

Dear Friends,

The Dignity Mission is in a period of transition. Changes in U.S. immigration policy and enforcement over the past year have dramatically altered conditions at the border, creating circumstances very different from those we faced eight years ago when the mission began.

At that time, the Dignity Mission was responding to the needs of hundreds of asylum seekers waiting in shelters in Ciudad Juárez for interviews with U.S. border officials, as well as hundreds more who had entered the United States legally and were temporarily housed in El Paso while traveling to their sponsors. Today, the Department of Homeland Security is detaining and returning that same population—along with many others who have lived in the United States for years—back across the border into Mexico.

U.S. Customs and Border Protection now escort approximately 100 individuals each day from El Paso across the bridge into Ciudad Juárez. Mexican nationals are taken to a large government-run shelter to begin repatriation, while individuals of other nationalities are reportedly bused to Mexico City for processing and deportation.

In order to better understand this rapidly changing landscape, we spent three days in El Paso exploring how the Dignity Mission might continue to provide meaningful logistical and operational support. A key part of that effort involved meeting with organizations assisting migrants on both sides of the border.

What we learned was sobering. The migrant shelters in Juárez that the Dignity Mission has historically supported are nearly empty. Casa del Migrante currently houses only six people, and Respetrans just twenty-two, despite having capacity for hundreds. Many displaced individuals are instead sheltering in abandoned buildings near the cathedral in central Juárez—raising urgent questions about how best to reach them. On the U.S. side of the border, Immigration and Customs Enforcement is “releasing” migrants from detention centers to Annunciation House in El Paso. They arrive without documentation and with nowhere else to go.

Six volunteers representing the Dignity Mission—Sean Ferrell, Anne Karsian, Ralph and Chris Bowlin, and Jack and Cheryl Ferrell—traveled to El Paso on Friday with donated supplies, including 454 pounds of beans and rice; ten bags of jackets, sweaters, sweatshirts, underwear, and socks; two boxes of Days for Girls hygiene kits; and 1,560 hand towels and 1,768 Ziploc bags for Dignity Kits. Prior to our arrival, we had shipped all remaining toiletry items needed for approximately 2,000 Dignity Kits directly to Dr. Eva Moya in El Paso.

Because needs shift daily, we explored whether assembling Dignity Kits locally in El Paso—where organizations know exactly when and where they are needed—might be more effective. At our request, Dr. Moya and her team organized an assembly event on Saturday, January 31. That morning, more than 90 volunteers gathered in Dr. Moya’s

garage and driveway and assembled 2,116 Dignity Kits. It was truly a sight to behold. (See the attached pictures.) The energy, commitment, and joy of the volunteers were deeply moving. We are now planning another assembly in late March, possibly at a different location in El Paso.

Over the course of the weekend, the six volunteers and Dr. Moya also met with leaders from several organizations serving migrants, including Grecia Herrera of Respettrans in Juárez; Ana Laura Rodela Soto, director of Los Centros de Bienestar para el Migrante in Juárez; two sisters from Hermanas Siervas de los Pobres in Juárez; Maria Covernali, executive director of Familias Triunfadoras in San Elizario, Texas; Araceli Perez, manager from the Opportunity Center in El Paso; Rev. Peter Precourt, pastor of St. Francis Xavier Catholic Church in El Paso; and Omar Rios, formerly with the Hope Border Institute and Las Americas Immigrant Advocacy Center in El Paso. These conversations will help guide our discernment as we consider the Dignity Mission's role going forward.

In the meantime, we continue to request donations in the form of direct shipments of urgently needed items to Dr. Eva Moya in El Paso. There is an ongoing and critical need for underwear, Nido powdered milk, and diapers. These items may be purchased through Costco or Amazon and shipped directly to:

Dignity Mission

c/o Dr. Eva Moya

6520 La Cadena Dr. El Paso, TX 79912

A full list of requested items is available on the Dignity Mission Amazon Wish List:

https://www.amazon.com/hz/wishlist/ls/3A8N584B37L61?ref=wl_share

Direct shipments to Dr. Moya or monetary donations to the Dignity Mission remain the most effective ways to respond quickly and efficiently to the constantly evolving needs at the border. Monetary donations may be made in one of two ways:

- • By check payable to Las Placitas Presbyterian Church, with "Dignity Mission" noted in the memo line, mailed to P.O. Box 768, Placitas, NM 87043.
- • Online at <http://lasplacitaschurch.org> by clicking "More," then "Give," selecting "Click Here to Give," choosing "Dignity Mission," and completing the donation form.

Blessings,

