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## Easter in the Andes

*By Sarah Corson*

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The truck climbed slowly up the narrow ledge of the Andean road, cutting sharply to make the hairpin curves in Bolivia. At least two dozen hitchhikers joined us in the back, crowded with the produce, furniture, chickens and other cargo. It was the Saturday before Easter in 1985. We were hoping to get to the capital in time to go to the Easter service the following morning.

This had been the longest, hardest trip ever coming up the Andes Mountains. It took us 46 hours to drive 200 miles. Every time we got stuck, everyone helped dig the truck out, although we only had one shovel. The rest of us used our hands to dig out the mud in the tracks. Five times, a tire blew out along the way. It rained, and our sleeping bags and clothes were wet. Finally, at 3 a.m., we reached a pass in the Andes some 16,000 feet high. The cold was bone-chilling. Suddenly, the truck stopped. A wheel had lost some bolts and was about to fall off. We could go no farther. One of the church leaders walked down the road in the snowstorm and found a small hut where a sheep herder lived. The man got out of bed and welcomed us. We crowded in and, grateful for a roof, lay down on the dirt floor littered with sheep dung. As usual in the area, the sheep herder had no heat for his house. In the freezing cold, we huddled together on the floor. The sheep herder's daughter slept with a lamb, and when he jumped up and walked among us with his warm coat of wool, he was welcomed. For a few minutes, he lay at my head, and I buried my face in his wool, thankful for the warmth.



Finally, morning dawned, and we sat up on the floor—sick, cold and miserable while some of the men worked on the wheel. One of our fellow hitchhikers, an indigenous woman, suddenly remembered. “Ah!” she exclaimed. “This is Resurrection Day!” Indeed, it was Easter! A Catholic boy, also a hitchhiker with us, reached in his pocket and pulled out a small booklet. He scraped

the dried mud off, then handed it to me. “Read it to us, Sister! We must have an Easter Service!” he exclaimed. It was an Upper Room in Spanish, a United Methodist daily devotional. Far from any city or church, high in the Andes, where did he get it? No one knows, but we used it. The sun suddenly streamed into our room through the one small window high up in the wall, bringing warmth to our service.

I thought of my home church in Alabama, where my family and friends would be sitting on the cushioned pews, enjoying the lovely Easter lilies along the altar. And I was filled with praise to our Christ! No matter if we worship Him in a lovely church with carpeted floors and stained-glass windows, or in a humble sheep herder's hut high in the snowy Andes, ***we are the Resurrection People, the people of hope.*** All of us ... Methodist, Catholic, North Americans, Latinos, indigenous, educated and illiterate, all alike, are worshiping the same Resurrected Christ.

This year because of the coronavirus pandemic, some of us won't be able to attend church in person. But whether we are in our church sanctuary, a humble hut or at home, we can worship Him! Thank you for helping SIFAT take the hope and the power of the Resurrected Christ to those in need during these hard times!