

GPCS Spanish Mission Team Reflections

This year's team wrote especially long reflections, but upon reading them I really didn't want to cut any of them short. You have already heard from me in the team letter. I hope you enjoy each one of these testimonies as much as I did. Mrs. Hasbrouck, GPCS Spanish Teacher

First of all I was really impressed by the nice and warm welcome by the church members. Everybody greeted us several times and they all had a smile on their face. For me, the most important part was going out and sharing the gospel with the people in the neighborhood. It was amazing to see how God used and guided us. We were able to invite people to the church meetings and tell them about Jesus. It was a joy to see how most people opened their doors and were willing to listen to what we had to say. I also enjoyed seeing how the people from the church had a passion for sharing the gospel with their neighbors. Another part was the evening meetings. Previous to the trip I wasn't really thrilled about working with the little kids and I thought it would be a pain. Surprisingly, it wasn't at all how I expected it to be. The kids were all nice and paid attention to what we were saying. It was actually really fun working with them. We taught them how our mouths, eyes, hands, hearts and lives belong to Jesus. We had a lot of fun doing crafts and making new name tags every night. Besides the fun it was great to see how the kids enjoyed coming and that they enjoyed learning about God. There are a lot more activities I could talk about, but I think it's more important how God worked in our hearts and in the hearts of the people we interacted with. I was impressed by how willing the people of the church were to give their time and energy to serve and work with us. It reminded me of how much more we could give if we were willing to. We all had a great time working together as a team and getting to know each other better. I believe that each of us also grew in our faith and willingness to share the Gospel. All things considered, it was overwhelmingly awesome!

Simon Mader, Spanish III

This past week I've had such an awesome experience, I barely know where to start. First off, my favorite part of the trip would have to be all of the moments that made me smile. I know that sounds weird, but the little things made the trip so inspiring for me: when one of the kids would run up to us ready to say the memory verse or when someone would invite us into their home to hear us talk about our faith. Fellowship with the people of the church is also pretty high up on my list. I loved talking to them and hearing the love they have for God, each other, and us even though they had just met us. It was also fun watching them beat us horribly at volleyball. At least by the end of the week we were a slight competition. Now, sitting in the van on the way home, I'm totally in awe of everything we did, the relationships we made, and most of all, I feel that I've been stretched spiritually and emotionally. I'm absolutely beat, and I have a strong feeling that regular life will seem ultimately boring now.

Jennie Barney, Spanish I

This week has been off the hook. From the trip itself, to our time there and our trip back, everything has been really awesome. I am too drained to write anything important, so I'll just try to say something. The kids were great. My group went door to door four days instead of three because some people wanted us to come back and talk to them again. I felt bad going door to door, because when they spoke Spanish I was useless. Again, I really enjoyed the families and their bonding, which was always shown. It was awesome! ***Than Peterson, Spanish I***

I've learned that the Lord does not always ask us to jobs that we want to do. He asks us to do the hard things as well. Communicating with the people has been a great experience and one that I've learned from. Speaking English kind of seemed like the only way to communicate to me, but I've learned that all people praise and serve the Lord differently. He made us that way. It was a real pleasure to be on this trip with everyone and I'll never forget it. ***Haylee Sullivan, Spanish I***

I have learned so much about the people around me and how God works in such amazing ways. Preparing for this trip I was very nervous and did not know what to expect, but once we arrived at the church I felt very welcomed by everyone and knew that God wanted us to be there. Working with the kids was so much fun! I really enjoyed talking to them individually and learning what their families and lifestyles were like. I wish I could have had more time with them, because one week was not long enough. Also, going door-to-door was a little out of my comfort zone at first, but after the first day, I got more comfortable with sharing the gospel and enjoyed listening to what people had to say to us. Going with Francisco made it a lot easier because of how friendly and motivated he was. I also really enjoyed spending time with the people from the church and talking with them. Even though I can't speak Spanish very well, I was able to communicate somewhat. I can't believe how hospitable and generous everyone was towards us. The entire time I felt so loved and was honored to be there. I will miss all of them, and hope we can go back soon. Getting to know the people on the team better was also fun, and I enjoyed all the time we spent together serving the Lord. **Maddy Minor, Spanish I**

I came on this trip expecting to be spending all of my time working (evangelizing, painting, cleaning, and teaching) but instead I ended up spending most of my time playing games and building relationships. I think, though, that the friends I gained, both in the church and on my team, are more meaningful than most of the work I did. My only disappointment is that I didn't get to use very much Spanish. I've heard that Mexicans at their church have a lot of Mexican culture. If that is true, then I really don't see much difference socially between Mexicans and Americans, or northerners and southerners. They are all just people. **Lauren Wallace, Spanish I**

For the past two years, since our first trip to Guatemala, Mrs. Hasbrouck, Cheri and I have had our hearts set on returning there. However, over last summer, I went on a mission trip to Mexico and the biggest thing I came away with was a desire to share the Lord not only with those living far away, but with my neighbors as well. But, when Mrs. Hasbrouck came to Cheri and me with the news that we weren't going to Guatemala after all, it was hard to swallow. North Carolina did not seem exciting at all compared to Guatemala. But, when I prayed about it, I had to confront the fact that maybe this was God's way of reminding me about what I had felt in Mexico and he was challenging me to follow up on my convictions. So, I told Mrs. Hasbrouck that I was "in" and it was probably one of the best decisions of my life. We weren't sure what we would be doing in North Carolina, except that we would be helping the church. That made the trip a lot harder to prepare for than what I was expecting. When we got to the church, immediately I could tell that the week was going to be great. The church was so warm and welcoming. They had a way of making you use your Spanish without making you want to give up. Our week consisted of three main activities: evangelizing, playing, and teaching. All three were a joy. With our evangelism, I was so encouraged by our church partners. The way they were so willing to go share the love of God with people they lived among made me want to do the same. We evangelized for three days and had just one profession of faith. But, every amount of discomfort or awkwardness I felt in the process was totally worth the excitement of seeing this man, Pedro, come to the Lord. The times in which we got to play and relax were just as precious because we were able to fellowship with the church members and those memories are priceless. Lastly, we had nightly meetings in which we taught the children in a style similar to VBS. We built so many relationships with the kids over those five short days and I hope they were able to see the love we have for God not only in what we taught them, but in how we acted. In the end I was so happy that we had chosen to go to North Carolina instead of Guatemala. It was obviously God's plan for us, and I am so thankful for the experiences we had. Thank you to everyone who was praying for us and please continue to be in prayer for all those we shared the gospel with. **Taylor Sarver, Spanish V**

As many of you know, I switched schools this year. Although the transition has gone well, one thing that I missed from my former school was the ministry opportunities, so when I heard that I might have the chance to go on a mission trip, I was really excited. As the year went on, however, I began to feel overwhelmed and I was not entirely sure if it was my desire or God's will that I go on this trip. Over time, though, God really showed me that it was truly His will. Another apprehension was that I did not know the other people who would be going very well. Once the trip started God took away my fears and provided a great trip. The first day we got there was very encouraging because the church body was so welcoming and inviting. The rest of the week also went very well. We had the opportunity to do door-to-door evangelism, teaching others, and doing work around the church. The door-to-door ministry was a good way to bridge any gaps between the church members and our group as it used skill sets from each. It was also an encouragement to many people who we talked to. In the evenings, we got the chance to teach all different age groups. I got to work with the 7-11 year olds. Through each of the classes, we were able to use and develop many leadership skills and got to know the kids on a more personal level than we could have in other contexts. Working around the church really seemed to be a blessing to the church members, and in particular the leaders, and I'm glad we had the chance to do so. All together, God taught many lessons about how to serve and relate to others, and I was blessed with the opportunity to form much closer relationships with all those who came. Thank you for your support, both financially and through prayer. God bless. **Liz Garland, Spanish II**

From the first time Mrs. Hasbrouck said we were going on a mission trip, I was excited to go, but had some fear as well. This being my first trip it was a mix of emotions. I had no idea what to expect; I was just ready to serve. Though going to North Carolina was less exciting than going out of the country, I was ready to go where the Lord led us. As the plans were made, I was looking forward to working with the kids and in the church. When we arrived, it was amazing how welcoming the church was. The people were so open to helping us in any way they can. Each aspect of the week gave me much to take away. The evangelism was one aspect. It was amazing how much the people of their church were enthusiastic about going out and sharing God's word to those around them. It helped me to want to bring that enthusiasm back to my church. It also helped me to realize how much of an impression hospitality can make. I want to be more like this at home. Another aspect was playing with the people of the church. Through this I was able to see the joy of fellowship with others in the church. The last aspect is the Vacation Bible School we did for the children each night. It brought me much joy to teach and spend time with the children. They showed me that I should be joyful in all I do for the Lord. I pray that I gave as much of a lasting impression of the Lord to them as they gave to me. I would not trade this experience for anything. **Alex Whalen, Spanish V**

My hopes or goals when heading to North Carolina were quite simple: to follow well. I wanted to just do what was needed or asked of me and enjoy the Lord through the process. God is so good! I don't necessarily forget that, but I can get so busy, I don't focus on it. During this trip, I couldn't help but be aware of His goodness. He surrounded me with such loving, caring, fun individuals both within the team and the church that serving was a joy, a serious joy because what we shared was of eternal importance. I wanted to always be ready, but I almost never felt completely prepared which actually enabled me to see the Lord take our efforts and grow them to His glory. The church family in Monroe was a marvelous example of Romans. 12:12 ...joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer, share with God's people who are in need, practice hospitality. I had thought about and prayed for the church people in Monroe, but I am grateful now to have relationships with those people. There is something so special about witnessing together that I feel eternal life bonds have been formed. The final piece that sticks with me is a reminder to remain in prayer for the Hispanic and more specifically, the Mexican people. Their deep love for each other prompts them to share Christ, even at great cost. They are wonderful models and have touched my heart deeply. May I put into practice a portion of what I have seen. **Mrs. Lynn Sarver, GPCS faculty & trip chaperone**

Our trip to North Carolina went so well and I'm so glad we had the opportunity to go. When I first heard that we wouldn't be returning to Guatemala, I was really disappointed because I had been counting down the time until we could go since I first got back two years ago. Mrs. Hasbrouck really felt God's direction about where He could use us, and I'm so glad she listened and that we trusted her discernment. Otherwise I would have missed out on a wonderful experience. I witnessed talents and good characteristics shining through people I have known and been around for a while that I had not previously seen, such as creativity, obedience, and responsibility. And, I myself was able to practice diligence by doing what was asked or what needed to be done. A reoccurring appreciation that I had on this trip was that nothing became too overwhelming. There was always just enough comfort to keep me focused on the task in whatever challenge we faced. For example, the first day we went evangelizing door-to-door, I wanted to leave as fast as possible because the Spanish in my head seemed to disappear completely. I felt so inadequate and unprepared at first, but God showed me that I could leave the speaking part to the Spanish speaker with me and to instead listen to what he was saying and to follow along and look up the Bible verses he was referencing and to pray that God would open up their hearts. The next day I felt more at ease and relaxed because I knew it wasn't my words or my capability that mattered. Another way I noticed the good balance between comfort and challenge was on the first day that we went to the church. We had no idea what to expect, but I remembered that in Guatemala on the first day we were expected to launch right into everything we hadn't prepared yet. I was really dreading that initial meeting because it's hard to anticipate being "put on the spot", but when we got there we found that they just wanted to meet us. We had a day to get to know the church members, to observe their church service, and to plan with them what we were going to do the rest of the week.

A humbling experience I had on the trip was playing accompaniment on the piano. I'm used to memorizing piano solos, but I had never played while someone sang, and the two are very different. I don't like doing anything that I'm not good at, but it came down to willingness, because the church really wanted someone to play. Even though it was nerve-wracking and I felt embarrassed, I was able to practice with Mr. Hasbrouck and the guitarist and at the church, and from one night to the next it got easier and we all improved. I was really impressed with the church members' willingness to serve God. They wanted to cook us food, share the Gospel with their neighbors, expand their knowledge of parenting and leadership and improve in whatever ways they could. I think our biggest accomplishment was just encouraging the church. They are a wonderful group of people of all ages and different pasts, but they all work so well with each other as a result of their close relationship with God. My favorite way we spent our time was getting to know the church members, whether by playing sports, painting on the roof, teaching or eating – in whatever we did the fellowship was so rewarding. (Also, I really enjoyed being able to understand most of the Spanish, even though I mainly listened in Spanish and spoke in English.) It was a great trip with warm weather and awesome people. Thanks so much to everyone. *Cheri Keenan, Spanish V*

I've had the privilege of teaching Hispanic church leaders in several countries, but this was by far the most receptive group to teach. It wasn't my profound material as much as it was their profound need that made them so interested. The four main leaders of the church are hungry to know how to provide better direction and training to their congregation as they prepare for the departure of the church's founding pastor. It was great seeing their eagerness both to learn and to provide an example to the congregation as we worked together in evangelistic outreach. Even as I taught them about leadership, I was challenged to improve my own leadership. What a great joy to have met, worked, and worshipped with new brothers and sisters in Christ! *Peter Hasbrouck, Chief van driver*