



Yucatan Peninsula Mission, Inc.
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Dear Friend of YPM,

We are writing to you because of your past involvement with YPM in the Yucatan Peninsula. If you have brought work teams to Mexico, you know how potentially life transforming this experience can be.

Many of you may have first experienced the Yucatan through the ministry of Ramon Celis. As a young Mexican pastor in the 1960s, Ramon established relationships with several American pastors, and his ministry grew to include church planting and building throughout the Yucatan peninsula. When his niece Bettina was born with Down's Syndrome, Ramon helped his sister to found and establish a Therapy Center for Down's Syndrome. As he traveled to villages preaching and teaching, his wife, Nady noticed the girl's who could never receive more than an elementary education. Their response to this need was to bring the girls to Merida to live and study in their own home, and Casa Hogar (The Home for Female Students) was born.

For more than thirty years Mayan/Mexicans and Americans have partnered together in various construction projects, cultural exchanges, medical interventions and ministries that have enriched the lives of many Mayan/Mexicans and Americans along the journey. While Ramon Celis has retired from YPM, he continues to work with one U.S. presbytery that has partnered with the Northern Quintana Roo Presbytery to plant ten churches.

In an effort to continue the work begun through Ramon, YPM has formed both a 501(c)(3) in the U.S. and an Association Civil in Mexico. Since the name had to be registered in both countries, and Mexico refused to allow the words "Presbyterian Ministries," the name was changed to Yucatan Peninsula Mission in the U.S. to match. YPM continues to support most of the ministries you already know along with new directions in ministry. Here is an update on the ministries you know already:

1. The Therapy Center for Down's Syndrome located in Merida is a school for children with Down's Syndrome as well as a place that offers support, education and therapy for younger children and their families and teaches life skills for adults with Down's Syndrome. Most recently a grant was given allowing for long overdue repairs and improvements to the building, updating plumbing and electrical, updating fixtures and painting. Scholarships for children are also given each year.

2. The Home for Female Students (Casa Hogar) is currently closed for renovations with the hope of re-opening within a year. Both the Therapy Center and the Home for Female Students are governed by separate boards, although they continue to be financially supported by YPM
3. Casa de Esperanza Hospital Presbiteriano is now leased to a for-profit group of doctors, and therefore YPM no longer continues in a charitable mission.
4. “Come and See” Missions is what we call the American team component of YPM. It remains our core mission and ministry. “Come and see,” an invitation extended throughout the Gospel of John by those who knew Jesus, is an invitation we extend to you to travel to Mexico and experience first hand what God is doing here. Through a partnership with the National Presbyterian Mexican Church, direction from their regional presbyteries, and invitations from local congregations, we work together to build churches, homes, schools, clinics and community centers.

Most recently YPM purchased 25 hectares (one hectare equals 2.4 acres) of property in the town of Leona Vicario, a town of about 6,000 people located an hour from the Cancun airport and more centrally located in the Yucatan Peninsula. Over the past thirty years, the Presbyterian Church in Mexico has grown phenomenally, and the need for church buildings and pastoral leadership continues to increase. As tourism draws the Mexican people to Cancun and the coastal region known as the Riviera Maya, the men in the central villages leave to find work and sometimes do not return. Pastoral leadership is also difficult to retain in the villages because salaries are higher and churches are larger in the tourist areas. The training of lay and pastoral leaders in the villages has long been an issue, and YPM, along with presbyteries in the region is attempting to address this need.

In November the YPM Board of Directors gathered in Puerto Morelos with Mark and Sandy LaGree and William and Erly Cen to prayerfully consider the future of YPM. For those of you not familiar with these folks, please look at the YPM website (www.ypminc.org) for more information about them. In 1999 Ramon Celis first began working with Mark and Sandy to continue the work he began, and they now spend most of the year in Mexico. William is a Presbyterian pastor who currently serves a congregation on the island of Cozumel. Erly, his wife, is a pastor's daughter and works in partnership with William and YPM.

Pastor William feels particularly called to the work of training village pastors and lay leaders to lead their churches, and he and Erly are moving toward fulfilling this call in the near future. In addition, they are in the process of seeking five Mexican people to serve on the Board of Directors in partnership with the five North Americans already serving. We are excited about this new direction and look forward to seeing where God will lead.

Please consider how you and your church might want to join in this partnership with our Mexican neighbors to become the hands and feet of Christ as together we reach out in Christ's love. If you are interested in bringing a group to “Come and See,” contact Mark and Sandy LaGree at ypm@ypminc.org. If you are not able to travel to Mexico, consider adding YPM to your mission giving in a ministry of partnership.

Sincerely Yours,
Cindy Merten
YPM Board Member