

## God's Love Story for All People Everywhere

The service was beautiful. The pastor delivered a message of love and commitment for a successful, loving marriage. The couple gleamed as they held hands and dreamed of their future life together. The setting was as beautiful as the loving, Holy relationship between a young man and a lovely young woman. The panoramic view of the Ecuadorian national park featured majestic ridges that spanned 360 degrees, framing the lush, green floor of a dormant volcano crater. The couple was not only surrounded natural beauty but also by family and friends. Love filled the air and tears of joy abounded.



It was God's love that brought the two together in the first place. It started with each person's love for God and the desire to serve Him. Out of that love for the Lord God orchestrated a love between the two.

Each year Matt came with his church on a mission trip to Quito, Ecuador. He traveled more than 2,500 miles from his North Carolina home to serve at Pan de Vida, a Christian ministry in the capital city of Ecuador. There Matt met a beautiful young lady named Janela who worked at the mission. Nearly every summer since 2011, Matt and Janela served God side by side, helping the poorest of the poor in Ecuador. Two years ago Janela came to the states on a 7-week internship, volunteering at Matt's church and the YMCA. Her time of service in the states helped their friendship to flourish.

The "blessing of the engagement" ceremony allowed Janela's family, her Ecuadorian friends and co-workers to be part of this step in their Christian commitment. An interpreter provided the translation for her

future North Carolina family and American friends in attendance. Fast forward three months: Janela obtained a fiancé Visa and recently arrived in the United States to prepare for her new life of service to the Lord. Later this summer a wedding ceremony will be held in North Carolina to complete the union. An interpreter will be present, to translate the ceremony into Spanish for a video feed to her family back home. People on two continents will enjoy what God has brought together.



The love story of Matt and Janela is part of God's bigger love story for all people, throughout His creation. The common ground for Matt and Janela is the same for people everywhere – a love for others and putting that love into action through service to the Lord. We all can love because God first loved us. *A new commandment I give to you, That you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another (John 13:34).*

God's love has no boundaries, borders or nationality. *There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. (Galatians 3:28).* We are all brothers and sisters in Christ around the world. It all starts with our relationship with God, as He wants us to be one with Him (John 17:21). While we may need translators God speaks all languages. We are family. The Family of God includes all believers, everywhere. *Whoever does God's will is my brother and sister and mother (Mark 3:35).* We rejoice in the love that Matt and Janela have for each other and that they demonstrate for all of God's people, everywhere. Perhaps you, too, can share God's love with everyone you meet.

**Prayer:** Lord, we thank you for the opportunity to serve You by serving others – our brothers and sisters in Christ. We thank you for loving each of us. We pray that Your love will shine through us to all people, everywhere. Amen.