

These are comments forwarded to us by Ministerio de Fe, our mission partner in Reynosa, supplemented by a few of our own random notes.

**MISSION STATEMENT FOR
FAITH MINISTRY/MINISTERIO DE FE, INC.
McAllen, TX–Reynosa & Miguel Aleman Tamps., Mexico**

Being grateful to God for all the Blessings He gives us, including the Good News of redemption in His Son Jesus Christ, “Faith Ministry/MDF Inc.” a ministry of compassion, based on the love of our Lord Jesus Christ, is responding to the spiritual, physical, housing and other needs of the people that live in the Texas/Mexico border area and when possible, in the interior of Mexico.

Our Goals are as follows:

- A. To share the Good News of our Lord Jesus Christ with others in the communities where we are working.
- B. To provide medical assistance and medications to members of the communities where we are working.
- C. To provide housing facilities to the impoverished (consisting of a modest 12' x 24' block building) to replace the unlivable dwellings in the communities where we are working.
- D. To establish other programs that will show the love of our Lord Jesus Christ in action.
- E. To serve as a means of uniting two cultures and two nations under the mantle of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Faith Ministry/MDF Inc. is a strong praying ministry based on the Holy Scripture text, Galatians 5:6 “For all we need is Faith working through Love.”

DRESS

You will be working hard and will want to wear work clothes that you will not mind getting dirty. Good shoes are a must. It is recommended that you have a pair of lace up shoes (i.e. tennis shoes) or work boots.

During the summer temperatures will be HOT. Hat, sunglasses, sunscreen, sweatbands, gloves, etc. are almost mandatory. Most youth group members wear cut-offs and T-shirts. Shorts are acceptable, as long as they are not short shorts.

Abbreviated forms of dress will be misunderstood in the communities where you will be working. In this community, women dress modestly. Short shorts and/or halter tops will be offensive. If attending church services, women should wear dresses, skirts or semi dress pants.

During the winter months (Dec.-Feb.), temperatures can be in the 40's with drizzling rain. The weather can also be in the 70's. Please bring clothing for various temperatures during this time of the year. The rest of the year has moderate weather conditions (60's to 100's).

SUPPLIES

Work groups should bring coolers for lunches, soft drinks, water, etc. The tools for use at the work-site are provided. Faith Ministry/MDF Inc. will advise you if you need to bring any special tools.

ETIQUETTE

Drinking of any alcoholic beverages and smoking are considered unacceptable behavior by Faith Ministry/MDF Inc.

LOCAL TRAVEL

Work Groups need vans for daily travel to the work site. Driving in Mexico is not difficult, but Reynosa is a congested, urban area with the challenges that are inherent to any such city. The quality of the road depends on the project location. Main highways and the main city streets are paved. Faith Ministry/MDF Inc. works in areas where the poorest people live and the streets are not paved. Driving in these areas must be done slowly and carefully. ***Note for SHPC & DSPC: everyone on the team must exercise care for their own safety and that of other team members on the road and on the site.***

INSURANCE

Work Groups should purchase insurance for the vehicles used for driving in Mexico. This is common and insurance (available locally) is sold by the day or week. Insurance can be ordered ahead of time by phone using a credit card and picked up upon arrival. **Word of caution!!** If you rent a van to drive to the Rio Grande Valley, be certain that the van is permitted to leave the USA and can be driven in Mexico. If you borrow (or rent) a van, be certain to get written notarized permission from the owner to use the van in Mexico. Written permission is necessary to obtain the required insurance.

PROOF OF CITIZENSHIP

Each person in the work group needs to have proof of US citizenship. A birth certificate, voter's registration card, or passport provides this information. (A passport will be necessary in 2007.) A driver's license is NOT sufficient. If there are members of the work group who are not US citizens, they need to bring their passports and obtain a multiple entry visa. **THIS IS VERY IMPORTANT.** U.S. Immigration (now homeland security?) Expects each person returning from Mexico to be able to furnish upon request, the documentation proving citizenship of an appropriate visa for non-U.S. citizens.

FOOD

One of the best ways to experience the culture and to meet the people in the communities is to eat together.. It is POSSIBLE that the families will invite you to eat together. It is OK to eat with them. Just remember a few precautions:

Water: Do not drink water from the tap. If someone offers you water, make sure that it is bottled or has been boiled. Also, be careful with the ice. (Chipped ice is a 'no-no.' Square ice with holes is usually OK. If in doubt, don't take.)

Fruits and Vegetables: The problem with fruits and vegetables is that they may have been washed in water. To be safe; eat fruits that have been peeled or have a rind you can remove.

Chili or hot peppers: This varies from person to person and from spice to spice. If you are sensitive to spicy food, ask which food might have hot peppers. For the most part, the families in the communities are sensitive to this and will serve food that does not have a lot of chili. Usually the food in itself isn't spicy; but the families serve salsa or hot salsa on the side.

Restaurants: Many groups choose to "eat out" once or twice during the week. The above precautions apply to restaurants also. Ask Faith Ministry for suggestions of restaurants in Reynosa. There are several that are clean and reasonable in price and are not "just for tourists." Ask for suggestions of restaurants on the Texas side of the border as well.

Food Note for SHPC/DSPC: We will definitely eat out on Sunday and Thursday nights. Hopefully, Mon-Tues-Wed nights we will eat at the Ministerio de Fe facility in the colonias and have a meal cooked by the local women. Lunches will be at the MdF facility, put together by our group and complemented by the food provided by our host family. Breakfast will be at the hotel; bring your favorite box of cereal to share; milk and fruit will be provided.

Hotel note for SHPC/DSPC: We will be staying at a hotel in Reynosa called HotelVirrey, Blvd. Hidalgo y P. Balboa, Cd. Reynosa, TAMPS. It is across the street from a grocery store and a pizza place. It has a pool, and protected parking. No one speaks English, though, so if your family should need to call for any reason, it's best to try to get a Spanish speaker to help you negotiate your call. In the alternative, you can ask for Gaston Broyles with Shepherd of the Hills and leave a message. Some helpful phrases include:

Yo soy (-your name here-) (I am _____)

Necesito hablar con Gaston Broyles con la iglesia de Austin, Shepherd of the Hills. (I need to speak with Gaston Broyles with the Austin church, SHPC.)

Por favor, quisiera dejar un mensaje para el. (I would like to leave a message for him.)

Mi numero es _____. (My number is _____)

Mi nombre es _____. (My name is _____)

Por favor, dele el mensaje. (Please give him the message.)

(Accents are missing on these phrases—my laptop doesn't provide them.) The phone number for the hotel is, direct dial: 011-52-899-923-12-10 or 011-52-899-923-10-50. You can also call Ministry of Faith offices in McAllen, and they will try to get a message to Gaston. (See website for further information.)

WHAT TO BRING

Passport, voter's registration or birth certificate (notarized copy)	Extra towel (the hotel will have some, but an extra is always good, washcloth, too)	Nice outfit to attend church services (SHPC/DSPC, we probably don't need this)
Good walking shoes (Lace up tennis shoes or boots—some chose steel toed boots)	Comfortable, modest work clothes	Sunscreen, hat, sun glasses, bandana, extra bandana, etc.
Personal toiletry items	First aid kit (antibiotic ointment, bandaids, etc.)	Camera, film
Pre-moistened towelettes (for lunch time)	extra pair of glasses or contacts	Coolers, water jugs (SHPC provides)
work gloves	Bible/notebook/journal	Medications
Money for dinner	If driving, insurance doc's	Swimsuit (hotel has pool)

CODE OF ETHICS FOR TRAVELERS*

1. Travel in a spirit of humility and with a genuine desire to know more about the people of your host country.
2. Be sensitively aware of the feelings of other people, thus preventing what might be considered offensive behavior on your part. This applies very much to photography.
3. Cultivate the habit of listening and observing, rather than merely hearing and seeing.
4. Realize that often the people in the country you visit have time concepts and thought patterns different from your own. This does not make them inferior, only different.
5. Instead of looking for that “beach paradise,” discover enrichment of seeing a different way of life through other eyes.
6. Acquaint yourself with local customs; people will be happy with you.
7. Instead of Western practice of knowing all of the answers, cultivate the habit of asking questions. Cultivate the habit of listening.
8. Remember that you are only one of thousands of tourists visiting this country and do not expect special privileges.
9. If you really want your experience to be a “home away from home” it is foolish to waste your money on traveling.
10. When you are shopping, remember that the “bargain” you obtained was only possible because of the low wages paid to the maker.
11. Do not make promises to people in your host country unless you are certain you can carry through.
12. Spend time on your daily experience and attempt to deepen your understanding. It has been said that what enriches you may rob and violate others.

* *Ministerio de Fe acknowledges the source for this list as Tourism in the Third World.*

SOME INFORMATION ON REYNOSA FROM MINISTERIO DE FE

Population increase: With the opening of twin plant operations (maquilladoras) in border cities, a high number of people from the interior of Mexico moved to the border towns to take advantage of the job opportunities. Ten years ago, Reynosa Tamps. Mexico was a city of 250,000-300,000 inhabitants. Now it has grown to over one million people. The job market is not large enough to meet the needs of the people. This creates a vast amount of inhabitants without jobs, or working at low pay-scale jobs that do not meet Mexico's minimum wage of \$3.00/day.

Peso devaluation: Throughout the last fifteen (15) years, the peso devaluation has hurt many people in the area. In the late 1970's and early 1980's, if you had a \$1,000 bill, you had \$80.00 U.S. dollars. Now, a \$1,000 peso coin (they stopped circulating the peso bill is worth 14 cents (US). The new currency has dropped the zeros in the peso amount, making the old \$1,000 pesos (one) \$N 1.00 nuevo peso, or 14 cents (US). The current rate of exchange is \$N 8-9 nuevos pesos per US dollar and it keeps floating. In some exchange houses in town, you get as little as \$N 8.10 nuevos pesos per US dollar.

Homelessness: The increase of population and the peso devaluation has created a very high percentage of homeless families. Many of the people who came from the interior of Mexico to look for jobs did not find one and due to lack of opportunity and money, were forced to remain here. The people that lived in the city of Reynosa, with jobs, living in rented houses and making a halfway decent living, were also affected by the peso devaluation. Not earning the same amount of money as before and having to pay a higher rent for the same house, they were forced to leave the city. Where do people in both these categories go? They moved to communities called "colonias" in the outskirts of town where they became "squatters."

Medical Attention: This became almost non-existent in most of the "colonias" (Communities) because of lack of money and availability of medical facilities. The family income, which is normally very small, becomes used up for food and other essential needs, therefore leaving no money available for medical attention.

Hopelessness: The people become hopeless because of the above-mentioned conditions. The need to take the "Good News of Hope" in our Lord Jesus Christ has become a high priority. By stressing the importance of a spiritual life of Faith, Hope and Love, we feel the people of the "colonias" can cope in a positive way with their daily struggles.

SUMMARY

FAITH MINISTRY/MINISTERIO DE FE, INC. and its staff have felt the guidance of the Holy Spirit to reach out and try to alleviate some of the needs that face our brothers and sisters in Christ from Reynosa and Miguel Aleman (our newest project) Mexico. With your prayers and support, we feel that we can reach our goals set in MDF proposals.

See website for further information about the project.