new. A short promotional video can be found at www.youtube.com/watch?v=7GrsOfdktKc.

GFI Grant Updates: Washington, D.C., and North Korea

Two GFI grants awarded in 2017 were not utilized. A grant for $7,550 was given to support the work of Robert and Linda Shank at Pyongyang University and School of Technology (PUST), in North Korea. Due to heightened tensions in the region, the Shanks will not return to North Korea at this time.

A grant given to the Brethren Nutrition Program (BNP) in Washington, D.C., will be returned. The $10,000 grant was given to assist Washington City Church of the Brethren with kitchen renovations. Later, the congregation decided to close the BNP. Pastor Jennifer Hosler shared that a major factor was the changing make-up of the neighborhood. The number of guests coming to the soup kitchen has declined, and community needs have changed. The BNP officially closed on September 29, 2017.