

### *News from Feliberto:*

Greetings in these early weeks of 2016 from all of us here at SWGSM! I thank my God for every remembrance of you, old friends and new. With the help of God, our active Board of Directors, and you our loyal donors, we finished 2015 financially strong. Thank you! Every gift is precious. I especially lift up the recent gift described in the following excerpt from the announcement by the donor church:

***In recognition of the urgent and ever increasing need for refugee assistance on the Texas/Mexico border, Southwest Good Samaritan Ministries has been given a grant in the amount of \$100,000 from University Christian Church (DOC), Austin, Texas. The funds are to be used exclusively for refugee assistance.***

***University Christian Church received a significant gift from [a] Trust, and the church board designated a tithe of that gift for outreach.***

Praise God! What a wonderful reminder to us all to plan our giving in ways that benefit persons Jesus himself would have fed, clothed, housed and loved – be they refugees or others in need.

We start this year housing 9 refugees. There is a baby, mother, and grandmother from Guatemala, 5 persons from Cuba and a man from Honduras.



I am sure that you are touched, as I am, by this picture of Astrid and her baby Aitana. Astrid and her mother Elsa were both attacked and abused horribly by kidnappers in Guatemala. They managed to escape and endured a long journey to the U.S. Sadly, they became victims of labor abuse even once in McAllen, TX. The women have found sanctuary here, and are staying at our Ebenezer Christian Church in Los Fresnos. Aitana was born several months ago, conceived when Astrid was brutally raped by a masked kidnapper in Guatemala. Because of your support, baby Aitana faces a bright future so different from the horrors her family faced.

Each asylum case has legal complexities and this one is no exception. The attorney working with Elsa and Astrid has received recognition by her peers as one of the best immigration lawyers, and she has offered her services to these Guatemalans without charge. There are other expenses related to their care and their case, of course. Yet your donations stretch further because we take seriously our stewardship responsibilities for your gifts. We are grateful for the cadre of legal and medical professionals we have nurtured, and their frequent offerings of pro-bono or lower-fee services. Thank you for helping assure sanctuary and the promise of a brighter future for so many.

Through the decades, as many of you know, our ministries have expanded to include a number of programs in addition to refugee relief. One such program, the Lilies of the Valley ministry to build life skills in young mothers, now operates in San Benito independent of SWGSM. We delight in having “birthed” this ministry, and we pray God’s blessing on the leaders and those they serve in 2016 and beyond. Our other ministries continue to serve the poorest of the poor in the Rio Grande Valley. These include the children of Casa Bethel, a loving home for those orphaned and abandoned. We also supply some of the food and clothing needs for seniors at Asilo Refuge in Rio Bravo. Donors are generous with food for these and others who come to us hungry. We particularly lift up the Coastal Plains Area churches, having fed thousands over the years through their ongoing gifts of beans and rice. You can see from the photo the volume of food we receive in a single delivery. I would be remiss not to lift up the blessing of those who help us here with the hard work of unloading, reloading and other tasks that keep our ministry working. Here I am with one such “muscle crew.”



The North Texas Area churches, through the “Mike’s Kids” program launched in 1987 by the Slight family, bring joy for so many of those we serve. The semi-trailer loaded with toys, clothes, food and other necessities arrived just in time for Christmas, as it has every December for decades. Not all joy comes via semi-truck! Here is a photo of a delivery of Christmas gifts from the good folks of Rolling Oaks Christian Church in San Antonio.



Despite the chaos of our daily work, we pause each day to give thanks for each of you and to pray God’s blessings on you. We work to be good stewards of God’s gifts and yours. We hope you can come and visit us in the Valley. You are always welcome.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "J. Pereira".

*View from a Volunteer:*



Our esteemed leader is indeed willing to do any work that needs to be done to assist refugees and the poorest of the poor here at Good Samaritan Ministries. Admittedly, this is a posed photo, and we certainly don’t want Rev. Pereira to over-exert! Yet all of us who know him know that he is blessed with the energy of a person half his age. He does get regular check-ups. The last time he had a stress test for cardio-vascular health, the technician asked him “What is your secret?!” Clearly hard work and a loving spirit are good for the health! Despite our excitement that Rev. Pereira is going strong, rest assured that the SWGSM board is mindful of the importance of leadership succession. In concert with Rev. Pereira, plans are being developed for continuing this important ministry into perpetuity. As the SWGSM board continues its work, all of us can be contributors of time and treasure. Your gifts are precious. Thank you!