



Circle of Hope

Guadalajara Mexico

Update on the Circle of Hope/Care Ministry in Guadalajara, Mexico 2020

The ministry called Circle of Hope/Care was started in August of 2018 in answer to the great needs the Breath of Life church was encountering in their church community among women and children who did not have the means to sustain themselves adequately or who were in desperate situations due to the violence in Mexico. So many women and children were coming to our doors, finding hope and learning about Jesus but also needing help in practical physical ways.

In January 2021 we are changing our name - **Circle of Care** to align with our Spanish name which is the **Circle of Hope**. We have grown faster than expected and need to align the names both in English and Spanish. The Circle of Hope is now sufficiently established to not be a source of confusion with the Chilean ministry - House of Hope and we are making this change as of January 1st, 2021.

In November 2019 we were one of the recipients of the Alliance Women National Project and received a very generous donation that spurred the ministry to begin to dream about how to truly become a place of caring and hope for so many in the community surrounding the Breath of Life church plant in Guadalajara.

The Circle of Hope began to offer different workshops for the women in our community, to give them job skills and in a sense, dignity for their lives with the ability to move forward and advance in society. With each workshop, we would start with a verse from the Bible and a short thought on that verse, and these mini devotionals were prepared by the one leading the workshop. Usually, the woman leading each workshop was herself someone who had experienced some form of abuse, abandonment or violence in her life – the one difference was that these women leading had found Jesus as their Savior and now had HOPE through the grace and mercy that Jesus gives each believer! The workshops offered were Basic Haircutting Techniques, Professional Make-up and Nails, Basic English Classes, Introductory Calligraphy (just in time for Christmas and home-made Christmas cards!) Artisan Jewelry and just recently, Sewing classes (birthed from the Covid pandemic where we began making facemasks).

Through the Alliance Women ministries in the US, I was invited to share at three different district retreats – the Pacific Northwest, the Hispanic District East in NY and a second retreat in Orlando. At these retreats, I brought several samples of the bracelets the women had made in the Artisan jewelry workshop, and many women the US bought bracelets to support the ministry. Through these different retreats, we began to form a “micro – business” where each woman involved in the jewelry class were paid for every bracelet they made. An initial investment was made into this business through the purchase of all the materials needed to make the bracelets and package them for sale in the US. Our non-profit status in Mexico permitted us to participate in Christmas craft shows in Mexico for women and children at risk and we have received tax deductible donations in kind from Mexican business.

In July 2018 - the Circle of Hope received a donation from the Five James Foundation and with support from Allegheny Center Alliance was able to rent and furnish a small office space for 12 months. As we grew in 2020, the Circle of Hope began to look a larger building – the initial space we were renting was a one-room office area where we were very restricted on space. We could only have one workshop at a time with a small area left for any type of counseling, but at least we had a space!!

With the infusion of the support from the Alliance Women, we began looking for different rentals that would meet our needs to facilitate more ministry.

Due to the economic crisis of 2020 in Mexico from the pandemic we were able to rent a 4-bedroom home with a large first floor with a covered outside patio area and four bedrooms upstairs. Our director Lety Avila is now living on site at the Circle of Hope home and during the week there are a number of workshops happening



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simultaneously – it is a house filled with hope! Laughter can be heard in each room where women are gathered to learn new techniques on cutting hair, while in another room a group of women are learning about the Fruit of the

Spirit from a Bible study led by one of the lay leaders from the church, while in another room, Lety and I are looking at the new year, what new workshops we should plan for, and what can the budget allow us to dream.

- Many will see 2020 as the year of the pandemic with churches and ministries closed down, but the circle of Hope will see the year 2020 as a time where we all came together and began to minister to one another, where the need became so great that the care going out became even greater – people were concerned for each other and the women of the Circle of Hope came together to provide hope, love and care.
- Together we went to the city market and bought hundreds of kilos of rice, beans, oatmeal, potatoes, soy, onions, cleaning supplies, toilet paper and candy for the kids. We put together food bags, 120 at a time, and each bag was filled not only with enough food for ten days but with spiritual food – tracts and Bibles for each family. The women gathered to put the bags together every two weeks, and then they helped in the distribution of the bags, taking them to neighborhoods with families hardest hit by the pandemic. One woman, who is not a Christian yet, (she always tells me “I am a Catholic for life”) helps us distribute 22 bags to people in her neighborhood, and as she delivers to each home, she told me she felt like she was being the hand of God for some of these people.
- Expansion into indigenous people group - Purepecha. In December of 2020 the Circle of Hope made its first trip to the town of Quinceo in the state of Michoacan, 4 hrs. south of GDL as part of an integrated church planting strategy to reach and train Purepecha people. The goals for 2021 are to plant a new campus church in the nearby town of Paracho with Breath of Life using both community development ministry of Circle of Hope and evangelistic events. Once a suitable office is found in Paracho the church and Circle of Hope will cover the costs and begin to offer Bible studies, spiritual counselling, legal aid, community, and job skills training for home micro business. A great challenge for the Circle of Hope in 2021 will be to identify and then train women in this distant city who will become workshop leaders and future leaders of the ministry.
- The Circle of Hope plans to work hand in hand with the Breath of Life church to plant campus congregations in Guadalajara in the area of San Sebastian and then Avenida de Aviación in 2021 and 2022 along with Paracho -Quinceo.

Excited to see how the Lord works to transform lives and bring hope as we reach out in these practical and vital ways to women in vulnerable states in Mexico. Thank you for your support and prayer.

- Video Link to short spot on Christmas Piñata in the Purepecha town of Quinceo - <https://vimeo.com/493075725>
- Attached pics from first Circle of Hope mini-training on jewelry making. The goal is to open this economic plan for these women who often find themselves in extreme poverty and marginalized from mainstream markets.