

# Mission to the Children

## News Update

February, 2018

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### PASTOR'S CORNER

*Psalm 90:1-2 "Lord, you have been our dwelling place throughout all generations. <sup>2</sup> Before the mountains were born or you brought forth the whole world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God."*

A lot can change in a year. Songs that once played on the radio are now questions in Trivial Pursuit. Concerns that once troubled our dreams now are a thing of the past. How true it is the saying "Here today, Gone tomorrow."

Yet Christians know that this is not the case for everyone. God is the exception to time's passing as Psalm 90 clearly says. God is the believer's eternal dwelling place no matter how much time changes things in this world. This is possible only because of the cross and its eternal promise of all sins forgiven.

As you continue in a new year of God's blessings, cherish the eternal dwelling place you have with God made possible by Christ's cross. It is the eternal constant in all of time's changes in this life and in the life to come. **Pastor Tim Patoka**

### PRESIDENT'S NOTE

Greetings to all our cherished friends, donors and prayer partners! I pray that 2018 will be a blessing to you and your family as we all look at "new starts."

When one of my friends is asked how she is doing, her reply most often is, "I am drinking out of the saucer." Her response is based on a portion of Luke 2:38, "...a good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over..." Like her, my heart is joyful and my cup

is running over with gratitude as I write thank-you notes to donors of school supplies and Christmas gifts for the families in Sonora we are so privileged to serve. We could not do it without YOU! Writing notes gives me the opportunity to connect directly with those of you who pray regularly for the mission and also give from the heart. At the mission office, along with financial and humanitarian gifts, we also receive many wonderful notes and cards thanking us for serving the children of Northern Mexico. Thank you!

But that is not all of it by far. In the past year, the mission has built and dedicated a new chapel attached to the house in Altar where we worshipped for many years. The chapel even sports a lovely burnished bell donated by one of our long-term volunteer families! We have a second pastor now, Pastor Victor who serves both Sasabe and Altar along with Pastor Alejandro. Pastor Victor brings along a wife and two young children.

As I write this, a sizeable group of WELS Spanish-speaking pastors and pastors from the IELC (the Mexican Lutheran Synod) are preparing to meet on the border for their quarterly study and devotion group; truly two countries "walking together." Our board is indeed "drinking from the saucer."

The past year has also seen many challenges for this vital ministry. Memorial services were held in Tucson and at our churches in northern Mexico for Mary Ann Rosas, our beloved Hispanic office manager, who gave so freely of her love and time on both sides of the border. She was truly an ambassador for Christ. Just as I started typing this, I received a call that another much-loved and vivacious volunteer, Gisela Kittel,

has died from a recently diagnosed aggressive brain tumor. Our past president and long-time Spanish-speaking volunteer, John Bolm, has also just passed away because of stage four cancer.

Another long-term volunteer, Karen Manning, has stepped into the office manager role with great efficiency while several other long-term volunteers came forward to do the four-day trip to Sonora to take 1,100 Christmas gifts and do posadas in 13 venues.

Our major volunteer, the “flying gringo”, John Kramer, is currently spending a good deal of time for WELS World Board exploring the potential for ministry in Paraguay. All of the above has challenged us to dig deeper, looking for new talent willing to make long trips to spend days in Sonora assisting the ministry.

Volunteer Jeff Hauser oversaw the building of the new chapel in Altar and repairs on the parsonage in Atil. Volunteer Kent Phillips worked long hours to assist Pastor Victor in getting internet. Spanish teacher Karen Kilchenmann from Wisconsin and Lori Hauser from Tucson made sure that all 1100 gifts made it safely to Mexico for Christmas. Pastor Tim Patoka, our spiritual advisor, has gone above and beyond making trips to Mexico to also share the gospel. We thank all of the above and in particular Missionary Tim Flunker who gives us freely of his time and expertise on a regular basis.

Our cup indeed runneth over. As reported back to me, it brings such joy to the hearts of the volunteers when they hear the correct spiritual answers from the children in church, Sunday School and VBS. This is our mission---to serve these children and their families in multiple small villages in Sonora. God continues to bless the mission and continues to richly provide us with what we need through so many of you, our faithful donors.

Thank you from your sister in Christ, Ruth Schaller, Chair of the Board.

## ***CHRISTMAS TRIP***

### **MttC Posada Tour December 2017**

- Four people
- Three vans
- Over 1,000 gifts
- Over 1,350 people attended
- Three days of work
- 10 places

If you like stats, then that first line is all for you. If you like personalities..... Then we can talk about Alma, who is in Tubutama, which took place at 9am on Sunday. This is an uncommon hour for Mexicans on the weekend, but she had the people all there, and she organized the “buffet” breakfast that had every Mexican Christmas dish that I am love. From tamales to hot chocolate, from tacos to enchiladas and everything in between – they were all ready by 9:15am and everyone ate well (and probably in excess, due to the generous amount of food that was there).

We can also talk about Pastor Victor, the new pastor in Atil, who accompanied us on seven of the ten visits, and did the entire posada service not only for his hometown of Atil but also for the town of Saric, where combined over 200 people heard the Gospel message of the birth of Christ and the good news that Jesus is Emanuel – God with us.



We can even talk about Luisito, who in the town of 16 de Septiembre, was convinced that there was no gift for him. He stood at the front of the crowd, anxiously waiting to hear his name. He held back tears

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(sometimes not to successfully) and waited. Finally, the second to last gift had his name on it. His eyes shined through the tears as he gratefully accepted his gift and went away happy, eager to play with his new toy. But above all, we talked about Jesus, the Son of God, who came to take away our sins and be God with us, so that no one needs to be alone anymore. We talked about the sins that separated us from God and the forgiveness that Jesus won for us. We talked about our desire to share that, even shouting it from the mountains. That is the most important message we could have shared – and share it we did.

Want to know more? Continue reading – because I give you a day-by-day accounting of our activities.

### Thursday, Dec 7

We all gathered at Grace, spent time in devotion and made our way out of town before noon. We arrived at the Sasabe border, and in less than 30 minutes we had our gift-filled vans on the way down to Atil. We spent the night in Atil, understanding that the next three days would be filled with action and adventure.

### Friday, Dec 8

We left Atil to head to Altar, where we ate lunch and then met at church to follow Luz Maria to the three places we would be attending that day. We were at Llano Blanco around 2, 16 de Septiembre around 4 and in Altar at Luz Maria's place around 6. Later that evening, one van headed back to Atil while the other one went to tow Pastor Alejandro's vehicle from the grocery store where it had stalled out to his home. After that was done, that van headed to Atil as well.



### Saturday, Dec 9

We left Atil by 9am, heading out to the three “desert” villages: San Jose, La Sangre and San Manuel, where we gathered at 10a, noon and 2pm. After those three places, we headed back through the desert to Atil, where Pastor Victor had just finishing the worship service when we arrived. We helped hand out gifts, and by 8pm the once-bustling backyard was quiet again.



### Sunday, Dec 10

We left Atil, having packed everything up (because we weren't coming back) around 8:30am. We arrived in Tubutama, and instead of meeting in the square, like we have done in the past, we gathered at Alma's house. They wanted to meet there to avoid the cold wind in the morning. We then went on to La Reforma, where we gathered in the plaza and watched the best piñata destruction. The candy rained down! After we met there, we went on to Saric, where we hadn't delivered gifts in several years. Pastor Victor led the worship in the street in front of Fidel's house, and over 75 people gathered and listened. We then made our way through the desert to

Sasabe, so that we could cross the border, doing so by 4:30pm.



Our God has blessed us again! We all enjoyed our time, and left refreshed in the knowledge that another opportunity to share the birth of Jesus was successful, humanly speaking. May the Lord of the Harvest bless your Christmas celebration.

## *IN MEMORY*



Gisela Kittle, a beautiful sister in Christ and a volunteer for Mission to the Children was taken home by our Lord on January 30, 2018.

She will be truly missed for her love for our Lord, MttC and children. We will miss most of all her joy, her laughter, her hugs and her smile.

Our hearts are breaking with sadness for our loss but overjoyed with gladness knowing that she is now with our Lord. She will be forever missed but we will see her again with much joy.

## *IN MEMORY*



Our wonderful Lord took John Bolm home on February 8, 2018. John was a long time member at Holy Cross Lutheran Church and then a member at Grace-Sahuarita in Tucson, Arizona. Not only was he a brother in Christ but he worked tirelessly for MttC as a past president and again as a volunteer for many years. Again our hearts are sad but also overjoyed knowing that John is with the Lord.

He too will be forever missed by all who knew John but we know that we will see him again with much joy.