

World Mission

NEWSLETTER

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More and more churches in North America are sensing a call to mission. They respond to that call not only by sending and supporting longer-term missionaries, but also by sending mission teams around the world. Here are two examples of Covenanters who participated in such trips, as well as opportunities for your church to participate in a similar experience.

The Parable of the Obedient Workers and the Bulldozer

Gary and Mary Lou Sander

The men's mission team from First Covenant Church in Sacramento, California, had been silently praying that some major help would arrive so that they could get a soccer field laid out at the Peace House, part of the ministry of the Shalom Community Covenant Church in Medellín, Colombia. Peace House takes at-risk boys off the dirt streets of the Santo Domingo neighborhood and gets them into a program that offers hope to them and their families.

It was a Wednesday afternoon, three hours into the task of digging the two-foot-deep trench and laying fifty-four feet of pipe underground to help with the drainage for the soccer field. Shovels and picks were busy at work in the hands of the five men, and reality was setting in.

By the end of that first day, Tom, the project mastermind, realized they needed to significantly adjust their expectations. There was no way they could lay out and finish the soccer field in four days. Tom hoped that they could at least control the water runoff and prepare the yard for some other group to lay down the soccer field. The men prayed and they agreed to do all that they could.

The water runoff from the mountain behind them had formed deep trenches in the yard. Trying to control that by



The group that worked on the soccer field, including members of First Covenant Church in Sacramento, California



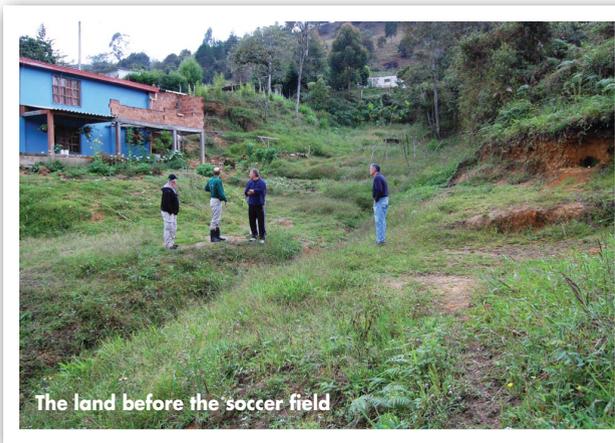
A group of boys who live at the Peace House

hand was as much as they could hope to do. Getting the first fifty-four feet of pipe into the ground in about four hours was an accomplishment for the team. Everyone felt that God had answered their prayers after a good first day. No one shared what they had been silently praying as they worked.

A couple of months earlier, Jeff Koons, pastor of adult and men's ministries at First Covenant Church and the team leader, had asked Gary if there was any way to rent a bulldozer to help with the job. Bulldozers cost about \$200 an hour to rent plus fuel, so it wasn't feasible. Plus, Gary said, people in the countryside around the Peace House do most of their personal landscaping work by hand. So when the men came from Sacramento that first day, they obediently got to work with borrowed shovels and picks, using their own hands and backs.

Word got out Wednesday night about the work the men had done, and the next day twice as many men from the Shalom Community Covenant Church made the hour-long trip up to the Peace House to help. What they didn't know was that they were going to spend most of the day watching God work instead of working themselves.

Just before lunchtime



The land before the soccer field



A mission team member hands the bulldozer driver a cup of cold water.

on Thursday, a man came into the yard and asked Pastor Carlos Díaz what the men were building. The man had been hired to develop the land next to the Peace House, and he was looking for a place to put some dirt. He also offered the use of his bulldozer for free. It was exactly what the team had prayed for. They could use the dirt, and they certainly needed the bulldozer. It did mean that they had to dig up the pipe they had laid the day before to allow the bulldozer to do its work.



The bulldozer doing the work

So at 4:30 in the afternoon the bulldozer started pushing dirt from the neighboring land into the yard. The driver had been paid to work until 5:30, but he turned on the bulldozer lights and worked until 7:30 that night. Friday morning the team got to the work site early to see what had been done. They

were elated by what had been accomplished, but still only 60 percent of the work had actually been finished. When they asked if the bulldozer could come back, they were told not for another two weeks.

People began to pray. Someone made a phone call. A messenger went to talk to the bulldozer driver. Fifteen minutes later the bulldozer returned, and in three hours he had finished everything he could do.

That afternoon, the Sacramento men's team somehow tripled their efforts and laid more than 150 feet of pipe in the new yard that God had built with the neighbor's bulldozer. Instead of submitting a bill of more than \$700, plus fuel costs, the bulldozer driver enjoyed lunch with the team and reluctantly accepted \$40 to help pay for the fuel. On Monday, the last day of work, twice as many men showed up to put the finishing touches on the yard before the soccer field would be laid.

Now the boys who live in the Peace House are eagerly awaiting their first soccer game on their new field. And the men from First Covenant are back in Sacramento thanking God for allowing them to participate in the parable of the obedient workers and the bulldozer. □

Gary and Mary Lou Sander are Covenant missionaries serving in Colombia, where Mary Lou is World Mission's country coordinator.

After a Mission Trip *Carol Hegberg*

Our church mission team returned from Monterrey, Mexico, with inspiring testimonials on an early Sunday morning. They had built a room addition and a needed wall upon the concrete slab that the previous year's mission team had poured. And they had provided the funds to purchase all the materials.

The team had developed a camaraderie and had enjoyed discovering each other's unknown talents. One man's talent was his height—the church owned no ladder, and only he

could paint the top of the wall. Another person with musical gifts led the singing. A younger team member had strong legs to run errands. Still another possessed the ability to fix whatever was broken with whatever materials were available.

One strong, middle-aged woman longed to help build the wall for the struggling church they had come to serve. Yet each day a need arose within the mission's community—not one that required great exertion—and always this woman felt God urging

her to answer that call. She learned humility. In God's eyes, babysitting a sleeping child was as important a job as the demanding, physical task of building a wall.

The team stayed in church members' homes. They each were stunned by the poverty and happiness of their hosts. Why was that? Certainly they knew poverty resided in that part of Mexico. Of course they had seen pictures and heard testimonies from past mission teams. But being physically present was to experience the

poverty and the joy that come with a simple life.

Each team member experienced the joy of serving God and God's people. For one week they practiced a lifestyle of "not sweating the small stuff." They experienced God as a daily, dependable, spiritually visible member of everyone's family. They saw what it meant to ask, why keep two pans when a friend needs one? In spiritual math both people have enough.

"One kid was given a beach ball," team member Cara Sisler told our attentive congregation. "Just a plain beach ball. And she was so happy. I mean, here at home we expect expensive gifts. Just a beach ball would never do it." The young woman held back tears as she told the story.

A group of teenaged girls were touched by the generosity of the family they stayed with—the house had only one bedroom, which the family happily gave to the girls for the week.

When it was time to leave, one

woman handed her teenage visitors specially purchased stuffed animals as parting gifts. The teens were blown away by her generosity.

One man on the team challenged himself—and the congregation—with a basic question: What do you fear that hinders your work? What fear stifles our Christianity from calling out our love and need for God in our neighborhood, workplace, home, and environment? How can we change the places our lives touch?

"What matters is faith that works through love" (Galatians 5:6, TEV). My interpretation is, "The only thing that matters is love expressing itself through action." Now that's a goal all Christians should strive for.

"May God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face shine upon

us, that your ways may be known on earth, your salvation among all nations" (Psalm 67:1-2, NIV). Amen. □

Carol Hegberg is a member of Hillcrest Covenant Church in DeKalb, Illinois. The church has made several trips to Monterrey, Mexico, and plans to continue sending mission teams there.

Covenant Mission Connection

(CMC) is a resource available to local Covenant churches that facilitates contact between ministries that want workers and volunteers who would like to be part of such a project. CMC also assists in planning for and preparing work teams sent to locations in the U.S. and abroad (usually for one to two weeks).



With the help of Elise, the Covenant Merge Ministries translator, Lois Miller teaches the children.



Samantha Kevin, Cara Sisler, and Olivia Kevin surround Irene, the Roca de Salvacion Church secretary.



Members from Hillcrest Covenant Church in DeKalb, Illinois and Elim Covenant Church in Moline, Illinois, gather for a group photograph after their work at Roca de Salvacion Church in Monterrey, Mexico.



Mission team members begin construction on the wall.

INTERNATIONAL PROJECTS

Covenant Merge Ministries

Team opportunities are available in Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Jamaica, Dominican Republic, Chile, Argentina, Uruguay, and Spain.

Contact: Dale Lusk at dale@covmerge.org;
www.covmerge.org.

China

Beijing Connection, January 2009. Tour Beijing with a Chinese student eager to learn English, and enjoy the opportunity to show Jesus's love.

Contact: Christina Wooten at coo@cox.net

Colombia

Children and youth ministry, adult ministry, and service projects are available.

Contact: Gary or Mary Lou Sander at
mission@pactocol.org

Ecuador

Work and ministry teams are welcome to work with the Ecuador Covenant Church.

Contact: Paul and Joan Spjut at ecuaspjuts@hotmail.com

Mexico

Children's ministries, construction, and community health projects are available in partnership with the Mexican Covenant Church.

Contact: Jo Ellen Reaves at joellenreaves@yahoo.com

Russia

Christian Radio for Russia seeks help installing radio equipment in various areas of Russia.

Contact: Dan Johnson, New Life Radio, at crfr@juno.com;
www.crfr.org

Cape Town, South Africa

Bridges of Hope is looking for work teams to ready their facility for orphan ministry.

Contact: Dennis Wadley at
DennisW@bridgesworldwide.org;
www.bridges-of-hope.org

Johannesburg, South Africa

The South African Chinese Covenant Church seeks teams for vacation Bible school and other ministries for English-speaking Chinese children.

Contact: Dave and Judy Dolan at
dave.judydolan@comcastnet

Taiwan

Teach conversational English in a Taiwan Covenant Church.

Contact: Sally Carlson at (773) 907-3322;
mission.connection@covchurch.org

Women Ministries

Cross-cultural opportunities to China (2009)

Contact: Marcia Friedman at (773) 907-3332;
wmc@covchurch.org

NATIONAL PROJECTS

Center for Student Mission

Urban mission opportunities are available year round in Chicago, Toronto, Houston, Los Angeles, Washington DC, and elsewhere.

Contact: info@csm.org; www.csm.org

Covenant Bible Camps

Assistance is needed in remodeling, grounds work, maintenance, etc.

Contact: The camp nearest you or
www.covenantcamps.org

Covenant Mountain Mission Bible Camp

CMMBC seeks both summer staff and maintenance assistance year round.

Contact: Ellen Finkbeiker at (276) 346-1013;
elfink@localnet.com

Covenant Pines Bible Camp

CPBC is seeking skilled volunteers for carpentry, plumbing, and electrical work.

Contact: Josh Rude at (218) 768-2610;
josh@covenantpines.org

Covenant Youth of Alaska, Unalakleet, Alaska

Covenant Bible Camp volunteers are needed for summer 2009.

Contact: Erica Ellingson at erica@cyak.org;
www.cyak.org/camp.html

Volunteers are needed to minister to Native youth and young adults.

Contact: Byron Bruckner at byron@cyak.org;
www.cyak.org

Jesus People USA, Chicago

Opportunities are available to be involved in the JPUSA community and in inner-city ministries.

Contact: Scott Ingerson at (773) 561-2450 ext. 2310 or 2112; www.jpusa.org

KICY, Nome, Alaska

Work teams are needed for summer 2009.

Contact: Dennis Weidler at dennisw.kicy.org

Our Place/North Place, Duluth, Minnesota

Volunteer with residents in various activities (Christian education, community integrations, etc.).

Contact: Dana or Shirley at (218) 624-3097

Rebuilding in Phoenix, Louisiana

Volunteers are needed for clean-up and reconstruction from hurricane damage.

Contact: (913) 638-6839; mgromer@everestkc.net;
www.rebuildingphoenix.com

If you are interested in having a project included in this list, or if you have a question for Covenant Mission Connection, contact Sally Carlson, Covenant Mission Connection coordinator at (773) 907-3322 or mission.connection@covchurch.org.