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THE PROMISE IN THE DESERT

BY KELLY GRAHAM

The world is going through an unprecedented time as we figure out how to navigate the pandemic, the social distancing, and the financial hurt that so many people are experiencing. While we covet your prayers, we also pray for those who contribute so much to Misión De Candelilla. I also want you to know that we are continuing to pursue our mission of changing lives on both sides of the border. We are planning for the future for when this pandemic comes to an end, and looking for ways that we can assist those in our community at this time. It can be difficult to believe that God is in control and can seem that God the Father is far away. However, I'm also reminded that in difficult times we see God's work more clearly. I already see the promise of Romans 8.28: And we know

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that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him." It is hard to always believe that we "know" this promise but, like David in the Psalms, we tell ourselves with the leading of the Spirit, we "DO KNOW THIS!" Our trips are often a great reminder of this very promise.

Many of you that have been on trips know that we often encounter some sort of challenge to tackle, a breakdown, new border rules, weather and the likes. As I began leading trips I kept trying to plan for every "eventuality", and was often thwarted at each turn. However, I have discovered after my initial expectations get shattered, God is always there. This is through people that show up in the desert night, to get us back on the path; often this

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is a person who knows a guy that can fix that, Pepe and a posse coming to pull us out of the sand dunes, Mexican soldiers who befriend us. I have seen example after example of being blocked by an immovable obstacle and yet; we are able to move. Often when I first see a problem, I'm calm, but then it settles in and I run my hands over my head and say to myself (while smiling, of course!), "that's it, that is the end of the road, I have no idea what to do". However, an amazing thing happens next as we embrace the problem and usually very quietly God brings people into our path that are the angels we need. The rag-tag missionary group that comes to help and often finds ourselves helped and always blessed!

In a "true-to-form" example, last fall there was a trip that had already had some issues before we hit the rough dirt roads. The pavement ended while the sun was just setting. We were just outside of Ejido Jaboncillos, when over the radio Brian states - in a calm manner - "we lost a wheel". I was thinking that a spare tire fell out from under the van or he meant they had a flat. I stop and go back and I can tell from the angle of the trailer he meant it literally - He had lost an entire wheel off the trailer! In fact, he tells us that it rolled in front of them as they were driving, just like some cartoon! Here we are in the desert, hours from any repair shop, and we have an entire hub and wheel broken off. Problem? Not really. You see there was this truck that had been following us for some time. He gets out and assures us he can fix it. First, he was the exact person that bandaged our axle issues during the "muddy road adventure" the previous fall. He had the exact hub size at his house just down the road. 45 minutes later we were driving back down the road (we have purchased two new hubs to reimburse him, in case you're wondering!). Literally, God had sent this man following directly behind us who was the one person who knew exactly what we needed. This is often how God works when we are on a mission. The promise is not that we won't at times be in trouble in a desert -spiritual or physical. The promise is to get us **through** the desert.



Judy Hutcherson checking glucose levels for the clinic in San Miguel.



Kambree Kothmann, Emilia Smajstrla, Clay Crouse, Ethan Williams, and Clara Pluenneke, all students from Holy Ghost youth, serve the villagers of La Union a good Texas BBQ lunch during our annual Christmas gift giving trip!

*"It truly is
astounding to see
the work that the
mission has done
in my life, and I
can wholeheartedly
say that this
mission has
radically changed
my life."*

**— WYATT TURNER,
FHS SENIOR**

OPERATING DURING COVID-19 CRISIS

Now again we are in a difficult spot. As you may know we are unable to run our normal clinics at this time. We want to protect our participants, as well the villagers. However, many of our people out in the desert do not have access to regular medication that is often vital for survival, such as Cardiac and Diabetes medication. We felt we had to find a way to make sure they were able to get their basic needed medication. By the grace of God, our volunteers and doctors have stepped up to help us to complete this mission. **(continued on pg. 5)**

BREAKFAST IN SAN MIGUEL

BY OTTIS LAYNE

“Why do you want to go to Mexico?” I have been asked this question many, many times over the 34 years I have gone to Mexico with Mision de Candelilla. In recent years I have often heard a different underlying question, one with a scolding tone, that goes something like this: “Why in the world would you risk your life to go to Mexico these days.” I have many reasons, of course, to want to go to Mexico with Mision de Candelilla, and I formulated most of these reasons in my mind long ago. I rarely add anything new. But on March 14, 2020, as I sat at breakfast in San Miguel on the last day of our trip I realized I had something to add to the list.

Our trip had gone well. We had seen 140 patients in three days, a few people had been rather ill and for some I thought we had arrived in a timely manner and had brought care early enough to keep them from becoming extremely ill. We had no problems crossing the border, we had no travel problems, the desert spring weather was lovely, and we had a wonderful group of 17 volunteers who had worked together beautifully. As of that morning in San Miguel, all of the trip lay behind us except the drive home.

Our routine for the last morning of our trip includes having breakfast and then following that with a sharing time. Seventeen of us sat at a long table on one of the side porches of our clinic building in San Miguel. I had not been there in years and I had not gone on any of the several building trips that turned this simple adobe house into a building suitable for our clinics, our kitchen and meals, and for outdoor church services as well as community meetings. The San Miguel clinic has a typical Mexican style painted exterior with white stuccoed walls and a chartreuse border around all the doors and windows, as well as a wide stripe of this same color along the corners, the top, and the base of the building.

We started breakfast before sunrise. Despite the early

hour I already felt the slightest of warm breezes as we sat down to eat. Fidencia, the wife of Pepe, the pastor we work with on most of our mission trips, brought us tacos still warm from her kitchen. I had egg and potato rolled into homemade corn tortillas with a garnish of “salsa de Len,” followed by a breakfast desert of an overripe banana. I had no coffee because I did not expect to start out driving that morning and I could nap. Our breakfast was simple but delicious.

As I ate and listened to light chatter I saw the south sky begin lighten. From my seat at the table I could not see a dramatic sky develop in the east with a thick band of clouds tempering the sunlight until after we rose from the table. I was only aware the brightening of the sky was unusually gradual. The light breeze I had felt earlier had



Celebrating a goal scored in a game of soccer with the children in Centinila.



both warmed and strengthened as the sunlight began to heat the desert. With the coming of dawn the many roosters of San Miguel raised a shrill chorus in the distance, just far enough away to not override any of the conversation. The coming of the light had illuminated the Spanish Daggers that lined the front edge of the lot of our clinic building. Several of these plants had put up bloom spikes that stood higher than I could reach. I didn't say much through breakfast because I simply savored this as an intensely "Mexican" moment with an almost perfect ambience. The slow coming of dawn, the warm breeze, the adobe structure where we sat, the rooster chorus, and the plants typical of the Chihuahuan Desert all contributed to a feeling I have not quite experienced anywhere outside of Mexico.

And then there were my companions. We had all worked hard to orchestrate the set-up, operation, and pack-up of our three clinics. I had been especially impressed with the tireless efforts of the young people on this trip. We had six of them, ranging in age from 13 to 23 years old. Henry, a sixteen-year-old from Stephenville, Texas had his seventeenth birthday on our trip.

At our sharing time each of us is asked to say something about what the trip has meant to us. When it came time for Audrey Tubbs, a seventeen year-old high school senior to share, she said, "There is no place in the world where I'd rather spend my spring break than right here." I was floored. I was glad I had already had my chance to speak because Audrey would be hard to follow after a comment like that. In fact, I don't remember much about what the other group members said after Audrey had shared her heart. I also don't remember much about what I had shared before her because I was so taken with what Audrey said.

As I sat and savored that time, enjoying a moment of lovely peace and pleasure, I realized another reason I want to go to Mexico. Elsewhere it is rare that I get to experience such times of pristine beauty, interwoven from a multitude of levels, as I do on almost every one of my trips with Mision de Candelilla. I was spell-bound that morning as dawn slowly unfolded in a country I love, a climate I love, with simple food I love, and surrounded by people I love. I come home every time looking forward to the next trip.



Dr. Ottis Layne prepares a splint for a broken bone during our San Vicente clinic



FHS Junior, Audrey Tubbs, playing with a little girl from Jaboncillos Chico. It blesses us to have our local youth share their heart for the children of Mexico!

"I had prayed for many years to find an outlet for missions and God answered my prayers with MDC. I pray for many of the villagers by name, and cannot wait to be reunited with them again soon."

JILL RODRIGUEZ, NEW BRAUNFELS



Mission Calendar 2020

Fiesta Fundraiser- August 1
 San Vicente Medical- Sep 16-20
 Marquez Medical- Oct 7-11
 Boquillas Medical- Nov 4-8
 *Summer construction and youth trips are still pending

So, we went through the charts and filled the previous prescriptions for volunteers to count and fill medications. Now, the hard part, so we thought, was how do we get it there. We came up with all kinds of plans and decided with the simple one. Just a couple of us would take them down and deliver to Ojinaga to Martha Alvarado. So, we contacted the U.S. Customs and Border Protection, who gave us assurance that we could cross. The next hurdle was Mexican customs. I will be honest; I was nervous that they would turn us around. However, we arrived and there was no line, they did a quick check and asked a few questions and sent us off to deliver. We were thrilled that the Lord gave us favor in this mission. We will be doing this method again for the Boquillas round of trips. So please pray for this next mission! In the meantime, we are also making plans for summer make-up clinics, as soon as possible.



Kelly Graham, Executive Director and Trip Leader preaches on grace for the church in La Union.

"Every time the missionaries come, it gives us hope. We in the ejidos know that we are not forgotten"

— JUANITA VARELA,
 LA UNION

Ministry Updates:

Christmas Trips: We had two successful Christmas Trips. First with the First United Methodist Church, and the second with the Holy Ghost Lutheran youth group. These trips are always an intimate time with a slower pace, as we simply prepare meals, deliver gifts and have fellowship with our friends in Mexico.

San Vicente Medical Trip: When we left for the San Vicente medical trip, there were some rumblings of issues to come but not much had yet occurred. We were without cell service for five days, only to come back to a world that had already drastically changed. It was a very blessed trip with an excellent group of 17. We successfully met the needs of 140 patients between the 3 clinics.

Future Trips: We are planning future trips and hope by the fall we can be running on regular schedule again. However, we will keep things updated as we know more. We do want to assure you that we are working in the meantime to continue to serve on both sides of the border. For any postponed medical trips, vital medications will still be delivered.

Would you consider helping us continue this work?

Our fees received from participants only cover the basic costs of each trip. All of our other expenses are covered by private donations. Would you consider becoming a monthly donor? You may also donate on line at mdcmexico.org/donate

Name: _____

Address: _____

City/State/ZIP: _____

Email: _____

Enclosed is my one-time donation for \$ _____

Enclosed is my monthly donation for \$ _____



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