



THE FPC JOURNEY

Walking in Freedom,
Wholeness, and
Intimacy



SPECIAL EDITION



August 2025

www.ReachingTheValley.org

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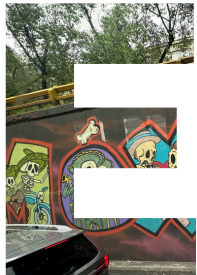
The FPC Journey.

Stay Connected with
First Presbyterian
Church of Santa Clara -
Your Church Family in
Santa Clara, CA- with
The FPC Journey

Join us as we share the latest news, events, and inspirational updates in our newsletter. Our newsletter is your go-to source for staying connected with our vibrant community, spiritual growth opportunities, and upcoming programs. Whether you're a long-time member or visiting for the first time, our newsletter aims to keep you informed about everything happening in our church and our local Santa Clara community.

Each month, we will strive to offer insightful devotionals/articles, upcoming event details, volunteer opportunities, and ways to get involved with the church. Stay up to date with our weekly services, youth programs, mission projects, and much more. Be part of the First Presbyterian family and grow in faith, fellowship, and service.

Visit our website at
www.reachingthevalley.org
for more details.



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FIRST PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH OF SANTA
CLARA

OR



Amy's Mexico Mission Trip

By: Amy Gunaseelan

When my sister went on the Mexico mission trip last year, I couldn't fathom why she wanted to go back. She had described it as "labor and work." I physically couldn't wrap my head around why someone would voluntarily go somewhere that included hours and hours of work: either under the hot sun or the heavy downpours. It was even harder for me to understand why she would want to go back- what exactly was so special about Mexico? What made it so different from the hundreds of other experiences we encounter every day? Why did it attract people from our church every year, and why was my sister so upset that she was unable to go this year? Well, I was soon going to find out for myself, to put it simply, what the secret of Mexico was.

We arrived very late at night, and the very first thing I saw was a selfless act. Juan Carlos, who was my dad's and my host, had taken the time out of his sleep to pick us up. This was also true of the other hosts. I learned very quickly that knowing the most basic of Spanish would not take me very far, but it was just enough to understand bits and pieces. That was just one of the many, many things I would learn that short week.



When I met all of the kids at the church, only a few of them spoke English, so communicating was a bit hard, but it didn't really discourage any of us. They were making a skit for the younger kids, and I was going to play the part of Emile, a selfish rat that was going to get into a lot of trouble. I didn't understand any of my lines in the skit, and I am one hundred percent sure that I totally and completely butchered every word I spoke, but yet, the play must go on!

The skit was how I connected with all of the kids, but the gardening was how I grew my relationships with them. I understood and spoke all of the 'ice breaker' questions, and Google Translate helped with the rest. We were determined to become friends with one another, and in the end, the language barrier was just a broken obstacle.

Amy's Mexico Mission Trip (cont)



I think my friendship with each and every one of them is extra special because we had to work harder than normal for it. We couldn't understand each other, but it didn't stop us. I especially grew close with Mila, a girl my age, Rene, who has been part of the church since he was a baby, Jhaviv, a boy the same age as Rene, Lupita and Amanda, who made the extra effort to talk to me even though I had absolutely no clue what they were saying, and Andrea, a girl who was 18, but didn't let the age and language gap interfere with our growing friendship.

So, what exactly was the 'secret of Mexico'? What brought people back every year, despite the hard work? Why was my sister so upset she had to miss it this year? Well, I have yet to figure it out, so I suppose my only option is to go back again, and again, until I truly understand. And, honestly, who really knows how many years it might take until I do?

Those friendships were what defined the week for me. If you said "Mexico mission trip", the first words that would come to mind would not be 'labor' or 'work'. They would be 'community', because that's what it was. It was one big community-one where I could make friendships with the new people I was meeting and grow relationships with the people I already knew.



Home Away from Home

By: Chrys Sahgal



This year marked my fourth trip to San Bartolo, Mexico—but it was the first time my wife, Sandra, and our son, Luke, came along. That one difference changed everything.

In years past, my work was mostly hands-on as I have written about in the past. We have mixed concrete, put roofing on homes, built bathrooms, painted walls, planted a garden and so much more. I loved that work. I thrived in the camaraderie of labor, in sweating beside others with purpose.

“Working side by side with everyone in San Bartolo, I’ve never had more fun—even while lifting more concrete than anywhere else in my life.”

But this year, my role shifted- even more so than in the last few years. I was asked to help co-lead the youth group alongside Sandra, preach the Sunday sermon, and teach the Monday evening class. So a very heavy teaching workload. This trip wasn't just about building walls—it was about building community, teaching in vulnerability, and learning how God's strength is often made perfect in our weakness.

We, the Sahgal family, arrived early with, Jaime (Jim), and Teresa. Thanks to Tim's driving so early in the morning we made it to the airport with ease. We had a smooth flight experience despite some luggage issues. We were forced to check our carry on bags, and as such had to wait for our luggage upon arrival, which unfortunately for us took almost 2 hours. And not long after settling in, we got sick (Luke and I). By midweek, Luke was running a 104°F fever, and Sandra and I found ourselves at a doctor's office with our wonderful host families, which overall took roughly four hours. In those moments—waiting, helpless, and discouraged—I felt I had let God down. I wasn't leading well. I wasn't serving. I wasn't producing. I had spent Thursday through Saturday just resting, recuperating, and of course nursing Luke as well.

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Home Away from Home (cont)

And yet...

"At no point did we feel neglected, forgotten, or unsafe—God's love and protection surrounded us through others."

Lessons Learned in Weakness

The apostle Paul wrote, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness" (2 Corinthians 12:9). This trip became a living testimony of that truth.

I realized how much I'd tied my self-worth to effort and productivity—how I'd fallen into the trap of believing that doing more meant being more. Like Luisa in Encanto, I had come to see strength only in burden-bearing. But God had different lessons for me:

- **Our value comes from God, not performance.** Even when sidelined, we were seen, loved, and included. God doesn't ask for strength—He asks for us to surrender.
- **Prayer and love are tangible.** From messages sent by our church family back home to arms folded in prayer, we were sustained more by presence than productivity.

- **Hospitality shines brightest in hardship.** The care and welcome we received from our hosts in San Bartolo was nothing short of Christlike.
- **God strengthens us through each other.** Watching Sandra lead the youth, translating and mentoring with grace, was a blessing not only to me but to others. Our shared leadership and hardships — through fevered nights and changed plans—brought us closer, and unexpectedly encouraged another couple on the team.



Home Away from Home (cont)

A Philippian Moment in San Bartolo

One of the most meaningful conversations I had during our stay was with Rodrigo. We were talking about the early church in Philippi—a small community of believers who deeply encouraged Paul. Rodrigo said something that stayed with me, it was something to the extent of: “They were a small but mighty church—because of discipleship.”

He was absolutely right. The Philippian church, as described in Acts 16 and throughout Paul’s letter to them, wasn’t known for size or influence. It was known for faithfulness. Paul calls them his “partners in the gospel” (Philippians 1:5) and thanks them repeatedly for their unwavering support, their joy in suffering, and their generosity despite their poverty.

Rodrigo’s insight reminded me that this is the kind of community Jesus described in the Sermon on the Mount—a people marked by quiet righteousness, joyful endurance, and deep love. A small group of believers, rooted in discipleship and transformed by grace, can have an immeasurable impact. And in San Bartolo, I saw that same kind of church: small in number, but mighty in love and faithfulness.



An Invitation to Join

If you’ve never experienced a trip like this, I encourage you to pray about it. Whether you feel called to swing a hammer or share your testimony, there is a place for you in this mission. God works through hands that build and hearts that serve—and sometimes through those who are simply present, available, and willing.

Returning Home, Changed

Coming back from San Bartolo, I feel different. I expected to work hard, to sweat and build and serve—and I did, in ways I didn’t anticipate. But more than that, I was taught to rest in God’s strength, to receive love I couldn’t earn, and to lead not from capability, but from trust. I returned not just tired or fulfilled—but renewed.

It turns out that the most important structure we built this year wasn’t made of concrete. It was the foundation of a deeper faith, laid in weakness, held together by love, and built within the body of Christ.

Santa Clara Mission Week – Christian Center for Community Development

By: Rodrigo Pedroza.

For me, as for many of my fellow community members, Mission Week is one of the most anticipated weeks of the year. We pray for it days in advance—planning, preparing, expecting. Naturally, that brings with it many hopes: hopes to serve, to hear God speak, and to learn what He wants to teach us through His Spirit as reflected in the service of each and every participant. And this year was no exception. Although, as in other years, it was different. Life and community work continue to evolve with time. But one thing never changes—and we pray it never will: our vision to serve others, to serve one another, and to serve ourselves in community.

That said, we're aware that the pace of our work can be challenging, especially for those who aren't used to it. So, we aimed for a healthy balance between work, teaching, and rest. But one of the first surprises came from Dennis, who said, "I don't want us to rest too much. People didn't come here for a vacation." Rather, they chose to use their vacation to serve. And it's not that our brother was being harsh—it's that everyone came joyfully to serve, and that in itself taught us something valuable.

There was far too much that happened to fit into a single reflection. The week began with the coming together of three different traditions on a Sunday unlike any other: Brotherhoff, Presbyterians, and Anabaptists. Who would've thought? Yet we shared the Lord's Supper with this shared understanding: Christ is the center of our faith. And in Him, the whole body of believers grows. Sure, we may differ on some theological points, but even those differences enrich our individual understanding of Christ. Christ is everything; Christ is our unity. In San Bartolo, He brought together three distinct churches. The unity of Christ is real and possible.

Another beautiful lesson came from the willingness of both locals and visitors to serve. From the youth devotionals—where the young people left happy and continue meeting and discipling one another—to the children's classes, the construction work, the gardens, even the activities inside the church building... all of it showed us more of the Lord's love. Smiles, unconditional help, a willingness to go the extra mile, to get their hands dirty, to wipe the sweat off their brows, to rest a little while joking between tasks, to laugh, to tease, to try to communicate—sometimes with nothing but the heart. All of this made our joy complete, just as John writes. We are family.

Santa Clara Mission Week (Cont)

Of course, there were complications: someone forgot to buy something; many fingers got smashed; I accidentally hit Luke with a shovel; someone got upset over something small; many couldn't understand each other; a car broke down; a storm rolled in. Not everyone liked the food—we're aware of that—but still, they ate it joyfully.

Chrys and Luke got sick. It was a tough moment for us—we didn't know what to do, since every culture and every family has its own remedies. But something that truly lifted our spirits were Chrys's words: "I don't know why, but I feel like we'll recover better here." Maybe it was the strong sense of family. I hope they felt as loved as they truly are.

In the end, opening up our homes and pantries, squeezing into cars together, sharing stories, discussing biblical perspectives, eating tacos, going to the doctor together, serving others, being advised and advising others—loving and being loved. That's all part of being the Church, a community, a family made up of very different people who share the same Spirit. And that's why we are one.



"FOR THE SAKE OF THE NATIONS"

By: Dennis Woodsmall

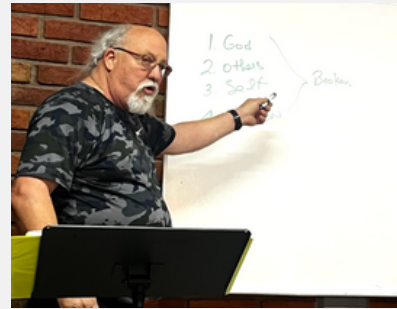
"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations..." — Matthew 28:19

MISSIONS AS THE LOGIC OF THE GOSPEL

To speak of "missions" is not to discuss a mere programme or ecclesiastical strategy; rather, it is to enter the very heartbeat of God Himself. The missionary impulse does not originate with the Church; it begins with the missionary nature of God. As the missiologist David Bosch has written, "It is not the Church that has a mission of God, but the God of mission who has a Church." The triune God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—is, from eternity, a sending God. The Father sends the Son (John 3:16); the Father and Son send the Spirit (John 14:26); and the triune God sends the Church into the world (John 20:21).

The incarnation of Christ, the pouring out of the Spirit at Pentecost, and the calling of Abraham (Gen. 12:1-3) are all part of a unified missional arc in salvation history. Missions, therefore, is not optional or peripheral—it is intrinsic to the very structure of redemptive reality. One cannot be faithful to the gospel and indifferent to its global proclamation.

A Theological Reflection on the Importance of Christian Missions



THE APOSTOLIC WITNESS AND THE GLOBAL HORIZON

The Acts of the Apostles opens with a commission: "You will be my witnesses... to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8). The Church is born not in isolation but in outward momentum. From Jerusalem to Judea, from Samaria to the Greco-Roman world, the apostolic witness is geographically and culturally expansive. Paul's own letters testify to a restless evangelistic energy—he longs to preach where Christ has not yet been named (Romans 15:20-24). It was not just to convert people, which many have tried. But the mandate was to make disciples, not only for them to become reflectors of God's ways and character. But also so they could become disciple makers.

The theological implication is profound: the Church is only the Church when it is moving outward. A static Church, inward-looking and self-absorbed, does not reproduce itself. To be the body of Christ in the world is to carry the wounds of Christ into all nations, to embody His reconciling work across boundaries of race, culture, and geography.

CONTEMPORARY
CONTEXT: WHY MISSIONS
STILL MATTER

Some today argue that in our pluralistic and post-modern age, the idea of missions is outdated, if not offensive. But this misunderstands both the nature of missions and the Lordship of Christ. Christian missions are not cultural enforcers; they are sacrificial witness to a crucified Messiah whose kingdom is not of this world, remember we are a counterculture to all things self. Indeed, the history of missions in many places has been controlling, abusive and dictatorial. Yet at its best, missions has involved humble service, translation of Scripture, medical care, education, and above all, the planting of indigenous churches rooted in their own soil, trying to reach all tribes with the truth that God loves them and wants to have a relationship with them

Moreover, in a world marked by fragmentation, despair, and spiritual hunger, the need for gospel witness is as great as ever. The call to missions is not merely to "convert," but to proclaim and embody the reality that Jesus Christ is Lord—not just of our private piety, but of history, culture, and the cosmos.

PRACTICAL PARTICIPATION:
EVERY DISCIPLE SENT

Mission is not the purview of a few zealous individuals; it is the vocation of every baptized believer. One may go, or one may send, or one may support—but none may remain indifferent. Whether in distant lands or local neighborhoods, the Church must be alert to the missionary opportunity at hand. The stranger across the street may be as unreached as the village across the sea.

Our Lord did not suggest a mission—He commanded it. The call to go, to preach, to teach, and to baptize is the Church's joyful obedience and enduring privilege. When we shrink back, we do not merely neglect a task—we forsake our identity.

CONCLUSION: A CHURCH
ON MISSION

To be a Christian is to be sent. As the Father sent the Son, so the Son sends us (John 20:21). We go, not as salesmen of religion, but as heralds of hope, as bearers of light in a darkened world. Our message is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord (2 Cor. 4:5), and our motive is love—love for God, and love for those He longs to redeem.

May we realize anew the command, privilege, and honor it is to tell people of the wonder of a God who gave His sons' life so they could have real life.

Call for Submissions: Share Your Stories with Us!

We'd love to hear from you! The FPC Journey is now accepting story submissions from members of our congregation. This is a wonderful opportunity to celebrate the lives, actions, and experiences of the people around us. However, please note that submissions should focus on stories about others — not about yourself. Think of it as an opportunity to highlight the good deeds, inspiring moments, and heartfelt connections that make our church community so special.

Please submit your stories to Chrys Sahgal : sahgalchrys@gmail.com . We can't wait to read your contributions and continue celebrating the amazing people in our congregation!

While we truly appreciate every submission, please understand that not all stories may be included in the newsletter due to space limitations. If your story isn't featured, please know it's not a reflection of its value — we simply strive to include a diverse range of voices and experiences in each issue. Thank you for your understanding and continued contributions!



AUGUST UPCOMING EVENTS

HERE AT FPC

- Family Movie Night – Wednesday, August 20th | 7:00 PM | Social Hall

End of Summer/Back to School FPC Movie Night, August 20th @7 pm in the social hall. Come join us for the movie "Heaven is For Real" rated PG13. Have you ever wondered what heaven is like? Colton (4 yrs. old) experienced heaven during his surgery. The story is nonfiction. In Revelation 4, John was in the Spirit and a portal was open for him to see heaven. If you have any doubt, heaven is real come see the movie. Pizza and snacks served.

COMMUNITY AT LARGE

- Silicon Valley Campfire Worship :Thurs, Aug.21 st @ 7-9 pm (PT); Lakewood Park :834 Lakechime Drive Sunnyvale, CA 94089- Join for this live, in-person Silicon Valley campfire night filled with worship on Thursday, August 21st, at 7:00 pm! Come sing songs with new friends around the campfire, hear testimonies about how God is working in the workplace, and make some s'mores together!

Please note that people will be meeting at Lakewood Park in Sunnyvale. You can find them at the firepit in Lakewood Park's interior near the picnic areas and the John W. Christian Greenbelt trail. Be prepared for cool weather in the evening by bringing a jacket and blanket or camp chairs to sit on.