



**Frontera de Cristo Bi-national Border Ministry**  
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Board of Directors

December 22, 2021



Laying the cornerstone for expansion of the Children's Enrichment Ministry. In 2022, we will open our third site in Agua Prieta, in partnership with Lirio de Los Valles Presbyterian Church



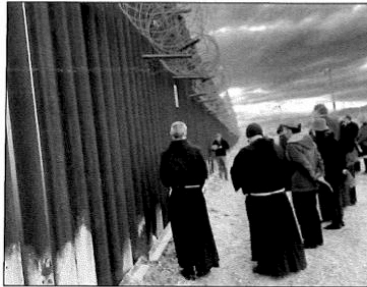
Children learn the principles of permaculture and organic gardening, and provide food for their families' tables.



Our newest peace pole is carried to its permanent location at the Migrant Resource Center



Community members offer prayers for peace, hope, love, and joy at our Noche Navideña at Café Justo y Mas



One of the stops during our Posada Sin Fronteras  
*Posada photos courtesy of Todd Miller*



The message at the MRC:  
"Migration is not a crime."



Pastor Lorena and FDC Board Member Noemi Noriega visit at Café Justo y Mas during Noche Navideña

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This letter serves as your receipt for tax purposes.

# Kids' Life in the Borderlands

a letter from Miriam Maldonado & Mark Adams,  
as published in *Mission Connections* by the Presbyterian Mission Agency  
November 2021

"Sicario," responded six-year-old Jaciel.

Marina, the director of the children's enrichment ministry, had divided up the children in the morning session at the New Hope Community Center into three groups: G1, G2 and G3.

Unbeknownst to us at the time, G2 means something different in the community surrounding the community center and six-year-old Jaciel made sure we knew—"Teacher, do you know what G2 means?"

"Group 2."

"No, teacher, it means something else."

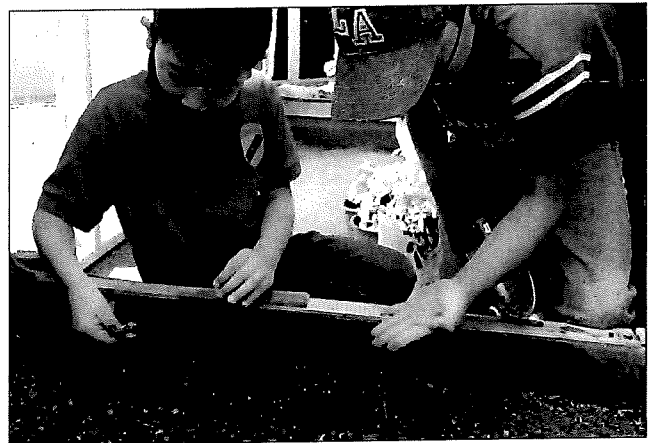
"What does it mean, Jaciel?"

"Sicario" (Hitman).

When the response of a six-year-old community members is "hitman," we know that we are in the right place. Jaciel taught us what we did not know and confirmed once again both the importance of the ministry we have with the children who are at risk of dropping out of school in elementary school and the importance of our continuing to immerse ourselves in the life of the community and to learn.

"What do you want to be when you grow up?" is a common question to ask young people both in the United States and Mexico.

There are children in our ministry who verbalize that "Sicario" is a possible vocational path for them.



Learning the principles of organic gardening



Matilde helps the children plant a tree near their classroom

Organized crime not only targets younger and younger children to consume and traffic drugs, but also to become hitmen. And children who drop out of school are more likely to enter more directly into this violent environment. A recent article in the Arizona Daily Star highlighted that there are 37,000 children in juvenile rehabilitation centers after having been arrested and convicted of violent crimes, including murder, on behalf of organized crime. Children as young as 12 trained to murder.

The Children's Enrichment Ministry of Frontera de Cristo is designed to provide academic, nutritional, emotional, social and spiritual support for children who are at risk not only of dropping out of school, but also of being consumed by the culture of violence that pervades organized crime.

This year the ministry expanded in partnership with Douglaprieta Trabaja (DPT), the women's cooperative, that Miriam trained in the practice of permaculture. DPT donated a piece of their land to be used to build a classroom for the children.

Matilde, one of the leaders of the cooperative who teaches hands-on permaculture classes to the children, talked about the initial mixed emotions she had about the women's decision:

*"We have spent years growing nutritious food in our community garden. When we began, even weeds would not grow and so we had to cultivate the soil: digging and digging, removing the caliche (alkaline clay), and composting. Now we grow more food than we can eat and we share."*

*We are excited to start a new time in our cooperative. We have a new classroom where we will be able to welcome children of the community. At first, I had mixed feelings. To have this space, we had to give up part of our garden—a part that had provided lots of food: beans, chard, squash, corn, tomatoes, peppers...*

*But I am happy because we are now going to dedicate this space to cultivate the intelligence, talent and creativity of the children of the community. And we are also going to teach them to cultivate food in their homes. This piece of God's creation will no longer grow vegetables, but it will be a place where our children grow, and they will bear fruit in our community and our community will be transformed."*

Currently we are working with 70 children in two sites, the New Hope Community Center and DPT, and partnering with the neighborhood schools. In 2022, Frontera de Cristo will be expanding the children's enrichment ministry to a third and possibly a fourth site to "cultivate the intelligence, talent, and creativity of the children of the community," as Matilde said.

Recently, we dropped off our 14-year-old son Nathan at CATPSIC (formerly known as CRREDA), the drug rehab center we have partnered with for many years, for a birthday party for Luis, the son of Laura, the director. That day, Laura had led a group from CATPSIC to work with the children's enrichment leadership team and the children to help clean up a lot where the children could have a safe place to play outside.

Esthela was at the party as well, with her children. She is one of the graduates of the drug rehab center and has been sober for over seven years. She had started consuming drugs and dropped out of school when she was 12. One of the most humbling, moving and sobering moments of our ministry here was when Esthela asked us to help lead her quinceañera (15th birthday) worship service in the rehab center. When she was early in her recovery, she participated with others in the permaculture class that Miriam led at Douglaprieta. She said, "I wish I had an opportunity like the 'escuelita' when I was a kid; perhaps I would not have gone through the horror I went through."

Life for children in the shadow of the drug culture is dark. As we enter and journey through this Advent season toward Christmas, we cry out "Come, Emmanuel, and ransom the captive children of the world. O come and shine your light into our darkness." We are grateful for your prayers and support that help sustain our life and ministry with this incredible community that God is knitting together here, a community of faith that reflects the light that shines in the darkness.



Miriam with Esthela at her quinceañera

Join us in prayer for our dedicated education team, for the children, for the women of Douglaprieta Coop, for the leadership of the drug rehab center, and families of our community. May our work together bring forth fruits of hope, joy, love and peace, and transform communities of violence into communities of *shalom*. □



More than a decade ago, the women of DPT cleaned up and began cultivating a trash-strewn, barren creek bed beside their community garden to grow corn. They channeled the rainwater, composted the soil, tended the ground lovingly. In this photo from 9 years ago, they celebrate their first harvest. Their garden has continued to produce every year since.

