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Crossing Cultural Lines to Link People to the Cross

# Crossbits

**Fundraiser Event >>>**

## **Gutierrez Fundraiser**

*Thank you for supporting Shawn and his ministry work!*

*Shawn joined CrossLink as a missionary in 2023.*

*Shawn is the Ministry Leader for the Celebrate Recovery Program at West Side Church in Yakima, WA.*

*His goal was to raise \$30,000 in donor commitments for 2024 and he was able reach that goal with your help!*

*Shawn's next fundraising goal is to reach \$50,000 so that his ministry work can be 100% full-time.*

*Thank you!*

## **Baja Leader's Retreat: Building Ministry on Jesus Alone**

*A month before the Baja Mexico Leader's Retreat this year, Pastor Umberto and his wife Esperanza were ready to quit ministry. The discouragement was real and putting one foot in front of the other foot was becoming too hard.*

During the 2023 Baja Leader's retreat, Umberto and 23 other pastors attended workshops taught by CrossLink Board member, Pastor Elias Garcia from Yakima, WA. The focus of this year's conference was "On this Rock" based on Matthew 16:13-20. The purpose was to encourage the pastors to build their ministries on Jesus and Jesus alone, asking the questions: Who do we serve? How do we serve? How can we work together?

How do you measure real encouragement that the CrossLink Leadership retreats give to our brothers and sisters in Christ who are living out the gospel in Mexico and serving in ministry?

*Photo: Pastors and their families at the 2023 Baja Mexico Leader's Retreat.*



## Venezuela Ministries Assistance Programs >>>

### **Arepitas de Amor (Bread of Love) >>>**

In Venezuela, 12 churches have continued the Arepitas de Amor program – a program where church volunteers teach Bible study lessons while providing a meal for children. From April to October 2023, some of churches were able to send regular reports to CrossLink and we have counted over 2,500 meals given to children at schools, Bible studies, and community outreach events. If we were able to count every meal delivered by each of the 12 churches, this number would increase.

One of the churches also sends volunteers twice a month to local hospitals with bags of prepared arepas (a flatbread unique to Venezuela) and juice to give to patients and their families. Sometimes, the volunteers make 40 pieces of flatbread to give to patients and sometimes they make 100 pieces of bread depending on how far their resources stretch. Each patient and their family receive prayer and hear the gospel message. Each of the 12 churches receives \$20 to support their food ministries for a total of \$240.

*Photos: Several children at Saturday breakfast. The Rosa de Saron Baptist Church in Sabana Grande hosts breakfast for 65-70 children every Saturday morning.*



### **RAVENZ>>>**

The Ravenz program now includes 33 pastors. Ravenz was named after the story in I Kings 17 when Elijah obeyed God by staying in a land of drought to do ministry and *God provided for his needs*. Venezuela is like Cuba in that more people outside of the country support the people living inside the country.

The salary provided by the government is \$5 a month, however, the current living wage is \$300 a month – which none of our pastors receive in salary. One pastor wrote, *“I lament to tell you, but some of the pastors wait for the money to come each month. Some only earn \$5 and \$10 a month.”*

As long as funding is available, CrossLink sends \$660 each month (\$20 for each of the 33 churches) to provide food for pastors who are not consistently receiving enough wages to feed their families.

Arepitas de Amor is an important program, however, with the more recent wave of emigration out of Venezuela, we need pastors to stay in Venezuela to continue ministry and the work that God has called them to do.

Pastors cannot remain when their families are hungry. Without pastors and church leaders staying in ministry in Venezuela, we and they would not be able to continue programs like Arepitas de Amor that impact so many children and families in Venezuela with God’s love.

Thank you for continuing to support these programs.

*Photo: On 10/18/23, the Dios es mi Paz Baptist Church visited the Pedro Emilio Carrillo University Hospital with 100 arepas filled with ham and cheese.*



### **Baja Leadership Retreat Continued >>>**

*The Mexico Leadership Retreats bring pastors together and encourage them to continue serving in the ministry that God has called them.*

During the Baja Leader’s retreat, Pastor Umberto said, “We were ready to quit. Now, this retreat has encouraged us, and we are ready to work.” Umberto is now part of a network of pastors who have started meeting monthly for a prayer gathering across denominational lines, something which had not previously been done.

The unity of these pastors praying together and for each other, encouraging each other, and working together has breathed life into their various ministries in Baja Mexico.

One pastor taught the other pastors some of the skills needed to communicate to speakers of different language groups in their communities, including getting Bibles to people with the appropriate languages and dialects.

The networking of pastors that started with the Leader’s retreat has significantly impacted many of the churches. Some pastors, like Pastor Luis, have grown more vibrant in their church ministries. The leadership retreat also provided the groundswell effort needed for churches to work together and plant two more churches.

*The Mexico Leadership Retreats brings pastors and their wives together in ministry and leadership development.*

Another aspect of the leadership retreat is how it values the wives of pastors and their children who also participate and carry out the work of ministry. Sarah Hires, a missionary along with her husband Dwight, in Baja Mexico, explained, “It’s hard to quantify, but being invited to a high-quality hotel (that these families cannot afford) was an emotional uplift for the wives because they were treated with that kind of honor and value.”

Although the retreat was not focused on marriages, pastors and wives shared that their ability to be together and learn and worship together in this type of setting helped create and strengthen their relationship to each other.

One of the goals of CrossLink is to help pastors and ministry leaders stay in ministry and to encourage those in ministry to build their ministries, their marriages, their families, and their lives on Jesus and Jesus alone.

*Photo: Ladies from the Baja Mexico Leader’s Retreat*

