

WHERE JESUS WALKS

by Miriam Maldonado Escobar and Mark Adams

“This is a place where Jesus walks.”

—David, a mission delegation participant after spending time
at the CRREDA (now CATPSIC) drug rehab center.

The drug rehab center may be a place where Jesus walks, but it definitely was not a place where Mark wanted to be when Pastor Chuy Gallegos sent him there to deliver some blankets early in his service as a Mission Co-worker. As Mission Co-workers, we serve at the invitation of and under the direction of partners. And so Mark went.



The entrance gate to CRREDA (now CATPSIC) in Agua Prieta

The first time Mark entered the center, and the gate was locked behind him, he felt the urge to get out as soon as he could. He delivered the blankets and left without the intention of going back. But Pastor Chuy sent him back and the second time he went back he was even more uncomfortable than the first. As soon as he entered, someone yelled: “Llama Señor Hoyo ya llego el doctor.”

They thought Mark was a doctor and they were calling out to a 22-year-old man addicted to heroin whom they had baptized “Mr. Hole,” because he had been stabbed in a knife fight, received an emergency colostomy, and had been released after his recovery from surgery, but had not yet recovered from his addictions. Several days later, he “hit bottom” again and ended up at the Rehab Center with a severe infection in his wound. They brought him to Mark to “heal him.” His name was “Jesús.”

Mark called Pastor Chuy and together they accompanied Raul, the director of the center, and Jesús, to the hospital. While Chuy and Raul were talking with the administrators of the hospital, Mark sat awkwardly by Jesús in the waiting room without knowing how to communicate with him.

Finally, Mark just asked: “¿Quéquieres, Jesús?” (“What do you want, Jesús?”)

“I want to live again. I haven’t lived for 8 years, and I want to live again. And I know with the help of God and with the help of the rehab center, I will be able to live again.”

The words of Jesús, struggling with addiction, became the hands of Jesus the Christ, touching Mark’s eyes, beginning to remove the scales and the fear that had blinded him from seeing the humanity of the person sitting beside him. Mark was set on a road toward more healing and wholeness.



A student delegation from the Menaul School in Albuquerque on an Agua Para la Vida trip with CATPSIC residents.

As Mission Co-workers, we have cherished the role of helping to cultivate relationships and understanding across borders. One of Miriam’s responsibilities has been to help facilitate border immersion experiences for churches, seminaries, universities, and high schools. A highlight for Miriam is to accompany delegations out into the desert to walk migrant trails with the Agua Para La Vida (Water for Life) ministry led by CATPSIC.

Many of the young people who lead the walk tell the delegations about the realities of the dangers of migration caused by lack of legal pathways to migrate and because of the US’s

“prevention through deterrence” strategy that has pushed migration routes into more and more remote areas using mountains and deserts as lethal deterrents to migration.

On these excursions, PhDs and CEOs, suburban middle-class youth, and seniors in the golden age of their retirement are led, taught, and cared for by mostly young men, many without a high school education, all struggling to overcome addictions in order to live again. On these excursions, roles are reversed, the proud are humbled, and the humbled are lifted up and community is formed.

CATPSIC is a work in progress. One day we entered the facility and were welcomed by a new “Bienvenidos” mosaic sign, and we noticed that they had covered the gray sidewalks with beautiful mosaics. A resident named Raul told us that they had been working for a contractor to clean up a construction site and the contractor wanted them to take a bunch of broken tiles to the dump. Raul asked permission to bring them to the rehab center and use them. His reply: “If you can use this trash, take it ... it’ll save me money on dumping fees.”





Raul served as the Director of CATPSIC until his death in 2017.

Raul told us, "You know, it's kind of like us. Society thinks we are trash and not worth anything. But God doesn't see us that way. And God can take us off the trash heap and form us into something beautiful and useful."

As Mission Co-workers we were taught to listen to the local community and to listen for the voice of God in surprising places.

One of our New Year's traditions has been to attend a 12-step meeting followed by dinner and dancing at the CATPSIC. This year we arrived a little late. We did not recognize the woman leading the meeting at first. When she welcomed us, she said, "So good to see you. I am grateful that you believe God can still do miracles. I was one of the first ones to work for Café Justo—you believed in us when no one else did."

Initially that evening, we still could not place her, because we did not think she had been a barista at Café Justo y Mas, the coffee shop that is a partnership between Café Justo, Frontera de Cristo, and CATPSIC, where they give jobs to folks re-entering society from rehab. And it turns out, she hadn't been. Myra had been hired by Café Justo 18 years earlier to help them with data entry. She has been sober for 18 years, living in a city about an hour from Agua Prieta. We were able to have dinner with her and her daughters and celebrate the miracle that God has done in our lives.

We are unsure if Pastor Chuy sent Mark there because he didn't have time to go or because he knew that Mark needed to be there so that God could continue transforming him, but we are glad that he sent us on a path where Jesus walks. Our walk as Mission Co-workers has come to an end, but our call to walk with Jesus into the joy and suffering of the world continues.

We are grateful for each of you who through your prayers, encouraging words, visits with us, and financial support have helped make possible our service as Mission Co-workers, and we pray that wherever you find yourself, your walk with Jesus will take you into surprising, uncomfortable, and life-giving places.

Peace,
Mark & Miriam

