

History Highlights



“In the Beginning”

Back in 1965, starting a nonprofit ministry organization was the last thing on Pastor Von’s mind. He was the youth pastor at Clairemont Emmanuel Baptist Church, and he had been pouring himself into his role. His seven-word synopsis of how to be a Christian, “Read the Bible - do what it says,” informed his belief that youth should learn to serve like Jesus did on earth and care for the less fortunate like He does. So Von regularly took the youth to visit and to care for those whom the world often neglects. But that year one of his students wanted to expand on that across the border and urged Von to visit Rose Park, an orphanage in Tijuana. Von later related that he was reluctant to go that first time, blaming his lack of Spanish and any other reasonable excuse that all of us can find in such a situation, but in the end he went.

After seeing the needs, visiting Rose Park became a regular event on Thursdays (Von’s day off), and over the next fifteen years, more of his youth began to join him on his trips. They went on to add six more orphanages to the schedule and later began to visit the people who were living in the city dump as well. The lives of Von’s youth were being changed. They began to think about how God would use them to impact the world. Other churches wanted to bring their youth too so they could be challenged for service.

In 1981 Von decided to leave his youth pastor position and step out in faith to focus on the ministry in Mexico full-time. He knew what he would be doing, he knew who he wanted involved, and he had a name for the new ministry in mind: Von Ministries. The lawyer who helped with the incorporation process suggested that using a personal name might cause some delays in acquiring a non-profit status. Upon reviewing what the ministry would do, the lawyer suggested that it had several thrusts - a spectrum of ministries - and hence our name, Spectrum Ministries.

From these humble beginnings at Rose Park to a fledgling nonprofit and then through the 40 years since, we have seen God's blessing on this ministry in Mexico. While the team who served in Mexico were once mainly Americans, now many of our staff are Mexican nationals who grew up under Spectrum and Von and who continue to carry out his vision of serving the least of these.

