

Report on the trip to Mexico, March 10-18, 2024

By Jim Stumbo

“Thank you” to all who have shown such interest in our annual trips to Mexico and supported us with your prayers, finances, and participation on the work teams. This March, 9 of us went from ND, SD, and MN. While we were small in numbers, we had a lot of manpower (and womanpower) for the cement project, as well as the retreat and children’s ministry.

We had a rough start as the 4 of us from MN missed our midnight flight from Dallas to El Paso (actually they gave away our tickets and the plane left 15 minutes early). In order to get to El Paso in time for the Monday travel into Mexico with Tomas, we rented a car and drove all night. We made it and so did our luggage, thankfully, but it was a rough start to the trip.

On Tuesday we immediately began to tackle the project of completing the expansion of the chapel. We have never been there during their camp season, but we saw pictures of hundreds of teens worshipping in the chapel, standing room only. We added a 30x50 addition, about a 50% enlargement. Removing the wall of adobe, rebar, concrete, etc. was an all-day maximum effort, followed by 3 days of mixing concrete and pouring the floor. After reinforcing the support for the roof beams, the building is ready for new windows, siding, and will be used this summer. Praise the Lord! I am so glad for Doyle, Chris, and our 4 young men with such strong backs and work ethic. Along with the 2 young ladies and the Mexicans we hired, we had an amazing team.

Tomas is always so appreciative. “We wouldn’t be able to do these things without you”, he tells the team. It’s all about being blessed so that we can bless others. In this case as we bless Tomas, he will use our resources to bless 100’s, even 1000’s of others.

The retreat for the Missionaries, Pastors and workers from the mountain regions has become one of the most important ministries Tomas looks to us to provide. These dear people have so little and sacrifice so much. It is a joy to bring them out of their remote areas and give them a retreat, housing them in a motel, eating good food from the ladies in the local church, and fellowshiping with others from like circumstances.

While there are definite distinctives to the ministries of the mountain churches, there are also many common subjects of ministry to relate to. I preached from the declaration of Peter in Matthew 16 ideas that were helpful in my years of ministry. 1) It is His church (not our stage to strut upon). 2) He said “I will build it”. We love, serve, sacrifice, and work hard, but it is Jesus who builds his church. 3) The gates of hell cannot prevent it from happening. The success of the church is assured through authority of Christ. While God uses us, He does the work and gets the glory. Tomas assures me that this is just what the pastors need to hear.

One fun note: after I would speak with an interpreter for 45 minutes, Tomas would get up and talk (shout, weep, etc.) for over an hour. When I asked him what he was preaching on, he said, "what you preached about". I guess I was a good jumping off spot for what he wanted to say to them.

My personal highlight. The teen worship band is so good, by any cultures' standards. I just love Ashley, the young lady lead singer who has been practicing her English on me the past 5 years and getting quite good. She is singing "I surrender all" and I can't help but get up and ask if I can join in English. So, she sings from her heart in Spanish this beautiful old hymn of surrender while I harmonize in English. Afterwards, I tell Ashley that this was the highlight of my trip. She says, "I was just trying to keep from crying. I had the 'skin of a chicken'". The skin of a chicken? Oh, goosebumps. We laugh. I have no explanation for why we call them goosebumps. The skin of a plucked chicken certainly does resemble our goosebumps.

Our 2 gals from Rapid City, Emily and Antonia, did a beautiful job of singing at our Sunday service in Rio Chico, both during the worship and then as background music to the after-service cake we served. It was St. Patrick's Day so we celebrated the Irish missionary and his use of the 3 leaf clover to explain the Holy Trinity. There wasn't as large a crowd as they expected so everyone was given a huge serving of cake...4"x4"x4" to be exact (maybe larger).

Our next trip will be led by Vince Vannett from Saratoga, WY, July 28-Aug. 6. We have about 10 signed up to go. Then a year from now in early March we will be going into the Copper Canyon to help construct a church for a congregation of over 200 among the Tarahumara. The revival continues to spread among the Indian tribes and we will try to assist them however the Lord (and Tomas) sees fit.

Our role continues to be to assist Tomas in strengthening the mountain Churches so that they have resources to do the missionary work to the Indian tribes in their regions.

Contact me, Jim Stumbo at 320-360-7936 if you are interested in our trips. The cost is \$900 registration and your travel to El Paso. The trip to the Copper Canyon will be slightly more expensive.