



## **JOURNEY INTO CHURCH PLANTING**

Last year there was an article that came to me from a Southwest Church Connection email that peaked my interest. It had to do with an idea a few pastors had about starting a new church in Morenci Arizona. I had been interested in church planting for years, but the timing was never quite right for my family or our church. When I read the article I was immediately interested in the idea so I sent my resume. Long story short... I am currently living in Morenci working towards starting a new church.

## **OBSTACLES**

There have been some pretty significant obstacles on the road to Morenci. The first obstacle was making the decision to go forward. Our family had lived in Nogales/Rio Rico for 24 years, I had been the Associate Pastor at First Baptist Church of Nogales for 16 years and recently I was employed with the Fire District in Rio Rico as an EMT/Firefighter as well as the Chaplain there. It would be a struggle to leave our church, friends and community. After visiting Morenci our first impression was not impressive to say the least. Morenci is a ¼ of the size of Nogales. There are only three retail establishments, one gas station and no fast food.

Taking into consideration all these factors we found ourselves wanting to wait for another opportunity, but we did not feel peace with this decision. God reminded us that this opportunity was an answer to prayer, so instead of closing this door we decided to go forward as long as God was opening the doors.

Things were coming into place nicely but there was one more obstacle and it would turn out to be pretty daunting. As it turns out Morenci is 100 % owned by Freeport-McMoran, including housing. You cannot just decide to live there, in fact there is a waiting list even for the miners who decide to work for the company. I had put my application in as a music teacher and as an EMT but I hadn't heard back so things were looking pretty bleak.

## **GOD'S ANSWER**

The time for the commissioning service was fast approaching and only the church leadership was aware of the possible church plant. So, on a Sunday morning I stood up in front of the church and shared our plans. I said that without some kind of employment opening up in Morenci I would not be able to get housing. I asked for prayer towards a job in Morenci and for housing. The next day, Monday, I received a call from Morenci Unified School District. Their music teacher for elementary and middle school had unexpectedly resigned and wanted to know if I could come to Morenci for an interview. By the end of the week I was hired and the following Monday I reported to work. Pam and the boys began to bring things to closure in Nogales/Rio Rico. My position at FBC Nogales is being filled by lots of people who are plugging in and Pam's role at Sonshine Christian has also been filled. Our house is currently on the market to be sold.



Whenever we question whether moving to Morenci was God's will we only have to remember and consider how God has intervened to make any of this possible. How Bob Lehman decided to send me to a church planting conference after meeting and talking with me seven years ago. How God is currently moving in the hearts and minds of leaders in the Southwest Church Connection to prioritize church planting and the fact that I still have current teacher's certification for a position that came up just when we needed it... God has been in the driver's seat.

## NEXT STEPS...

I have a job in the community, so I live and work among the people and their children. The first half of being a bi-vocational pastor is in place. My background is in instrumental music so teaching general music, chorus and drama is a stretch for me. I am enjoying the challenge, but it does require a significant time investment initially. I am working hard to do quality work in that arena and to be a good example of a Christian worker.



I am meeting people and so are Pam and Nathan. Pam has struck up informal relationships with several ladies while attending the fitness center. Nathan is meeting kids his own age and I am meeting other teachers. Nathan is taking up Wrestling and I will be an assistant Wrestling coach starting in November. That will expand the circle of people that Nathan and I know and converse with. Currently, Nathan is inviting kids to a Youth Group that we are starting. Pam is also starting as a temporary office manager at the Middle School where I work while the regular office manager is on maternity leave. We have started a Sunday morning service at our house. Right now it serves our family, but our hope is that eventually people from the community will feel comfortable attending. Pam and I are meeting our neighbors and communicating our vision

to start a church in the area. I am giving guitar lessons to at least one neighborhood boy who attends the Middle School. We are also hoping to invite teachers who do not have family in Morenci to Thanksgiving dinner at our house. There are in fact a lot of teachers who feel isolated and alone.

From our conversations we have learned that Morenci is a unique and difficult town to reach, mainly due to the mining culture and schedule, which is what some of the other churches have struggled with. We are hoping and praying that our church plant will grow, but right now it exists as several small seeds. Each seed has the potential within itself to grow into what will eventually be the ministries of Morenci Community Church.

We believe the next steps are to move forward in obedience in the areas where God has opened up opportunity, watering and providing nourishment to the seeds that are planted so that they might grow in the warmth of God's love. Pam and I are committed to praying for God's movement on a regular basis and we are hoping that many of you will pray with us and for us.

### How you can partner with us:

- Your prayers are needed and appreciated for our effectiveness in Morenci.
- Financial Support  
Goal is \$15,000 for start-up funds and \$60,000 for the first year of church operations. We are asking people and supporting churches to give a one-time investment, or preferably, to become a monthly investor of \$25, \$100 or \$250/month.
- All supporters will receive reports and prayer updates along with a small gift of appreciation.

Send all donations to:

*Southwest Church Connection  
855 E. Schoolhouse Gulch Road  
Prescott, AZ 85603*

**(Indicate Morenci Church Plant on the check)**

~all donations are tax deductible~



### **Philippians 1:4-6 (NIV)**

In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.