I love reading biographies of great old Christians. One of my favorites is Saint Augustine, best known for writing the “Confessions.” Augustine is one of the greatest minds that Western civilization has ever produced. His conversion to Christianity followed a long, tortuous path, and when he finally did come to Christ, he decided to live the life of a monk in the North African desert and write theology and philosophy. So he retreated to a monastery and tried to write, but his bishop, realizing the genius of this young man, commanded that Augustine be ordained as a priest. So Augustine, much against his will, was ordained and sent to work in a parish where he taught the basics of the Christian faith to largely illiterate peasants.

This is not what Augustine had planned for his life. He came from a prominent family and was highly educated. He must have thought that surely there was some better service he could perform for the Kingdom than teaching Sunday School to illiterates. But God had a plan for Augustine and in subsequent years did call him to the work that would make him famous. The illiterate peasants were a training ground for the man who became a giant of Christian theology.

And there are many other examples of persons whose well-constructed plans for their lives were interrupted by God. Theologian and Harvard professor Henri Nouwen left academia and worked in a home for handicapped adults. William Wilberforce, the great abolitionist of the 19th century, was born into wealth and planned a life of ease and privilege until he encountered Christ, after which he toiled until the end of his life to abolish slavery.

The Bible is full of examples of “interrupted” lives. Zacchaeus the tax collector probably envisioned for himself a life of wealth and privilege, until he came face to face with Jesus. Peter no doubt saw himself as a fisherman for the rest of his life, until he met Jesus on a beach and was made a “fisher of men.” The apostle Paul undoubtedly planned out a life zealously defending the values of the Pharisees by persecuting Christians, until he had a dramatic encounter with the Lord himself.

I have a magnetic sticker on my refrigerator door in Mexico which says, *We Plan…. God Laughs.* It is a constant reminder to me that...
when we place our lives in the hands of Jesus, there’s no telling where we will end up. In the case of my own life, that meant serving the Tarahumara Indians in the Sierra Madre of Mexico, but I believe that God has a plan for all persons who are willing to kneel at the feet of Jesus. It will probably not be the life we had planned out for ourselves, but it will be more wonderful (and more challenging) that anything we could have envisioned.

So this Christmas, as we, like the wise men, kneel before the Christ child, may we all be asking, “Where are you leading me Lord Jesus?”

Blessings to all of you this holiday season.

Mike Berkeley

For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve others and to give his life as a ransom for many.
Mark 10:45 NLT

In October, we celebrated the 10-year anniversary of the opening of Hospital Misión Tarahumara! Some of our guests are pictured above. More than 500 people came from nearby villages for a feast and worship service to thank God for all He has done in this first decade.

Here are just a few things we have to celebrate from 10 years of ministry:

80,000 patient visits
Over 3000 surgeries
14 wells drilled in villages
3 Tarahumara teachers trained
1 school built, 1 under construction
8 local Tarahumara nurses graduated and employed

. . . which represent many thousands of lives touched with God’s love, and many forever changed!
Insights from Dr. Bruce Daugherty

The two excerpts below are fresh perspectives from volunteer Dr. Daugherty’s recent e-mail letter.

“The rainy season has passed, and the dust is back. The weather is still warm during the day, but freezing at night, as would be expected at 7200 feet elevation. . . The dry season brings the resurgence of the water well-drilling aspect of the ministry, as roads dry up and become nearly passable into the small villages. The mission received donations for the well-drilling ministry and, through another act of God, ran upon a virtually new, used air compressor, simultaneously. That new equipment means faster and more effective well-drilling because of the benefit of air compression in the rarified air above 8000 feet, where the Tara live on the canyon rims. The airplane aspect of the ministry was given new life with the sale of the plane, unsuitable for high altitude, short runway bush flying, in exchange for a Cessna, much more suitable for air ambulance transport in the mountains. With the harvesting of the corn and bean crops at the end of the growing season, the pediatric ward is no longer filled with malnourished, starving Tara children. That sad aspect of the hospital ministry will be quiescent until the beans are exhausted in the spring, and the diarrhea-producing rains return. Hospital Mision Tarahumara celebrated it’s tenth anniversary last week with a gathering of Tara, Mexican, and Anglo, many dressed in traditional clothes of their cultures. Attached is a file with thoughts on what it will take to see our twentieth anniversary.”

On a recent trip to Norogachic for a clinic to be held at the Catholic hospital, I was struck by several contrasts. First, we had stopped at a small store in Aboreachic for a breakfast snack. While I sat in the car, I observed an indigenous couple with the woman dressed in the standard Tara long, brightly colored skirt with a contrasting patterned blouse, and headscarf. Her husband did not wear traditional Tara attire, rather opting for the more Mexicanized blue jeans, brightly colored shirt, and a cowboy hat. But, while they sat on the ledge, the contrast occurred when a young Tara youth walked up to sit near them in prototypical LA gang attire of baggy jeans, a grey “hoody”, and a dark baseball cap skewed on his head. We progressed on to Norogachic, encountering the brief visual contradiction of a Tara man standing motionless by his burro laden with bags as a giant dump truck drove by him full of tons of boulders from a nearby road construction. Finally, we two Anglo physicians from a Protestant mission hospital arrived at the Catholic hospital that stands now virtually empty and used solely for outpatient care. Decades ago, it was constructed to be a regional center for medicine in the Tarahumara district, but fell into obscurity when the highway bypassed it. Even remotely in the Sierra Madres, echoes of traditional Tara life are being drowned out by the sounds of modern 21st century influence. One religious order struggles to hold open their barely used hospital, while Hospital Mision Tarahumara teams with patients, staff, and physicians. The contrasts are as stark as they are real. How can our hospital escape obsolescence? The story in Exodus chapter 17 of Israel’s victory as a result of Moses’ arms held up to God in heaven with the assistance of two friends from early morning until sunset may hold the key. God’s power brought to our effort through the prayers and support of our friends may bring eternal success in reaching these unreached and uncared for people.

~ Bruce

This family, from oldest to youngest, has been served by the ministries of MMM.
Would someone you love be honored to receive a Christmas gift that will serve needy Tarahumara families?

Choose one of the giving options listed below, and we will send a customized Mexico Medical Missions Christmas card to your friend or loved one. The card will state that a gift was given in their honor, and will specify the designation of the gift.

Giving Options

$25 gift to treat a malnourished child for one day.

$100 gift to send out a medical team to a remote village for medical care, health teaching and Bible “storying.”

$200 gift for cataract surgery that will restore sight to one person

Any gift toward other ministry needs, such as:
Missionary Support (please specify family)
General Support for Hospital Operations
Water Project for a Village
Patient/Missionary Flights
Expansion of the Pediatric Ward
Building of the Literacy & Translation Outreach Center

Please fill out and return the response card in time for Christmas cards to be sent and received.

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For information, or to stop receiving newsletters, contact our US office at (970)945-5432 or send an e-mail to vicky@mexicomedical.org.

MERRY CHRISTMAS AND A VERY BLESSED NEW YEAR TO ALL OF YOUR FAMILY FROM THE MMM FAMILY!