



# Presbyterian Border Ministry at **PASOS DE FE** “Steps of Faith”

## Mission Statement:

Pasos de Fe is a ministry of the National Presbyterian Church of Mexico and the Presbyterian Church (USA) in the states of Chihuahua, Texas, and New Mexico. Its mission is to realize the reign of God by:

- ❖ Participating in holistic evangelism and supporting churches as they minister to their communities on both sides of the international border;
- ❖ Strengthening bonds of faith and Christian fellowship by promoting reciprocal ministries between the churches of both nations; and
- ❖ Being always guided by the Holy Spirit

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# PRESBYTERIAN BORDER MINISTRY

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"He Himself is our peace, who made both groups into one and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall" Ephesians 2:14

## GENERAL OVERVIEW

In 1980, after an 8-year moratorium on mission work in Mexico, the Presbyterian churches of the United States were invited to re-establish relations with the National Presbyterian Church of Mexico (NPCM) as an equal partner in mission. This new agreement between the Presbyterian churches of the United States and Mexico was spelled out in the document, "A New Relation in Joint Mission", which was adopted by these churches and still forms the basis for exchanges and collaborative efforts between them. One joint effort that arose out of the renewed relationship was "Presbyterian Border Ministry" (PBM). The principal long-term objective of PBM is to strengthen and expand the Presbyterian witness in northern Mexico through evangelism leading to new church development. Furthermore, PBM seeks to function as a bridge of understanding to permit a truly reciprocal exchange of gifts between Presbyterians on opposite sides of the border.

PBM currently oversees seven bi-national mission sites along the 2,000-mile U.S.-Mexico border. Each site is staffed by Presbyterians from the United States and Mexico, and governed by a bi-national board representing the churches of both countries on an equal basis. The seven sites are:

<b>Puentes de Cristo</b>	(McAllen, Texas / Reynosa, Tamaulipas)
<b>Laredos Unidos</b>	(Laredo, Texas / Nuevo Laredo, Tamaulipas)
<b>Proyecto Amistad</b>	(Eagle Pass, Texas / Piedras Negras, Coahuila)
<b>Pasos de Fe</b>	(El Paso, Texas / Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua)
<b>Frontera de Cristo</b>	(Douglas, Arizona / Agua Prieta, Sonora)
<b>Compañeros en Misión</b>	(Nogales, Arizona / Nogales, Sonora)
<b>Pueblos Hermanos</b>	(Chula Vista, California / Tijuana, Baja California)

Presbyterian Border Ministry seeks to address the needs, both spiritual and material, of the people living in the U.S.-Mexico border region. The material poverty of Mexican border cities is evident in the dilapidated housing of low-income *colonias*, or neighborhoods, that may lack basic urban infrastructure and services. Yet the availability of relatively high wages in *maquilas* (assembly plants) attracts large numbers of people from other parts of Mexico to the northern border. The region's cities are often unable to adequately meet the basic needs of their swiftly growing populations. To help address the social problems of the border, health clinics and other community services function year-round under the auspices of the seven Presbyterian border ministries listed above.

New immigrants to the northern border region face, besides material need, the spiritual hunger of cities beset by a variety of problems that transcend the simple lack of resources. Because of past neglect by U.S. Presbyterian missionaries and the border's once marginal population, the Presbyterian church was practically non-existent along the Mexican side of the border until shortly before PBM began functioning in the 1980s. Presbyterian Border Ministry's main goal is to extend the life-giving message of the gospel throughout the entire U.S.-Mexico border region by partnering with its existing Presbyterian community, both in the United States and in Mexico. In the case of PBM, partnership means that Presbyterians from both United States and Mexico give and sacrifice to advance the common goal of extending God's kingdom along the border while acknowledging their theological, cultural, and political differences. In seeking to meet the spiritual and material needs of the border's people, PBM follows an understanding of partnership endorsed by the General Assemblies of both the PC(USA) and the NPCM.

## **PRESBYTERIANS DO MISSION IN PARTNERSHIP**

Adopted by the 212<sup>th</sup> General Assembly, June 2000

The Presbyterian Church (USA) seeks to engage the church in faithful and vital global mission. As Christians, we understand “Mission” to be God’s work – centered in the gospel of Jesus Christ, and made real through the active and leading power of the Holy Spirit – for the world God loves. The “where” and “how” and “with whom” of mission is of God’s initiative, sovereign action, and redeeming grace.

As Presbyterians we do mission in partnership. We have in recent decades sought to be more intentional in our mission through “partnership” based upon mutual respect and sharing with churches around the world. We understand partnership in mission to be that disciplined approach that assumes the goals can best be accomplished by joining hands with those who share a common vision. Partnership in mission involves two or more organizations who agree to submit themselves to a common task or goal—mutually receiving and giving and surrounded by prayer so that God’s work can be more faithfully accomplished. Theologically and biblically, partnership is based upon the fundamental belief that God’s desire for the world is greater than any one church can possibly comprehend or envision. God’s purpose for us in mission is fulfilled as different and differing communities – Christian, secular and other faith communities – find common ground and are brought together in mutual submission and commitment to serve the people and world God created (Phil. 2:5-11)

In mission there must be an awareness that partnership demands all partners seek:

- ❖ to answer God’s call in mission, not serve our own needs by “doing good;”
- ❖ opportunities for initiatives in mission by any partner, not one-sided efforts;
- ❖ mutual respect, not paternalism;
- ❖ to be independent (self-propagating, self-supporting, self-governing) church partners with a mission vision, not dependent churches focused on survival;
- ❖ interdependent partnerships that are of benefit to all partners, not one-sided dependent relationships;
- ❖ mutuality, not one-way mission;
- ❖ opportunities and recognition for the “least of these,” not exploitation to the benefit of the more powerful;
- ❖ a growing web of partnerships, not exclusive sets or private domain;
- ❖ to move to action together in ecumenical partnership, not simply to establish an “ecumenical relationship;”
- ❖ to meet the holistic needs of churches and people(s), not serve narrow agendas;
- ❖ open dialogue, prophetic challenge and mediation of differences, not coercive or manipulative imposition of solutions;
- ❖ to honor the integrity of the church context, structures and social dynamics, not to subsidize another’s central church life nor exert undue pressure to change or to conform; and
- ❖ we seek the day when Christ’s Church in all its diversity may show its unity for the sake of the gospel, not promoting or being content with division.

## **PRESBYTERIAN MISSIONS to MEXICO**

Presbyterian mission work in Mexico began informally under the direction of Ms. Melinda Rankin who initiated a mission in the Texas border town of Brownsville in 1852, but succeeded in relocating south of the Río Grande a decade later. Until the 1850s, Mexico’s unwavering Roman Catholicism denied legitimacy to the Protestant church, which was officially considered both heretical and foreign. But secular leaders of the Mexican republic increasingly challenged the power of the Roman Catholic hierarchy until the latter unleashed an armed rebellion against the new constitution of 1857, which guaranteed religious liberty and eliminated all special privileges for the Church. A series of bloody conflicts ensued, pitting supporters of the new constitution, led by Benito Juárez, against opponents, who invited a European aristocrat named Maximilian to rule Mexico as emperor. Juárez won a decisive victory in 1867, after which the state declared itself neutral in religious matters, although significant bias against non-Catholics continued to pervade the culture of Mexico. After Juárez’ victory, Protestant missions proliferated, and, beginning with its formal establishment in 1872, the Presbyterian Church in Mexico expanded to different parts of the country under the direction of United States missionaries. During the next four decades, Protestant churches with similar theologies extended their mission work rapidly, but without central coordination between denominations. This resulted in excessive competition for new converts in some places and the complete absence of Protestant missions in other areas of the country.

After 1910, Mexico was plunged into turmoil by a series of revolutions, and by 1914, all Protestant missionaries from the United States had been evacuated due to an unstable political situation and continuing violence. That same year, most of the U.S. Protestant churches with mission commitments in Mexico met in Cincinnati, Ohio to 're-group' and explore ways of avoiding the inefficiency and competition caused by overlapping missionary fields. They designed a plan that would divide Mexican territory between their denominations; U.S. Presbyterians agreed to restrict their missionary activity to a portion of southern Mexico. Mexican Presbyterians were not consulted in this decision. Those Presbyterian churches that fell outside this territory were asked to merge with the missions of other denominations, and were informed that they would no longer receive funding from the mother churches in the United States. However, some churches in northern Mexico refused to comply with the Cincinnati Agreement and preferred instead to maintain active Presbyterian churches there without the help of foreign mission subsidies. The Cincinnati Agreement was emblematic of a paternalistic model of church relations in which important decisions regarding the church were made outside the country, namely in the United States. One important effect of the agreement was the strengthening of Presbyterianism in the southern part of Mexico at the expense of the northern regions of the country.

### **A NATIONAL PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

The National Presbyterian Church of Mexico was founded in 1919 at the same time that the United States churches were implementing the Cincinnati Agreement. The National Church sought to avoid the dangers of domination by a foreign church by ensuring that real authority would rest on Mexican Presbyterians. Despite the U.S. missionaries' desertion of northern Mexico, the National Presbyterian Church continued to grow and, in 1947, its first General Assembly met. In 1962, the church petitioned for the withdrawal, over a ten-year period, of all U.S. missionaries then resident in the country, in order to experience full autonomy (with the goal of becoming self-supporting, self-governing, and self-propagating). The influence of the Presbyterian churches of the United States had been an active force in the Mexican church since its establishment. A period of self-reliance (like that imposed by external circumstances during the Mexican Revolution in the 1910s) was recognized as the next step in the process of achieving real independence from the United States churches. At its centennial celebration in 1972, the National Presbyterian Church of Mexico asked the Presbyterian churches of the United States to formally suspend relations.

In 1980, the United States and Mexican churches agreed to re-establish relations as partners on an equal footing, making a covenant agreement called "A New Relation in Joint Mission" and together creating a "Joint Mission Commission" to coordinate church relations and initiate collaborative projects. One such joint effort is Presbyterian Border Ministry (PBM) which operates seven bi-national ministry sites located in cities along the 2,000-mile U.S.-Mexico border (including Pasa de Fe in El Paso and Juárez). The neglect of the northern half of Mexico by U.S. missionaries (due to the application of the Cincinnati Agreement) resulted in the uneven distribution of Presbyterians throughout Mexico, with most concentrated in the south. The border ministry was created at the invitation of the National Presbyterian Church of Mexico, as a way for U.S. Presbyterians to work alongside Mexican Presbyterians in expanding the Presbyterian witness specifically in northern Mexico. Each year, about 2,000 Presbyterians from the United States participate in various types of educational, service, and evangelistic activities with the 37 Mexican Presbyterian churches encompassed by PBM's seven ministry sites. Such projects are guided by the vision of a cooperative partnership designed to enrich the spiritual life of North American Presbyterians while building a strong, authentic, and self-reliant Presbyterian church in the northern border region of Mexico.

### **The RELIGIOUS CONTEXT of MEXICO**

According to Mexican government statistics, 88% of Mexicans are Roman Catholic, 7% belong to Evangelical and 'Biblical' churches, and 5% belong to other religions or none at all. However, many of those classified as Roman Catholic do not actively practice the faith, but rather claim adherence to the Church only because it is identified with the dominant cultural tradition. Partly because of this, there are not nearly enough Roman Catholic parishes or clergy to meet the spiritual needs of all those claiming membership in the Church (for instance, the Diocese of Ciudad Juárez maintains one priest for every 29,000 baptized Catholics). Evangelicals (the common word for Protestants in Mexico) advocate conversion from a 'cultural' Catholicism to a personal relationship with Jesus Christ as the only legitimate means of salvation. Evangelical churches have succeeded in winning many converts in areas traditionally neglected by the hierarchical and centralized Catholic Church, which is most deeply entrenched in the states near Mexico City. Many evangelicals, including Presbyterians, belong to indigenous groups in peripheral regions of the country, and may prefer to worship in their native tribal languages rather than Spanish.

The National Presbyterian Church of Mexico claims 1,800,000 members and 4,000 local churches throughout the country, making it the second largest Protestant denomination in Mexico (after the Assemblies of God). In south-eastern Mexico, where the church is strongest, open persecution against evangelicals has repeatedly erupted in recent decades. Indigenous evangelicals may risk being expelled from communities dominated by Catholic traditionalists for refusing to participate in the communal rituals and feast days of the local parishes. Anti-Protestant sentiments, often compounded by a variety of non-religious antagonisms, may threaten their property, and even their lives. Recently, the Presbyterian Church has been involved in efforts to free a group of indigenous evangelicals who had been imprisoned on the basis of uncorroborated accusations that they participated in a massacre of a group of Catholics. Partly because of instances of religiously motivated crimes and official abuses, the National Presbyterian Church of Mexico is unlikely to seek closer relations with the Roman Catholic Church in the near future.

## **PROTESTANTS & MEXICAN CULTURE**

In Mexico, the Roman Catholic Church calls evangelical churches 'sects,' groups that have broken away from the true faith. Evangelicals prefer to view dissent from Mexican Catholicism as a rejection of its non-Christian aspects, and thus consider themselves more orthodox in their adherence to the Christian faith than the Catholic Church. This dispute, which is central to the story of world Protestantism, is still very contentious in Mexico. In rejecting the nominal form of Catholicism, evangelicals especially emphasize those components of a Christian lifestyle that are normally disregarded by the dominant culture (historically identified with the Catholic Church). Thus, Presbyterians in Mexico usually consider such qualities as sobriety, simplicity, and propriety to be essential elements of Christian behavior. In practice, this means that church members are generally expected not to drink alcoholic beverages, smoke tobacco, gamble or play cards, engage in violent behavior, wear immodest clothing, attend non-Christian parties, or listen to non-Christian music. Many Christians in the United States consider some or all of the above behaviors to be acceptable (at least, under certain circumstances). It is extremely important for North Americans visiting evangelical churches in Mexico to understand and conform to the expectation of local believers that Christians follow a set of norms distinct from those accepted by the surrounding culture. Those who flaunt these norms will likely have a counter-productive effect on the efforts of the local church to reach its community. Lapses in behavior damage the local church's message that true Christians conform not only to certain religious practices and abstract beliefs, but to a lifestyle that distinguishes them in a meaningful way from the dominant culture.

The above does not mean that most Presbyterians entirely reject mainstream Mexican culture. Despite the necessity of making clear distinctions between popular culture and the church, most Presbyterians in Mexico see their national history and cultural heritage as sources of pride. The church seeks to respond to the surrounding culture(s) by providing distinctly Christian answers within a uniquely Mexican context. In order to thrive within their cultural context(s), Mexican Presbyterian churches have sought to integrate forms of worship, fellowship, governance, and church construction that are familiar within such context(s). While Presbyterian missionaries to Mexico brought with them styles of church music, liturgy, social interaction, organization, and architecture that were familiar within United States culture, these styles have undergone various degrees of change as the Presbyterian Church has assimilated to Mexican culture. Effective mission teams will recognize the superiority of local Christians in communicating the gospel within their particular cultural context. For this reason, Presbyterian Border Ministry emphasizes the wisdom of involving U.S. Christians in the service and evangelism projects of Mexican Presbyterian churches only when these are developed and supervised by Mexican Presbyterians themselves.

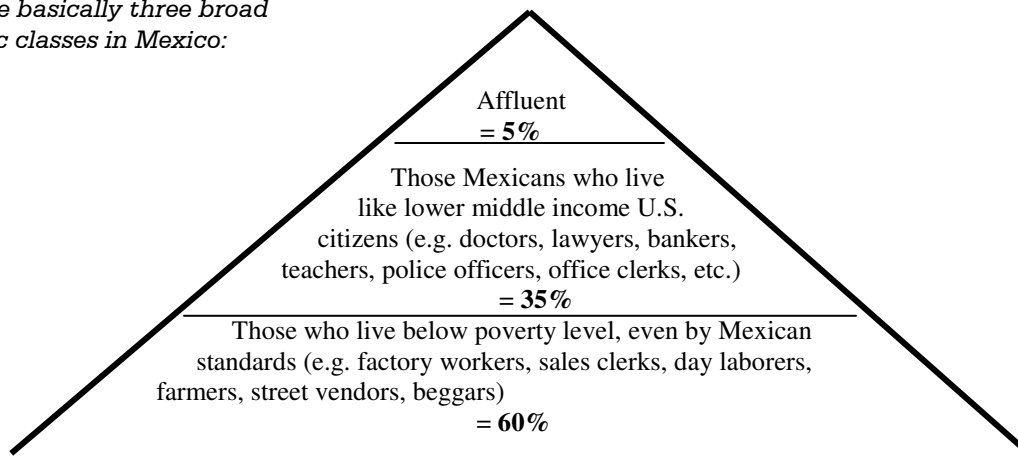
## **SURVIVAL at the BORDER**

In recent decades, large numbers of Mexicans have migrated to their country's northern border in search of relatively well-paying jobs in *maquilas* (factories that assemble imported materials and then re-export the final product to United States for consumption). More than one million Mexicans work in the nearly 4,000 *maquilas*, most of which are located near the United States border. Minimum wages for all workers are set by the Mexican government and vary regionally; a typical minimum wage is \$4.00 per day. The average *maquila* worker in 2002 earned about \$1.71 per hour, significantly above the minimum wage. In order to retain workers, some assembly plants also provide transportation to and from work, free child care, and one or two free meals a day. A typical *maquila* worker can make the equivalent of about \$2,500 in a year (plus retirement, medical, and vacation benefits). Factory workers doing similar work in the United States earn many times this amount, but Mexican authorities tolerate low wages because the *maquilas* create a large number of jobs as well as income for the government (through tariffs).

The availability of factory jobs along the border has decreased in recent years, while immigrants continue to arrive from other parts of the country, resulting in higher regional unemployment rates. The border cities' existing infrastructure (water/sanitation systems, road networks, electricity grids, police protection, etc) cannot support their rapidly growing populations. The lack of municipal resources results in the existence of large *colonias*, or neighborhoods, without water or electricity lines, proper waste treatment, or maintained roads. New immigrants to Mexican border cities often settle on whatever unoccupied land they can find where they construct makeshift homes out of cardboard, wood pallets, and other readily available materials. Despite poor living conditions, many household items are actually cheaper on the northern side of the border than they are in Mexico, a fact that encourages residents of Mexican border towns who have visas and/or passports to cross over regularly for routine purchases.

An array of other challenges affect the lives of people living on the border. Immigration to a border city sometimes means loss of traditional support networks (such as extended family) that immigrants may have enjoyed in their home communities. On the other hand, border industry provides at least a possibility of economic advancement to workers from marginalized regions of Mexico's interior. Another social trend related to industry comes from the fact that maquilas have typically favored women workers over men, challenging the traditional Mexican family structure, where the husband's role is breadwinner and the wife's full-time child-rearing. These are just a few of the challenges of a rapidly changing society at the interface between 'first-world' and 'third-world' economies and the values of two very different nations. The response of Presbyterian Border Ministry to the complex concerns of people living on the Mexico-United States border involves participation with the local churches on both sides in discerning how the Presbyterian community is called to fulfill the new commandment of Jesus Christ in the midst of a grossly inequitable, yet ever-changing social reality.

*There are basically three broad economic classes in Mexico:*



**SOME QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER :**

1. What does it mean to be a 'partner in mission'? What are the benefits and drawbacks of a missionary partnership with Christians in another country or culture?
2. Does the scarcity of financial resources in Mexico inhibit a healthy *reciprocal* partnership with United States churches (in which neither side is dependent on the other)?
3. Do you think the history of United States-Mexico church relations will have any impact on the way Mexican Presbyterians see you or the work you will be doing?
4. Do you think Presbyterians in Mexico see their church's role within their society the same way that you see your church's role within United States society?
5. As a Christian, will you see Mexico differently on your trip than if you were going as a tourist?
6. What (if anything) do you expect to see in a Mexican Presbyterian church that you don't see in a United States church (e.g. architecture, music, interaction of members, etc)?

# Presbyterian Border Ministry

at



P A S O S D E F E



"We walk by faith, not by sight"  
II Corinthians 5:7

## The JUÁREZ / EL PASO area BORDER MINISTRY

Pasos de Fe, created in 1998, is the youngest of the seven sites of Presbyterian Border Ministry (although it was preceded by *Proyecto Verdad*, a border ministry that functioned in El Paso and Juárez from 1973 – before the creation of PBM – until 1989). Its duty is to coordinate collaborative missionary efforts between the Presbyterian Church (USA) and the National Presbyterian Church of Mexico within the state of Chihuahua, and the presbyteries of Tres Ríos and Sierra Blanca. Responding to the call of the National Presbyterian Church of Mexico to plant new churches along its nation's northern border and in each of its 31 state capitals, Pasos de Fe's major focus is expanding the work of the church in Chihuahua State's two large cities: Juárez and Chihuahua. It also seeks to expand opportunities for Mexican Presbyterian clergy and laypeople to assist in the ministry of churches throughout the United States. The board of directors of Pasos de Fe and its staff represent the Presbyterian Church in both the United States and Mexico. They are grounded in a shared dedication to serve God across international borders.

### *Pasos de Fe Board of Directors:*

Felipe Barandiarán, <i>Moderator</i> (Chihuahua)	Antonio Carrillo (Chihuahua)
Viola Johnson, <i>Vice Moderator</i> (Sierra Blanca)	Marisela García (Tres Ríos)
Robelio Roblero, (Chihuahua)	Ramón Antonio García (Chihuahua)
Elaine Olsakovsky, <i>Treasurer</i> (Tres Ríos)	Wayne Hawkins (Sierra Blanca)

### *Pasos de Fe Coordinators:*

Jaime Benjamin Dueñas (Juárez) – Mexico Coordinator (NPCM)  
Todd & Tricia Reinschmidt (El Paso) – United States Coordinators (PCUSA)

## **PRESBYTERIANS in the CONTEXT of CHIHUAHUA STATE**

Chihuahua is geographically the largest state in Mexico, comparable in size to Oregon. In 2000, it had 3.1 million inhabitants, heavily concentrated in two urban centers: Juárez (1.2 million) and Chihuahua (0.7 million). The harsh desert and mountain climates of the state, combined with the extreme poverty of some rural areas, have resulted in a relatively sparse population outside of these cities. Indians known as the Tarahumara (or Raramuri) live in the mountainous southwestern region of the state and form part of the steady stream of migrants entering the big cities in search of work. Small minorities of North American Mormons that originally settled in Chihuahua during the 1880s and Mennonites that arrived from Canada in the 1920s also figure into the state's cultural dynamics. The majority of the population, as in most of Mexico, traces its heritage to both indigenous and Spanish roots. About 9% of Chihuahuans claim an Evangelical/'Biblical' faith according to government statistics (Among historical Protestants, the Baptists and Methodists predominate).

Paso del Norte, the former name of the city now called El Paso (on the U.S. side of the Río Grande) and Ciudad Juárez (on the Mexican side), was founded by Franciscan friars in 1659. Two other communities (Ysleta and Socorro) were established a little further down river in the 1680s by Spaniards and their Indian allies fleeing a revolt of the Pueblo Indians in the north. A major north-south trade route called the 'Royal Road of the Interior Lands' passed through Paso del Norte, linking it with frontier outposts further north and large towns in the south. The valley of the Río Grande near Paso del Norte developed some modest agriculture under Spanish and Mexican rule, but it remained thinly populated at the time of the U.S.-Mexico War (1846-48). This war dispossessed Mexico of half its national territory and suddenly made Paso del Norte into a 'border town'. Paso del Norte gave refuge to Benito Juárez during the lowest ebb of his struggle against Emperor Maximilian (1865-66) and was later named in his honor. The state of Chihuahua played an important role in the Mexican Revolution of the 1910s as a key support base for General Francisco "Pancho" Villa. Afterwards, the city developed its reputation as a center for trade and tourism; and, beginning the mid-1960s, Ciudad Juárez sought to become a major industrial center as well. *Maquilas* currently employ about 200,000 people in the city, although the number of factory jobs has declined since 2000.

Príncipe de Paz, the first Presbyterian Church in Ciudad Juárez, was built in 1965. After 1972, when the U.S. churches declared a moratorium on mission work in Mexico, an innovative bi-national ministry was launched in El Paso and Ciudad Juárez under the name, “Project Verdad”. From 1973 until Project Verdad was discontinued in 1989, many new Presbyterian churches were created in Ciudad Juárez, including six of those that currently work with Pasos de Fe. Another three Presbyterian churches were established in Ciudad Juárez during the last decade, and are not directly involved in the ministry of Pasos de Fe. The 10 National Presbyterian churches of the city are divided into three categories, ranging from small to large in terms of membership: *misiones* (1-24 members), *congregaciones* (25-59 members), and *iglesias* (60+ members). There are 2 *misiones*, 5 *congregaciones*, and 3 *iglesias*.

Chihuahua City, originally known as San Francisco de Cuéllar, was founded in 1709 and received its present name when it became the capital of Chihuahua State in 1823. The city was a center for ranching and agricultural activity and an important point on the already mentioned Royal Road. It participated prominently in many of the key historical events of modern Mexican history, from the War of Independence from Spain (won in 1821) through the conflict over the Constitution of 1857, and the Revolution of the 1910s. The city hosts a diverse population, including Tarahumara Indians, Chihuahuans of European heritage, and mestizos (Mexicans of mixed European and indigenous ancestry). Agriculture and trade continue to be important economic activities and *maquilas* have become an integral part of the city’s economy, employing about 40,000 workers. In the early 1990s, the National Presbyterian Church of Mexico, desiring to plant a local church in each of the nation’s 31 state capitals, established *Berith* in Chihuahua City, which has attained the status of *iglesia*. The Presbytery has recently initiated a new mission in the capital city under the name “Pacto de Gracia” which it hopes will become a second church. These are the only Presbyterian worshipping communities in a city of roughly 700,000 inhabitants.

**Mexican Presbyterian churches and pastors that work with Pasos de Fe**

“Berith”	Chihuahua	Ramón Antonio García
“Pacto de Gracia”	Chihuahua	José Angel Valencia
“Monte Santo”	Juárez	Miguel Mata
“Príncipe de Paz”	Juárez	Germán Casanova
“Renovación”	Juárez	Baltazaar González
“Verdad y Esperanza”	Juárez	Isaac Durán
“Verdad y Fe”	Juárez	Juan Pablo Gutiérrez
“Verdad y Redención”	Juárez	Robelio Roblero
“Verdad y Salvación”	Juárez	Felipe Barandiarán
“Verdad y Vida”	Juárez	Elías Estrada



The Presbytery of Chihuahua, spanning the Mexican states of Chihuahua, Sonora, and part of Sinaloa. Pasos de Fe, Frontera de Cristo and Compañeros en Misión border ministries all 3 labor within the Presbytery of Chihuahua, although only Pasos de Fe works in Chihuahua State (the others are based in Agua Prieta and Nogales).

A large percentage of the pastors and members of the Presbyterian churches in the state are immigrants from the central and southern regions of Mexico. In Juárez, about 35% of the population as a whole was born outside the state, and an considerable number of new immigrants to the large cities come from southeastern Mexico, where Presbyterianism is strongest. On the other hand, there is not a single Presbyterian church within reach of the 40% of Chihuahua State’s residents who live outside the two largest metropolitan areas. And the churches of Juárez and Chihuahua City struggle to reach just a small fraction of their vast and still increasing populations. Pasos de Fe exists to help equip the Mexican church as it seeks to make God’s Kingdom ever more of a reality in the state of Chihuahua.

**PRESBYTERIANS NORTH of the BORDER**

The United States side of Paso del Norte (re-named El Paso) began to grow rapidly after a railway was built through town in 1880, and the first Protestant churches followed immediately. Presbyterians of the northern church created a local congregation in 1882 and those of the southern church started one in 1903. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, El Paso became a center for mining-related industries and international trade, besides serving as the home of an Army base (Fort Bliss). As El Paso grew, Presbyterian churches (representing both major denominations) multiplied throughout the city (there are currently 9 PC USA churches in El Paso County). The Hispanic population of El Paso has grown rapidly in recent decades; the 2000 census reported that 78% of El Paso County’s 680,000 residents were ‘Hispanic or Latino’ and 66% of the total claim ‘Mexican’ heritage. A Spanish-speaking congregation was initiated in 1915,

and still exists (some of its original members belonged to Presbyterian missions in Mexico before immigrating to the United States because of the Revolution). The county's only other Spanish-speaking Presbyterian congregation was established in the town of Socorro, southeast of El Paso, in the 1980s. The urban conglomerate composed of Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua, El Paso, Texas and surrounding communities that extend into Doña Ana County, New Mexico, in reality form a single metropolitan region of about two million people. For this reason, an effective evangelistic strategy for the area should take into account the similarities, at least as much as the differences, between the Chihuahua, Texas, and New Mexico fragments of this urban unit.



**Sierra Blanca and Tres Ríos presbyteries:**

The Presbyteries of Sierra Blanca (left) and Tres Ríos (right) are integral to Pasos de Fe's mission of bridging the gap between the world-views, economic realities, and national loyalties that clash and collide at the international border.



Pasos de Fe exists, not only to serve the immediate El Paso/Juárez area, but also the entire extent of the presbyteries of Tres Ríos (western Texas), Sierra Blanca (southern and eastern New Mexico) and Chihuahua. Each of these three presbyteries is represented on Pasos de Fe's board of directors. A long-range goal of the ministry, besides helping to advance the National Presbyterian Church in the state of Chihuahua, is the construction of a faith network of Presbyterian churches spanning both sides of the international border. The core of Pasos de Fe's network might naturally be those churches located in the border region of southern New Mexico, western Texas, and the state of Chihuahua. Unfortunately, a history of unsuccessful attempts at unity with fellow Presbyterians across the border has diluted mutual trust between the churches of both sides. This situation can only be remedied by the work of the Holy Spirit and a practical willingness of churches in Mexico and the United States to be servants of each other. The socio-cultural realities common to both sides of the international border affect the prospects and challenges of all borderland churches, whether in the United States or in Mexico. The expanding role of United States agencies and businesses in Chihuahua State, along with the growing Mexican-American presence throughout all of Sierra Blanca and Tres Ríos presbyteries indicate a trend towards increasing bi-national inter-dependence.

**MORE QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:**

1. Is there any evidence of Mexican national culture in the community where you live in the United States? What evidence of United States culture do you expect to see in Mexico?
2. Does your home church have any evangelistic commitments in a local Mexican-American community? Could a partnership with a Presbyterian church in Mexico improve outreach to such communities?
3. When you think of the words "mission" and "missionary", what images come to mind? If a foreign short-term missionary were to serve in your community/church, how would this be similar to, or different from, your service in Mexico?
4. What special gifts do North Americans, individually or as a group, bring to a mission partnership with Mexican Christians? What gifts might you suspect that Mexican Christians would contribute?
5. Can you think of analogies to cross-border ministry in other aspects of your home church's mission? What other kinds of "borders" or barriers (linguistic, political, social, economic etc.) exist where you live?
6. Can you think of instances in the Bible where people crossed "borders" of various kinds in obedience to God or as part of God's plan (although they may not have wanted to)? Do these instances say anything to you about why you are embarking on a mission trip?

## **The PRESBYTERIAN CHURCHES of JUÁREZ & CHIHUAHUA**

**Note:** The National Presbyterian Church of Mexico has three levels of Churches. Starting out with few members and little to no structure they are called Missions. The next level is a Congregation, and when they can have 75 members, a governing body and are self-supporting, they are called a Church.

**Note:** The socio-economic categories used to describe the neighborhoods of different churches listed below (low income, middle income, etc.) are generally based on typical United States standards of living, rather than those of Mexico. Keep in mind that perceptions of relative wealth vary greatly between our two nations.

### **CHURCHES:**

#### **VERDAD Y REDENCIÓN (*TRUTH AND REDEMPTION*)**

Located in the colonias of Morelos and Azteca in southwestern Juárez, Verdad y Redención began as a service-based mission of Project Verdad in the 1970s. After the demise of Project Verdad the mission was re-established by the Presbytery and has become one of the city's three churches. (Remember that, in Mexico, a Presbyterian congregation must attain at least 60 members to constitute itself as a church, meaning that it must be self-supporting.) To accommodate its growing membership, the church has long-range plans of expanding the current sanctuary. Verdad y Redención has developed a very active program of family evangelism, music, and youth ministry. In addition, the church assisted in the construction of the Christian Family Center (see below).

Pastor Robelio Roblero, by the grace of our Lord, and despite some health problems, has worked hard to make his small congregation into a full-fledged church. By providing a spiritual home to families that have recently immigrated to the border from southern Mexico, the church has grown in numbers and faith under pastor Robleros' leadership. Raised in the southern state of Chiapas, pastor Roblero has served various Presbyterian churches in northern Mexico since 1974. He and his wife, Florinda, have five children.

#### **PRÍNCIPE DE PAZ (*PRINCE OF PEACE*)**

Built in 1965, this was the first Presbyterian church organized in Ciudad Juárez. Most of its original members arrived from other parts of the country as Presbyterians, and, finding no Presbyterian church in the city, committed their time and resources to the establishment of Príncipe de Paz.

Located in north-central Juárez, near the United States border, Príncipe de Paz sits amid busy commercial districts and a densely populated urban neighborhood. There is no space for parking at the church, which is causing a problem with the neighbors as well as creating the risk of car theft or vandalization to church members. One of the church's long-range goals has been to buy the property nextdoor to use as a parking lot. There is a 200 square meter house on the adjacent lot that would need to be demolished; the owner is asking \$30,000 (U.S.)

Germán Casanova Trejo was recently called to pastor the church, after serving a Presbyterian congregation in Tijuana. He and his wife live inside the church facility with their six children. Pastor Casanova hopes to see the church expand its classroom facilities over the original pastor's manse and continue its commitment to mission. Currently, Príncipe de Paz is beginning a new Presbyterian mission in colonia Carlos Chavira on the eastern edge of Ciudad Juárez with the support of its members and extra help from United States mission teams.

#### **RENOVACIÓN (*RENEWAL*)**

This church is physically the largest in the Chihuahua Presbytery and has usually had the largest membership since it was founded in the late 1980s. It is located in a middle income residential neighborhood in east-central Juárez surrounded by commercial districts. Many of Renovación's members are relatively affluent and tend to be engaged in professional occupations. The church provides classrooms and a small library for the local branch of a Presbyterian theological seminary based in Mérida, Yucatán. In addition, a number of the city's Presbyterian missions and congregations are under the care of Renovación Church.

Pastor Baltazaar González was one of the coordinator-leaders of Project Verdad – the original Presbyterian Border Ministry in Ciudad Juárez that established the other churches listed here except for Príncipe de Paz and those in Chihuahua City. Pastor González also teaches for the above-mentioned seminary and holds a leadership position in the Juárez association of evangelical pastors. He and his wife, María Teresa, live near the church.

## **BERITH – CHIHUAHUA CITY**

Chihuahua City, the state capital, is a 4-hour drive south of the border on the Autopista 45 toll road. The church is located on the southwestern edge of the city in a low income neighborhood called colonia Díaz Ordaz. Berith was established in the early 1990s and has increased its adult membership to about 60. There is no property available for expansion, so the church is building a new sanctuary above the current facility and plans to convert the lower floor into classroom space and a fellowship hall.

Pastor Ramón García, originally from Ensenada (Baja California), has served the church for seven years. He began attending the Presbyterian church in Ensenada at a time when Robelio Roblero, now his father-in-law, was the pastor of that church. He, along with wife Ruth, and 3 small children live in the manse of the church.

## **CONGREGATIONS:**

### **VERDAD Y FE (TRUTH AND FAITH)**

This congregation is located in a low income colonia (neighborhood) called Azteca in southwestern Ciudad Juárez. Many of this neighborhood's residents are immigrants from the interior of Mexico and a large number work in *maquilas*. Verdad y Fe was founded in the 1970s as one of Project Verdad's service-based missions; it housed a nursery and kindergarten used by the surrounding community. The mission closed for a time after Project Verdad ceased to exist but it was reopened by the Presbytery of Chihuahua in the early 1990s. The nursery facilities have since been demolished to allow for expansion of the sanctuary at some future time.

Pastor Juan Pablo Gutiérrez has 15 years experience serving the Presbyterian churches of Ciudad Juárez. Before coming to pastor Verdad y Fe, he had started a mission in the living room of his home. Within one year, this mission had grown to 35 members including children. Considering the rapid growth of his ministry in a middle class neighborhood, the Presbytery invited him to pastor Verdad y Fe church. Pastor Gutiérrez and his wife, Yolanda, live next to the church facility; they have three children.

### **VERDAD Y VIDA (TRUTH AND LIFE)**

This mission is currently pastored by Elías Estrada, a recent seminary graduate who also practices veterinary medicine. He dedicated his life to Christ seven years ago, and now serves the same congregation that was started by his father-in-law, Juan Mata. Pastor Mata initiated the Verdad y Vida mission in one of the poorest colonias of Ciudad Juárez, known as Anapra, and served as its pastor for 19 years before passing away in 2002. Pastor Elías Estrada continues to serve this colonia, where he lives with his wife and two children.

The community of Anapra sits very close to the Mexico–United States border on the far northwestern edge of Ciudad Juárez, isolated from the rest of the city by rugged hills. The area was, for many years, ignored by the municipal government, although the city has recently provided electricity and water to the homes and stores here (the colonia still lacks sub-soil drainage and paved roads).

As in most low income border communities, this congregation is made up largely of people who come from southern states of Mexico seeking a better life in Juárez or north of the border. Some new immigrants, unable to cross into the United States, may find work in the *maquilas* and stay for long time, but many return to their home states in the south. This constant rotation in membership also causes fluctuation in income for the mission church.

## **MISSIONS:**

### **VERDAD Y SALVACION ( TRUTH AND SALVATION)**

This mission, located in a low income neighborhood, puts into practice the concept of holistic evangelism (meeting the needs of each person as a holistic unit, not viewing spiritual, physical, and social needs in isolation from one another). The mission is currently being pastored by Felipe Barandiarán, who is currently enrolled and working to complete his theology training at San Pablo Presbyterian Seminary. Verdad y Salvacion is located inside the Christian Family Center which has three bunk rooms sleeping 10 to 12 persons each, a large kitchen and dining area, and an activity space generally used for playing basketball or soccer. all within a walled and gated court. A family belonging to Verdad y Redención Church lives on site and keeps up the facility. The Center is available for

mission teams, youth retreats, and Presbytery meetings.

The Center is home to a health clinic as well as Verdad y Salvación mission, which serve the spiritual and material needs of the surrounding neighborhood. The Christian Family Center is situated in colonia Toribio Ortega, on the southern edge of Ciudad Juárez, near a state penitentiary.

### **VERDAD Y ESPERANZA (TRUTH AND HOPE)**

This mission is located in a low income colonia known as Guadalajara. Begun as a service-based mission back in the 1970's, the facility was vacated in the late 1980's and had since been occupied by a series of other ministries and businesses. In 2004, the Presbytery of Chihuahua approved re-initiation of a mission on the site and recognized a seminary graduate, Isaac Durán of Renovación Church as its lay pastor. One of our smallest missions, Isaac is focusing his attention on helping feed both the spiritual and educational needs of the community. The mission has on site a large two story building that is currently being renovated to serve as a community center. Isaac hopes to have classes in English, computers, and some sort of skill training, as well as offer after school tutoring, and free legal aid.

### **MISSION IN COLONIA CARLOS CHAVIRA (A MISSION OF THE CHURCH PRINCIPE DE PAZ)**

Recently recognized by Chihuahua Presbytery, this mission started as a project of Príncipe de Paz church in an impoverished colonia called Carlos Chavira. The small mission meets in an unfinished room of one of its members and is being directed by a pastor appointed by the presbytery to work in cooperation with the session of Príncipe de Paz. Principe de Paz, in cooperation with Pasos de Fe, is currently searching for land to purchase and start building a worshiping facility.

### **PACTO DE GRACIA (COVENANT OF GRACE) – Chihuahua City**

This new mission, in Ciudad Chihuahua has begun meeting in the home of missionary José Angel Valencia. Currently a member of Berith Church, brother Valencia has many years experience working in the missionary field of Chihuahua City, as well as Lerdo, Durango.

### **MONTE SANTO (HOLY MOUNTAIN)**

This mission is housed in the colonia Lomas de Poleo, which is a neighborhood of families who work in the maquilas. Lay Pastor Miguel Mata started this small mission about 2 years ago. They currently feed the people of their needy both spiritually and physically on Saturdays and Sundays with Bible Studies and a meal program. They are also beginning a day care as well.



## **SUPPORTING THE WORK OF PASOS DE FE**

Although the needs are great, so are the opportunities that this ministry affords for Presbyterians from the United States to participate in the amazing development of the Presbyterian Church in this border area. It is indeed an exciting moment for missions here. On behalf of the Body of Christ we invite YOU to consider being part of it!

We believe that each of us, whether Mexican or U.S. citizen, is a member of the Body of Christ, created for a common purpose and subject to the lordship of Christ, but having different gifts “according to the grace given to us”(Romans 12:3-6):

*“For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of yourself more highly than you ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned. For as in one body we have many members, and not all the members have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members of one another. We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us...”*

Pasos de Fe offers Presbyterians from Mexico and the United States the opportunity to share their varied gifts with one another, allowing each person and church to become integral and able parts of the Body of Christ.

## **THANK YOU!**



**THANK YOU for your interest and continuing support! The ministry of Pasos de Fe could not exist without the support of its partners through their prayers, visits, and gifts.**

All donations are tax deductible. Checks are payable to: “Pasos de Fe” 9210 Dyer Street, El Paso TX 79924-6404. Contributions to Pasos de Fe can also be directed through the PC (USA): ECO# 863549.

## NOTES ON GIVING: GENEROSITY AND ITS COMPLICATIONS

Pasos de Fe discourages people from giving monetary gifts to individuals. Partnerships can be formed between USA and Mexican churches and Pasos de Fe can help in the reciprocal relationship. We recommend that tax-deductible gifts be given to Pasos de Fe and they can be specified for a specific church.

The following was taken from: *Cross Cultural Conflict* by Duane Elmer, Inter-Varsity Press, 1993

Although generosity is a virtue, it does carry complications--especially in a cross-cultural context. Simply put, giving is power. It is power to control valuable resources. It is power to select who is to receive and who will not receive. Therefore, it is power over people. This power can make giving a source of liberty and empowerment of another; or giving can further consolidate power in the giver, bringing inevitable isolation from other believers.

Giving is easier than receiving, yet without reciprocity, a relationship will continue to be one of donor to receiver, superior to inferior, person of power to person with less power. The generous giver who rarely receives will be popular for a time, with a wide range of eager friends, but will be an alien to the community; in time he or she may even become an enemy.

Visitors to Mexico find it difficult to receive from people in the Two-Thirds World: "What do they have to give me?" Of course, such a question assumes that reciprocity requires some equal exchange of material things or knowledge. Many people in the Two-Thirds World have neither the schooling nor the material wealth to balance the scales in that way. Yet it is a Western limitation to think of reciprocity in such restrictive, materialistic categories.

[A further complication results from the fact that] in Hispanic cultures an invitation to visit may be interpreted literally - creating many difficulties such as sponsorship and locating employment, etc.

In order to avert these unfortunate byproducts of generosity, [the North American in the power position] it is wise to channel generosity anonymously through a third party such as a local Church, a not-for-profit agency or some highly trusted person who can act as a mediator of your kindness. Exercising this kind of caution protects everyone and offers several advantages:

- ❖ · It does not create dependency or indebtedness toward the donor
- ❖ · The donor does not need to worry about a pseudo friendship from the receiver
- ❖ · It decreases the potential for power abuse in the relationship
- ❖ · It protects the dignity and self-esteem of the receiver
- ❖ · It helps maintain open and honest communication in the relationship, which is usually sacrificed when one is forced or pressured into a one-down position
- ❖ · It allows for a relationship of equals wherein each is free to mediate Christ to the other.

# **PLANNING YOUR MISSION TRIP**

## **TYPES OF TEAMS**

We encourage ALL teams to spend at least one afternoon with the children of the mission or church that hosts their visit. Possible activities include: doing crafts, teaching songs, playing games, doing Bible stories, etc. We also include cultural / educational activities for every team in the attempt to promote learning and building relationships.

Each mission trip is planned on an individual basis with the team leader and Pasos de Fe staff dependent upon the gifts and talents of the team members and the over all goals of the group.

- **Construction Teams**: Many churches are in immediate need of repair and improvements, while others have long-term plans for new construction. We try to provide someone at each site with the knowledge and language skills to oversee each project, however this is the responsibility of the host church, as it is their project.
- **Educational / Service Teams**: We welcome teams or individuals who wish to share their knowledge and skills with our community by teaching specialty courses in sewing, crafting, basic English, computer literacy, cookery, home repair, medical hygiene, etc. Opportunities are available for medically trained groups or individuals to volunteer their services at the Family Center's health clinic or other sites with medical needs.
- **Study Teams**: Arrangements can be made for teams that are primarily interested in visiting the border to learn more about the Mexican Church and the borderlands region. The program is highly participatory, and not solely an educational experience, but a Christian endeavor as well. Come to share with, and learn from, your Mexican brothers and sisters!
- **Exploratory Teams**: If you are simply interested in coming down for a day or a weekend to have a look around, worship with a mission, learn more about PBM, and/or talk about a future mission partnership, you are very welcome!

## **COMPOSITION OF THE TEAM:**

If your team is primarily composed of youth, please bring at least one adult advisor for every 5 youth. Children under 14 are welcome at Pasos de Fe if accompanied by a parent, legal guardian, or, other adult relative. Please contact a Pasos de Fe staff member if you would like to bring children.

Due to the mission of Pasos de Fe and the focus on relationships, mission teams may not consist of more than 20 people. If you have a group that is larger please contact us and we may be able to consider your group as two smaller ones with different work sites.

## **TRAVEL ARRANGEMENTS:**

Mission teams are responsible for their own transportation both to and from the mission site and during their stay. If planning to fly to El Paso you may rent a van or car at the airport. Agencies that rent mini- and 15-passenger-vans with Mexican insurance include -but are not limited to- Enterprise and Budget. Be aware that not all rental vehicles can cross the border. When you reserve the van or car be sure you let the company know you will be taking it into Mexico. If you plan to drive to El Paso, make sure your vehicle/s have Mexican coverage. Insurance coverage begins at about \$10.00 per day. If you bring borrowed vehicles, and their owner is not present, you need written and notarized permission from the owner that the vehicle may be taken into Mexico. All drivers of vehicles must carry proof of U.S.A. insurance, a valid driver's license, and vehicle registration. This is especially important for teams traveling south of the city of Juárez (see pages 21 & 22 for additional requirements.) A Pasos de Fe staff member will meet groups at the airport, or at the Pasos de Fe office, if the group is driving to El Paso.

**Options for Lodging**  
(see “summary of costs” for further information)

- Both facilities, Christian Family Center (CFC) and church Verdad y Fe are dormitory style facilities. They each have hot showers, bunk beds and kitchens.
- Mission teams may stay at the church that hosts their visit. If they do, they will need to bring their own sleeping bags, sheets, and pillows.
- As an additional option, church families may be willing to share their homes for 1 or 2 nights; we like to arrange for two mission team persons per home stay.

**Options for Meals**

- The CFC and Verdad y Fe will prepare meals for you or you may use their kitchens to prepare meals on your own.
- Host churches may also prepare meals for teams.
- Many restaurants are located in Juarez (and Chihuahua) including American chains and great Mexican restaurants. Average costs are similar to those in USA.

**SECURITY CONSIDERATIONS**

Team members are asked NEVER to go anywhere alone unless with the permission of an adult group leader. Never walk around the neighborhood at night without an adult and at least a group of three. No one should be on the streets after 10 PM.

**HEALTH CARE & PRECAUTIONS**

Inoculations are not necessary; an up to date Tetanus shot is recommended. About 1/3 of all travelers suffer a minor case of diarrhea or nausea from the change in water, food, and stress levels. For minor cases, Pepto-Bismol, Acidophilus, Immodium, or Diasorb are recommended. Medications such as Lomotil, Kaopectate, and preventive antibiotics are discouraged.

There are some preventive measures you can take to stay healthy. Between now and the trip do some “conditioning” like walking and exercises. Add active yogurt products to your diet now. Chew a Pepto Bismol tablet twice a day for a week or so before your trip and while you are here. Bring an anti-bacterial soap and anti-bacterial wipes with you on the trip.

Stay away from caffeine, which can cause dehydration. While here, we ask you to drink only bottled water and sports drinks. Ice in drinks is OK (by Mexican government regulations, consumable ice must be made with purified water.)

**JUÁREZ CLIMATE**

Juárez, Chihuahua, is located in a desert, 4,000 feet above sea level. The sun is HOT! Most of the year’s rain falls from July through September.

Approximate temperatures are:

<b>Month:</b>	<b>Typical Highs:</b>	<b>Typical Lows:</b>
March – April	60s – 80s	40s – 50s
May – September	80s – 100s	60s – 80s
October – November	60s – 80s	40s – 50s
December – February	40s – 60s	20s – 40s

## EMERGENCY PHONE NUMBERS

	<u>If calling from the United States:</u>	<u>If calling from Mexico</u>
Pasos de Fe Office	(915) 759-7764	001 (915) 759-7764
U.S. Coordinators – home	(915) 581-5057	001 (915) 581-5057
– cel	(915) 637-2818	001 (915) 637-2818
MX Coordinator – home	011-52 (656) 615-8442	(656) 615-8442
-- US cel	(915) 637-4836	001 (915) 637-4836
– MX cel	011-52 (656) 569-2505	044 (656) 569-2505

## IMPORTANT TIPS!

**Be flexible!** # 1 word to keep in mind before and during your trip. Things do not always work out the way we would expect them to. Materials are not always available when we need them and things are done differently in Mexico than in the United States.

**Beware of the sun!** Remember you are closer to the equator. You will burn much faster here than you will back home. While a tan is nice, skin cancer is a very real danger.

**Drink lots of water!** Please drink plenty of water (soft drinks will only dehydrate you more!) and take regular breaks. In such a dry climate, dehydration is a constant threat. If you wait until you are thirsty, you are already dehydrated!

**Don't get caught penniless!** Very few places in Juárez or Chihuahua accept traveler's checks. Cash them before crossing the border. U.S. dollars are accepted anywhere, but very few merchants will have change for large bills. You may want to change some dollars to pesos, especially for buying gasoline. The current exchange rate is about \$1.00 = \$11.00 pesos. Be prepared for a slight difference from this amount as fluctuations in the exchange rate occur.

**Use your Spanish!** Don't be shy about trying out your Spanish, no matter how rusty it is. People will appreciate your attempt and they will be more likely to strike up a conversation with you.

**Don't wander alone!** Let team leaders know where you are going and always go in groups of three or more. Absolutely no one should be out after 10 PM.

**Don't tempt your neighbor!** Watches, cameras, cell phones, and even tools have a very high value in Juárez! Please don't tempt anyone to steal by leaving valuables unattended. Personal stereos and the like, are better left at home.

**Keep it clean!** Be considerate of those who come after by leaving areas cleaner than you found them.

**Take "three-step" showers!** This is a desert climate, and water is *extremely* precious. It is imperative that you shower in three steps: 1) turn the water ON to get wet 2) turn the water OFF, and then soap and shampoo 3) turn the water ON to rinse off. THANKS!

**Be careful what you eat & drink!** Do not eat or drink anything offered by street vendors. City water is NOT safe for consumption. You may buy purified water, and request "agua pura" at restaurants. Remember that any vegetables, fruit, or other food that has been washed in tap water is not fit to eat, unless it is then cooked or peeled.



**Be insured!** If you do not have medical insurance that will cover you in case of an emergency in Mexico (some won't, please check), short-term missionary insurance is available through many companies including:

STM Services International. *Phone: (800) 422-4350.*

Their emergency telephone numbers are:

*Mexico: 95-800-101-0061 and U.S.A.: (410) 453-6330.*

Phone Home! Phone cards that fit in a slot in Mexican pay telephones can be purchased at many pharmacies or convenience stores. If using USA phone cards, check rates per minute for Mexico to see if you have a sufficient number of minutes. If using USA cell phones, check to see if you will have service and what the rates are outside of the country.

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## **SPIRITUAL GROWTH THROUGH CROSS-CULTURAL EXPERIENCE**

As you begin to prepare for your mission experience in Mexico, please do not neglect the spiritual, mental, and team-building needs of the participants. Some excellent resources for team preparation are *Vacations with a Purpose*, and *When God's People Travel Together: A Trip Leader's Planning Manual* (publishing information is found on the "Additional resources" page.)

### **Before you come:**

- ❖ Provide the team with as much information as possible about Mexico, the National Presbyterian Church of Mexico, and how they will participate in the border ministry.
- ❖ Take time to discuss expectations, hopes and fears as a group.
- ❖ Discuss team goals and develop a team Mission Statement.
- ❖ Have team members sign a team Covenant (outlining mutually agreed-upon behavioral expectations, guidelines for group interaction and teamwork, etc.)

### **While you are here:**

- ❖ Encourage team members to keep a personal journal in which they record their experiences and feelings.
- ❖ Take advantage of all opportunities to hear the testimonies of members from the church and staff and share your own. Participate actively in all worship activities.

### **When you return home:**

- ❖ Prepare to interpret your mission experience to your congregation and neighboring churches, if possible, during a worship service or special gathering.
- ❖ Encourage team members to continue to interpret for themselves their experiences in Mexico upon returning home.
- ❖ Explore ways your team and church may continue the relationship with Pasos de Fe and the mission site. (Some suggestions: letters, photos, newsletters, future visits, financial support)

## **SUMMARY of COSTS**

## **BASIC COSTS:**

**Deposit and Administration Fee:** A \$100 non-refundable deposit and \$200 administrative fee are due at the time of reserving the dates for your trip. The administrative fee may be refunded if the trip is cancelled with more than 2 months prior to your planned arrival date. If it is cancelled with less than 2 months, the administrative fee is non-refundable.

**Materials Fee:** \$25.00 per person per day (excluding travel days) covers the cost of materials for the team's construction project or VBS if not doing construction. Unspent money goes into Pasos de Fe's general funds to help cover ongoing expenses relating to the work of the ministry.

## **LODGING AND MEALS:**

There are at least two types of accommodations available:

- (1) Groups may stay in the Christian Family Center or at a similarly equipped church, Verdad y Fe, which are equipped with a kitchen and bathrooms, including showers. The Family Center contains three separate rooms of 10-12 beds each (accommodating a maximum of 30-36 people), as well as facilities for group meetings and Bible studies. Verdad y Fe has one bunk room which can sleep 10 people in beds and space for a couple on the floor, as well as two other rooms with bunks or other beds. The church can sleep up to 30 people.  
\$6.00 per person per night covers the use of the Center's facilities.

Meals can be purchased at either of these facilities at these rates:

\$3.00 per person per day for breakfast  
\$5.00 per person per day for lunch  
\$6.00 per person per day for dinner

*You may choose to purchase any or all meals on your own, instead of through the Christian Family Center. If the kitchen is used to prepare meals independently, a small fee may be charged.*

- (2) Groups may opt to stay in a church that they are assisting, provided that its facilities are adequate (bathrooms, kitchen, running water, etc.) No beds are available at churches and space is often limited.  
\$100.00 per week per team covers the use of the church's facilities.

Additionally, prepared meals can usually be purchased from the host church if desired. Churches generally do not provide breakfast, and the costs of meals listed above will be the same as those in churches.

\*\*\* Please send your materials and lodging/meals money at least four weeks prior to your visit to allow Pasos de Fe staff time to purchase the materials you will need for the week.

Make checks payable to "Pasos de Fe" (9210 Dyer Street El Paso TX 79924)

## PACKING LIST

### WHAT TO BRING WITH YOU - AND WHAT TO LEAVE BEHIND

#### INDIVIDUALS WILL NEED TO BRING:

\_\_\_\_\_ One of the following: (a) passport; (b) copy of birth certificate and photo ID; or (c) voter's registration card and photo ID.

\*\*\*If traveling to Chihuahua City, consult pages 31 & 32

\_\_\_\_\_ Bible/ notebook/ journal

\_\_\_\_\_ Camera and film if desired

\_\_\_\_\_ Sleeping bag or Sheets and pillow (unless staying at the Family Center or Verdad y Fe)

\_\_\_\_\_ Towel and washcloth

\_\_\_\_\_ Water bottle with lid

\_\_\_\_\_ Sunscreen, hat, and sunglasses

\_\_\_\_\_ Insect repellent

\_\_\_\_\_ Any medications you are taking, in original bottles, along with the *original* prescription (required if bringing the medications back into the USA)

\_\_\_\_\_ Personal toiletry items

\_\_\_\_\_ Good working shoes (lace-up tennis shoes or boots)

\_\_\_\_\_ Work gloves

\_\_\_\_\_ Comfortable and modest work clothes

(NO tight, skimpy, or extremely baggy shorts, spaghetti strap blouses or tube tops)

\_\_\_\_\_ Appropriate clothing for worship services

(dress/skirt for women and nice slacks/ long pants for men)

\_\_\_\_\_ Clothing for tours and community activities

(Knee length walking shorts are acceptable)

\_\_\_\_\_ Swimming suit (one piece only - no bikinis or speedos)

#### TEAMS SHOULD BRING:

\_\_\_\_\_ Gel hand disinfectant

\_\_\_\_\_ Spanish/English dictionary

\_\_\_\_\_ Ear plugs

\_\_\_\_\_ Liquid hand soap

\_\_\_\_\_ Pre-moistened towelettes

\_\_\_\_\_ A few flashlights

\_\_\_\_\_ First aid kit



#### PLEASE DO NOT BRING:

Valuables, expensive jewelry, a computer or other large electronic equipment, or abbreviated clothing (short shorts, mini skirts, cut-offs, halter or tube tops, etc.)

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

**Please see our web site for more resources:**

[www.pasosdefe.net](http://www.pasosdefe.net)

### **PUBLISHED DOCUMENTS**

#### **Mission:**

Elmer, Duane. *Cross-Cultural Conflict*. Varsity Press, 1993.

Eaton, Chris & Ken Hurst. *Vacations with a Purpose*. David C. Cook Publishing, 1993.

Vial, Debby D. *When God's People Travel Together...* Presbyterian Distribution

Campbell-Evans, Sally. *People, Places and Partnerships* (workbook). Presbyterian Distribution: 1-800-524-2612

*Having an Excellent Adventure*. Friendship Press, 1992.

"Presbyterian Border Ministry Mission Team Guide" and videos. Presbyterian Border Ministry US office.

(This should be sent to you directly once you are confirmed for a trip. If you do not receive it, please contact the PBM at (210) 299-5011 or email at [jennifercollins@swbell.net](mailto:jennifercollins@swbell.net))

#### **Mexico:**

Immigration & Border Issues: [www.marketplace.publicradio.org/features/undocumented\\_war](http://www.marketplace.publicradio.org/features/undocumented_war)

Barry, Tom. *Mexico: A Country Guide*. Inter-Hemispheric Education Resources, 1992.

Riding, Alan. *Distant Neighbors*. Harper and Row, 1990.

Weber, David J. et al. *Foreigners in their Native Land: Historical Roots of the Mexican Americans*. University of New Mexico Press, 1973.

### **Spanish Language Programs**

Schwarz, Carol L. *Spanish For Mission Trips*. Mission Travel and Translation, Telephone: 956-565-3646.

(An entire Spanish language learning program with cassettes, geared toward Christian missions.)

### **Web Sites and E-mail Addresses**

Mexican Consulate E-mail: [conmxny@quicklink.com](mailto:conmxny@quicklink.com)

U.S. State Department website: <http://www.state.gov>

Latin America information: <http://lanic.utexas.edu/las.html>

Mexico information: <http://mexonline.com>

Presbyterian Border Ministry website: <http://www.pcusa.org/border>

#### *In Spanish:*

National Presbyterian Church website: <http://www.inpmar.org>

On Presbynet join "Presbyterian Border Ministry" meeting to communicate with missionaries and others interested in the Border Ministry.

**WE, AS MISSION TEAM LEADERS,  
UNDERSTAND THAT WE ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR:**

- Preparing the mission team for the experience by reading the Mission Team Manual;
- Acquiring general knowledge necessary for the trip (including some basic familiarity with the Spanish language, Mexican culture, and the expectations of Presbyterian churches in Mexico);
- Planning whatever activities (crafts, songs, games, dramas, etc.) that the team intends to do as part of a Vacation Bible School (if applicable);
- Consulting with the Pasos de Fe staff to determine what, if any, extra materials or specialized knowledge may be required for the type of trip we have chosen;
- Funding:
  - 1) \$300.00 Deposit / Administration fee
  - 2) \$25.00 per person per day
  - 3) The cost of lodging and meals
  - 4) Optional donation to Pasos de Fe
- Sending deposit and administrative fee when dates are reserved and sending other funds and forms to the office of Pasos de Fe at least one month prior to the scheduled date of arrival en Mexico;
- Making decisions regarding lodging and meal arrangements for the mission team in consultation with the Pasos de Fe staff;
- Providing transportation for our mission team during its visit, and buying Mexican insurance for any vehicles that we will drive;
- Ensuring that team members have adequate medical/accident insurance;

**"PASOS DE FE" WILL PROVIDE:**

- An opportunity for mission team participants to experience the culture and church life in Juarez / Chihuahua MX.
- Mission Team Manual, and other resources to aid team preparations as requested;
- A work site, if applicable, and help with arrangements for meals and lodging;
- Advance preparation for a work project (purchase of materials including tools if applicable);
- A staff member to accompany your team during your stay in Mexico;
- Orientation and de-briefing opportunities for the groups;
- Suggestions and aid in planning recreational and educational experiences for groups;
- Organized educational and cultural tours with a staff member to lead.



## **Covenant Agreements And Information Forms**

**To be returned with fees one month prior to your trip to:**

Presbyterian Border Ministry at PASOS DE FE  
9210 DYER STREET  
EL PASO TX 79924-6404

Page number 25 and page number 26:  
Please copy and return one form for each participant

Page number 27 and page number 28:  
Only one copy per team is necessary

# MISSION PARTICIPANT AGREEMENT

(one for EACH participant)

I (name), \_\_\_\_\_, will be attending a Pasos de Fe mission team experience during (dates) \_\_\_\_\_. I understand that the sponsoring church or group provides travel/accident insurance during this activity. In the event of accident or injury, I agree that the church or group is not liable beyond the limits of the travel/accident coverage. Further, I grant the leaders of the mission team permission to authorize any emergency medical procedures, should that become necessary, and to authorize treatment by a licensed physician.

I agree to participate fully in the educational, service, and fellowship activities of this mission experience. I understand that use of alcohol, drugs, and tobacco are unacceptable to the Mexican church, and will not be used during this mission trip. I agree to wear modest clothing (no tube tops, spaghetti strap shirts, short-shorts, or other overly tight or suggestive clothing). If I fail to comply with the preceding statements, I understand that I will be sent home immediately at my family's expense.

I/We, the undersigned, individually and/or as parents/guardians of the above named mission team participant acknowledge that the above named mission team participant will be participating in a Pasos de Fe work or study experience and related activities, and will be using facilities at the mission team participant's own risk. I/We have been advised of the physical, mental, social, and safety requirements of this experience. I/We on my/our own behalf, hereby release, discharge and indemnify Pasos de Fe, its directors, officers, employees, agents, and all volunteer personnel from all liabilities for damage, injury, or illness to the mission participant or his/her property during his/her participation in or travel to or from any Pasos de Fe work experience or related event.

Further, I/we authorize the leaders of the mission team on my/our behalf and at my/our account to take such measures and arrange for such medical treatment by a licensed physician and hospital treatment as the leader of the mission team may deem advisable for the health and well-being of the participant without the need for further consent or permission.

(signed) \_\_\_\_\_ Participant \_\_\_\_\_ date

(signed) \_\_\_\_\_ Parent or Guardian \_\_\_\_\_ date

(signed) \_\_\_\_\_ Parent or Guardian \_\_\_\_\_ date

This space for notarization - for participants under 18 yrs. of age traveling to Chihuahua City:

Sworn to before me this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 200\_\_.

State of \_\_\_\_\_, County of \_\_\_\_\_

Notary Public Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

My term expires: \_\_\_\_\_

# Participant Information Form

(one for EACH participant)

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

AGE: \_\_\_\_\_

DATE OF BIRTH: \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

EMAIL: \_\_\_\_\_

HOME TELEPHONE: (\_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

EMERGENCY TELEPHONE NUMBERS (PROVIDE TWO):

	Name	Telephone Number	Morning/Evening
(1)	_____	_____	_____
(2)	_____	_____	_____

Primary Medical Insurance Carrier: \_\_\_\_\_

Policy Or Identification Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Secondary Medical Insurance Carrier: \_\_\_\_\_

Policy Or Identification Number: \_\_\_\_\_

## MEDICAL INFORMATION:

Are you allergic to any food, medications, animals, etc.? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_

If "yes" please list: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Are there any other medical/ diet issues the leaders should know about?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

# Mission Team Agreement

(one for each team)

NAME AND ADDRESS OF SPONSORING ORGANIZATION:

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

PHONE/FAX: \_\_\_\_\_

E-MAIL: \_\_\_\_\_

NAME OF GROUP LEADER: \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE/FAX: \_\_\_\_\_

E-MAIL: \_\_\_\_\_

WE ARE INTERESTED IN PARTICIPATING IN THE FOLLOWING SERVICE PROJECT(S):

\_\_\_\_\_ Construction

\_\_\_\_\_ Vacation Bible School/Crafts

\_\_\_\_\_ Medical

\_\_\_\_\_ Educational

\_\_\_\_\_ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

TOTAL ANTICIPATED NUMBER OF TEAM MEMBERS: \_\_\_\_\_

TOTAL CHILDREN: (<12): \_\_\_\_\_ M \_\_\_\_\_ F; TOTAL YOUTH (12-17): \_\_\_\_\_ M \_\_\_\_\_ F

TOTAL ADULTS (>17): \_\_\_\_\_ M \_\_\_\_\_ F

WE WILL BE ARRIVING ON (date) \_\_\_\_\_ AT (time) \_\_\_\_\_

BY (type of transportation) \_\_\_\_\_

Flight # (if applicable) \_\_\_\_\_

WE WILL BE STAYING AT: \_\_\_\_\_

WE EXPECT TO LEAVE ON (date) \_\_\_\_\_ AT (time) \_\_\_\_\_

Flight # (if applicable) \_\_\_\_\_

## ORGANIZATION'S WAIVER OF RESPONSIBILITY

We acknowledge that mission team members will be participating in a Pasos de Fe mission work or study experience, or related activities, and will be using facilities at the mission team participants' own risk. We have been advised of the physical, mental, social, and safety requirements of this experience. We, on our own behalf, hereby release, discharge, and indemnify Pasos de Fe, its directors, officers, employees, agents, and all volunteer personnel from all liabilities for damage, injury, or illness to the mission participants or their property during their participation in or travel to or from any Pasos de Fe work experience or related event. We agree to pay any and all expenses incurred by group participants for damage, injury, illness, or accident. A consent form for each participant has been signed by them and by both parents or legal guardians if they are under 18 years of age.

### CONSENT FORMS AND LIST OF PARTICIPANTS ARE ATTACHED

Church/Group Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

We are covered by our own insurance policy(ies) held by:

Company: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Policy #: \_\_\_\_\_

Church/Group contact:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone #: \_\_\_\_\_

This mission trip is for the period:

from: (date) \_\_\_\_\_ to: (date) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Signature of team leader*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Date*

## INFORMATION FOR TRAVEL TO TO CHIHUAHUA CITY

ATTENTION: PLEASE READ THIS SECTION CAREFULLY IF YOU INTEND TO TRAVEL TO CHIHUAHUA CITY OR ANYWHERE ELSE BEYOND THE IMMEDIATE BORDER ZONE.

### ITEMS NEEDED FOR EACH PERSON:

1. Original Birth Certificate (not a notarized copy) and Photo I.D. *or*
2. Passport (If your passport has ever been stamped by Mexican customs officials, it must bear a corresponding stamp showing that you have left the country.) *and*
3. If a group participant is under 18 years of age, the minor must bring notarized written permission from his/her parents or legal guardians declaring that he/she will be in Mexico for the specified time and for the particular purpose with their knowledge and approval.

### TOURIST VISAS

#### You may obtain one of two different types of visas:

1. A 7-day Tourist Visa: This will allow you to stay in Mexico for 7 days (beginning the day you arrive and ending the day you leave- e.g. Mon.-Sun. or Fri.- Thurs.) This visa is free, but you must return it to the officials inside the 21 KM checkpoint before leaving the country. When you turn it in, the official should stamp your passport showing that you have left the interior of the country. If you want a 7-day Visa, you must specify this at the time that it is issued, or the official will automatically assume that you want a 180-day Visa.
2. A 180-day Tourist Visa: This will allow you to stay in Mexico for up to 180 days (during which time you may leave and re-enter the country as many times as desired). If you plan to stay more than 7 days, you must use this visa. You will normally pay for it upon leaving the country by depositing the equivalent of about \$20 (U.S.) – or 210 pesos – in a bank in Ciudad Juárez or Ciudad Chihuahua, at which time a bank employee will stamp your visa as paid. Afterwards you will turn in the stamped visa to an immigration office at one of the ports of entry, where an official will stamp your passport showing that you have left the country. Of course, if you do intend to return to Mexico at least once within 180 days, you should hold on to your visa, and only cancel it the last time you leave the country within the 180-day period. (You will not get a receipt for the amount paid for the 180-day Visa unless you specifically ask the bank employee who receives payment to make a copy of the visa before you take it to the immigration office.)

**\*\*\*CAUTION:** If you fail to cancel your visa before its expiration (whether it is for 7 days or 180 days) you will be considered to have remained in Mexico. For each day after the expiration of your visa that you are considered to remain in Mexico, you will be fined an additional \$4 (U.S.). If you have not followed the cancellation process described above and you attempt to re-enter the country by car after your visa has expired, it is likely that you will be assessed the full amount of fines accumulated over the period after the expiration of your visa up until the time of your return to Mexico. These fines must be paid at a bank in Ciudad Juárez (and not at the 21 KM checkpoint). Refusal to pay such fines will result in inability to obtain a new visa.

### ITEMS NEEDED FOR EACH VEHICLE:

1. (a) Titles to all vehicles you will be driving into Mexico, or (b) current vehicle registration papers for these vehicles, or (c) if the vehicles have been rented, the invoice from the rental agency to which these vehicles belong (the contract must be in the name of the person who will be driving the vehicle and show the correct VIN number). It is highly recommended that you bring more than one of the above, if possible. Using notarized copies of these documents in lieu of the originals is discouraged but sometimes allowed (even if they are accepted, using notarized copies will likely prolong the process of obtaining a permit).

2. If the vehicle belongs to someone other than the person who will be driving it in Mexico, a letter stating that this person (mentioned by name) will be allowed to use the vehicle (identified by VIN, year, make, etc.) in Mexico for the specified dates and purposes, signed by the owner of the vehicle and notarized.
3. A credit or debit card *in the name of the person who will be driving the vehicle* and is physically present at the checkpoint. Visa, American Express, and Master Card are accepted. Expect to pay about \$29.70 (U.S. currency) for the vehicle permit. (No type of check or money order is acceptable. If the driver does not possess a credit or debit card, you may pay cash, but will have to leave a deposit of between \$200 and \$400, depending on the age of the vehicle, to be returned upon cancellation of the permit.)
4. The person authorized to drive the vehicle will also be required to show their original passport, although a birth certificate or voter registration card with picture I.D. should suffice. The driver must obtain a tourist visa (see below) and short-term Mexican insurance before purchasing a vehicle permit (the tourist visa, proof of insurance, and the vehicle permit may be issued at the 21 KM checkpoint). Of course, all drivers should also have a driver's license. The driver must make copies of these documents (which can be done in the same building) and must also show the *originals* of each document.
5. If you have driven a car into the interior of Mexico before, it is advisable to carry the receipt showing cancellation of the previous vehicle permit, if possible.

### **Vehicle Insurance:**

Your vehicle must be insured by a Mexican insurance company before you can receive a vehicle permit. Several of these companies have offices inside the 21 KM checkpoint, where you may purchase coverage upon arrival (amounts vary depending on your vehicle's value). This insurance must specify the person who will be paying for the vehicle permit (see below) as a driver.

### **VEHICLE PERMITS:**

Like the standard Tourist Visa, the Vehicle Permit also expires at the end of 180 days. Upon payment of \$29.70 (U.S.) and presentation of the appropriate documentation (listed above, under "Items Needed for Vehicle") you will receive a receipt with an attached windshield sticker to be placed on the windshield of your vehicle. When you return to the 21 KM checkpoint at the end of your trip, you must cancel this permit (as well as tourist visas). The vehicle permit is cancelled by an official stationed outside the checkpoint offices, who should remove the sticker from your windshield and take the original receipt (it is important that the official should keep this receipt, showing that you have left the country). The official should then give you a new receipt showing that you have exited the interior. Keep this second receipt, if you intend to return to Mexico by car at any future time.

**\*\*\*CAUTION:** As with the Tourist Visa, failure to cancel a vehicle permit will result in penalties for the person formerly assigned as driver if that person should return to the interior of Mexico by car after the expiration of the 6-month permit. Until the original receipt (obtained upon purchase of the permit) is returned to the Mexican immigration office, you will be denied permission, upon returning to Mexico, to drive any vehicle into the interior, regardless of whether or not it is the same as the vehicle used the previous time. If you plan to drive a vehicle into the interior of Mexico, and you have ever done so before, make sure that you have followed the permit cancellation process described above before you name yourself as driver again. If you believe that you may have failed to properly cancel your permit after a previous trip, it is advisable to choose someone else as 'driver' for official purposes.

### **Tolls:**

If you are going to Chihuahua, you should budget 137 pesos for tolls each way (274 pesos round trip, or about \$25 U.S. per vehicle)