



## Update from Phil and Olivia Iekel

### December 2021

Dear Friends,

We are currently in the United States as we receive training and raise support for our new roles as the team leaders of Engineering Ministries International's Nicaragua office. We are immensely grateful for this time of reconnection and preparation before we welcome a new staff team to the office in early 2022.

We'd like to share an article titled *iPrepárate! Getting Ready!* that gives insight into EMI's work, our team, and a recent project with El Monte ministries in Mexico. It was written by Phil and our Mexican colleague, Jorge Agüero. The full article and a 4-minute video from our trip to Mexico can be found at:  
[www.inside.emiworld.org/2021/september/preparate](http://www.inside.emiworld.org/2021/september/preparate).

Thank you for your ongoing partnership with us and prayers during this season of transition! We would love to hear from you with questions or prayer requests at [theiekels@gmail.com](mailto:theiekels@gmail.com).

Grace,

Phil and Olivia

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#### ***iPrepárate! Getting Ready!***

"Demand for Christian camps and placements in the missionary training school for 2020 had surged like never before.

El Monte staff and facilities were about to be pushed to the limit and maybe beyond. Then it all evaporated with COVID. For Ministry Director Paul Wilson, the Lord's message was loud and clear: "This is what's coming. Get ready [prepárate] for it."

Located a few hours from Mexico City, the staff team and the beautiful 70-acre campus had come through some serious legal threats. They had reached a point where there was now space and focus for what God was calling El Monte to become. As a ministry of WEC International, El Monte has remained committed to intimate camp discipleship and equipping Mexican missionaries for cross-cultural service.

To face this challenge to grow, God connected them with EMI's seedling Mexico staff. Earlier this year, a 15-member EMI team joined El Monte's team to explore God's vision for their ministry—through surveying, architecture, and engineering.

*Would you like to receive these updates digitally? Please email Kelli at [kgilmore@rca.org](mailto:kgilmore@rca.org) to be added to the email list. You will receive more timely updates from the missionary you support and help us be good stewards of our resources.*

El Monte's culture of discipleship through confianza [trust] built through time spent together is foundational—from the youth that first choose to follow Jesus at camp to the missionary preparing to adopt a new culture and people.

But not only are we helping El Monte to grow their role in a Mexican missionary movement—we're getting ready to be part of it as EMI.

### A vision for Mexico

by Jorge Aguero

El Monte is a great example of how relevant EMI can be to the Mexican church. There are many ministries in Mexico with a vision to serve and extend the gospel to the far corners of the nation and the world. Many of them are in the process of getting ready and realize that the endeavor comes with many challenges.

My wife Gilda and I have a passion to serve the Latin American Church as it continues to strengthen and mature in its participation in God's mission. We have two small boys and have served with EMI since March, 2018. After two years with the Nicaragua team, we are now back home preparing to launch EMI in Mexico.

EMI Mexico will be a resource to ministries like El Monte, helping them envision and reach their full potential.

While we're praying for more expat staff to join the team, there's a solid local team supporting the pre-launch stages. We will be joining a vision for ministry in Latin America that EMI Nicaragua has been cultivating the past six years. Now we will serve the Spanish-speaking world together!

### Looking outward and inward

By Phil Ikel

Nestled in the busy and vibrant city of Managua, EMI Nicaragua has been involved in transformational projects from Mexico to Chile since its founding.

Despite many challenges, including a staff team of just three this past year, EMI Nicaragua has continued to serve ministries such as El Monte. We know God has sustained us because the need is great and He has more in store!

After stepping into the role of Director earlier this year, my wife Olivia and I are serving together as team leaders. Prior to God aligning our call to lead EMI Nicaragua's team, I served as a staff structural engineer and deputy director, while Olivia worked with a local community development organization. Looking back, we see how God used our collective experiences and time working cross-culturally to help ready us for this season.



*The architecture team reviews designs for new cabins with El Monte's camp program directors.  
Photo by Darius Cinpear*



*Latin America team leaders, Phil, Olivia, and Jorge.  
Photo by Matthew Coffey*

Our team is getting ready, too, for rapid growth and a widening reach in 2022. Three new international staff families along with one or two more Nicaraguan professionals will join EMI Nicaragua's next chapter of ministry.

Through His faithful provision, God is calling us to look outward to support how He is moving in greater Latin America. But He is also calling us to look inward, as witnesses and participants in His restoring work in our team, churches, and communities in Nicaragua.

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EMI Mexico and Nicaragua share a vision of the Latin American church influencing its local communities and partaking in the global great commission. We are excited to discover the ways God wants to use EMI in this region as our Spanish-speaking teams grow and we grow in partnership with each other and ministries like El Monte. There is much hope and expectation as we see God working in Latin America, and we are getting ready!"



*El Monte staff take in the hand-drawn representation of the master plan for the site expansion, which accompanies a 65-page report and technical drawings.*

*Photos by Darius Cinpean.*