



GPCS North Carolina Mission Trip Report

April 17, ten Spanish students from GPCS and three chaperones started our journey. After an overnight in PA, we finally arrived at Wycliffe's JAARS headquarters late on Saturday night. The three fully-furnished apartments were a welcome sight.

On Sunday morning we went to La Iglesia Bautista "El Buen Pastor" in Monroe, about a half-hour drive from JAARS. The church people were warm and welcoming. Think of your best church pot-luck, where all of the ladies know how to cook. Then make it Mexican. That is what we enjoyed after the service. Later we met with church leaders to plan the week.

Monday through Wednesday mornings we met at the church at 10 AM to go door-to-door evangelizing in teams of GPCS students and church members. Initial nervousness on both parts led to joy of serving God together and seeing fruit as some doors were opened. In the three days there was at least one person who prayed to receive Christ. Many people allowed team members to pray with them for needs in their lives. Church members took note of which people desired follow-up visits. They went back to some houses three times in the week we were there.

Since some of the students speak little Spanish, and some church members didn't know English, they actually made good teams. When the door was opened and the person greeted them, there was someone who spoke the right language! Team members also worked well together to pray for one another and help as much as they could.

The teams shared lunch together, and then some time playing volleyball. The students hoped that local teens would join in their games, but then they found out that school wasn't dismissed until 4PM. So, the games were moved to after our evening meetings.

The GPCS team spent afternoons in preparation for their evening meetings. The students were broken into two teams of five, one working with Pre-K – 1st graders, the other with 2nd – 5th graders. Each evening they ran, without adult supervision, a VBS style evening with games, songs, Bible lessons and verses and crafts. The younger group was taught in Spanish, the older group learned in English but sang and memorized verses in Spanish. We tried to relate to the language they use in school and among themselves, and what their parents speak.

Most nights we shared suppers with the church people. One or two women would show up with a Mexican dish. Then our team would whip up something to compliment the meal. As people gathered for the evening meetings, we would all eat together. It was great, spontaneous fellowship.

While the children were in their meetings, Mrs. Sarver had a time encouraging the church teens, Mr. Hasbrouck taught church leaders, and Mrs. Hasbrouck had classes for the mothers. Because all of the teens and adults wanted to be in one of these three classes, the GPCS students were left alone with the children. This was not the original plan, but it worked out really well. The parents and children were extremely pleased with the kids clubs. The moms said that homework was never done so quickly as it was that week!

The pastor, Rev. Tommy Concha, needed to have gallbladder surgery on Tuesday. He didn't get back to the church until Friday night. God's timing for our group was evident as Pastor Tommy is planning to retire soon, so church leaders had to take over in ministering. Mr. Hasbrouck

brought teaching on leadership and vision for church leaders and was able to adapt his lessons to their present needs. Each evening session was packed as they tried to learn all they could in four nights.

Wednesday afternoon and all of Thursday was spent in projects around the church. Together we repainted the large letters on the face of the church and the wall around the baptistery. We fixed letters on other signs, mopped floors, scrubbed the baptistery tank, and cleaned up church property. The evening meetings continued on both of these nights.

After the meetings, the older teens, young adults, and GPCS students went out to play volleyball or soccer. It was hard to get them to say good-bye each night and get in the van for the ride back to JAARS. Then we had a devotional time led by Mrs. Sarver. We talked about what we had learned or what had challenged us that day. As the nights went on, the focus of conversation changed from apprehension, to joy of serving together, to exhaustion, to not wanting to leave. Each night Mrs. Sarver gave a word for that day or the next and a Scripture reading to emphasize her point. We tried to get to bed by 11:30, sometimes with more success than others.

Friday was our “free day”. Mrs. Sarver took some students to explore Charlotte. They found out that Charlotte doesn’t really have a cute downtown district, but they had fun anyway. The rest of the group visited quaint nearby Waxhaw, then went on a tour of JAARS and rode in a six-seat airplane. JAARS stands for Jungle Aviation and Radio service, and it is the technical arm of Wycliffe Bible Translators.

On Friday night the adults and teens of the church met to go out evangelizing together, leaving the children behind with the GPCS students. Mrs. Sarver accompanied the teens she had been serving, and encouraged them to use their spiritual gifts. The church members came back excited about reaching their community.

Saturday we packed up the vans and went back to the church for a closing meeting. After some songs, people took turns sharing about the week, one from the church, one from our group, etc. Then we had a Mexican cookout, more sports, lots of photos, and a hard time saying goodbye.

We finally got into the cars and on our way to Richmond, VA. for the night. Along the way there was a shredding serpentine belt that was diagnosed in one spot, part bought in another, and expertly installed by “James the Mechanic” at his jam-packed garage. We definitely knew God was going ahead of us in that whole venture. We drove the rest of the way on Sunday, arriving late at night once again, happy to have gone, sad to have left, but glad to be home.

This GPCS Spanish mission trip was different from the rest in that we wanted to partner with a Hispanic church to encourage them in any areas they desired. The plan was to work along side of the church people, not be the show that comes to town for a week. We came prepared to serve, but ready to change our plans if our preparations were not what the church needed. Thankfully, they were!

Even though the economy is rough and wages are low, church people took vacation days to minister with our group. Through evangelizing, teaching sessions, working, playing and sharing meals, we saw the body of Christ come together.

By mid-week we all knew why God had closed the door to Guatemala this year. It wasn’t because of finances, dangers, etc. It was because He wanted us to go to Monroe, NC, where He has a vibrant Hispanic congregation that is going through change. Every single person who went on the trip was used to the max to bless this church, and they in turn blessed each one of us.

Many thanks to each one of you that made this trip possible, through your prayers, financial sacrifice, or help along the road. Please take the time to read the reflections written by trip participants.

Mrs. Hasbrouck for the GPCS North Carolina Mission Team