



Friends of Accion  
c/o Covenant Presbyterian Church  
1000 E Morehead St.  
Charlotte, NC 28204

# **A Slice of the Action**

**December 2010  
Issue 7**

**People to people.  
Person to person.  
Relationships, not just a program.**

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## A Word from the Director

*Oscar R. Dorantes, Acción Director*

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On his graduation ceremony a few summers ago, a good friend of ours, pastor Hayes Noble from South Carolina, watched and listened as the guest speaker, at the time anchorman Tom Brokaw, delivered the final address to the graduating class. As he was finishing his speech, he said to the audience “it’s easy to make a buck, [but] it’s hard to make a difference”.

As I have shared with you, there is nothing that can be compared to serving our brethren and thus continue to expand the Kingdom of God. When one is serving, one becomes the hands and feet of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The year of 2010 has had a diversity of activities, among which we can mention: a) the construction of 16 houses in Mexil, Yucatán, b) the building of churches in Holcá, Pisté, and Chiná, Yucatán, and c) continuation of the construction of The Mayan Children’s Village in El Ideal, Quintana Roo—with some 28 young pupils residing there currently.

Let me give you the updated information on the two programs we maintain year-round. At the Children’s Mayan Village, we currently

have 28 children. Isaac Ricárdez continues to be the resident director. We hired two new members into our staff as our program continues to expand. They are Martha May, our cook, and Marcos Chi, our driver and grounds- keeper. Another wonderful piece of news is that we have made the connection between our two programs. We have two guys from the Children’s Mayan Village going to the University in Mérida and residing in the Students’ House (Shelter), which continues to grow steadily and strong.

At the Students’ House, we currently host 13 young men going to the University. Oveth Hernández has been our resident



*Oscar Dorantes (Acción Director) poses with Oveth Hernandez (Student House Director) and Pastor Teodulo May from Kimbila, Yucatan*

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director for the past three years. We had three young men graduating this past June: one as a School Teacher, another one as a computer engineer and the third one, as a business administrator.

On behalf of Acción Ministries, Mérida, Yucatán, we would like to express our sincere gratitude to all of you for the invaluable help you have given us throughout this year. In 2010, you not only aided us financially, but gave us your labor force, friendship, moral and

spiritual support, among others. Again, Thank You.

To all of you, our utmost gratitude and May the Lord be with you. We're looking forward to enhancing our relationship through the continuance of our mutual and regular contact. There is still much to be done and your help has been remarkably valuable. Until we communicate again, God bless you.

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## Help Acción Plow Ahead

*Rich Neidinger, Friends of Accion President*

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On behalf of Friends of Acción, I would like to thank all our supporters and tell how much we need your financial help. I'd also like to invite you to become an "insider" in our organization!

The invitation is to an orientation session, designed for new Friends of Accion board members and supporters who would like to

know more about Acción, on Saturday, Jan. 8, 11:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

EST. While conducted at First Presbyterian Church Charlotte, most participants will join us via conference telephone call.

If you are interested, please, email me at [rineidinger@davidson.edu](mailto:rineidinger@davidson.edu) for specific directions. We hope representatives from many of our supporting churches will learn more about how Acción operates. Even if you can't make it but are interested in such information, just let me know.

**Orientation Session: Jan. 8**  
*Contact: [rineidinger@davidson.edu](mailto:rineidinger@davidson.edu)*

We now have three-year terms on the Board of Directors and are happy to welcome three new board members beginning January 1 and thank three servants rotating off.

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We owe a great debt of gratitude to outgoing Directors: Elise Barksdale, Jason Gwaltney, and Russell Thompson. Elise is a legendary mission trip leader having led dozens of trips from First Presbyterian Church Charlotte to the Yucatan, dating back to the start of Acci3n in the early 1980's. Jason, from Vienna Presbyterian Church (Vienna, VA) became the U.S. coordinator of Acci3n when Dave Coster retired and then helped us through the transition to FOA, Inc. Russell and his congregation in Ocean Springs Presbyterian Church, MS, have been steadfast supporters of Acci3n, even through Hurricane Katrina which destroyed much of their town. Russell always urges broader involvement in Acci3n.

We are excited to welcome Abby Gwaltney, Stacy Lynch, and Nancy Scheid to our board. Abby is well known as our Work Team Coordinator and has recently completed Master's degree with a focus on nonprofit administration. She and her husband Jason are now members of Providence Presbyterian Church (Fairfax, VA). Stacy Lynch has been to the Yucatan many times with First Pres-

*Unfortunately, we are again running short of funds to sustain our monthly support.*

byterian Church (Charlotte, NC), and has led a family trip. Nancy Scheid has been a catalyst for Acci3n trips and support from churches and businesses in FL, where she is now the Children's Minister at University Carillon United Methodist Church (Oviedo, Florida).

When reflecting on our ongoing ministry, I think of parables about plowing and sowing. Everyday, we help young men and women find educa-

tional opportunity in a safe Christian environment. Together we are plowing this field and the crops are growing, as evidenced by the young men from VIM who graduated high school and are now at the Shelter in Merida, pursuing higher education.

Unfortunately, we are again running short of funds to sustain our monthly support of these ministries. Christ says in Luke 9:62, "No one who puts a hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God." So, we trust in God. Help us keep looking ahead with your support. Pray for good soil



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## Three Become One

*Deb Meckley, Gettysburg Presbyterian Church (Gettysburg, PA)*

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On July 6, 2010, members from three Presbyterian churches gathered at Dulles airport, drawn together by the Reverend Doctor David Wright (Pastor Dave)

*We were blessed by our experience with the people of Mexil*

and his commitment to Acción Ministries. Some of our group had worked with Acción Ministries for more than 2 decades. Some of us had never taken part in a mission trip. We were a diverse group, and yet, by the end of our trip, we were a family.

We began the trip knowing that we faced challenges that varied from physical ailments to communication, from unaccustomed heat to unaccustomed physical labor. However, one thing we knew was that we could be confident in the Lord.

Thank you, Lord, for watching over us. We ended the trip with a sense of accomplishment, renewed energy in our faith, and a better understanding of our motivation to be a part of this journey. Between the beginning and the end, we

had a new and exciting adventure. We were welcomed by the people of the village. Some gave up their homes for us. They shared fruit and tortillas with us. They came to our Bible School and spent time with us.

At the final church service, when Pastor Mario shared his message, they



*Gettysburg team members share a worship service with their brothers and sisters in Mexil.*

shook our hands and hugged us all. Thanks to the openness and acceptance of the people of Mexil, we left the village with a warm feeling that we share a mutual respect.

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In other, more mundane matters, we figured out how to bathe by scooping water from a barrel. We ate warm tortillas with peanut butter and jelly - a tasty blend of both our worlds!



*Laying block in Mexil*

We learned about hammocks: hanging them, getting in and out of them, but not always being able to sleep in them - they are different than what we're used to!

We learned to lay block. Our masons showed us, they corrected us, they showed us again, and then they proudly watched us follow their direction. They are good teachers.

On July 13, 2010 we left Mexico for home with memories that will last forever. We were blessed by our experience with the people of Mexil and the beauty of the land.

We were dazzled by flowers and trees, cenotes and ruins. The splendor

of Mexico is proof, for anyone who would need it, that God created great beauty when he fashioned the world.





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## A Week at the Mayan Children's Village

*Anonymous High School Student, First Presbyterian Church (Charlotte, NC)*

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In July a group of 50 First Presbyterian members traveled to the Mexican state of Quintana Roo for a week of mission work. The group was comprised of youth, youth advisors, parent volunteers, and one doctor. We spent the week building the foundation for a dining facility at Villa Infintel Maya (VIM), a boarding residence for children whose village is too small for a middle or high school. The students live at VIM during the week and return to their villages on the weekend.

Currently VIM consists of one building with two long sleeping halls, a central room, a room for the family who runs it, and a small kitchen. Most of the food is cooked over a small burner in a corner covered with aluminum foil to keep the heat close.

We began our trip by flying into Cancun and shopping for a week's worth of groceries. As the shopping group wheeled out a dozen shopping carts loaded with countless bags of chips, bread, peanut butter, and cookies it became clear that we would be leaving behind any access to modern civilization.

Upon arrival at VIM we settled into our new home by selecting hammocks and walking the grounds. A stone outline of the building had been set up and we

were told that our job was to fill the outline with rocks and to do some cement work. A seemingly simple task, but add in killer Mexican heat, a few faulty wheelbarrows, and a leaky sewage pipe and the job becomes just a little more difficult. And anyone who has ever mixed cement knows that that is backbreaking labor. Luckily with such a spirited group our time working was filled with jokes and laughter as well as plenty of Gatorade.

Each afternoon we ventured into a



*A bucket brigade for cement*

nearby village for bible study. Unlike trips in the past our group returned to the same place each day rather than traveling to different areas. This allowed us to make personal connections with the people.

The first day we showed up there were roughly thirty people who came to see the strange newcomers, but by the end

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of the week the place was buzzing with the sounds of hundreds of eager children and their parents. Vacation Bible School started off with a Spanish song about a green frog whose mother tells him he has a friend in Jesus. While the majority of us did not understand the words we were able to pick up on the rather goofy dance that went along with them. Watching members of our congregation who I had previously only seen in suits attempt to wiggle their hips in a circle was a serious highlight of the trip.

Another unique highlight was the opportunity to watch the United States/Algeria World Cup game at VIM We stopped work early one day and crammed ourselves into one room around two grainy televisions and watched the game with friendly bets of ice cream and Coca-Cola on the line. Sitting in that cramped room and watching the place erupt with cheers as the game winning goal was scored celebrated the way most of the world watched the world cup. All the amenities from home like HD and surround sound were completely unnecessary at that moment.



*Vacation Bible School is a hit*

After a week of hard labor we wound down the trip in Akumal with a day on the beach and a morning of volleyball in the midst of tropical storm Alex. Our time there gave everyone a chance to reflect on the week and an opportunity to solidify new friendships. Each small group had time to discuss events of the week, and our group as a whole got the chance to poke fun at each other during the team awards show.

While the trip home was filled with a chorus of relief to be leaving, it was tinged with the notion that the Mexico Magic would soon be gone.

It is hard to convey to people the intense attachment to this week that most participants feel. It is a rare opportunity to step away from the flurry of daily life and out of our comfortable lives and into a world that is so different from our own. I feel blessed to have been a part of this amazing trip and to have spent a week with this group of crazy, silly, dynamic, and determined people who were willing to give their time to God.



## 2010 Work Teams and Safety Concerns

*Abby Gwaltney, Acción Ministries Work Team Coordinator (Springfield, VA)*

This year saw growth in our work team ministry compared to last year. We had 9 teams with 211 people from across the U.S. who shared their time and talents with our brothers and sisters in Mexico.

Over the past couple of years I have received many questions concerning the safety of our missionaries in Mexico. The violence and drug cartel crimes reported in the news are certainly a concern to anyone travelling to Mexico. However, these safety issues pertain to Mexico City and the states near the U.S.-Mexico border—not the Yucatan Peninsula, which is very far away. The only possible place of

concern for our missionaries is the city of Cancun, which has some seedy parts. Although the tourist areas are relatively safe and well-patrolled by police, we don't recommend that teams vacation in Cancun.

Acción Ministries is committed to the safety of our missionaries and continues to monitor the situation in Mexico. For now, the Yucatan is a safe and peaceful place for Americans to come. Thank you for continuing to be a blessing to others and receive blessings yourself by being part of a work team.

Team	Hometown	# People	Village	Project
First Lutheran Church	Fargo, ND	14	Hidalgo, Chiapas	Making bricks for adding onto a church hall
First Presbyterian Church / Friends of Accion	Charlotte, NC	15	Huechenbalam, Yucatan	Building homes for families
Northminster Presbyterian Church	Tucson, AZ	28	China, Campeche	Roofing a church
Hopewell Presbyterian Church	Huntersville, NC	19	Mexil, Yucatan	Building homes for families
First Presbyterian Church (youth)	Charlotte, NC	52	VIM	Laying the foundation for the dining hall, and painting the girls' dormitory.
First Presbyterian Church	Burlington, NC	32	Holca, Yucatan	Building an annex onto a church building
Covenant Presbyterian Church	Charlotte, NC	12	Piste, Yucatan	Roofing a church
Gettysburg Presbyterian Church	Gettysburg, PA	18	Mexil, Yucatan	Building homes for families
Peninsula Bible Church	Cupertino, CA	21	Mexil, Yucatan	Building homes for families

# Let's hear it!

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