



Education
that *transforms*

October 2023 Newsletter

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Dear Friend,

Greetings to you from Guatemala.

CEDEPCA just celebrated our 37th anniversary. Reflecting back, our thoughts and prayers have turned to the great gift relationships are in our lives. We have mourned the loss of a dear friend of CEDEPCA, Gwen Wagner, who passed away suddenly on August 11th. Gwen understood the power of relationships and lived that out in her life through her family, friends, and the ministry of CEDEPCA. Gwen served as a Board member of CEDEPCA USA and was instrumental in providing training to staff on the use of communication tools. Thanks be to God for the gift of Gwen's life.

We invite you to read other examples of how CEDEPCA provides a "bridge" for individuals, churches, and other groups to develop relationships both at home and in other settings and cultures.

As always, thank you for your prayers and support.

In Christ,
The CEDEPCA Staff

P.S. You can now donate monthly or even yearly [HERE!](#) Sustaining donations help us to continually plan ahead. Thank you!



~ ~ ~ Intercultural “Steadfast Love” ~ ~ ~

By Betsey Moe

A recent conversation I had with a friend I’ve known for 45 years made me remember this truth: a friendship, if given time and nurture, becomes exponentially richer year by year.

The same is true here in Guatemala when long-term intercultural relationships are nurtured. Of course, many people come to Guatemala through CEDEPCA’s Intercultural Encounters program just once. They may be deeply challenged and changed by what they hear and see, and they carry back a piece of what they have learned into their lives as citizens, parents, teachers, church members.

But some people – and some churches – come back again and again and end up forming long-term relationships with individuals, churches, or organizations here in Guatemala. I think of the Hebrew word, “hesed” that occurs so often in the Old Testament, the word that means “steadfast love” and characterizes how God acts toward God’s people. “The LORD is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love” (Exodus 34:6). Showing steadfast love to one another is our primary way of reflecting the steadfast love of God back into the world.



After the pandemic, Covenant Presbyterian Church from Madison, Wisconsin approached CEDEPCA and asked for help coordinating a trip to visit two churches with whom they had a previous relationship in the department of Suchitepéquez in southwest Guatemala. Twenty years previously, they had begun visiting these communities annually, but had fallen out of touch during the pandemic. The Intercultural Encounters team got to work planning a “*Partnership Strengthening Trip*,” one of three types of trips offered through CEDEPCA’s Intercultural Encounters program. The team drove to the communities and met with leaders face-to-face to discuss what the visits might look like and what we could do from the beginning to encourage a spirit of companionship and co-development.



In October of 2022, the first group from Covenant arrived in Guatemala. Only a couple of the participants from Covenant had visited the communities before, and there was new leadership at both churches in Guatemala, so CEDEPCA’s role in visiting the communities ahead of time and being the trusted communication bridge between the parties turned out to be crucial. Community members were ready with open arms and abundant food. At the first church, the group was able to work side-by-side with church members on

a construction project; at the second, they teamed up with health promoters to offer a pop-up health clinic one afternoon.

But by far the time they valued most was the time they spent listening to stories. Stories of family members migrating north out of economic necessity, stories of having to lean on church community through times of struggle, stories of scholarship students finding their way into lives of service after graduation.



A new group from Covenant returned this August, many of them young people, and they were received just as warmly by the two churches in Suchitepéquez. Once again, they shared in some side-by-side work, but also had the chance to sit and listen to stories – like friends do.

We at CEDEPCA are grateful for the church and university groups that come again and again, nurturing relationships that bring encouragement and challenge to our U.S. friends and our local Guatemalan communities alike. We celebrate God’s steadfast love that continues to transform the world.

Betsey and Eric Moe Back from a Non-Virtual Journey to the U.S.!



CEDEPCA's Mission Co-Worker from the PC(USA), The Rev. Betsey Moe, and her husband Eric recently returned from two months of Interpretation Ministry in the United States. They shared with 17 congregations in nine states about what CEDEPCA is doing throughout Central America to respond through faithful actions to a challenging context. Thank you for your support of Rev. Betsey and her ministry of bridge-building and peace-making.



Calling All Travelers from 2023: Enjoy a Cafecito (Coffee Break) with CEDEPCA!

All those who visited Guatemala on an Intercultural Encounters trip in 2023 are invited to join us on Thursday, November 16 for a "Cafecito" follow-up session via Zoom. At this hour-long informal meeting, the Intercultural Encounters Team will share with you what is currently going on in Guatemala (with particular attention to the political scene). We also will be hearing from YOU in small groups about how your trip to Guatemala has influenced your perspective and your actions this year. We are looking forward to seeing you all again, and we hope it will be a good chance for you to remember your time in Guatemala, meet some fellow travelers, and re-commit yourself to prayer and actions for justice.

*We will hold two identical sessions on **Thursday, November 16**; please choose the session that works best for you.*

For the daytime session at 12:00 p.m. EST/11:00 a.m. CST/10:00 a.m. MST/9:00 a.m. PST - register for this Zoom meeting: [HERE](#)

For the evening session at 7:00 p.m. EST/6:00 p.m. CST/5:00 p.m. MST/4:00 p.m. PST - register for this Zoom meeting: [GOHERE](#)

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*Thank you for Visiting*

[Covenant Presbyterian Church - Madison, WI](#)



~~~~~ *Calendar Corner* ~~~~~

*Please keep us in your prayers as we
continue our work here in
Guatemala.*



October

- 13-20 Delegation from North Decatur Presbyterian Church (GA)
- 21-28 Delegation from Winchester PC & Looking for Lilith with Faith Stories (VA)
- 26-27 ACT Alliance meeting on Gender Humanitarian Action (Disaster Ministry)
- 27 Reformation Day Commemoration (FBT)

November

- 1 All-Saint's Day (Guatemala holiday)
- 2-3 Contextual Reading of the Bible in Quiché (FBT)
- 6-10 New Castle Presbytery strengthening partnership with Mam Association
- 14 Advent season begin
- 24 Commemoration of International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women (Liturgy) - Women's Ministry
- Nov. 29-Dec 01: CEDEPCA staff retreat

December

- 4-7 CEDEPCA's Programs Planning (2024), Monitoring and Evaluation

12 Christmas celebration
15 Last day of work (Christmas break)
Jan. 8: Staff returns to the office (end of vacations)

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www.cedepca.org

CEDEPCA | P.O. Box 920243, Norcross, GA 30010

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