



Serving the UNDERSERVED

NEWSLETTER

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Start of the two mile climb to the house church in San Cristobel, a ghetto area of San Pedro.



Extrication training for the volunteer firefighters, using their antiquated model of the "jaws of life."

From Mike -

Now, approximately three months later we will finish the report on our missions outreach to San Pedro Las Huertas April 27-May 2, 2010! Our intention had been to follow up the May newsletter, which highlighted insights from three of the team members, with a June newsletter that highlighted insights from two more of the team. Tropical Storm Agatha's impact on Guatemala took us another path. So, here we are to complete the report on our spring outreach.

Again, we will paint the picture through words from two team members. Let these words and pictures take you to San Pedro Las Huertas . . .

Mike

Thoughts from the missions trip journal of team member Michael [our firefighter instructor]:

[Second day of trip]

After Pete and I left San Cristobel to begin work on [painting] City Hall we witnessed another extraordinary act of kindness. Pastor Israel and Cecilia saw two women and a small girl sitting on the side of the road. Pastor Israel waived them over and began talking to them. Cecilia handed the women the left-over food from lunch, and Pastor Israel reached into his pocket and handed the women all the money he had left. Once again, someone that has so little, but is willing to give it up without hesitation. It makes me realize once again how much we feel we "need" worldly possessions. I get mad sometimes when I don't have the money to buy something I want right away. I feel bad when I can't give my kids all the "worldly possessions" they ask for. But when you see people that do without and survive off the basic necessities of food, clothing, and water, it opens your eyes. To be content with the basics and willing to give up everything else just blows my mind. That is the life of Christ.

[Third and fourth days of trip]

Chief Carlos and the volunteer firefighters once again welcomed our group with open arms. This trip we brought them two pairs of size 9 bunker boots (a little too big for most of them), ten center punches (five of which have seat belt cutters built in) two spanner wrenches, and two pairs of trauma shears. Even though these are basic tools that are used every day, the firefighters here don't have any of the tools and their boots are very old and very "well used." We began with extrication training. Carlos was able to get an old vehicle for us to practice their current extrication techniques and allow me to show them some tips and a few new techniques. Their thirst for knowledge and attentiveness was overwhelming. Even though most did not speak any English or very little, they were hanging on every word trying to get everything they could out of it.



Practicing putting out a car fire after extrication training was done.



Extrication training. The only car Chief Carlos could obtain for our use to practice on had no hood, trunk cover, or doors to begin with, so we worked on what was basically a frame!



Practicing vehicle fires.

The extrication equipment that the firefighters use in San Pedro Las Huertas and Ciudad Vieja is like their fire trucks. Everything is in Antigua and has to be brought in. Carlos told me about a recent vehicle accident they responded to in which six of the ten people involved were killed, including a small child. With pride in the job his firefighters did and sadness for the people involved, Carlos explained that they were able to extricate all of the victims with the halligans and axes that we provided for them last May. Because of the location of the accident and distance to Antigua, they would have waited almost thirty minutes for the extrication equipment to arrive. Using only the hand tools that Plant Today provided last year, they were able to remove all the victims.



[During extrication training] I was watching how excited they all were and how much each of them wanted to jump in and work. Carlos told me that this type of hands-on training is very rare for them and they have not done training like this in over two years.

The second day of training was on vehicle fires. . . . After the discussion was over, we loaded up the car that we used for extrication the day before with pallets and wood shavings. Then we threw the roof back on top and lit the car on fire. We were able to complete three evolutions with the vehicle before we put it out completely. This allowed everyone the opportunity to participate in the evolutions and rotate through different positions. We were only stopped once by the military [carrying M16s] to find out what we were doing.

I just feel that God already has the blueprints drawn up for San Pedro Las Huertas and Plant Today as a whole, and it's beyond what our minds can conceive.

Missions trip thoughts from team member Sonda:

[Trip after-thoughts]

I believe I can safely say that 85% of the people who came through for eye exams had burning, watering eyes. The air is so polluted with the vehicles. They have no emissions controls in place. There are no restrictions on burning trash, etc. And the air always smells of something burning. Most, to whom we recommended eye drops, will not be able to afford to purchase them. We need to provide eye drops—along with glasses. Many have 20/20 vision, especially among the children and teenagers, but their complaint was burning and watering eyes. Their eyes appeared red and weak. We ran completely out of glasses, frames, and lenses, and started taking orders for glasses to be purchased here in the states and taken back down to these people with vision needs.



We have just completed our missions trip and I am feeling so many things. I am not sure if I want to stay a little longer to avoid going back to the world that I know . . . and yet, the world that I live in is one that many of our friends in Las Huertas have seldom dreamed of. The life that I know is “cushy,” “comfy,” “cozy,” and with very few needs ever having gone unmet. Then why am I drawn to a place with very few conveniences? I am somewhat confused! I am physically and emotionally fatigued and home sounds comforting to find peaceful, physical rest. However, I don’t feel that I will go there to rest again without longing for the next trip to see our Guatemalan family. They live their lives in a very simple way. Very few of us have ever wondered where we would get our next meal.

We here in the USA tackle our days aggressively. We look to ourselves as our means of feeding our families well and providing as many of the material “things” that we can in an attempt to buy them happiness. We look to God as the source of the “things” that we can’t accomplish and can’t afford. Only as “self” comes up short do we really cry out to God. Our Guatemalan families must trust God for food and clothing and health. They have no government subsidies to rescue them when jobs aren’t available. Few have the money for a doctor’s care. They live each day grateful for the provisions for that day. Are they going to teach us or are we going to teach them? They celebrate daily the gift of their children and their family’s health. They know how to laugh together and to praise God with abandon. They have no inclination to worry about what others think of them or their possessions. They yearn to find a way to provide their children an education. They yearn to learn, to be able to read and write. The area to which God has called us has very little opportunity for their children to receive an education while we are concerned with providing ours with cell phones, computers, cars, and fashion. Who is teaching who?



This woman’s sight was so bad from cataracts that we could help only a little with glasses.



Elderly woman being assisted by our local translator, Jackie, with her eye exam.



Eyeglass exam in progress.

We are so grateful to God and His favor on our trip. He revealed Himself to us in so many ways. **Thank you prayer team for diligently holding us up in prayer as we traveled there and served the underserved.**

Final Thoughts From Mike -

Through the words and pictures of the team members, you see the needs. I pray you also sense and feel these. Let me end this newsletter by summarizing some immediate needs that we, as a team, feel that Plant Today should meet.

A total of \$600 to complete two walls, build two new walls, put on a roof, and build steps for the new ghetto house church. The people attending the ghetto home church and Rain of Grace Church will do the work.

A total of \$2,500 to build a classroom for the San Pedro Elementary School. The parents and teachers have agreed to do the work if Plant Today can provide the materials.

A total of \$4,000 to provide 1000 Bibles for all students in all the San Pedro Schools. The school has requested Pastor Israel to come and teach a Bible class to all age groups. We need to provide Bibles for this GREAT opportunity.

A total of \$1,000 to bring Carlos, the area Fire Chief, to train with Palm Beach County Fire/Rescue for one week. One week here for Chief Carlos would be worth six months of training in Guatemala! He can then pass that training on to his volunteers.

At a cost of \$3.20 each, provide 47 special needs children with equine therapy at a local facility. This is such a small cost for such a wonderful benefit for these children.

At a cost of \$15 per family, assist 10 families with food and clothing. Please consider giving up a few cups of coffee each week to help us feed families in San Pedro Las Huertas and the surrounding area!

You may be thinking, "The amount I can give is too little to amount to anything." That thinking is not correct. Just \$1 can pay for two meals, and \$3.20 can pay for a special needs child to have therapy. NO AMOUNT is too small. Yes, the need is great but the God we serve is greater!

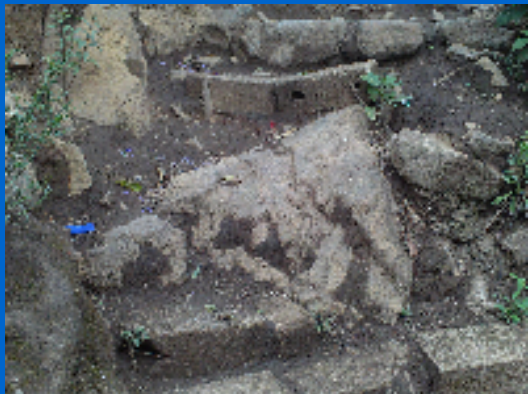
God bless you and thank you!

Mike

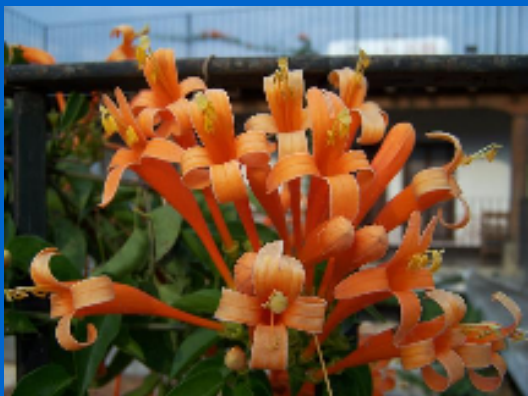
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"Room" in the house where the ghetto church is located. The adults are currently meeting here, and we are going to supply the materials to complete these walls, plus two more walls and a roof.



Steps leading up to the house where the ghetto church meets, which we are going to rebuild.



This beautiful Guatemalan flower stands in stark contrast to the extreme poverty of the people.

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