

**Guatemala Trip June 4 – 11, 2013,
Presbytery Report
July 30, 2013**

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Having heard of other experiences and reports from previous Guatemala trips, I felt well prepared for what I was to encounter in my journey. I expected extreme levels of poverty, unsanitary conditions and a language barrier, but what I experienced from the very beginning was God's presence with us.

Before beginning our trip, Pastor Boggs, shared a daily devotional with us. The verse showed how we are partners together to lift one another up in the love of the Holy Spirit. Guatemalans and North Carolinians are united in our belief in God and putting the Bible into practice.

From Charlotte to Atlanta and onward to Guatemala City, we prayed for a safe journey and for our brothers and sisters who would receive us. We asked God to lead our hearts and minds for our journey as we strove to strengthen our relationship/partnership with our sister church members, elders, and pastors.

As we departed the Guatemala City airport we were greeted by our PWNC driver Jorge. His face and actions shined with the Holy Spirit. His enthusiastic welcome and kind guidance immediately made us feel safe and at home in a foreign and distant land from our own. It was the start of an incredible journey for each member of our team.



Bethesda Church –

It was truly glorious to see God at work within the sister church and community. Upon arrival, I was greeted by most of the church members. There were ready smiles and much joy to go around. Edwin Gelista was there and shared with us Psalm 133.

The Blessings of Brotherly Unity

A Song of Degrees of David.

- 1 Behold, how good and how pleasant *it is*
for brethren to dwell together in unity!
- 2 *It is* like the precious ointment upon the head,
that ran down upon the beard,
even Aaron's beard:
that went down to the skirts of his garments;
- 3 as the dew of Hermon,
and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion:
for there the LORD commanded the blessing,
even life for evermore.

These words touched us and reminded all that where more than one of Jesus' followers is together to praise God that he is there with you. Though they had little in the way of material wealth, it was immediately noticeable that they were indeed very rich in faith. I felt very much honored to be able to walk, talk, and learn from my brothers and sisters in faith at Bethesda Presbyterian church in Santa Ana.

Pastor Jose Ascencio was very joyful and hardworking in all ways in the community. I was immediately taken to see the local elementary school. The school director greeted me kindly and showed me the facility. The school receives some government assistance in feeding the 250 children daily who attend the school. This is prepared in a Concrete small building over an indoor open fire. It consists of tortillas and black beans. The community care for one another truly touched my heart. Classrooms were decorated with illustrations from books read aloud and the field was full of excited children participating in a soccer game.

The next day we were able to meet with a local group who is working to provide the community with water filter wells. Pastor Jose noted the need and interests of members to have access to clean water. We were able to provide Pastor Jose with funding needed to provide a water filter for Bethesda and Genezaret, in La Sabana. These were to be installed the week after we departed with three additional trainings for the church and its members on how to properly use and care for the water filter wells.

Visiting both of Pastor Jose churches and meeting all the scholarship children and their families really solidified the importance of our partnership with the scholarship program. More than a handful of students are orphans and are dependent on the scholarships not just for an education put for a future. They have become the life blood of the children giving them access to a future



far better than that of their parents. They are so very grateful and thankful in every way. They showered us with hugs, letters, and gifts to take back to our home churches. Our help is very real to them and through this trip they became very real to me. I am now forever tied to my Guatemalan brothers and sisters. Their hopes and dreams are the same as ours and through the glory of God our beautiful relationship continues.



Thanks be to God.

Líbano Church –

Deborah Garrison, Banner Elk

Wow, what a whirl wind experience. I have so many things to process through, but to say I had a wonderful time would be a huge understatement and doesn't even begin to describe how to explain my experience. I love the people of Guatemala so very much and they have taught me so many things about life, God, education, the world, and also myself. Walking in my front door I am faced with implementing what I learned from them into my life. I don't want it to be just a trip or just an experience. It was a life changing learning experience and I will change and apply what I learned. I am so thankful!

Arca de Noe Church -

Amanda Carringer, Banner Elk

From the moment I arrived in Morelia, the village that Arca de Noe serves, I was struck by the strength of the relationships between the people of the village. They embodied the definition of a faith community in their love for one another and in their love for God. I learned how they supported one another through periods of grief and came together to celebrate and work on common goals such as the renovation of the church. Their community was tightly-woven but expanded easily to include Barbara Hosbein and me. They were so happy to see us and included me right away in their activities even though we had never met before. The people of Morelia reminded me that our relationships with others and with God are truly what fulfill us, and I am so thankful to have been able to have this experience.