



The CHALLENGE

MOVING EARTH TO SHARE HEAVEN **JANUARY 2026**

**Trusting God's
Sovereignty**

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LIVING WATER IN DRY PLACES



“For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour my spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring.”

— Isaiah 44:3 (KJV)

BY MATT DURKEE, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

My first years in missions were spent operating FIA’s water well drilling rig in West Africa, and my experiences there shaped everything I believe about water ministry. One moment from that season came when we were chasing a well in a desert region where hope was scarce and water even scarcer. After drilling 290 feet—with only 300 feet of drill rod available—we had found nothing but dry, dusty cuttings. We paused the drilling, beginning to feel discouraged but not defeated. The village around us, once full of excitement and anticipation for what was to come, had quieted in resignation that this would end in nothing. As the dust settled around us from the drilling, all we could do was pray over the final drill rod – and trust.

Then we pushed forward.

At first, nothing changed. Dust continued to spit from the borehole. But in the final two feet—just before the drill string bottomed out—water burst from the ground with astonishing force. More than 2,500 gallons per hour of cold, clean water surged upward. **In one instant, God transformed a barren place into a wellspring of life.**

Moments like that are why water ministry matters so deeply in missions.

Water is woven through the story of Scripture: God brings streams into deserts, calls His people to drink freely, and sends His Son to offer living water to the thirsty. Throughout the Bible, water symbolizes renewal, hope, and the presence of God. And in communities today, it still does. When clean water flows, hearts soften. Suspicion fades. Relationships form. People begin to ask questions about the Source behind the provision.

This is why serving people through practical means is not separate from evangelism. It is often the very thing that makes evangelism possible.

FIA exists at this intersection—where technical service becomes a pathway for the Gospel.

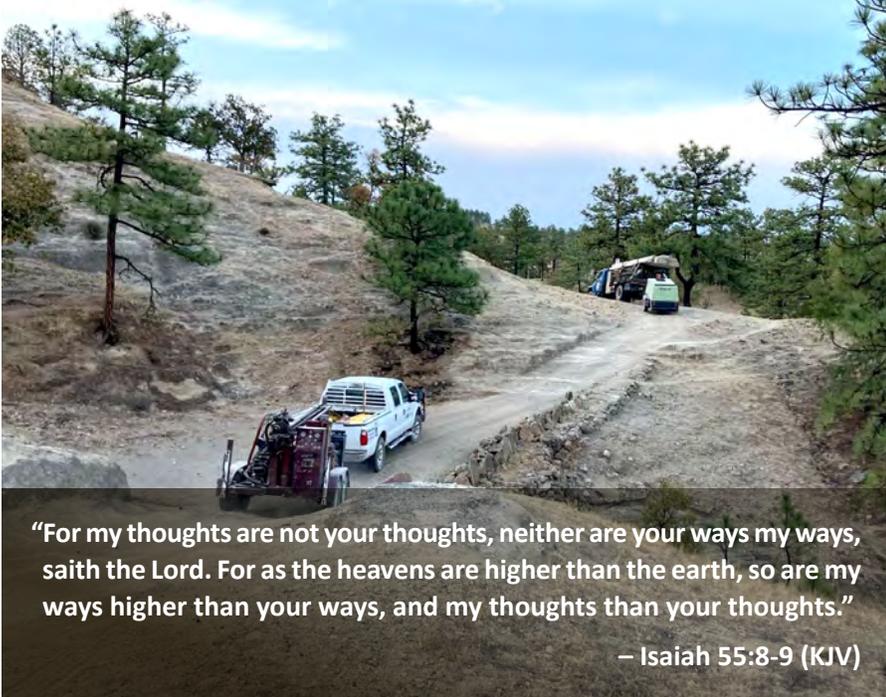
Drilling a well may look like mechanics, geology, and logistics, but it creates daily touchpoints for local pastors and missionaries. It builds trust in places where trust is earned slowly. And it communicates, in tangible ways, the love of Christ.

Our work is deeply technical. Drilling in remote areas means adapting to unpredictable formations—sand, granite, basalt—and sometimes working without formal hydrological surveys. We watch the cuttings, feel the pulse of the rig, fight collapse zones, and build wells designed to last for decades. Excellence is not a luxury; it is an act of love.

Partnering in West Africa, Nicaragua, Vanuatu, Bolivia, and Mexico, clean water projects continue to accelerate the work of church planting and discipleship. Each well, pump, and pipeline becomes a reminder: God sees you. God loves you.

This year, FIA finds itself centered on water projects as catalysts for Gospel impact - the kind of practical service that builds trust, restores dignity, and breaks ground for spiritual transformation. I am deeply grateful for how you journey with us. Your prayers, generosity, and steadfast support are woven into every water story and every changed life.

May God continue to deepen our wells of faith as we bring both clean water and the Living Water to those who need it most. ■



“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.”

— Isaiah 55:8-9 (KJV)



MEXICO



Trusting God’s Sovereignty

BY CHUCK HARDER, FIA ASSOCIATE, USA

The dust swirled lazily around the equipment and the operator as the drill bit hammered into the rocks below. Drilling this well was a demanding test of machines against the elements—something I thrive on—but with no guarantee of success, the challenge felt even more significant.

We spent two days preparing the equipment, including the heavy-duty well-drilling rigs and specialized bits, and loading all the needed supplies. The first two hours of travel to this site were uneventful; however, for the following thirty minutes, we bounced over the boulders on the two miles of “road,” which was really just a rough path without trees leading to the mountain top.

This trip took place last November to the Sierra Madre Mountains of Chihuahua, Mexico. Dean Block and Les Mather, Associates of FIA Canada, and I, along with several men from the Hospital Mission Tarahumara,

attempted to drill two water wells as part of FIA’s water ministry.

A small group of believers in this village lacks a reliable water source and requested a well for their own use and for sharing with the rest of the village. Most of the area is Catholic, mixed with some syncretism and animism. The believers hoped that sharing their water would help ease tensions. More importantly, clean water provides an opportunity for the unreached to hear about the Living Water.

To raise the stakes, the non-believers from the village expressed skepticism, saying, “It’s no use drilling; it’s been done before, and there’s no water there. Besides, why wouldn’t you do a geological study? All you’re going to do is pray and then start drilling. You’re wasting your time.”

But we (and you!) prayed and drilled, fully anticipating a front-row seat to a miracle. Inch by inch, the drill bit

pounded through the rock below. Sometimes it took twenty minutes to go ten feet; other times it moved a bit faster. At 140 feet down, we were encouraged when the rock became damp, but it soon dried again.

At 480 feet, the rock turned so damp again that it resembled mud and wouldn’t blow out of the top of the hole. We added a lot of water as we drilled. Then the unthinkable happened: the drill bit got stuck. It would not go down any further, and worse, it would not come back up. It was lodged tight at 500 feet down.

We stopped to pray and tried every trick we could think of for the next eleven hours. Finally, we decided to get some sleep and went to bed at 5 AM, believing there was still plenty of time for a miracle. So many people were praying for us.

A few hours later that morning, we tried again, but the drill bit was still stuck. We had to make the



Mexico Medical Missions

A few years ago, FIA partnered with Mexico Medical Missions, a ministry focused on serving the indigenous tribal groups of the region, through healthcare and community development, and remotely through community outreach, evangelism initiatives, supporting educational and residential programming, and church planting support through the provision of clean water to communities.

gut-wrenching decision to abandon our equipment and pack up. The disappointment hung in the air like a wet blanket. Would the believers face even more ridicule because we failed to complete the well? Did we not pray enough? Would God be disappointed in us because our drill bit got stuck?

The Lord was gracious and allowed us to retrieve 260 feet of the drill rod from the hole. Off we went to the next site. More dust, noise, and damp rock greeted us at 240 feet! It was wet enough to squeeze into a ball, and we felt we had to be close now.

The drilling progressed faster this time, with no dust, and each ten-foot rod added brought us closer to water. I kept an eye on the rod pile, believing that with eleven rods left, we would surely succeed.

However, 110 feet later, we still encountered nothing but damp rock - hardly suitable for drinking! Time had run out, and we were out of rods to go any deeper. The equipment fell silent as we surrendered our will to the facts and ultimately to the bigger plan of the Lord.

At that moment, we didn't know what that bigger plan entailed. All we could do was pack up and head home. Honestly, I had hoped for a more thrilling ending—a last-minute, miraculous freeing of the drill bit and water flowing from an “impossible” situation, thus blessing believers with this most basic need. But God said, “Not now.” There was nothing left to do, which was relieving because we had tried everything we possibly could.

We were brought face-to-face with Isaiah 55:8-9, “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.” In this situation, He said, “Not now,” and I’m okay with that.

Despite the disappointment, we experienced many blessings: safety around the equipment, a renewed sense of gratitude for a shower after several dusty days, newly formed relationships with the local men who assisted us, and delicious food provided by the church ladies—some things never change, no matter where you are! We toured the hospital, witnessing the extensive medical care the staff provides for physical needs, which opens the door to discussions about our Great Physician and His immense love for us.

Through the Lord’s sovereignty, this experience becomes part of the larger narrative of what He will do among the national people and communities in the area. This is part of His Story! Please continue to pray for future opportunities and for our next visit, armed with greater knowledge than we had before. ■



A Journey to Vanuatu

VANUATU

BY SIMON STRAUSER, FIA VOLUNTEER

I never thought I'd find myself on the other side of the planet, working on a construction site in the South Pacific. But there I was in Vanuatu, halfway around the world from Pennsylvania, and God was teaching me things I never expected to learn I would be a good fit for.

I'm a volunteer with Friends in Action at their headquarters in Pennsylvania, primarily helping Rob, FIA's Head Mechanic, with welding projects. Rob has been a mentor to me for years and has always wanted me to come on a trip with him. I've been wanting to do missions work too—to discover what God has gifted me with and how I could use those skills for His kingdom. But honestly, I wasn't sure what I was capable of or if I could really travel this far from home.



When Rob proposed the idea of going to Vanuatu, everything fell into place. I took that leap of faith, and it changed everything.

The Work in Vanuatu

During my time in Vanuatu, I worked primarily with Rob and Levi, FIA's field leader. We installed the last roof panels needed for the mechanic shop that was damaged in a cyclone a few years back. Seeing that building finally completed—knowing it would protect Levi's tools and equipment for years to come—that felt significant. God was using my hands to build something that would last.

Next came welding work, using the skills I've developed back home but in a completely different context. Then there were the vehicle repairs: oil changes, tire changes, and the kind of general maintenance that keeps ministry equipment running in harsh tropical conditions.

The mechanics work here isn't just about fixing vehicles—it's about enabling long-term ministry. When equipment runs smoothly, Levi can continue facilitating the Vanuatu Water Project while helping other missionaries continue their gospel efforts.

What struck me most was working alongside two Ni-Van men, Jeremiah and Arthur. They're good, kind men, and I could see their hearts for service. Going to church together on Sundays was something special—worshiping with believers on the other side of the world, hearing them sing praises

to God in their own language. It reminded me that the body of Christ truly is global.



What God Taught Me

I'm so grateful I took this leap of faith. Before Vanuatu, I wasn't sure what I was capable of or how God could use me. Now I know. God used me to complete a mechanic shop that will serve missionaries for years. He used me to repair vehicles that carry the gospel to remote villages. Through it all, He showed me that I'm capable of more than I ever imagined when I trust in Him.

The practical skills I have—welding, mechanical work, general labor—those aren't just trades. They're gifts God has given me to serve His kingdom. This trip gave me greater confidence not in myself, but in the Lord and the plans He has in store for me.

Philippians 4:13 says, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." I've known that verse, but now I've lived it. That truth isn't just for Vanuatu—it's for everywhere God calls me to serve.

It's a blessing to serve, and I'm grateful to Jesus for the opportunity to travel and serve with FIA." ■

MISSOURI

Feeding His Sheep: A KITCHEN MINISTRY

BY TRACY MILLER, FIA VOLUNTEER



My day starts at 5:15am, while most of the Ethnos360 training center is still quiet. By 5:30am, I'm in the kitchen starting the coffee and preheating the ovens. But before the busyness begins, I step outside with my cup of coffee for the most important part of my day—thanking God for the morning and praying over each FIA team member by name.

This is my mission field: a kitchen in Missouri.

Answering the Call

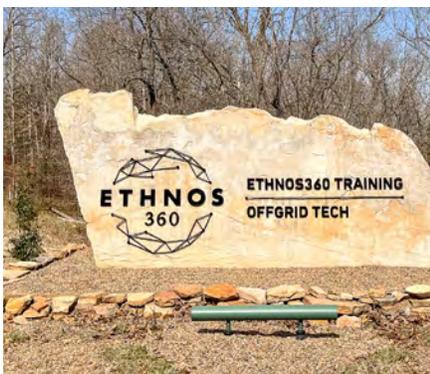
My journey to Friends in Action Intl. started in an unexpected place—behind a desk at Fulton Bank in Elizabethtown, PA. When I met Paul Brosey and Tim Johnston, something stirred in my heart. I wanted to serve on a mission trip, but I had limited vacation time and no "hard skills" to offer. What I did have was a love of cooking.

That's when I realized God wasn't asking me to be something I'm not. He was inviting me to use the gifts He'd already given me. I felt His call so strongly that I retired early just to go on more trips. Since July 2022, I've served as team cook ten times, and I wouldn't trade it for anything.

Supporting God's Work at Ethnos360

Several times each year, Friends in Action Intl. sends week-long work teams to Ethnos360's training center in Missouri. This partnership is close to my heart because of what's happening on the campus—future missionaries are being equipped to take the gospel to unreached people groups around the world.

These students spend up to four years in intensive training, learning everything from culture and language acquisition to church planting methods. While



they're preparing their hearts and minds for the mission field, FIA teams bring skilled tradespeople—carpenters, electricians, plumbers, mechanics, and general laborers—to tackle the facility's ongoing maintenance and construction needs. Every project matters because it allows the training center to focus on their primary mission: preparing these young people to reach the unreached. And for each of these week-long trips, a cook is needed to feed the FIA team. That's where I come in.

The Joy of Service

My days are long—14 hours from start to finish—but they're filled with purpose. I prepare, serve, and clean up three meals a day, always with a homemade dessert for dinner. I've cooked for groups ranging from five to eighteen people, and I've learned that the real challenge isn't just the cooking—it's getting the portions right and making everyone feel cared for.

But when I see the team gathered around the table at the end of the day, full and relaxed, sharing stories of what God accomplished through their hands—that's when my heart is full too. While they're out painting, doing electrical work, or building a hydroponic greenhouse, I'm doing what God created me to do: nourishing His people so they can do His work.

Following Jesus' Example

As an Army veteran, I understand that not everyone fights on the front lines. Support roles matter. In the Army, we provided "beans to bullets." In God's kingdom, maybe we provide "beans to Bibles."

My inspiration comes directly from Jesus. Throughout Scripture, He fed people—not just spiritually, but physically.



He knew that when people's bodies are nourished, their hearts are more open to receive spiritual truth. Every day, I want to be more like Jesus. I can do that in part by feeding His sheep.

An Eternal Perspective

The relationships keep me coming back—the friendships, the laughter, the privilege of serving alongside others who share my passion for God's kingdom. But what really drives me is thinking about eternity.

I imagine standing in Heaven one day, and someone walking up to me saying, "I became a Jesus follower because you cooked for a work crew. That work crew repaired housing. Students lived in that housing and became missionaries. Those missionaries came to my village, and I accepted Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior!" How absolutely cool would THAT be?!

That's the ripple effect of faithfulness. That's why no role is too small when it's done for God's glory.

Step out in Faith

If you're reading this and thinking your gifts aren't significant enough for missions work, let me ask you something: Isn't saying that minimizing what God has given you? He's given everyone at least one gifting. If you feel that urge to serve, that's God nudging you to action.

Step out in faith. Don't miss answering His call.

Not everyone can be a hand or a foot, but ALL parts of the body are important. Serving God doesn't have to mean going overseas. It can happen right here, in our own country. In a kitchen. ■

2026 TRIP OPPORTUNITIES

A short-term trip can be an adventure of a lifetime! On a trip with FIA, you'll see the work of God on the mission field, be a blessing to another culture, and discover how your skills can help further the Gospel. Use your trade skills to help make Christ known by volunteering on one (or more) of FIA's upcoming trips.

INTERNATIONAL

WEST AFRICA |

- **Well Drilling Teams:** February & March
- **Construction/Welding:** April & May

NICARAGUA |

- **Well Drilling Teams:** February & April
- **Masonry:** April
- **Community Development Construction (Welding/Carpentry):** February, March & May

VANUATU |

- **Mechanic Teams:** April & September
- **Water Project Construction Teams:** June & August

MEXICO |

- **General & Industrial Electrical Team:** February
- **Well Drilling & Mechanic Teams:** April & November

UGANDA |

- **General Construction:** June

DOMESTIC

MISSOURI | May & November

- Renovations to buildings and student housing at the Ethnos360 training center with LeTourneau University students.
- Need general laborers.



SCAN TO LEARN MORE ABOUT TRIPS:
FIAintl.org/get-involved



Step into The Prayer Collective and help carry FIA's global ministry through faithful prayer. Each month, you'll receive specific prayer requests for mission workers, key projects, emerging opportunities, and unreached communities.

Contact us at FIA-usa@fiaintl.org to join us in what God is doing around the world—shaping Kingdom impact through prayer.

Seeking Project Managers



FIA receives requests from partner missions to engage in both short-term and ongoing project management services to support construction and expansion projects.

We are looking for experienced managers willing to serve anywhere from two weeks to 12 months (single deployment or multiple deployments) based on the needs of the projects.

For more information, contact Andy Bachert, U.S. Chief Operating Officer, at andybachert@fiaintl.org

Seeking Full-Time International Workers



Is the Lord leading you to jump all-in to serve alongside our mission partners as a full-time international worker? Our team is growing, and we are ready to welcome you!

For more information and to start the conversation:

Canadians, email FIA-CAN@fiaintl.org
Americans, email FIA-USA@fiaintl.org

Open postings include Well Drilling (West Africa), Builder (Papua New Guinea & Vanuatu), Mechanic (West Africa & Papua New Guinea), Sustainable Income Project Developer (Bolivia), Farm Manager (Vanuatu)



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