



An Assembly work in Mexico

by Rob Sullivan

Board Member, Stewards Foundation

Emmaus International publishes bi-annually the *Assembly Address Book*, primarily a listing of the assemblies in the United States and Canada. In conjunction with Assembly Care Ministries, Emmaus International does their best to keep the information up to date. This is no small feat considering that every year some meetings close their doors, while new assemblies open theirs. The address book also identifies meetings in other places, including some found in the Caribbean Islands.

While no one would say that such a directory is the definitive list of fellowships following the New Testament pattern in North America, it does provide a reasonable picture. It would, however, be encouraging to see more about the work taking place in Mexico.

In late December and early January, I joined a team organized by Believers Chapel in Augusta, Georgia, for a short-term missions trip to Mexico. Every year now for more than a decade, several in the fellowship have led a team to Veracruz, Mexico.

Veracruz is one of thirty-one states in Mexico, with a population of just over 8.1 million among the roughly 129 million in the country. The full name of the state is Veracruz de Ignacio de la Llave. Veracruz comes from the Latin Vera Crux, meaning "True Cross".

The team spent its time centered in activities in the mountains surrounding the towns of Rio Blanco (population of roughly 40,000), Orizaba (roughly 122,000) and Zongolica (about 26,000). The elders in the assemblies in Rio Blanco and Zongolica did the heavy lifting organizing the Gospel outreach campaigns and Bible teaching. Their seventeen American visitors for the week simply participated in an outreach effort that has been going on for some time.

The primary focus of the team's evangelistic efforts involved the Nahuatl (pronounced "now what") People of Central Mexico. Numbering nearly 1.5 million across several Latin American nations, this group is essentially the descendants of the Aztecs and those tribes indigenous to the area.

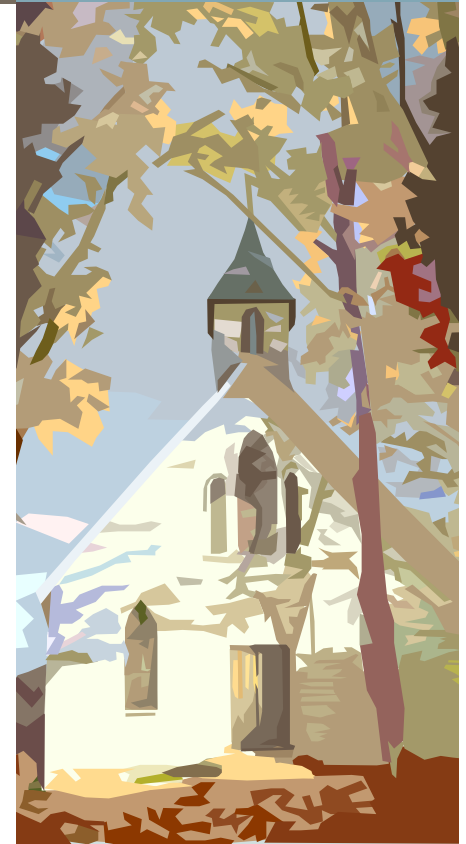
The first few assemblies in this part of Veracruz may be owing to British missionaries in the middle part of the last century. However, the work among the Nahuatl has everything to do with the Mexican saints themselves. Back in 1988, the assembly in Rio Blanco and a few assemblies in surrounding villages began a concerted effort to reach the Nahuatl. Over the past three decades, as many as 21 assemblies may have sprung up among the Nahuatl villages.



Rio Blanco Chapel

The week while we were there, the saints dedicated the land for their first Bible camp in the village of Xoxocotla. We also managed to visit 6 or 7 of these meeting halls that have arisen as a result of bringing the Good News of Jesus Christ to this "kindred, tribe, tongue, and nation."

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Meeting Hall in Atlahuilco

"So shall My Word be that goes forth from My mouth; it shall not return to Me void, but it shall accomplish what I please, and it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it."- Isaiah 55:11

The foundation for much of this was built on the Bible translation work done by David and Joy Tuggy. They first came to Mexico in 1970. David is a field linguist and member of the Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL). David and Joy are associated with Wycliffe Bible translators. They are in fellowship in one of the local assemblies.

There are considerable differences among the varieties of Nahuatl languages, which can make it a nightmare for a Bible translator. For example, the language has no passive voice. Also, idioms can take on completely different meanings from one dialect to the next. Still, the language has significantly influenced many other languages. The words, "avocado", "chili", "chocolate", "coyote", "peyote", and "tomato" have a Nahuatl origin.

Shortly after the Spanish conquest of Mexico, Alonso de Molina translated the *Doctrina Christiana* into Nahuatl, which was printed in 1546. The Spanish priest Bernardino de Sahagún attempted to translate the whole Bible into Nahuatl. However, the Catholic Church stood in opposition and the translation effort was forbidden by the Inquisition in Sevilla on May 10, 1576.

David completed the first translation of the entire Bible into one of the Nahuatl dialects in 1978. As more Nahuatl came to know Christ as Savior, it greatly sped up the work as David began to build and oversee a team of local believers who assisted in the translation of the Scriptures. Of the twelve active dialects of Nahuatl, some nine have major portions of the New Testament translated into their language. Three of these also have major portions of the Old Testament completed.

Stewards Foundation exists to assist local gatherings of believers in

the United States with loans for building purchases and construction. Proceeds from these loans fund the annual gift to workers in the Health Care Assistance Program (HCAP). Stewards Foundation has been a small part of the work in Mexico through assistance to commended workers in HCAP serving the Lord in Mexico.

"How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who proclaims peace, who brings glad tidings of good things, who proclaims salvation, who says to Zion, "Your God reigns!" – Isaiah 52:7

Capilla Evangelica Corona

Corona, New York

On Sunday, September 19, 1976 at 9:30 AM, a small group of brothers met in a basement located at 37-24 102nd Street in Corona, New York, home of the Lithgou family. This memorable meeting of remembering the Lord in the Breaking of the Bread was the formal beginning to what is known today as Capilla Evangelica Corona. That first meeting was attended by 17 adults and 5 children. Within the first year, we outgrew the basement, but having saved enough money the Lord provided an opportunity to rent space in a storefront. This new location provided more comfort and an opportunity to be seen by the community. We immediately initiated a building fund for the sole purpose of purchasing a building to house the local church. During the next 20 years, the brothers developed creative ways to raise money such as selling food, hosting special dinners, and undertaking day and weekend trips to increase the building fund. During this time, we were able to save \$100,000.00.

One of the sisters, María Luisa Valero worked as a housekeeper at the home of a very wealthy woman, Lady Ursula Corning. When Lady Corning was made aware that Maria's sister, Cornna, was planning to get married, she expressed a desire to attend the ceremony. Maria immediately thought of the poor appearance of our storefront church where the wedding ceremony was to take place, in stark contrast to the opulent architecture of the English church Lady Corning frequently attended. She modestly tried to persuade her boss not to attend the wedding telling her, "Our church is a small, humble congregation." Maria continued by saying, "the building is not a church, but an old storefront rehabbed to host our meetings." Lady Corning was not dissuaded, but instead determined to attend the wedding, wherever it was going to be held.

The wedding went on as scheduled with Lady Corning present among the guests. The simplicity of the nuptial ceremony and amiable Christian guests, along with the harmonious camaraderie

IN STEWARDS THAT A MAN BE FOUND FAITHFUL”

of the brothers and sisters strongly resonated in Lady Corning’s heart. She loved what she saw and heard. The Spirit of the Most High used this environmental shock, the cultural difference and the strength of evangelical simplicity, to display to this aristocratic lady the presence of God in that nuptial meeting. Psalm 133:1-3 seemed to come true before her eyes. **“Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! For there the LORD commanded the blessing, even life for evermore.”**



Some time after the wedding the owners of the storefront asked us to leave because they did not want to renew our lease. Having more faith than money, we took to the streets in search of a building to purchase. At that time, banks were reluctant to make loans to churches. The buildings for sale were well beyond our financial ability, but the pressure to move out increased daily. As our precarious situation continued to worsen, Lady Corning asked sister Maria, “How is the church?” Maria told her about the difficult situation we were experiencing. Lady Corning replied, “I am going to help the church with a good offering.” Gerald Rupp, Lady Corning’s attorney, summoned Maria and the pastor of the church to his office. A day was agreed upon and the meeting took place at his office.

Explaining our financial need, we told Mr. Rupp that we wanted to borrow \$350,000, and indicated our willingness to sign a document showing our commitment to repay the loan in monthly installments. Mr. Rupp replied, “I am very sorry, but we are not going to proceed like this.” Upon hearing this, our hopes momentarily vanished, but they were revived, and became energized when he continued, “What we are going to do is donate \$350,000 to the church. Thank God! A lump formed in the throat of the brother pastor as he thought, “Glory to God.” Tears of joy flowed down sister Maria’s cheeks. “Praise the Lord!” “Thank you, our Lord!” “Blessed be your name!” These thoughts quietly fired through our hearts. It was an unforgettable moment.

*“Praise the Lord! Thank you, our Lord!
Blessed be your name!”*

A few months later a sister who worked in real estate called the house of one of the elders saying, “Come look at a place being sold for \$350,000.” One of the brothers replied, “You do not have to go see it, that’s the one the Lord has for us.” The terms were quickly negotiated, and the building purchased.

We thank Stewards Foundation for their loan that permitted us to make much-needed repairs in order to meet the city’s requirements. As the result of evangelistic work by the brothers, another testimony has been established in the Bronx, New York, and one in a city in the Dominican Republic. Today our membership is about 120 brothers from Central and South America, and various Caribbean Countries. Our meetings are held in Spanish, the language of the adults. However, our youth and children’s ministries are bilingual English/Spanish. TO GOD BE THE GLORY.

News you Can Use

It is important for each local assembly to have an asset dissolution plan. There is a risk that without such a plan, the assets of a local fellowship could fall under the control of other groups. Several assembly and assembly related ministries have had their assets assumed by unwelcome organizations simply because proper steps were not taken ahead of time.

Have you reviewed your assembly’s bylaws recently to ensure that these issues are addressed? Does your assembly have an asset dissolution plan in place? If your assembly were to close how would the following matters be handled?

Disposal of Real Assets – When a nonprofit organization dissolves, the assets or proceeds from their sale must be given to another nonprofit

Disposal of Financial Assets – Banking and investment accounts must be donated to another nonprofit organization

Maintaining a “Set-Aside” Account – Some funds should be set-aside for a defined period of time to handle unforeseen bills.

Taking Care of the Assembly’s Commended Workers – Consideration should be given to their ongoing support, once the fellowship ceases to meet.

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Psalms 126:3, “The LORD hath done great things for us; whereof we are glad”

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How can Stewards Foundation (SF) assist your assembly?

SF is registered 501(c)(3) organization that is led and run by individuals in assembly fellowship

SF can facilitate the use of sale proceeds to go to the benefit of other assemblies and assembly related ministries

SF is a partner organization with Believers Stewardship Services (BSS) who assists assemblies with various assembly stewardship related matters

How can BSS assist your assembly?

BSS is a registered 501(c)(3) organization that is led and run by individuals in assembly fellowship

BSS has experience in property management and in the management of investment assets

BSS has legal and regulatory experience in both governance and asset dissolution matters

BSS can assume the title of property to ensure assets remain within assembly control

BSS can manage assets until assembly leadership decides how assets (both real and financial) should be disposed

BSS can set up a Donor Advised Fund ensuring existing commended worker needs are met

BSS can manage banking and investment accounts on behalf of the local fellowship

BSS can oversee property repairs in advance of the sale of property assets

BSS can assist with and oversee the sale of property

BSS works with assembly related organizations (or other evangelical organizations) that the local fellowship would ultimately like to see benefit from the sale of the assets

BSS is a partner organization with Stewards Foundation who serves as the key resource for loans to assemblies



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