

August 2023 MEXICO TRIP REPORT...Jim Stumbo

Dear friends and partners in our Mexico Mission,

In August, 8 of us from Wyoming and Montana went to Rio Chico, MX in support of Tomas Bencomo and his mission outreach to the Indian tribes of the northern Sierra Madres. Thank you to all of you who have prayed and supported us in this endeavor over the past 19 years.

I guess I only have one sermon. This year I went to El Paso a day early and preached at 3 services in Juarez and El Paso. I chose the message of Jesus that his followers must take up their cross and die to self-rule. Tomas wanted each of the services to hear this message. By the 3rd time, I didn't really need any notes. Their services have so much energy with the 11 member bands, light show, and driving beat. There is plenty of dancing in the pews, but I am quick to assure my Scandinavian friends that I didn't succumb to anything more than tapping my toe and a little hand clapping.

"Every time you come, you are an inspiration to us". How honored we were to hear these words from Monse! Of course, that is our desire in coming year after year. They are our friends and we hope to bless them in their ministry to their communities and friends. Building and sustaining the local church is hard everywhere.

And just when we think we have figured things out...surprise! You may recall that on our last trip we made an 11th hour change in our project to work on the chapel instead of a kitchen enlargement... thinking the enlargement was not really what they wanted, but more of a concession to the Americans. After congratulating ourselves on our perceptive sensitivity, you can guess what we found when we arrived in Rio Chico...a beautiful half constructed addition to the kitchen! "We had the materials" was their explanation. It does look great and will be a good asset, especially helpful when they want to serve the work teams in one dining area while they have devotions with the staff in the other.

Rio has a good team in place, even though Isaiah completed his helpful year of discipling and has left for college. Juan Diego and another worker, along with Abbey and Lucio care for the greenhouse, animals, El Dos farm and the field in Nicholas Bravo. We have some fruit in the orchard, tomatoes and peppers in the green house. Beneath the acre of waist high weeds that we picked, there is growing a nice crop of potatoes.

A big success! Many of you helped to raise the \$18,000 for a new tractor to avoid another expensive crop failure. Our tractor and the 50 acres of corn are beautiful! The corn was planted on time, is now a healthy 7' tall, and the expectation is for a great harvest. 2 years ago they raised 80 tons which allows them to sell some to pay their farming expenses and have lots to distribute to the Indian tribes.

A sweet impact...its not all about evangelism! We discovered the Rio congregation was going to have cake for a birthday party after church (Monse's granddaughter and others). Let's have cake for everyone...and ice cream...and coca cola...make it a real fiesta. Everyone had a terrific time, the tres leche cake was awesome. Then they thanked us for introducing them to the idea of ice cream with cake. Really? This may go down as one of our truly great contributions to their culture.

It's all about the people. We have started to make sure that we have a translator when we are with people and the stories we hear are so rich. Monse shared that this was year 22 of sobriety for him. In his youth he had lived a worldly life and was usually drunk when not working. Then he met Margarita, the pastor's daughter, whose parents were not pleased at her choice of a boyfriend. (I can picture the disapproving scowl of her mother...I've seen it!) Little by little Monse came to believe. God changed his life and now he is a pillar in their church. We were impressed when Monse told us that he still invites these old drinking buddies to church, even though they always give him excuses.

Keeping our promises. Projects are easy to start and hard to finish. Tomas has experienced many disappointments of this kind. Our project in March was to start a new expansion of the chapel and so we picked up where that group had left off. We succeeded in putting up the metal frame walls and completed the welding of the roof beams. Our next step in March, 2024, will be to install ceiling insulation, a tin roof, sheeting and plaster for the walls and a cement floor, in order to be ready to use in their summer camps. I don't have the dollar amounts, but it sounds expensive. We'll be hopeful that many of you will want to join us in finishing the chapel.

The worst/best basketball camp outreach ever. Vince, the leader, will be the first to admit that the basketball camp could go down as one of the worst ever...or was it the best. Start with unruly kids, give us a translator that had a sweet, but unauthoritative voice, add a group of older kids who came to heckle... and, oh yes, we were short on basketballs that we had left in El Paso. Get the picture? But each day we shared the importance and benefit of being a Jesus follower; we saw the local pastor with his arm around one of the worst kids; and then the local church stepped up and did an outdoor service for over 100 people, complete with hot dogs, worship band, and short sermon (at least, I thought I was short). In conclusion, we thought it was one of the best outreaches we had ever done in partnership with the local church. Great Camp!

More to come. Here are some events for you to watch for:

- September 15-27, Tomas, Maria, and Brenda will be on tour in the US. They will be with Saratoga WY, Cheyenne WY, Staples MN, Greybull WY and then to the RMD pastors gathering in Great Falls MT.
- Mid-March 2024, a team will be going to Rio Chico for a Pastors Retreat, working on the chapel, and doing both a children and sports outreach.
- July 28-August 6, a 2nd team will be going to Rio Chico on a project to be determined later.

Again, we appreciate you! Some go, some send, some (all) pray, and some even read this report. Everyone is important to the accomplishing of our goal of supporting Tomas in his mission to the Indian tribes. Next year will be 20 years on this journey of mutual inspiration. While they feel inspired by us, God has blessed us and enriched our lives through this calling and partnership. Thank you for the role you are faithful to.