

## **Companeros en Cristo:**

### **The Diocese of Honduras and the Diocese of Northern Indiana**

The companion relationship has been productive of much good over the last eleven years. Four churches, a conference center chapel, two vicarages, school support, orphan support, mutual contacts, trips back and forth, deep friendships with Hondurans and missionaries there—all of these plus an immense outpouring of support in the aftermath of Hurricane Mitch have been the partial results of the relationship. In the future we hope to see more of the same, as we share some of our resources with the poorest diocese in the Episcopal Church. Yet in many ways it is one of the richest dioceses in terms of enthusiasm, evangelism, and growth. We hope to be beneficiaries of that enthusiasm for the Gospel that has taken Honduras from five congregations in the early 1980's to over 165 today!

Anyone with a heart for mission may join us the Companeros en Cristo. A committee meets about three times a year to discuss ways to help the Diocese of Honduras and plan mission trips. Please contact me the chairman, Tim Skimina at (248) 459-9776 or [t-skimina@northwestern.edu](mailto:skimina@northwestern.edu), if you are interested or have any questions about our work.

*The Companeros are hoping to raise funds for more drinking water projects* like the one described below, contributions may be sent to the treasurer of the Episcopal Diocese of Northern Indiana earmarked for “Companion Diocese”.

### **2010 Trip**

The focus of our mission trip was to nurture our relationships with the villagers of Delicias del Norte - a small village in the mountains near San Pedro Sula, Honduras.

David Silva recalls, “Last year, I had a special opportunity to travel to a small, poverty stricken village in Honduras. I had no idea what I would encounter. I, along with others, met warm and friendly people that were happy to welcome us to their village ... this year, my wife and I had the opportunity to travel to the same small village. Arriving at the village, we were greeted like returning relatives. We may not make a big impact on their daily lives but every little act of kindness that we are able to provide is much appreciated.” In addition, we worked along side the villagers building stoves, pillas (above ground cisterns with a scrub board and faucet) and latrines. We also planted gardens. “It was hard backbreaking work to those of us unaccustomed to manual work, especially in 90 degree plus weather. We’ve been reminded how fortunate we Americans are and how much we have in material things. We’ve also learned that the villagers in Honduras share the same faith we have and that gives us a common bond that we hope we can continue to build on together.”



David's wife Stella adds, "I had heard the stories of the Honduras mission from my husband and his fellow travelers. My experience in Honduras, especially with the children, has enriched my life. If it were possible, I would have brought numerous of the children back to the U.S. to provide them the lifestyle and educational opportunities that we Americans enjoy. I hope that in the near future that we'll have the opportunity to have our grandkids travel to Honduras on a mission trip; I know they'll quickly learn that by giving of our time and resources we receive so much in return."



To prepare for this mission, we collaborated with two missionaries from Virginia and raised over \$20,000 to purchase an urgently needed water treatment plant. The plant is capable of producing safe water for up to 4,000 people per day. The dedication ceremony for the water treatment plant was well attended by villagers, the local politicians, and national police and included coverage by a national television station. The safe water has already reduced the frequent instances of water borne diseases in the area.

The Companeros en Cristo Committee is assisting the women of San Lucas in the development of their sewing cooperative. The women are gaining a sense of self worth and accomplishment. One of the women – Gloria - has increased her income from \$25 per month to over \$100 – a meager amount by U.S. standards, but life changing in this small Honduran village. The money helped her to receive much needed medical care.

The women are learning how to sew school uniforms from a volunteer sent by the technical school. The sale of school uniforms will allow the cooperative to expand. The group has already grown from two women to fifteen in the last two years - greatly impacting the village. The women also produce patchwork handbags, which we are helping to sell. Money earned allows the women to provide food, medicine and clothing for their children.

The purpose of mission is to come alongside other people and to share in their lives. Relationship is at the core of our Christian experience, as it is with the Holy Trinity.

### **2009 Trip**

The purpose of our mission trip was get to know the villagers of Delicias del Norte - a small village in the mountains near San Pedro Sula, Honduras. A secondary purpose was to work along side the villagers building stoves, pillas (above ground cisterns with a scrub board and faucet) and a latrine. We spent the first two days visiting the churches, daycare center and clinics we helped to build or support over the years. As we traveled across the country, we visited the people we worked with on past trips.



On a hill in the village stands San Lucas an Episcopal Church in the Diocese of Honduras. The people in the village are kind and filled with the spirit of Christ's love. That is evident to any who come into contact with them. One day while Rev. Dan Layden was working on a stove, his work group ran out of cement to mix. He recalls, "My shoulders are still sore from mixing cement with a shovel all week, but that is another story. Anyway, I was glad for a little break. In our down time, I struck up a conversation through the translator with Bonifacio the local mason in charge of our work group. I asked him a simple question, 'How do you like your Church?' To my surprise he told me of how the Church had come to the village a few decades earlier and how he had been baptized. He went on to say that the church changed his life. As he told his story I could see the deep feeling in the man. I thought to myself, 'Thank God for those who brought the Gospel here to this village some years ago.' I further thought how amazing God's love is. Here I sit in a place I have no business otherwise being and the love of God shines to me through a man with which I have so little in common."

Honduras is a country of extremes – lush forests and deforested wasteland, the abundantly rich and profoundly poor, beautiful landscapes and trash, people spiritually

empty and those filled with the spirit. It is difficult for an American to grasp the depth of the poverty. Some of the families (6 to 8 people each) live on \$300 or less per year. For many of us living on \$300 per week would be difficult. The families get poorer as one moves further from the center of the village. Melissa Goodwin worked on a stove for a family whose “house” was made of sticks stuck into the ground with scraps of cardboard lining the inside and some rusty sheet metal as a roof. When she was telling her story at St. Timothy, she recalled how happy the family members were. Americans blessed beyond their knowing are too often totally miserable. Poor, filled with the spirit and happy – what a contrast!

We brought used toys to give away. Simple things such as marbles provided days of entertainment. The children were enjoying basic toys. They did not need iPods or video games. While we were waiting for a work assignment, I helped two other missionaries from Virginia – Alice and Haze. Alice was there to teach sewing and Haze was there to help build gardens. We were preparing a garden – hoeing, pulling roots and picking out rocks. A 4 or 5-year-old boy named Jolie jumped right in and started working with us. A child volunteering to work! He was also very smart. I found a piece of jagged glass—he grabbed it from my hand and pointed to the bottom of his bare foot. He knew exactly why I was picking it up.

Debra Herman summed up the mission trip, “I’ve enjoyed telling everyone about my experience in Honduras and how privileged I feel (that) I was to be able to go there. Each and every picture is priceless to me, and as you had told me, and I tell others, the pictures are nice but just cannot capture the experience.”

### **Since 2001**

- 2001: Fact-finding tour by group from the Diocese. Traveled along the north coast to the Guatemala border, through Santa Barbara and visited construction projects already completed, visited the large housing construction project near San Pedro, and visited Siguatepeque, Tegucigalpa, Danli and other parts of El Paraiso.
- Fr. Schramm represents the Diocese or Northern Indiana at the Consecration of Bishop Lloyd Allen as the new bishop of Honduras.
- 2002: College-aged student trip, led by Marcus Cunningham.
- Fr. Schramm visits churches in Santa Barbara and Siguatepeque.
- 2003: Two students spent extensive time in Honduras, Nick Myers (3 months) and Paula Morningstar (1 year). Assisted with funding to send 9 girls to school. \$3,000.00 raised for church construction.
- 2004: Various meetings attended.
- 2005: Team of seven went to work on SAMS project in Villanueva. Used funds for discontinued church project to build a daycare for children of women in that city who are garment workers.
- 2006: Various small independent projects by parishes.

- 2007: Consecration of the daycare center “Los Amiguitos de Jesus” in Villanueva.
- Fr. Schramm to Honduras to study Spanish and also to visit in Olancho the families of many of the Honduran parishioners at St Thomas Plymouth, traveling with SAMS Missionary Barbara Boghetich and presenting Bibles to the families from the Diocese of Northern Indiana.
- 2008: The Rt. Rev. Lloyd Allen, Bishop of Honduras, visited Northern Indiana. He served as Chaplain to our diocesan convention and preached at St. Thomas, Plymouth. The two dioceses renewed their companion relationship.