

Mexico Mission Trip Report

June 9 – 16, 2007

“Puentes de Cristo”

Reynosa, Mexico

Many of us thought long and hard about our decision to go to Mexico and others just knew that they were supposed to go. Even knowing that you are supposed to go on a mission trip to another country does not always make it easy to go. You are stepping outside of your comfort zone. You are leaving behind responsibilities and the things in life that you are accustomed to having in your life. However, when you do, you experience an entirely different feeling than anything you could ever imagine.

For me, the decision to go to Mexico was a harder one than others. I had wrestled with the idea for a while. When I was told that I was approved to go, obstacles seemed to be in the way. However, God knew that this was something that I was supposed to do. Each obstacle was cleared with a little prayer and a little help from others around me. God choose our team this year, just as He has done for many years.



Our team consisted of Bob “Buffalo” Blum (co-leader), Carol Byrd (co-leader), Katrina Shambaugh, Patrick Ashley, Tabitha Ashley, Greg McBryde,

Jan Duncan, Laura McBryde, Cindy Moore, Emily Powell, Andrew Parrish, Lee Ann Pasker, Matthew Pasker, Joseph Byrd, John “Fish” Fisher, Philip Ratchford, and Mike Daniel. A hand picked team following God’s Will.

The first night was filled with uncertainties. Several of us were experiencing this journey for the first time. We were unsure what to expect. Others had made this trip many times, but still wondered what was in store for them this year.

After arriving at the church, we unpacked the vans and went out for dinner. We went to McDonalds. This may seem like an ordinary experience, but it was definitely unusual. Have you ever tried to order in Spanish before? Thanks to Philip and Carol for standing near the front of the line to help translate if we were incorrect on our order.

When we finished dinner, we went to the store for a few more things that we needed for the morning’s breakfast. We worked together to get air mattresses blown up, benches moved, tarps laid out, and make sure everyone had a place to sleep. I remember that my

thoughts were racing as I laid down that night on the rooftop of the church. Across the road, there was a celebration with loud music and piñatas.

As I drifted off to sleep, I still wondered what I had gotten myself into. Knowing that I was following what God wanted me to do was the only comfort I had that first night.

Just as I had fallen asleep and started to dream well, I heard strange noises. When I looked up there were lights across the road. The party had ended. To my surprise, there were people everywhere. Booths began to spring up along the road. There were people with all kinds of items to sell as far left and as far right as I could see.

As the sun began to rise, slowly our team began to wake and begin the day. We all tried to get a shower in between breakfast and learning new songs (in Spanish). It was Sunday morning and we were going to be asked to sing during the church service. We picked out two songs that we were best at singing. The Pastor of the church came out with us to sing as well. One of his daughters peeked around the corner, unsure if she could come out until her father invited her over.

Soon the time arrived for church to begin. We had an intergenerational Sunday School lesson with singing. The Sunday School was followed by a sermon and more singing. (Thanks to Bill (the US Director of Puentes de Cristo) for translating the messages for us.)

Sunday afternoon was spent exploring the area. We were able to fellowship with one another and experience a little of the sights and sounds of Reynosa. It was an eye opening experience. My heart ached for the people of Reynosa.



Sunday night we had dinner prepared by the Pastor's wife. We ate outside beside the church in an affectionately named area called "The Wind Tunnel" (an area where cool breezes can be found). The food was amazing. The fellowship was incredible. We sat and talked with the Pastor and his family after dinner. We also used this time to sort through Bible School Kits and prepare for the first day of Bible School the following morning.

Starting Monday morning, we had devotion and prayers before the beginning of our day. Part of the team loaded a van with water and supplies to head to a jobsite, while the other part of the group worked to clean up the area and prepare for Bible School.

The team that went to work at a jobsite went to a house of someone in the community to put a new tin roof on the house. This was an ongoing project during the week. While they were there, they also did several other things including rewiring the electricity.

At first, I thought that Bible School wasn't going to be as successful as we hoped, but that was before I realized that children would eventually trickle in a few at a time. We finally got started around 9:20 AM. We had around 40 children.

The Pastor is an amazing storyteller. He shows so much excitement in his story. The children received nametags and a bag of school supplies with their names on it. We had activities, crafts, and singing. Each day ended with refreshments before the children left for the day.

The working crew came back to the church for lunch. Everyone took a little time to eat, rest, relax, and regroup before the afternoon work.

After lunch we loaded up the vans and headed off to work. The morning crew went back to work on the house. The Bible School crew and several of the morning crew members went to another building where we worked to build up an area for a new wall and clean up an area of the grounds.

We followed the same schedule through Thursday. Each day Bible School grew to an even larger group. The word spreads quickly through the community that something is going on at the church. By the last day, we had 100 children. The children began arriving at the gate shortly after 8:00 instead of twenty minutes later than we started Bible School. On Thursday, we gave the children bubbles, their bags, and coloring books. (Thanks to the churches that sent the Bible School Kits.)

Thursday the pastor's wife made tacos for the children and watermelon juice. Each child received two tacos and a glass of juice. The juice was a treat for them. We had provided the watermelons. All the children were so excited and grateful. They blessed the members of our team in so many ways.



For dinner Sunday and Monday nights, the pastor's wife prepared food for us. Tuesday and Wednesday night, we traveled one block away to Maria's house. Maria learned how to cook for foreigners to make sure the food didn't make them sick. She is an incredible cook. She made some of the best food I have ever tasted. Thursday night we went to a restaurant in Reynosa. It was a totally different experience. When we walked into the building it was almost like we were back in the States.

Friday morning we finished packing up, loading the van, and spending time with the family one last long visit. The family was so gracious and kind towards us. The children were such a blessing, and we were truly blessed by time we spent fellowshiping with our brothers and sisters in Christ. It is an experience that I will never forget. The amazing part of our many conversations is that I actually started to remember the Spanish that I knew several years ago and I could understand the conversations without having someone translate it to me.

Before we left, the work crew that had been at the house completed the roof and the other jobs they had. They cleaned up all their area and visited with the family. The other crew had finished painting the room and moved over $\frac{3}{4}$ of the pile of rocks and dirt that was used to build out to level the ground to build a new wall.

When we finished with the job sites, we went back to the church to change clothes and



say goodbye to the pastor and his family. It was hard to say goodbye to them. For a week the church had been our home and they had been part of our family. We exchanged goodbyes, gave hugs, said a few words of encouragement, and even shed a few tears.

Our trip was very successful. We accomplished many tasks, made new friendships, renew old friendship, shared God's love with others, and for many of us, had eye opening experiences. We all came away

being more blessed than before the trip.

If you ask any of us, I'm sure that you will hear different reasons why we feel that we were meant to be on this trip. Everyone will tell you different stories, highlights of the trip, the best parts, and the lessons that we learned. Our mission now is to take those things that we have learned and the blessings that we received and pass them along to others.