

Baja California, Mexico Mission Trip
Highland Augusta Mission Community
Central Valley Mission Community
Shenandoah Presbytery of Virginia
July 17-23, 2011

Highland Augusta and Central Valley Mission Communities once again generously sponsored a one-week mission trip to Baja California, Mexico in July 2011. This was the twelfth consecutive year and thirteenth trip that Shenandoah Presbytery has made to Colonia Vicente Guerrero, approximately 200 miles south of San Diego, CA. While you here in Virginia were experiencing unbearable humidity and temperatures hovering around 100 degrees, we were enjoying mid- to upper-70s with dry, brisk afternoon desert breezes and cool, comfortable nights!

Our team of 52 people comprised of members from ten congregations built three houses for needy Oaxacan Indian families. The teams received profiles of the families a few weeks before the trip, allowing congregations to know and pray about the families they would be supporting through their teams. Relationships are stressed as the most important part of the mission: with the Oaxacans families for whom we will build houses; the missionaries at the local mission base, IDT; and with other members of the team. Through this continued mission work we have seen strong relationships develop between team members and families they have built homes for in past years, as visiting old friends in the *colonias* is a highlight for many returning team members. Team members have also built long-term and lasting friendships with many of the missionaries who live and work in Mexico.

Living in shacks often built of tarpaper, plastic sheeting, and flattened cardboard boxes, and nearly always with a dirt floor, the Oaxacans are exposed to the elements and bacteria in the soil, with no chance of keeping their homes or themselves clean. The houses we construct, though not the traditional houses we know, are nonetheless very nice wooden structures built on a concrete slab. With the ability to customize each house according to family wants and needs with two, three or four rooms, the houses provide the flexibility to have a kitchen and separate bedrooms, with an option for a family room.

Each house measures 20 x 22 feet (this is called a “double build” which is considerably larger than a single build). The cost of a double-build house this year was \$3,600. Paint, used mattresses, used furniture, household items, groceries, an outhouse, a bathhouse, and lumber for building beds, shelves and kitchen counters for the families are additional expenses on each build site and this year averaged \$2,200 per build.

The builds began late Monday morning and finished up late Thursday evening. Build teams had 17 or 18 members and included a mix of youth and adults. Because relationships are stressed as the most important part of the trip, a central focus of the work was to get to know the family members, interact with them and show the love of Jesus Christ. For the first time ever, this year we had a women’s build team. Ten women who wanted to build a house asked seven men to join them, and the result was an amazing build experience where women were in charge, called the shots, and made the decisions. Power tools mainly were operated by women of all ages. It was an exciting innovation that likely will be repeated in coming years. Reports and photos from each of the three builds are attached.

Long-term relationships with a number of families for whom we have built houses have grown and developed over the years. On several evenings team members piled into vans to visit these families, laden with presents for the children (and parents, too) and envelopes of money to help sustain them. Gifts, hugs, meals, cups of coffee, stories, smiles, and lots of tears were shared. Some of the team members had made photo albums to take to the families, a treasured gift as most of these people have no photos of themselves and their families. One of our congregations that has been participating in this mission for several years is now visiting and supporting five

families. Another congregation has been actively visiting and supporting two families for many years. One family made two trips to come to us to visit. It was a wonderful week of renewing old friendships.

Several outreach opportunities during the week to spread the love of Christ included trips to local churches, rehabilitation centers, and work camps.

561 people have now participated in the Baja Mission trips which began at Augusta Stone Presbyterian Church in 2000. The project has grown to include members of 32 Shenandoah Presbytery congregations, and we have built 38 houses. We have also built an addition to another house; rehabilitated a schoolhouse; re-roofed at least two other houses; helped with the construction of a church; and installed a water purification system. Several other miscellaneous projects have been completed at the mission base and in the *colonias* (communities) over the years. We now have built houses in twelve different *colonias*. The Lord has blessed us with safe travels and changed the lives of many of our team members, as well as the Oaxacan indigenous people we serve.

All team members are responsible for personal travel costs within the U.S.: travel to and from San Diego, hotels, meals, ground transportation, airport parking, etc. Money raised through fund-raising, grants, and donations covers the cost of the houses; extra building materials, paint, etc.; mattresses, used furniture, household goods, clothing and groceries for the families; and the \$300 fee to cover lodging, meals and rental van travel in Mexico. Those who are not members or active participants of congregations in Shenandoah Presbytery may participate, with the stipulation that they pay the travel/meals/lodging fee in Mexico of \$300/person. We are grateful to all those organizations, congregations and individuals who provided support.

Funds over and above what was necessary to support the trip were raised, and those funds were taken to Mexico and distributed. On our final night at the mission base, the full team of 52 met to discuss ways in which the remaining funds should be used, and after prayerfully considering all the needs brought to the attention of the team, decisions were reached in a collaborative atmosphere. Those benefiting included: a day care center; a rehabilitation center for women; the mission kitchen staff; and a gift to the mission so they could purchase a new generator for use on build sites. Other "private" donations from several individual congregational teams went to assist other missionaries; several indigenous families; a mother's medical expenses; and a child's medical expenses.

Because the build teams over the years have been comprised of members from multiple congregations, the trip affords the opportunity for everyone to make new friends within our own Presbytery and local area. Many team members have become active in other mission initiatives, and many have called this a life-changing experience. God truly is working his purpose out as strangers in our local community come together in the name of our Lord to travel across lines drawn in the sand to minister to those who have so little in the way of basic shelter, personal needs, and material goods and in many cases, do not know Our Lord. Out of the love and caring of all who participate directly and those who provide generous donations, relationships have been forged, lives changed, shelters built, the love of Christ known.

Yes, we are making a difference!!

Mac Sterrett
Staunton, Virginia
macsterrett@comcast.net
August 2011

Leadership Team: Dan Williams, Staunton Second PC; Doug Sensabaugh, Massanutten PC; Rhonda Richie, Olivet PC; Dan Woodworth, Waynesboro First PC; Mac Sterrett, Augusta Stone PC

While walking along a beach, a man saw someone in the distance leaning down, picking something up and throwing it into the ocean. As he came closer, he saw thousands of starfish the tide had thrown onto the beach. Unable to return to the ocean during low tide, the starfish were dying. He observed the young man picking up the starfish one by one and throwing them back into the water.

After watching the seemingly futile effort, the observer said, "There must be thousands of starfish on this beach. It would be impossible for you to get to all of them. There are simply too many. You can't save enough to make a difference."

The young man smiled as he continued to pick up another starfish and toss it back into the ocean. "It made a difference to that one," he replied.

As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. -- 1 Peter 4:10

The Kingdom Builders

Derek Almarode (Bethel)
Alex Arneson (Bethel)
Jenna Arneson (Bethel)
Ben Folsom (Bethel)
Kayla Folsom (Bethel)
Keith Folsom (Bethel)
Bert Lamond (Bethel)
Bob Olson (Bethel)
Adam Ritter (Bethel)

Jacob Ritter (Bethel)
Dustin Skillman (Bethel)
Kathy Swisher (Bethel)
Jackie Whetzel (Bethel)
Jim Williams (Bethel)
Camben Kurtz (Covenant)
Jessica Hawkins (Loch Willow)
Dillon Sowers (St. John's Catholic)

Here we are, home in one piece, recovered from jet-lag, and pictures off our cameras. As a team of 17, we can say “mission” accomplished on our build. On day one, we met our new family members and by the end of the week, handshakes turned into hugs and “nice to meet you” became “we love you.” Our mission was to provide a home for a single mother, Esther, and four children: America, Evelin, Jesus-Raul, and Andrea. The beautiful red house was supplied with beds, shelves, cabinets, a kitchen table, sofa, groceries, clothes, and toys. Also, the family was set up with electric and each of the kids supplied with school supplies. In addition to the structure, we began an even stronger relationship with the family and surrounding community. Through several write-on/wipe-off school sessions, soccer games, and rounds of duck, duck, goose, we poured out God’s love to the children around us.

Each team member found his/her niche in the overall build effort. We had school teachers, carpenters, electricians, soccer players, painters, diggers, roofers, and even a fingernail painter. Each one became a brother or sister in Christ, to the members of our new, blessed family. The end of our build week marked the completion of a house, the beginning of a relationship, and another step on the path with God for all of us. Our funds met every need we were compelled to fulfill, and supplied a beautiful family with a new beginning. God’s love was present in all of our endeavors during the week. Now, from home, we can only pray for continued blessings for the family and for the total mission effort that we have become a part of in Vicente Guerrero.

--Kayla Folsom



Pastor Dan Williams leads worship each morning under the olive trees. Think it’s hot where we go in Mexico?
Notice the jackets, hats, sweatshirts and campfire!



Team Cuadrado (T-Squared)

Laura Atkins (Massanutten)
Matthew Atkins (Massanutten)
Rachel Atkins (Massanutten)
Randy Atkins (Massanutten)
Laura Holbrook (Massanutten)
Mary Beth Holbrook (Massanutten)
Philip Holbrook (Massanutten)
Rebekah Holbrook (Massanutten)
Tara Dearing (Moorefield)

Sarah Leatherman (Moorefield)
Teri Johnson (Olivet)
Gary Milstead (Olivet)
Tessa Dearing (Presbyterian Campus Ministry)
Alex Haney (Presbyterian Campus Ministry)
Kathleen Murphy (Presbyterian Campus Ministry)
Marcus Sensabaugh (Presbyterian Campus Ministry)
Andy Easley (Staunton Second)
Dan Williams (Staunton Second)

Reflecting on Baja, I am reminded of the words of St. Teresa of Avila:

Christ has no body now but yours
No hands, no feet on earth but yours
Yours are the eyes through which He looks
compassion on this world
Christ has no body now on earth but yours.

In Baja, on “Team Cuadrado” I feel we acted as God’s body in a very literal way when we built a house for Lorentino and Maria’s family. Lorentino suffers from diabetes and without the aid of crutches he cannot walk, or work. Maria sells vegetables door to door, and I am sure they struggle to support the family and keep their teenage children Emanuel and Cecilia in school. In a sense, we came to Baja to be Lorentino’s hands and feet, building a house that he must have dreamed of many times during the 21 years his family has rented. Having a home may alleviate financial stress for their family. In their new home, perhaps Lorentino’s children will have a better space to study and pursue their dreams to be an engineer and a scientist. Using our hands to build a house, we changed a significant variable in their lives and may have shown them another view of Christianity, of humanity.

At our site, another family--three boys and their mother--often visited us. IDT had built a house for them just a few years before. The mother, Elena, said she felt so grateful for her house she wanted to help us build for Lorentino’s family. Using her hands, she drove nails and painted walls. She assisted Lorentino as he painted. She looked upon her neighbor with compassion--the kind I think St. Teresa of Avila talks about. Baja reminded me of these simple and beautiful ways of thinking about how Christians should act in this world.

Baja also reminded me that being the body of Christ in this world is not easy. For many of us, those were long days of work we were not accustomed to. Together, we spent hours learning or teaching the correct way to hold a hammer, pull out a misdirected nail, use an electric saw, tar a roof. We changed plans when we learned that the family wanted another room built inside. We made last minute ramps for the outhouse and last minute trips to the store. By day four when we dedicated the house to Lorentino and his family, we were tired, sore, and covered in dirt. But isn’t getting our hands dirty part of what we are called to do in this world?

I think I speak for “Team Cuadrado” in saying thank you for allowing us to go to Baja and be reminded of these simple ways to be human and to be Christian. I hope that each of you will one day witness the transformative power of being God’s hands and feet on this earth--either in Baja or in your own neighborhood. And I pray you will continue to bless YWAM, the IDT mission in Baja, the groups who travel there and the efforts of people who dedicate themselves to serving those most in need. Thank you.

--Bekah Holbrook



Maria and Lorentino



Lorentino and his children Cecilia and Emanuel help with the painting



Lorentino's neighbor Elena helps Bekah nail the walls together at the corner.



God's hands and feet are building His kingdom as one body.

The Laughing Dogs

Mac Sterrett (Augusta Stone)	Kaley Richie (Olivet)
Lily Damico (Bethel)	Rhonda Richie (Olivet)
Olivia Damico (Bethel)	Jessica Smiley (Olivet)
Kara Fox (Bethel)	Nina Stewart (Olivet)
Andrew Heizer (Bethel)	Becky Elkins (Waynesboro First)
Laura Barmore (Bethel)	Max Elkins (Waynesboro First)
Aaron Crosby (Loch Willow)	Alan Vestal (Waynesboro First)
Doug Sensabaugh (Massanutten)	Dan Woodworth (Waynesboro First)
Kaylee Floyd (Olivet)	

What an amazing trip this year. In with all of the planning, meetings, fund raising, packing, and anticipation, one of our goals this year was to have an “all girls” team. That in itself is a long story that began in 2008 when several of the ladies were challenged to build a house without any guys on the team.

Well, we tried to get it together this year. Ten willing ladies were eager to give it a try but we needed more hands to be able to build a house in a week. Andrew started the idea when he agreed to be an “honorary woman” for the week. Then there were more volunteers that were secure enough with their manhood to be outnumbered by the females for a week. This is how we formed our awesome team: “The Laughing Dogs.” We did have an additional helper: one of the local foster kids, Gumarro, was anxious and willing to join our team.

The family that we were so honored to build a home for was Dionicia and Isac Ramos. They were a young couple with one daughter, Karla who was 9 years old. They were living with relatives and so anxious to have their own home.

Dan showed up on the first day at our build site with a wig of braids to be supportive of our all girls team. After the introductions with the Dionicia and Karla and the explanation of the wig, and the pink tool belts and pink “Laughing Dog” shirts we were all wearing, we began our work for the day. Isac was in the fields working but had planned to be able to spend the afternoons building with us. His workday started before 5:00 AM but his excitement to have a home and his willingness to want to help with building his home was an inspiration to all of us. Laura had hoped that he would want to help and came prepared with a tool belt with a few tools for him so he would fit right in. Several from the team were able to visit the place just down the street where they were living. Their belongings were so few and their needs were so many. They were so appreciative that we were there; we knew whatever we were able to do for them would be a blessing.

Dionicia was just as excited about their new home and she was eager to make decisions. Becky, as our amazing interpreter, was able to let us know the color for the outside of the house was red and we should paint the trim white. The final decision on the inside was an open living area for half of the house with the door entering in the kitchen. Two bedrooms in the back of the house would take up the rest of the space. The second day of building went just as smooth as the first.

Karla started opening up to having new friends, she loved the small gifts we brought each day, and she looked forward to playing “Twister” in the street with Kaley and Kaylee. Dionicia surprised our team with burritos in the afternoon that were delicious and the perfect motivation to keep doing our best, despite our tired bodies and sore muscles.

The building continued, the walls were raised, the women took over with lifting up the first roof panel, the young adults took over with the tarring of the roof while others were painting, installing windows and putting on the trim. A few of the members of our team took the family shopping for some furniture for their new home. Thanks to the donations and the fund-raising support, we had budgeted enough to furnish the house with

furniture, groceries, and household items. They were very shy and worried about getting too much, quite surprised and very grateful. We continued shopping the next day and were able to furnish their home with groceries, buy some dishes and cleaning supplies, shoes for the family and even get Karla school supplies and the uniform she needed for school.

With the rest of our funds we were able to put a window in each room, panel some of the interior walls, buy an outdoor shower for their build site, pull wire for light fixtures and a few receptacles and add a kitchen sink.

We did face our challenges of roof panels that didn't fit, cutting the same board several times to get it right, several trips to the hardware store to get the right plumbing fixtures, and that door that Alan so patiently adjusted time and time again.

The final day it all came together. Max found enough time and spare lumber to build a desk and bench for Karla, we were sewing curtains, making beds, building shelves, touching up the paint, re-adjusting the door again, and sweeping the floor, again and again, setting the table with the new dishes, placing the gifts from generous folks from home and displaying special pictures taken during the week.

All while we were making sure everything was perfect for them, they were using all they had to prepare for us, too.

The dedication was quite special. Everyone was able to talk to the family about what the week meant to them and pass on their blessings. The family was able to express their sincere appreciation and told us of their prayers to have a home one day of their own but they never expected it to be so grand, and furnished with everything they could ever wish for. What a blessing to be used by God as an answer to prayer. There wasn't a dry eye around.

The evening ended with such a time of fellowship and a lovely meal with the best fried chicken and all of the fixings furnished by the family as a gift to us. It always amazes me that we always go to Baja to be a blessing to someone with all of our money and stuff that we bring, but we end up being blessed so much more by those that have nothing.

--Rhonda Richie



Isac, home from the fields, helps The Laughing Dogs, in hot pink t-shirts and pink tool belts, build his house.



Old house, new house: what lies behind that door?



Comfortable furniture, beds with real mattresses, and a kitchen sink with running water (a garden hose with a spray nozzle, and buckets underneath to catch the waste water)



Karla, Isac and Dionicia. Tears of joy turn to huge smiles: they're honorary Virginians now, through and through!

Baja Mission Trip 2011

Receipts

Shenandoah Presbytery

Central Valley Mission Community	\$1,700.00
Highland Augusta Mission Community	\$3,748.53
Moffett Fund	\$1,515.00
World Wide Ministries/Ramsey Fund	\$938.00
	\$7,901.53

Congregations

Augusta Stone PC	\$910.05
Bethel PC	\$10,000.00
Bridgewater PC	\$92.00
Cooks Creek PC	\$400.00
Covenant PC	\$650.00
Massanutten PC	\$1,390.00
Moorefield PC	\$200.00
Mossy Creek PC	\$200.00
Olivet PC	\$3,494.00
Parish of the Pastures	\$374.00
Piedmont PC	\$1,500.00
Rocky Spring PC	\$30.00
Staunton Second PC	\$1,200.00
Trinity PC	\$250.00
Waynesboro First PC	\$4,050.00
	\$24,740.05

Team Fundraisers

Applebee's Pancake Breakfast	\$187.00
Make Sense Dining	\$61.94
	\$248.94

YWAM Fee

Dillon Sowers	\$300.00
	\$300.00

Individual Contributions

Leotus Morrison	\$60.00
CJ Blosser	\$30.00
Anonymous	\$5.00
Kaylee Floyd	\$25.00
Kaley Richie	\$25.00
Beverly Crosby	\$407.50
Andrew Eastly	\$1,000.00
Susan Cromer	\$50.00
Pheasant Run Town Homes	\$25.00
Rebekah Holbrook	\$250.00
John Haney	\$190.00
Thomas Heizer	\$25.00
Linda Lamond	\$28.00
Tara Dearing	\$500.00
Rebecca Ramsey	\$25.00
Helen Robertson	\$14.00
Thomas Duquette	\$20.00
Aaron Crosby	\$200.00
	\$2,879.50

GRAND TOTAL

\$36,070.02

Baja Mission Trip 2011

Disbursements

Funds accounted for below do not include participants' costs for travel, meals and lodging in the U.S., paid by participants out of personal funds
Participant fees included below are for travel, meals, lodging in Mexico

*Additional monies were taken and distributed in Mexico by many of the congregational teams. Those decisions were made by the individual church team members and are in addition to the "pooled" funds listed below. Several thousand dollars were donated quietly in this manner and are not reflected in these numbers. See below for some of these donations.

For:

Disbursed:

Participant fees: YWAM	\$15,600	Participant fees (52 x \$300)
Construction costs: YWAM	\$10,800	Cost of 3 houses (3 x \$3,600)
Construction costs: IDT	\$3,220	Extras (extra lumber, mattresses, extra windows, whirlybirds, outhouses, bathhouse)
Family expenses (three families)	\$3,392	Family expenses on builds (furniture; clothing; shoes; housewares; school supplies, etc.)
Donation to IDT	\$463	To purchase generator for use on build sites
Donation to IDT - Kitchen staff	\$220	Gift for kitchen staff
Donation to Oaxacan family	\$75	For cleaning vans
Donation to IDT Day Care Center	\$1,000	IDT Day care center in Los Misiones
Donation to missionary	\$1,000	Donation to support Monzano's women's rehab center
Donation to missionary	\$100	Adilene, build supervisor
Donation to missionary	\$100	Noah, build supervisor
Donation to missionary	\$100	Elijah, build supervisor

Grand total disbursements:	\$36,070
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Contributions by category:

Construction costs (total)	\$14,020
Family expenses (total)	\$3,392
Donations (total)	\$3,058
Participant fees (total)	\$15,600

Grand total disbursements:	\$36,070
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*Additional private team donations (not a complete list):

Oaxacan family	\$300	For mother's breast tumor medical expenses
Oaxacan family	\$300	Children's educational expenses
Oaxacan family	\$365	General support
Oaxacan family	\$346	General support
Oaxacan family	\$300	General support
Oaxacan family	\$300	General support
Missionary family	\$500	General support
Missionary family	\$300	Children's educational expenses
Missionary family	\$125	Undesignated
Missionary family	\$500	Child's medical expenses

Baja Mission Team 2011

1	Sterrett	Mac	Augusta Stone
2	Almarode	Derek	Bethel
3	Arneson	Alex	Bethel
4	Arneson	Jenna	Bethel
5	Barmore	Laura	Bethel
6	Damico	Olivia	Bethel
7	Damico	Lilly	Bethel
8	Folsom	Kayla	Bethel
9	Folsom	Keith	Bethel
10	Folsom	Benjamin	Bethel
11	Fox	Kara	Bethel
12	Heizer	Andrew	Bethel
13	Lamond	Bertram	Bethel
14	Olson	Robert	Bethel
15	Ritter	Adam	Bethel
16	Ritter	Jacob	Bethel
17	Skillman	Dustin	Bethel
18	Swisher	Kathy	Bethel
19	Whetzel	Jackie	Bethel
20	Williams	Jim	Bethel
21	Kurtz	Camden	Covenant
22	Crosby	Aaron	Loch Willow
23	Hawkins	Jessica	Loch Willow
24	Atkins	Rachel	Massanutten
25	Atkins	Matthew	Massanutten
26	Atkins	Laura	Massanutten
27	Atkins	Randy	Massanutten
28	Holbrook	Laura	Massanutten
29	Holbrook	Philip	Massanutten
30	Holbrook	Mary	Massanutten
31	Holbrook	Rebekah	Massanutten
32	Sensabaugh	Doug	Massanutten
33	Dearing	Tara	Moorefield
34	Leatherman	Sarah	Moorefield
35	Floyd	Kaylee	Olivet
36	Johnson	Teri	Olivet
37	Milstead	Gary	Olivet
38	Richie	Rhonda	Olivet
39	Richie	Kaley	Olivet
40	Smiley	Jessica	Olivet
41	Stewart	Nina	Olivet
42	Dearing	Tessa	Pres Campus Ministry
43	Haney	Alex	Pres Campus Ministry
44	Murphy	Kathleen	Pres Campus Ministry
45	Sensabaugh	Marcus	Pres Campus Ministry
46	Sowers	Dillon	St. John's Catholic
47	Easley	Andrew	Staunton Second
48	Williams	Daniel	Staunton Second
49	Vestal	Alan	Waynesboro First
50	Elkins	Becky	Waynesboro First
51	Elkins	Max	Waynesboro First
52	Woodworth	Dan	Waynesboro First

**Baja Mission Trip
Congregations
Sending
Representatives to
Mexico
2000 - 2011**

Church	Mission Community
1 Augusta Stone PC	Highland-Augusta
2 Berryville PC	Mountain Valley
3 Bethany PC	Highland-Augusta
4 Bethel PC	Highland-Augusta
5 Bridgewater PC	Central Valley
6 Covenant PC	Highland-Augusta
7 Elkton PC	Central Valley
8 Finley Memorial PC	Highland-Augusta
9 Goshen PC	Maury River
10 Harrisonburg First PC	Central Valley
11 Hermitage PC	Highland-Augusta
12 Lexington	Maury River
13 Loch Willow PC	Highland-Augusta
14 Massanutten PC	Central Valley
15 Millboro PC	Maury River
16 Moorefield PC	Potomac Highlands
17 Mossy Creek PC	Central Valley
18 Mt. Horeb PC	Highland-Augusta
19 New Providence PC	Maury River
20 Olivet PC	Highland-Augusta
21 Opequon PC	Mountain Valley
22 Rocky Spring	Maury River
23 Smyrna PC	Highland-Augusta
24 Staunton First PC	Highland-Augusta
25 Staunton Second PC	Highland-Augusta
26 Timber Ridge PC	Maury River
27 Trinity PC	Central Valley
28 Waynesboro First PC	Highland-Augusta
29 Waynesboro Second PC	Highland-Augusta
30 Westminster PC	Highland-Augusta
31 Zetta PC	Highland-Augusta
32 Presbyterian Campus Ministry	Central Valley

