

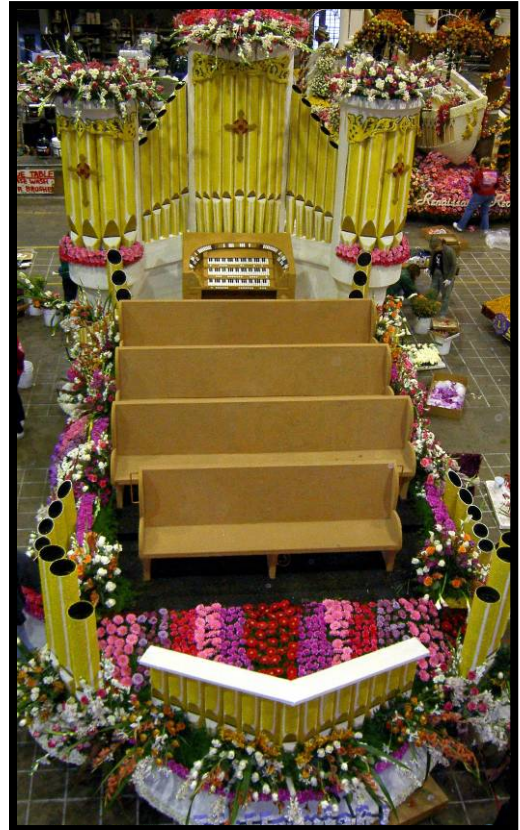
What an Experience!

Wow! What an amazing adventure! A team of 37 recently returned from a one week mission trip to Pasadena, CA and Tijuana, Mexico.

IOWAY has been part of the Petal Pushers for eight years. Petal Pushers is a group of 4,000 volunteers who decorate the Lutheran Hour and other floats for the famous Rose Parade. Because of our continued support of the Petal Pushers, I was honored to be one of the riders on the Lutheran Hour float.

January 1, the alarm started my day at 3:00 am. At 4:00, I was off for an hour's drive to meet the rest of the riders for the Lutheran Hour float. I had the opportunity to see and experience the behind the scenes excitement as the floats, horses and bands lined up to head down Colorado Boulevard.

The theme for the 120th Rose Parade was "Hats off to Entertainment." The Lutheran Hour float featured an organ, organ pipes, gorgeous flowers and a choir of 17 on church benches covered in ground walnut hulls.



It was truly a once-in-a-lifetime experience for me and I find it hard to describe the emotions of riding past the people who lined the route. They saw the only Christian float in the parade proclaim the majesty of God with a stirring rendition of the Hallelujah chorus from a loud speaker system and from the choir members of which I was privileged to be included.

It is reported that 450 million people see the float around the world and 1 million line

Colorado Boulevard to see it in person. That is amazing!

Having a great view of the million that I rode past, the joy was indescribable as the crowd responded in such a positive manner to the Hallelujah chorus. I waved and sang non-stop for five and a half miles. It seemed like it lasted only 10 minutes.

People in the crowd: waved and smiled; gave thumbs up; pointed up; gave a V for victory; clapped; joined in singing the Hallelujah chorus; directed the choir; made the sign of the cross; held their clenched hand to their heart; and held up placards with a "10" for excellence. We were blessed to have another amazing team for decorating the floats and for the mission outreach to Tijuana. Among them were Pastors Scott Fiege, John Schauer, Ed Bode and Vicar Brian Lee.

Following are their reflections of the mission trip. To learn more, please contact them. They will be happy to share photos, excitement and stories.



What a Delight!

Pastor Scott Fiege
St. Matthew Lutheran Church
Mapleton, IA

I began this trip with much fear and trepidation not knowing what to expect from this new adventure that was ahead of me. I was uncertain about my ability to be a "petal pusher," yet excited about this adventure. The idea of working on floats and then viewing the Rose Parade "up close and personal" was something that I was viewing as a once in a life time experience.

As I look back on this part of our journey, it was exhausting being in all the different positions that I was in, twisting, turning, stooping, running with all sorts of flowers was a physically draining, yet an exhilarating experience. I was wondering about what would ever top this experience. Little did I know what God had planned for me and the rest of our team.

As we entered Mexico, the delight and splendor of the roses, mums, carnations and other beautiful flowers faded slightly, to be replaced with uncertainty centering on the theological questions that some of our group, me included, would be asked. I wondered about what type of questions I would be asked, if I would be able to communicate well enough with the group, would I be able to answer their questions in a thoughtful, respectful way. As I look back on this chapter of our adventure, it was both a humbling and awesome experience. To be able to share my faith and what God has done in my life with people of a different culture was an exciting event. To see the smiles, to feel the handshakes and the hugs of people who know the Lord Jesus Christ as their Savior was an exhilarating event that will be with me for the rest of my life.

Following our day with our Mexican brothers and sisters in Christ we traveled the streets of Tijuana, observing the homes of the somewhat wealthy and the poor. We were also shown the new day care center that will be finished shortly, and will be another aspect of the Lutheran Hour Ministry in Tijuana. What a joy that will be to help single mothers who have no one to take care of their children while they work.

As I flew back home and entered the safe and warm haven of my own home, I reflected upon this wonderful opportunity that God gave me. It will remain with me for the rest of my life.

What a great experience!

Pastor John Schauer
Carroll, IA

What a great experience! It was all about Jesus and not about us. This was truly a mission trip for us. Wearing our "Petal Pushers" sweatshirts gave us many opportunities to share Christ with the people in Los Angeles, on the plane, in the grocery store, in restaurants and on the street. It was also great knowing that we were working on a float that gave a Christian witness to millions of people throughout the world. It was even greater to see the excitement on the children's faces in Mexico as we made witness bracelets and the interest of the church leaders as they asked their questions about religion and concerning their struggles of faith. We will always remember this mission trip with fondness and thank God for this opportunity of service.



What a Trip!

Pastor Ed Bode
Rapid City, SD (Formerly Ute, IA)

My favorite part was working on the floats for three days and seeing how complicated the process is, how much time it takes, and to learn so much about the details that go into the floats. Wow!!

The most meaningful for me was to be a part of the group that delivered the gift to Melissa Salomon in Tijuana to be used for the Day Care Center. They surely need much help.

It was fun to meet so many fellow servants. We got to know many by riding in the different vans. We rode with the Sturtz's one day and found out how much fun they can be. I will always remember what a "Connie" is now. That is hitting a high curb with the right rear tire! Her daughters labeled that one.

I was really impressed with Judy's prayer our first night and I told her so. We found out that she had been on mission trips with her husband. I absolutely cracked up in laughter at Will when he presented his gift to Carroll with his speech! What a singer too--- very gifted young man. I worked beside Carroll in Mexico as we scraped off old paint. He hoisted an extension ladder by himself. One tough dude at the age of 78!

The best connection with others was to simply meet Melissa and Tere at Tijuana and see how important they are in getting the Lord's work done. Add to that the privilege to meet Pastor Porter. Wow, an ex-lawyer who has become a pastor. We pray the Lord will wonderfully bless his leadership.

Lastly, I want to thank you, Ellie, for your leadership and accepting this position to work for IOWAY. We know that the Lord has grabbed you by the elbow and encouraged and nudged you along the way. Your attention to details made it a great experience for us. Thank you, from the bottom of our hearts. Thank you for sharing your talents with all of us as we work together in the Lord's mission.

What a Mission Trip!

Vicar Brian Lee
Trinity Lutheran Church
Des Moines, IA

A mission trip to California has a lot going for it just based on location so it was not hard for me to talk some Drake students into going. What a mission trip to California doesn't always have is the relationships, humbling experiences, and heart-breaking confessions that this one did. The students most certainly embraced the



mission of Christ's great commission on this trip. I will never be able to find the words to adequately describe what exactly happened on this mission trip, but I do know this... nothing has the ability to still you (Psalm 46:10) like being used by Christ and having Him work through you. All praise, honor, and glory be God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

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