



Fall 2008 Newsletter

For whosoever shall give you a cup of water to drink in my name, because ye belong to Christ, verily I say unto you, he shall not lose his reward. Mark 9:41

www.aguavivaministries.org

Ministry update *from Rose Mary Townsend*

Psalm 103:1-2...Bless the Lord O my soul and all that is within me, bless His Holy name. Bless the Lord O my soul and forget not all His benefits.

We wish to thank all of you dear ones who have given of your time and finances and have made the past year an "awesome time of blessing" for many precious souls. This summer a large group from Kent, Ohio had the courage to come see us for the first time during the "hot...but dry temperatures." We had many groups come and help out - to all of our extended families in Canada and the USA: blessings to you :)

This summer we have seen many overflowing washes from seasonal downpours of rain. Many homes are in dire need of repair, and so the needs continue.

Since school started, the dining room fellowship hall has been in operation to feed children. A meal is served from 12pm to 2pm. The agreement was that the local city government would supply the necessary materials to prepare the meals...but due to "technical difficulties" we are supplying most of the supplies. Tortillas are donated by a local business and we serve these along with beans and soup. Tabitha is in charge of the dining room. **Please consider donating to this worthy cause - the need is critical!** One week we fed 400 people! This is a wonderful outreach opportunity. We look forward to seeing changes in individuals who come to worship and fellowship with us.

We are looking forward to the return of our Director "gran jefe pluma blanca" (grand chief white feather, as John VerWys is lovingly referred to by the local Agua Prieta family). We look forward to John resuming the Tuesday morning Bible studies. We also rely on him to cross much needed food supplies over the border and organize building projects.

My "dreams" for the next season, Lord willing

- a "porch" added to our existing buildings where the congregation can sit outdoors and fellowship
- laundry facilities for our ladies to do their laundry
- cabinets installed in the dining room
- to build at least four homes for needy families.

These are a few of the goals yours truly would like to see. We trust the Lord will provide in continuing to give generous hearts.

Dios los bendiga, Rose Mary



We are so grateful for the three buildings that we now use for our many activities. A few years ago, this was just a dream. Thank you sincerely to our supporters. God bless you all!

Wedding at Ebenezer Church...

John and Rose Mary with Veronica and Isidro. A large group of Canadian volunteers were also guests at the March wedding.

Veronica's grandmother Esther is a good and longtime friend of Agua Viva Ministries. Her four daughters and all her grandchildren attend our church services.

We wish this dear Christian couple much happiness!



New friends Carly and Gloria. "They gave away their material possessions so easily that I couldn't help but be reminded of Jesus. The experience was truly inspiring."

EDITOR'S NOTE Sincere thanks to contributors. The purpose of our newsletter is to glorify God's work and encourage support for this Ministry. Please consider sending your thoughts and photos for future editions and our web-site. Email info@aguavivaministries.org

Agua Viva Ministries

provides Christian teaching and humanitarian aid to needy people in Agua Prieta, Mexico. Volunteer organizers Rose Mary Townsend and John VerWys are assisted by visiting teams and caring individuals. Together we aim to glorify God and give testimony to how He is working in the building of His kingdom.



Our logo represents "living water in a dry, thirsty land." Agua Prieta (Spanish) means Dark Water (English) while Agua Viva means Living Water. The mission of Agua Viva Ministries is to bring **LIFE to DARKNESS** - the gospel of Jesus Christ in Word and Deed to needy people.

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Dear Mission Minded Friends...

by Chris Foreman

The Loma Community Church became aware of the Agua Viva Mission almost 10 years ago and has been sending a "Work and Witness" trip to Mexico on an annual basis ever since.

How did a small rural church in the Colorado Grand Valley get involved with mission work in Mexico? Our pastor went in search of a mission work that would be close enough so that expensive travel would not be involved, provided a safe environment for families, and offered a positive work and witness experience. Through *Village Missions*, contact was made with Rose Mary Townsend and Agua Viva Ministries and an exploratory trip was launched. The hands on ministry to the desperately poor of this Mexican border town was just what the pastor had in mind. The ability to stay at the Valley Bible Church on the US side of the border made the logistics perfect.

After much prayer and planning the first trip to Mexico occurred just before Christmas in 1999. Some 26 people from Loma participated - families, teens, and singles. We drove down in a caravan and took 2 days for travel. We ate and slept in the Valley Bible Fellowship Hall and made the daily trek across the border to work on a variety of projects and worship with the local congregation in their church. The visits to different families in need were probably the most dramatic aspect of the visit. Lots of hard work, long days, and worshipping together built our group's love of each other and the Lord.

In the early years we were mixing concrete when John couldn't call for a concrete truck and we screened sand and gravel from the wash. Recently we have focused on projects we could do in individual homes - the last two years we installed propane stoves in homes; this also included tanks and repair of existing stoves. Prior to that we installed wood burning 30 gallon barrel stoves.

Over the years the mission focus of our church has benefitted from the exposure of the congregation to the needs and blessings of the Agua Viva Mission. Returning from our annual trip we often discuss how to expand the efforts of the mission.

If you think that this is an opportunity for your church or group please contact me at chrisfromfruita@yahoo.com. Your trip to the mission can be set up in a variety of ways. Many of the groups are teen groups and the mission has arrangements with a local Douglas motel. The ability to stay in the US at night and travel to the mission during the day is a comfort to many. We feel that this small mission is very deserving of your support and involvement.

Chris Foreman is an Elder of Outreach at Loma Community Church in Loma, Colorado



Loma ladies help Rosy Mary package rice. Food staples are purchased in bulk and packaged family-size for giving/selling to people living in the church area.



Installing heating in a home.



The landscape around Agua Prieta.

Medical Needs *by Rose Mary Townsend*

This picture is of Fermin and Ivette. They live directly behind the church. They have 3 little ones, Isaac (6), Jonathan (2 1/2) and Nubia Suzette (6 months). Fermin is healthy in the picture, but since then he has developed diabetes and is down to about 120 pounds. He is on Insulin. With their limited staples it is difficult for him to eat properly. Because of his illness he lost his job, thus losing the medical care he had for himself and his family. Fermin does whatever odd jobs he can find. I have hired him to keep the church yard clean, (as needed) paying him \$5 a day (he killed two rattlesnakes, scorpions, and the biggest deer slayers HE has ever seen...) Fermin also drives the church van and helps around the church. A doctor that came with the Kent, Ohio team got him started on regular injectable insulin and gave him enough to last for a couple of months. After that I hope to find a sponsor for his needed meds.

I really wish we had \$ set aside for medical emergencies. We have several people in the congregation who need insulin. The Generic Medical Organization (sponsored by Mexican movie stars) does sell meds, but generic type insulin tablets...which is what Fermin was taking, but it was not helping him. One of our newer, older ladies who needs to go to Hermosillio for dialysis, can't do that either. Before I left last week I went to go visit one of our ladies who had been in bed



for 1 week...apparently she has a "kidney-stone" stuck and any movement was causing her horrible, horrible pain. She said it is worse then giving birth! Now she needed to be in the hospital with an IV pushing the fluids, plus pain meds to hopefully get that stone out...again...I could not

help her... I hope to see her tomorrow.

You know we have the piece of property that is in front of the church...the thought has been going through my mind for quite a while about possibly building a clinic or urgent care center there. Of course that would be quite an undertaking. My thought would be that perhaps we could ask for Mexican Drs. to volunteer their time ...but then of course we would have to provide the meds, perhaps we could charge each patient a small amount for the meds...depending on the situation...this is just "food for thought". I know we cannot help everyone, just the dear ones God brings across our path.

Vacation Bible School

Each of the larger groups and several individuals who visited Agua Prieta this past year hosted a "vacation bible school" for area children. We are so grateful for the effort and resources our work groups put into preparing a lesson, craft, and lunch. Vacation Bible School is very popular with everyone - for visitors as well as "students" of all ages.

To our many readers who worked on building these premises, you can see that they are well utilized! ALL for His honor and His glory...



Jodene Les helps cut a craft, local mothers and volunteers prepare lunch, several fathers watch with interest.



A reason for PRAISE - our large room, plenty of tables and chairs for sell out crowds attending VBS. What a wonderful way to reach MANY with a simple gospel message.



Clever crafts: photo frame with scripture verse; sun catcher "Que tu luz brille" "That your light shines..."

Spring Break Mission Trip to Mexico

by Brian Najapfour

This past spring break (April 3-11), the Lord gave me the privilege to minister to Mexican people. A mission team of twenty-three members, mostly teenagers from the Heritage Netherlands Reformed Congregation, invited me to join them in their mission tour to Mexico.

The main task they gave me was to facilitate the morning and evening devotions and to preach God's word for them. These devotions as well as the sermons helped us fuel our passion for the mission work.

We were also encouraged by the dedicated lives of Rose Mary Townsend and John VerWys who became our guides throughout our stay in Agua Prieta, Sonora, Mexico. Both of them are missionaries in that area. They not only teach the Scripture, but also provide shelters, clothes, and foods to the needy. They indeed minister in word and in deed. The team was so challenged by the ministry in Agua Prieta that some of us wished to stay longer in order to serve more. Many first-timers expressed their desire to come back again, the Lord willing.

Since all of us in the mission team could not speak Spanish fluently, we found it hard to effectively communicate the gospel to Agua Prieta people, those who live around the mission base, where the church is, are completely incapable of comprehending English. But this language barrier did not stop us from proclaiming Christ. When we visited a family, with the help of the Spanish-English Parallel Bible, we were able, if not to explain, at least to read the gospel of Christ to them in their mother tongue. We therefore evangelized them by simply repeating what the Bible says in their language. In this given circumstance this method seems to have been operative.

I was also privileged to preach three times, with Rose Mary translating, at Herencia de Ebenezer

Templo (Heritage of Ebenezer Church), where the Agua Prieta believers hold their corporate worship. The church has three services: Sunday, Tuesday, and Thursday. Interestingly, the number of those who attend the weekday services is almost equal with the attendance of those who come on Sunday. This suggests something about the spiritual condition of these church people—that they really long to worship the Lord. In fact, as I was preaching to them I myself could sense their thirst and hunger for God's word.

On one occasion, while preaching, I noticed that I was running out of time (because of translation the amount of time it took to preach was doubled.) And so I said to them that I have to stop, but they beseeched me to continue. They seemed to not care about time when listening to the sermon. They were also appreciative of the message. They are truly to be commended for their zeal for God's word.

We did not only *share* the message of salvation, but also tried to *show* this message to Agua Prieta people. We demonstrated this good news by helping them out in various ways, as most of them are desperately poor. One main job we undertook was to build houses for them. These houses are small, perhaps even smaller than the size of an ordinary American garage, but people contentedly received them. For them they are a big blessing. A feeding center was also founded. This reminds me of Jesus' earthly ministry, where he himself fed 'about five thousand men, besides women and children.' Jesus was not only concerned with people's spiritual need, but physical need as well, and so were we.

By God's grace, we sought to share the good tidings to people not only in word but also in deed. I ask then—how can we tell people of the love of God without showing them something of that love? I therefore exhort every Christian to present the gospel of Christ both in word and in action.

All for God's glory!

And he [Jesus] said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature (Mark 16:15)



Brian Najapfour is a pastor-teacher in the Philippines, on study leave at Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary, Grand Rapids, Michigan. Brian hopes those who will read this commentary (also on his weblog) will be encouraged and even challenged to support Agua Viva Ministries.

Urgent Need: Passenger Van



Our church vans are vital to ministry in Agua Prieta. Some of our regular attendees walk to church, but many live a good distance away and have no transportation. Several church members travel the roads each Tuesday, Thursday and Sunday, picking up members and friends to attend services. The vans are also used to pick up visiting groups at the Tucson airport.

According to Rose Mary, "We currently need another church van desperately. Our blue van is using 4 liters of oil each time it goes out...plus it needs work on transmission, needs new tires, we think it needs new fuel injectors...now it needs new brake shoes and the steering is not very stable...it kind-of-sort-of "sways" back and forth on the roads."

Can you help? Do you know of a good, used passenger van that is available for little cost? Could you organize a fundraiser for this need? Please contact us!

A family mission...

For most of us, a 30 hour drive from Fort Macleod, AB to Agua Prieta with three small children, pulling a supply trailer of donated goods across two international borders sounds like a pretty daunting experience. But Correen and Rob Slawson would do it again. Thanks for sharing your thoughts Coreen, on this 3rd trip to Agua Prieta...

As we sit enjoying our morning with a hot cup of Mexican coffee, our thoughts often drift back to our Mexico mission trip earlier in the year. Our team consisted of approximately 30 college and career aged persons, with Mr & Mrs Nijse and Pastor deVries as leaders. We had an excellent team to work with, and once again the experience was amazing.

We arrived in Douglas, Arizona on December 23, which allowed us to take in the Christmas program that the Sunday school children put on. It was wonderful to see everyone again; it felt as if we had never been gone. The Mexican people were so thrilled to see our children, and glad to see that we had come back to help them.

As part of a "Feed the Babies" program through our church, we had raised almost enough money to feed the babies of the church for one year. A youth team bottle drive and ongoing bottle drops income was designated to purchase formula for the babies of the Agua Prieta church. This is something that both Rob and I had felt was of utmost importance after our first trip. Many of the mothers cannot breast feed and have no money for formula, so the babies were getting a mixture of flour or cornstarch and water, which of course is merely filler. We also had a fundraiser night where we raised money for items of necessity: food, undergarments and personal hygiene products. We have been so grateful for the support of our church family with this Mission endeavor. We pulled a u-haul trailer loaded with clothing, etc. for the Mexican people.

We were really encouraged to see how the church in Mexico had not only grown in number, but also how everyone, even the children, had matured spiritually. Our first few days were spent preparing for the rest of the team, stocking up with formula and visiting with our Mexican friends. We were excited to see Pedro and Celena's home, especially after the fire had destroyed their home earlier last year!



Correen and son Luke having fun with local children at the new recreation area nearby. The government built a skatepark, soccer field, ball diamond and playground.



Rob Slawson, Danielle and Blaine share lunch with Mexican friends.

When the team arrived, it was time to get to work. The plan was to build a distribution centre which would be used to feed children before school. Our children were right in the building project, helping mix mortar, building trusses with their dad, or playing soccer with the children.

We held a distribution day, where the local people could receive various staples. We also made a few stops at homes where there was very little food, and gave out hampers to them. A book drive was held where parents and children could choose Christian literature. Just seeing the gratitude of the Mexican people is so encouraging for each one of us, because we so often take things for granted, and they are thankful for leftover food, or a pair of socks!



Daniella Slawson learns the art of tortilla making from Mama Rosa.

Luke Slawson enjoys socializing with Mexican children.

The Mexican families love to have us over for coffee, and visits. Even though they may only live in a cardboard shack, they still have a smile on their face. Pastor deVries suggested that in order to truly experience a mission trip, we had to live with them for one day -- only if we felt this was something we could do. So after working a long day on the project, groups were organized to experience Mexican life. Some of the team only visited a family and enjoyed fellowship and supper with them but about 90% of the team went to different homes for a sleepover. Now this was the real deal! Rob spent the night over while I went back to Arizona with the children. He said it was a real experience; you tried to wash your self with a little bowl and cloth and then turned in for an early night. Rob and Chris got the best room of the house because they were guests. In the morning they were treated to a real Mexican breakfast, and then it was back to the work project.

Our children enjoyed our time in Mexico. For Danielle this was her second trip with us, so she was excited to see her friends again. We continue to remember this Mexico Mission Project and pray that in the Lord's time we may once again see our friends.

Testimonies from volunteers...

Work teams that come to help out Agua Viva Ministries usually stay at a motel in Douglas and cross the border daily. The following comment by a member of Riverwood Community Church group is noteworthy:

“One of the things that doesn't come out in the stories that you'll hear when the team returns are the evening recaps. Every evening the team gathers (36 of us in one motel room) to recap the day. Some talk of progress on construction, others talk of children, their families, while other tell stories of what they saw in the medical clinic. As the week goes on the stories become more detailed as names of children are learned, homes visited, and the whole work becomes not just an annual event to do something for someone else - it becomes today's ministry for a newfound "neighbor.”

“Abundantly more than all we can ask or imagine.”

As we recite that benediction in worship each Sunday it always reminds me of how we see the Lord work in the mission field. Today in Agua Prieta was no exception. We entered a nice size church which was already full of children waiting for VBS. It was estimated that we would have 50 -75 children the first day with attendance increasing daily. Today we had over 100 children come to learn and play at VBS. The “alpha team” did a great job presenting the story of the paralyzed man being brought to Jesus. There was a craft station where the children could make a bracelet or punching ball. The game station included relay races and a parachute game.



It is always a joy to see what our kids can do with children when there is a major language barrier. In fact, we were at a disadvantage today without an interpreter; yet the Lord surprised us in a little 10 year old girl named Mary. She came up to me as I was struggling with instructions in Spanish. As she curiously stared up at me she asked if she could help. Mary spoke English fluently! In fact, she didn't even have an accent. She soon became my right hand girl and helped me through the rest of the morning. What a joy it is to serve with an amazing team from Riverwood Church here in Mexico. - *Kim, Kent, OH*

Your eyes can be opened...

The first two days of January were the highlight of the trip for many. On Tuesday night, many of the group did something they had never done before. Small groups of us (about 2-4) stayed at different Mexicans' houses. Krista, Lydia, Mike, and I stayed at the house of Veronica, who has three kids - Gabriela, Esther, and Jose. While it certainly was a little awkward since our Spanish was limited, these kids did know some English, so we spent most of our time teaching them a little more.

The amazing thing was how the four of us had dinner at the table with the three kids, while Veronica and the men in the house ate in the kitchen. Moreover, the meals were

amazing. Supper consisted of turkey with cranberry jelly, rice, and eggs. We had a birthday cake for the youngest girl's birthday for dessert. Breakfast included tortillas with jam as well as with eggs and ham. What hospitality! We all slept in one room. Mike and I shared the top bunk, while Lydia and Krista each shared a bed with one of the girls. Veronica and her son shared the other bed. It was great to build relationships with the Mexican Christians in this special way.

On Wednesday, we set up the trusses and started laying bricks for the peaks. The next day, we did all the bracing for the trusses and laid some more brick. We were also able to put the steel roof up on almost one whole side. In the afternoon, we had the last church service together. The people were so thankful!

Overall, the trip was a great experience. Personally, one of the highlights was the devotions we had every evening. The two things that seemed to come up repeatedly in our discussions were: knowing and trusting God's promises, and spending more time and effort daily communing with God. It seemed like God was trying to teach me these two things especially. As for mission trips, I heartily recommend them to each Christian. You can be a servant to His people, and your eyes can be opened.

May God receive all the glory also in producing the fruit of this trip. *Jeff Overduin - Chilliwack, BC*

What I learned...

What I've learned through interaction with both the Mexicans and the rest of the group:

How self-centered I can be, even on mission trips. Make me God-centered, especially in my thoughts and attitudes. Our devotions and discussions really stressed spending time with God daily and also knowing, trusting, and pleading His great promises.

Near the end, someone stressed the importance of going home to serve, rather than to be served. Somehow, that's always harder at home than on a missions trip - perhaps it would help if we view our own environment more as our mission field.

I was reminded through others' testimonies of the simplicity of the gospel. I was also reminded not to be ashamed of the gospel - it is the power of God to salvation.

Glory to God for His providence. One day we crossed the border into Mexico with over \$600 worth of items for families--we were all praying we would not get stopped because then we would have to pay duty, and God wonderfully answered our prayer! The vehicle behind us got stopped. God answers prayers.

As John VerWys put it, it was a Psalm 133 experience.

Your donation is vital to the work of Agua Viva Ministries. Designated funds are welcome - or we will use your gift where it is currently most needed. Every dollar received is spent on ministry to the poor in Mexico - administration expenses are donated. No gift is too big or too small!

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