

“Encuentro con Dios”

Presbyterian Church

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January 2007

What has happened with the Church-planting project?

The National Presbyterian Church “*Encuentro con Dios*” (Encounter with God) was organized on August 7, 2005. After 5 years of intense work and with the support of Mission to the World, the church plant was completed as projected. The church began with 81 communing members and 30 children, with three elders and one deacon.

What has happened over the past year?

The transition of working with a Board to a Session has been challenging. The elders have had no experience with their positions, but they have all been learning. It has been particularly difficult to transition from being simply an ‘administrative’ board to a ‘ministerial’ session.

1. Within our goals of church planting, we wanted to begin a new church plant the moment our church was officially organized. On the same day we were organized as a church, we received a group of 20 people from the city of Saltillo, to begin a church planting project with them. This new group is called “*Dios con Nosotros*” (God With Us). We are beginning to work on developing a philosophy of ministry and at this time we are looking for a church planter for them. The city of Saltillo is situated 45 minutes east of Monterrey. It is the capital of the State of Coahuila and it is a key city to reach northern Mexico with the gospel.
2. We have grown and new people continue to come. We finished the year with 91 adult members. I am especially grateful to God in seeing families sharing the gospel with unbelieving relatives. One example is **Jorge and Ana Luisa Lankenau**. They began to invite Ana Luisa’s brother and his wife. **Eduardo and Silvia** began coming to church in May of last year. We began a cell group with

them and step by step, the barriers of her “Catholicism” began to come down in light of the gospel of grace. They received Christ and are now taking membership classes. It is very motivating to see the changes God is making in their lives.

3. I am very grateful to the Lord for the three members of our church who are studying in seminaries in the US:
 - **Jaime Jiménez** is close to completing his M.Div. at RTS in Jackson, MS. He is considering going as a missionary to Peru.
 - **Arturo Terrazas** is also studying for his M.Div. at RTS in Jackson, MS.
 - **Miriam Díaz** is a physician and completing her second year at the Rio Grande Bible Institute. Lord willing, she will return to Monterrey this summer to work with MTW on a new medical ministry.
 - I am thankful to the Lord that He has allowed us to influence the lives of these young people and motivate them to consider full-time ministry as a career. I am grateful to God that He has allowed our congregation to contribute to their financial needs. And I am also thankful to God at work in the lives of other young people in our church who are considering full-time ministry.
 - We have 15 church members studying at ITEM.
4. We elected new church officers in November. You all know **Andrés Garza** is a member of our church and returned this summer after completing his theological studies at RTS Charlotte. The return and involvement of the Garza family has been a great blessing and help to our church.
5. In November, we took part in a campaign called “*Mi Esperanza*” (My Hope), a ministry of Billy Graham. During a three night series, the gospel was preached on national television (this is highly unusual in México because no permission has been given to religious programming in the mass media). It was very encouraging to have 25 of our church families

open their homes to friends, neighbors and relatives to hear the gospel. Of that group, approximately 15 people came to Christ.

6. Last month the Lord gave me the opportunity to officiate at the wedding of **Mario and Raquel Tobías**. They were divorced 14 years ago. During that time both truly received Christ as Lord and Savior. Mario and his daughters joined the church in December 2005; but Raquel was not attending. Mario asked her to marry him again. After talking, they married. It was a work of God's grace. Now they are all attending as a family, including their older son who had left the church for some time.
7. We actually have 15 people attending our membership class. Of those 15, 5% are a result of our cell groups working with unbelievers.
8. Something that is very important not only for my church but also for the church planting movement is that "Encuentro con Dios" church and MTW are working together in order to make "Encuentro" into a flagship church. We really need a resource church and we will work to get this goal in this year.

- **News about the church planter**

2006 was a very difficult year for us. My wife, Diana, suffered a heart attack at the end of 2005 that caused her many problems during the first six months of the year. We had many hospital visits and very high medical expenses. It was a very stressful situation. It has been the most difficult time we have faced in 14 years as a family. In gratitude to God, I can report that Diana is much better, although we have not yet recovered economically.

My son continues to grow. He is now 12 years old and in seventh grade. It has been quite a change to watch him transform from boy to adolescent. We are learning how to parent an adolescent.

In the midst of everything, we have sensed the faithfulness and love of God in our lives. We have learned more about His grace and how weak we can be. My son is growing in his faith and it is wonderful to watch God at work in his heart.

- **Future Plans**

If the Lord permits, we would like to continue our studies in the US, working on a masters degree to be better equipped for ministry. Our plan is to return in two or three years to plant a new church and support The church planting branch of the Theological Institute of Monterrey. This is a critical need because there is no formal training available for church planters at this time.

- Please pray for all these plans and for the work at Encuentro con Dios church.

Church Planting Movement Northern Mexico Mission to the World.