

Dear Friends,

February 26, 2006

Our group of 14 youth and adults returned from YPM Saturday warmed both by the sun and our experiences of the week. Highlights included getting to know William and Erly better, worshiping in a village church where William preached in Spanish, Erly translated into English and Ismael translated into Mayan. The relationships built with the neighboring children and our youth were a gift of grace. On two evenings we showed movies projected onto a fleece blanket hung on a clothesline to the kids. It was the first time William had prayed with them. One afternoon our youth put together a PowerPoint presentation and showed it to the kids. They had allowed the children to use their cameras, and the pictures they took were awesome. When we returned home we put it together with the Karen Drucker song, "Faces of God" and showed it at the session meeting Monday night. On two other evenings in Mexico we showed movies at Agua Viva Presbyterian Church there in Leona Vicario and played games with the kids.

Our work included moving many rocks, building a rock wall, and preparing the foundation for Ismael's house and assorted projects at our base in Leona. We tore down the bodega damaged in the hurricane, moved a lot of dirt and stones to level out some areas, repaired the front door, and poured a sidewalk along the outside of the wall adjacent to the road. William and Erly, Pedro and David, Mary and Terry worked very hard with the group. The first day William went to the site with Ismael and Pedro, and the other days he stayed with the group at the base and directed our work there.

One afternoon I met with William and Erly requested in a meeting with me to discuss several issues they asked me to bring to you all. I'll try to recount that conversation for you:

Maria Arroyo

William met with Maria Arroyo in Mexico City on Jan. 6 and received two different answers regarding our involvement with PC(USA) and the National Presbyterian Church of Mexico. Apparently the Mexican church told William they have no problem with YPM and would approve us, but Maria told them not to give us the letters because there are "problems down there." Needless to say, William did not understand this, and neither do I. I put a call into Maria yesterday, and she asked her assistant to call and see what I wanted. She is supposedly going to call me today – we'll see.

Pastor and Lay Leader Training

William was obviously excited about the training event they had Feb. 9 and 10 for 17 elders. My understanding is that a professor from San Pablo Seminary was there to do the instruction and Ismael did some translating and helping. William and Erly helped with the details of the event. I'm not clear on whether or not William actually did any teaching or not. The next training is scheduled for Mar. 24 and 25, and they are expecting the number to double. They felt not as many came the first time as they had hoped because there had been a rumor that William was making a new Presbytery. When those who

came saw what was going on, they said they would spread the word that this is a good ministry.

William is saying they need to know who/when the seminary intern will come. The people want training, and they need to know how to schedule it. The plan is for the intern to teach one day a week. If Princeton isn't going to send someone, they need to know so they can ask someone from San Pablo Seminary.

Ismael

William has questions about how he and Ismael will work? He says 17 churches in the area don't have pastors, and so Ismael plans to visit, preach and teach and help with what they need – all in the name of YPM. There is confusion about how much Ismael will be paid. William says Mark told him \$250/mo and John told him \$500/mo. He received \$250 in Jan. and Feb. William is saying that Ismael is going to work full-time with YPM, and he needs \$500/mo or he will need to work for another church.

Projects

William was asking if he should leave the Therapy Center on the Website (I think he means the PowerPoint presentation he has in Mexico), but it does raise the issue of whether we leave it on or not. The "Programo Medico" is also listed. While we were there I met Obed and his mother. Obed had just returned from being in the hospital again. I am wondering how we might help there. I understand that when we've provided medical care someone from YPM goes to the hospital/doctor with the family and pays the bills directly. Is that correct? Our church could possibly help with this if the board decides it's a good idea. I'm thinking special projects like this might be one avenue for fund raising. People like to respond to a specific need rather than paying what they see as administrative costs.

William also asked if we are interested in "supporting" an organization of single women with children in Merida. These women need to work, and yet they can't leave the kids. The fathers aren't paying child support, and the women can't pay for lawyers to get help. They are mainly a support group, and I'm not sure what exactly they need. Currently a pastor from the Peninsular Presbytery is leading this group.

Mexico Board

My understanding is that Pedro (an elder at Bethesda in Cancun) is on the Mexican board, and they are considering asking David (an elder at Betel in Cozumel.. Angelica, a secretary at San Pablo Seminary is also interested in being on the board and as a single mother has interest in the above mentioned organization.

Vans

William is saying that we need to sell the minibuses. Apparently he used one the week before us with Northville, but the battery died and it wasn't running when we arrived. We used the Expedition and the van, and that was fine.

David's church is interested in buying one of the minibuses for \$50,000P. They could pay in installments but not all at once. A new van costs \$416,000P with payments of \$10,000P and \$70,000P down. The monthly payments would be \$1000. David's church can give \$30,000 now, and if YPM paid \$40,000 it would be enough for down payment. Donations from groups and part of William's salary (he volunteered that) could pay the \$1000/mo payment.

There is also a used van, a 2004 model in Cozumel available for \$240,000

Terrenos (Deeds)

William is asking for a deed in Chetumal. Erly made copies of the papers you requested, and I have them. To whom should they be sent?

Visas

William and Erly are still trying to get visas. They recognize the importance of their visiting churches and know they need to come. Because they don't own property or have money in the bank, they are having difficulties. They need letters inviting them to come for specific dates and places and must apply three months ahead of time. They are supposed to get back to me with dates. They were talking about coming in Sept. or October. (If they come, who pays their expenses? That's my question, not there's.)

That's all I have for now. I will keep you posted on the Maria Arroyo issue. She is coming to our church for a Peace and Justice conference April 28 and 29, but I hope to talk with her before that!

I am always energized and grateful to God for the opportunity to live and serve in community on mission trips, and this one was no exception. Obviously there is work to be done. Please keep me posted on how I can be helpful.

Blessings,
Cindy