



Manos de Dios May/June 2008 Newsletter

www.ManosdeDios.org

...serving our Lord by encouraging Pastors,
Families and Prisoners in Sonora, Mexico

Yes, LORD, walking in the way of your laws,
we wait for you;
your name and renown
are the desire of our hearts. Isaiah 26:8

May/June trip to Mexico starts off as usual!

by Dennis Smith

Sometimes we get in a rut because things go as usual. This trip was no exception...in the beginning. Truck and utility trailer full of donations - as usual. No problem getting to the border - as usual. Prayed for a green light (I was very concerned because of the large amount of non-prescription drugs and supplies we were taking to the educational/medical clinic we were holding in El Diamante) and the Lord helped us through - as usual. Arrived safely in Peñasco - as usual. Thank you, Lord!

After settling in at our Holiday Rambler trailer, we started visiting friends and pastors. We especially cherish the time we pray with and for them. We checked in on what the immediate needs were and how we could assist them in non-enabling ways.

Update on Pastor Manuel

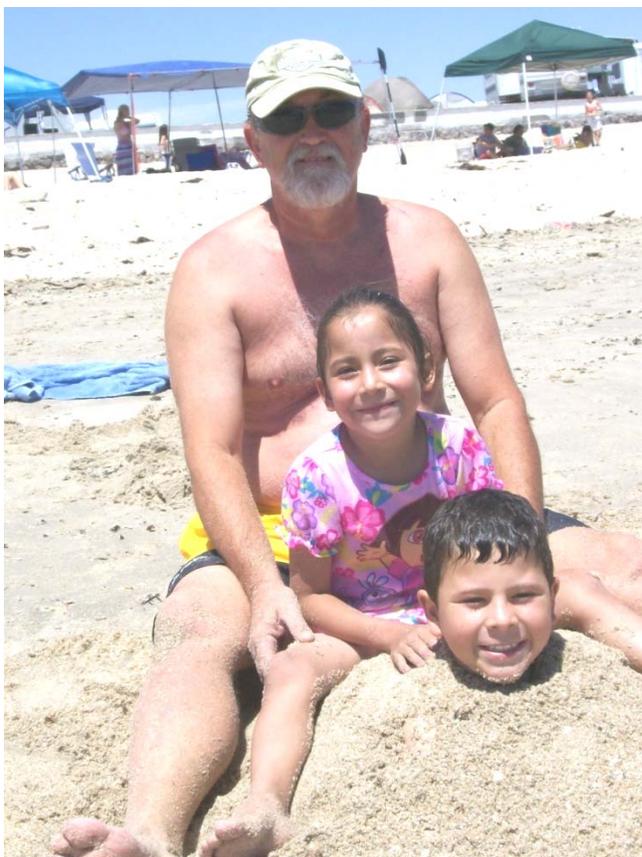
During a visit with Pastor Manuel's family we were pleased to find that the house Manos de Dios built for him in February of '07 has been added on to and he now uses it as his church! A church group from Michigan built a large sanctuary, connecting it to the house. The house is now used as the Sunday School rooms and a church office. The church, ***Metodista Libre***, is growing and reaching out into the community. FYI, Manuel's family continues to live in a rented home a few miles away from the church. We donated two large bags of clothes for the pastor to give to people when needed and a bag of craft supplies for their ***Estudio Verano*** (VBS).



New church building attached to home in the foreground

Animo (encouragement) of Single moms

Lucy calls single moms with children “modern day widows and orphans,” as is talked about in scripture (James 1:27). These women, raising children without a husband, live difficult lives (as is true in all cultures!) The summer heat takes its toll on these precious families living in substandard housing. Each mother works...when a job is available. This is a blessing as it brings in income, but presents the challenge of childcare while she works. We love sharing our trailer (air conditioning and running water is a special treat!) with these moms and children. A day at the beach is not common even though they live in Puerto Peñasco. Here are the



Dennis, Yara & Juan Ramon: day at the beach!

stories of our time with three single moms and their kids.

Socorro and her children are like family to us. We are their unofficial *Padrinos* (Godparents). They were some of the first people we met when we started going to Peñasco. Socorro is currently unemployed, after being laid off recently by a construction company. Juan Ramon (8) and Yara (6) live with their mom in a 2 room house made of scrap lumber. They have electricity and a hose in the front yard provides water. Socorro’s oldest daughter, Fatima, lives with friends in Hermosio as she can’t afford to raise all three children alone. Socorro had saved some money for a trip to Hermosio this summer as Juan Ramon needs (another) surgery on his urinary tract. Socorro has been looking for another job for 2 months, but has not found anything yet. She was starting to dig into her savings to pay for groceries. Lucy took Socorro to the market to purchase food for the family and we were able to give them a

few donations for the house and shoes for Juan Ramon. They spent a wonderful day

with us at our trailer on the beach. What a fun day of relaxing, enjoying the ocean, eating and quality time! My favorite is the quality “play” time with the kids. When I asked the kids what they would like for dinner, they immediately replied “hamburgers and hotdogs.” Go figure!

As always, we cherished our time with **Margarita and Alejandra**. They now live in an old motor home (in terrible condition) not too far from Playa Bonita. What a challenge to climb in and out of that motor home carrying 40 + pound Alejandra numerous times per day! Margarita has a lot of struggles in her life (taking care of her handicapped daughter is a huge responsibility), but she always meets us with a big smile and a hug. Margarita recently quit her job working at a



Margarita and Alejandra

restaurant and is hoping to have enough sewing to support herself and Alejandra. She is a very accomplished seamstress! We were blessed to be a blessing by being able to help her with gifts of food for her and her child, clothing and bed sheets. She spent a couple different days with us at our trailer. Please lift them up in prayer for the trip to LA, California for Alejandra's next appointments at the Shiners Hospital July 15, 16 & 17.

The third single mom and children we pour our lives into is **Angela and her son Jafet**. Angela is the youngest (19 years old) and we have known her and assisted her through tough times in the last 18 months. We originally advised her NOT to sneak across the border to be with the baby's father. We walked with her through many of the pains and joys of pregnancy. Since the



Mom's day at the trailer: (right to left): Angela, Margarita, Lucy with baby Jafet and our dog, Soliel.

arrival of her new baby we have assisted with diapers, formula, food, baby clothes and supplies, plus medicine (all thanks to many generous donors!) for Jafet. Angela now has a job working at a laundry. Pastors Rafaela and Lupe care for Jafet while she is working (normal hours: 6am to 2pm 6 days a week). Angela and Jafet also spent a day with us at our trailer. We visited, played, took lots of photos and enjoyed eating together. After time on the beach, Angela and Jafet took a bath

with warm water in a bathtub. You should see Lucy's eyes light up when she is holding or caring for Jafet. Again, we are called **los Padrinos**, and we love it!

A special blessing was having the opportunity to introduce Margarita to Angela. They spent an afternoon together at our trailer and enjoyed each other's friendship. Lucy cared for both children on the beach while the moms enjoyed some adult time swimming and walking on the beach. They found that they have a lot in common. Angela prayed with Margarita and encouraged her to read her Bible. She suggested reading a Psalm every morning. They exchanged cell phone numbers and planned to get together on their next day off. What a blessing to everyone!

These are some of the fun times of mission work. Not a care in the world. God is making a difference in their lives and all in as well as it can be in our community, "as usual."

Warnings about violence in Mexico

By now you may be wondering where I am going with stating "as usual" so many times in the beginning of this newsletter. I guess I better go there now. Life in Peñasco and Sonora is not "as usual" any more. Things are changing.

As we visited with friends and listened to the prisoners we learned things that had not made it to (were kept out of) the local newspaper (or to the American press). Serious violence and crime has come to our area!

The start was in April when the Mexican Army had the shoot-out with drug/gang members at the border town of Sonoyta. One drug runner was killed and two were captured. Most of you have probably heard about that incident as there was an employee from one of the Tucson TV newscasts at the border when the shooting started! Now for what you may not have heard. While we were in Peñasco during the last week in May there were three murders. One involved a man being beaten to death with a baseball bat. All murders were gang/drug related. There was also a man serving time in the Puerto Peñasco prison for blowing up a man in Sonoyta with a hand grenade. He was there for only about a week and then was transferred to a higher security prison in Hermosillo. And two weeks ago there was an incident in the desert just east of the Lukeville/Sonoyta checkpoint. Four Mexican men, armed with automatic weapons, came into the United States. They were spotted by our National Guard who are not allowed to take any action except to retreat and contact the U.S. Border Patrol, which they did. By the time the Border Patrol officers got there the men had gone back into Mexico.

In addition to violence, gang members use fear as a tactic. A local restaurant owner, who we have become friends with, told us that a relative who owns a business in Peñasco was threatened over the phone. A man called him and threatened him saying “we know who you are the kind of car you drive, your family members and where you live – if you want to stay safe you will pay us money.” He also claimed to be a member of a specific gang. The man did not pay. As far as we know right now, nothing has happened. We also have another friend that tells almost the same story about one of his family members.

I don't know how many of you follow what is going on in Mexico between the Mexican Government (the Army) and the drug cartels. There is extreme violence and killings all across the northern states of Mexico that border with the United States (except in the Sonoyta/Peñasco area...until now). There is more information on the travel page on our web site www.ManosdeDios.org/travel.html. Some have called it a *modern day* revolution in Mexico. In this revolution, the Government is fighting against the organized crime instead of fighting against its citizens.

I have always stated that I would be upfront and honest with all our supporters in regards to what is going on in our mission, in Mexico and with all safety and security issues. Lucy and I have the responsibility to inform you as to what is taking place so you can make your own educated decision about any safety concerns you may have. Considering the small amount of violence that has crept into Peñasco, Lucy and I feel it is not serious enough to make us curtail our mission or reduce our travel to Mexico and Peñasco. Lucy and I will continue to minister to the people in Mexico until our Lord directs us otherwise. You must make your own decisions concerning your safety if you travel into Mexico.

There are many good things constantly being accomplished in Peñasco. **Mayor Heriberto Renteria Sanchez** is trying to clean up Peñasco in many different ways. During his first year in office he ordered all the people in his administration to take a drug test (including the police officers) which resulted in only two people being fired! He has instituted programs funded by the Federal Government to help improve the lives of the citizens of Peñasco. There are programs that will give financial assistance to people that want to improve their living conditions (put a concrete floor in their homes, add an additional room and even remodel the

home for starting a childcare business). There is a new community park and numerous streets have been paved in the last year.

Still, your prayers are desperately needed not only for the people in the Sonoyta/Peñasco area but also for the entire country of Mexico and the families of the people that have died in this needless conflict. Please pray for those in authority in the country of Mexico.

Campo Animo, El Diamante

During our stay in El Diamante for the educational/medical clinic I had some time to work on the baño. I was able to put a coat of brown paint on the building and a nice bright coat of yellow/green on the trim. I figured by painting the trim a bright color, volunteers that come to El Diamante to work on a project would be able to spot



Campo Animo! What do you think? It was so hot and windy when I painted, the fresh paint I just put on would be almost dry by the time I dipped the roller in the pan and returned to the wall to continue to paint! Even though it is hot, you do what you have to do! And that includes sleep adjustments. The volunteers (Dr. Troy and Lisa, a nurse) were to arrive about 7pm Friday. They called and said they would be delayed. A bad accident between Lukeville and Why, Arizona was delaying them and they would arrive about midnight. Lucy and I decided to lie

down about 11pm and were just dozing off about 11:30 when they arrived. We showed them their bunks, visited a little and tried to get back to sleep. As you know, the sun rises very early in the morning in the summer. So do the roosters next door to our trailer! They started crowing about 3:30 and then the train went by at 5am, blowing his whistle as they always do. We just laugh it off and remember how blessed we are to have a place to sleep in! We spent precious time with the children living on our property, Tony and Jenifer. They love coloring in the Christian coloring books and cooled off in the plastic pool we brought for our dog. (We left the pool for the kids to enjoy!)



Tony and Jenifer coloring in our trailer

Educational/medical clinic in El Diamante, June 7

Communication and flexibility are very important factors in our mission life. We must communicate as much as possible and we also must be willing to be flexible in everything. Case in point: our planned clinic in El Diamante.



Jenifer cooling off in our doggy pool



Patients waiting for medical care in El Diamante Clinic

The first snag (there would be a few more) we hit was that one of our educators would not be able to come to El Diamante. No problem, the nurse and doctor would ride together and we could get by. Next, we thought we had worked all the details out with Pastor Alfonso concerning the date and time of our clinic and the best possible time was selected. What had not been considered was the grape harvest. Because of the extreme heat, the grapes in the neighboring fields had to be picked early and quickly or they would spoil. That meant that on

Saturday, the day of the educational/medical clinic, most of the people in town were working from sun up to sun down in the grape fields or the grape

packing plants. Again, no problem, we could make adjustments. Then on Saturday morning the wind picked up and the temperature started rising. There are no paved streets in El Diamante so if you are outside, the blowing dust and sand sticks to you like glue. Needless to say, the streets were quite empty. Lucy, Dr. Troy, Nurse Lisa and I arrived at the local clinic at eight am and started setting up. We had been blessed with donations of many bags of medication, vitamins and non-prescription drugs to dispense and to leave with the local doctor. We sorted and inventoried the donations.

The clinic was to start at 9:00 am and a few people began arriving at 8:30, ready to be treated. There was a slow but steady stream of people that needed medical attention. So the heat, wind, blowing sand, and grape harvest that kept many from coming to the medical clinic was a blessing in disguise. It gave the Dr. Troy and Nurse Lynn extra time to interview and care for the patients. It also gave Lucy time to visit with, play with (puppets and children's praise music CD's to the rescue!), and pray with the people in the lobby while they waited to see Dr. Troy. The Lord made it possible for us to minister to the people that needed to be ministered to. Because of the crowded conditions in the small clinic, I opted to work around the trailer (Campo Animo) and paint the baño. At 2:00 pm we were able to stop for lunch. Everyone was tired and hungry. Angelita had put in her order for us to bring chicken legs, bags of salad lettuce and potatoes from the US. From these items she prepared a delicious lunch for Dr. Troy and Dr. Armando (local doctor), nurse Lynn, Lucy and me, and her husband, Pastor Alfonso. Our favorite part of the meal was the homemade *Tres Leches* (three milk) cake! Yum! The best any of us had ever eaten!



Dr. Troy explains how to use donated Diabetes testing kit

The educational part of the clinic started at five pm. It was held in the small school house (with no air conditioning) across the street from the clinic. At this time the wind had quit blowing and it was just HOT! I don't know which was worse!

Dr. Troy did an excellent job of educating the people on the topic of Diabetes and Hongus, a fungus that is prominent in that area. Lucy and Lynn passed out educational material and bottles of bleach (to treat fungus germs on their clothes,

sandals and concrete floors). I took pictures and tried to entertain the few children with weird expressions. Dr. Troy ended the clinic with a few magic tricks that were based on the Gospel message. He also made animals from balloons. The children (of all ages) loved seeing the magic and hearing about the workings of Jesus. What a blessing... a doctor who loves the Lord, is a wonderful teacher, speaks Spanish fluently, and does Christian magic tricks! Thank you, Lord, for Dr. Troy and his willingness to travel to Sonora to treat and educate the poor.



Dr. Troy educates and entertains!

It was a long, hot, tiring day but all of us were pleased with the results and were confident that we had accomplished what God wanted us to accomplish. Lucy and I are definitely believers that our mission is not about numbers. Instead it is about quality of time spent with God's children, the relationships that are made, and the opportunities to demonstrate God's love!

Dios te bendiga, Dennis

DONATIONS delivered on the May/June trip to Sonora

- | | |
|---|--|
| 2 cases of food (sisters in Christ) | 15 gallons of paint (for family to paint their home) |
| 7 bag of clothes (church clothing bank) | 3 case baby formula (moms in need) |
| 1 children's bicycle | 1 TV |
| 3 bags of work shirts (farm workers) | 2 bag of kid's shoes |
| 2 cases of medical supplies (clinic) | 2 boxes of diabetes equip. and supplies (clinic) |
| 1 box of asthma supplies (clinic) | 46 bottles of bleach (clinic) |
| 12 pair flip-flops (El Diamante) | 6 bottles of anti-fungal spray (clinic) |
| 40 tubes of cortisone cream (clinic) | 1 bag iodine prep pads (clinic) |
| 1 Earoscope (clinic) | 1 bag allergy syringes (clinic) |
| 1 stethoscope (clinic) | 8 bottles dry eye therapy drops (clinic) |
| 2 Nebulizers (clinic) | 20 tubes and disposable mouth pieces (clinic) |
| 300 Claritin tablets (clinic) | 2 Accu-check compact testers, 10 AA batteries |
| 1000 Accu-check test strips (clinic) | 50 bottles of adult vitamins (clinic) |
| 50 bottles of children's vitamins (clinic) | 30 bottles of calcium (clinic) |
| \$200.00 donation toward purchase of a car for a pastor | 40 sheets, comforter & pillow cases (El Diamante) |
| 1 diaper bag and 6 bags of diapers (moms) | 1 large bag of yarn (mom) |
| 8 yards of fabric (church) | \$150.00 worth of prescription drugs (for clinic) |
| 3 first aid kits (left at clinic) | 12 bibles (El Diamante) |
| \$50.00 for food (El Diamante) | \$50.00 food (person in need) |
| 1 bag men's dress pants (for pastor) | 1 bag craft supplies (for Sunday school) |
| <u>Prison ministry:</u> | |
| 1 devotional book (women) | 1 bag t-shirts (men) |
| 6 individual CD players (women) | 10 bottles calcium tablets (women) |
| 7 Christian music CD's (women) | 7 bags of personal hygiene supplies (women) |



**Up-coming projects and activities of Manos de Dios:
Please pray for all...and get involved!**

School Uniform Drive:

Assist Manos de Dios in providing uniforms for children of families that could not otherwise obtain the necessary uniform for their child to attend school. \$50 purchases two polo shirts, a skirt or pair of pants, and a pair of shoes. Donations of any amount gladly accepted. All donations are tax deductible. Make checks out to Manos de Dios with 'School Uniform' on the memo line. Drop off at the MEXICO table between services at Pantano Christian Church or mail to: 2914 N Indian Ruins Road, Tucson AZ 85715. Or donate online:

www.ManosdeDios.org/donations.html Deadline: August 17, 2008

Thank you!



Water Fun Day and Family Outreach

Saturday, August 30, 2008. Barrio Nuevo Peñasco, Puerto Peñasco. A day of providing water and fun to a neighborhood that is without piped in water and electricity. Kids can shampoo their hair and wash their clothes while getting cooled off! Haircuts, games, towels and the Gospel message will be included. Join us for this outreach! Camp or reserve a hotel. RSVP to:

GetInvolved@ManosdeDios.org

September 2008 Work on getting electricity and water installed at Campo Animo in El Diamante. Start acquiring donations of winter supplies (sheets, blankets, winter clothes/coats/shoes for the needy). Planning to have a dental clinic in the prison.

Ancient Paths "Sendas Antiguas" Conference October 10 & 11, 2008. This Family Foundations International conference will be presented in Puerto Peñasco in Spanish for pastors and church leaders and their wives. Please pray that the participating pastors and wives will be blest and take new encouragement back to their churches. Expected attendance: 30.

House build trip October 12-15, 2008 The Rock of Sahuarita Church is financing and providing the work crew to build a home for a family that currently lives in substandard housing.

Rocky Point House Building Trip with Pantano Christian Church November 6-9, 2008 Manos de Dios will be coming along side Pantano Christian Church as they take a large work team to Peñasco to build homes through Amor ministries. Lucy will lead the "Los Niños" outreach to children and moms in the barrios during the home construction. Registration for this work trip begins in August 2008 at Pantano Christian Church. Check their website www.PCCWired.org for details.

LifeWind Training of Trainers (Capacitación de Capacitadores) December 1-5, 2008 Puerto Peñasco. A seminar training locals in the vision of helping themselves with their own resources. Jody and Mandy, trainers with LifeWind International (www.LifeWind.org) will be coming from Zihuatanejo Mexico to teach this conference in Spanish. Please join us in praying for wisdom in choosing who to invite to this conference.

December 2008 Third annual Posada in the prison, Puerto Peñasco. Date TBA. Deliver winter supplies and food boxes to families, attend Christmas pageants at local churches, celebrate the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ.

On Lucy's heart....

We serve such an awesome God! I am loving living my life worshiping, serving and loving God. And God equates loving Him with loving our neighbor (other people). **Jesus replied: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' Matthew 22:37-39.** So, as we continue to show love to the people we are in contact with in Mexico, we are demonstrating our love to God. Wow! Thank you, Lord for this opportunity to serve you. Lord Jesus, *please bless all who donate to support your work.* Amen.

Currently listening to: new Salvador CD "Aware". Title song words include "...Oh, it's You in me, that I fail to see...Make me aware, make me see That everything I am is not all about me So take my world, turn it around So that the obvious can finally be found Make me aware, make me aware." Yes, Lord make me aware. Help me see this world and others through Your eyes. One song on the CD is in Spanish "Llévame" (take me). The whole CD is great!

Currently reading: The Final Quest by Rick Joyner. Prophetic fiction that is captivating. I can't put it down.

Praises:

- For the 17 male prisoners who completed the 40 days of Purpose book and study in the prison. For many this was the *first book* they had ever read completely in their life. They received a small gift (boxer shorts, socks, razor and a phone card) and congratulations for their accomplishment. Other prisoners were encouraged to continue working through the book with the goal of completing it, also. There are numerous testimonies of how the book has impacted and changed lives. Yeah, God! They have now begun a discipleship series from Emmaus Ministries (www.ecsministries.org). The men are learning so much about studying the Bible and look forward to submitting exam responses and receiving certificates of completion.
- For a sewing machine donated to Margarita, so she can begin her micro-business as a seamstress (another sewing machine is needed for a woman in El Diamante)
- For a house in Puerto Peñasco that Manos de Dios has use of for one year. We will need to pay only the utilities and care for the home and yard. What a gift and answer to pray as this will make coming and going to Mexico much easier and provide a safe, comfortable place for us to stay and house pastors, conference leaders, etc. PTL!

Prayer requests

- Pray for the women in the prison. They have been in conflict with each other. It is very stressful living in such close quarters 24/7! Also, pray for one or two women to join the ministry who are willing to go into the prison on a weekly basis.
- Pray for those in positions of authority throughout Mexico (President, Governors, Mayors, prison commandants and military leaders). The violence has increased due to illegal drugs and mafia activities. Pray for wisdom and protection and that that justice and righteousness will prevail. (**The LORD loves righteousness and justice; the earth is full of his unfailing love.** Psalms 33:5)

Manos de Dios encourages and empowers families, pastors, prisoners, and communities in Sonora, Mexico. We are trusting in God totally to provide for our needs and the needs of those we reach out to. Please consider partnering with Manos de Dios, a 501 c 3 not-for-profit corporation. Your tax-deductable donations will have eternal value as they impact lives for Christ in Mexico. Donations can be made on our website www.ManosdeDios.org or with checks made payable to Manos de Dios, NFP. Contact us for our mailing address and/or banking online donation information. May God bless you!

Contact us: GetInvolved@ManosdeDios.org

Phone while in US 520-975-7356

Phone while in Mexico 520-203-3276

Thank you for your prayers and support!

Dennis and Lucy Smith

Manos de Dios...God's hands and feet in Mexico



Alejandra, age 7