

Mission News

Foundation for His Ministry - Transforming communities in Mexico starting with kids.

Gardening for The Kingdom

I am the gardener at the Oaxaca Mission. I am just one cog in the engine that makes this place function. There are also houseparents, cooks, maintenance people, a mechanic, an accountant, school teachers, and administrators. We all work together to give the children who come here a life that they could not have otherwise imagined—a life where their physical, emotional, educational, and spiritual needs are met.

All of the staff members are dedicated Christians, both Mexicans, and Americans. We all have our regular jobs at the mission. On top of those jobs, many of us serve God or cooperate with God in building up the Kingdom, using our gifts to help people glorify God and enjoy him, outside of our children's home job description. The maintenance guy and his wife, one of the cooks, minister weekly at a church they started a couple years ago. The kitchen supervisor, a couple of house parents, a school teacher, and the administrator make up the church band. Others teach Sunday School.

And then there is Pablo. He works in maintenance and helps me with gardening. He also preaches and teaches during the week at five drug and alcohol

rehabilitation centers throughout the Oaxaca Valley. He has a passion for helping people struggling with addictions because he, himself, overcame drug and alcohol addictions and found Christ in the process. After completing a rehabilitation program, he graduated from the Bible institute operated at the Baja Mission. The Bible Institute is free, but one requirement is that upon graduation, students volunteer to help at one of the ministries operated by FFHM for a year, which is what brought Pablo to the Oaxaca home for needy children. After his one year of volunteering, he came on staff and has helped care for the children in many ways. He married another staff member four years ago, and they recently adopted three of the children from the mission.

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Gardening for The Kingdom

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Pablo has invited me to go to one or more of the rehabilitation centers and share the gospel a few times over the last few years. I always kind of wanted to go with him. However, my Spanish is still a bit iffy. And I was busy with my own on-the-side ministry of teaching English at a prison across the highway from the children's home. COVID shut down that teaching opportunity, so in January, I took Pablo up on his offer to go and share the Word of God at a rehab center. I went with him to "Nueva Criatura" or New Creature, in the nearby town of Tlacolula and met a bunch of men of all ages and walks of life who live at the rehab center and have at least one thing in common – they need help to break free of their addictions.

I asked myself, and God, What could I possibly say to those men that could help them? Being a gardener, I thought of all the areas at the mission that were at one time just a wasteland filled with thorn bushes and thistles and are now beautiful gardens. I heard one time that no one enters a rehab center unless they have hit rock bottom. One day they look at their lives honestly and simply see a wasted life filled with trash and rubble,

weeds and stubble, pain and broken relationships. They desire a better life, and they finally seek help.

My hope was (and is) to be an encouraging light in a hopeless darkness, one showing them how to turn their personal wasteland into a beautiful garden. I took a few basic garden principles, found spiritual parallels in the Bible, and encouraged the men to apply these principles to their lives. I talked about the first garden, the Garden of Eden, and how it was beautiful, abundant, and ordered, and how God could take the disorder, chaos, and ugliness of their lives and change it into a wonderful garden that would not only fill them with peace and joy, but also those around them, if they trust God, the Master Gardner, with their lives.

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Gardening for The Kingdom

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This is not a new message for them. The rehab center is run by Christians who give the men a healthy dose of the Gospel many times a day in many different ways. My voice is just one of many who hope and pray, preach and teach, at the center. Perhaps the fact that I come from a different country, background, and culture gives them a different perspective. They see that the Good News about Jesus and his love is not only for the down and outers suffering from addiction withdrawal but for all types of people from all over the world. Or perhaps they just see a gringo loco. Probably a little bit of both.

I don't know how successful I have been communicating with them, especially with my less than perfect Spanish. Some of the guys speak English and help me out when I stumble, and when I am finished talking, Pablo comes to the rescue and drives home whatever point I was trying to make.

Since that second week in January, I have continued to accompany Pablo to Nuevo Criatura to share my heart truths from God's Word that have changed my life and hopefully will make a difference in their lives. I pray that they not only become free of addictions but come to believe and see that God loves them and wants them to be happy and follow him forever and ever, amen.

Santiago Schwab
Oaxaca Mission Gardener





FOUNDATION FOR HIS MINISTRY

PO Box 74000
San Clemente, CA 92673-0143

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Birthday
Nancy!

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IN HONOR OF:

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Barbara Leighton's 40th birthday

By Jack & Kim Leighton & Family

Hoke Family new beginning

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Barbara Leighton's 40th birthday

By Jack & Km Leighton & family

Paul Gauci's 95th birthday

By Jack & Kim Leighton

Thank you, Father, for those who care!