

First Presbyterian Church of Birmingham  
"Mexico Mission Meditations: Salt and Light"  
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## **Dr. Peter Miller: Reflection on the medical component of the Mexico Mission Trip**

The 5 prior YPM medical missions I had been on were in conjunction with and run by the San Antonio First Presbyterian Church (SAFPC). The team usually was made up of approximately 25 adults. Physicians (divided into specialties Gen med, GYN, and pediatrics), pharmacists, opticians (reading glasses), translators & a team ran simultaneous VBS type children's activities. The last SAFPC trip this past Feb provided for 600 pts.

This summer's trip was much lower keyed. I performed dual roles as the physician and the pharmacist. I joined up with the church's very welcoming construction mission team. It actually worked extremely well in my opinion.

### **Backtracking; Why just me?**

I had been unable to participate with last 2 SAFPC trips. This spring I decided to try to do a mini med mission targeting diabetes, a highly prevalent disease of the Mayans in the Yucatan. YPM was happy about the plan and Amy welcomed me aboard this summer's mission team. Now the last task was to acquire medications and supplies. I was expecting this to be a big hurdle. I recollected a local charitable organization World Medical Relief (WMR).

They were a Godsend. I submitted my application. They were enthusiastic in their support. I was trying to limit the weight of what I would be taking in to Mexico. WMR provided much more than the oral diabetic meds, anti hypertensive med, Glucometer and test strips that I requested. Without an additional charge they added more, and it weighed 125 lbs. (While telling you of WMR's generosity. I want to also acknowledge the spontaneous generosity of the church and a friend's donation to WMR that covered the entire cost of the med supplies.)

I had acquired far more meds and supplies than I had expected; and fortunately was with a team able help with transporting them into Mexico.

Being a guest in a foreign country when you're bringing in a lot of medical supplies:

Psalm 121 says "the Lord is your keeper" but you still need to get thru Mexican customs. Unfortunately SA FPC had up to half their supplies confiscated at customs on their last 2 trips. I tried to be diligent with the paper work for the donation. Our documentation wasn't perfect, but fortunately not totally inadequate. We got everything through. It took time and a lot talking. Keep in mind that I don't speak or understand much Espanol. So clearly the Lord was our keeper on this trip through customs.

## **What was the light?**

Provided care for 50 persons in 4 mornings of clinics. As well as ace wrapping Alex of Esperanza's mild ankle sprain sustained playing soccer at VBS.

Many diabetics in Leona run out of their medications. They have regular access to medical care and are given samples which is not enough to last a couple of months. They can't afford to purchase their meds. Blood glucose checks confirmed their diabetes was out of control. We had taken plenty of Metformin and Glipizide to supply their meds until their next clinic appointment (up to 2 months forward). We dispensed 3000 tablets. On this type of med mission I treat a chronic disease hoping that today will be better than yesterday for the patient, with the clear knowledge that I don't have the long term solution for the problem. I know the cycle is bound to repeat itself. But, for today the patient's medical situation is better than having no meds at all.

Thanks to WMR's generosity we had plenty of Acetaminophen, vitamins, and cough meds for the other patients. (Dispensed 2000 Acetaminophen, 4000 adult vitamins, and 4500 children's vitamins)

We left behind plenty of diabetic, antihypertension and antibiotic meds that won't expire for a year or two. (Good for two more medical mission trips)

I now have a better understanding of Mexican customs regulations for the importation of "in kind" medical supplies and equipment. I know we need to be more diligent in properly complying with the regulations. If we do that: clearing customs with our donations can be a problem solved rather than a potential vignette for a border security reality TV show and potentially turning off the light.

## **Mexico Mission Trip Reflection by Julie Wagner**

The passage that Grace just read was our theme for the mission trip. We were charged with being the salt and the light.

"Sal con colores . Sal con colores. That is me and my limited Espanol, standing over my open luggage, opposite customs officials, at the Cancun, Mexico airport. I'm attempting to explain to the customs officials what the granular substance in the plastic bags is, amongst all the other Vacation Bible School supplies.

While in Mexico we truly experienced the salt of the earth, and the light of the world. The Mexican workers, hired by our Yucatan Peninsula Mission hosts, Willian and Erly, shined their light upon us constantly.

With Lucio, it was his infinite patience. He taught us how to build walls with mortar and cinder blocks. Lucio was cheerful and bright with each lesson and his eyes never rolled, but smiled even when sections of our wall needed to be taken down and re-built.

Juan's light shown through his infectious friendliness. He forged a unique bond with Robert and Eddie. They were able to joke constantly, not hindered by their limited command of each other's language. Juan watched out for us all, fearful we may fall asleep on our shovels, he asked Erly for the English words necessary to change the music, and liven up our work site tunes from mellow to danceable.

At times, our team was the salt of the earth. We were a well-oiled machine, manually mixing cement, no easy task, passing buckets along the chain to elevated Jevahirian boys pouring columns. There was so much light and power, the Electric Slide made its debut in the cement line. Between buckets, Christina was able to master the dance moves of the Electric Slide as expertly as she had mastered wall construction.

Our youngest team member worked hard and demonstrated a lot of leadership, much to the delight of his mother. On the work site, he mixed cement and worked well with our host, Erly guiding us on the placement of each wheelbarrow full of sand. On the play site, he singlehandedly convinced all of us to experience the pool slide. This was quite a challenge, as we were all aware of the bumpy design of the slide and the pain it would inflict on our weary bodies.

There was no wasting of salt and a keen respect for resources. We diligently watched out for one another, conscience of dehydration and muscle fatigue. On the material side, once the concrete columns were set, we disassembled the forms, saved the nails not too bent from extraction, and repainted the boards with diesel, ready for the next set of columns.

Not only could we see the light and taste the salt, but they could also be heard. Amy's most genuine laugh told us all how loved we were and how unique this trip was, even though she has been on numerous mission trips. During our nightly devotions, hearing thoughtful prayers and beautiful voices singing Sanctuary, reminded us of God's presence.

The brightest lights and tastiest salt may have been at Vacation Bible School. The smiles on the children's faces were contagious. The language barrier was absent in the crafts and games so expertly designed by Jen and Heide. Collin became a movable playscape with the children climbing on his limbs. They were thrilled to have someone so tall, so blonde, and so eager to play with them. At times it was difficult to ascertain whom was having more fun, the Mayan village kids or us, especially Dr. Peter, who shifted from his daytime doctoring to VBS craft expert.

Increasing the volume of my phrase "Sal con colores" did not seem to help with the customs officials. So to explain that the granular substance in the plastic bags was salt, I tasted it for them to see. As said in Matthew 5, this salt had not lost its taste.

**The text of Wendy's meditation was not available at the time of publication: we will include it when it is submitted.**