

Mission to the Children



Mission to the Children

Providing Spiritual and Humanitarian
Support to Children in Northern Mexico



June 2011

Necessary Adaptations

WITH MORE AND MORE AREAS OF NORTHERN Sonora being designated “no travel” by our State Department, Mission to the Children board members and volunteers continuously explore avenues by which we can provide aid to the wonderful people we are privileged to serve. The approach is two-pronged.

Preserving the ministries of Pastors Alejandro Sanchez and Carlos Rosales is primary. This in-

It is no longer deemed safe to carry cash to this area, so alternate ways of paying the stores and volunteers who shop have evolved

cludes ongoing contact and encouragement by American volunteers via personal visit and emails or phone calls

with the pastors. On-site visits, Skype (video teleconferencing) and emails from Pastor Michael Hartman and other pastors in the Iglesia Evangélica Luterana Confesional (IELC) gives much-needed spiritual food. Mission to the Children also assists with costs to pastoral conferences and conventions similar to those attended by pastors in the United States.

The second prong is continuing physical aid to the families in the villages. This consists of food coupons; caps, sweaters and quilts in the winter; school supplies; Christ-

mas gifts; dental hygiene items and most recently a large gift of donated dental film and supplies.

Sasabe, right on the Arizona-Mexico border, is the village most visited. John Bolm and Magi Reed provide on-going English lessons, guidance and fellowship. John Kramer and Mary Ann Rosas visit the Altar area as frequently as once a month. They assist Pastor Rosales and Vicky in services and Bible studies, home visits and assessing the needs of the parishoners along with humanitarian aid. It is no longer deemed safe to carry cash to this area, so alternate ways of paying the stores for food coupons and volunteers who shop have evolved after months of investigation, trial and error.

To God be the glory as his never-failing grace and mercy allow his Word to continue to be presented in Northern Sonora.

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Follow the Money Trail

PERIODICALLY WE TRY TO UPDATE YOU ON THE FINANCIAL needs of Mission to the Children. While it is true we can no longer adequately serve 14 villages at the level of one year ago due to invasion by drug cartels, we have many ongoing expenses, some of them relatively new to us in the last eighteen months. We now have the salaries and ministry expenses of two pastors. Rent, travel and vehicles, maintenance and repairs on the church in Altar (like

[HTTP://WWW.MISSIONTOTHECHILDREN.ORG](http://www.missiontothechildren.org)

new plumbing) and costs of nationalizing the churches in Mexico are ongoing. Other examples: Car repairs and new tires for Pastor Rosales' vehicle along with great expense for nationalizing his vehicle for registration in Mexico, finally locating and appropriating a vehicle for Pastor Sanchez, which he should have by the time you receive this newsletter, and care and maintenance of the parsonage in Atil which remains vacant at the moment. The rented church facility in Sasabe is bursting at the seams, so that congregation is looking at options to bring to the board.

In March we received requested annual budgets from the two congregations. Since this was a totally foreign concept to the pastors and congregants, Mission to the Children will review the budgets every four months for modification if needed.

We, as the board, having prayerfully assumed the obvious expenses of two growing congregations, are in a learning mode ourselves. We struggle with limited donations due to the weak U.S. economy. Our prayer is to always be good stewards of the loving donations sent by you. Mission to the Children volunteers are exactly that, often absorbing unanticipated costs when faced with a medical or personal emergency in one of the villages. Presentations are made all over the country by board members and others familiar with the mission. Pastor Ron and Karen Baerbock, our retired U.S. Missionary and wife, continue to be great advocates for this mission to Northern Sonora and do respond to presentation requests in their area.

The board is happy to report that we are meeting our financial obligations, but often struggle with priorities. We earnestly re-

quest your ardent prayers for the mission and the pastors and people of Sonora and your financial support as you are able. Please continue to spread the word!

Board Changes

MISSION TO THE CHILDREN BOARD MEMBER AND Finance Committee member Marcus Sorgatz has submitted his resignation to the Board. We gratefully acknowledge the many contributions Marcus has made the past four years to Mission to the Children and wish him God's blessings with his new family. Our hearts are with you Marcus!

John Kramer, a four-year volunteer with Mission to the Children and supervisor of the Altar area along with Mary Ann Rosas, has agreed to serve on the board. A pilot, John has flown to many towns to promote Mission to the Children and has also taken interested persons to the areas he serves. He also works closely with Pastor Rosales in Altar. John and his wife Marta live in Cedar Crest, New Mexico. Welcome, John!

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Needed Items

SCHOOL SUPPLIES, CASH OR GIFT CARDS TO TARGET or WalMart for the same. Christmas gifts or cash or gift cards to Target or WalMart for the same. We will receive these gifts at any time due to the inability to predict when it will be safe to go to the villages we can still access. Therefore we are taking items as quickly as we can after we receive them.

Please mail to:

Ruth Schaller

3829 W. Cetus St.

Tucson, AZ 85742-5016

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Presentations are made all over the country by board members and others familiar with the mission.

Trip Report - Altar Area

John Kramer and Mary Ann Rosas

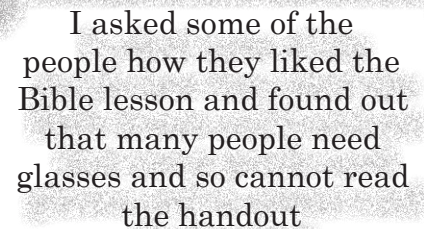
MARY ANN AND I LEFT TUCSON JUST BEFORE noon and headed for the border about an hour away. The van was lightly loaded with blankets, clothing and baby supplies (diapers & formula). Every inch of the van's floor was covered to the depth of a foot. We crossed the border on the American side at Mariposa. The border patrol and police weren't interested in our van. On the Mexican side we received a green light, but then the customs agents and army were somewhat interested. We rolled down the window and after a short round of questions and a look inside they let us go. The amount of clothing we carried didn't interest them, unlike our load of Christmas presents in January where they held us up six hours! At the second customs check point we received another green light and we were off to Altar, about two hours away.

The streets are busy, the illegal crossing of the U.S. border has ostensibly returned to near normal levels as the violence has subsided somewhat. For a few months last summer and fall, Altar was nearly deserted and the streets were empty. But now the usual hustle and bustle has returned along with the dust churned up by the many cars and trucks. We called our Altar volunteer and she met us for dinner at Rosa's Café. At dinner we made arrangements to visit her the next evening to settle accounts and to continue the dispensa* in her three villages.

We dropped in on one of the member families of El Buen Pastor church and visited with them for an hour over tea. The husband recently got a job at a gold mine 30 miles away after 9 months of unemployment and only comes home every few weeks. Without phones or other means of communication he just shows up when he can without any notice. We listened to stories about life in Altar. For example, the wife is on a softball team but only has an old worn baseball glove which

she uses but doesn't offer much protection. She ends up catching the ball with her bare hands. We got the daughter's email address, but she doesn't own a computer and only occasionally goes to an internet café to get her emails.

Next morning we arrived at El Buen Pastor church to pick up Pastor Carlos and to head to the villages for the Bible study and dispensa*, but walking around the side to knock, I was surprised to see a dozen Federales with all their machine guns near the parsonage. Pastor Carlos quickly let me in the side entrance to the yard and apartment. Mary Ann was going to have to wait in the van out front until things settled down with the Federales. A few minutes later they came to the side door to inquire what the "gringo" was doing here.



I asked some of the people how they liked the Bible lesson and found out that many people need glasses and so cannot read the handout

Pastor Carlos explained and they left me alone. They were there to arrest the sicarious (gunmen) who lived next to the church. Later the neighbors told me the sicarious had been pre-warned and left earlier that morning from three different houses. Arresting sicarious normally involves lots of shooting so we didn't venture outside until the Federales left.

Finally all of us, including pregnant Vicky and the baby, loaded up and headed for San Jose, the first stop on the dispensa* tour that morning.

Pastor Carlos did a great Bible lesson with each of the villages, and Vicky did a great job with the children. I asked some of the people how they liked the Bible lesson and found out that many people need glasses and so cannot read the handout, but they liked and appreciated the message of God's love which comes to us through Jesus. San

Jose had coffee for us afterwards, and San Manuel had a lunch prepared for us. Martha made the lunch and her husband is the one who is back in town after three years in prison in the U.S. He works at the tire store out by the highway and I was only able to wave at him as we later went by. He and I communicated for years while he was in prison and he received Bibles and prison ministry material while there. It's nice to see him back. He once wrote me that prison in the U.S. was nicer and more comfortable than being back in San Manuel.

About 4:30 we arrived in Atil for the



Scenic route between Saric and Sasabe, watch out for the rocks!

dispensa*, the first one since last May. The violence has kept us from visiting this town for many months. Everyone was very happy to have us back. Once again the Bible lesson and kids' lessons were well received.

Later that night Mary Ann and I visited with Luz Maria and gave her a check for her upcoming dispensa*. After she receives money she orders the food and then makes plans for what weekend she will do the dispensa*, depending on Pastor Carlos' schedule. At her house that evening we met an important guest – the comptroller for the local government and his family was visiting.

We discussed with him the best way to drive home the next day, as we needed to drop off Pastor Alejandro in Sasabe, and he got on the phone and called all the officials in the towns all the way to the border and told us that the road past Saric was safe and he recommended we take it.

Sunday morning we went to El Buen Pastor church. While waiting to get ready I went to the neighbors who had some letters ready for Julian (their son) who is back in jail in the U.S. I take letters for prisoners because the Mexican postal system doesn't work. Julian is a friend who was one of my pen pals in jail a year ago, and now he is in jail again. His families are members of El Buen Pastor church. It's a good time to send them Bibles, prison ministry pamphlets and lessons.

Across the street from the church lived a family that Pastor Baerbock became the padrino (godfather) to their two boys. The father later lost his job, became a drug dealer, didn't pay the drug cartel all the money he owed them, and just now fled for his life. So I learned that the family is suddenly gone, owing three months back rent.

After loading up with Pastor Alejandro we gassed up outside Altar. At the gas station two police trucks of local Altar police officers pulled up. I went over to talk to them. Finding out that they needed flash lights I gave them one of the two I had brought for the police in La Sangre. La Sangre ran out of money since December and so the police left. Now I had two big police three-cell flashlights with no one to give them to. I didn't give the Altar police both of them that morning, wanting another opportunity to talk to them later. So, I promised them one when I return next month.

We drove out on the Saric road and the only armed men we saw was an Army patrol in their armored military vehicle. They were "loaded for bear," as we say. We dropped Pastor Alejandro off and went to visit a lady we have known for a long time. She told us about the big gun battle that happened at La Ladrillera that weekend

outside Sasabe. But she said, in general, there is peace (todo esta tranquilo) that is developing between the drug cartels.

Crossing the border we also heard about the big gun battle from the Border Patrol. They could hear the shots being fired from their border station. We went on our way.

ON OUR 4-6 MARCH TRIP, WE MET WITH LUZ Maria about the upcoming dispensa* in Altar, 16 de Septiembre and Llano Blanco (three of the villages that receive food staples instead of coupons). We also coordinated the dispensa* planned for March 12th for the towns that Mary Ann and I visit. Due to the information gathered on this trip Mary Ann and I have greatly altered our plans. Ruth and Mary Ann had loaded the van with blankets, baby clothes, and children's toys the day before. The border crossing and drive was uneventful.

Pastor Carlos has located a young lady who has agreed to accompany us to the villages for dispensas* and do the children's lessons. She is a Sunday school teacher at El Buen Pastor.

Pastor Carlos asked Mission to the Children to consider providing about three used computers to establish an "internet café" at the church. Young people have a desire to be at and to be seen at the church and only need a few activities such as this to make it happen. Also, the church library is poorly stocked but well utilized by the teens and young adults and needs more books suited to all age groups, but particularly teens. And, there is a medical issue that I'm requesting we address. One of the leaders of El Buen Pastor has a glass eye. His eye is frequently infected and the area around the eye red and sore because the eye is a size too small allowing dust to enter the eye socket. He needs a properly fitted glass eye.

Saturday morning I left for Luz Maria's, where I met with her and her brother and made arrangements for an upcoming dispensa* to

her three villages. Sunday morning we went first to San Manuel, then to La Sangre. While speaking with several community members we learned that the person who sells gas in San Manuel had his door "machine gunned" recently in a confrontation during the night and a few sicarios have taken up residence in La Sangre. This is not good news as it relates to our ability to continue working in this area.

After meeting with several people at both villages and dropping off the items in the van in La Sangre, we returned to Altar, where Pastor Hartman gave the sermon. His sermon focused on Psalm 23 and the great burden Christ has relieved us of by his



Bashful crowd with their new blankets.
(That's John Kramer in the back row.)

atonement act on the cross. At church I picked up two letters to send to a husband of one of the members who is currently in prison in the U.S. After church I stopped by Eduardo and Alma's house to drop off baseball equipment donated by American Legion members, through Mary Ann's efforts, and then drove to Atil.

Something new on the road was hand painted lettering on the back of nearly every

road sign saying “Brujo Pollero.” I take this to mean that the cartel on this highway had mistreated some Mexicans intent on crossing the border and one of the offended was putting a curse on the bad “Polleros” and/or letting everyone know they can’t be trusted. I picked up a hitchhiker carrying books and gave him a ride from Altar to Átil. He turned out to be the primary school teacher for Tubutama and relayed sufficiently colorful stories about gun fire in and about that town to convince me it is too early to return to doing dispensas* there.

After visiting with a few people I continued on to the border by way of the Saric road. I passed by a three truck convoy of solders driving south on the road who were armed with visible rocket launchers and when I got to La Ladrillera I spotted two more army vehicles which had pulled over two white vans and were searching about 40 people with their hands in the air. I only saw three other cars during the almost two hour drive. We are going to drop all villages from our plans for the foreseeable future, except Atil.

**dispensa – distribution of food staples or coupons to the eligible residents. Three villages receive food staples instead of coupons to use at a local grocery*



Vicky cooking “Mole” for Mary Ann.

Mission Statement

MISSION TO THE CHILDREN HAS BEEN ORGANIZED TO bring the Gospel to children and their families in northwestern Sonora, Mexico and to help meet their physical needs.

To bring the Gospel, Mission to the Children cooperates with mission activities of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS) and associated groups to:

- Organize groups for regular worship and Bible study
- Foster worship services and Bible studies in such groups
- Provide prayer and financial support to congregations of the Iglesia Evangélica Luterana Confesional (IELC) in northwest Sonora, Mexico
- Obtain and distribute Bibles and other literature for Christian education

To help meet basic physical needs, Mission to the Children

- Provides financial and material aid to needy families as appropriate.
- Contributes to projects of general benefit to larger communities as may be appropriate. This physical ministry is administered to honor our Christian responsibility to help the truly needy and to promote our Gospel outreach.



Thank You!!

To all our donors of financial and material gifts, please know how much we appreciate you! We are constantly surprised at the creative ways you find to raise money or garner items for the families in Sonora. As we hope we always remember to say, this is your mission. Please take this to heart as this mission would not exist without your participation and prayers.



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Report From el Sasabe

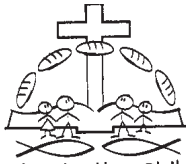
Pastor Alejandro Sanchez

Thanks be to God, in April we had a baptism with an attendance of about 70 people, even though the facility was not sufficient to receive so many people and some had to remain outside. But, it was a grand opportunity to speak about Jesús and the salvation He gave us. Thanks to this, two new families have come to the Church and one of the ladies wishes to take confirmation classes. We will start teaching this lady in May 7th. Mr Roberto was confirmed after one year of studying and is very active in the Church. With God's help, the Church keeps growing little by little.

Report From Altar

Pastor Carlos Rosales

We celebrated Easter with four baptisms and good attendance and more baptisms are expected each end of the month. There are two people studying towards confirmation. An average of 36.5 people attended the four services this month. The church now has a treasurer. We painted the front of the church to make the building more acceptable to the community and our members. We have had lots of visitors. The men have constructed bathrooms outside the church because of the collapsed pipes.



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The Great Commission
On a Great Lake

“Go and make disciples of all nations”
Matthew 28:19

Lutheran Women's Missionary Society
48th Annual Convention- Milwaukee, Wisconsin
June 23-26, 2011

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Hope to see
you there!**