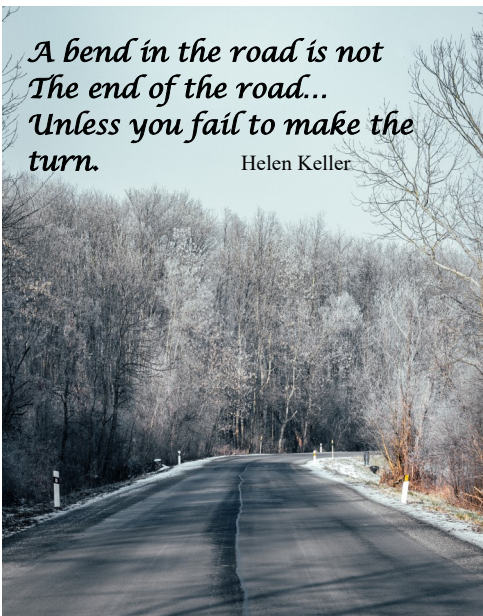


# Seeds of Hope

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Newsletter of Mustard Seeds & Mountains

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*A bend in the road is not  
The end of the road...  
Unless you fail to make the  
turn.*

Helen Keller

## A Closing Door In McDowell County

*When they came to the border of Mysia, they tried to enter Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus would not allow them to. So they passed by Mysia and went down to Troas. During the night Paul had a vision of a man of Macedonia standing and begging him, "Come over to Macedonia and help us." Acts 16:7-9*

The situation at Mustard Seeds is not as dramatic but it is practically the same thing. We envisioned working in West Virginia for decades more.

God had other plans and effectively shut the door, in a sense, not allowing us to continue there, especially doing what we had been doing for nearly three decades.

**To discern what God was communicating, the Board of Directors looked closely at what had transpired over the past decade as well as more recently in both the county and the ministry.** A combination of a change in demographics in McDowell County, the direction of the changes, and the realities on the ground within Mustard Seeds provided necessary insight into potential new directions for the work.

Home repair has been the primary emphasis of the ministry over these past years. However, the number of volunteers coming into the county has steadily declined. From a high of over 600, to a recent average of between 125 and 150 with the trend pointing downward, we saw that the emphasis on home repair and volunteers seemed to be fading away.

**Was God closing the door in West Virginia for this type of work?**

Most recently, the exit of crucial staff who oversaw the work in McDowell County presented another indicator of pivotal change taking place. In addition, in recent years we have not attracted new and gifted staff. **We now have no staff on the ground in WV with the gifts and skills through whom to build new programs.** This seemed to be a further indicator that the time in McDowell County was ending. **God was closing the door.**

The Board of Directors discerned that Mustard Seeds and Mountains should terminate its work in McDowell County and shift its focus to doors God is opening in other areas. We have set in motion the necessary steps

*Continued on page 2*

## Open Doors in Mexico

Over the past year, Randy and his sons have volunteered with *Mexican Christian Children's Aid*, whose volunteers monthly deliver food to over 60 Christian orphanages in Northern Baja Mexico. While delivering food, Randy began attempts to establish relationships with a few small orphanages that could benefit from the consulting and training Mustard Seeds offers. Because these efforts take time, this is an ongoing process and is still in its infant stages in terms of developing the kinds of partnerships that would lead to major boosts in the ministries the orphanages deliver.

Farther south, Randy is working with *Urban Mosaic* in Mexico City, a Christian organization involved in holistic development, strengthening faith communities, striving for peace, and driving systemic change in slums in Mexico City. Their philosophy and approach to ministry to the poor mirrors the values and focus of Mustard Seeds and Mountains.

**In May of this year, Randy traveled to Mexico City** to spend three days with Urban Mosaic Director Jean-Luc Kreig visiting the various locations of their work, seeing what they are involved in. While there, Jean-Luc voiced the need for someone to come and train slum dwellers in how to start businesses. There is a great need to help the poor help themselves since the kinds of government help programs present in the U.S. are non-existent in Mexico. Randy and Jean-Luc began a conversation about what Mustard Seeds could do to help. Since Randy does not speak Span-



Staff of Urban Mosaic serving in six Mexico City slums.

(bend in road Continued from page 1)

to exit McDowell County. This involves selling various assets and moving some equipment to the office in California.

Lacy and Shawna Blankenship, longtime faithful staff, will be overseeing this transition. Lacy is preparing properties for sale and inventorying equipment. Shawna is preparing key office files and other materials for transfer to California. We anticipate that this will take another six months if all goes well.

What is essential for you, as donors and prayer supporters, to understand is that the work of God continues, but in a different manner. **Your continued support of Lacy and Shawna enables them to flourish as we make this transition. Your continued support of the overall work helps us launch the early stages of some exciting work God has opened in Mexico.** See more on that in the next article.

Mustard Seeds has always had an interest in working among the impoverished wherever they are found. We were anchored in WV partially because of Jacque Wallace's physical limitations due to myasthenia gravis.

**The Wallaces, Randy and Jacque, rather than being the front line deliverers of ministry, are now both functioning in leadership training roles.**

I realize that this seems a sudden and drastic change, but it is not. Over the last eight years God has been moving us in that direction both as an organization and as individuals. It is evidenced in our involvement in *Mission as Life, Business As Mission, Positive Change and Development Center, Not My Will But Thy Will*, and the *Mexican Christian Children's Aid*, among others.

In His wisdom, God has been preparing us for this emphasis on leadership development versus service delivery. The Board of Directors of Mustard Seeds and Mountains sees training of leaders as the main direction the ministry should take in the future.

**Its not the end, it's a bend in the road,** and we are following it into new ventures of faith and service.

Please continue to pray for and support the work of Mustard Seeds and Mountains.

Randy

ish, he proposed providing training for Jean-Luc's staff so that they can do the direct training of youth and adults in the slums, teaching the basics of starting a business.

Randy met via teleconference with Jean-Luc and his team in early November to further discuss the potential and process of creating a training program for launching new businesses. **By the end of the meeting it was agreed that Mustard Seeds and Mountains would enter a partnership with Urban Mosaic to create a training program for entrepreneurs.** First, Randy will create curriculum for training youth in starting businesses. Then, once this is completed, Randy will train Urban Mosaic's staff in how to facilitate and oversee the business training. The next phase involves creating a competitive process whereby those in the program will compete for start-up funding for their business by presenting their business plan to a panel to be judged. To fund these entrepreneurs in this initial phase, \$10,000 must be raised by donations from God's people.

We at Mustard Seeds are excited to be part of this work that has great potential to truly lift the poor out of poverty in a healthy, productive way. **Prayerfully consider joining us by donating to the Business Start-Up Fund to raise \$10,000 to fund new entrepreneurs** starting businesses in slums in Eastern Mexico City. *Please make checks out to Mustard Seeds and include a note stating "Business Start Up." Mail to Mustard Seeds and Mountains, PO Box 686 Northfork, WV 24868.*

## Jeremy Wallace family in France

Nearly halfway through their one-year commitment to live in France, the family continues to adapt to the culture, learn the language, and enjoy the slower lifestyle. Among other things, Jeremy is developing an assessment tool for French church planters, curriculum for a six-week series on Hospitality Evangelism and Spiritual Conversations, and training teens and their leaders in disciple-making techniques. **Please pray for them all.**



## Prayer Requests

- ◇ Pray for Randy as he develops curriculum for training youth and adults in entrepreneurship.
- ◇ Pray for safety as my son Seth, his son Caleb, and I travel in Northern Mexico delivering food to orphanages.
- ◇ Pray for Jacque as she leads two women's Bible studies and a mission group in our church.
- ◇ Pray for Jeremy and his family in France.
- ◇ Pray for new connections with organizations working in slums in other countries.
- ◇ Pray for new donor churches and individuals, especially here in the west.
- ◇ Pray for new board members.
- ◇ Pray that the organizations we are assisting with consulting and leadership development, grow and prosper. Pray they have deep impact in the lives of the "least of these" whom they serve.
- ◇ Pray that we raise the \$10,000 needed for funding young entrepreneurs.