

## Ministry at the USA/Mexico Border And a Call for Sponsors

For a long time now, Provisional Pastor Brian Sieve and MCC El Paso have been involved in ministry with migrants, especially those seeking asylum in the USA. The crisis at the US southern border is not due to unprecedented migration but rather due to the broken immigration system including policies excluding families, insufficient numbers of immigration judges and trained asylum officers with US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). Politics and racism have also played key roles in the dysfunction. Meanwhile, the needs of asylum seekers and migrants caught in the process grows.

“For those held up or returned to Juarez (Mexico - across the river from El Paso, USA), they have no way to make a living and depend totally on the generosity of strangers to survive for an indefinite time while they wait for word from the US. In addition to needing food, shelter and clothing, they also need legal, psychological, social and spiritual care,” writes Pastor Brian. “When our siblings are released by the government with little to no notice and no care for what comes next, they are in need of showers, beds, clothes, food, contact with their family or sponsor plus spiritual, emotional and legal support.”

Pastor Brian notes: “While Annunciation House (Catholic Charities) is still an option for many, we were contacted by advocacy groups that our Queer siblings did not feel comfortable there.” This year Santa Fe Dreamers have been coordinating the crossings of our Queer siblings under a new exemption by the Biden administration to allow certain at-risk populations to cross, despite the COVID situation.

Casa Carmelita is a community based collaboration of a variety of Queer/Femme Indigenous siblings from the Borderlands. They responded to the need by making their 3 bedroom community center, a former bus station just steps from the International Border bridge, available to gender Queer asylum seekers, once they were finally processed at the Border and allowed to wait in the US. The collaboration of services, activists, volunteers, and grassroots donations provide for all their needs until sponsors are secured for each one. Casa Carmelita has housed up to 14 at a time there. It is certainly an ad hoc situation, but still more comfortable than when the original eight Transgender siblings contacted Pastor Brian seeking assistance a year ago.

[IMAGE: Early group shot with Rev. Antonio and Pastor Brian]

That first group founded Casa de Colores, a resident led refuge, network, and community of Transgender siblings in an abandoned hotel in the center of Ciudad Juarez that eventually housed 43. Members of MCC El Paso, Casa Carmelita, ICM Caminando Juntos



Misión Cd. Juárez, and partner groups provided assistance and funding. According to Pastor Brian, “The resident siblings were creative, frugal, and graceful while toughing it out through limited electricity, one industrial propane heater, and using buckets at their sole spigot of water for washing. Eventually the building and the community became more habitable and comfortable, with better electricity, and plumbing, and even wifi provided by volunteer activists passing through Casa Carmelita.”

MCC’s Pastor Brian would cross over the border at least once a week to bring funds, and take the asylum seekers to Home Depot, the supermarket, or whatever their needs. He was honored to be invited to lead a number of services for them such as blessing the building, the Day of the Dead memorial service, and a Christmas night celebration with gifts and Santa Juan from Casa Carmelita, and more.

MCC and Pastor Brian also work in partnership with other nonprofits serving the needs of those seeking refuge in the USA through the port of El Paso. Recently, he reached out to MCC with a specific urgent need for **SPONSORS for Trans / Queer migrants**, especially femme folk.



[Image: Rev. Antonio, Suzanna (Suzi) Coreas, Pastor Brian at Casa de Colores]

“Rev. Antonio Narvaez (ICM Caminando Juntos Misión Cd. Juárez, Chihuahua, Mexico) and I,” says Pastor Brian, “have been assisting for a year, a specific group of 43 mostly Salvadorean Transgender femme folk at Casa de Colores in Central Ciudad Juarez, Chihuahua, México. But they are just one of many groups that have been held in Mexico for the past few years under policies that defy US and International law, not able to apply for

asylum. While I have specific commitments and responsibilities to this particular group, there will continue to be thousands of Queer migrants appearing at US Borders as they always have. My partners and I will continue to try to assist as more come, especially from the destabilized economies and governments in the "Northern Triangle" of Central America: Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras.”

“Right now, among the half dozen organizations who have been helping us with Casa de Colores, one specific organization - Santa Fe Dreamers - is helping prepare our residents, and many others to secure processing through the Border, receive a hearing date, stay safely in US Border locations until sponsors are found, and then place asylum seekers and refugees with sponsors anywhere in the US.”

He emphasizes. “The need is urgent. As a microcosm - of our 43 residents: 20 took a bus to Tijuana to walk up to be registered during a brief period that was allowed. They were held for a

few days to a week or two, then released and are now in California and Arizona awaiting sponsors. Thirteen have been allowed across to El Paso. Four have sponsors and have left to join them. Nine are living ad hoc at our small community home in El Paso seeking Sponsors. That still leaves ten in Juarez preparing to cross over when possible. They will need Sponsors.”

On the USA side, Santa Fe Dreamers coordinates the legal process and Sponsors while groups like MCC, ICM and their partners are providing basic needs on both sides of the Border.

Perhaps you have wondered what you could do to help with the situation at the USA/Mexico border.

Perhaps you are in a position to be a sponsor.

Perhaps you are in a position to make a donation to those assisting LGBTQ migrants.

More information is available on the form at this link: <http://bit.ly/SFDPSponsor>

OR you may reach out to Pastor Brian Sieve at [godsloveforalllep@gmail.com](mailto:godsloveforalllep@gmail.com)

All of us can pray for Pastor Brian Sieve and the members of MCC El Paso, Rev. Antonio Narvaez and the people of ICM Caminando Juntos Misión Cd. Juárez, the residents of Casa de Colores and Casa Carmelita, for the migrants they work with, for all those caught in this broken system and for just immigration reform.

[IMAGE: Residents of Casa de Colores with Pastor Brian]

