

Mission to the Children

News Update

Website: www.missiontothechildren.org

Email: info@missiontothechildren.org

February, 2020

PASTOR'S CORNER

"This is how God's love for us was revealed: God has sent his only-begotten Son into the world so that we may live through him." (1 John 4:9 EHV)

It is interesting to see how people show their love for one another in light of Valentine's Day. Children in grade school exchange sweets and cards. Young adults contemplate how best to express their heart's desires or agonize how single they still are. Busy couples may use Valentine's Day to schedule an irregular date night or perhaps entirely forget about it. Those who have had to say goodbye to loved ones may view this day with a mix of sadness and longing for a blessed reunion in heaven. No matter how we celebrate Valentine's Day, it revolves around the idea of love.

Love is not a concept that is uniquely human. Our God too knows what love is. But unlike we who show our love in ways that are almost always self-serving, God's love is primarily shown in one way – in his only-begotten Son Jesus Christ. It is entirely because of God's love that the Father sent his Son to live, die, and rise for our salvation. It is entirely because of the Son's love that he accomplished his mission which caused him untold anguish and suffering.

Even though we are born in sin and by nature reject anything dealing with

God, we still receive God's wondrous love as revealed in his Son. God's show of love is greater than anything we could ever offer to another for Valentine's Day. Yet there's more to being a Christian than simply receiving God's love. We are also blessed to be its messengers by telling others about God's love as revealed in his Son Jesus Christ.

As you read through this newsletter explaining what all Mission To The Children has and is planning to do, you will see how we act as messengers of God's love for the families in northern Sonora. While we recognize that only the Holy Spirit can effect spiritual changes, we ask for your continued prayers and support for this gospel ministry that seeks to tell all about God's love as revealed in his Son Jesus Christ.

By Pastor Tim Patoka

PRESIDENT'S CORNER

A most blessed 2020 to all of you, our incredible donors!!! Each year my amazement and appreciation grow for those of you who have been with this mission for so many years! Some wonderful friendships have grown "across the miles." Your cards and letters and prayers continue to inspire us as we serve the wonderful people of Sonora with God's Word. Along with services and the regular school supply

drive and Christmas gift collection, Mission also gets involved with other events in Mexico depending on what time of year it is. Pascua, or Easter, is a major celebration. Mother's Day and Children's Day are great fun if we happen to be there at those times.

One of the most popular events is Vacation Bible School! The children love it, look forward to it, and sometimes beg their parents to let them attend all three lessons over a three-day period. John Kramer and the volunteers he lines up do wonderful lessons, activities and crafts that the children really can get into. A much-anticipated writing of prayers, attaching them to helium balloons and watching them rise into the sky is one of the highlights. It is an object lesson that does not lose its appeal. They often do plays with costumes they make and assume roles from the Bible. If there are enough volunteers and weather permits, the children are taken to a stream, or even the ocean, where they actually get to be in the water---a foreign experience to many of them. And, of course, the annual hot dog roast!!! Pastor Alejandro Sanchez Amaya and Pastor Tim Flunker often accompany them. Your prayers are cherished. Please add to them that we might be able to replace our aging van. Thank you for everything!

By President Ruth Schaller

Christmas Posada Trip- ***December 2019***

It all began on a starry night just before Christmas in December of the year 2019. Many volunteers had completed the choosing, gathering, wrapping and sending of children's Christmas presents that now lay in the

Tucsonan desert. 1,400 presents were ready for transport to the sleepy little Mexican pueblos just across the border from Arizona. Children in these little pueblos were anticipating their arrival, because why? Because Mission to the Children (MttC) has not let them go without Christmas in almost 30 years. The pleasure was mine to help distribute these gifts and I arrived in Tucson on a late-night flight with a sky full of desert stars twinkling in plain view.

I reflected on my hotel accommodations, far different than many experiences in Sonora. When Sonoran's want to take a shower this time of year, they first need to light a wood fire under the water tank. Then they'd need to wait an hour for cold water to become tepid, which is the warmest it becomes and then only for the first to shower. Typically, the fire is only lit on Saturday night...and many don't even have this.

At my hotel breakfast early the next morning I chose the buffet with all that means. In comparison, many Sonoran's eat nothing but tortillas three times a day with a little green or red sauce spread over the top. Once a mother in Sonora told me that she hoped to offer her children some beans to spread on the top of the tortillas, but then said, "But you know how expensive beans are?".

Yes, they do eat some beef or chicken but typically only on the weekends, and only if they had a paycheck that week. And the concept of a paycheck is different in Sonora. It isn't a check, there isn't any withholding for taxes or Social Security. 200 pesos a day is good money, the equivalent of \$10 and a shiny quarter per day.

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During our Posada gift distribution tours, the people usually share food, as in a Lutheran Potluck. A young girl once told me, between bites, she loved the meat tamales at Christmas. I tried to correct her that they were Christmas tamales...but she corrects me. They had meat in them!

With a 15-passenger van and seats removed, loaded full to the brim with Christmas presents Kent and I headed for the border and the usual ordeal with Mexican Customs. Since MttC now has only one van we need to rely on help from the Hausers' and so Jeff took one load of gifts down a week ago, now I'm taking another load down to store in our Atil house in preparation for the next day.



Then Friday we'll take his van and ours, both loaded again to the brim and with our 7 volunteers head to Mexico for the official start of the Posada Tour. It's a lot of driving. Tucson is over an hour from the border, and then it takes

a few more hours to get to the farthest of villages.

On Thursday morning I met Mike and Dawn from Minnesota who came as volunteers to help in the Posada Tour. Their participation was coordinated with Shannon of Mission Journeys, a WELS program that encourages short term mission work. Karen from Wisconsin also joined us, she being the one who coordinated much of the gathering of Christmas presents. Santiago from California was with us to give the message in four of our villages. Pastor Jon (Juan) Buchholz was also with us, and he led us in prayer before we crossed the border.

Getting our two loaded vans plus us volunteers to the house in Atil was enough of a job for one day. We never know how much of a delay we'll experience in crossing the border. We managed to arrive in Atil before it got too dark and then we began preparations for the next day and three Posadas. The vans had to be loaded with the boxes of gifts in the order we'll need them. We ended the day with a devotion by Pastor Juan. It's important for us volunteers to have opportunity to grow in our faith even as we share the message of Christmas with the people of Sonora. Each of the three days of Posada events saw us in at least three different pueblos for a total of 10, plus we delivered the presents for the two churches and Cerro Prieto, a village we

equip our Mexican volunteers to visit in our place. That's 13 locations we deliver 1,400 gifts to and in one form or another share the message of Christmas. Pastor Alejandro led the devotional message in 7 villages plus the two churches, Santiago in three plus a Children's message in Atil, and Fidel the message in Cerro Prieto.



A Posada event is a party with a devotional message, a piñata to break, a cake to eat after a potluck meal, and a present to receive. Without this almost two-hour event in each pueblo, requiring so many helping at the many stages of organizing, buying, wrapping, sending and delivering, these many children wouldn't know that American Christians care about them. It's a way to reflect the love of Christ to people we wouldn't otherwise have the opportunity to touch with Christ's message. We touched over 2,000 people again this year. Thank you all for the part you played in this!

On behalf of Ruth, Karen, Becky and all who make up Mission to the Children: Merry Christmas to all, and to all a good night!

John
Mission to the Children.



A Message from John Kramer

In the gospel according to Luke we find a narrative where John and James are asking Jesus if they should "call fire down from heaven to destroy" a Samaritan town that wasn't receptive to the message of God's great love from our Savior. But "Jesus rebuked them, and they went to another village." (Luke 9:54,55) Jesus worked hard at sharing the forgiveness of sins through faith with the people of this world. He invited many saying "Follow me". But they replied with excuses. (Luke 9:59)

While it is unthinkable that a person would turn down an invitation from the "author of life" (Acts 3:15) it is equally unthinkable that we Christians would be slow about the commission he gave us. It's called the "Great Commission". It says to go and share his message with many (Mathew 28:18-20). It also follows that we shouldn't hinder but encourage others, including our youth, to participate in the Great Commission.

Remember, there is a sense of urgency in sharing the gospel. "The gospel is only good news if it gets there in time." This quote is from Carl F.H. Henry, not a WELS theologian, but a Christian theologian non-the-less! His quote shares the urgency that all Christians should feel. There's at least another

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reason for sharing the gospel with a sense of urgency. Many have reported that Great Commission work revitalizes a church like little else. It allows Christians to actually live out the life that the Lord wishes for all Christians. He wishes us to share his message and not be distracted by life. You've heard it said, "Carpe Diem!", "Seize the Day! Or as we see it in the NIV "making the most of every opportunity" (Ephesians 5:15-17).

The Apostle John, who appears in the Luke narrative above didn't want to share the message with Samaritans. The Samaritans were a people settled in Israel after the Assyrians carried off the unbelieving northern 10 Tribes of Israel in 721 B.C, replacing them with these other people. The Jews didn't like these Samaritan people for several reasons, one being they represented God's judgment against Israel. Now in Acts 8:14-17 we see a revitalized Apostle John gladly sharing the message of God's grace with people he formerly had nothing to do with. What a change! Now he's sharing the message of God's grace with people he previously didn't like. Now he's acting like a Christian!

We are also revitalized by the message of Jesus, in which we receive a forgiveness we don't deserve, and are now empowered to share that message with others. Motivate yourself and others to do what the Lord, "the bread of life, the author and perfecter of our

faith" has given us to do. Be a missionary!

Missionaries do God-commanded work. We are not motivated by the law but wish to follow our Savior's imperative because of the great love he has shown us! We go swiftly, with a sense of urgency for the same reason! Missionaries can follow the Apostle John's example and deploy in a temporary yet swift and repetitive manner. Missionaries are not necessarily professionals. Almost all the missionaries sent to Sonora, Mexico are laity. They are lay missionaries. Yet, from this lay involvement, we have two churches and many eager listeners available whom are now Christians, participating regularly in the mission called "Mission to the Children". Despite the name, we share the message with adults as well as children.

Our Savior is saying "Follow me." No excuses. Let's go! The Apostle John followed and witnessed to those he formerly didn't like. He can be our example. Again, Let's go!

Here's an example of what Mission to the Children does:

<https://youtu.be/W0Y4Cr-62vs> . Cut and paste the URL into your browser. There are many ways in which you can help share the message of Jesus with the people of Mexico. All you need to do is contact us and begin!



Another Baptism in Altar



Cake for Confirmation Class.



Children of Altar at Christmas Time



God's Precious Children



Sunday School in Altar