

Works of Grace

GRACE COVENANT INTERNATIONAL

December 2024

Reaching the Unreached!

MISSION TO THE DEAF IN MEXICO



"The Deaf Community is the last frontier of the Great Commission." Sherri Sexton



"The Deaf are the unreached people group in every people group." Tim Brown



GCI Missionary
Kayla Lawmaster with
Pioneers' Team Leaders
Mike and Sherri Sexton



To say it was an eye-opening experience would be an understatement! It was an absolutely incredible time as Ministry Director Dallas and Connie Elder visited Ensenada, Mexico where GCI Missionary, Kayla Lawmaster, and her team minister to the deaf. Team Leaders Mike and Sherri Sexton serve with Pioneers (missions organization). They've been missionaries serving the deaf in Mexico for over 10 years. Kayla has been part of their team for about three years. She is just completing her first year as a fulltime missionary with our GCI Ministry Family. Kayla creates animated Bible videos to share the love of God, the Gospel and His Word with the deaf. A young man named Ward Silverman from Florida is also part of the team. Connie and I were introduced to some of the ministry that the team does. Pictured (lower left) is a deaf woman from a very poor barrio who recently had a stroke. The team met with her to play dominos, to help with her hand functions.

It was a wonderful compassionate touch! It was the ministry of "presence." We prayed for her and other sick people in the home. Often the deaf and their needs go without care because no one can communicate with them. The Hearing Community takes so many things for granted. We had the opportunity to be part of a dinner and game-night hosted at the Sexton's house (Upper Right). It was such a reality check to sit in silence as the whole table was engaged in their sign language communication! (Lower Left) Connie shared in a Women's Bible Study. We got to see Kayla in action (Upper Left) as she videoed the Pastor of the Deaf Church. He signed an invitation announcement about a retreat for the deaf the team planned for the last week of November. The video was shared with deaf community to invite them to attend. Kayla did an incredible job hosting us. We are so grateful for her and her team and the amazing ministry work that they are doing for Jesus.



“What a special few weeks it's been here in Ensenada, Mexico! In early November, I was so blessed to have Dallas and Connie Elder come for a visit. It was a great honor to have my missions director witness the ministry to the deaf in person and to get hands on with serving. I hope to see them again soon and hopefully with a team!

That following week, my team gained two new permanent missionaries, Andrea and Carolina, sisters from Cabo San Lucas. And we threw them into serving almost immediately, because just a few days later we had a three day retreat in the mountains with about 30 deaf in attendance, our local team, as well as a missions team from Illinois. Some had driven four or more hours just to be a part of this incredible event. Since the deaf often feel very isolated from society, these types of get togethers are always very cherished. There was fellowship happening from 7 AM to 3 AM the next morning. There was no shortage of games, crafts, skits, laughs and fellowship all catered for this community. In between the merriment, there were teaching workshops. I really feel a lot of the deaf matured in their faith during those times. Hard questions were asked. Truths were fully realized. Sins were confessed and the love was abundant.

They are already asking about the next one and telling those who couldn't make it to put in their calendars! I have a feeling our next retreat will have a lot more attendees. GOD IS WORKING!” ~Missionary Kayla Lawmaster

Kayla Lawmaster launched into fulltime mission work in December 2023 with GCI. She trusted God and began raising her support to do so. She needs just \$300 in monthly support to reach her goal. We are believing God she will reach her goal this month. Any amount that you give, will help her to serve in this powerful ministry. You can support Kayla by mailing a check to our GCI office or online through our website.

Interested in going on a Mission Team to Mexico in 2025? Stay tuned for info!

VU-MAKING AN IMPACT!

Value Unconditional is making a tremendous impact as they serve faith-based help to traumatized and trafficked individuals in the Kansas City, MO area and beyond. They offer “Embrace the Grace” group sessions and one on one counselling. They work with law enforcement and a local hospital to provide care and support for victims. They are making the community aware of these issues.



Recently their team gathered at VU’s Annual Fundraiser. Left to right: VU Founder and Director Geony Rucker, Sophia Ekuase, Apostle Pam Brown, Susie Thomas, Leranda Brewer, Sara Moser and Samantha Drake. Great Team!

From: Platte County (MO) Sheriff’s Office

**Subject:
Counter Human Trafficking Operation**

On November 21-22, 2024 the Platte County Sheriff’s Office conducted a Counter Human Trafficking Operation composed of a predatory buyer interdiction operation and a survivor advocacy operation. During the predatory buyer interdiction, five adult males were arrested for attempting to engage in paid sex acts with females, they believed to be 14 and 15 years old. The survivor advocacy operation was hosted by Value Unconditional, a victim advocate group, who met with 12 commercial sex workers and provided 11 successful advocacy sessions. Sheriff Mark Owens stated, “This type of crime often goes unseen by the public but victimizes some of the most vulnerable in our communities.”

Ecuador-Foster Care Training



Guido and Kim Orellana have ministered in Ecuador for over 20 years. In this past year, they became part of GCI. While they are currently on furlough in the US, they continue their touches of ministry in Ecuador making visits and taking teams. They have an incredible open door. They have been asked by the Ecuadorian Government to assist in rewriting Foster Care policies. Below are the highlights of Kim's recent ministry visit.

"Our team of five arrived at the government building (Quito, Ecuador) and found our way to the offices to find that only 2 of the Social Service (SS) people had shown up. The Department head, who called the meeting, had some pressing matter and apparently the others as well. The government team for the other cities were unable to attend because they had not received a salary or any compensation and simply could not afford to travel to the meeting. Frustration hit our team "we came all this way.....". The two workers began to connect with us. The exact ones who needed to be there were there. They had been tasked with rewriting the procedures and technical manuals in two weeks. By the end of our conversations, the SS workers who invited us to the table were so grateful, and even stunned at the precise timing of the meeting with the exact information that they needed. We addressed some of the main issues and roadblocks to Foster Care that exist in Ecuador. Beautiful conversation! They felt supported and equipped to actually do what the government was asking them to do. AND they felt seen and connected to a group of extraordinary women! If it goes as the SS workers have asked, we will be training our first 10 families to receive foster children in the first part of 2025! Thank you for your prayers and your support in allowing me to be a part of this amazing project!" ~Kim and Guido Orellana

You can become a member of the support team of our missionaries.

Ministry is always a team effort.

Some **PRAY**, some **GIVE** and some **GO!**

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The True Christmas Story!

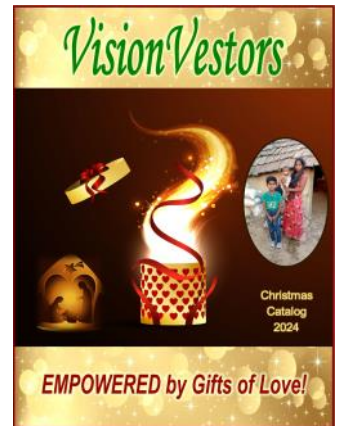
By Dallas Elder

There are a lot of titles flying around during the Christmas Season. There is the famous story of Charles Dickens' "A Christmas Carol." I like to think both Scrooge and the Grinch who stole Christmas, ultimately got saved in the spirit of Christmas. Each year there is the TV movie marathon of "A Christmas Story." "That (BB gun) will put your eye out." Of course, there are all of the Hallmark movies. This one may be of interest to some. It was certainly a hit in Kansas City. The Hallmark Channel recently presented "Holiday Touchdown: A Chiefs Love Story." I know, they are kind of cheesy. Hey Dateline fans, if Dateline had a movie about Christmas, it could be titled, "Scandal in a Small Town." Then, there could be a movie titled: "Three Men and a Baby." By the way, recently I saw a woman wearing a shirt and printed on the front was: "3 Wise Men? Be Serious." Was there some kind of point to that? I don't know that it was regarding Christmas. Certainly, we enjoy the Christmas stories and movies. Each year they are part of our celebration. But, all of them pale in light of The True Christmas Story. It is a real life drama played out in real time in our world and far beyond our wildest imagination. I can't wrap my mind around it. It is a pageant of multitude of miracles and promises fulfilled. It is the incredible display of our awesome, loving, all-powerful God who sent His Son as our Savior and Redeemer. To say that we embrace The Christmas Story by faith, leaves us short of the true mark. The defining destination, the indelible intention is for us to embrace the Author of the Account. It is a never-ending story.

Continued >>>

VisionVestors Christmas Catalog 2024

Make sure to check out our VV Christmas Catalog. See the compassion projects we have completed and our current ones. We have copies available through our churches and our office or you can view it online.



MSI Zoom Ministry Training Course

Get encouraged and equipped in your serving. We are offering our Zoom course "Cross-Cultural Ministry" taught by Dallas Elder. The dates are Saturdays, January 11, 18, 25 (9am-12:30pm (CT)). Contact us to register!

Mark Your Calendar!
GCI Ministry Conference 2025
March 4-7
Platte City, MO

In the Prophet Isaiah's day, the people of God were rebellious and backslidden. Injustice, unrighteousness and unbelief were the practices of the people. The king over the 10 tribes of Israel had made an alliance with ungodly nations. King Ahaz of Judah was invited to that coalition. However, he was considering an alliance of his own with the Assyrians. It was all about protection and security. The nations around Judah and Jerusalem were posing a threat. The people were afraid. ***"Now the house of David was told, 'Aram has allied itself with Ephraim' (Israel); so the hearts of Ahaz and his people were shaken, as the trees of the forest are shaken by the wind."*** The Lord through the Prophet Isaiah said to the King, ***"Be careful, keep calm and don't be afraid. Do not lose heart because of these two smoldering stubs of firewood—...It will not take place. It will not happen. ...If you do not stand by faith, you will not stand at all. ...Again the Lord spoke to Ahaz, 'Ask the Lord your God for a sign, whether in the deepest depths or in the highest heights.'" But Ahaz said, "I will not ask; I will not put the Lord to the test."*** Then Isaiah said, ***"Hear now, you house of David! Is it not enough to try the patience of humans? Will you try the patience of my God also? Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel."*** (IS 7:2-14)

There are a number of interesting themes flowing together in this passage. First of all, King Ahaz of Judah and the people were afraid of the threatening nations around them. They are shaking with fear "like trees in the wind." But rather than looking to God, their Deliverer, Redeemer and Protector, they are only considering political alliances. In their state of unbelief and compromised commitment, they only sought solutions from the world around them. The Lord through the prophet, called them to seek and trust Him for their welfare. The One who is on the Throne and knows all, told them to keep calm, the threat will not take place. It won't happen! What are the wind currents that maybe shaking you? Are you only reading the signs from the world? Here is the news the news flash that God brought to King Ahaz. Your consideration is based on fake news. It's a false narrative to cause you to fear. Those threats won't come to pass.

It is time to seek the Lord and find your shelter in Him. He is Sovereign. He reigns over all the boasts, threats and clamoring of the world, designed to cause you to fear and compromise. The exhortation of the Lord that we need to receive when the winds of the world set us trembling is, "Stand firm in your faith." ***"If you do not stand firm in your faith, you will not stand at all."*** (IS 7:9)

It was also an interesting invitation that the Lord offered the king, ***"Ask the Lord your God for a sign, whether in the deepest depths or in the highest heights."*** (IS 7:11) This was God's invitation to ask for a sign. The Lord was saying, let me prove to you, I mean what I say. Look to me, trust me, I will supernaturally authenticate to you, that the events will unfold as I have said. You can be secured in My Presence, centered in My Will, sheltered under My Protection and flowing in My Favor. But Ahaz refused to asked for a sign. He said, he didn't want to test the Lord.

What was the real issue? The real issue was that the king had set his eyes on the swirl of the world. He had no faith and confidence in the Lord. He didn't believe the Word of the Lord. He refused God's invitation for a personal sign that would underscore God's promise that He would bring deliverance from the enemy. Are you needing a sign from the Lord that He is real and present for you in your current life circumstances?

In the midst of this context, Isaiah prophesied that a sign would be coming and made known in the world. ***"Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel (God with us)."*** (IS 7:14) This promise of a sign was spoken about 700 years before it took place. With this sign, The True Christmas Story began. ***"The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us."*** JN 1:14 Promise fulfilled! You will find great benefit in looking back to the sign of the Savior. And, I encourage you to take God at His invitation: ***"Ask the Lord your God for a sign, whether in the deepest depths or in the highest heights."*** (IS 7:11) He will prove Himself to you!

Have a Blessed Christmas!

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