

Witness Division Report October 26, 2013

A continuous running thread through our Presbytery's collective witness to the love of Jesus Christ over the past (nearly) 20 years has been our partnership with the churches of two Presbyteries in **Guatemala**, Suchipequez and Sur Occidente. The importance of that thread in our witness seems to be evident again in this season of our collective ministry. August 3-11, 2013, four educators from our Presbytery joined with teachers in Guatemala to conduct an assessment of educational strengths and weaknesses in local school systems, determine how best to improve schooling in Guatemala, and evaluate the use of resources. Those women returned excited about the possibilities and committed anew to making a difference in the lives of children through quality education (See their more detailed report). In like manner, another group of four representing Presbyterian Women will travel to Guatemala along with the leadership team for the Guatemala Partnership on October 29th to renew and strengthen the ties of our partnership. As your Interim Associate Presbyter, I am looking forward to being a part of those conversations for the first time face-to face. I can't wait to hear what we will dream of doing together to demonstrate Christ's saving grace in our lives and in our communities! I am also honored to travel with a leadership team that already so ably reflects strong Christian commitment and loving service. They are an exemplary group, many of whom have served lovingly, compassionately, and consistently for more than a decade.

Furthermore, in another area of international witness, members of our Presbytery have responded generously and appropriately to assist our Malawian brothers and sisters in their hour of need at Nkhoma Hospital in **Malawi**. A huge THANK YOU goes to those who have demonstrated their Christ-like love in this way!

Meanwhile, the **Peace & Justice Committee** has been addressing areas of concern, both domestic and international. Domestically, we encourage churches that may have innovative ideas for furthering peace to apply for a grant funded by our portion of the Peacemaking offering (traditionally collected on World Communion Sunday). The application for grant requests is attached. Additionally, grant monies are available through our portion of the *One Great Hour of Sharing* offering for projects promoting the **Self Development of People** (Application and qualifications are on-line). Internationally, the members of the Peace & Justice committee have committed together to pray for peace and justice in areas of distress – particularly Israel/Palestine, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Kenya and neighboring African nations. We invite you to join our efforts to spiritually support those who struggle with threats and violence, even when our involvement is from a distance. Another issue that increasingly concerns the members of Peace & Justice Committee is global warming and environmental responsibility. This is an issue we will be seeking to highlight and discuss with the churches of our Presbytery in the coming months.

The **Hunger Committee** comes to you this season with ideas for infusing your upcoming holiday traditions with meaningful gift giving. You will find suggestions for organizations and causes that would value a monetary contribution during this season of generosity on the presbytery website (www.presbyterywnc.org). You can either give a gift in honor or memory of someone special or just out of your own need to give meaningfully. Either way, gifts are shared in several directions, spreading their impact.

Another way that you can meaningfully finish 2013 in the coming months is to join the **Missions Committee** in praying intentionally for the PC(USA) mission co-workers from this Presbytery: Amanda Craft (Guatemala and Mexico), Frank & Nancy Dimmock (SE Africa), Karla Koll (Central America – Costa Rica), John McCall (Taiwan), Barbara Nagy (Malawi), Gary & Marlene Van Brocklin

(SE Asia), and Becca Young (Indonesia). They would also appreciate being remembered and greeted during the holidays.

Finally, please don't forget our college students and their pastoral mentors. The **Campus Missions Committee** would be happy to share with you who these students are, where they are from, and where they study, if you are not already aware.

PRESBYTERIAN PEACEMAKING OFFERING GRANT REQUEST FORM

Please mail to:

Peace & Justice Committee

114 Silver Creek Road

Morganton, NC 28655

Or Fax to 828-437-8655

The Peace and Justice Committee of the Presbytery of WNC is making small grants of at least \$250 to churches that are working in concrete ways toward peacemaking in the community or the world. Funds will come from the Presbytery's portion of the Peacemaking offering. Please provide a one or two paragraph description of your project/idea/proposal. In addition, please suggest how your project fits with the peacemaking goals of the PC(USA). **Deadline for requests is December 31, 2013.** The committee will begin making decisions at its January 2014 meeting. If your church is awarded a grant, you will be asked to provide a brief report (a paragraph is sufficient) and a picture by September 15, 2014.

NAME OF CHURCH:

CONTACT PERSON:

PHONE NUMBER:

EMAIL ADDRESS:

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF YOUR REQUEST:

GUATEMALA PARTNERSHIP

“that we may be mutually encouraged by each other’s faith”. Romans 1:12

Presbyteries of Western North Carolina, Sur Occidente, and Suchitepéquez Education Study Trip



Front Row: Flor de Maria Chapeton (daughter, Dulcie), Valerie Noble, Becca Weeks, Damaris Anderson (daughter, Cloe) and Judy Nebrig.

Back Row: Tenma Galindo, Carmen Flores, and Carole Ball

This trip was the first of its kind for the partnership or that our leadership team from CEDEPCA had ever done. Four sisters from WNC and 4 from Guatemala bonded together with the love of Christ and the love for the children of Guatemala. This trip was unusual in that it was a group of 8 women all having an equal role in the outcome; yet, from different countries. While the women from WNC had read many articles on the

history of education in Guatemala, statistics of education, and various reports on education prior to the trip the women from Guatemala all had experienced teacher training and teaching in the schools of Guatemala. We give thanks to God and to Trinity that all of our prayer concerns were answered, and our goals for the trip were met

The trip began by worshipping together at Peniel Presbyterian Church in Guatemala City, where the pastor is the newest (March 17, 2013) of only 4 women pastors in Guatemala. Miriam Azucena (Susy) is a daughter, a sister, a mother, a wife, a pediatrician, and a pastor. This was followed by team building, presentations on child abuse statistics and children’s rights, reforms in teacher training, and the status of bilingual education. Several schools were visited: including 3 schools for children who mostly work on the streets, break rock in the rivers, or work in the sugar cane fields; and INTECAP, a vocational school similar to a Jr. College for Technical Training in WNC. Students at INTECAP are able to attend this school without having completed a high school education. It was the cleanest and most progressive educational facility we saw in Guatemala. It provides young adults with the opportunity to study in a vocation of their choosing while learning business skills, and finishing with job skills to provide a living.

The last day of the trip was spent setting dreams for the educational system and scholarship programs in the partner presbyteries. Following a listing of dreams, action steps were created to make the dreams become a reality. Actions Steps were created in the areas of (1) Teacher Formation (2) Scholarships (3) Human Rights and (4) Advocacy. While there was not time to complete all action steps the women will each work on the steps independently; by presbytery; by country and finally participating in a Skype meeting in September when they will prioritize, add responsible parties, and timelines to the steps. A report will be made to the Partnership Meeting of the 3 Presbyteries at their November meeting with the hope of making this group of women a Committee on Education with the ability to follow through on the proposed actions.

Please keep this group of women in your prayers as they work to further the quality of education, create awareness of educational opportunities for children and youth, and standardize the scholarship programs of our partnership presbyteries. Watch for further information from this committee on the knowledge gained from this trip, and the continuing work on: “new learnings” dreams, and action steps which will be posted on the presbytery web page and Guatemala Partnership Face Book page. For further information contact: Carole Ball caroleball@gmail.com