



RCA
**Global
Mission**

2022 Year in Review



Angel Lopez – Mexico

Greetings to you in the name of our *Señor Cristo Jesus!* I am delighted greet you as we give thanks for another year of God's faithfulness, and enter a new year watching for his promises yet to unfold.

2022 TIMELINE:

APRIL 2022: began as an RCA Missionary

JUNE 2022: traveled to the border for learning, planning

FALL 2022: communications, information sharing, fundraising for the program, visiting, or connecting with supporting churches.

- Fundraising reached five Partnership-in-Mission Shares
- Meaningful experience of relative of a church member in Holland, MI, being rescued in Juarez and helped by the folks at Frontera de Gracia (FdG).

NOVEMBER 2022: led a trip of 12 participants from two churches and one non-profit immigrant legal firm in Holland, MI, to experience the realities of the border and get to know FdG. We also observed a couple of the few other sites doing similar work in Juarez and El Paso.

A glimpse at what your support made possible:

I'd like to share with you a couple of stories that paint a picture of the some of the encounters I have had at the border when I traveled there in November with a learning group from West Michigan.

Meet Maria. She and her toddler daughter arrived a couple months ago at the FdG ("Border of Grace") shelter in Ciudad Juarez. When spoke with her, she recounted to me the reason that she fled her hometown elsewhere in Mexico. The local drug lords had murdered her husband, who had been running a successful business in the neighborhood but failed to meet their corrupt demands. After his death, the cartel continued to terrorize the family and, in time, also killed her son. They threatened and extorted her to take over her house. She knew she was being watched constantly, and day and night feared for her life and that of her little girl. One morning in the early hours, she took her daughter and fled, trying to take a route no one would suspect when she was reported gone. It did not work. Throughout her journey, it was clear from the texts she received that she was being spied on or traced. In God's mercy, she made it to the border town of Juarez, Mexico, exhausted and without anywhere to turn. She heard about FdG Shelter and took refuge there, despite that she had long stopped trusting in churches as places of help or integrity. When we met, she told a different story; she now feels grateful for all she has found of life in the church-shelter and desires to continue learning and participating in

prayer, worship, and learning about faith. Since our meeting, I'm told she crossed into the United States seeking asylum, as she had longed to do. Please pray for her and her daughter as they make a new start and that God will continue to show himself to her in big and small ways as she learns to trust in Him!

Meet Antonio and Lupita. They came to FdG Shelter all the way from the unrest and dangers that haunted them in Honduras and darkened any likelihood of a safe future to build their lives. They were a committed couple, but had never been formally married. When they were at the shelter, they received some legal advice that it might be better, safer for them to cross the border as legally married spouses and not to be separated. The importance was heightened because in the course of their journey, Lupita realized she was pregnant. Everyone could see that they deeply loved one another and, in short time, the church women and other residents at the border all chipped in to buy her a nice dress and food to prepare a wedding meal. They were married at the Civil Registry and would have a church ceremony at FdG to everyone's delight! However, their "number was called," meaning they would have their appointment given by U.S. Border Control to cross over. In the rush of just a day or so, they managed to keep their date for their civil wedding and became husband and wife, but had to skip their church ceremony and fiesta. When they departed from FdG, they assured pastor Samuel that they would look for a new church in America for their family and have a worshipful ceremony before God and the Body of Christ.

Isn't that part of our identity as God's covenant body? We receive brothers and sisters whose journey began elsewhere and often send friends, even our own children, on to purpose their lives, trusting that Christ's church will be there for them, support them, and help them grow. **Thank you for all of the ways you have supported the ministry at the border where we only get to know folks for a short time, and then entrust them to God's power and grace to continue leading and guiding them in his plans for them, wherever they go.**



Our challenges of 2022

The challenges of a ministry at the border are many—hunger, shelter, clothing, family reunification after separation, protection from trafficking and abuse, and help legal processing are the well-known needs. The FdG shelter needs are always more resources to meet what is widely reported—an exponentially growing wave of desperate and needful migrants and asylum seekers approaching the U.S. border searching for asylum and stability. The needs of the shelter reflect and try to anticipate the changing trends of human migration, as well as the announcements from the U.S. government.

Another constant challenge for FdG is that they work out of a tiny church facility that is crowded and underdeveloped to properly house and feed men, women, and children. Recently, Pastor Samuel has been in talks and in prayer about gaining authorization to take over a much larger shelter that was shut down (due to leadership corruption and fallout), in order to run the sort of program he longs to see. This site would have space for helping activities, growing food, and providing a more adequate sleeping, bathing, and cooking facilities. Please pray for God's wisdom and provision in this exploration.

Another challenge—also not new—is the leadership fatigue of Pastor Samuel and others. We continue to pray for ways to raise up new volunteer leadership to support the ministry and share the load.



Prayer requests and learning opportunities

Over the past year, it has been my honor to travel twice to the border to learn about what God in the lives of people like the ones I mentioned in this letter and to support and encourage Pastor Samuel Lopez and the congregation of FdG. I heartily invite you and your own congregation, part of the same body of Christ, to pray for this essential ministry of mercy and support at the border. Please pray for protection and the meeting of basic needs, but also for God to continue to meet people with his Spirit and transform hearts to follow him. Pray for God to guide the leadership there in ministry and for the congregation to be renewed and encouraged as they serve Christ and Christ's beloved.

Finally, I am already planning trips for youth and adults in 2023 and would be pleased to talk to you or your church leadership if you wish to join in a learning or service trip to the border—to discover how it is that God may transform your own eyes and heart as well.

Gracia y Paz en Cristo Jesus,
Rev. Angel Lopez