

Mexico Report [Bob Buxman], to Simon Rendon

Simon Rendon was gracious to permit me to accompany him as he visited the PNMC partner churches in Sinaloa and Sonora. There are approximately 14 Mennonite churches in these two states, with the majority being found in the more southern state of Sinaloa. Sonora is primarily desert, and Sinaloa is rich in agriculture. Sinaloa reminded me much of the San Joaquin Valley where I grew up, with pure agriculture and canals weaving among the fields, producing an abundance of grains and vegetables. *Me senti en casa!* Some of the churches are located on the shore of the Sea of Cortes, where fishing is the primary source of income. Simon is well respected among the churches. He has been visiting that area, building relationships, encouraging the churches, for the past 36 years.

My observations of the churches are cursory, being there only one week. I found the churches to have a deep faith, with a Pentecostal emphasis. They love to worship, spend time in prayer, sing and listen to the word. For me the richest times were the one on one visiting with the sisters and brothers. They expressed such a gracious hospitality. All the pastors I met seemed to have a warm, humble spirit. The youth also were vital and enthusiastic.

My purpose [personal agenda] in going was to meet the people who have been relating to the PNMC for many years, and try to understand the essence of that relationship, and what that means for both the PNMC and the conference of Mexican churches in Sinaloa and Sonora. **1** - History seems to be the primary glue, with the Pacific NW sending a number of missionaries over the years. Simon Rendon was not invited to be a missionary, but was asked by the mission board to visit the area about 36 years ago. With that visit, a mission seed was planted for him. He fell in love with the people, and they with him. **2** - It seems to me that the relationship today, between the two conferences, is what it is, primarily because of Simon Rendon's long term efforts. There are other players of course, Curt Dorsing to name one, who have had a deep impact over the years. Everywhere I went, Curt's name was mentioned eg "Curt build this...Curt and his friends build that!". Pretty amazing! **3** - In my conversations with a few pastors, it seemed that they valued the relationship with the PNMC because it was encouraging to know that they were not alone in ministry, they were connected to others. But I never could really nail down what that encouragement looked like exactly for them, other than they were glad Simon was again with them.

In conclusion [and I remind you that I'm new to both the PNMC and that my time in Mexico was short], it seems to me that the relationship between PNMC & the NW Mexico Mennonite Churches needs to be a serious agenda item some place within the systems of these two entities. Why do we relate? If the answer to that is one which both groups affirm, then it seems to me that the two groups need to address ways in which they can mutually contribute to the strengthening of the relationship. Or maybe take a route not yet articulated.

My role in that short week was to share [in halting Spanish] one session at a pastors and wives seminar, two sessions at a youth retreat, and the morning message at a joint service of 4 churches [which was open air, lots of music, and wonderful soup for lunch!...]...and eat lots of Mexican food and visit. *Que bueno!!*