

Guatemala June 2008

Team members: Susan Brantley, Philip Beisswenger, Fred Kirchner, Gregg Hileman, Melissa DuPuy, Fran Peebles, Doris Rice, Mike Magee, Bob Goodrich, Chris Goodrich. Gloria and Roger Marriott

Traveling – flying on a Thursday seemed to help with the crowds, not as many mission trips compared to Saturdays. There was a delay on the return trip causing the Houston group to miss their flight and stay overnight.

Church Visits – we visited 3 churches for only a short time. They warmly welcomed us. We either had a conversation or worshiped together, applied fluoride, and played with the kids. These short visits feel awkward **to me**, because the congregation understandably takes this opportunity to make requests/solicitudes. This format makes it feel as if our purpose is to provide money.

Theology training – went very well. Philip and Benjamin conducted training on baptism.

VBS – the craft went over well. The theology did not. They did not participate in discussion, answer or ask questions. Games, songs, crafts work best. A craft that builds each day is a good idea. They loved the beads and stickers. Simple, repetitive songs work well. Games need to be more organized possibly, but kids had fun! Chris was a huge help!

Fluoride treatments – we had plenty of fluoride. Two lines is an efficient method. We gave the remainder of the fluoride to Patrocinia. She helped apply in her village.

Women's workshop– they enjoyed doing the cross craft. No discussion was had. There was not enough time to build trust and community.

Meeting with Benjamin – one evening the team met with Benjamin and Roger to discuss education in Guatemala.

- Roger and Gloria are working with the Walton Funds to provide 15 students in Coban with a 7th to 9th grade education.
- The school in Coban is trying to find a church or other facility to board students who come a distance to school.
- Currently there is no Presbyterian Church in Coban
- Do parents want their children educated? There is interest, but aspects need to change. We understand from the Gospels that all cultures are confirmed – all have value – all have grace. All cultures are affected by sin and create models of life that need to be broken. Ex. For the Kek Che, there is no “youth”, you are either a child or an adult. At age 11, 2 or 13 they think about getting married, this

affects the educational development. Also poverty is a big problem because it is hard to be prepared economically. We want to help them transform as God wants. These things come in time. Including worth of women – we need to break the paradigms to have sense of worth.

- What type of education do the pastors need in the Peten, what are the opportunities? One goal with school in Coban would be making education opportunities available to any area of ministry – lay leader or pastor. We would like to develop a program where classes would be held for 4 days – we could help provide these for aldeas who don't have pastors. Currently, there is no one in the PdP who has seminary training.
- Can someone be placed in the Peten to train pastors and do church development? We have folks that could do that, just the obstacle of money. Several years ago the PdP suffered much: corruption, racism, division – this hurts us. One of the pastors from Melchor was given a scholarship to study – he stole the money. The PdP sold property in Melchor and this helped to purchase land in other villages.
- The IENPG is in crisis- “when the Church loses its sense of mission, they also lose their vision”.

Executive meeting with the PdP

- Present: Ricardo, Chepe, Gonzola Max, Juan Lopez, Santiago Cruz, Miguel, Baldilio, Philip, Roger, Susan, Bob.
- Ephe Chapter 1 verses 3-10 were read and a prayer given by Ricardo.
- Here is their list of topics to discuss:
 - Status of buildings in the Presbytery
 - Discussion of New PdP center
 - Continuation of theological education
 - Children's ministry program in San Banito
- 1. Presbyterian Center – a holistic education recreation center. Build on land near a city which is accessible, and where there are hotels to accommodate mission teams. There will be a house where people can stay and a children's dormitory. A church for worship, and a place meetings and classes to be held. A kitchen, and recreation center for the children. A house for the director to live. Training will include: theological, vocational, agricultural and health issues. Training for women, men and children. This will need to be built in phases. Do not build it like the Sayaxche center because this was not a good vision on use of the facility. We will wait for the issue of land to be determined and details of a plan with a budget and phases.
- 2. They want the PTM to continue their theological classes. Where to meet is an issue – Valle Nuevo is difficult to travel to in the rainy season.

3. Children's Center in San Benito – Baldilio and his daughter are beginning this effort. It will be for orphans and others who do not go to school or have a home. They need materials and supplies to further develop this ministry. This could be a future church in San Benito.

- \$10 per month from the Pastors in Mid Tn to the pastors in the PdP - \$30 was given to 4 pastors for July, Aug and Sept.
- 4 previous solicitudes granted: we attempted give this money to the PdP account through traveler's checks – but this failed. The money was later wired to the PdP account.
 - Nuevo Cannan – roof, floor, windows, door \$ 1160
(donated from Trinity funds given to the GTF)
 - San Juan Acul – church floor \$ 640
(donated from Second)
 - Zapotal II – church renovations \$1000
 - Chinatal – lumber for church \$1000

Well drilling tools – difficult to work with when wells are full and theological training is going on.

Video – it was great for Melissa to get the footage for the video.

Free day – Team members enjoy Tikal and Yaxha – lesser developed ruins but very impressive. Not as commercial or crowded.

Long days – days need to begin no earlier than 7:00 and end by 9:00 so the team can get adequate sleep. **Eat only one meal in the village.** We had half the team get sick/exhausted.

Financials

Costs (for 10 team members, and Marriott's)

Hotel	\$ 1,250
Food	1,030
Food in villages	364
Gas and Van	660
Ferry	16
Benjamin	307
Marriot expenses	150 (travel to Flores, boots, Yaxha)
Other	
Gas for generator in village	27
Water	24
Students to travel to class	114

	<u>Misc: funnel, lunches</u>	<u>321</u>	
Total		\$4,000.00	
Cost per team member: \$400			
Given to Marriott's : \$4293 (\$293 from Presbytery)			

Transactions:

Chepe	\$50	
Tip for Ceasar	\$48 (360Q)	
Benjamin Yac	\$307	
Nuevo Cannan – roof, floor, windows, door	\$ 1160	(donated from Trinity)
San Juan Acul – church floor	\$ 640	(donated from Second)
Zapotal II – church renovations	\$1000	
Chinatal – lumber for church	\$1000	

** travelers checks do not work well – the Bank did not understand them.

Gifts:

- Spanish Bibles (200)
 - Roger took about 50
 - Ben took about 50
 - 50 were distributed at worship service to pastors
 - 50 given to Chepe
- Aprons and kitchen towels – remember to give to the entire kitchen – not one individual
- PC-USA caps – to those who took the theology training
- Toothbrushes
- Armbands
- Medical supplies for Concern America
- Frisbees and soccer balls for each village

Needs

- Spanish Hymnals – 40Q each from IEPNG
- Health promoter support – travel to trainings and food 300Q per HP per year

Bob's newsletter article for Second Pres.

On June 19, 2008, Second Presbyterian members Susan Brantley, Fred Kirchner, Gregg Hileman, Melissa DuPuy, Bob Goodrich, and Chris Goodrich traveled with Philip Beisswenger (Minister, Eastminster Presbyterian Church), Michael Magee (Minister, East Brentwood Presbyterian Church), Doris Rice, and Fran Peebles to Flores, Guatemala, where we met up with Roger and Gloria Marriott to begin the seventh year of Second Presbyterian mission trips to the Peten region of Guatemala. Bob, Chris and Fran were first timers to Guatemala, and the others were veterans. Roger and Gloria Marriott, members of Hillsboro Presbyterian Church, have lived in Coban, Guatemala on and off for the past seven years. Their main goal is to educate Guatemalans in basic accounting procedures; however, they also conduct a variety of other mission activities, including hosting groups like ours. Roger is a late 50s/early 60s gringo with an intelligent eye and a quick smile. Gloria, his softer counterpart, endures the hardships of Guatemala with devotion to her husband and their cause.

We carried Sunday school crafts, Bibles, Frisbees, soccer balls, toothbrushes and fluoride for the Guatemalan villages we were to visit and medical supplies for delivery to American doctors working for Concern America who run a clinic in Las Cruces. Most of Thursday, June 19, 2008, was a travel day, and after arrival in Flores, we met Roger and Gloria. That night and every night of the trip, the group met to share our reflections of the day behind and our hopes and concerns for the day ahead.

Friday was our tourist day. Bob, Chris, Fred, Melissa, Fran, and Doris went to Tikal, a fantastic Mayan ruin in a rainforest in the northern part of the Peten, and the others went to Yaxha, another Mayan ruin. At Tikal, our guide Sam, an "indigenous" (a word often used to describe a non-Spanish speaking person of Mayan descent who has not adopted an urban, Spanish speaking lifestyle), entertained us with fact and lore about the Mayan culture and shared with us the story of his family's ten year flight to the jungle to escape death at the hands of government hit squads during the country's long civil war, which began after the CIA-assisted overthrow of the democratically elected pro-land reform government in 1952 and ended in 1996. We were told prior to our trip that it was we who would be transformed by our mission, and hearing Sam's story was part of our transformation.

Saturday morning we set out for Chinatal, our first village visit, and Zapotal Dos, our second visit. Both villages have Presbyterian Churches, previously visited by Second Presbyterian, that are part of the Presbytery of the Peten, which is part of the national Guatemalan Presbyterian Church. To reach these villages, our workhorse van with its awesome driver Caesar left the pavement to challenge pothole ridden dirt roads. Each village came out to greet us with open arms. Beautiful children and skinny, mangy dogs were everywhere. The Chinatal Church was struggling, having lost its minister and having dwindled

down to three families. Zapotal 2 was faring much better. The congregation rented plastic chairs for us and placed us in the front of the humble church. We ate together, worshipped together, and played together (with kids running and shouting “Chris, aqui! aqui!”, hoping to get a Frisbee toss or soccer ball kick). Saturday night we returned to Flores, exhausted after a long day, and reflected on what we had experienced. One of those experiences was the sight, out of our van, of a murder victim lying on the sidewalk surrounded by a crowd in Flores with a sheet thrown over him, except for his tennis shoes, which stuck out of one end of the sheet.

Sunday morning we headed to Nuevo Canaan (on a paved road), where we were greeted with firecrackers, a marimba concert, and a delicious lunch. The Nuevo Canaan church seemed to be thriving, with a cinder block church building under construction, an active Sociedad Femenil (women’s group), and talented musicians. After that visit we headed to Sayaxche, which would be our second home base. To get there we crossed the Passion River by ferry. The ferry crossing, which lands at the doorstep of the downtown area, operates non-stop day and night as cars, trucks, bicycles, and motorcycles (one of which carried a family of four) cross the river filled with every type of cargo imaginable. The river front is a noisy hubbub of activity: swimming, bathing, camping, hanging out. Our hotel had a resident parrot and a second story patio that overlooked the ferry crossing. Sayaxche, a center of commerce in a country plagued with violence, is not a place where one wanders around after dark. Although we did not feel threatened, our use of police escorts was a prudent move in a country with no real law enforcement.

Using Sayaxche as a home base, we spent the next three days visiting Valle Nuevo, a village about an hours’ drive from Sayaxche. The end of the trip was the most challenging: an unshaded dirt road with standing water ranging from several inches to several feet deep. We sometimes drove (in a truck lurching wildly from side to side, close to tipping) and sometime walked down this challenging stretch, with mud and water cresting the tops of our boots to slide down our legs and slosh about. The village was a microcosm of life in the Peten for the indigenous. On the front steps of the humble but welcoming church building, we looked out over ground that was pasture, barnyard, playground, and latrine, with dogs everywhere, a male turkey strutting his stuff, ducks, chickens, children playing, horses. A corn grinding machine was cranked up occasionally, with a loud thumping engine and smoke puffing out of the engine’s exhaust pipe, which stuck out from the corn grinding hut. Water was available to the community out of a large tank into which poured rainwater from the gutters of an adjacent house.

In Valle Nuevo, we conducted Vacation Bible School, worshipped, played, and ate together. Philip Beiswinger, fluent in Spanish, conducted a three day training session for local ministers, focusing on the sacrament of baptism. The trips in and out were exhausting, and many of us (including your reporter), experiencing various degrees of nausea and fatigue, skipped at least one of the three days and stayed at the hotel to recover. On Wednesday, at the end of the third day, we closed with a joyous worship service. Hanging across the front of

the church were over fifty blue spirals, symbolizing the water of baptism, adorned with divine symbols, the beautiful product of Guatemalan children during the Vacation Bible School.

Wednesday afternoon we headed back to Flores to spend the night and fly out the next morning. After Sayaxche, our hotel in Flores, which initially seemed a bit primitive, felt like a five-star hotel (hot water! pizza across the street! a steady stream of electricity!). We again reflected, humbled but not dispirited by what we had seen and by the difficulty of effecting change in this war-torn country. As predicted, it was we who were transformed.