Indigenous Church Strategies

4th Quarter Report

... to facilitate an uprising of the Kingdom of God through the proclamation of the Gospel and equipping of the local Church to fulfill the work of the Great Commission.

Mahanaim Youth Camp - 2018

In December, youth and church leaders from all over the state of Oaxaca gathered to study the Word... (page 2)

8 People Groups Engaged

Q4 Training Module

Memorial Baptist Church & Switzerland Community Church joined forces... (page 3)

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The 2018 Mahanaim Youth Camp was a wonderful success! Thanks to each and everyone one of you who made it possible through your gifts and prayers. We are excited by what the Lord accomplished through the camp and the impact it will have on the indigenous churches and communities of Oaxaca.

The camp was held on December 20th - 22nd at Finca Refugio in Pluma Hidalgo. Originally, we had expected around 80 participants. However, we ended up with over 140 people representing 8 people groups! It was a wonderful weekend of studying the Word and fellowship between the diverse churches. Most of our churches exist in small communities with very limited numbers of believers. It is a tremendous joy for the youth to have the opportunity to spend time with other believers studying Scripture and encouraging each other. It is also a great opportunity for the older church leaders to build relationships that will impact their ability to reach the unreached communities of Oaxaca.

Testimonies & Thanks

Pastor Jeremias - “Thank you to everyone who made this camp possible! It is such a blessing to the youth and leaders of our mission.”

Christian - “(The camp) is such a blessing to me. Every year I grow in Christ and I am better equipped to serve Him. Thank you for making it possible.”

Pastor Felipe - “We are so thankful for everyone who made the camp possible this year. It is important for the churches and missions to come together for fellowship and community.”

The youth leadership team at the closing services for the camp

MAHANAIM YOUTH CAMP - 2018

The 2019 Mahanaim Youth Camp was held on December 19th - 21st. 

2019 Camp Dates: December 19th - 21st

www.icsmissions.com
Rural Zapotec communities have an average illiteracy rate of 20%.

In October, we welcomed two of our board members, Steve White & Joseph Smith, along with leaders from their churches, Memorial Baptist Church and Switzerland Community Church, and Sheilene Ettlinger to lead our fall intensive training module. Through the course of the week we had the opportunity to lead some of our key church leaders and missionaries through the first portion, Creation, Abraham, Sinai, of the Casket Empty Bible Series (https://www.casketempty.com/). It is such a joy to see their eyes light up as they begin to understand the full counsel of the Word of God. In a culture that is primarily oral, helping the leaders to see that the Bible is ONE big, unified story centered on the death and resurrection of Jesus is essential! We are excited to finish the process over the next several modules. 2019 will see several of these leaders finishing their training and joining us training new leaders and pastors in other people groups throughout the state.

Since arriving in Oaxaca in 2012, one of our goals has been to reach the rural communities through the school systems. Over the years that has involved building schools, teaching English classes and Bible studies, and supplying the schools with the necessary materials. In Q4, we were blessed to supply school supplies to over 150 students.

The Fancy Feather employed more than 30 women in Q4, providing a quarter million pesos in cost-neutral, sustainable aid to the women of Pluma Hidalgo. Without the funding provided by The Fancy Feather, we could not accomplish much of the work that we do throughout Oaxaca. In addition, The Fancy Feather raised funds for their annual Christmas Basket drive. You can read more on page 7.

SCHOLARSHIPS

The cost of attending a “public school” in rural Oaxaca can be over a month of salary per child...

Every year, Sheilene Ettlinger helps to coordinate and raise funds for a scholarship program designed to benefit the students of the communities in which we work. This fall, scholarships were awarded to over 35 students who demonstrated strong academic potential and whose families lacked the necessary resources to continue with their education. If you feel led to help with the scholarship program in 2020, contact us at info@icsmissions.com.

EDUCATION BY THE NUMBERS

Education, while a given in the United States, is something many Zapotec children can only dream about.

- Rural Zapotec communities have an average illiteracy rate of 20%.
- Adult men in rural Zapotec communities have an average completed education level of 6th grade.
- Adult women in rural Zapotec communities have an average completed education level of 2nd grade.
- The cost to attend high school, if even available, can exceed 3 months of salary for the average worker.
In 2014, the Lord brought us into contact with Samuel, a young man who had a heart to study the Word and a passion to serve the Lord. As he grew in grace and knowledge he began to partner with us to serve the Lord using his gifts and abilities. Over the past two years, Samuel has been assisting us with dental clinics in rural communities throughout Oaxaca.

The dental clinics, like all of the humanitarian aid side of our ministry, serves three purposes. First, it allows us to show the love of Christ in a practical way. Second, it opens up doors to share the Gospel and for our indigenous leaders to start Bible studies. Third, in communities with an established church, it helps that church reach out to their community. In many of the indigenous villages, Christians are viewed with suspicion and often experience outright persecution. Showing the love of Christ in practical ways allows them to answer that persecution in a loving, Christ-like manner. It is our prayer that the Lord will allow us to purchase a fully mobile dental office that can be transported from village to village.

The goal of ICS is to train and equip indigenous church leaders who have a passion to take the Gospel to the unreached communities surrounding them. The long-term vision is a solid indigenous leadership team leading the work here in Oaxaca forward. Samuel has now graduated from our training center and is actively involved in helping train local church leaders as he runs dental clinics. In the months ahead, it is our desire to see Samuel begin to share some of the leadership responsibilities in the days ahead.

Samuel is an indigenous dentist and Church leader who is passionate about the work of the Gospel among the people of Oaxaca. We are excited to see what the Lord has in store for Samuel and his wife, Esther, as they grow in their calling.

In Q4, we delivered more than 300 Bibles to Churches and Missions throughout Oaxaca.

Bibles for the Churches and Missions in the indigenous villages of Oaxaca are a constant need. In Q4, we were able to deliver over 300 full Scriptures to churches in the Yaltepec region and other communities in Oaxaca. We would like to extend a special thanks to Common Ground Ministries for their help acquiring the Bibles!

Scriptures can be delivered in Spanish print versions or in audio versions recorded in their indigenous language.

If you are interested in supplying Scriptures to churches and communities in Oaxaca, please reach out to us!

“The greatest missionary is the Bible in the mother tongue. It needs no furlough and is never considered a foreigner.”
- William Cameron Townsend
Esther, Samuel’s wife, is a licensed psychologist who has been training with us for the past few years in order to serve the indigenous churches of Oaxaca.

Esther is a licensed psychologist with a passion for serving the Church of Jesus Christ. The reality is that many of the indigenous church leaders in Oaxaca, and throughout Latin America, are unprepared to deal with the complicated counseling issues that arise within their communities. They lack the formal training, resources, and mature leaders from both sexes that are needed to provide counseling to the complex array of issues confronting their members from polygamy to abuse to unbiblical views of marriage & family.

Esther works closely with Mary & I to provide workshops to church leaders equipping them Biblically to pastor their flocks. She also helps us to provide counseling and support to the isolated church leaders and their families as they struggle to lead their churches while growing in their faith. In addition, she & Samuel lead workshops with the youth & adults from each church providing a healthy, Biblical understanding of marriage, family, and Christian life. In the coming months, our prayer is that the Lord provides the resources necessary for Samuel & Esther to join us in ministry work.

As many of you know, it has been our prayer for years that the Lord would bring another couple to work with us on the field. We believe that Samuel & Esther are a big part of the answer to that prayer. Our desire is to see them grow and to increasingly share responsibility for the work. This will allow us to multiply our efforts to reach every people group in Oaxaca.

ICS COUNSELING & MINISTRY CENTER

- PRAY -

- For the resources needed for Samuel & Esther to join the ministry in an larger capacity.

- For the Lord to provide the portable dental equipment needed.

- For the Lord to continue working in the lives and hearts of Samuel & Esther, preparing them to serve His church.

Samuel cleaning teeth in Pluma

Esther helping to lead a mock counseling session at our intensive church leader training

Esther leading a group session for some of the young women at the youth camp

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We are excited for all the Lord has in store for 2019! I will be dividing my time between developing church leaders in the Yaitepec & Costa regions among the Chontal, Chatino, Huave, & Mixtec people groups. Our goal is to launch training sites within these people groups in 2019, led by myself & our indigenous leaders here in Oaxaca. This spring, we are working closely with indigenous leaders here to prepare them to begin training alongside us starting this summer. In March, July, & October we will host our tri-annual intensive training modules in Pochutla.

Help Wanted!!!
If you feel led to get involved in what the Lord is doing through ICS, we would love to talk to you! Below are a few areas to get involved.
- We are seeking someone with graphic and web design skills to assist in ministry operations
- The dental clinic is in need of equipment and supplies.
- Collection of Spanish Bibles
- Scholarship Program Fundraising

In early October, we were blessed to have a small group from Common Ground Ministries in Glenwood, IA. Pastor Jon and several members spent a week with us painting the sewing center, the outside of our ministry headquarters in Pluma Hidalgo, and fixing up two new rooms in the building for ministry work, including a new home for the village dental ministry.

While in Pluma, they also assisted us with distributing school supplies to a couple of rural schools. It was a blessing to serve alongside them and to fellowship with them!

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A guiding principle of ICS is the idea of investing, rather than giving. After 7 years, it is a joy to see the fruits that this investment is starting to yield! From seeing the ladies at TFF handing out Christmas baskets to watching the church leaders grow in their understanding of Scripture and passion for missions.

CHRISTMAS BASKETS

In December, Mary and the ladies of The Fancy Feather were blessed to be able to pass out their 3rd annual Christmas baskets to the communities around Pluma Hidalgo. They were able to distribute 100 baskets! It is a wonderful way to share the love of Christ and to allow the ladies of The Fancy Feather to give back to their community.

U.S. TRIP

We want to say a special thanks to everyone who prayed for us as we traveled back to the United States in November. As many of you know, in mid-November we received word that my brother was in a coma and was not expected to wake up. He had arrived at the hospital with a 108.2 fever and, despite the doctor’s best efforts, his body was shutting down. We quickly loaded the kids and made the drive 55 hours north to Missouri, praying we would make it in time. Unfortunately, due to road construction, we were diverted to a new route that took us overnight through some of the most dangerous drug cartel territory in Mexico and a massive ice storm in the mountains above the Gulf of Mexico.

Thankfully, my brother made a miraculous recovery that can only be credited to the grace of God. It was a tremendous blessing to be with him when he woke up and to spend time with him as he was recovering. We made it back to Mexico on December 2nd, after over 6,000 miles and 120 hours of total drive time! I am not sure we have ever been so thankful to sleep in our own beds!

For those of you still praying for my brother, thank you! He is improving daily but he still has a long way to go. The doctors say there is no explanation for his recovery, other than a miracle. Please continue praying for him and his family.

Changes Ahead...

It is an exciting time for the ministry here! As the ministry grows and spreads throughout new regions and people groups in Oaxaca, we will be making changes to keep up. Pluma Hidalgo will still be a central part of our work, however, we will be increasingly handing the reins of daily operations in the Pluma region to local leaders. We believe this is the Biblical model and one we have been working towards for years! This will allow us to increasingly work out of a more central location that provides more direct access to the new regions in which we are training and working. Samuel & Esther will be taking over much of the day to day ministry activities and Bible studies in Pluma region as well as partnering with us in the new regions.

Invest rather than Give

A guiding principle of ICS is the idea of investing, rather than giving. After 7 years, it is a joy to see the fruits that this investment is starting to yield! From seeing the ladies at TFF handing out Christmas baskets to watching the church leaders grow in their understanding of Scripture and passion for missions.
Monte Alban was the capital of the Zapotec Empire. Located in the central valley between the Sierra Sur and Sierra Madre mountains, Monte Alban stood for over 1,250 years as one of the premier cities of the Zapotec civilization. Cortez, who held all of Oaxaca as his personal estate, found the city as ancient ruins when he arrived. However, the Zapotec nation, as a political force, still thrived. To escape the Spanish, the Zapotec fled to the mountains where many of their villages are still located today. They were not finally defeated by the Spanish until 1715.

Monte Alban was a sprawling metropolis filled with temples, mansions, ball courts, pyramids, the royal palace, and a large courtyard overseen by the king’s throne room. At its peak, Monte Alban was home to a population of over 17,000 residents, making it one of the largest cities in the Americas. Today much of the city has been unearthed and tourists can stroll through the great plaza and climb some of the large pyramids.

Before the Spanish came to the New World many of the culinary staples we enjoy today had never been heard of in Europe! Potatoes, corn, peppers, vanilla, chocolate, pumpkins, avocados, peanuts, pineapple, blueberries, tomatoes, and sunflowers all came exclusively from the New World, many from right here in Oaxaca! So, the next time you enjoy Italian food or chocolate ice cream, remember the good folks in Oaxaca who shared it with you and remember to pray for the church here!