April 2022 Newsletter

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Dear Friends,

Greetings to you from Guatemala!

Do you feel like you're caught doing the same things you've always done? As we enter the season of spring and rebirth, read the story below about how CEDEPCA's Women's Ministry is thinking of new ways to solve ongoing problems while demonstrating resilience in the ongoing struggle with the pandemic. We hope you will be encouraged.

And, throughout this season of Lent, as we look forward to once again celebrating the reason for our faith in the Resurrection, remember these words of Jesus, "Take courage! It is I! Do not be afraid." (Matthew 14:27)

In this email you can: ***sign up*** for our next Virtual Journey, ***consider*** bringing a group to Guatemala, and ***pray*** for our upcoming events.

In Christ,

The CEDEPCA Staff

~ Empowered women on their way to food sovereignty ~

Two years after the start of the pandemic, we have all had to reinvent the way we do the things we were used to and in some cases we have had to do completely new things. Undoubtedly, the pandemic time has been a challenge for everyone, but throughout it we have learned a lot. A case in point is the women of the Corazón de Mujer association (Ranm Ixoqi' in the Mayan Kaqchikel language).

WOMEN'S MINISTRY

The Corazón de Mujer association is a group of women formed as a result of displacement during the 1980s due to the internal armed conflict, which occurred in Guatemala between 1960 and 1996, ending with the signing of the peace agreements. This group of women has a relationship with CEDEPCA and the Women's Ministry Program for more than 30 years. Initially, the women who participated in the association received courses offered by CEDEPCA, which reinforced their self-esteem and knowledge of their rights from the perspective of the Christian faith. Over time, the women decided to organize and legally establish their association, which has allowed them to have new opportunities to improve their quality of life; they have been able to be a part of projects that have been of great benefited to them.

Before the pandemic, the women of the association met constantly to plan their activities – training, celebrations, reception and attention to groups. Many groups came through CEDEPCA's Intercultural Encounters Program to hear the women's life stories, to do

activities with them, and also to purchase the woven products that the women make. However, during the pandemic, the association paused all activities, as they had to remain in isolation and refrain from work.

As of 2021, CEDEPCA's Women's Ministry in conjunction with the Disaster Ministry, proposed activities to be developed with the group of women in order to provide new knowledge and alternatives to contribute to their development and improve the quality of life of the women and their families. The activities included a pilot project implementing a forest nursery, planting 200 pine and cypress tree seeds, with which a reforestation day is expected to be carried out later. The main objective was that women could learn about other activities that are not only educational, but are part of a commitment to care for the environment and contribute to disaster prevention. The forest nursery is also an opportunity for women to reproduce trees that they can market in the future.

Another activity was training in growing family gardens as a way to contribute to the food sovereignty of women and their families. Over the years, many people have moved further and further away from the knowledge of the natural process of planting and harvesting their own food. Our hope in training on family gardens has been to share about the importance of families reconnecting with the land and food production; families can decide what to plant, what to eat and at what time of the year. In this training, women were provided with information on types of family gardens, from those that can be started in large places directly in the ground, to those that can be planted in pots or small containers suitable for small spaces. They learned to take into account irrigation, plant spacing, and harvest times. In addition, the importance of cultivating various types of plants was discussed, so that crop diversification can help control pests. Another benefit of family gardens is that families have control over plant fertilizers and pest control, to avoid the use of harmful agrochemicals. After the training, seeds of 5 species of native plants (miltomate, the herbs chipilín and macuy, tomatillo and spinach) were delivered, and training was given on how to make a seedbed for the germination of the seeds that will later be transplanted to a more permanent space.

For this family garden training held in January 2022, we were accompanied by our friend and member of the Board of Directors of CEDEPCA USA, Cheryl (Esperanza) Rowan.

She shared: "This was an exciting day for the women of Corazon de Mujer, since it had been some time since the women had been together at their cooperative space in Chimaltenango due to the pandemic. On this day, Pamela was guiding the women in a hands-on workshop on the value and benefits of planting family gardens. Pamela, who coordinates the Pastoral de las Mujeres program and who has experience in the field of agronomy, instructed the women in specifics about choosing a space for their family gardens, preparing the soil, planting the seeds in a seed "nursery," and techniques for transplanting the seedlings to a larger space later.

In addition, Pamela shared with the women the wide range of benefits to be gained from family gardens: availability of nutritious food close at hand, less dependence on markets,

and involvement of family members in addition to the mental health benefits of tangibly connecting to God's creation through the soil and the sense of accomplishment they would experience. What joy was on the faces of these women as they were able to come together again to experience fellowship and the joy of doing something tangible – and new – with their hands! They teased each other, laughed together, and even playfully tossed handfuls of dirt at one another. At the conclusion of the morning together, they had two completed seed tray "nurseries" with five types of vegetables which they would return to tend until the seedlings were ready for transplanting to their own family gardens, or huertos.

This day was a wonderful example of the cooperation between two of CEDEPCA's programs – the Disaster Ministry and the Women's Ministry– to create something new which perfectly encompassed the goals and initiatives of each program and the larger mission of CEDEPCA."

These types of activities, marked by a long-term vision, are ones that contribute comprehensively to the empowerment of women. They could not be carried out if the people were not well organized – and the Corazón de Mujer association has been one of the exemplary and successful groups walking with the Women's Ministry Program and with CEDEPCA. The group started through self-esteem and empowerment courses taught by Luz María Coto, Judith Castañeda and Anne Sayre, and has been reinforced with comprehensive support

~ ~ ~ Join us on our Next Virtual Journey ~ ~ ~

"Confronting Climate Change with Actions of Hope"

Wednesday, April 20, 2022
4:30 p.m. PT / 5:30 Mountain/GMT / 6:30 CT / 7:30 ET

During Earth Week, take a Virtual Journey to Guatemala to see how Central Americans are "Confronting Climate Change with Actions of Hope." You will be challenged by the Rev. Dr. Karla Koll, Professor of Mission at the

Universidad Bíblica Latinoamericana (UBL) in Costa Rica, who will speak about what it means to live holy lives in the midst of the threat of destruction. And you'll be inspired by the stories of ordinary people in Central America whose actions in relationship with creation reflect extraordinary hope.

This virtual travel opportunity is designed for an English-speaking audience and will include breakout room discussions.

Register **HERE** in advance for this meeting:

After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the meeting.

~ ~ ~ ~ *CEDEPCA is Ready for You!* ~ ~ ~ ~

INTERCULTURAL ENCOUNTERS

CEDEPCA is prepared and ready to host your group in Guatemala! With safety protocols in place, we are well-equipped to facilitate safe and meaningful intercultural encounters. We can facilitate existing partnerships that may have been strained through the course of the pandemic or help your group learn something new on a topic of interest. Our calendar is filling up, so contact the **Intercultural Encounters** staff today to plan your next trip!

Thank you for visiting!!

New Castle Presbytery - DE

Augustana College - IL

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

Please keep us in your prayers as we continue our good work here in Guatemala during this pandemic.

April

1 Second cycle of classes start – Biblical and Theological Education (Higher level)
11-17 Holy Week (office closed)
19 Virtual conference – Celebration of the Day of the Book
19-20 1st Encounter of Jose Project
20 Virtual Journey on Climate Change – Intercultural Encounters
22 Earth Day
25-29 CEDEPCA's Strategic Planning (2023-2027)

May

1 Labor Day (Guatemala)
4-5 Clinics on Sexual and Reproductive Health in Alta Verapaz -Women's Ministry
10 Mother's Day (Guatemala)
13 Virtual conversations of Contextual Reading of the Bible with facilitators of the Biblical and Pastoral Institute
16-18 Study groups in Alta Verapaz - Biblical and Pastoral Institute
17 Global Recycling Day
28 International Day of Action for Women's Health
31 Workshop on Environment and Climate Change – Disaster Ministry

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