



# Frontera de Cristo

A Presbyterian Binational Border Ministry

## We Thought We Were Prepared

A Reflection from Rev. Amy Miracle, Pastor, Broad Street Presbyterian Church, Columbus, Ohio

Last month, twenty-one folks from Broad Street Presbyterian Church in Columbus, Ohio made our way to the border. We were an intentionally intergenerational group that included youth and young adults. It was the largest group that any of us can remember taking on a trip, but after Mark and Miriam and Joca visited us in 2022, interest was high. The large group worked surprisingly well thanks to the hospitality and flexibility of our hosts.

We thought we were prepared. We had a robust packing list. We brought sunscreen and hats and we had been practicing our Spanish and we had read articles and watched a documentary. Our trip leaders, Brittany Porch and Jen Bunker, had done a beautiful job of preparing us for the experience.

We thought we were prepared. But who can be prepared for that level of hospitality? From the moment we were picked up at the airport in Phoenix, the people of Frontera de Cristo wrapped us in their arms and welcomed us and fed us and laughed with us and shared their work and their joys and their struggles with us. Who could be prepared for how “at home” we felt while experiencing so much that was new and challenging?

I know that I personally wasn’t prepared for Father’s Day. I arrived at the border carrying a burden of grief: the death of my father in March. I was grateful that I would be out of town for Father’s Day. I had it in my head that it wouldn’t be celebrated in a Mexican border town. Boy, was I wrong!

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The delegation from Broad Street Presbyterian Church walks in the “Healing Our Borders” Prayer Vigil and prays at the border wall.



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## We Thought We Were Prepared

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Lirio de los Valles celebrated the day with a feast and games and a piñata and I found it all just about the most healing experience imaginable. Watching our Columbus dads interact with the Agua Prieta dads while playing these goofy games put a smile on my face and a warmth in my heart that I still feel.

There was so much we weren't prepared for. We weren't prepared for the multiplicity and complexity of stories we heard:

- the vitality of the children at the Migrant Resource Center
- the power and resilience of the women of DouglPrieta Trabaja
- the ways in which the stories shared at CATPSIC touched us and connected with us
- how changing who controls the roasting of coffee is changing lives in Chiapas.

We weren't prepared for the power of the images that we now carry around in our hearts:

- the sheer size of the wall
- the beauty of the murals found on the Mexican side of the wall
- the cool shade found under the Tree of Life
- the beauty and desolation of the desert
- white crosses held high in the air
- the laughter of children playing soccer
- smiling faces in the church kitchen as we learned to make tamales.



Broad Street learns to make tamales

We weren't prepared for all of the ways in which God is at work on the border. Each day we were invited by our hosts to reflect on where and how we saw God at work. Tuesday evening's "Healing Our Borders" Prayer Vigil is etched into our hearts. God's presence was palpable with each "Presente."

A few days after we returned from our trip to the border, one of the adults in our group, Jeff Beam, posted the following on Facebook:

*I found the US/Mexico border to be a lot of things, very few of which show up in the political crossfire.*

*It is desolate. It is full of life. US border infrastructure and the desert climate cause the former. Border communities and Mexican culture create the latter.*

*It is welcoming and forbidding. It is dangerous and inviting. It is a barrier and a gateway. What passport you carry makes a lot of difference.*

*It is a place where bad policy is followed by worse policy (or by posturing in place of policy). As a result, communities suffer. Families are broken. People die unnecessarily.*

*The communities on the border have many smart, resilient, warm, and spiritual people willing to share their work and their personal stories, and who will be patient with your limited Spanish and knowledge. It is an amazing place to learn from others alongside your inquisitive kid. It's a place that invites mourning, gratitude, introspection, and prayer.*

*I'm incredibly grateful for the opportunity to cut through the noise and see it for myself.*

On behalf of our entire team and congregation, we give thanks to God for this experience and for our ongoing relationship with Frontera de Cristo. ☐

**Take Action**—Organize a delegation to the Border. For more information about bringing a delegation to the borderlands and doing life and ministry with us, please contact Angie at [office@fronteradecristo.org](mailto:office@fronteradecristo.org). You can also review our Mission Delegation Manual and get other details on our Website at <http://fronteradecristo.org/delegation-info/> ☐

## Here I Am, Send Me

by Bridich Saragos, Assistant Coordinator, Migrant Resource Center

In March, I represented Frontera de Cristo and the Migrant Resource Center at the Central America Mission and Migration Network launch in San Salvador, El Salvador, a country whose wealth lies in nature, its people, its culture, its struggle, resistance, and resilience.

It was a great blessing in my life to meet more people from El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, other parts of Mexico, and the United States who are actively helping and improving the situations of people in transit who are leaving their homes, families, and countries to reach their destination. Churches are looking for a way to respond in faith to help them by strengthening our connections and communication. The realities of migration are different in each country: each has its own migration procedures and stories.

I returned home amazed, inspired, and motivated by the beautiful things that I was able to experience that week, including learning about the story of [Monsignor Oscar Romero](#), his work, his fight against the system that oppressed the most vulnerable, and, above all, his continuing inspiration to today's generations and the ones to come.

Remembering the martyrs, hearing the way their lives were taken from them, seeing what was left of them (their vestments), and listening to the person who was narrating the story with fervor and hope made me think of this phrase from Che Guevara—"They can kill people, but never their ideas."

There is so much to learn, value, and admire. I have to think about what I am doing for the kingdom of God. Jesus invites us to serve, not to be served; to love, to be servants of peace, not oppressors; to fight for truth and justice. The gospel is not limited to four walls of a sanctuary; it is much more than that.

Let us be that change that our society needs. Let us be that living church that fights and shouts not to remain silent in the face of injustice, which is what is sought, that we, being those churches, can say "Here I am, send me." —Isaiah 6:8 □

**Take Action**—You can help provide relief to migrants at the MRC. Scan the QR code to send goods from their Amazon Wish List.



AP/Douglas contingent at the Central American Migration Network launch in El Salvador —Perla del Angel, CAME; James Martin, Tucson Borderlands Young Adult Volunteers; Bridich Saragos, Assistant Coordinator of the Migrant Resource Center; Mark Adams, PC(USA mission co-worker serving with Frontera de Cristo

## We Are Thankful

by Marina Forero, Director, Children's Enrichment Ministry

*"When we work to illuminate others, we naturally illuminate our own path!" —Mary Anne Radmacher*

This quote was taken from the story "Kindness is My Super Power" by Alicia Ortego. Adopting that phrase as our own helps us foster healthy and close relationships. The phrase was also the source of inspiration for thanking each of the people who serve in this ministry.

We are thankful for the teachers Paola, Adriana, Brenda, and Ruth, who welcome the children daily and offer educational support according to each of their particular needs.



We are thankful for Yadamy, an intern at Frontera de Cristo for a year, who traveled on her bicycle to our different sites to teach literacy to boys and girls who are behind in school and who need a continuous teaching-learning process, so that they can feel secure in themselves. When they learn to read and write they are no longer burdened by their peers who may make them feel that they are at a disadvantage.

Julia is a young woman with a big heart who gives all her energy in service to others. She not only serves the children of the orphanage with her love by teaching English and mathematics, in addition to having individual talks to strengthen their faith in God and hope, but she also serves migrants awaiting asylum at the Migrant Resource Center. In this photo, she is holding baby Rocío, who is only 6 months old and who was separated from her family due to neglect and absent parents. She has been in the orphanage since she was a month old.



Mark, pastor and coordinator of FDC, always makes time to come and share with the children of the orphanage despite his many obligations. Children love that he reads books to them in both languages (English and Spanish), although they generally prefer Spanish because it is more understandable to them. They especially enjoy it because they find the intonation he

uses when reading to them captivating, and he always invites them to reflect on the different topics that are brought up for this time. He is a great instructor for younger children who are just learning how to handle scissors, paint, and glue.



Sherry is not only a creative woman with extensive experience in educational accompaniment, but she also has a sense of love and dedication to making her teaching have great meaning for children. She prepares the materials and classes with great care, she has the heart of an excellent teacher, and she has been learning Spanish so that she can communicate with the boys and girls. And although she will be here for only a few months, I know with certainty that she will leave a wonderful mark on the hearts of the children.

To each of the groups that visit us and that not only "go against the current" wishing for more social justice, community development, and for a more equitable dream, to those who share with us and play with the children without reservation and with great love, this means that there are no longer borders or divisions, but rather we are close and empathetic even in the midst of our realities. Thank you for wanting to break paradigms and bring real knowledge of our borders to others. You make us one in the Kingdom of God here and now. □



## Stories of Grace

by Lorena Ocampo Campos, Pastor for Children and Families

### Grace in Families

“I am grateful for this program because I have learned many things, and the Word of God,” Hamilton’s little 9-year-old face was red from the nervousness of public speaking, and yet he wanted to be the voice of so many children who experience the joy of being a part of the Children’s Enrichment Ministry at a “Celebration Party” a few months ago.

It was a morning of jubilation, when parents, representatives of Frontera de Cristo, and some sister organizations participated in celebrating the accomplishments of the children.

We celebrated the grace of God, poured out into our lives, the effort, fidelity, and creativity of the children who have completed their Bible program “The Timeline of the Promise.” Week by week, through the different biblical characters, they discovered their purpose, trusting that God has a plan for humanity and firmly believing that, as the image of God, we are intelligent and capable, and that with His help, we can make a dream come true.

One by one, the children, walking with firm steps and heads held high, received a diploma and a small gift, a reward for their work.

Photos, applause, and congratulations were part of the celebration. Pastor Mark Adams, Coordinator of Frontera de Cristo, expounded upon the Word of God, sharing God’s love for us even in the brokenness and hurt of our own lives and that of our families. Supported by the Holy Spirit, he kept the children’s attention and participated by expressing their opinions.

“God invites us to be a part of his family. God is ready to embrace us even if we have messed up. God calls us to live together as family. The unity of the family of God gives strength.” It is the message of grace that was transmitted to families. The Word of God is being preached and we trust that it will not return void.

### Grace in Children

“Therefore, be prepared to act intelligently; have self-control; Put your hope completely in the grace that will be given to you when Jesus Christ is revealed.” (1 Peter 1:7)

After diplomas and recognitions were given, the participants enjoyed looking at the small craft market the children had set up with crafts they had made from recycled materials.

“How much does the broom cost? And the flower pots?” It was exciting to see the children proudly displaying their creations and getting compensated for their work!

Those crafts represent teamwork, motivation, ideas turned into projects, and formed into a product; they reflect the ability and intelligence of children.

Having a change in the way of thinking is one of the important manifestations of a genuine relationship with Christ. Each child who is part of the project conceives of themselves as a being created with intelligence to generate ideas and solve problems. They know that self-control is important to work as a team and that their hope is not only in their parents, or in life opportunities, but in Christ who died and rose again so that we can fulfill the purpose of life: To be happy. □



**Take Action**—You can help the children’s educational, social, and spiritual journeys by providing material goods to the Children’s Enrichment Ministry. Just scan the QR code to access their Wish List on Amazon.



## “If We All Share a Little”

by Miriam Maldonado and Mark Adams, as published in *Mission Connections*, Summer 2024

**“If we all share a little, there will be more than enough.”**

—volunteer at the Douglas Welcome Center during an organizational gathering as the community prepared to welcome persons released by Border Patrol.

Wouldn't releasing so many people a day be seen as a burden to your community?" asked Nathan, a reporter from *The Globe and Mail*, Canada's largest newspaper, while interviewing Mark on the Frontera de Cristo (FDC) porch in Douglas last week. He had come seeking to gauge community reaction to the Biden Administration's recent executive action to increase expulsions into Agua Prieta and other Mexican border communities.

Implicit in that question was that vulnerable families, men, women and children who are fleeing extreme violence or poverty or are seeking to be reunited with family in the U.S., are burdens, as opposed to human beings created in the divine image, beloved by God. What the question failed to capture is that there will be an extra burden on the already vulnerable population being returned.

This was just another election year change in U.S. government policy that is guided by fear and fails to create solutions for the safe and orderly transit of persons seeking refuge, opportunity, and/or family reunification in the United States.

In February of 2021, the leadership of the Douglas Border Patrol Station reached out to Frontera de Cristo and asked for help. They said that they were going to begin releasing up to 100 people a day in Douglas, Arizona, and wanted to know if we could provide a place where they could release them instead of just releasing them on the streets of Douglas. We responded that we would provide the best welcome we could but encouraged them to release the people in Tucson where there is an airport, a bus station, and a train station that people could use to get to their family and/or sponsors.

We were told that Border Patrol was not going to “prop up a broken system anymore,” and once large numbers of persons were released in small communities there would not only be angry communities but also “there will be media” that would spread the news of the broken system.

Since December 15, 2020, the Tucson Sector Border Patrol had been transporting people for over four hours from the western part of Arizona and expelling them in the middle of the night into Agua Prieta without telling

people where they were being dropped off. The Migrant Resource Center in Agua Prieta responded by increasing its capacity to welcome vulnerable populations and keeping the Center open for 24 hours. The team of volunteers welcomed 30,297 men, women and children from December 2020 to December 2021. In 2022, the team welcomed more than 42,000 men, women and children.

Last month, we had lunch with a delegation from St. Ignatius High School (San Francisco) at the Douglas Welcome Center which, in a six-month period, welcomed 8,500 men, women and children who were released by Border Patrol before the recent executive order.

On June 8, we celebrated the 24<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Exodus Migrant Attention Shelter (CAME), a ministry of the La Sagrada Familia Catholic Parish with whom we have partnered throughout their existence. CAME has provided shelter and food for thousands of people in transit over the past 24 years. Lorenzo, who had fled his community in Chihuahua with his wife and three children because of threats to their lives, and had waited for over two months to petition asylum at the Port of Entry, asked us, “How long do you think it will be until we can apply?” He felt stuck—without the possibility of returning to the beautiful but dangerous forested mountain home and not knowing when or if they could apply for asylum.

On June 30, we celebrated the 18th anniversary of the Migrant Resource Center (MRC), which has welcomed more than 200,000 men, women and children who have been expelled from the U.S. or who are waiting to seek asylum in the U.S.

- 18 years of choosing welcome
- 18 years of choosing to recognize the divine image in persons in transit and resisting the demonization of the most vulnerable among us
- 18 years of choosing to live in faith, hope and love and resisting fear, hate and exclusion
- 18 years of cultivating community across borders
- 18 years trusting that if we all share a little there will be more than enough.

We are super grateful for:

- the “great cloud of witnesses” who have gone before us and lived out the Gospel value of hospitality: Doña Ester, Chayito, Benito, Father Bob, Pastor Chuy and so many others
- the hundreds of volunteers over the years
- the more than 200,000 persons who have sought refuge in the MRC

- the thousands from churches, universities, seminaries and high schools who have come to learn from the community of faith here, encouraging, supporting and praying for us
- the individuals, churches and organizations that “share a little” financially or with “in kind” donations.

In a world where persons migrating are increasingly demonized and scapegoated, may God give us all courage, wisdom, and an abundance of love and compassion to choose welcome!

We are grateful to be a part of a bi-national community that chooses welcome and rejects labeling vulnerable populations as “burdens.” We are grateful to be a part of a bi-national community that seeks to live out the values of Jesus and rejects the temptation to respond in fear when confronted with the suffering of the world.

We are grateful for you whose prayers, and words of encouragement and support strengthen our community of welcome. ☐

**Frontera de Cristo**  
**40th Anniversary Celebration**  
 Friday–Sunday, October 18-20

at Lirio de los Valles Presbyterian Church & Café Justo y Más, Avenida 19 & Calle 10, Agua Prieta, Sonora

2024 is a year of celebrations: the 18th anniversary of the MRC and the 24th anniversary of CAME, both in June, and our upcoming 40th anniversary of Frontera de Cristo in October. For details about our anniversary celebration, scan the QR code or go to [fronteradecristo.org](http://fronteradecristo.org)



Our Love Mercy, Do Justice initiative provides coffee for shelters in these locations in the US and Mexico. You can help! Go to [fronteradecristo.org/lmdj/](http://fronteradecristo.org/lmdj/)

**In Mexico—**

- Agua Prieta, Sonora**  
CATPSIC  
CAME  
CRM  
Centro Comunitario
- Nogales, Sonora**  
Kino Border Initiative  
Casa de Misericordia
- Sasabe, Sonora**  
Casa de Esperanza
- Matamoros, Tamaulipas**  
Albergue Dulce Refugio
- Sonoita, Sonora**  
Centro de Esperanza
- Gomez Palacio, Durango**  
Luz y Salvacion
- Tapachula, Chiapas**  
Albergue Buen Pastor  
Casa Hogar para Rehabilitación de Adicciones  
Albergue Diocesano Belen

**In the US (added in 2024)—**

- Douglas, AZ**  
Douglas Welcome Center
- Silver City, NM**  
Gospel Rescue
- Deming, NM**  
Deming Welcome Center
- Columbus, OH**  
Bethany PC Feeding Ministry

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## Come Celebrate With Us!

# Frontera de Cristo

# 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration

Friday–Sunday, October 18-20

at Lirio de los Valles Presbyterian Church and Café Justo y Más, Avenida 19 & Calle 10 Agua Prieta, Sonora

**Sign up today!** 

Scholarships/sponsorships are available—no one turned away due to financial need.

- ◆ Friday Welcome Lunch ◆ Mural Art on the Border Wall
- ◆ Biblical Reflections on Binational Ministry ◆ Artisan Market
- ◆ Workshops on "Responding in Faith to the Realities of Migration" and "Communities of Mission Praxis" ◆ Tours of Ministry Partner Sites
- ◆ Painting Class at Café Justo y Más ◆ Border Infrastructure Tour
- ◆ "Lotería" de Frontera de Cristo ◆ And more!

 [View the Schedule](#)

  
Dinner & Concert at The Gadsden Hotel  
Friday Evening

  
Dinner & Concerts in the Plaza  
Saturday Evening

**Details Inside...**

### Ministries of Frontera de Cristo


- ◆ Collaboration with Churches ◆ Mission Education
- ◆ Just Trade Center ◆ New Hope Community Center
- ◆ Health Ministry ◆ Family Ministry

*Sharing the Good News in Word and Deed*

[www.fronteradecristo.org](http://www.fronteradecristo.org)

*Frontera de Cristo is one of four binational border ministries of the PC(USA)'s Presbyterian Borderlands Ministries. Frontera de Cristo works with churches, presbyteries, and organizations on both sides of the border to do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with God.*

### Connect With Us

- Sign up for our monthly e-letters at <http://fronteradecristo.org/newsletter/> and click "Sign Up Now"
- Follow us on Facebook: Frontera de Cristo  
Café Justo  
Café Justo y Mas 
- Volunteer with us on the border. For details, email [mark@fronteradecristo.org](mailto:mark@fronteradecristo.org)
- Organize a delegation from your church, university, or other organization to experience the border firsthand.