

God Uses Youth to Breathe New Life into Mountain Church

By Steven Shepard

I was in central-west Mexico from January 7-20. My main purpose was to visit the Huichol church in the mountain village of Guadalupe Ocotan, where CPI has worked since the year 2000. Pastor Domingo went to be with Jesus six years ago, and since that time they haven't had a pastor. The congregation continues to persevere through many trials and some persecution. CPI has tried to find a pastor that speaks their language, but so far, we have been unsuccessful. However, in the past two years God has been moving by His Spirit among the youth. They are on fire for the Lord. In March of 2020, CPI was able to sponsor two of the young people, Elian Chavez (19) and Paloma de la Cruz (21), for nine months of intensive ministry training in Oaxaca. Paloma is the daughter of the pastor who passed away.

I arrived in the village just after Elian and Paloma returned from their training, and I immediately saw growth in their vision, motivation, and ministry gifts. Elian wrote, *"In these nine months of training I learned to love missions and to value all the cultures of the world...Our goal is to reach them for Christ...I no longer think as I did before. I know God's mission is more important than my own life."*

During our stay in Guadalupe, my co-worker Pastor Lenon and I conducted two days of training workshops, three special worship services, served communion, and baptized four new believers.

At the Sunday service, young Elian preached in his native language of Huichol with a poise and confidence that only the Lord could have given him. Before, much of the teaching was done in Spanish. It was evident the people needed to hear God's Word in their heart language. They listened with rapt attention. It was just what they needed.



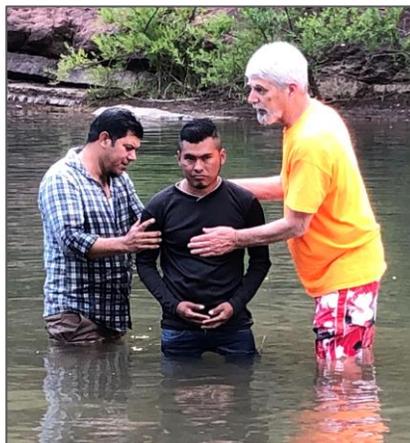
Steven with Elian Chavez and Paloma De la Cruz after they recently returned from nine months of intensive ministry training in Oaxaca. They are now serving at the church in the remote Huichol mountain village of Guadalupe Ocotan.



Above left: Narciso and his wife Josefina. Narciso came to the Lord a little over one year ago. He was working as a night watchman in a coastal area requiring him to be away from his family, but has decided to come back to Guadalupe to serve the Lord with his family.

Above right: Elian ministers the Word in his native Huichol language at the Sunday service.

Left: Communion at one of our evening meetings and baptism. Pastor Lenon and I baptized four new believers – including Narciso pictured above – in a mountain stream about an hour's drive from the village.





Partnering in Church Planting with Isaac in Western Uganda

CPI began partnering with Isaac Mugisa in 2014 to plant churches in the remote Rwenzori Mountains of western Uganda. Isaac has planted seven churches in the region.

CPI helped with two of these churches: one in the small community of Katumba and the other in the town of Bundibugyo. The first meeting in Katumba was held in 2014 on CPI's first trip to Uganda. In 2018, CPI provided the funding for the purchase of property for their building. There are now about 75 people that attend the church in Katumba. Isaac says about 50 are new converts. The church in Bundibugyo began meeting in 2020, and CPI provided the rent for the first year. It has an attendance of about 100 people, of which about 75 are new to the faith. CPI also has conducted training, helped to launch micro-businesses, and is providing school lunches for about 235 children of the God's Mercy Christian School. CPI's vision is to aid native workers in planting biblical churches in un-churched and needy communities.



Above: Part of the congregation of the Bread of Life Church in the town of Bundibugyo (pop 20,000), near the border of Congo in western Uganda. This work was started about one year ago.

The Need for Reconciliation

Article by Steven Shepard

For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. (Romans 5:10)

The greatest need of mankind is reconciliation, first and foremost with God, and secondly with each other. Reconciliation means the action of restoring a right relationship between two people or groups that were formerly estranged or at enmity. We enter the world estranged from God and at enmity with Him, because of our morally corrupt human natures – out of which proceed our evil thoughts, words, and deeds. Because of this objective moral guilt before an infinitely righteous God, we deserve His judgment. But there is a way to be reconciled with God and restored to fellowship with Him. God sent His Son to suffer and die to pay the penalty for *all* sins – past, present and future – of everyone who believes in Jesus. Reconciliation has already been accomplished through the death of Jesus on the cross. Our part is to trust in what Jesus has done. If we do, not only will we be reconciled with God, but we will be reconciled with every other person who believes in Jesus, regardless of ethnicity, gender, or color of skin. All believers are already united in one Spirit to God, and reconciled to each another through Jesus' work on the cross.

Only faith in Christ can set us free from our moral guilt and make us whole. And only faith in Christ can heal the divisions between people and restore genuine love. No human philosophies or social movements will work. Only Christ saves sinners.

Scriptures on sin and judgment: Romans 3:10-12; Isaiah 59:2; 64:6; Jeremiah 13:33; Ephesians 2:1-3, 4:17-18; Romans 1:18; 2 Thessalonians 1:3-10; Hebrews 9:27; John 3:36

Scriptures on reconciliation: Ephesians 2:13,16; Col 1:19-23; Galatians 3:27-28; 1 Corinthians 12:12-13

Below on left: Rose, a member of the Bundibugyo church. Rose testifies of having suffered rejection, loneliness and almost committing suicide, and that through Christ her life completely changed. Isaac says, "she now lives happily with a peace of mind and heart."

Bottom right: Some of the congregation in the small rural mountain community of Katumba where we visited on our first trip to Uganda in 2014.



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