

We share the same essential need...

I should have been prepared. For years my sister has taken work teams to Agua Prieta, my husband had joined her in the past, and our four oldest children have participated in mission trips to Agua Prieta. I'd seen pictures – hundreds, heard stories, raised funds, and prayed for the work being done by Agua Viva Ministries. But I had never experienced firsthand the poverty of a third world country, nor felt the joys and heartache that are part of such an experience. Until this year. In February 2007 nineteen young people and adults from the Fort Macleod, Alberta area traveled to Agua Prieta to offer assistance to the needy and “so fulfill the law of Christ”.

But I was not prepared. Perhaps I was somewhat prepared for the physical appearance of the homes and the dry desert surrounding the mission complex, but it is the people that touch your heart. The cardboard, dirt-floored homes are lived in by real people – young Moms with hungry children, Grandmas with health problems and no money for medical care, families with no income. After several days of mingling, one of our girls asked, “Where are the kids our age?” I had to point out to her that the young Mom struggling to find food for her baby and unable to buy needed medicine for her sick toddler was “her age.” The contrast is so poignant: at sixteen the one young woman has set before her open doors of opportunity for education, a career, a home full of modern conveniences, and no thought to how she will supply her daily needs; the other struggles to feed her children, worries about their health, and has no hope of a better life, realizing that, barring a miracle, her children are destined to the same life of hardship and poverty.

But are the two really so different? The worlds they live in are at opposite ends of the living standard scale, and yet they share the same essential need – to know the Lord Jesus as their personal Savior and Lord and

to live a life of glory to God. This became so clear to me when Rose Mary invited me to lead an impromptu Bible study with several Mexican women who help her at the mission. As we read John 13 together and discussed (with Rose Mary as translator ... that takes a little getting used to) our need for daily forgiveness of sins and Christ's shining example of humility and service as he washed His disciples' feet, it was so evident that despite the vast cultural and socio-economic differences, with God there is no respecter of persons. We are all sinners and need to be born again by the Spirit of God. These women share the same spiritual struggles we do; we are one in Christ and can only find rest and peace at the foot of the cross of Jesus.



Sheila VanEe and Bernita Van Hierden join several church ladies in study of Jesus washing His disciple's feet.

For the girls who were on our team Vacation Bible School was definitely a highlight of our work. Upon our return someone asked, “What ages did you do VBS classes for?” and our answer ... “age one to ninety-nine!” It was heart-warming to see entire families join together to hear the Bible story and then enjoy craft time and treats. The grateful smiles of children as we served lunch at the church was reward enough for the time it took to make a huge pot of chili in a tiny motel kitchen.

The guys felt especially rewarded by the “gracias” and smiles of the young family who are enjoying the new home we built

for them. The trip was an overwhelming experience for all of us. We thank the many people, particularly Pastor Schoeman, the consistory and members of Bethel Free Reformed Church in Monarch for their encouragement and financial support. We left intent on helping the poor and with the hope that in some small way we could share the love of Christ with these needy people; we returned realizing we had learned far more from them than we could hope to contribute in one short week.



Vacation Bible School students learned about God's promises through Noah.



John VerWys discusses home building project with Harvey Van Hierden and Alberta youth.

Submitted by Bernita Van Hierden

