

## **Guatemala Partnership Gatherings**

August 23, 2015 **Grace Covenant Presbyterian Church**

August 30, 2015 **FP Gastonia Church**

“Two are better than one, because they have a good return of their work: If one falls down, his friend can help him up. But pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up! Also if two lie down together, they will keep warm. But how can one keep warm alone? Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.” Ecclesiastes 4: 9-12.

Our twenty years of partnering with Guatemalan churches in Sur Occidente and Suchitepequez has been much like the above Old Testament quotation. Together in Christ, we have accomplished much in the areas of education, health, women's issues, and church growth that we could never have done alone.

Together in Christ, we have formed lasting relationships as brothers and sisters, hermanos y hermanas, despite cultural and linguistic differences. Together in Christ and by the power of His Holy Spirit, we have prayed for God's will, His Kingdom on earth, and each other, and there has been “a good return of our work.”

The following information is a distillation of discussions we in the Presbytery of Western North Carolina shared on two separate occasions concerning partnership. Over seventy individuals were able to come together, to sit down with each other, and to convey openly and honestly what they perceived as the successes and difficulties of our twenty years together, as well as to express their dreams and hopes for our continued future. It is our prayer that this information will be used not only by the leadership teams in WNC and Guatemala, but also by congregational sessions, church committees, and individuals who join us in this mission.

### **Summary of Prayer and Discernment Questions from Discussion Tables**

#### **Successes:**

##### **A. Educational Successes**

###### **1. Children and Families**

- a. Strengthened relationships between parents and their children
- b. Strengthening of self-esteem with hopes and dreams for a better future
- c. Improved equality among siblings, genders, classes, and ethnicities

###### **2. Higher Education**

- a. Greater access to education and improved literacy levels
- b. More students moving toward higher education and trade schools
- c. More students attending university
- d. Improved respect for value of education
- e. Increased support for programs with tangible goals and measurable actions

###### **3. Church Scholarships**

- a. Length of the scholarship program has strengthened church relationships
- b. Trust building between partner churches as well as mutual responsibilities
- c. Greater engagement from churches and parishioners in education
- d. Financial support and partnership has built an attitude of “Together we can do more”
- e. Creation of enthusiasm and positive feedback

###### **4. Funding**

- a. Education and scholarships are a wise investment of money
- b. Family money can be used for other pressing needs
- c. Gateway to addressing other issues: health, abuse, schools, diets, etc.
- d. Inclusiveness of program (for community, leadership, and theological needs) has led to greater empowerment and outreach
- e. Development of creative ways of fund raising

And as a result of the above, we have been blessed with an **emerging project**: Libros Para Ninos/ Books for Children!

## **B. Partnership Successes**

### **1. Understanding and Valuing Mission**

- a. Increased acknowledgement of the value of overall mission in churches
- b. Twenty years of partnership is an acclamation of its value
- c. Increased youth participation and mission trips which have changed lives and vocational direction.
- d. Strengthening of faith in churches which in turn promotes growth in those churches

### **2. Relationship building**

- a. Building of stronger personal relationships
- b. Greater awareness of life in Guatemala and cultural growth in both countries
- c. Partnerships build peaceful relationships between countries

### **3. Health Issues**

- a. Improvement and attention to health needs and programs which address them
- b. Improvement of overall health in church communities

As a result of the above, we have been blessed with an **emerging project**: Micro loans for women!

## **Difficulties**

### **1. Communication**

- a. Listening to and hearing what Guatemalans say they need
- b. Technology: knowledge of and access to
- c. Current church contact information (both places)
- d. Keeping churches informed in WNC
- e. Language barriers
- f. Getting timely reports from Guatemala
- g. Locating interpreters in US and Guatemala
- h. Maintaining momentum within individuals and churches

### **2. Knowledge and understanding of partnership**

- a. Levels of leadership (leadership team and committees)
- b. Covenant relationship steps
- c. Areas of partnership programs ( Health, Presbyterian Women, Education, etc)
- d. Cultural differences
- e. Methods of operation or how things are done in partnership
- f. Location of partnership churches
- g. Accountability and sharing of information

### **3. Understanding cultural differences and similarities**

- a. In communication
- b. In lifestyle
- c. In living situations in Guatemala
- d. In education systems in WNC and Guatemala

### **4. Delegation Trips**

- a. Obtaining visas for Guatemalans
- b. Lack of sharing opportunities for returning delegates to WNC

### **5. Organizational Challenges**

- a. Changes of leadership: differences of passion and mission focus

b. Changes of leadership: transferring/sharing of information and knowledge

## 6. Financial Challenges

- a. Limited resources and competition for resources
- b. Balancing need requests of PWNC and maintaining focus on partnership
- c. Balancing finances of small churches in WNC and the need of scholarships for many students in Guatemala churches
- d. Individuals directly asking for money

## 7. Education specific difficulties

- a. Administrative expenses in Guatemala (need a cap)
- b. Timing of scholarship funding with the school year
- c. The increasing financial needs for higher education levels
- d. Parents accepting money without students being enrolled
- e. Deciding who receives scholarships: needs versus grades
- f. Building problem solving skills with children, youth, adults, and churches both in WNC and Guatemala
- g. Addressing holistic needs of students
- h. Keeping pace with society/student growth
- I. The need for teacher training, quality education, materials, and resources
- j. Dropout rate
- k. Attending school versus lost income
- l. Parental support
- m. Need to explore long distance learning

## The Future

### 1. Knowledge and Understanding of Partnership

- a. Inform and train churches in WNC on partnership structure and happenings
- b. Label emails to WNC churches: “To Guatemala Partnership Committee”
- c. Greater engagement between churches and partnership leadership
- d. Leadership training on how to do a mission trip for your church
- e. Continued prayers
- f. Encourage more ministers to participate (“buy in”)
- g. Share fund raising activities
- h. Everyone contributes to the campaign
- i. Greater support for seminaries
- j. Visible opportunities for giving to Guatemala partnership
- k. Uniform reporting—include templates to facilitate PWNC churches reading/understanding
- l. Provide opportunities for learning about: education in Guatemala, new programs, books, films, etc.
- m. Leadership development of WNC and Guatemala leaders
- n. Continued partnership in trust, not by micro managing
- o. Greater ways for youth involvement

### 2. Communication and Technology

- a. Improved meaningful communication
- b. Provide opportunities for Guatemala churches and presbyteries to talk about their needs and LISTEN
- c. Correspondence between churches with youth and adults
- d. Involvement of children drawing pictures and writing letters
- e. Improved technology in Guatemala churches
- f. Technology training

### 3. Exchange Visits

- a. More visits to WNC that include participation in local mission work
- b. Language classes
- c. Continue and improve cultural education of mission teams

- d. Build bridges with Guatemala in WNC
- e. Greater sharing of experiences and visits
- f. Consistent yearly exchange visits between WNC and Guatemala churches
- g. Encourage families to visit

**4. Education**

- a. More college scholarships
- b. All children being educated
- c. Increased scholarships for higher education
- d. Higher education and seminary education for pastors
- e. Greater knowledge of children's holistic needs
- f. Improved teacher training with greater access and support
- g. Every child is given a book and a climate for reading is developed
- h. Continue to develop libraries
- i. Explore long distance learning

**5. Health**

- a. Family planning and development of workshops
- b. Possible Health Fair
- c. Get more water filters to schools and churches

**Suggestions for New Covenant.**

1. Broaden connections with non-governmental organizations in Guatemala
2. Integration of health, economic development and education

**Finally**, let us remember from our covenant of twenty years that we are partners to:

- Glorify God (Romans:15: 5-6)
- Testify and demonstrate to all the reconciling love of Christ (Romans 12: 9-21)
- Mutually encourage one another (Romans 1: 12)
- Help our pastors, churches and their members gain a better understanding of God's shalom and experience God's abundant life in all aspects of our lives
- Affirm our integral faith in Jesus Christ, declaring our intention to work as partners in support and mission in our respective countries, learning from each other, sharing our joys and pains in order to appreciate those gifts that each church offers for God's purpose

**And,**

“ . . .because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, being confident of this, that He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.”

Philippians 1: 5-6

Submitted by the Education Committee:

Carole Ball, Chair  
Roselyn Barker  
Ellen Dozier  
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Valerie Holcombe  
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## Libros Para Niños/Books for Children

Early in 2014 members of the Education Committee of the Guatemala Partnership met a group of public school educators in Santo Domingo, Suchitepéquez who were trying to respond to the fact that over half the first graders in their school district had failed the previous year. We listened to their struggles, hopes and plans and were inspired by their commitment in the face of limited resources and seemingly overwhelming odds. We wondered if there was a way to “walk with” these educators as they tried to provide quality education for their students.



By chance, or the providence of God, we met a woman who had begun a program in Nicaragua some years before that provided quality books to schools for children. She was willing and able to help us send 500 children’s books, in Spanish, to the school in Suchitepéquez. She also helped us train 60 teachers in a read-aloud methodology which encourages children to love reading and books by involving them in activities related to the stories. Now every morning all 450 students in this school have 35 minutes of reading time, either the teacher reads aloud to the students or students read silently by themselves.

With our partners in the two presbyteries in Guatemala, we now dream of putting into place a pilot Community Library with a facilitator trained in this reading methodology; this library would be a location where both children and their parents would have access to books and where everyone could learn to love reading.



We all know, and they know in Guatemala, that being able to read and comprehend the printed word is fundamental to achieving an adequate basic education – which is known to be a path out of poverty around the world. Learning to read and love books supports these findings. As the principal of the Santo Domingo School now says, *“We are very enthusiastic about the reading project. We believe that this is a basic tool for our students and are very satisfied with the results. The children are learning to love books.”*

You can be a part of making the dreams of Guatemalan children, parents, and teachers in our partners presbyteries come true. You can be a part of providing more quality books in more schools, a part of providing quality training for more teachers and a part for ensuring the development of a pilot Community Library by purchasing greeting cards.

A \$10.00 donation will purchase a book as well as provide training for a teacher or facilitator of a Community Library. Suggested prices for the cards are: \$5 per card or \$20 for 5 cards.

The checks can be made payable to: PWNC

(subject line write, "Libros Para Niños/Books for Children" & mail to presbytery office)

114 Silver Creek Rd.  
Morganton, NC 28655



### Education Committee of the Guatemala Partnership

Carole Ball, Judy Nebrig, Valerie Holcombe, Rosalyn Barker, Anne Evans, Ellen Dozier

For further information about the greeting cards, contact Ellen Dozier at 828/403-3988 or [ellendozier@hotmail.com](mailto:ellendozier@hotmail.com)