

Dear friend,

Well it is a bit of a scorcher out there. I really don't know what the temperature is outside as we don't have a thermometer. However, we do have one in the relative coolness of our living room, and it is showing 100°, so it is obviously much hotter out in the sun. Theresa and I are reveling in the fact that we were finally able to pick up our air conditioner today for our bedroom/office. What a joy to sit here at the computer and enjoy the coolness. We have been stretched a little bit in the area of creature comforts since we arrived here last month. We arrived directly into the hottest season of the year here in Cd. Valles, having left Manitoba on the 8th of May to snow falling as we headed south. We had to make a very quick adjustment. To make matters just a bit more trying, the one room that was to have an air conditioner – the aforementioned bedroom – had a unit that no longer worked. We took it in for service, and many “mañanas” and promises later we were finally able to pick it up this morning.

Enough about the weather, as that is not the purpose of this letter. My reason for writing this letter is to update you on the purposes and vision that Theresa and I have for being here in Mexico. As you probably already know, we came to Cd. Valles after being invited to return by pastors Ezequiel and Veronica, the pastors with whom I worked for many years while I was doing medical clinics. What you might be less aware of is that the work of *Voice in the Wilderness*, the ministry which I began while I was living here in Mexico, has continued to function and thrive over the past years. VitW has continued to work with the Mexican national church, and ministry has continued.

One aspect of the work over the past years has been the beginning of a Bible school in Cd. Valles. *Voice in the Wilderness Ministries* has been blessed to be able to utilize the L.A.M.B.S. (Light Abroad Mobile Bible Schools) curriculum from Providence Bible Seminary in Manitoba to supplement the *Instituto Biblico Interdenominacional Luz de las Naciones*, the Bible school begun by pastors Ezequiel and Veronica. *Luz de las Naciones*, or “Light of the Nations”, is an interdenominational Bible school with a vision to train pastors and leaders to impact not only Mexico for Christ, but the world.

Luz de las Naciones has been training pastors and leaders for several years under the leadership of pastor Ezequiel. It has been the joy of VitW to work with several very talented and dedicated pastors from both Canada and the U.S. to supplement the Bible school for the past three years with Project LAMBS curriculum. In November of 2008 the first LAMBS graduating class of 35 students received their certificates, recognized by Providence Bible Seminary. In January of this year the second cycle began with 50 students attending the LAMBS portion of the Bible school, besides the ongoing program of *Luz de las Naciones*.

The vision for the Bible school has grown to include a passion to train the students in vocational and practical trades as well as in a sound biblical foundation. The dream began several years ago with a realization that many pastors, especially in the smaller villages, are completely destitute and unable to even feed their own families. Many, living on faith, in a community where tithes from the church amount to only several

dollars per week, must of necessity live in a little mud-floored shack, and attempt to eke out a living while ministering to the equally poor of the community. It has become the desire of Ezequiel and Veronica to provide practical work skills to pastors and students so that when they do return to their villages they will be able to find paid employment, and possibly even the ability to begin a business. In this way they can not only provide for the needs of their own families, but also employ others in the community, thereby being able to amplify their ministry by providing for others as well.

With this mission in mind, Ezequiel and Veronica asked Theresa and I if we would come back to Cd. Valles and work with them to bring this passion into a reality. A number of years ago I was involved in the purchase of a property in a nearby colonia called la Pimienta. This piece of land is a town lot and is well located. However, as the vision has grown, it has become evident that this particular property is inadequate for the scope of the work which God is calling us to. It has seemed good to sell this property and look for a much larger property outside of the city. We are believing for a property large enough not only for a Bible school and dormitories, but also for shops where the students can be trained in welding, body work, carpentry, baking, sewing, etc. As our faith and dreams are being expanded we are even praying for enough land for agricultural training and possibly even fish farming.

The most promising property that we have looked at to date is a five hectare lot about three kilometers out of town. It is fully covered with bush and beautiful large trees. It is ample for the needs and the vision. In faith we are believing that we will own this land soon, or that God will provide us with an even better property.

This is the vision, and this is why Theresa and I are here. What are the needs? Many indeed. I fully understand Moses' stuttering and hesitations and argument with God when he was asked to perform the work that God had placed before him. I too, often feel that I am not only inadequate for the task, but that there are so many others who could do a much better job than I. I have never begun a Bible school or technical school. I am not gifted in the areas of administration that are needed.....still, here we are, and undeniably God has orchestrated our being here. We believe that He will go before us.

The most pressing needs right now are in three different arenas. First of all there is a Bible school building to build and a technical school to birth. There is land to purchase and clear, and many buildings to build. Along with this is the ongoing need for continued funding to meet VitW's obligations in the Mexican ministry – that of training local pastors and other believers for the work of the ministry, assisting the national church in the costs of evangelism, helping to pay for travel expenses for outreach into neighboring communities, and purchasing food for a food pantry outreach so that the church in Cd. Valles can give to the needy.

Next, there is a beautiful frame and metal clad building built onto the church in Cd. Valles which has not been completed. The complete inside needs to be finished out with sheet rock or the likes, so that the children have a place to meet for Sunday school. Right

now they are attempting to meet there, but the heat is unbearable without a ceiling, not to mention that the partition walls are completely open with only studs between the rooms.

Then finally, there is a great need in a sister church in Matamoros with pastors who are close friends of mine, and who have been called to work within one of the most dangerous and impoverished areas of that border city.

An instrument for meeting the financial needs of the first area - that of the Bible school and technical school - has already been placed into motion in that Listowel Community Church in Canada, and NewSong Church in the U.S. are able to receive and handle all donations for this part of the ministry. You will already have received information on how this can be done in a previous letter which was sent out a couple of months ago. However, I would be very happy to give you any further information on how this ministry can receive funding if you contact me.

The second mentioned need, that of completing the Sunday school and meeting rooms attached to the church in Cd. Valles, is outside of the mandate of VitW directly, and as such, it is unable to receive or tax receipt funding for this project. However, the need is not outside of God's Kingdom, therefore we are also responsible to do what we can. Although VitW is not able to receive money directly for this particular project, we desire to find a church or group of churches and/or fellow believers that would adopt it and see it to completion. Pastor Fred Erb and other leaders within VitW have learned enough about working in a foreign country as a Canadian Christian charity that they can be an invaluable resource in directing interested Canadian churches or groups in the right way, or by hooking them up with the needed information. Incidentally, U.S. charity laws make international work much easier than Canadian laws, and NewSong Church in Oklahoma is much more able to receive and tax receipt any U.S. money for the Mexican work directly. It is Fred's heart desire to be able to assist in the training and equipping of the saints to do the work of the ministry in foreign missions, rather than the already trained ones needing to do the work. It is recognized that because of the complications and possible misinterpretation of Canadian charity laws, many Canadian churches and groups of believers simply throw up their hands and give up. Fred and others desire to be a resource to train and "walk" others through the process, thus multiplying what we as believers can accomplish for God's Kingdom – and to do it without fear and hesitation concerning the laws of the land. If any of this rings true to you, or to your church, please contact me or Fred Erb directly.

Finally, concerning the third mentioned need – that of the fledgling work in the impoverished and dangerous part of Matamoros – this is obviously completely outside of the mandate of VitW, and we are unable to receive or tax receipt any Canadian funds for our friends there. However, we have a great love for this work, and will link and bless where we can. Exactly the same things apply as for the aforementioned need. We will work with you in what ever way we can if you feel directed to help out pastors Frank and Maribel in their great need in Matamoros.

The needs are truly great. You also have a part in the work. Mine is to link with you. Truth be told, I am writing to you as a friend, but also hoping that you will be able to be a vital link in the work. We need planners and architects. We need builders. We need teachers. We need welders, mechanics, carpenters, English teachers, etc., etc. We need givers. We need churches and individuals who will rise to the challenge and support the work. We need those who can link others into the work. We need people who can connect us to people who can help. In all honesty, the task is huge, and I barely know where to start. I am asking you, no, I am pleading with you, can you help me? Can you link me in with someone who can help me? If you can't come, do you know others who can? How do we begin with this large vision? How do we make a seemingly impossible dream become a reality?

Theresa and I are finally on line and can now be contacted be either e-mail or by computer phone. The e-mail address you will have at the top of this letter. Our phone number is a U.S. number: (702) 516-1478. Being a VoiP phone on a very unreliable service it has its peculiarities, however it does work most of the time.

Please call or write. I look for your help, prayers and linking.

Blessings,

Steven and Theresa