

Claudio's Story



My name is Claudio Zarate Palomino. I was born on July 7, 1960 in the Pumapuquio community of Uripa.

I came to know the Lord at a very young age. I am grateful to my parents who instilled Christian faith and love for God in me. I am a part of the Peruvian Evangelical Church of Ancco Huayllo of Uripa, a province of Chincheros in the Apurímac department. Ancco Huayllo is located 3,209 meters above sea level. The region focuses on agriculture and raising livestock.

By profession, I am a teacher at José María Arguesas de Uripa School. I am also the president of the church council of the Peruvian Evangelical Church of Uripa. At the beginning of this year, I began assisting in the church's pastoral area. For our church body, the presence of Paz y Esperanza since 2012 has been very important. With their focus on the holistic mission of the church, Paz y Esperanza has taught us about being an active church and serving within our community. As members of the local church, we have an important role in social work.

As a church leader, I began to see many problems in the church, and making changes, as well as working together as leadership, was not an easy process. One of the problems in our church was a lack of young people. Not too long ago, I stood at the pulpit of our church and looked out at the whole congregation, and I saw mostly white heads. At that moment, I realized our church was missing an important population— young people. This worried me a lot. How do we reach out to young people in such a way that they commit themselves to the work of the church? In the search for answers to this question and many more, we arrived at a fundamental shift in our church's mission. Before, we focused completely on evangelism, "winning souls", and pastoral care within our congregation. Now, we are doing holistic mission. Along with the telling of the Gospel and congregational care and discipleship, we focus on being present in our community, and how we can best support and serve within the community. For example, we recently opened our doors to an early educational center that needed a facility during the construction of a new school. By the grace of God, we were able to supply an adequate space for the school to continue during construction.

We have further plans to participate in and serve our community, including working toward social change and conflict resolution. With the help of our partner Paz y Esperanza, we continue to work out our holistic mission. They consistently come to train, educate, and support us in any way. In our upcoming 3-year strategic plan, we are including three overlapping spheres of involvement—social, cultural, and ecclesiastical. We hope to involve all of the church—young and old—in making a positive impact in our community. As members of the Uripa community, we want and work toward the best for our community, but we also need to be doing this united as a church body. Making profound internal changes in our church has not been an easy. Day after day, I present the importance of holistic mission to our church leaders, and altering their thought processes can take a long time. Still, if I try my hardest and have support along the way, I know that we can reach our goal. As a church, we can be united in holistic mission. Even in the past six months, I have seen small changes, and I believe that we will keep on seeing church-wide changes.

