

West Ohio Conference of the United Methodist Church
Volunteers in Mission

Taking a Mission Trip to Piedras Negras, Mexico

Planning and Logistics

Sharon Wiles and Scott Vaughan

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2010

Taking a Mission Trip to Piedras Negras, Mexico

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Step 1: Determine some dates that work for your participants. Be sure that you stay over a weekend so you can attend a church service on Sunday, as it is an important part of the trip to worship together. If you send possible dates to Scott, he will reviews your plans with Pastor Miguel to determine which of those dates will work best for them, preferably when there are no other large groups present. Typical weather patterns for the Piedras Negras: Page | 2

<i>Month</i>	<i>Jan</i>	<i>Feb</i>	<i>Mar</i>	<i>Apr</i>	<i>May</i>	<i>Jun</i>	<i>Jul</i>	<i>Aug</i>	<i>Sep</i>	<i>Oct</i>	<i>Nov</i>	<i>Dec</i>
Average high (°F)	64	69	77	83	88	94	95	96	91	83	72	64
Average low (°F)	41	44	49	56	63	69	71	71	66	57	48	41
Precipitation (in)	0.4	1	0.8	1.9	3	2.2	1.9	2.2	3.9	2.3	1.8	0.9

Step 2: The biggest variable in cost is airfare, so get some pricing estimates for the trip so you can give people an idea of the costs.

<i>Costs Paid In Advance</i>	<i>Details</i>	<i>Per Person Cost</i>
Airfare	Can typically get discount with 10+ people	\$200 - \$400
Meals in Piedras Negras*	For meals at the orphanage	\$5 per meal
Construction materials you provide*	A good estimate is \$100 per person; could vary	\$100

*Money is wired or mailed to Pastor Miguel at least three weeks in advance of the trip

<i>Money to take with you</i>	<i>Details</i>	<i>Per Person Cost</i>
Checked Baggage Fee (can use a credit card)	Charged by airline	\$20
Ground Transportation (van rental, insurance & gas; can use credit card)	6 people per van	\$125
Hotel in Mexico	\$40 per room per night	\$20 per night (2 persons per room)
Meal with the pastors	Plan on going out to a restaurant one night and treating the pastors and their families for dinner	\$20
Hotel room and tax in San Antonio (can use a credit card)	Needed only if you'll be spending the evening in San Antonio	\$60 (2 persons per room)
Food for travel days	\$30 - \$40	\$30 - \$40
Border fee	~\$5 per car per way	\$1
Souvenirs & Offering	Up to individual	\$TBD

Step 3: Gain commitment on number of people going on trip with a non-refundable deposit (which is typically the amount of the airfare since that will be booked and paid for in advance). An ideal number is 10 – 12 people. More than 12 people will require 3 or more vehicles and can become somewhat harder to manage. With 10 people, you can often get a group discount on the airfare usually via a travel agent. Any agent can help, but Rick Raber at America's Vacation Center (rick.raber@americasvacationcenter.com) has experience coordinating this trip. You will need to have a translator. The people you'll be working with speak very little English, so it will be very difficult for you to communicate without one.

Step 4: Complete the registration forms (see the section "Paperwork" on page 9). Everyone must have a passport for reentry into the United States, so team members without a valid passport should submit a passport application well in advance of your trip. Processing time varies, but allow at least six weeks. Passport forms are available at http://travel.state.gov/passport/forms/forms_847.html.

Step 5: Reserve your rental car(s)/van(s). See the section "Driving in Mexico" on page 10.

Step 6: Send Scott the following information (or use completed Mission Trip form on the next page) for him to send to Pastor Miguel.

- Who's coming on the trip with you, their ages, skill set, etc. and a description of mission trip experience you have, if any.
- Number of single rooms and double rooms needed and how many nights you will stay. Do any members of your group require a first floor room? Each room will hold at least two people; agree on room assignments before you leave. Families of three and sometimes four can share the same room. Some hotel rooms have two double beds, while others have a double bed and a twin bed. Pastor Miguel will select the hotel for you, but a typical hotel is the Motel del Sol - <http://moteldelsol.com/>.
- How much money you'll be sending for the group project. You'll send this money in advance so they can buy the materials and have it ready for when you arrive. If you have a project preference, such as working at the orphanage specifically (playing with children, Vacation Bible school, construction or gardening / farming) or at Templo Aleluya (hydroponics / growing crops, kindergarten or elementary school, construction, medical personnel seeing patients), it can typically be accommodated if you let them know where your heart is.
- If you have any people on your team with special eating needs, such as vegetarian or food allergies.
- What time you'll be arriving in Eagle Pass, TX. It is a three-hour drive from the San Antonio airport, but you should allow yourself at least 5 hours so you can get your luggage and rental cars and have time for a quick bite to eat on the way.

Step 7: Understand that the most important work you will do there is to be in relationship with our Mexican partners and the children. The second most important thing you'll do is the actual construction project.

Other Reminders:

- Determine if you'll need to drive back to San Antonio the day before your flight departs. You need to allow at least 1 hour to get through border control back into the US. There are plenty of places to stay in San Antonio. If you want to stay near the airport, the Days Inn San Antonio (542 NE Loop 410) is clean and reasonably priced.
- Make sure your team members know that much of the trip cost is non-refundable and advise them to consider trip insurance.
- Here is a video about the orphanage: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=noChMgbGvHc>

Mission Trip to Piedras Negras, Mexico

<p>Mission Trip Experience: Will this be your first mission trip? Will this be your first mission trip to Piedras Negras?</p>	
<p>Mission Trip Attendees: How many people, their ages, # men / women, and their skill set(s)</p>	
<p>Type of Project: Do you have a preference in the type of project? How much money will you be sending for materials for your project?</p>	
<p>Hotel: How many rooms will you need and for how many nights? Any special requests (e.g., 1st floor room)?</p>	
<p>Food: Any special dietary needs (e.g., vegetarian or allergies)?</p>	
<p>Meeting Time: What time will you meet Pastor Miguel in Eagle Pass?</p>	

Safety & Security

Piedras Negras is a cosmopolitan area, and you should exercise the same safety precautions you would in any city. The ongoing drug-related violence that has occurred in other Mexican cities has not yet reached the Piedras Negras area. The most violent nearby border town is Ciudad Juarez, which is across the border from El Paso, Texas. This is 500 miles from Eagle Pass, Texas and Piedras Negras.

If you need to exchange money, you will visit a bank or money exchange location and you will be escorted by a Mexican national. A national will also accompany you on shopping trips or leisure activities if you want. As necessary, Pastor Miguel or a family member will escort you from place to place. As in any unfamiliar city, you should not go out late at night or alone.

Recently, Pastor Miguel was asked to address these concerns, and here is his response:

I am aware that security has become a concern for many Americans. Especially because the news are talking a lot about the battles among drug dealers.

The facts are:

The borders where there is a lot of violence are the one with Cd. Juarez, Chihuahua and Reynosa, Laredo and Matamoros. There are other places at the south of Coahuila where there is tension too.

Piedras Negras is known as the "White Border in Mexico" what it means, it is the safest and the most peaceful from all the borders.

The violence is in areas where drug dealers and the police are fighting. Mexican government is trying to control this situation right now.

Our city receives every month of the year missionary groups from different churches and also local missions. We have never had a report of any person suffering any problem/damage by being here.

Besides that, remember Psalm 34: 7 "The angel of Jehovah surrounds those who fear Him and protects them"

I am sure that your visit is going to be a blessing
Miguel de Leon

Also, this message comes from Guillermo "Willie" Berman, GBGM Missionary; VIM Coordinator for the Eastern Conference of the Methodist Church of Mexico:

As you may be aware and concerned about the increased violence in many cities of Mexico and lately in the Reynosa area due to the Mexican Government fighting the drug dealer's cartels, I would like to say a few things for your consideration:

- 1. The Methodist Church of Mexico is very aware of this situation and has declared Ciudad Juarez, Chihuahua, (across from El Paso, Texas) a very risky place for Mission teams to visit at this time. Although there has been an increase of acts of violence in other cities, they have been considered as sporadic events.*
- 2. In the case that the Church of Mexico will "feel" that there is not enough safety for a team to visit any of our cities, we will ask the team to cancel their visit, or we will assist them to go back to the United States immediately in the case the team would be already in Mexico.*
- 3. We continue to stress teams about watching the standard practices to promote safety, those are: to stay in the compound where the team is being housed at*

nights, unless the host will be taking them to another safe area for a Church service, or a night at a Restaurant; nor to go for a walk alone or without asking the host if it would be safe; etc.

We appreciate and value a lot the efforts teams go through to come to our country and we want to be ready about advising them about the safety of their visit.

Please feel free to contact me for any inquiries about this at wberman@prodigy.net.mx.

The following is a statement from Bishop Raul Garcia:

Dear friends,

I write just a few words to you to greet you in the name of Christ our Lord.

In the last weeks, our government has made a much more decisive campaign against drug cartels in our country. These actions, as expected, have provoked a violent reaction from the side of drug dealers. This, in turn, being publicized by the media, makes people in the US to think that it is wholly insecure being in Mexico. The truth is that our government is working hard to keep our country clean of this evil and it is impossible to avoid the clashing of forces. Nevertheless, the general atmosphere in society is at calm. In spite of the financial crisis which permeates in the globe, our industry, commerce, tourism, and other areas of development keep operating as usual.

We have never had a single problem with one of the visiting teams. Scheduled activities are done in such a way that we take no chances for risk; the travel routes are totally safe. Nationals are always with every team. We instruct teams to stay together and we provide directions that make their visit most pleasant for all and fruitful for God's kingdom. Incidents in our midst are in average just as incidents in any other place.

We trust that you will continue to support the ministries you have considered. Our people and churches are open to receive you even in their homes. Our partnership is one of God's means to continue to heal both the Church and the world.

*"May the Lord bless you and keep you."
Bishop Raúl García de Ochoa*

Finally, input from Karen Smith (kls83052@netzero.com), an American who lives at the orphanage, dated March 16, 2009:

We certainly appreciate the concern folks have regarding safety issues in Piedras Negras. I do a lot of 'coming & going' here and in Eagle Pass, usually by myself. I am as careful as I would be back home in Atlanta - that's just 'good sense'. We all know that anything can happen anywhere - but Piedras Negras is not Ciudad Juarez or Nuevo Laredo. There is a team here this week from the Dallas area. They have been doing mission work in this area for several years. News regarding the border towns prompted their team leader to call, prior to their trip, the Eagle Pass mayor's office, police department and the Chamber of Commerce, as well as the American Consulate office in Piedras and the Mexico Consulate office in Eagle Pass. He received assurances from all with whom he spoke. I want to reiterate, anything can happen anywhere - but we have lived here almost five years and we do not live in fear.

For current information, check the Department of State web site: <http://travel.state.gov>.

Health Concerns

The water and food in Piedras Negras are generally safe to consume. If you feel more comfortable with bottled water, purchase it in Eagle Pass before crossing the border. There is an HEB store at 2135 East Main Street, which is directly across the street from the McDonalds, or a Wal-Mart at 496 South Bibb Street.

There are no special vaccinations required for travel into Mexico. There have been no reported cases of H1N1 in the state of Coahuila. Check the web site for the Centers for Disease Prevention and Control for up-to-the-minute information: (<http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel/destinationMexico.aspx>).

Emergency Contact Information

Make sure you have at least one cell phone that you can use for communication in the US and Mexico. This means the phone would be able to call:

- A Mexico phone number from inside the US
- A Mexico phone number from inside Mexico
- A US phone number from inside Mexico

In addition, your signal provider may have a monthly plan that makes such calls more affordable. If so, consider activating this plan for the duration of your trip.

Pastor Miguel De Leon Flores Calle General Cepeda 705 NTE Col. 28 De Junio Piedras Negras, Coahuila CP 26060 [01152] (878) 786-9930 (Home) [01152] (878) 788-0211 (Cell)	Bishop Raul Garcia Oriental Conference Office Galeana 430 Norte Zona Centro Monterrey, Nuevo Leon CP 64000 [01152] (818) 344-0055	Casa de Misericordia David & Karen Smith PO Box 1168 Eagle Pass, TX 78853-1168 (830) 513-2028 (830) 513-2029
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	<i>US Consular Agent (Piedras Negras)</i>	<i>US Consulate (Nuevo Laredo)</i>
Hours	9:00 – noon, MWF except holidays	8:00 – 5:00 M-F except holidays
Phone	[01152] (878) 782-5586	[01152] (867) 714-3954
After Hours Emergency Phone	[01152] (878) 788-0343	044-867-727-2797 (calling a cell phone from Nuevo Laredo) 045-867-727-2797 (calling a cell phone from other cities in Mexico) [01152] 867-727-2797 (from the US)
Fax	[01152] (878) 782-8707	[01152] (867) 714-7984
Address	Abasolo #211, Local #3 Colonia Centro Piedras Negras, Coahuila Mexico 26000	3330 Allende Street Colonia Jardin Nuevo Laredo, Tamaulipas Mexico 88260
Email	usconsularagencypn@hotmail.com	NuevoLaredo-ACS@state.gov

Observing Local Customs

The people in Piedras Negras are generally more conservative and formal compared to those in Ohio. Please observe these practices:

- Do not wear shorts or shirts that expose your shoulders. You will never see Mexican adults (and rarely the children) with exposed shoulders or wearing shorts even in the hottest weather. Jeans and t-shirts are fine for all events except church, although you'll want a nicer shirt for the restaurant.
- For church and special events, nice pants/skirts and shirts/blouses are acceptable. Neckties for the men are not required, unless you are a pastor in which case you should wear a tie and jacket.
- If you are a pastor, you can anticipate that you will be asked to give the sermon.
- Always address the pastors by their title; e.g., "Pastor Miguel" and "Pastor Hector", not just "Miguel" and "Hector". Your interpreter should always use the more formal "usted" words when addressing an adult unless advised otherwise by that person.
- Many families of the orphans have suffered the effects of alcoholism. Commit to alcohol abstinence for the duration of your trip.
- You are not permitted to bring items into Mexico, particularly those you will leave behind at the orphanage, which are marked "Made in China". Remove all packaging stamped that way.
- Do not put anything in the toilets that you have not already eaten. All toilet paper, no matter what it has been used for, should be placed in a wastebasket.

What to Bring

Pack lightly! If possible, try to fit everything into carry-on luggage. Remember, there may be six people in a van so luggage space will be limited. You do not need any special electrical adapters or convertors. **Bring your passport.**

Bring your cameras. The children enjoy having their pictures taken. (You may consider designating one or two official photographers who concentrate on documenting your trip.)

Most businesses in Piedras Negras accept US dollars, but not all accept credit cards. If necessary, you can exchange currency in Piedras Negras at a bank or money exchange center. You will also be able to use the local ATMs. Do not bring traveler's checks.

The children at the orphanage are well cared for, and you do not need to bring gifts. The offering of your presence and love is sufficient. However, any items you decide to bring and leave behind for the children must be approved by Pastor Miguel and not be marked "Made in China". Scott can help get this approval. You will find that the children very much appreciate any activities you do with them, so crafts or games are very appropriate. You might also check your local library for Spanish or bilingual picture books that you can share. It is not necessary to leave them behind; the orphanage has a large library already.

Bring any safety equipment you'll need for construction, including gloves and safety glasses. The will not be provided for you.

Your Team

You might consider dividing the responsibilities for the trip among different people. Typical jobs are:

- Team Leader
- Translator (required)
- Driver (one per vehicle)
- Navigators (one per vehicle; record your routes so you don't need an escort every time)
- Treasurer (handles and documents the money; one or two people)
- Prayer Leader (for meals and devotionals; one or two people)
- Spiritual Leader (monitors the spiritual health of the team and/or leads devotionals)
- Health and Safety Monitor (monitors the physical health of the team)
- Photographer (one or two people)
- Construction Leader
- Children's Activities (plan and lead; one or two people)

Your Trip

You will fly in and out of San Antonio, TX. Check your airline's web site for limits on carry-on luggage and extra charges for checked baggage.

It is a three hour drive between the San Antonio airport and Eagle Pass, TX. You should allow five hours for this trip, which allows extra time to retrieve your luggage, get the rental cars, have a quick lunch and purchase supplies in Eagle Pass if needed.

To get to Eagle Pass, you will take I-35 south to Route 57 (Exit 111) and follow 57 into Eagle Pass. There are various ways to get to I-35, depending on the route you prefer. For example, you might take State Route 281 directly through town until it intersects with I-35. There is a small general store just as you exit I-35 onto Route 57 which makes a good rest stop. While on Route 57, make sure you observe all posted speed limits. **You will meet Pastor Miguel at a McDonald's in Eagle Pass, at 2130 East Main Street.**

When returning back to San Antonio, allow an hour to get through customs and immigration. Remember, you must have a passport to reenter the US. There will be a border fee of about \$5 each time you cross the border.

Paperwork

There are permission and release-of-liability forms available on the West Ohio Conference web site: <http://www.westohioumc.org/page.asp?PKValue=1431>

You will find "Required Forms", "Additional Form Required for all Foreign Teams", and "Additional Forms Required for all minors participating on VIM Teams". (Scott has condensed versions of the major required forms that can be filled out online; he will send these to you upon request.) Complete these forms as appropriate and keep a copy in the church office during your trip. You do not need to send them to the West Ohio Conference office. The forms for minors should be completed for any children traveling without a parent on the trip.

You might consider carrying color copies of each passport with these important papers. You can shred all of them upon return

Itinerary

Plan to be flexible. Pastor Miguel will arrange your visit to make the best use of your talents for the most urgent needs, but the schedule is always subject to change. So again, be flexible.

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Most of your meals will be at the orphanage. Pastor Miguel may host you for dinner at his home, or at the home of another pastor or church member. If there is a sight you would like to see while in Piedras Negras, ask Pastor Miguel and he will make every effort to get you there. Remember, your primary mission while in Piedras Negras is to build the relationship with the Mexican people and the children. The construction project is a distant second.

While the itinerary will vary widely depending on your schedule and the amount of time you have, here is a sample:

- Friday – travel day, arrive in Eagle Pass at 5:00 PM, check in to hotel, dinner
- Saturday – work day, meals at the orphanage
- Sunday – church, visit the Mercado Zaragoza (the local market), lunch and afternoon at the orphanage (no work), evening worship
- Monday – work day, breakfast and lunch at the orphanage, dinner at a restaurant
- Tuesday – leave for San Antonio

Did we mention that you need to be flexible?

Driving in Mexico

When you arrange for rental cars, make sure you advise the rental agency that you are taking the vehicles into Mexico. There will be an extra insurance charge for this, and you will need to tell the agent at the desk exactly when you will be entering and leaving Mexico. This extra insurance will be good only for border areas, which is adequate. You will not be traveling more than 20 miles into Mexico. If you are asked if you will be traveling past the checkpoint, the answer is, "No." Note: the quote given to you when you reserve your vehicles will probably NOT include the extra charge (typically \$25/vehicle/day) for Mexico insurance.

If you intend to use a credit card to pay the rental car bill, remember the credit card holder will automatically be the primary driver. If another person will be driving, the car agency will charge an additional fee of about \$6/day.

Pay attention to the terms of the Mexico insurance (see sample on the next page). There is likely a high deductible and you may be responsible for any "loss of use" charges. You might consult with your church insurance agent to see if they will make up any accident-related costs not covered by the Mexico insurance. The rental car company will advise you to purchase insurance for your time in the US as they always do, but this insurance will not be in effect when you are in Mexico.

If you have an accident while in Mexico, call the police and the Mexican insurance carrier. Do not leave the scene of the accident until the insurance adjuster arrives. In Mexico, the adjuster attempts to settle the claim on the spot.

ABIS

AMERICAN BORDER INSURANCE SERVICES, Inc.

Automobile Certificate of Insurance
 Master Policy No. **ABIS-SY-030404**
 Insured: Rental Car Company

Dollar Thrifty
 Automotive Group, Inc.



DECLARATIONS PAGE	
COVERAGES	LIMITS OF LIABILITY IN USD \$
No. 1 COLLISION, OVERTURN & GLASS BREAKAGE* <i>Obligatory Deductible USD \$1,000</i>	\$25,000
No. 2 FIRE, TOTAL THEFT ONLY & NATURAL DISASTERS* <i>Obligatory Deductible USD \$1,500</i>	\$25,000
No. 3 PROPERTY DAMAGE LIABILITY TO THIRD PARTIES	\$100,000
No. 4 BODILY INJURY LIABILITY TO THIRD PARTIES	\$ 50,000 PER PERSON OR \$100,000 PER OCCURRENCE
No. 5 MEDICAL EXPENSES FOR OCCUPANTS OF INSURED VEHICLE	\$ 2,000 PER PERSON OR \$10,000 PER OCCURRENCE
No. 6 LEGAL DEFENCE AND BAIL BOND	UP TO \$22,500

IMPORTANT INFORMATION

- A.) COVERAGE IS ONLY PROVIDED TO **NAMED DRIVERS** IN THE RENTAL AGREEMENT.
- B.) MEXICAN LAW PROHIBITS ANY MEXICAN NATIONAL FROM DRIVING A FOREIGN-REGISTERED VEHICLE IN MEXICO.
- C.) **ALL CLAIMS** MUST BE REPORTED TO THE TOLL-FREE TELEPHONE NUMBER **WHILE IN MEXICO:**
01 (800) 001-1300
- D.) **ALL ACCIDENTS AND/OR LOSSES** MUST BE REPORTED TO THE MEXICO INSURANCE CLAIMS OFFICE AND TO THE MEXICAN POLICE/AUTHORITIES.
- E.) **NEGLIGENCE, OMISSION OF REASONABLE CARE** OF VEHICLE, OR **FAILURE TO REMOVE VEHICLE KEYS** WHILE VEHICLE IS UNATTENDED WILL VOID COVERAGE UNDER THIS INSURANCE CONTRACT.
- F.) **FAILURE TO COMPLY** WITH THESE PROCEDURES WILL VOID THE INSURANCE COVERAGE, AND THE RENTER WILL BE RESPONSIBLE FOR ANY/ALL DAMAGES/LOSSES.

ADDENDUM TO RENTAL AGREEMENT

UPON PAYMENT OF THE MEXICO ENTRY SURCHARGE, THE RENTER OF THE VEHICLE ACKNOWLEDGES THAT THIS VEHICLE HAS BEEN AUTHORIZED TO BE DRIVEN IN MEXICO FOR THE PERIOD INDICATED IN THE SALES RECEIPT. THE VEHICLE DESCRIBED IN THE RENTAL AGREEMENT WILL BE SUBJECT TO THE TERMS AND CONDITIONS, EXCLUSIONS AND LIMITATIONS OF THE MASTER POLICY NO. ABIS-SY-030404.

THE MEXICO ENTRY SURCHARGE EXTENDS THE ABOVE COVERAGES (No. 1 THROUGH No. 6) TO THE RENTER OF THE VEHICLE, WHILE THE VEHICLE IS DRIVEN IN MEXICO ONLY. IN CASE OF AN ACCIDENT, THIS CERTIFICATE OF INSURANCE MUST BE PRESENTED ALONG WITH SURCHARGE SALES RECEIPT AND THE RENTAL AGREEMENT.

THE RENTER OF THE VEHICLE IS RESPONSIBLE FOR ANY AND ALL DEDUCTIBLES, FINES, LOSS OF USE CHARGES, AND ANY OTHER CHARGES RELATING TO THE USE OF THE VEHICLE WHILE BEING OPERATED IN MEXICO.

BY SIGNING THE MEXICO SURCHARGE SALES RECEIPT AND THE DOLLAR / THRIFT RENT-A-CAR RENTAL AGREEMENT, THE RENTER OF THE VEHICLE ACCEPTS THE TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF THIS CERTIFICATE OF INSURANCE AND THE CORRESPONDING CHARGES RELATED TO IT.

INSURANCE AGENCY INFORMATION

AMERICAN BORDER INSURANCE SERVICES, Inc.
 LOCAL RECORDING AGENT 1278320 - JOSE M. GOMEZ
 99 East San Ysidro Blvd. San Ysidro, CA 92173
 Tel (619) 428-4200 Fax (619) 428-4342
 Toll-Free (800) 554-2247

INSURANCE COVERAGE
 UNDERWRITTEN BY:



TX - DTG Ver. 2

**ALL CLAIMS MUST BE REPORTED WHILE IN MEXICO
 BEFORE RETURNING TO THE USA**

Adults you will meet



Pastor Miguel de Leon is the founder and director of Casa de Misericordia. He is shown in the center of this photo along with his sons Miguel, Misho and Isaac (from left to right) and his wife Rolindez.



Pastor Hector Aguirre runs Templo Aleluya which serves a very poor area near the orphanage. His ministry includes feeding 80 people each day, and he is building a kindergarten and primary school for the children of his church. He is married to Berta and they have two children, Hector Jr and Suzette.



Ricardo and Karla Traconis serve as the parents to all the children at Casa de Misericordia. They live in a house behind the orphanage building with their children Ricardo Jr, Kathy and Kristelly.



David and Karen Smith are missionaries from Georgia who have worked for the orphanage since before it was built. They live in a house on the orphanage grounds.