

It has been my privilege each Sunday evening, when Maria returns from ministry in Cheke, to have a phone conversation with her. This provides an opportunity to converse on the many aspects of our JEM ministry in the Mexican villages where we serve. We can discuss local conditions, the spiritual growth and development of our people, and the present teaching of God's Word that day, as well as any other concerns.

This has been an unprecedented year in our ministry in Sonora, Mexico. From the time of our last AGM in March 2020, to the present, numerous adjustments have had to be made to facilitate our outreach to these villages.

CHANGES BROUGHT ON BY COVID:

Travel into Mexico:

The border was closed to all except for essential travel from April - June. During this time Maria was not permitted to travel but was able, by teleconferencing, to participate in the Cheke services, preaching the Word from her home. Her home became the gathering place for a few ladies from Somerton who participated with Maria in the work of the Holy Spirit each Sunday.

Although travel has continued to be rather restricted in and out of Mexico, the Lord has favored Maria with an open door to travel each week, not having to wait in long lineups or inspections as so many are required to do.

School Attendance:

Since the pandemic began the children have been unable to attend school. Some classes have been offered on line but many families cannot access them. JEM has provided some school supplies for children in our villages where little has been given by regional governments.

Health in the Villages:

Due to the lack of health facilities, many of the surrounding villages have been heavily impacted by Covid-19. Reports of loss of lives and many infections continue to be reported. Through this time our people in Cheke have increased their prayer meetings, seeking the Lord for His help and protection. Their village has been almost free of cases, only two reported with one ending in death. God in His mercy has covered them, giving them opportunity to continue gathering in worship and prayer each week.

Ministry in Escondita:

The pandemic has prevented us from continuing the children's ministry at the farm location but Pastor Arnulfo (our intermediary) has continued his visits to the families in the village. Funds for food, essentials, and school supplies have been provided by JEM, allowing his team to purchase and distribute these to needy families. Donations of items Maria brings bless the people of Escondita as well. Recent reports indicate that Sonora schools could reopen which would allow us to open the children's work at the farm property again.

Tony and Maria's Work Situation:

With the tight border restrictions through this harvest season in Yuma, there have been fewer Mexican workers coming across the border. As well, many of the present laborers are inexperienced. This has added significantly to Maria's work days making this the most difficult year of her career with the company. Early April is when the season ends and they will again be able to participate more actively in Mexico. "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" have been words of encouragement for them through these difficult times.

DEVELOPING A MINISTRY TEAM IN CHEKE:

Maria has been committed through her ministry to raising up a spiritual leadership team in the Cheke assembly. Lapita Ramiverez, who leads the worship team, and is our bookkeeper in Mexico, along with her nephew Juan Carlos Gonzales, have been opening services with scripture and leading weekday prayer services. God's grace has been preparing them for

further leadership as they devote themselves to prayer and the study of His Word. We anticipate that both of them will share in leading the Sunday meetings and preaching the Word in the coming year.

A recent addition to the leadership team is a seasoned Christian from San Luis, Nancy (Kimberly Herrera) Adame. Out of a deep desire to fellowship where God's Spirit is present, Nancy and her husband have been attending Sundays in Cheke for several months now. With past training in Christian leadership, Nancy has willingly assisted in children's ministry and contributed to prayer ministry as she attended. She has recently been joined by others from San Luis as well. We have sensed the call of God on Nancy and asked that she join the ministry team; using her gifts to lead the youth, and as God directs, assist Maria in Sunday ministry in the future.

The anointing of the Lord has been present as God's people have increased their prayer services to three days a week. Healings and deliverances are common occurrences as they wait before the Lord and participate in Sunday prayer ministry.

PRAYER NEEDS:

I have listed below some prayer concerns for this ministry. We would appreciate your assistance as we lift up Mexico before the Lord.

- Strength, wisdom and safety for Maria as she ministers. Travel has become more dangerous as cartel activity has moved into the region.
- An outpouring of the Holy Spirit to prepare God's people for outreach to neighboring communities
- For christian youth in the communities to be strengthened in the Lord and resist the allure of the world.
- Continued health and supply for Mexican believers during the pandemic.

DEACONS MINISTRY:

Bro. Benjamin Gonzales and Bro. Jesus Ramivera oversee the maintenance of the Cheke church properties and have recently installed a new 6 foot fence around the remaining grounds. Some of the roadside fence had been damaged by a reckless driver. This new fencing will ensure a safe area for children during church activities and help protect church facilities. For some time now Sister Lupe Reyes has cared for the cleaning of the interior of our facilities.

MATERIAL DONATIONS:

We wish to give thanks to the Lord and to the many generous people of the Yuma and Somerton regions who continually donate goods to the Mexican people. Almost every week Maria is able to bring gifts of food, clothing and toys to share in the villages of Cheke, Escondita and Islitas.

CANADIAN SUPPORT:

We want to again express our deep appreciation to all the Canadian brothers and sisters for your continued sacrificial support of this ministry. May the Lord bless and encourage you as we labour on together in His Vineyard.