

Misión Peniel
Presbytery Report
February, 2023

2022 Reflections

Living with Uncertainty

"Rejoice in hope; be patient in affliction; persevere in prayer."

-- Romans 12:12 --

-- Reverend Miguel Estrada --



Every day that passes always brings with it some uncertainty; we can never pretend that we are in control of the circumstances around us. There is mystery and excitement, promise and uncertainty in each new year as we examine our past and look to a new day, a new year ahead. 2022 was a transition year. Transition by its very nature involves uncertainty and 2022 was no exception.

For Misión Peniel this time of transition from pandemic to what some call the “new normal” forced us to make changes that we believed appropriate and necessary to continue to be and grow as the bridge that unites the farmworker community with faith communities and the rest of the world. Achieving that was not about going back to what we did before, as some thought would happen. The real challenge was based on the experience acquired over previous years with an understanding that reality as we knew it then, had been transformed whether we liked it or not. We have had to discern again the priorities and focus that our ministry in Immokalee must embody. In other words, 2022 has compelled us to open our eyes wide and carefully ask if what we have before us today is what God is calling us to do.

As if entering the post-COVID era was not enough, for us that has not been the only reason for uncertainty during 2022. Since the first year of the pandemic, Misión Peniel has lived under a cloud of uncertainty related to a legal process over the property where we currently operate. Without going into unnecessary details, it has been distracting and exhausting at times to find meaning and energy in these types of circumstances. Even in the midst of clouded uncertainty over what we can or cannot plan and do, our first response was to keep moving forward in faith. By the end of the year, when we felt we couldn't take it anymore, words of encouragement reached us through the community we serve. It came from the farmworkers who can rarely say that they are sure of something, and for the most part, who live in life's uncertainty. The example of facing life with encouragement, joy and trust in God that agricultural workers have shown us season after season, year after year, helped us reclaim our hope and desire to keep moving forward. Many may recall after all, that Misión Peniel began serving on the street, in a parking lot or on any corner necessary to build relationships with this farmworker community.

We give thanks for all who have been our companions in uncertainty in 2022. Those individuals, churches and other organizations that have continued by our side and supported us with encouragement, prayers, given of their time and shared resources; YOU are our beacons of hope. This kind of partnership and solidarity is allowing us to continue experiencing the real presence of the Lord in these uncertain times.

“But this I call to mind and therefore I have hope: The steadfast love of the lord never ceases, his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. The Lord is my portion, says my soul, therefore I will hope in him. The Lord is good to those who wait for him, to the soul that seeks him...”Lamentations 3:21-25

May the following photos and highlights offer a testimony of how much, despite uncertainties, God continues to accomplish through Misión Peniel:

Pastoral Care

Reverend Miguel Estrada, Presbytery Evangelist and Misión Peniel Director

Throughout the year, Pastor Miguel provided countless hours of spiritual guidance, accompaniment in times of crisis, shared in celebrations, and preached in various SW Florida churches. His role as mission director continues to impact the lives of countless individuals and families in the farmworker community of Immokalee.

Mission Coordinator Position Transition

In September, the full time coordinator position was divided into two part-time positions, with Marifrans Castillo de Estrada taking over as Mission Coordinator. Ruth DeYoe is now the mission's part time Communications and Grant Administrator, and works remotely. She oversees the website, social media, newsletter, donor communications, grant writing and reporting.

Pan de Vida

Marifrans Castillo de Estrada, Coordinator

In 2022, 20 homebound clients were supported with three meals delivered each Monday. Approximately 3,120 meals were delivered throughout the year, along with basic groceries, hygiene products, kitchen items, bedding, and housewares. Also, some clients received assistance with rent and/or utility bills.



Mision Peniel's Music Academy

Juan Pablo Oliva, Director

This ministry began in January 2022 and ended the year with 9 students meeting weekly for private lessons on Tuesdays at the mission and group music theory study by zoom on Thursdays. Additional teachers are needed to help grow the music academy. **First recital:** Feb. 12th at Covenant Presb. Church, Ft. Myers.

August Backpack Event

Thanks to the support of 11 churches and many individuals, 500 backpacks with supplies were distributed to school age children! Additional volunteers from 6 different churches shared in the distribution. It was truly a celebration!



Fall Wellness Fair

In September, the mission hosted a wellness fair for the community in partnership with ChenMed, a Miami based international health care organization and other partner organizations: CIW, PIH and HCN. They were part of the Friday food distribution and led the fair on Saturday. Over 350 community members participated.

Additional community events are being planned.

Christmas Joy Campaign

This year's Christmas Joy campaign focusing on children ages birth to 10 years old brought joy to many! On December 16th, Christmas lights weren't the only things shining bright in Immokalee! Thanks to the collaborative generosity of 23 SW Florida churches and other organizations, 220 families were able to register their children to receive a special gift at Christmastime! By the end of the holiday season 706 children had received a new toy, lovingly chosen specifically for them! As you can imagine, providing gifts for farmworker families is



extremely difficult when basic needs of food and shelter consume most of their income. We give thanks to all the gift givers, gift shoppers and volunteers who made this year's Christmas Joy Campaign such a beautiful experience of holiday joy! JOYFUL, JOY-FILLED FAMILIES THANK YOU!



Friday Food Distribution

This ministry served between 300-475 individuals every week in 2022. Thanks to our garden partners, Cultivate Abundance, 36,834 lbs. of fresh harvested produce was distributed in 2022, resulting in 108,072 food servings of produce alone! We give thanks to all the churches, organizations and individuals who made it possible to organize, serve and share “Peniel”/the face of God with our beloved farmworker *community!*

COVID Relief

From May 2020 through April 2022, Misión Peniel provided approximately \$950,000 in direct support to those directly impacted by COVID. This two year outreach was made possible through the support of churches, grants and partner organizations. In 2022, approximately 400 food boxes were distributed to individuals and families in quarantine. Weekly vaccine and testing events were held at the mission, led by Health Care Network and Partners in Health. For full report visit: www.misionpeniel.com

Mission Status

Misión Peniel is not an independent non-profit. As a ministry of Peace River Presbytery, Misión Peniel relies on support from Peace River Presbytery churches.

Misión Peniel 2022 Budget: \$282,429.00

A detailed financial report will be presented as part of the presbytery's report.

***May 2023 be a year in which we continue to affirm with certain hope:
“..for in him we live and move and have our being” -- Acts 17:28***

On behalf of all who are served through the ministry of Misión Peniel, we give thanks for all your ongoing support and look forward to where God leads us in 2023 and beyond!