

A Journey from Death to Beauty

Saint Death gets some visitors

In August a five person prayer team came to visit us. Their first stop was a visit to a church of *La Santa Muerte*. Santa Muerte is a two million strong offshoot of Catholicism that worships Death Personified as a Patron Saint. Evangelical Christian music played in a small church where Death and the Virgin of Guadalupe were surrounded by candles in glasses that say, "Death to my enemies." The rest of the week the team saw and prayed for many Christians and ministries here in Mexico City and the state of Morelos. *We give thanks to the Lord for this team and their valuable ministry of intercession.*

"Moviendo el tapete"

Right after the team left, I taught a 20 hour conference on Reformed Identity in three days at the seminary of the National Presbyterian Church. Dr. Justo González had to cancel his conference, and I was asked to fill in for him with a conference of my own. I was very nervous about stepping in for such a celebrated scholar and author, as well as having to teach the sessions to bachelor's and master's students as well as to visiting pastors. But the conference went well, and on the second day a pastor from Acapulco encouraged me by saying that he was secretly glad Dr. González hadn't been able to come, because my conference was important and that it "*movió el tapete*" – it shook people up and made them think.

The Old West

Blanca helped the Gethsemane Church in Xochimilco organize its Vacation Bible School, August 8-12. Over a hundred children, mostly non-Christian, attended the western-themed VBS. The church members worked hard – in addition to decorating the church and teaching the classes, the church had to provide lunch for all those hungry little ones and then clean up each day. *Pray for the Spirit to bring lasting fruit in the form of changed lives of the children and their families.*

Back to school

In August Daniel and Alexandra were finally reunited with their classmates after a year's absence due to our home service plans. They are happy to see their friends again, and are doing quite well academically, too. I returned to our own seminary to teach New Testament and philosophy, too.

(over)

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Dave and Blanca Gifford

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Ministry objectives:

1. Teach at / develop the Reformed Theological Seminary of Mexico, and develop free Spanish resources on the web
2. Give conferences on various topics across Mexico to Reformed Presbyterian (RPC) churches
3. Network the RPC by maintaining its website and its pastor's directory
4. Assist local churches in Mexico City and host Service and Learning teams from Christian Reformed churches

Shopping spree

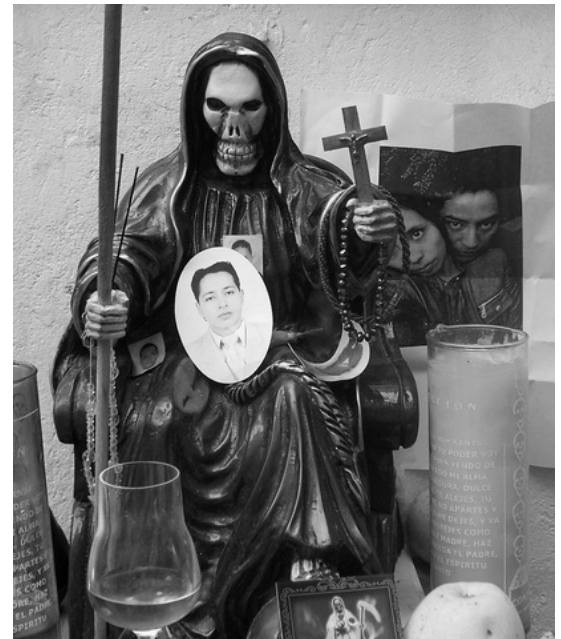
The prayer team surprised us by bringing down *all* of the 162 Spanish books that were donated by not-really-retired missionary Winn Gritter in June. Soon afterwards we got news that the donations for the seminary library book project had passed the halfway mark. Seminary rector Luis Be Huchim and I went on a shopping spree to three different bookstores and bought almost 200 books. Teachers and students alike were elated, as were we. You can still contribute to this project with a check to World Missions, using fund code 80-570-6800-010-00.

Beauty in the rough

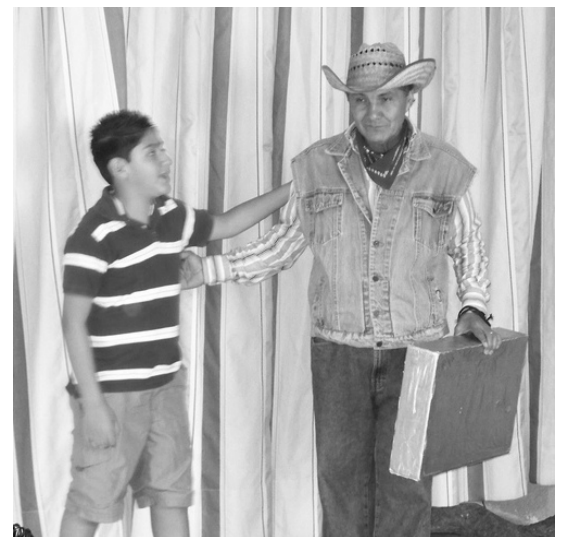
At the end of September I traveled to the city of Campeche to give a two day conference on forgiveness, reconciliation and communication to *La Iglesia La Hermosa* (The Beautiful Church). The pastor and elders asked me to speak on this topic since the church has been struggling with conflicts between families and individuals in the church. We looked at forgiving and asking forgiveness, at Matthew 18.15-17 as ‘evangelism within the church’, and at techniques for communicating in the midst of conflict. At the end, many people stood to say how helpful the conferences were to them, and one woman even stood up, in tears, to apologize to an elderly man of the church. Please pray with us that the Lord will use what was shared to bring lasting reconciliation and change, so that the ‘Beautiful’ Church can become beautiful indeed!

Thanks to all of you who have been praying for us, our family and our ministry. We are relishing the way the Lord has been answering your prayer requests. Thanks also to those of you who have sent in donations toward our support recently. We are grateful that our support level is right on target. Many blessings to you in Christ. May you see less Death and more Beauty in your lives. In Christ Jesus,

Dave and Blanca Gifford, Daniel and Alexandra



Saint death



**Pastor – or should we say Sheriff -
Odón at VBS**