

MISSION OF HOPE, BOLIVIA NEWSLETTER

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A MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR, CINDY THACKER

Since our spring surgery team had to be postponed until the fall of this year, I thought I would take the opportunity to share some of **the story of Mission of Hope** with you. I hope that as you read this, you will see that it is the story of how God heard and answered the cries of the poor in Bolivia. In my early years as a believer, we sang a beautiful hymn in church called “Here I am, Lord” from Isaiah 6:8 that often moved me to tears. Here are some of the lyrics...

*I, who made the stars of night,
I will make their darkness bright.
Who will bear my light to them?
Whom shall I send?*

*Here I am, Lord. Is it I, Lord?
I have heard you calling in the night.
I will go, Lord, if you lead me.
I will hold your people in my heart.*

Never in my wildest dreams did I imagine that many years later in June of 1999, I would be awakened from a sound sleep and hear the Lord telling me to go to Bolivia and start a free hospital for the poor! I remember thinking, “Lord, I have no idea how to do that!” His response to me was very clear. He said to me, **“I’m going to do it, not you!”** And that was the beginning of a very exciting adventure with the Lord!

A few weeks later in July of 1999, I went on a medical mission trip to Bolivia. When I arrived in Santa Cruz, I found out that there was **a hospital for sale!** The hospital was very centrally located and very accessible by bus, which is the main mode of public transportation. I met with the owner and told him that I wanted to buy his hospital as soon as I had the money!

Six months later, I met with a Christian lawyer who did all the paperwork to establish “Mission of Hope, Bolivia” at no charge. Ten days later, it was official! We were a non-profit corporation in the state of Virginia! When the IRS received our application for tax-exempt status, they sent us a letter saying it would take anywhere from four months to a year to approve our application. Three weeks later, a second letter came saying our application had been approved! In July of 2001, **we bought the hospital for sale, paying cash for the full amount,** with donations that had come in!

One year later in July of 2002, we quietly opened the Mission of Hope clinic in Santa Cruz without any publicity. The first day we had 3 patients, the second day 8 patients, the third day 22 patients... By the end of the first 2 weeks, there was a line outside to get in, and it has been that way ever since! To date, we have seen **more than 300,000 patients free of charge!**

Mission of Hope was to be a place where the poor could come and receive good medical care and medicines without cost. We also wanted to share the hope that we have in Jesus Christ. From day one, the patients have come in as a group to sit in the waiting room, where they hear the Gospel message. Before anyone sees the doctor, the patients have an opportunity to meet “The Great Physician!”

A few weeks after opening the clinic, a man came back to tell us his story. He said he had come to the clinic very **depressed and contemplating suicide.** He came back to tell us that **after hearing the Gospel** presentation that day in the waiting room, he had given his life to Jesus. He came back to thank us and tell us that **his life had completely changed!**



Pastor Alex sharing the Gospel



Waiting for the clinic to open

Sucre

About four years after opening the clinic in Santa Cruz, I received news that **a pastor in Sucre wanted to donate land to build a medical clinic**, just like the one in Santa Cruz. His dream was to bring health care to his Quechua Indian community, where most of the people still went to the local witch doctor if they got sick. Not long after that, I received a call from **a man with his own construction company** in St. Simons Island, Georgia, who **wanted to know if there was anything he could build** for Mission of Hope!

Mission of Hope opened a **free clinic in Sucre** in February of 2013. They just **celebrated their seven year anniversary!** To date, they have seen **more than 33,000 patients!** Up in the mountains of

Sucre where the clinic is located, there is no public transportation. Most of the patients arrive at the clinic on foot, many of them **seeing a medical doctor for the first time in their lives!** They are also hearing the Gospel message in their Quechua language.

Making a Difference

Both Mission of Hope clinics are completely staffed by local Bolivian people. Everything in both clinics is free. People often ask me **where the money comes from** to operate two clinics. The answer is simple. The **money comes from people like you and me.**

Twice a year, surgery teams from the US provide a week of free surgeries. Team members pay their own way and volunteer their time to go to the Santa Cruz clinic, where we have two operating rooms and 32 beds. To date, the **teams have performed almost 2,000 life changing surgeries**, including a cardiology team that implanted 20 pacemakers. We also pay for surgeries for our patients at local Bolivian hospitals.

Going Forward

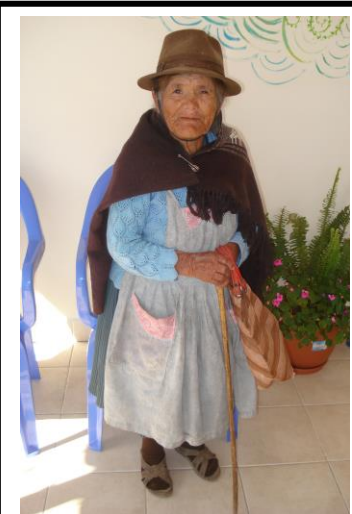
This is an exciting time for Mission of Hope as we **transition to new leadership.** For many years, I have been asked the question, “What’s going to happen to Mission of Hope when Cindy Thacker can’t do it anymore?” And, as I approached my 70th birthday, I was asking God the same question!

I am happy to report that I now have the answer! Her name is **Julie McNally.** Julie is finishing a 30 year career in the Navy at the end of this year and will take over as Director of Mission of Hope on January 1st of next year. Julie is **wonderfully qualified.** She is **a nurse**, and she has been a leader in

healthcare in the Navy for many years, including **directing a large medical center.** We have already made 3 trips to Bolivia together, and we will have one more trip together this fall.

I look forward to “passing the baton” after more than 20 years as director. I am excited to see what God will do **as He continues to grow the ministry of Mission of Hope,** and I am hoping to write more of this story in a book.

**To God Be the Glory!
Great things He has done!!**



Seeing a medical doctor for the first time



Julie (left) & Cindy (right)

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