

Mexico – September 2011 by Barry Christensen

Any mission trip to Mexico is destined to have schedule changes, time concerns, and opportunities both gained and lost. This trip was a prime example.

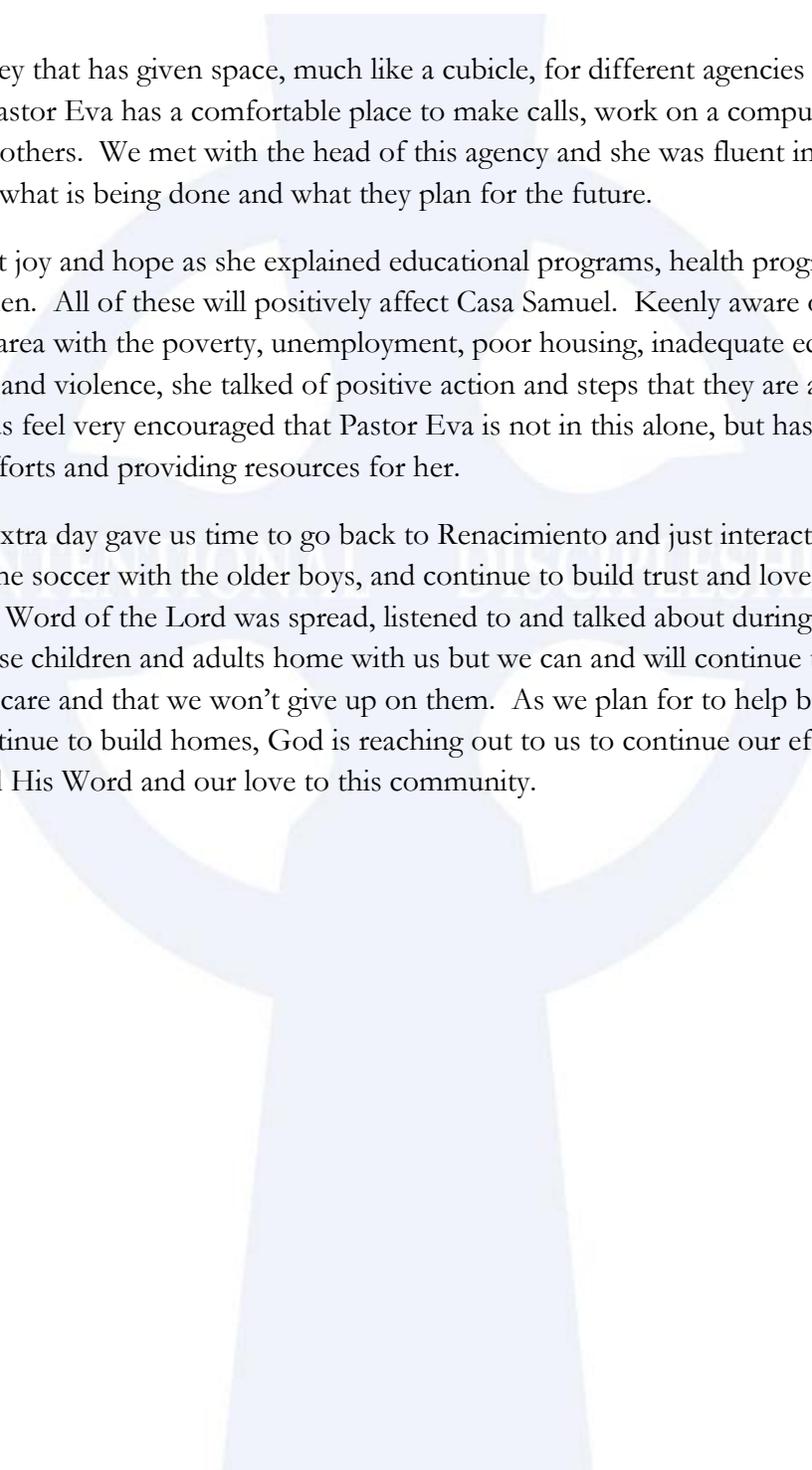
Flying to Monterrey takes only a little longer than two hours but the difference in culture is endless. When you arrive, you become immediately attuned to your surroundings and to the tasks at hand. As we arrived on the evening flight, we were greeted by the Casa Samuel van and driven to Los Ventos, our home away from home in Garcia, which is only ten minutes from Renacimiento, where our work is to be done.

The next morning, after a short meeting with Pastor Eva to get our day planned, we set off for Renacimiento. It is always a mixture of sadness for the primitive housing and conditions in which the people live, and the happiness and joy as you see the children and adults you have come to know and love. Each time we come, you see small but positive changes. This time there was running water for the first time in Casa Samuel. What a difference for all the cooking of meals for the people and for sanitation. Getting the water turned on had been promised by the local government back in May but in Mexico, it takes time.

Bringing the Spirit of the Lord to the community and showing them that we love them, is always such a positive for us all. But beyond that, we gathered information for future trips. We looked at the houses that Marietta First Presbyterian built there in the last couple of years and determined ways that we could improve them. At the roofline, the houses leaked when it rained and let in cold air during the winter. In November, we hope to have a team from FPC who will fill those voids at the roofline and improve their quality of life.

That evening, a men's and woman's Bible/devotional gathering was held back in Garcia as we spend the evening presenting a lesson. As Collins led the women, Pat, David and I worked with the men and the evening was incredible, even with the language barriers. The discussions were lively and very passionate. It was a wonderful evening as people of different cultures and languages embraced our Lord together as one. We plan to continue this on future trips.

Flying standby means you run the possibility of not getting on the flight. For Pat and I, this meant another day in Mexico. It was God's will as we had an opportunity to go with Pastor Eva to an



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office in Monterrey that has given space, much like a cubicle, for different agencies such as Casa Samuel. There Pastor Eva has a comfortable place to make calls, work on a computer, and best of all, network with others. We met with the head of this agency and she was fluent in English and she gave us a tour of what is being done and what they plan for the future.

This gave us great joy and hope as she explained educational programs, health programs, programs for battered women. All of these will positively affect Casa Samuel. Keenly aware of the major problems of this area with the poverty, unemployment, poor housing, inadequate education system, the cartels, drugs and violence, she talked of positive action and steps that they are and will be taking. It made us feel very encouraged that Pastor Eva is not in this alone, but has this agency supporting her efforts and providing resources for her.

In addition, our extra day gave us time to go back to Renacimiento and just interact with the children, play some soccer with the older boys, and continue to build trust and love with this community. The Word of the Lord was spread, listened to and talked about during our time there. We can't take these children and adults home with us but we can and will continue to show them our love, that we care and that we won't give up on them. As we plan for to help build a medical facility there, continue to build homes, God is reaching out to us to continue our efforts and our support to spread His Word and our love to this community.