On April 25, 2009, pilot Mark Egolf and Dr. Carmen Reyes were married in Baja California. After celebrating with hospital staff in Chihuahua City, they joined Carmen and Mark’s families for a traditional ceremony.

Mark continues to fly doctors, community health workers and patients in a Piper Cub. Carmen is a doctor in the hospital, and is actively involved in the community health program. Mark and Carmen are passionate about serving God among the Tarahumara, and we are thankful they joined forces to reach them with His love!

On June 5, 2009, Salem Esteban Hardin was born to our bush plane mechanic, Dave, and his wife Delia. Delia gave birth in the birth center with Shelley, our midwife. We praise God for a healthy baby boy to add to the family! Dave provides mechanical and ground support for the aviation ministry. The hangar, where Dave, Delia and Esteban live, is in the village of Napuchis. They have many visitors, and are building relationships with the people. Please pray that God uses this new family to shine His light to the curious villagers surrounding them.

Andy and Deb Kramer recently came under the umbrella of MMM. They have worked with Ameritribes in La Mesa, a village about a 9-hour drive from the hospital (or a 15 minute flight). Andy and Deb’s primary ministry is to plant churches among the Tarahumara who speak the La Mesa dialect. One service they are providing to this group is literacy training. They spend three days each week hiking, teaching and sleeping in three remote villages. They are also translating Bible teaching materials and scripture portions, and teaching literacy in La Mesa. Although Andy and Deb will remain in La Mesa, we are very pleased to have them join our team!

Ivan and Jennifer Wang plan to arrive in Samachique at the beginning of October. Their children Ellie, Joelle, Jackson, Ethan and Timothy will join our family and be homeschooled by Jennifer. Ivan is a physician’s assistant, and will be working in our community health program as well in the hospital. The Wangs come to Mexico Medical Missions from their home church in Albuquerque - Calvary Chapel Rio Rancho.

We welcome back Dr. Pedro and Rosie Ramirez to our hospital staff. Dr. Ramirez was the very first Mexican doctor to join Dr. Mike when the hospital opened almost 10 years ago. In 2006, God led them in a different direction. In May 2009, a vacancy came up at the hospital for a doctor, which many of you prayed for God to fill. Not only do all of the doctors need to be Mexican certified, but the mission is committed to its doctors being believers in Jesus Christ. The Sierra is no easy place to serve, so we believe God is involved in bringing the staff together that keep ministry happening on a daily basis.

We are thankful for the donation of a “new-to-us” ambulance. Through friend Timothy Alm, Mike Shelton arranged the gift of a 1995 Ford vehicle with all bells, whistles, sirens and lights. It is very clearly marked, which is a plus for transporting patients at night. Our ambulance drivers will feel more at ease and less at risk on these runs. It was also already in Mexico, so there was no hassle of importation.

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We are thankful to you, our prayer and financial supporters, for investing in ministry to the Tarahumaras. All of this growth can only occur as God sustains a group unified in a desire to reach the Tarahumara people. We are privileged to be an extension of the body of Christ in the Sierra!
I love and dread the Fall at the same time. For me, Fall is the time of new beginnings and new challenges. For many people the New Year or even the Spring are the times of new beginnings, but for me it is the Fall. I’m sure this is a holdover from my student days; and even though I haven’t been a student for 35 years, I still view the Fall as the time when the year starts anew. It is in the fall when a “Divine Discontent” descends upon me and I am prompted to examine myself and ask, “Where is the Lord leading me...and how do I get there?” And as leader of this mission, I ask “Where is the Lord taking Mexico Medical Missions?”

We have been remarkably blessed with an amazing hospital facility which is equipped with the latest technology, and staffed with dedicated people. The Community Health Evangelism program is growing and has ambitious plans to expand into more communities. The aviation program is planning to acquire another aircraft which will expand our capabilities to move medical teams and evacuate the sick and injured. The birthing center work is growing, as are other programs such as well drilling. New people are joining the work. From the perspective of growth everything looks so promising.

But the purpose of all these efforts is to reach the Tarahumara people with the Good News of the Gospel. I am convinced that God wants to do a great work among the Tarahumaras, and that he has appointed us and many others to be the agents of that work. Mission work with this tribal group has gone on for so long and there have been so few success stories. The Tarahumaras have been very resistant to the Gospel; the culture is so closed, yet as a people they are so broken. But we are seeing cracks in the wall. More Tarahumaras are accepting Christ as their savior. The few fledging Tarahumara churches are growing. There seems to be an increased willingness to listen to the Gospel.

The Tarahumaras are facing more challenges as the outside world intrudes into their culture. The invasion of the drug cartels into the Sierra Madre in the past decade is a particularly dangerous threat. The Tarahumaras have always believed that they are the “chosen people” of God. This belief has fostered a sense of cultural pride, self-sufficiency and a deep suspicion of outsiders. But I believe that the culture is “decompensating”; they can no longer resist the outside world, and they don’t have the tools to cope with all the changes that are descending on them.

But the Gospel of Christ offers hope for these precious people. So I believe that, this Fall, God is calling me not to depend so much on my skills and material resources; but rather I am called to pray for the movement of God’s Spirit among these people. St. Paul once wrote: “Finally, brothers, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may speed ahead ....” (2 Thes 3:1) So this Fall, as I pray for the Tarahumaras, I ask for your prayers as well, that there might be a great harvest among these people.

- Mike Berkeley

The Piper Cub and pilot Mark Egolf have been busy this summer. Just two weeks ago, Mark flew visiting surgeon Bruce Daugherty to Santa Rita to see a patient. What a difference an 8-minute flight is from the normal 6 hours of grueling travel to this village. Often it is inaccessible in the summer due to swollen rivers.

Although the Cub has seen a lot of airtime, it is very limited in carrying capacity. After much prayer and research, the aviation ministry is planning to sell the previously used Compair 8, which has not held up under the conditions as hoped. Lord willing, a Cessna 185 will be purchased. The Cessna is a time-honored mission bush plane, and is large enough to hold a stretcher.

Please pray with us for God’s timing and continued leading in this process.