



Man on a Mission

In March, Blair Andrew (pictured front row, at right) took part in an all-men mission trip to San Carlos, Mexico. The group of 15 from OneChurch.ca, which included his sons Carson and Brock, distributed food and clothing to the needy and repaired churches.



By Blair Andrew

I went on my first mission trip to San Carlos, Mexico in the spring of 2006. I was a youth leader with OneChurch.ca, a Pentecostal church that has brick-and-mortar locations in Redvers and Carlyle, Sask., where I live, and an online campus. A team of six adults and five kids travelled in a van to the city of about 7,000 people on the Sea of Cortez, on Mexico's west coast, four hours south of Tucson, Arizona. The drive from

Saskatchewan took 42 hours.

San Carlos is a beachfront subdivision within the port city of Guaymas in the state of Sonora. It's best known for its diving sites and the American movies that have been made there – Catch 22 and The Mask of Zorro. Many Canadians and Americans live in San Carlos during the winter – fewer during the summers, which are very hot and humid.

About 50 members of the church still visit the city every year. These days, we take a tour bus.

Whether you're travelling in a van or a bus, there's nothing like a long road trip and working together to create a sense of camaraderie. There's plenty of time to talk, allowing you to get to know each other, which is important for team building.

The group mainly works in slums and drug

rehab clinics, distributes donated food and clothing to the needy and repairs homes and buildings in rural areas.

We also spend time with the kids of San Carlos, playing soccer, sharing a meal – just being with them. Everyone on the trip helps out, no matter the age, and we try doing activities that impact all of the members.

On each trip to San Carlos there has always been something that affected me deeply. Last year it was my experience working at a private drug rehab clinic treating 90 men, women and children. The clinic was a 900-sq.-ft. facility with one washroom.

In December 2012 my wife Debbie and I took our three children to San Carlos for five weeks. It was an opportunity for us to experience the other side of mission work. We have always been privileged to learn from and work with a group in San Carlos called Casa de Esperanza a Koenes Ministries Outreach. This time we helped other volunteer teams coming down from Canada and the U.S.

We were also blessed to work with Reach Out and Care Wheels, a mission team out of Bozeman, Montana that coordinates a prison program that arranges for inmates to refurbish wheelchairs for Mexicans. The wheelchairs are customized to the specific needs of a person, and the family/caregiver is taught how

to work and maintain the chair. A photo is taken of the recipient in the new chair and sent to the inmates.

This past March, because we always come away feeling we could have done more, I helped organize an "all-men" mission trip to San Carlos. Our goal was to complete as many projects as we could in one week, projects that might not be

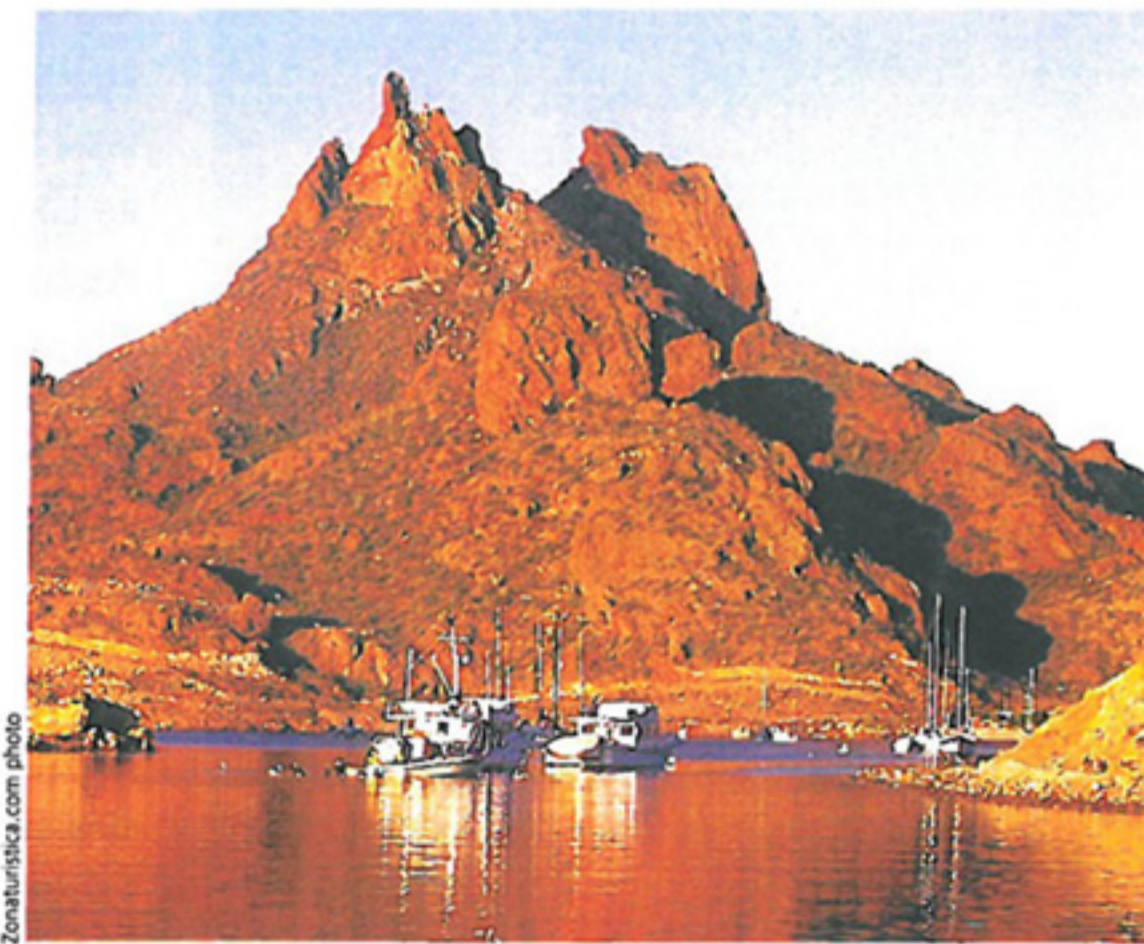
The trip was a huge success. We poured cement for a church site, replaced a wooden roof and fabricated a new rafter-and-roof system on a church in a remote community. Carson and Brock were integral to the welding and tinning process. It was neat to watch them learn the skills. The group also distributed food and clothing and, of course, prayed for people.

I'm not the kind of guy to go someplace hot and pass the time sitting on the beach; I need something to do. These mission trips are my way of enjoying someplace hot and finding a way to give something back. It's fun – almost addictive – helping people and seeing the impact we're able to make.

You can go to the touristy parts of Mexico and see some of the culture, but you don't have to go far to see the troubled areas. On our mission trips, we get to see both. That's why I keep returning to San Carlos. It keeps me grounded. ■

Blair Andrew of Carlyle, Sask is the coo of Andrew Agencies.

Have you had an interesting travel experience? You write it or we will. Contact editor Sarah Polson at 604-875-7768 (toll-free 800-888-8811) or by email at spolson@insurancewest.ca.



One of the scenic views in San Carlos, Mexico is Tetakawi Mountain.

possible without so many men.

There were 15 of us, including my sons Carson, 19, and Brock, 17, and two men from our church, Darren Grimes and Travis Singleton, who work at Andrew Agencies, which was founded by my great-grandfather Robert in 1913. It was pretty neat taking our work relationships and friendships outside the office and giving back together in this way.