***Jerusalem Evangelical Ministries (JEM)***

***Date: November 16, 2015***

***Re: ‘Missions Visit to Mexico’, August 26 to October 28***

***Reporting: Lanny Anderson, Director of Missions, JEM***

***Introduction***

This was my longest stay in our Mexican mission field, and with the assistance of our Missions Field Representative, Maria Porchas, I took advantage of numerous opportunities to observe and participate in the various village ministry activities taking place there. These activities included, visiting village people and the surrounding areas, fellowshipping with pastors (intermediaries) and leaders, preaching and teaching the gospel, ministering to church and individual needs, baptizing believers, organizing an individualized reading program, organizing building projects and the maintenance and repair of church facilities, communicating with benevolent partners, and overseeing the direction and control of financial resources. During my visit, I emailed some pictorial updates, presentations, and stories to the JEM board that represented these activities. There are additional presentations that I will be sending until all approved pictorial information and reports appear on our JEM-Site for all members and those interested to read and observe. In the remainder of this report, you will find further information pertaining to the ministry activities mentioned above.

***Village Visitations***

Maria and I made frequent weekly visitations to the village of Cheque, and as often as time allowed, to the village of Escondida and the nearby ‘Farm Church’ meeting location. The village brethren, leaders, and, children greeted us with enthusiasm and joy as they always do when I travel with Maria to these poverty laden areas. Because of my long stay, I had plenty of opportunity to visit families, bear witness of Christ, encourage brethren, and interact in their daily routines. I also enjoyed walking within sight of the village areas and observing vegetable and cotton fields where the majority of the people worked.

In Cheque all the village homes (casas) lie to one side of a long and narrow dirt road that borders a large twenty-five foot wide irrigation canal. This road was filled with deep ruts (seldom, if ever, graded) and was difficult to navigate on foot unless you stayed to the side. To my surprise, I found that the road headed in an oval shape direction for a distance of five to six kilometers, reaching the community of Islitas across the way and wrapping around back into Cheque. With homes along much of this road, I realized right away that we had only evangelized a part of the total community area. This will be the responsibility of the church brethren which has already begun to happen as evidenced by some of the new people attending the church meetings.

While driving on the main highway in the village areas, Maria pointed out a couple of packing plants where some of the village people also work. Most of the people walk out to the highway where labor buses take them to the fields or packing houses. There is also a chemical storage plant that can be seen a short distance from the Cheque church property. A few men work there as night watchmen. The Escondida people are also picked up by the labor buses. The average field laborer makes eight dollars a day and works from 6: am to 3: pm unless he is on an evening shift. I am not sure about those who work in the packing houses, but the wages are not much more unless they drive farm machinery.

***Church Ministry***

*Escondida* - Our meetings at the Escondida Farm Church were very well attended. Pastor Arnulfo and his Islitas assistants were very pleased to have Maria and I minister in word and prayer to the many children, young teens, and smaller number of adults at this meeting location. We also ministered in a similar manner on different occasions to the adults in the Escondida Village a short distance away. During our time with the adults, we encouraged them to walk in the salvation and faith that we all share and not to lose heart or be led astray by false teachings and religious deceptions. We also encouraged these dear ones to attend both our ‘Farm Church’ gatherings on Wednesdays and our Sunday meetings in Cheque just a few kilometers down the road. This way they could remain in fellowship with Maria and other village brethren in the Lord. The adults of Escondida remain very close to Maria because of their mutual fellowship over the years. I am also very close to them, and it would be good for their spiritual growth if they could participate with the people in Cheque in the ministry activities taking place there.

*Cheque* - Our largest church gatherings were in the village of Cheque where Pastor Maria and I concentrated the majority of our time ministering in various gospel events to the village people and others that attended from surrounding areas. On Sundays, I would preach and teach the gospel with Maria interpreting. When I had completed my message, Maria followed up with a confirming message to the people of the importance of what was said. The themes of our messages were always consistent in the Lord and continually emphasized God’s plan of salvation in Christ, “Christ in You the Hope of Glory” Colossians 3:. It was made very clear to the people in the Holy Spirit that they were not to be influenced by or put their trust in any part of a substitute plan of ‘Salvation’ that replaced Christ in any way. Such substitutes were revealed for what they are, “Doctrines of Demons”, I Timothy 4. This had to be emphasized to the village people because of the cultural environment they live in. They are constantly being bombarded and tempted with religious deception, witchcraft, idol worship, immorality, and many forms of addiction. For this reason, we had to be very thorough in ‘God’s Word’ concerning the true meaning and understanding of water baptism, partaking in holy communion, and walking in the ‘Spirit’ in the ‘Life of Christ’ by the ‘Grace and Strength of God’.

In all our gospel meetings, we witnessed people coming forth to receive Christ right up to the last week of my visit. There were also several others that came forward for the renewing and strengthening of their faith and for physical healing that included mothers bringing their sick children. Some came forward after the main message. Others came after Maria had given further understanding of the message. And still others came after closing prayer with their family members following close behind. Several of these precious brethren that came forward in response to alter calls, were from the San Luis, Sonora, and Yuma, Az. areas. In one case, a grandmother from San Luis brought her small six yr. old grandson who had leukemia and was shaved bald. We had noticed before the meeting that he was limping very badly and moving around very slowly with a very uneven walk and poor bodily posture. All I can say is that we prayed for him and when the grandmother brought him back the following week he was joyously playing and partaking in children’s free play activities on the church grounds with no noticeable physical problems. For now, we know that he is under a doctor’s medical care program in San Luis, and his grandmother said that he was going to receive a full examination at the doctor’s next scheduled appointment. The grandmother continues to attend meetings when she can, and has brought others to the meetings with very open hearts. There are a few other related stories that happened in our meetings which I hope to write about for our Jem-Site. The importance, of course, is that the Lord’s Word is confirmed and He is glorified. Many of the brethren in Cheque who have been ministered to in prayer have testified of receiving healing. I believe there will be continued manifestation of ‘God’s Power’ and ‘Saving Grace’ in this community as the people mature in their faith and seek and walk in the Lord with all their hearts.

We celebrated two baptismal events in Cheque approximately three weeks apart. This included some of the brethren that had made decisions for the Lord in the meetings and others who had made decisions for Christ earlier in their lives but had not been baptized as yet. These were joyous events with family members embracing each other with love, thankfulness and continual worship and praise unto the Lord. Submitting to full baptism in water has been a challenge to village families because many were baptized as babies and not in ‘Spiritual Truth’. The truth of ‘God’s Word’ must be restored in Christ concerning this matter. And that is what Maria has been doing, and I also partnered with her in some of my messages with consistent repetition. Maria has received considerable opposition over this matter from extended family members who have been conditioned by religious deception and have not received Christ in their hearts. Nevertheless, with Maria’s boldness in the Lord, many are growing in the ‘Truth of Christ’. We were about ready for another baptismal event when I returned to Canada. There are still several to be baptized in both Cheque and Escondida.

Maria held her afternoon women’s meetings in Cheque on Thursdays, and met earlier in the day, when possible, with the women in Escondida. The weekly meetings in Cheque were well attended which gave Maria quality time to teach and minister to the adult ladies and some of the teen girls. Maria encouraged interaction and discussion of the scriptures during these sessions, stressing the importance of putting Godly conduct and unity of purpose into practice.

The ladies also discussed their involvement and participation in weekly ministry activities.

There were also children’s ministries on Thursdays supervised by Lupita with Maria’s oversight. Lupita organized and taught two age groups of children with the help of her husband, Jesus’, and other adult and teen assistants. During the women’s and children’s meetings, I visited homes, greeted and talked with men and teen workers returning from their work in the fields, and often fellowshipped with husbands who were taking care of their young children outside the church facility so their wives could attend the women’s meetings. These meetings often lasted over two hours and were very cherished by the Cheque women.

We had some very well attended gospel meetings in Cheque. On one occasion, I counted over seventy people of all ages after a Sunday meeting while we were having a fellowship meal and children’s activities. What the real count was I am not sure because several adults were coming to the meeting from their day work shifts and others were leaving for their afternoon swing shifts. I noticed that these work shifts continued this way throughout the week from mid- September through October Often, during our Sunday meetings, husbands and wives would take turns during the services caring for their young children outside the church building. However, they could still hear the Word being spoken because of the microphones we were using. Our church facility does not hold a large number of people. To hold sixty or seventy people, we have to use all the floor space including the altar. This is another reason why several people choose to listen sitting or standing in the space outside the front entrance. To correct this situation, we need to install electrical outlets on the outside of the church so we can connect sound equipment and lighting and hold the larger meetings on the church grounds. This is possible, of course, but will take funds to do the electrical adjustment, purchase and install outdoor lighting, and acquire additional chairs and tables.

I must say that it is remarkable how these village brethren, including teens and children, attend church meetings that last two hours and more in 100+ temperatures. I know that whenever Maria or I were giving a message, the heat caused sweat from our foreheads to drop so rapidly that we were unable to manage it, and yet, neither one of us felt any discomfort while we were speaking. I can only believe that whether it is those listening and responding or those giving the messages, it all happens through the ‘Grace of God’ and the work of ‘His Holy Spirit’.

***Education***

Village education is a very important component of our ministry program. Language skill development not only gives children and adults the opportunity to read, write, and express God’s Word, but it also gives future advantages for better job and career skill development. During my visit I noticed several young teens, thirteen and fourteen years of age, choosing to work in the fields instead of staying in school. Many of these young people fell behind in their early childhood because of lack of attendance and parental support. Therefore, they became victims of developmental delay. The majority of young people have been following this pattern as did their parents and grandparents before them. There are only a few who have made it to grade five standards and fewer as far as the seventh grade level. It is apparent that this has become a cultural trait where the people have accepted a social and economic lifestyle of poverty with no way to escape except through a deceptive alternative of crime and immorality.

There are various methods we have been implementing to address this problem. To start with, Maria and our pastors (intermediaries) have been making a concerted effort to inform and encourage village parents on the importance of keeping their children in school. JEM and our benevolent donors have been supporting this ongoing effort by supplying school materials and needs. In all our villages, language skills have been incorporated into our Bible teaching lesson plans. In Cheque, Maria has set up a church office which also serves as a small learning center with space for computers, a printer, and storage of school supplies.

During the last two weeks of my visit, I set up a trial tutorial reading program for adults. This is a very basic triple option program much like the one I used during my teaching career in Canada for developmental delayed students. I began the program in the village with the co-operation of Jesus (Hey-sus’) and his wife Lupita, our church deacons. Lupita, who reads rather well, is the tutor (la professora) in this trial run, and Jesus, who is just beginning to read, is the student (estudiante). The reading schedule requires thirty minute teaching sessions five days a week unless there is an increase in session time by the agreement of both tutor and student.

There are several adults in the Cheque village that don't know how to read. I worked with three couples on an introductory basis where either the husband or wife did not know how to read. It is my hope that Lupita and Jesus will set the standard for others to follow. I have assigned Lupita as the lead teacher in this reading program because she is well capable of training others in the instructional methods. These methods can also be used to teach children and teens. Capable teens can also be trained to be tutors.

On another positive note, Maria was recently informed by villagers that a Sonora government official had spoken to them about a possible education support program being set up in Cheque. They also inquired about the use of our facilities as a part of their plans. This would be quite helpful for the basic skill upgrading of the community.

***Building & Repair Maintenance Projects***

*Escondida –* To prepare the farm church facility for winter use and protection from break-ins, the JEM board approved funding for the placing of metal guards on the windows, the installing of a new metal door, and covers for two outside arc lights. All has been completed except for the guards on the two lights which Pastor Arnulfo is waiting to find parts for.

*Cheque* – There are two projects that we have been making an effort to complete in Cheke’. The first is the construction of a church office & educational supply building which was nearing completion before I returned home to Canada in late October. It now needs only a door and window to be structurally complete. The interior & exterior surfaces will be painted by volunteers at a later date. This project has been totally funded by benevolent donated resources. The second project that needs to be completed as soon as possible is the maintenance and repair of the ‘Youth Facility’. We need to put on a new metal roof and upgrade the electrical system to safe standards which will make it fully functional for children and teens winter Bible classes, and a possible educational skill upgrading program sponsored by the Sonora Government. We have an estimate of approximately seven hundred dollars to finish this work. We do have some benevolent donations to complete a portion of the repairs, but most likely will need approved funding assistance from JEM to finish the project. I have been in contact with a donor who would like to designate funds in a donation to JEM for the completion of this project. This will be discussed for approval at our November board meeting.

All the projects mentioned either have or will be supervised by Pastor Arnulfo on our behalf. Brother Arnulfo, like Pastor Eduardo, is a contracting builder and has arranged for trade workers from his church in Islitas to deliver the construction materials and complete the building and repair projects. He has offered his service without cost, but did request that we provide fifty dollars for each day’s work to be divided amongst the trade laborers. This is because they must take time off from their regular work schedule to fulfill our construction needs. They have been doing this because they want to help us from their hearts in the Lord. I met these brethren in October while they were building the office facility. Two and sometimes three men work crews worked on alternating days up to six hours a day. It was quite a blessing to see.

***Finances and Needs***

As in my previous visits, I accompanied Maria in our meetings with her accounting assistant, Mary Elena, and participated in the distribution of JEM funds to our intermediaries and the collection of budget receipts. I also participated in the oversight of purchases and transportation of food, supplies and materials for use in our approved village activities.

There have always been many legitimate and spontaneous needs that arise in our villages that are difficult to provide for consistently with our limited JEM village budgets. Addressing these needs has been a stressing, on-going challenge for Maria, and it was no different during my visit. Some of the needs included study Bibles for new believers, a baptismal tank, baptismal certificates and awards, assistance for church funerals and church weddings, food and groceries for community gatherings, assisting widows, establishing new families and orphans in desperate need, first-aid supplies, response to medical emergencies, supply needs for villagers with disabilities, hospital visitations, vehicle maintenance, building maintenance and repairs, facility furnishings, basic accomodation needs for visiting staff, maintenance tools and equipment, office computer and printer, and educational resources.

Maria addresses some of these needs by encouraging brethren to use village church donations, when available, to help widows, orphans and families in desperate need, purchase building maintenance and bathroom supplies, and pay church utility bills. The church brethren that have resources are encouraged to help widows and members of their extended families and neighbors before burdening church resources. Other means of addressing needs has been the distribution and use of donated Biblical resources, food, groceries, learning supplies, equipment, building materials, volunteer labor, personal benevolent resources, and the list goes on.

***Accomodations and Transportation***

During my stay, Tony Porchas, Maria’s husband, arranged for me to rent a room in a home near their residence in Somerton, Az. with use of both bathroom and kitchen facilities. This was my primary accomodation and worked out very well in co-ordination with Maria’s daily schedule since most of our ministry responsibilities required traveling and working together in our many trips back and forth across the border.

Ministry travel during my visit was provided by the use of Maria’s vehicle. Besides our mission visits to Mexico, we also made several trips to the Yuma area to purchase church supplies and equipment which Maria transported regularly across the border to the villages.

I was also offered free accomodations at Pastor Eduardo’s home in San Luis, which I reluctantly turned down, but very well may take advantage of when visitors are traveling with me on future visits, and we have our own vehicle transportation.

There was one other limited accommodation that I used in October. I stayed in the Cheque church where I slept in a 7’ by 7’ tent. I wanted to just pitch the tent outside on the church grounds, but Maria and some of the brethren thought it best that I be inside with locked doors. As it was, on a trip to the outside bathroom, I managed to lock myself out of the church before midnight. Since everyone nearby was settled and locked in at the time, I found an old wired up plastic chair and sat down along the side of the church under a clear dark sky filled with multitudes of stars. I did not panic, but just relaxed as I sat there saying to myself, “Now what’s the purpose of all this!” I then spent my time praying and meditating in the company of the Lord, watching wild dogs run by in pairs, listening to large snakes croak along the canal, and looking at the beautiful array of stars, each one in its own glory. Finally, between 2:30 & 3: am my friend, Ramon (a village cocaine addict), came wondering by and I informed him of my situation. He immediately directed me to sister Lupe’s small shack home, who is the facility and grounds caretaker, and awakened her (and most of the village!), and she came and opened the door of the church for me, and I returned to my tent and went to sleep.

So, as it turned out, the Lord used Ramon to rescue me from my dilemma, and I was very thankful for his help. Ramon usually sleeps in the open air in blankets behind the church, but on that night he had slept by the road near one of the dwellings.

I developed a meaningful relationship with Ramon during my stay. I would say to him, “Ramon, when are you going to give your life to Jesus?”, and he would speak a very rapid excuse in Spanish. But as time went by, he would always be around the church entrance when Maria and I came for meetings, and would often stand near the entrance listening and observing the meeting activities. Negative spiritual influences will have to be dealt with in Ramon’s life so he can make a clear decision for Christ. This I am praying and trusting for and also for several others in the village communities as the Holy Spirit leads us in a deliverance ministry.

**Concluding Remarks**:

I can’t say enough about the sacrificial work of our intermediaries, Pastor Arnulfo in Escondida, and Pastor Gabriel in Nogales, and , of course, the work of our board colleague, Pastor Maria, in the village of Cheque, who also serves as our ‘Missions Field Representative’.

Besides fulfilling his intermediary responsibilities at the ‘Farm Church’ in Escondida, Pastor Arnulfo was very faithful and helpful to us by his recommendations and co-management of our building projects. He often visited us in Cheque and his fellowship was a personal blessing and encouragement to me. Brother Arnulfo reminded me again that I have an open invitation to join him in visiting the pastors and village ministries that he oversees as a superintendent in an area spreading from Sonora to the Ensenada region on the Baja coast. This I would like to do at a convenient time when there is a food shipment to share in our ministry partnership with his evangelical church fellowship.

We were not able to meet with Pastor Gabriel and his wife, Paula, in Nogales this trip which is approximately 350 miles east of our mission villages in Sonora. We did, however, receive their communications and pictorial updates of their village church activities and faithful ministry to the Nogales community they pastor as intermediaries on JEM’s behalf and the Lord’s Glory. Brother Gabriel was baptizing new believers in October just about the same time we were doing the same in Cheque. Some of the pictures will appear on the JEM-Site as a part of the October Nogales pictorial presentation.

Maria and I also communicated with two of our past intermediaries, Pastor Eduardo and Pastor Antonio. These Pastors are still dear to our hearts and share in our donated food shipments, clothing, and material donations in their current ministries. Pastor Eduardo serves as a supervisor in a ministry called, ‘Ministerio Al Migiante Divino Redentor’, which is a ministry to Mexicali illegal immigrants. These people are quite desperate and without care and little help. Pastor Antonio has been assigned to oversee a new pastoral work in the Baja and communicates with us from there. He still has his home in San Luis, and it is not certain when he will return.

During the past few months, Pastor Maria has been encouraging Cheke’ brethren, who have demonstrated advancing maturity in the Lord, to participate as often as possible in leadership roles in church services and ministries. We believe the Holy Spirit is preparing these brethren to serve as elders and deacons with gradual development in pastoral responsibilities. A good time to introduce and encourage these ministry opportunities will be in mid-week services when Maria is unable to travel to Cheke’ because of her seasonal employment from mid-November until mid-April.

## May the Lord’s Will be done.

Lanny Anderson, Missions Field Director Jerusalem Evangelical Ministries (JEM)