

WCBC YUCATAN TEAM 2024

Trip Journal

Saturday, November 2:

God blessed us with uneventful travel, including having a nearby gate in Chicago during our short layover and an hour plus at passport control in Cancun which allowed at least one team member to recover a bit from some travel sickness before boarding the chartered bus for the 2+ hour ride to the campus of FMSL (Medical Foundation of San Lucas) in Valladolid, where we stay in nicely furnished cabanas, have our morning and evening meals, and meet as a team each evening to have devotions and discuss the day.

Sunday, November 3:

We were able to worship at Jesus of Nazareth Baptist Church and were warmly greeted, especially the scout team that was here last year. The church is led by Jose and Elizabeth Santos who started the church and acquired the property and Pastor Rosario and his wife Jacqueline (Jacquie) and family who moved from Cancun last year where he had been an assistant pastor. Two families from his former church came to visit for the first time and were an encouragement to everyone. In the evening, we were able to enjoy some of the local culture while walking around the Town Square, checking out the vendors and shops, and listening to the big band and watching couples folk dancing.

Monday, November 4:

Construction Team Update: When we visited the site yesterday, the foundation and the block for the structure of the bathroom was already poured and laid. Come Monday morning, the fun began. We were able to split up into teams for the different tasks that needed to be done, each lead by a Hispanic worker of that trade. Each “foreman” was gracious enough to let us help them, as well as show and instruct those who didn’t have much experience in their task.

Through a lot of hard work and teamwork, one team was able to put block as well as build a pad on the roof for the water tank for plumbing. Another was able to begin to dig and build the foundation for the steps to the structure. Our last group was able to get the rough-in electric and plumbing and patch holes in the structure.

It was really cool to watch all the teamwork happening with the assembly lines of handing buckets of mortar up to the roof or constantly hauling bucket after bucket of sand or gravel for the foundation. God allowed for good communication even amid the language barrier through the use of translator and a lot of motioning and broken Spanish. Throughout the day and the muggy heat, God gave us all great attitudes to be able to work hard and push through for His glory!

VBS Team Update: The theme of this week of VBS is all about how God is the Rock. The first couple of days, the kids are learning about how Truth comes from God and how important it is to trust in and choose God's way like Daniel did.

We decorated the church with a beach theme and drawings on the sidewalk welcoming the kids. We had ten kids, and we started and ended the day with giant bubbles, which the kids loved. VBS is in the afternoon from 2:00-4:30pm.

We sang and did motions with the kids for a couple VBS songs in Spanish before Elisabeth, from the church here, taught the kids the lesson on how truth comes from God. After the lesson, we colored pictures, played picture Bingo based on Genesis 1 and 2, had a snack, and made clothespin orcas holding a paper with a lesson summary on it.

We have three students from the University of Valladolid, who are unbelievers, who were recruited to volunteer to help our team translate for games, snacks, and crafts this week. It has been a blessing to have them here, and we've been able to share the gospel with them while we teach and love on these kids.

Tuesday, November 5:

Construction Team: After another excellent breakfast given to us by our hosts at the lodge and some ibuprofen we were all ready to start tackling the site once again. Today our main focus was getting the front step dug out and set the forms for the concrete. We had a lot of chiseling and removing of rock and dirt as well as some more laying more rock and mortar. Electric and plumbing have been roughed-in and two steps were able to be poured.

Since all of the VBS setup was done yesterday, the VBS team was able to help in many ways in the morning. They helped move a lot of material and aided in bucket brigade lines to move concrete fast and effortlessly. Several large batches of concrete were hand mixed and looked effortlessly when done by the local tradesmen. We also had some fun encounters with some of God's creation with seeing a family of bats hanging from a palm tree, a tarantula, and finding out what a rotten coconut looks like on the inside.

Today our team was definitely challenged by the heat and tiredness from the activities from the day before. We all got to utilize patience as there were down times while waiting for help to be needed or simply needing to take a break because of the heat. But by God's grace again, we were able to work strong together and still got a lot accomplished!

VBS Team: We set everything up and then spent the morning working with the construction team until lunch and then began practicing our songs for the day. We began the arrival time with individual bubbles and the kids had fun playing in the bubbles.

We had twelve kids, and we started doing the music with motions at about 2:30pm. The kids and the interpreters sang and did the motions with us very enthusiastically. After the music, the kids learned about how Daniel trusted in God and His plan because His plans are always best. Then we colored pictures, ran beach ball relay races, had a snack, and then made and decorated some amazing paper plate clams with the theme of the week in them.

We have the same three university students from yesterday along with a new student today to help translate. They have done an awesome job not only with helping translate, but also helping by playing with the kids, helping pass things out, doing clean up, and joining in with the songs. We had also had some time to talk with them in English to help them practice and it has been an excellent opportunity to get to know them better and continue to share the gospel with them!

Ministry to Moms: "Pour out your heart like water before the presence of the LORD. Lift up your hands to Him for the lives of your children." (Lam 2:19)

Mothers all over the world work hard to raise their children. So many influences and ideas fight for their hearts and any mom can feel isolated, hopeless and afraid. God, who has given us our children, is our firm foundation. Moms in Prayer (MIP) is an international ministry that teaches women to join together to pray for children and their schools. One hour per week praying biblically through the 4 steps of Praise, Confession, Thanksgiving and Intercession points us to God, places our children in His capable loving hands and brings peace and hope and joy to a mother's heart.

Ruth Bos and I (Julie Vermeer) have been immensely blessed by MIP for almost 25 years now and we asked God if He would give us an opportunity to invite women here to start a group or to pray with them and encourage them in their faith. We asked God to prepare the way and to have His way. We secured MIP resources, booklets, tracts and teaching tools all in Spanish. And our God, who is generous, creative and faithful, placed Jossie in our path. She is the Manager of Operations and International Guests at FMSL and has been our team's primary contact person for trip logistics while continuing to serve in her home church in Cancun. She believes in the power and blessing of prayer and within just a couple of hours had texted ladies in her church re MIP. Leticia is a 70-year-old woman who would like to teach younger women to pray. Vianey has children in college and feels the burden to pray for them. And Marissa is part of a group of single moms and she had been asking God to show her how to encourage these struggling moms. These 3 have said they would like to start groups and many as 10 women have responded to Jossie's texts expressing great interest.

In addition, Ruth and I met with 4 women from Jesus of Nazareth Baptist church while the children attended VBS. We introduced them to the MIP 4 steps of prayer and shared a bit of our testimony and at the end Jacqueline replied, "It's so simple, but it's so very important." How true! She accepted the remaining Spanish resources to share with people she can invite. The 4 women said they plan to return tomorrow and would like to actually pray for their children together during VBS. Ruth and I are excited for these women and so very grateful to God. The more we get to know God through His Word and through prayer, the more we trust Him with everything in our lives, including our children. He alone is worthy of all the praise.

Wednesday, November 6:

Construction Team: Today started out really hot. The breeze didn't come until midday. Our muscles were definitely feeling it from the past two days, but we had work to do.

Our main focus was finishing the steps and getting stucco on all surfaces of the building. We hand mixed 2-3 batches of concrete and started the brigade to move the buckets over to the pour location. For most who did it, mixing the concrete was one of the hardest things we did all week. Each batch took roughly a half hour of manual mixing and shoveling of sand, cement, and crushed limestone.

Once again, our group's teamwork shown through as, whenever possible, everyone participated in the ways they knew how. By the end of the day, the we had a full set of stairs to the entrance of the bathroom most of the building was stucco-ed, inside and out. We also had a foundation made for a future wheelchair access ramp.

VBS Team: We set up for the day and helped the construction team with various tasks until 1:00pm when we began English time with the interpreters. Part of the reason the interpreters volunteered to help was to improve their English and since they arrive about an hour earlier than the kids, those of us on the VBS team sit and talk with them about lots of different topics. We had seven interpreters today, our four from the previous days and three new ones.

We had thirteen kids today and we began arrival time with individual bubbles, chalk, and beach balls. We officially started with all four songs and one of our interpreters from the first days helped us do motions in the front, which was great! After the music, we had the lesson where the kids learned about how we all need Jesus.

After the lesson, the kids colored a pictures and then played sharks and minnows which was a hit with the kids. Instead of giving high fives to the people at each end, they gave hugs instead which was really sweet. They made bracelets for craft with different types of beads including cross beads and most kids made two bracelets. They played with bubbles and beach balls again at the end and there was a tearful goodbye with the interpreters because the first four who had come are unable to come tomorrow for the last day. It has been such a blessing to get to know and witness to these interpreters.

Moms Ministry: The prayer ministry for moms continued on Wednesday and Thursday with a few of the moms from the church, including the pastor's wife, Jacquie, plus Jossie from FMSL. It was more open and comfortable each day, with the ladies quickly adopting the model of praise/confession/thanks/intercession and openly and fervently praying for unsaved family members, the VBS children, the construction workers, and the university translators. It was a unique opportunity to fellowship with Christian women uniting hearts in prayer and praise (in two different languages), and Jacquie looks forward to starting a women's prayer group at the church in the near future!

Thursday, November 7:

Construction Team: Today was the final day. We were so close to the finish line we could smell it. Unfortunately, we had a small set back as the trades wanted us to wait until 11am to show up. This gave us extra time to rest but also extra time to heat up.

We had a lot of down time on the job site as most of the items that we had to do was finish work. We had yet some more stucco to do, door frames to put it, and floors to pour inside each room. We also finished up getting the water tank on the roof and hooking it up. We also moved loads of rock around the site. We graded some of the land and filled holes, which, with many hands went very quickly.

We didn't get to see the finished product since the floors were not cured enough to set the toilets, and we ran out of time with a few other tasks. Thankfully, the Lord opened up an opportunity for us to come back tomorrow after our cultural experience day to celebrate the completion of the project. By God's grace, we were able to finish our part in this wonderful project.

VBS Team: We arrived at 11:00pm, set up for the day and then helped the construction team until 1:00pm when we began English time with the interpreters. We only had our three new interpreters from yesterday today, and one of them is a believer!

We had fourteen kids today and we began arrival time with individual bubbles and chalk drawing and the kids loved it. A couple of the older girls who came began writing out bible verses in Spanish all over the sidewalk including Genesis 1:1, Psalm 23:1, Matthew 2:1-2, John 3:16, and 1 Peter 2:9. We officially started with all four of the songs and one of the interpreters stayed up to help with motions and did an excellent job. The kids love the music and motions. They have been memorizing Romans 12:2 and have been doing a great job with it.

The lesson today was given by Pastor Rosario. He taught about Jesus's death and resurrection and how Jesus is the only way to heaven. He spoke with such passion and fervor that you could clearly tell how

much he loves God and how much he loves these kids. After the lesson, the kids colored pictures and then played with the beach balls during game time. The craft today was simple watercolors, which was a blast because the kids are incredibly creative and love to draw. Most of them made at least three or four each. The kids got snow cones and spaghetti and the ladies from church generously provided a taco lunch for us. At the end, we gave the kids little gift bags with American candy and other goodies. It has been a blessing to get to know these kids and love and serve them.

Friday, November 8:

Today's cultural tour included visiting Mayan ruins at Ek Balam (a smaller complex than the famous, and more crowded, Chichen Itza), a nice swim in the unique environment of a cenote ("see-notay"), and then a return to the church to celebrate the completion of the bathroom project with members of the church family and the local construction crew we assisted. During that time, Brother Jose shared a history of the church that had begun meeting in their home, the acquisition of the property, the loss of several people during Covid, and then the call of Pastor Rosario last year. Rosario then shared with us about his family, previous ministry as an associate pastor in Cancun (at a church where Jose & Elizabeth's adult children attended), call to Valladolid, support-raising from other churches in southern Mexico to afford the move, and his first year serving at the church.

Our final team session in the evening was a sweet time of sharing (we were able to sing around a campfire the night before with Devin and Alex playing guitar) before returning to our cabanas to pack up and prepare for our return home.

Saturday, November 9:

We had a good breakfast (again!) and loaded the bus for the 2-hour drive to the airport in Cancun. God provided a very helpful porter at the airport to help our entire group get our luggage checked-in and ready to go. We had enough time for lunch at the airport before heading to Chicago (4-hour flight) and sufficient time to get through passport control and customs before making our connection to Grand Rapids. We look forward to being with our West Cannon church family tomorrow to share about the trip that God has blessed in so many ways!

2024 Yucatan Team:

Devin Baab, Sarah Baab, Matt Batchelder, Bruce Bonnell, Gary & Ruth Bos, Julia Bos, Kelly Fath, Carissa Highman, Steve Kent, Matt McFarlane, Rachel McFarlane, Alex Narva, Katie Olander, Matt Sansoterra, Emily Sansoterra, Bill & Deb Shrontz, and Mark & Julie Vermeer.