



**March 2019**

### **We Thought We Were Too Old**

Last fall, Pastor Valleskey gave a presentation at our church about the mission in Mahahual. As we were leaving church, Deb, the CMM volunteer coordinator, talked about going there in Feb. 2019. I commented to someone else, “Wouldn’t it be something to do that?” Deb overheard me and said, “Would you like to go?” I sort of stopped and said, “Oh, Deb, Ralph and I are way too old for that, being 79 and 80.” She said, “No, you are not; you are active. I have seen it.” I said, “Well, I would need to talk it over with Ralph,” thinking that was the end of it. To my surprise, Ralph said, “Maybe we should. Let’s look into it.”

The next day I was reading this devotion (I know it wasn’t a coincidence): *“Lord, I pray that you would give me an ever renewing sense of Your purpose for my life. Use me for Your glory as long as I am on this earth. Help me to never be resistant to change, but instead to always be open to new things You want to do in my life. Lord, I know from your word that You never put us out to pasture because we have outlived our usefulness and purpose. Help me always to hear Your voice leading me in the way I should go.”* As I read this, I thought, is this the answer? Are we to go?

Apparently yes, because in late January we boarded our plane with seven

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others from Living Hope. We landed in Cancun, took a bus to Playa del Carmen and then another 4-1/2 hour bus ride to Mahahual. We arrived safely, headed to our hotel and slept soundly, ready for our big adventure Wednesday morning.

We all wondered what we would be doing, how we could help. Well, for the next five days we helped Karen, the Education Director, with adults and children who spoke some English and wanted to learn more. For four days they came to the mission, but the fifth day Karen drove the van 10 miles over “bumpy” (and I do mean bumpy!) roads, to teach children in a home on the beach. These children had never gone to school, so school went to them. But one thing these 3-16-year-olds all had in common was their eagerness to learn.

Every day we helped Karen teach the children English or helped the little ones with their numbers or letters, counting, etc. We simply helped where we were needed.

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The highlight of my week was one evening when we helped Karen work one-on-one with her ESL students. I had a mother and son, Raina and Anthony, the

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most wonderful people you could ever meet. They came from Honduras to Mahahual three months ago. They could not speak English, and I could not speak Spanish, but somehow we communicated through our smiles and laughter.

At our second class with them, it was as if we were old friends, so happy to see each other. Raina surprised me by giving me a beautiful heart necklace. I gave her and Anthony friendship bracelets and explained what they meant. My only regret is that I will probably never see them again here and that I could not speak Spanish to tell her that I loved her and her son and that someday we would meet in Heaven -- but I think she knew. One thing I do know is that I will pray for them always.



We helped with the Friday soup kitchen, serving soup and tortillas to about 30 people. Then on Sunday Pastor took the van to pick up adults and children for church. If you could have stood on that 10' x 20' patio with concrete floor and walls, white plastic chairs (nothing like our beautiful churches), all you would have noticed was how Pastor Valleskey loved his people and how the people loved him.

After church the women served tamales they had made to celebrate the day Jesus went into the temple. They did all the work, serving, and doing the dishes. That was their gift to the people.

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It is impossible to explain what it is like to interact with people so poor, but so happy. What we had heard about Mahahaul and the people became vibrantly

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real as we saw the homes, the people. They live in a world we cannot imagine, and we returned to a world they cannot imagine. However, by God's grace, our worlds are united in Jesus.

We came to Mahahual to help the people, to do what we could. We learned we were not too old, and we realized they gave us much more than we could ever give them. Our most important work was to tell them about the love of Jesus, and through more grace, our actions told them exactly that. ~ S. Hardgrove

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