



Epiphany Sunday Worship Materials

Prepared by

Southwest Good Samaritan Ministries

Epiphany 2015



**Los Fresnos
Texas**

January 6, 2015

Greetings from the Rio Grande Valley!

We write today with blessings and thanks for your support of Southwest Good Samaritan Ministries. SWGSM is your Disciples mission station on the Texas-Mexico border. It is a recognized organization in the Christian Church in the Southwest and a long-time partner of Week of Compassion, Division of Overseas Ministries/Global Ministries, Refugee and Immigration Ministries (RIM). For those of you who are longtime friends of SWGSM, please know that we thank the Lord every day for you. For those who haven't made it down to see us, we hope this packet helps acquaint you with the important work we're doing along the US-Mexico Border, and we look forward to a future of shared ministry.

Enclosed, please find the second annual Epiphany Worship Service prepared by SWGSM.

In Epiphany we find Christ is the light of the world, and through him we are both blessed by the hope he brings and charged to tend to the needs of our brothers and sisters around the world. To teach the love of Jesus, Southwest Good Samaritan Ministries works to build a renewed sense of wholeness and dignity and stand with those who are broken, especially among refugees and those who are disenfranchised and displaced, as Jesus himself was. With Jesus' revelation to the world and commissioning us to lives of public ministry, SWGSM lives out this good news by addressing the spiritual and material needs, including emergency shelter and food, clothing, transportation, legal aid, advocacy and job referral through a cooperative effort with other agencies and religious organizations.

Please feel free to use any or all of the materials we have provided, and edit as needed to fit your ministry and congregation. We ask only that you use this opportunity to educate yourself and your congregation on the important role SWGSM plays in the lives of individuals and families in our communities, that you give credit to the writers who contributed their time and talents, and that you consider donating your time, talents, or part of your offering to our programs. We also would love to hear from you if you choose to use a portion of the materials. You can contact Joy Borjes Callison at joy.borjes@gmail.com to let us know how we can improve upon these materials in future years.

This year, we have added an exciting new section entitled "Stories of Impact." These brief accounts bring the work of SWGSM to life, and demonstrate the many facets of ministry occurring in South Texas. We hope you will find ways to incorporate these stories into your worship time.

It is our hope that in these pages you will see how the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) is working at Southwest Good Samaritan Ministries to shine Christ's light in all nations and how SWGSM is revealing God's love and promise to those in most need of some Good News. For more information, including materials from our previous Epiphany worship packets, please visit us at www.swgsm.org.

Peace,

The Staff and Board of Southwest Good Samaritan Ministries



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Recommended Hymns

(Numerical references are for the Chalice Hymnal unless otherwise suggested.)

“Santo, Santo, Santo”	#111
“One Bread, One Body”	#393
“Here I Am, Lord”	#452
“Enviado Soy de Dios”	#307 in Caliz de Bendiciones (click here for music or contact SWGSM)
(“Sent Out in Jesus’ Name”)	

Recommended Scripture

Isaiah 58:10
Isaiah 60:1-6
Psalms 72
Psalms 82:3-4
Proverbs 22:22-23
Proverbs 31:8-9
Matthew 2:1-13
Matthew 5:3 (The Beatitudes)
Matthew 19:21
Matthew 25:37
Luke 6:20
Luke 10:33 (The Good Samaritan)
Luke 14:12-14
Acts 9:36
Galatians 2:10

Liturgical Call to Worship:

Leader: O come, let us worship the Lord and consider what wondrous things God has done:

Response: **The Magi who study the heavens follow a guiding star!**

Leader: O come, let us worship the Lord and consider what wondrous things God has done:

Response: **The people who live in faraway lands come and see a glorious light!**

Leader: O come, let us worship the Lord and consider what wondrous things God has done:

Response: **The Christ who embodies the Word unveils the hidden plan, making us joint heirs of the promise of salvation through the gospel!**

Leader: O come, let us worship the Lord,

Response: **for God has done wondrous things!**

Invocation:

Gracious God,

When the Christ child entered the world and the light was shared across the nations, you were there.

You are here in times of prosperity and abundance, and even as our brothers and sisters are living in war-torn countries or suffering in prison cells, work camps, and colonias, you are present. Your spirit is never failing.

God of all nations, who has seen the best and worst of humanity, be with us today.

Strengthen our hearts to celebrate the joyous arrival of Jesus and clear our minds to focus on what he has called us to do to share his light with those who remain in darkness. Send your spirit to prepare us to worship you.

Amen.

Pastoral Prayer:

Some babies sleep better when they're moving. In a car seat, a rocker or swing, or perhaps hugged into dad's elbow or loved into mom's embrace... were you like that Lord Jesus?

Did you only sleep more deeply as your family rushed into the night toward Egypt?

And then there are those light sleepers, who wake at any unusual sound or shudder, only able cry away the exhausting hours of being displaced... were you like that Lord Jesus?

There are toddlers, who, like newborns, know when their parents are calm and know when their parents are afraid or worried or out-of-sorts... was that you, Holy One?

We know what it is to be rushed, to be forced to find a way in the dark of night. Death surrounds us, so we've gotten used to its ache, but rushing off to parts unknown in the darkness, clinging to each other because you've called us to run – that's a different story.

Maker of all creation, Creator of all people (even us), Designer of Grace, You, God, still call us. Now it seems, though, as if you call to wake us up more than to run; more to make us focus than to escape, more to serve than to panic. Help us to hear.

When we listen to Your call, when we pay attention, we begin to notice again that there are already people running in the darkness cast by human shadows of injustice, of powergrabbing, of hoarding, and plain old meanness and abuse.

When they run toward us in terror, teach us to be like children of Your kingdom: more curious and welcoming than afraid. When we see the world's bullies doing what the world's bullies do, let us be brave enough to dare to step in-between to break the chain.

By your compassionate and challenging Holy Spirit, remind us to learn of Jesus, who saw people more than nationalities, brothers and sisters and friends more than opponents of Jesus... who saw us.

For refugees and immigrants and victims, especially children, for those who must run in the night, teach us to hold ourselves perched upon your cross, calling out a place of safety and grace and welcome, demanding justice and life, declaring Your kingdom coming even as we speak. Let us learn to kneel in prayer and thanksgiving before you, even as we stand side by side with those who dare to serve you, in Christ's name and for the sake of all souls we pray.

Amen.

Children's Moment:

Who Is Your Neighbor?

(Have a bowl of M&M all the same color with one M&M of a different color.)

Which M&M is different?

How do you think that M&M feels about being the only "different" M&M?

Do you think if the green M&M (*or whatever the odd color is*) would feel better if they were in a bowl with other green M&Ms?

Has there ever been a time when you felt different – maybe you were in a new place or around a bunch new people?

How did it make you feel?

Sometimes we feel uncomfortable when we are in a new of different place, but all it takes is for someone to accept us and everything is better.

(Eat half of the different M&M and half of one of the other M&Ms. Tell the children to only look at the inside of each M&M and ask what the difference is.)

God sees our insides and needs our help.

God needs us to see the insides of people around us too, so instead of people feeling left out they will feel loved and will feel like they have friends no matter where they are.

How can we make people feel loved like God loves us?

Will you pray with me?

Dear God,

Thank you for loving us.

Help us to remember that insides matter more, and teach us to love others just like you do.

Amen.

Sermon:

Please note, this has been prepared as a personal letter to you and your congregation. I hope you'll simply read it in worship as a sermon-that's how I preached it in The Woodlands! Do feel free to edit, adapt and use at will. This is not a work of fiction! - John

Ceramic Cows and Paper Candles

Epiphany 2015

Matthew 2:1-15

¹⁴ So he got up, took the child and his mother during the night and left for Egypt, ¹⁵ where he stayed until the death of Herod. And so was fulfilled what the Lord had said through the prophet: "Out of Egypt I called my son."

Dear Friends-

Now that Christmas has calmed down I want to tell you about two of the best Christmas presents ever: cows and candles. Salt and pepper shaker black and white cows about a inch and a half tall. Little paper candles with yellow flames. Monte Hall would call them "Zonks." You'd call them great candidates for that gift exchange to unload as a joke. Tacky, tacky, tacky . . . and holy and precious to me.

December 24. 1:43 pm. The time is etched forever into my soul.

There I was. The preacher. Lying flat on my back in the musty dirt of the crawlspace under our house in North Carolina tearing apart the plumbing instead of preparing for the 11 pm Christmas Eve candle light service at church or cooking for the widows, singles, and students our church was hosting for the holidays.

Everyone was due for an early dinner at the house and wouldn't you know it, as I was rushing about getting things ready, the drains backed up. Let me tell you-on Christmas Eve in rural North Carolina you don't call Roto-Rooter. There isn't one to call.

So I was on my back. Wrenches and plumbing snake in hand. Starting at the high end, just under the kitchen sink, I'd broken the first joint, snaked it clear, reassembled and moved on down the line toward the septic tank. I was almost done. I'd just broken the last joint on the last cast iron segment when I **heard** it . . . There was just enough time to close my eyes and tense up to roll but before I could move it hit me full in the face, and turned the dust and dirt into mud.



Water. I hoped it came from anywhere but the toilet. My eyes were filled. My clothes were soaked. I rolled over and slid through the mud and raced up the deck steps (it took two tries because of the ice that had built up), tracked into the house and through - it searching for the culprit that caused the disaster. Stomping through the dining room and the kitchen, down the hallway (tracking all the way and not really caring what my wife, Laura would say when she saw the mess) to the bathroom just above the broken joint. I pounded on the door sounding very much like John McEnroe on a bad day- like I was back on the offshore oil rig and angry – only to discover that it wasn't one of our sons (who never listened to dad at all back then). It wasn't Laura. It was our houseguest: Tadatoshi Takegawa. A graduate student from the University of Miami, Ohio. Spoke flawless English according to his undergraduate records from Japan, but clearly didn't understand *Stay out of the bathroom. No water. Do not use any water until I say it's ok.*

Apparently he understood me to to say *wonka wonka wonka wonk* or maybe he heard *I'm going to be gone for a while so why don't you wait for about an hour and then take a long, leisurely shower.*

Did you hear the one about the Atheist, the Buddhist and the preacher who walked into . . . ?

Here in the US, university housing often closes for Christmas break. Not everyone can afford to go home for just a few weeks mid-year.

Tadatoshi Takegawa, (Talk-ee to us.) was a Buddhist from Japan. And like the Atheist from China and the 12 other graduate students staying with our church folk for Christmas season were foreign nationals who needed a place to be while the dorms were closed so they came to our little town in North Carolina to stay with church members. They wanted to get an “**authentic** American experience.”

Boy did we give ‘em an “**authentic** American experience of Christmas in a small Christian community in rural North Carolina.

It was glorious. These 14 students, from Japan and China and Taiwan, and South Korea and Vietnam, all struggling with a North Carolina version of English delivered by a Texan preacher, got all we could give them.

We went up in the Blue Ridge mountains to watch apple butter get made in a cast iron pot and ate it warm on fresh baked bread. We went caroling with Christmas carols printed phonetically so the chorus roughly resembled the words one might expect even if the melody was shaky. WE took shifts ringing the bells over Salvation Army Kettles. We went to Advent services and Sunday School and choir parties and community events and more. Together we did what churches do: sing, pray, preach, eat, study, light the candles of the Advent wreath and practice community as best we could. Mostly.



After cursing Talk-ee out of the shower I went back down that hall, down the deck stairs, through the little door to shimmy under the house like a reptile back into the mud to finish the plumbing. Then back up and though that same hall to shower off the mud and the dust and grit and goo of the job. I couldn't wash off my disappointment in myself.

Then back to the Christmas Eve routine: cooking for the crowd and welcoming them all over. We had a grand dinner and an over-full house of students and host families and widows and singles and whoever else wanted to come. And then we loaded up to go back into town to the church for the 11 pm Christmas Eve Candle Light Service. I went straight to my office to try to prepare something since plumbing had taken my preparation time away. Stepped into the sanctuary just in time to start.

We read the Christmas scriptures and sang the favorite that we save for that time of year. We lit the Christ candle in the middle of the wreath and we moved to communion.

I stood behind the table to preside and looked down at the table. We kept our Advent wreath centered on the communion table. I saw something I'd not noticed before: 3 little construction paper origami purple candles with yellow origami flames. One like the others, but pink. And one, in the center, a little larger and white. An origami Christ Candle. And it hit me: As I'd gone to hide in my office, Talk-ee had found his way into a Children's Sunday School room and created a gift for the church and for me. He may not have understood what the candles meant, but he knew they meant something important. It was a precious gift.

I presided at that table with tear filled eyes as I thought of the gift given by the one I'd cursed earlier and of the gift of Jesus for us all. After communion was done we lit our candles and sang *Silent Night* as we walked into the night to light a bonfire to share the light of Christ with the world.

The service was over. When most had gone their way, the Atheist girl from China stepped toward me. She bowed and handed me a little wrapped gift. I opened it there in the light of the fire and discovered two little black and white salt and pepper shaker cows. And I thought . . . *How tacky! What am I going to do with this?*

Her host stepped to my ear and whispered: *when we left your house she made us drive until we found the only store left open in town. She searched every aisle till she found what she could afford.*

My eyes were misty again and fogged in the light of the bonfire. There I saw a young woman I can only call holy.

I said *thank you* and nodded, not knowing what else to do. Everyone left.



As I drove home from church to our house in the country
in the wee hours of Christmas morning.

Suddenly I realized that I saw Christmas differently:

This God of all creation chose to be a human baby
in a place and time when they couldn't understand him
with a story not quite like any they had ever heard.

His family had to run for asylum in Egypt where things were stranger still . . .
But they called him *Emmanuel*-God with us- Jesus- Christ for us-
The light of life for the world. . .

So this Atheist, a Buddhist and a preacher walked into each other one Christmas and
met the Prince of Peace.

Sometimes I think we overcomplicate things. I know I often do. Matthew's the only Gospel that
includes this text. I suspect that Matthew wants us to know this part of the story because
everybody is the stranger sometimes. The Disciples were regular men until they traveled with
Jesus and suddenly, in uncharted territory, they had to find new identities because they were
connected to Jesus. And I think Matthew wants us to remember that **everybody is the host
sometimes**. And hosts have to remember that the guests don't know the unwritten house rules
and habits; that guests feel a little lost to begin with.

Being the stranger is hard and fearful work that requires the ability to trust.

Being the host is hard work that requires patience and understanding and grace.

But when strangers meet in a safe place with a patient and gracious host . . .that's called the
Kingdom of God.

And that's the specific ministry that you and I share in Southwest Good Samaritan Ministries-
welcoming strangers and offering food and prayer, safety and Christ's love.

As for you, I hope that we will find ourselves together - at home with strangers- in a safe place
for all. And that we will all live Christmas a little differently this year.

I pray for you the loving arms of Jesus-

John

John Callison

Board Moderator, Southwest Good Samaritan Ministries

Senior Minister, The Woodlands Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

The Woodlands, Texas



Communion Meditation:

Communion at Epiphany is an interesting ritual. As Disciples, we partake in communion at each gathering, intentionally and mindfully to celebrate the new covenant that was made through Jesus' death.

But, it's Epiphany... Jesus was just born. The world, for a time, is brighter, with the hope of things to come, and here we are marking his death and resurrection.

But, baby Jesus' admirers didn't yet know his fate. That he'll be ridiculed, ignored, and, finally, hung on a cross to die. But we know. We know what's to come and yet, we still celebrate.

We celebrate because we have hope for the good things Jesus will do.

We celebrate because we know this tiny baby has the power to make all things new.

We celebrate because this tiny king will shed light to those who are oppressed, enslaved, and discarded.

We've talked a lot about Southwest Good Samaritan Ministries, in South Texas, today. They serve refugees and others living in extreme poverty. Brothers, mothers, daughters who have never experienced peace or abundance.

Whenever Good Samaritan encounters someone in need, there's no guarantee of how their story will end. But Feliberto is there to help and celebrate a new beginning.

A new beginning that may bring prosperity.

A new beginning that may bring security.

A new beginning that may bring grace.

Regardless of how things turn out, these new beginnings surely provide us with hope.

"Arise, shine; for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you." (Isaiah 60:1) Let's pray as we prepare to remember the sacrifice this tiny, innocent lord made.

Communion Prayer:

God of light and new beginnings,

Thank you for the gift of your son, who came to save us all. For your unending grace, and the hope and wholeness that has been brought into the world, we celebrate. For our brothers and sisters who are suffering, we seek guidance and courage to help. For the sacrifice your son made, we remember and commit ourselves to your word. Amen.



Offertory Meditation:

For today's stewardship thought, we'll draw inspiration from the prayer often attributed to St. Francis of Assisi, "Lord, make me an instrument of Your peace. Where there is hatred, let me sow love; where there is injury, pardon; where there is doubt, faith; where there is despair, hope; where there is darkness, light; and where there is sadness, joy."

When I hear this prayer, I think of Southwest Good Samaritan Ministries and the work of Rev. Feliberto Pereira.

Good Samaritan is located near Los Fresnos, Texas, in the Rio Grande Valley. Their ministry is situated on a five-acre campus called Casa Compassion, or "House of Compassion," and is home not only to volunteer groups on mission trips, but also to refugees who have newly arrived in the U.S. and are learning to live without fear of violence or persecution. The refugees find a safe haven at Good Samaritan and make do with donations from churches and individuals – rice, beans, hygiene kits, and other essentials.

The mission of SWGSM is to teach the love of Jesus Christ by building a renewed sense of wholeness and dignity, and to stand with those who are broken, especially among those who are disenfranchised and displaced. This organization, led by Feliberto Pereira, a Cuban refugee himself, lives out the good news by addressing spiritual *and* material needs – helping individuals who need it most to access shelter, food, clothing, transportation, legal aid – things you and I take for granted every day.

The calls for help are endless, and it's unlikely you'll be able to get through a conversation with Feliberto without him answering his phone, a literal lifeline for those who have lost everything they have, except hope.

Feliberto's story is inspiring. Not only does he truly understand what it means to walk through darkness, he's constantly looking for those who are stuck in the shadows, helping them find their way as well. I hope you all will take some time to get to know Good Samaritan, and get inspired to join their mission as well.

As we take this morning's offering, let us reflect on our ability to help carry those who've been in darkness into light.

Offertory Prayer:

Gracious God, bless these gifts we bring. In Your abundant love, transform them into signs of hope and compassion. In the face of violence, oppression and disaster, may they carry a word of Good News. May those who receive them know that their sister and brothers in Christ share them in the spirit of unity and love. Amen.



Benediction

Welcoming God,

who has always invited children and prodigals, so-called saints and sinners,

who has said, "Come let us reason together,"

who has said, "Come to me, all of you who are weary and heavy-laden,"

touch this world through us as we welcome all people in your name.

Amen.



In Thanks:

SWGSM would like to thank its staff, volunteers and board members for their prayers and efforts in support of this project.

Every day, we give thanks for the blessings you have brought to Jesus and his people through this ministry and the people we serve.

Appendix I. Stories of Impact

Cuban Refugees Saved From Sea

In recent months, 9 Cubans seeking safety from oppression and escape from Communism encountered great dangers and 20 foot waves at sea. Only 1 was Christian, but all were comforted when they were encouraged by that one to pray during the storm. When they did, they were inspired to see the waves cease. Upon arrival to the U.S., they were further blessed by God when they found their way into the welcoming arms of SWGSM. For the past five months, Feliberto has guided them through initial steps of entrance; helping them obtain temporary legal status to work, assisting them throughout the complex asylum process, and preparing them to adjust their Cuban status for permanent residency. As they continue to live safely at SWGSM, their faith in God's goodness

Casa Bethel: A Place for Children, A Place of Love

Casa Bethel, an orphanage on the west of Matamoros in Mexico, is a place where miracles occur frequently—and SWGSM has assisted the orphanage for over 15 years. In December of 2011, suddenly Ismael, the Director of the program, had a massive heart attack and went to be with the Lord. Pain and concern gripped all of us concerned for their future, and God worked in a gentle but powerful way to empower Lorena, Ismael's wife, to take over the helm of the ministry. Under her leadership, children are graduating from high school and continuing on to college. Those who have graduated from college are helping the ministry as their psychologist, social workers, and administrative specialist. Their Bible Institute has sent 34 graduates to start churches throughout Mexico, and about half of the graduates are children of Casa Bethel. SWGSM continues to be an essential part of Casa Bethel by providing rice and beans, clothes, personal hygiene items and much, much love. Recently, Lorena reported to SWGSM that the children's behavior, joy, and school performance continues to grow. Her report confirmed that God continues to be involved in the miracle working business.

Lilies of the Valley Ministry Helps Honduran Woman Fulfill Dreams

The "Lilies of the Valley" program of SWGSM helps dozens of women be empowered to find hope, to build skills, and to serve the communities of the Rio Grande Valley. One of those served through the ministry is Lorelys Corre, a young mother from Honduras that left her country seeking a better life for herself and her three month old son. Her husband was already in the USA. To make the journey, Lorelys had to cross through Honduras, and through the two countries of Guatemala and Mexico. Mexico was especially dangerous, as she had to fight off



persons to avoid being beating and being raped. It took Lorelys over a month and a half to get to the Mexican border and the USA. Once at the border, her son was sent, and a week later she made the journey herself. Lorelys thanks God for protecting her and her son. When in the U.S., she was heartbroken to find out that her husband already had another woman. Deeply discouraged, she learned of the “Lilies of the Valley” program, and came to SWGSM. Upon arrival, she was very depressed. But through regular attendance with Lilies, she has received a lot of love and counseling from the program leader Guille. Because of this love, she now walks and talks with a lot of confidence, and is moving towards new dreams ahead.

Gisela’s Family Finds New Faith and Life

Gisela Soriano, her husband, two children and her brother escaped decades ago from Cuba to Costa Rica. In Costa Rica, a missionary who was friend of Gisela's father-in-law made arrangements for a private plane to take them to Mexico. The plane landed on a deserted road, and the family jumped on and headed to Mexico. They flew low, through the mountains of South America. In Mexico, they were introduced to a DOC pastor who took them to a border city in Mexico where they passed across the bridge. Within a few months time, they were introduced to Feliberto who helped support the family while helping them work towards obtaining asylum status. During that time, Feliberto shared the love of Jesus with the family, and after prayer and scripture reading Gisela made her confession of faith--with her family soon following. They moved to Miami where Ismael, Gisela's husband, now has a successful construction company. Both of their children have graduated from high school and work in the family business. The couple preach the Good News in the United States and in Latin America. Gisela has recently written a book on prayer and continuously gives her praise and glory to God, and offers thanks for Feliberto’s welcome which helped make her family’s new life possible.

Peruvian Family Risks Much to Serve God Faithfully

For a professional couple from Peru, all they had to do was denounce their faith to remain safe in their homeland. But being faithful Christians, they could not. With their 3 young children, they instead made the treacherous journey to the United States. Within 6 weeks they were introduced to Feliberto at Southwest Good Samaritan Ministries. The family remained faithful during the long, arduous legal process as they sought political asylum. After 5 years and many denials, the court of appeals granted the family political asylum. Feliberto stood and said "Praise God" in court that day, knowing God was the one who ultimately saved this family. Felix and Irene are currently associate pastors at a church in Ft. Worth. Their son is a graduate of the University of Texas, Arlington and is employed as an engineer. Their oldest daughter is a



graduate of UT, Austin and is working in an outreach ministry of the United Methodist Church in East Dallas. Their youngest daughter is a senior at the University of Texas and is majoring social work. Clearly, SWGSM's investment of time with this family has helped God produce grand results of faith through their lives among us in America!

SWGSM Inspires Church for Ongoing Mission

Thirteen years ago, two members of the Outreach Committee at Azle Christian Church in Azle, Texas began a dream they had since meeting Feliberto several years prior. Their dream was to have a mission trip to SWGSM. The church's first trip was in 2002, when ten church members signed on. The group said, "We didn't know what we had gotten ourselves into or what we would be doing until we arrived!" On that trip, the group fixed the roof to a shed attached to a mobile home and put siding on a home. The group was led by the skills of two "handymen" who ensured the tasks were accomplished safely and successfully. The group felt deeply rewarded, and the home owner—who was a member of the church in Los Fresnos—was so pleased. Since that trip, the church's core group has worked in ministry at SWGSM every year, and has grown in size to nearly twenty-five! The annual mission trips have inspired the congregation to do many local projects, and have helped the church become known as a "mission-minded" church.

To learn more about Southwest Good Samaritan Ministries, see: www.swgsm.org, or call: 956-233-5198.

Appendix II.

Options for sending monetary contributions to SWGSM:

1. Donations can be sent directly to the SWGSM Office at:

Southwest Good Samaritan Ministries
Attn: Joel Pereira
PO Box 273
Los Fresnos, TX 78566

2. Donations can be made online at www.swgsm.org (Our "Donate" page will take you to PayPal.)

Checks can be made payable to Southwest Good Samaritan Ministries or SWGSM.

In addition to monetary donations, SWGSM is always in need of rice and beans, canned goods or new /gently used clothing and household items that can be donated to those rebuilding their lives.

For more information, call 956-233-5198 or email info@swgsm.org.

Appendix III.

Information on Feliberto's memoir:

I Was a Stranger: Hope for a Hidden World

By Feliberto Pereira and Chris Kelley

An unforgettable true story of suffering and faith that will leave you inspired to serve others

Feliberto has touched the lives of thousands of America's youth with his life-changing message of passion and purpose through service to others--especially the hidden world of the poor.

As a young Christian pastor on the island nation of Cuba, Feliberto thrived—until Fidel Castro's Communist regime came to power. Because he would not cave into Castro's demand to deny his Christian faith, Feliberto was eventually sent to prison camps where he nearly starved to death. But God had a plan for Feliberto's life, and Feliberto never gave up hope during nearly four years of unimaginable suffering. And when the American government eventually came to Feliberto's rescue, offering him and thousands of other Cubans airplane flights to freedom, Feliberto arrived in America with the clothes on his back and a promise in his heart.

Today, as a proud citizen of the United States, Feliberto lives out that promise: a life of compassion, offering hope for the hidden world of the poor. Through his personal testimony, Feliberto helps young people discover meaning, passion and purpose for their lives through compassion and service to others.

Special note to Youth Ministers

Based on one of the last teachings of Jesus before His death, from Matthew 25, Feliberto's book answers three questions on every Christian's mind:

1. When God calls on me to stand up for what I know is right, will I be ready?
2. When God calls on us to serve others in need of caring, will I know how?
3. When I serve God, what will other people think?

Feliberto wants to help Christians, especially youth, answer these questions for themselves. We hope you will consider purchasing Feliberto's book for youth group. It will help them learn about developing a compassionate heart by serving others.

Feliberto's book teaches young people that no matter what a teenager or young adult might think of his or her ability to make a difference in service to God, God wants and God needs them to fulfill His work on Earth.

Available on [Amazon](#) and [Google ebookstore](#) or at <http://www.hopeforahiddenworld.com>.

