



Journal

From June 7-14, 2014, a twenty person mission team from our congregation worked alongside our Christian sisters and brothers of the Presbyterian Church of Honduras to share the gospel and bring God's love to the people of this Central American country.

Our mission team helped to conduct three dental clinics, one-day medical clinics, poured a concrete floor in one church, and painted the sanctuary of another church.

Inside you will find experiences, thoughts, feelings, and pictures of the team. Enjoy sharing our joy.

The Itinerary
Saturday, June 7 – Saturday, June 14

- Saturday: Travel to Honduras
Arrive in Tegucigalpa
Check-into Hotel
Visit the Christ Statue overlooking the city
- Sunday: Morning: Worship at The Pena de Horeb in Presbyterian Church in Tegucigalpa
Afternoon/Evening: Sorting mission supplies for the week
- Monday: Painting project, dental & vision clinics at Pena de Horeb
- Tuesday: Construction on presbytery camp, medical brigade, dental & vision clinics at Quebrada Grande
- Wednesday: Rent trucks
Check out of hotel and travel to Comayagua
Check in at hotel in Comayagua
Visit old church in Comayagua
- Thursday: Depart hotel at sun up for travel to El Horno/ El Sute
Medical brigade, dental & vision clinics in El Horno
Construction on church in El Horno
Leave in time to return to hotel by dark
- Friday: Check out of hotel in Comayagua
Travel to Valley of the Angels for lunch and shopping
Check in to hotel in Tegucigalpa
Supper with Honduran hosts
- Saturday: Check out of hotel
Return trucks
Fly to USA

Tuesday, June 3

Packing Party

The mission team gathered to pack the donated clothing, supplies and other equipment into bags and boxes. Last minute instructions given and questions answered. The next time the team meets will be at 5:00 a.m. Saturday morning as they depart for the Miami Airport.



Saturday, June 7

Travel to Tegucigalpa and visit to the Christ statue

On Saturday, The 2014 Honduras Mission Team left Winter Haven at 5:00 AM and arrived in Miami at 9:00. Landed at Tegucigalpa airport where we were welcomed by many of our Honduran friends. Delivered our bags to hotel and enjoyed a few hours at a local National Park for picnic lunch, pictures of the Christ statue and the city of Tegucigalpa. Meetings this evening, devotions, dinner and bedtime. There is a two hour difference so most of us are a little weary from a day of travel and the addition of these two hours. The Team is growing together as we prepare for our work week.

- Penny Zwicker



Sunday, June 8

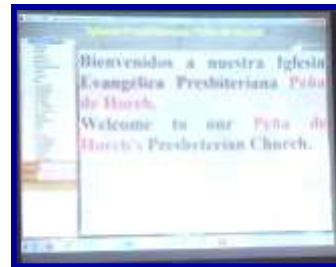
Worship at Peña de Horeb and lunch with our Honduran friends

My first trip to Honduras was in 2005. I returned in 2007. Circumstances prevented me from participating in the 2009 and 2011 trips. At the airport Saturday and at church today, we were greeted by many of the same people I met and worked with on my previous two trips. I was struck by how genuinely glad they were to see those of us that have been here before and how glad we were to see them — for we truly have become friends. Alex and Noel were in high school when we first met them. Some mission team members have helped pay for their educations. They are now married and we have the privilege of getting to know their wives and children. At times I can become overwhelmed at how seemingly little we accomplish in a place where the need is so great. What I have come to realize is that our mission is as much about forming relationships as it is about doing physical work. Our service here and the friendships that have formed are because of our mutual love for Jesus Christ. What better reason could there possibly be?

- Lia Gray

Today was a slow day, but at the same time a great day. There was a lot of singing in worship, and I also enjoyed the sermon and Sunday school class. Later, we had lunch at Las Tejitas, and the food was awesome. Then we headed to the shopping mart where we each picked up two gallons of water. We ended the day with sorting through all of the stuff that was donated for the mission trip. It was a good day.

- Austin Carrero



Monday, June 9

Peña de Horeb

Today we visited Peña de Horeb. We preformed various project such as, painting, dentistry, and entertaining the children while they waited. The dental work was a very fast paced. Most of the group was painting one of three rooms: the children's room, the sanctuary, and the front room. There was a young boy named Diego who was very fun to be around and put a smile I everyone's face.

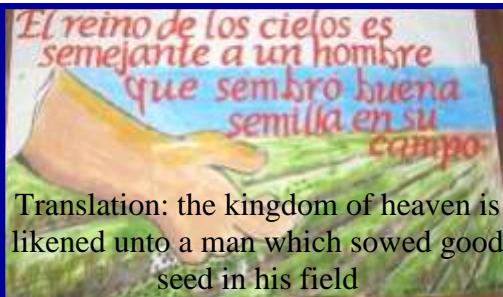
- Casey Cheatham

On Sunday our mission team worshiped with our brothers and sisters at their church, Peña de Horeb. Today we returned so that Dr. John Eycleshimer and his team could provide a dental clinic. Tom Oldt & local Presbyterian missionary, Mark Wright, could provide eyesight evaluation and eyeglasses distribution, and the remainder of the mission team could paint the sanctuary, Sunday school rooms, and the main entrance. The entire church was busy with workers, while church members and local residents waited for dental and eyeglass service. It was very special to work side-by-side with our Honduran brothers and sisters to bring much needed services to many who have little access otherwise.

The painting projects brightened the church and made drastic changes for the Sunday School rooms. The children's room went from dark and dreary to bright and cheery simply by painting, providing several floor lamps, and a portable fan. The children's teacher was very happy and the painting team felt God's love through service. Today was a very special day and the first of many to come. God does work wonders when we follow the teachings of our Savior, Jesus Christ.

Dr. Negley finished the day with a devotional: I Corinthians 12:12, "For as the body is one, and has many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ." The mission team is Christ's hands, feet, arms, legs, eyes, and ears here on earth as we serve through Christ's love.

- Dave Zwicker



Tuesday, June 10

Quebrada Grande

Our second day of mission work began figuratively and literally a world away from where we were yesterday. Our experience of helping an urban congregation in a church nestled in an industrial area of Tegucigalpa sharply contrasted with the simple villagers in the primitive, yet beautiful setting of Quebrada Grande. The tiny church we visited is located in a high valley surrounded on all sides by mountains. The churchyard and pastor's home is adjacent to acres and acres of mature sugarcane. Chickens and scrawny dogs scurry around neighbors' homes and dart out of the path of the hundreds of children swarming the facility.

As we pulled into the field next to the church, the first thing we noticed was the mass of women and children waiting in line to register for medical, dental, or vision care. Most of these folks had walked for miles and hours for the rare chance to receive some medical attention. As our team exited the bus, six local boys stood by the door and yelled "hola" as each of us left the vehicle. We knew from the start that we were among grateful friends.

We set up stations for rudimentary medical, dental, and vision care. Some on the team immediately began entertaining the village children and others went to work on a construction project for the church. By the end of the day, our medical team examined diagnosed and prescribed medicine for over 200 people. About 65 Hondurans received vision care, many receiving prescription glasses. Another 25 folks were treated for dental issues, including extractions. Our construction crew furthered the building project and the entertainment crew delighted hundreds of kids with bubbles, soccer, crafts and coloring. Overall, we touched the lives of many people today.

On the way home from the village, traveling down a dirt road toward the highway, we passed a small group of people walking who were some of those we treated today. As we passed and waved at the villagers, one of our team yelled "Hey...it's some of our people." It was then, with a lump in my throat, that I realized we are all brothers and sisters on this planet. At that moment, we were not Americans and they Hondurans; we are all people, living together on the same planet, under the eyes of God. Through this experience, we became part of them and they became part of us. They are truly "our" people. *That* is the lasting benefit of our Honduras missions.

- Jonathan Owen



Tuesday, June 10, (continued)

Quebrada Grande

Today we visited the small village of Quebrada Grande. When we arrived there were already many mothers & children waiting for our service. Throughout the day we provided optometry, medical, & dental services. I was lucky enough to get the experience of a lifetime: blowing bubbles to small children. Their faces lit up with joy when we opened the bubbles & began. It was amazing how captivated the children were by such a simple thing as bubbles. It really feels great to make a difference of this magnitude.

- Hadley Owen



Wednesday, June 11

Travel to Comayagua

We dropped through the clouds above a verdant, hilly landscape as our flight from Miami approached the Honduran airport low enough to see the stark contrast among the homes now arrayed below us. Some, on the higher perches, were large and luxurious with tiled roofs and spacious gardens. The overwhelming majority were quite the opposite – small, closely spaced and roofed in rusting metal. Our plane landed on the same earth but in a very different world. We knew, of course, that we were embarking on a third world experience – indeed, it is precisely because of the great need that we felt called to go there – yet it is a jarring transition to see that every dwelling, be it house or hovel, has been turned into a fortress.

This is the literal truth. The sad, bleak reality for most Hondurans is that without barbed wire, walls, fences, window bars and even electrified barriers, home cannot offer even a modicum of safety. Add to that the ubiquitous armed security at every hotel, most restaurants and many other places of commerce, and you begin to form a picture of daily lives lived very differently from our own on the most basic issue of personal safety. Rampant crime, an abominably high murder rate, devastating poverty, illiteracy, dysfunctional government, periodic military dictatorships, abundant beggars and streets littered with trash would seem to guarantee an unhappy people. Oddly enough, at least in our encounters, that was not the case.

Mission trips are a bit of cottage industry in Honduras. Our arrival at the Tegucigalpa airport coincided with that of several other mission groups. So important to the economy and nascent tourism industry are these infusions of help from North America that the Honduran government frequently provides gratis security, as they did for us in the form of four armed soldiers who have accompanied us every step of the way from our Saturday arrival. They will be with us to our intended Saturday departure a few days hence.

Odd as it may be to attend church with armed escorts, that is precisely what we did the day after our arrival – and a joyous service it was. Our sister congregation in Tegucigalpa welcomed us as brothers and sister in Christ, and proceeded to demonstrate that a service clocking in at three hours need not drag. We were still singing long past the hour that Steve would have offered a benediction and eaten lunch back home. One aspect of that worship service was a short, English language video created for non-church goers which confronted head-on some of the rationalizations people give for not attending. Such as: “Church is filled with hypocrites.” Said the narrator, brightly: “There’s always room for one more!” Our service was held on Pentecost, marking the post-resurrection day when the disciples of Jesus were imbued with the Holy Spirit and given the gift of being understood by speakers of all languages. Steve, in his powerful homily – translated thought by thought into Spanish – evoked the opportunity all of us had on this trip and in our lives to be the hands and feet of Christ, to take to all nations the good news of salvation.

The next day we returned to the church for our mission work – offering medical, dental, and eye care, and along with local church members we painted the sanctuary and Sunday school. On Tuesday we ventured into the countryside a couple hours and a world away from the squalor of Tegucigalpa. Arriving at a beautiful rural church we saw hundreds of people awaiting us, most having come on foot, some after traveling for hours. The needs were great and the small deeds we were able to do were clearly appreciated.

Our rewards were great. One smile from a child is indeed a gift from heaven.

- Tom Oldt

Wednesday, June 11 (continued)

Travel to Comayagua

Today we left Tegucigalpa and headed to Comayagua. When we arrived in Comayagua, we went to our hotel and dropped off our luggage. We headed into town to visit the old cathedral (Immaculate Conception Cathedral of Comayagua). We climbed into the bell tower and saw the working mechanisms of the oldest working clock in the Western Hemisphere. Then we walked through the open market. On our way back to the hotel Casey, Emily, Connie, Mrs. Gray, and I rode in the bed of the pick up truck. When we headed to dinner we got to ride in the bed of the truck again. After returning from dinner we had a short group meeting and ended the evening with a swim.

- Emily Snyder



Translation: Restoration of the cathedral of Immaculate Conception of Comayagua October, 20, 2003



Thursday, June 12

El Horno and El Sute

Well this is it, the big day? Height of the trip... Literally and figuratively. We will be going to the mountains after breakfast to El Horno and El Sute. I visited these two villages last February during our trip to assess the safety of this area. I'm looking forward to this return as I found these two hamlets my favorites.

This is a coffee growing region high up on the hills. The people are very welcoming and the kids just crack me up.

Breakfast is at 6:30 am and we will be departing shortly after 7 am because it will be a long ride on a steep, bumpy... well I wouldn't call it a road... so let's just call it a trail.

We had a fantastic and busy day. Now we are on our way back from Comayaqua. We are stopped because one of our trucks is acting up. I'll recap our wonderful day in El Sute and El Horno.

It took us 1.5 hours to climb the mountains with our trucks. At El Sute they were ready for us at the church. The main church room was set for the medical clinic, then the next room was set for the vision clinic, and we were in the last room for our dental clinic. We saw 21 patients with 19 extractions and 2 exams. All in all it was a pretty good day, especially because we had to leave early to get off the mountain before dark.

Dr. Moreno was very busy in the medical clinic, as was the eye clinic. We gave all our unused dental supplies like gloves, mask, needles, lidocaine, etc., to Dr. Moreno and our left over cleaning supplies were left for the church.

These people were so appreciative and it was our pleasure to serve their needs. The children were entertained well in the bounce house while the clinics were open and a lot of ball and other toys were passed out.

Back in El Horno, many of our men and youth helped install a concrete sub floor for the tile of their new church.

Tonight we are eating fast food and celebrating Mark Wright's birthday. What a great day in Honduras!

- John Eycleshimer



Thursday, June 12, (continued)

El Horno and El Sute

Crossing from the paved road on to the loose, sharp, narrow rock bed an overwhelming sense of excitement rushed through my veins as I knew that we were finally headed back to the village of El Sute, where I had previously visited on the mission trip in 2011. The skies were clear, as we ascended into the mountains, painted with streaks of yellow and orange as the sun peered through the pine trees. We continued on our gorgeous truck ride for two hours occasionally stopping to take pictures.

When we arrived in El Sute we were greeted by smiling children and anxious adults. I watched as Emily Alexander and her father David “Sweaty Bear” Alexander pulled out the bubbles. They blew the bubbles expecting the kids to chase them, but the kids were nervous and hardly moved a muscle. So to get the kids to respond David acted as if he was a kid and ran around chasing bubbles as Emily blew them towards him. The image of them running around and putting a smile on the children’s faces truly captured the ideals and purpose of our trip.

After unpacking the trucks full of medical supplies and toys we divided into two groups; The first group would stay in El Sute for the first half of the day while the second group would travel to a neighboring village El Horno. I was placed in the first group and privileged to play soccer with the local kids. Joined by my fellow gringo soccer players Emily Snyder and Casey Cheatham we learned fast that we were relatively inexperienced in soccer compared to our Honduran friends. After an intense soccer game, leaving Emily covered in mud; we headed to eat lunch that was prepared by the women of the Presbytery of Honduras. Lunch consisted of yellow rice with veggies and chicken and tortillas.

After lunch, group one and two group switched places. In El Horno we picked up where group two left off, laying concrete floors in the local Presbyterian Church. The process of making concrete floors is quite different than what you would expect, they would mix half concrete powder and half dirt on the floor and then add water to the pile. The pile would be spread out across the floor as two local Hondurans dragged a 2×4 piece of wood across the top to level the floor. Pastor Juan Rodas was there to thank us again and again, telling us how much he appreciated our help.

We left El Horno around 4 p.m. Honduran time with all intentions of being back to our hotel around 6 p.m., par usual we ran into a small problem. Approximately 20 minutes into our drive through the mountains Mark Wright’s Land Rover broke down. The group attempted to pull the SUV behind one of the rented trucks and ultimately got it stuck and came to the conclusion it would have to stay in El Horno over night. We condensed in the truck to make more room for the people that were riding in the Land Rover. I ended up sitting in the bed of a truck with one of our Honduran hosts sons. His name is Gabriel; he is 9 years old and in fifth grade. Gabriel is an amazing boy who is fluent in English. We kept each other entertained during the ride home singing songs in Spanglish, tossing a ball back and forth, and taking pictures. Even with the set back of a vehicle breaking down, our day was an incredible one filled with memories that I will never forget.

- Kenneth von Hahmann



Friday, June 13

Valley of the Angels

Today started off very good. We all loaded trucks and Ms. Connie drove most of the way back and it was fun. Everybody in the truck enjoyed it. We got back to the hotel in Tegucigalpa and unloaded to go to the Valley of the Angels. The traffic gets better and better every year. There were more cars and motorcycles to dodge. It was like watching kids in the candy store wanting everything. It was nice walking around as a guide and helping out. We had a great lunch. We rushed to go back shopping and pick up some goodies.

When we went out for dinner, I was left by myself in the front of the truck with Uncle Gene who decided to ride with me. Everybody else wanted to ride in back with Franklin {The Guard}. He likes to smile a lot. At dinner we were able to see Dr. Moreno's family. His little daughter is now eight. I remember when his wife was pregnant with her. She is so nice. I was able to see her two other daughters from three years ago. It was like we never left. I was able to introduce my oldest daughter to them. I have been waiting for four trips. I am so proud of her. We were able to see the family members of the helpers that were able to work with us and help us. Everybody is like a big family. We all just became a closer and a bigger family. Alex's youngest daughter, Sophia let me hold her in the parking lot, she is so cute. When we left the restaurant, Steve and Uncle Gene rode back with me inside the truck back to the hotel, Franklin won out again. We had our evening meeting before the end of the night. I can't wait till we come back in two years.

Thank you who helped us to go to Honduras again. This was my best trip ever since my daughter Emily was able to go. I was so pleased with her helping John with the dentistry. She is a fabulous young adult. Love You Emily.

- David Alexander



Friday, June 13 (continued)

Valley of the Angels

Today was a very interesting day. We started off by traveling back to Tegucigulpa. Ms. Connie drove Emily S, David A, Melissa, and myself back to the city. Lets just say her driving is a little crazy! You could say it is like a roller coaster, really fast and many curves. Ms. Connie hasn't learned to use the brake before the curves, but it was so much fun! My dad took over the driving on the way to Valley of the Angels. When we got there it was so pretty! Shopping went by extremely fast! Two hours seemed like 30 minutes, at the most. The restaurant where we ate was amazing! The people who owned the restaurant were so nice as well.

Tonight we ate dinner with all of our Honduran friends! It was so cool getting to meet everyone and talk to them more. On the way to the restaurant Emily S, Ms. Connie, Casey, the guard from the Army Franklin (he was the coolest guard!), and my self got to ride in the bed of the truck. We had a blast! I'm so sad that this trip is over. Getting to know the group of people that came with us and the people I meet in Honduras was a great experience. I can't wait to come back!

- Emily Alexander



THE TEAM



Dave & Emily Alexander



Gene Aspy



Austin Carrero



Casey Cheatham



Elaine Dustin



John Eycleshimer



Warren Girouard



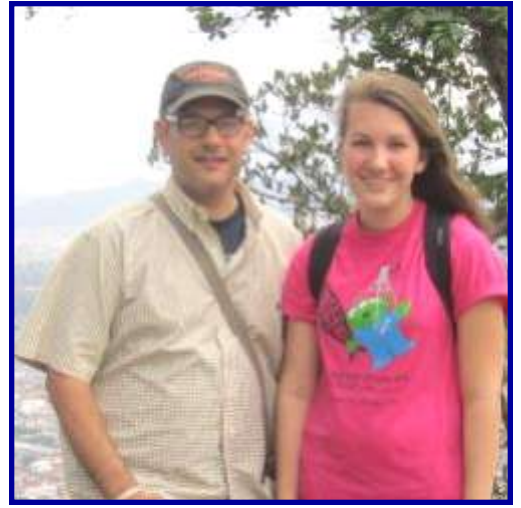
Lia & Jay Gray



Steve Negley



Tom Oldt



*Jonathan & Hadley
Owen*



Ryan Peardon



Connie Shipley



Emily Snyder



*Kenneth
von Hahmann*



*Dave and Penny
Zwicker*

THE HOTELS



THE FOOD



“We are determined to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our very own selves ...” (I Thessalonians 2:8) was the Bible passage that sent Mission Honduras 2014 on its way to Honduras on June 7th. The ending of this passage is what the Mission Honduras 2014 team members came back with on June 14th, “. . . because you had become dear to us.”

This is what our mission to Honduras was all about, helping dear friends who share our Presbyterian beliefs in Jesus Christ. “. . . because you had become dear to us.” We didn’t really acknowledge this when we left, nor did we acknowledge it when we returned, but we all felt it deep within our hearts. Mission team members are different now.

The mission team and our Honduran brothers and sisters spent time together; we worked together, prayed together, ate together, rode together, played together, served together, developed relationships, and we all became closer. Young and old, men and women shared a service role that expanded our spiritual beliefs and humbled us as we served the way that Christ instructed us to do.

Donating our time to those in need, ignites a passionate flame within us and shines a light unlike any other. “Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.” (Matthew 25:40) Bonds were created during our mission trip that will be with us for the rest of our lives. Praise God for his blessings and all of the people who gratefully donated the money and materials that made this mission trip possible.

- Steve Negley

