

What Happened in Guatemala?

The nine members of the RCPLC Living Waters team spent the early days of December in Guatemala. The team's goals were (1) to visit the site of last year's installation (the Belén Presbyterian Church in Jerez) and reconnect with their operators, (2) to install a water purification system in conjunction with the Ciudad de Refugio (City of Refuge) Presbyterian Church in La Felicidad, and (3) to make a covenant with a new site (for our next trip). All three goals were accomplished thanks to the dedication and commitment of our partners in Guatemala, and the prayers and support of those back home.

All of this took months of international communication and strategic planning. Project managers Lois Johnson and Cindy Theobald made all the travel, lodging, and eating arrangements. Their planning allowed us to see the country and experience the culture, while their careful guidance once there kept the team safe and effective. David Theobald and Lois were our ambassadors to review and celebrate the system in Jerez and traveled with Cindy to meet with members of the Monte Los Olivos Presbyterian Church in El Chico to finalize a new covenant. (See below for more on El Chico.) None of our success would have been possible without these team members' dedicated work before and daily adjustments to our schedule and plans while in Guatemala.

One of our tasks in La Felicidad was the education of the local villagers. Mary Finch was the leader of this effort, and her patience and kindness kept everyone on track and smiling even when barking dogs and the practicing drum band made hearing almost impossible. She was assisted by Ann Legg (with her invaluable keyboard skills) and Bill Weller (who set up the videos and played with the occasional disruptive baby). The education team met with 3 young women from the village each morning to select and rehearse the lessons and experiments deemed most appropriate. These included lessons and activities for children. In the afternoon, the now prepped and prepared young women educated the 15-18 villagers who attended each day along with even more of the village's children.

Arguably the most important part of our effort was to provide purified water for the community of La Felicidad. Acting in faith, the members of the church there had already dug a well and improved a building to house the purification system. Our team guided three elders from the church through the installation process and also trained them in its future operation. Andrea Pracht (a trained but rookie installer) was our leader in this effort. Working with her were Ed Waters (a veteran of installations) and Fred Neuschel (who twice spoke eloquently in English

to the Spanish speaking congregation). By the third day all of them were confident (and brave) enough to sample the newly purified water themselves.

All of the above explains what we did but it doesn't capture how we did it or what we learned and experienced. Feel free to ask any of the team members about our trip and maybe you'll hear something about: morning devotions; jockeying for seat positions in the van; police escorts; the friendly, appreciative generosity of our hosts; lunches on the porch; marimba music; goosebumps when Ebert sang; broken fans; firecrackers; our last night in the home of mission workers Brian and Sandy; stories of survival (and beautiful weavings) from indigenous women; coffee beans and tree climbers; toasting the purified water with dixie cups; stopping to take pictures of smoking volcanoes; speed bumps; the rugged, green landscape that is Guatemala; and the small but significant ways our time there changed their lives and ours.

While several of our team members are fairly proficient with the Spanish language, we must acknowledge that our trip's success was largely dependent upon the translation skills of our native Guatemalan friends and guides, Pablo and Rubenia (Presbyterian employees of Living Waters for the World) and Shannon (a college student). We also owe a "thank you" to Luis, the van owner and our driver. (Every day every one of us rode somewhere in the van, and none of us ever wanted to be the driver on those roads.)

As mentioned above, our next trip will be to El Chico, perhaps the most needy of our covenant Guatemalan villages. This village is very poor and lives by fishing. There are no stores to buy water and no electricity. They drink from a polluted well and therefore suffer from parasites. The children need shoes and medicines.

Please join us on January 21st during the Education Time for more details and pictures of the trip. We will begin planning the 2018 trip soon, so if you are interested in helping out at home or joining the travel team, this would be a good time to come and ask questions. Your support makes this mission project possible.



Installation Team at La Felicidad



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El Chico



Freshly painted water room in Jerez



Baby Whisperer



Handwashing Practice

