

VIM EL SALVADOR

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New residents of San Marcos discover the location of new home

Dedication of San Marcos Community in Izalco.

Izalco 13 February

Developing a new hamlet is an exciting challenge. It is also an important way of putting faith into action. The hamlet of San Marcos is located on the edge of Izalco, one of the oldest indigenous settlements in El Salvador, and is being transformed into a vital community for 34 families.

Joaquín Heriberto López Sánchez, one of the members of the new community spoke about his perceptions of the event. "This is a great day for us. The houses are well constructed and intelligently designed to meet the needs of our families. Not only are the houses great but also the process of developing this community has been a strong effort at making a community work. We are doing the important things like getting to know one another and discovering how we might work as a neighbourhood. Marítza Hernández (the Diocesan Social Worker) has helped us look at some of the directions that we must take in order to be a healthy community. It is exciting to be starting a new community."

On 13 February, exactly two years after the second large earthquake, the

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Theological Centre Changes

With the sudden death of The Rev. Boanerges Rosa, director of the Provincial theological college of the Anglican Church in the Province of the Centre of America (IARCA) the Commission of Theological Education of IARCA met in Managua, Nicaragua 13-14 of March to plan for continued programming. Ed Schmitt, Diocese of El Salvador representative participated in this planning meeting. As well as recruiting a new director, the Commission has made a commitment to gaining accreditation for the programme by working in conjunction with an established, accredited university programme. Also, the commission has reorganized the staffing of the programme to ensure more collaboration with qualified Anglican teachers in the Province. According to Ed Schmitt "We emerged from the meeting with expectation for an improved programme of theological training for ordained and lay ministers in the Province."

Building Nears Completion

The construction of the new building for Santísima Trinidad parish is almost completed.

The structure will be at least three times the space of the original church, held in one of the houses of the Santa Teresa housing cooperative. The interior walls had been removed to provide as large a space as possible. All parish programs took place in the same space, including Summer Bible School programs for over 40 children.

The new construction has created two levels of space. The upper floor is a large worship and Christian education area in which 100 people should easily fit. The upper floor will be a wonderful space for the all-night vigiliat that Salvadoran Anglicans love, with space to move around for various rites and activities. A small sacristy is yet to be added but will be located at the back of the room.

Children's programs, led by parish evangelist, Flor Hernández, may also use part of the upper floor, especially in the summer holidays (November through January) when more children attend.

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Santísima Trinidad Church and Youth Centre in final stage of construction



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The lower floor, which contains a kitchen, a meeting area, and toilets, also includes a large storeroom and a small bedroom with bath and shower for a prospective guard to live on the premises, or it could be used as an office.

The meeting area will provide the church youth group with space for a variety of activities, and on Sundays, an educational class for small children during the sermon. The congregation also plans to provide space for a Visual Health Clinic.

The building is constructed of concrete blocks with steel reinforcement. The floors will be of dark red tiles.

Parishioners are now in the process of deciding about furnishings and decorations.

The building has been made possible by the contributions of the Episcopal Church USA development fund, and also from friends such as St. James Church in the Diocese of Central New York.

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English Program at Colegio San Andrés

One gift brought by Kay Schmitt to the Diocese of El Salvador is her training and certificate in teaching English as an additional language.

She spends every Wednesday from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. teaching at the Colegio San Andrés six levels of elementary school English. As she had taught several classes of Taiwanese children in Vancouver, she had experience working with children when she arrived in El Salvador.

The Salvadoran children are warm and welcoming, leaping to their feet and shouting out "Good Morning, Teacher!" — a song they have learned in the past. The classes number from 20 students at the first-grade level to 6 in the sixth-grade.

One challenge in teaching in another culture is the tradition of authoritarian, teacher-centred methods in education here. While new young teachers are learning more interactive teaching skills, there is still a strong emphasis on memorization and repetition of what the teacher has said. The children love to parrot back sentences when they are working on inflection

patterns in speaking English. Struggling to differentiate the sounds of V and B, which in Spanish are often interchanged, the children are amused to learn that Kay cannot make the Spanish sound for double R.

Conceptual development is different in El Salvador. For instance, few people here use maps. Even the most simple of maps can pose programs for students as a map is simply outside of their experience.

One of the heart-breaking aspects of teaching in El Salvador is that there are virtually no resources to help battered children. Family violence is common, and corporal punishment considered acceptable in at least some levels of the society.

Diocesan Archbishop Barahona speaks out clearly against violence at home and urges members of the diocese to seek more positive ways of relating in their families. While family violence is included in at least one course in the diocesan School for Women, resources to help are slim in this country which has suffered so much violence and where street violence continues to be a big problem.

Three elementary schools are sponsored by the diocese in El Salvador and two pre-schools



Diocesan Youth hold Lenten retreat at San Pedro y San Pablo Church with The Most Rev. Richard Bower one of the presenters.



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Diocese celebrated a formal opening and blessing of the houses. Members of the new community offered prayers and speeches giving thanks to God for the opportunity to venture in this direction. Bishop Martín Barahona along with various leaders of the Church in El Salvador and members of the Board of Directors of the US based Episcopal Relief and Development Agency celebrated the opening of the community. Community and Church leaders expressed mutual commitment to continued support in this process of integrated community development

At the close of the celebration the houses were assigned to the families that had been integrated into the community. On a long cord small, brightly coloured paper packets were hung. As the roll of community members was called, each family came up in turn to select a packet. Inside the packet was the house number for that family. Next, the families enrolled, indicating the land location in a register. Although members of the families had helped construct the settlement, they only discovered which family home would be theirs at this point.

This project is a vital part of partnership between local people in need of housing, the Anglican Church of El Salvador and partners from the Episcopal Church, USA.

Young People Receive Help

At least 30 young people in the Diocese of El Salvador receive scholarship assistance from a variety of sources. With high unemployment and low incomes in El Salvador, many families have difficulty sending their children to school, especially after Grade 8.

St. James Church in the Diocese of Central New York has a longstanding relationship with Santísima Trinidad and now supports eight students: one in the last year of high school, three who began the 3-year high school program in January, two ninth graders, and two first-year university students. Various families of St. James contribute \$600 annually to high school students, and the parish mission committee supports one scholarship. One scholarship is divided between two ninth graders and a university student who is fortunate enough to have part-time work.

Christ Church, Calgary, recently made a contribution toward expenses for four high school students who attend San Pedro and San Pablo where Ed officiates on Sundays.

As well, the diocesan pro-cathedral church of San Juan Evangelista, oversees a fund that enables twelve or more students to attend school, including

some from outside that parish. The fund currently supports some Santísima Trinidad students — one in university, one in final year high school, and a young woman in the eighth grade. She receives only \$10 US per month from this fund; however, this amount assures that she can attend night school when her working mother or sister can look after her 3-month-old baby.

The Diocese of New Jersey contributes annually to build a scholarship fund for the churches here. Once the fund reaches at least \$50,000, a few students will begin to receive help. This amount will need several years to accrue.

In El Salvador parents recently polled reported that their main goal is to help their children get more education than they had. For many persons attending school was impossible during the 12-year civil war. Now, as the country shifts from agriculture over to a global business (maquila) economy, without the intermediary phase of industrialization, education seems more urgent than ever.

Many of the Anglicans in El Salvador are under thirty years of age.



Curriculum evaluation meeting at the Universidad Bíblica Latinoamericana (Biblical University of Latin America) in San José Costa Rica. This ecumenical university provides theological education at the Costa Rican campus; however, the largest number of students is made up of distance education participants from all over the Spanish-speaking world. Ed Schmitt was involved in the evaluation of distance learning modules. Also, Schmitt was working at the establishment of a coordinated system in which the specific interests of the Anglican Church would be more clearly met.

Practical Preparation for Evangelism

During the past year there has been a reinforcement of the commitment of the Diocese of El Salvador to preparation of members of the church for their role as evangelists. Proclaiming the Good News of the Reign of God is the work of all baptized persons. Clearly, some persons have a special call for full-time work in this ministry. However, each person has the call and an opportunity to exercise this important ministry. The classes are being held at San Andrés Church that is accessible to members of other parishes in the area.

Ed Schmitt is giving practical training courses to various regular lay members of parishes in the Diocese. The program of evangelism being offered seeks to help members own and articulate their own experience of Christ's action in their individual and family lives in a process of Bible reflections. After the participant has developed some facility in speaking of his or her faith within the friendly confines of the study-group, they are also trained in sharing their good news vision with friends, work and leisure associates and other members of the family.

The participants are of various ages and they have different levels of previous involvement. However, since the programme is based on the Bible and the Church Tradition as seen by the individual participant, all can participate.

Pressing Personnel Needs

- Clergy – the Diocese of El Salvador currently has six clergy including Ed and Kay to meet needs for services for seventeen congregations.
- The Diocese has trained and placed four young evangelists and five adult part-time evangelists.
- In the western area of Ahuachapán, one lay worker and two young evangelists continue to build up San Pedro and San Pablo in Cuilapa (El Mango), and the three missions in Maizal (site of a diocesan housing project), Acajutla, and Cara Sucia. Ed Schmitt officiates at services in Cuilapa and occasionally at the other sites.
- One priest, one young evangelist, and a pre-seminary student volunteering from the US oversee the parishes of San Mateo and San Francisco in the Lourdes area, San Rafael in Santa Ana and the nearby developing housing project of El Congo.
- One priest oversees San Miguel y Todos Ángeles in Quetzaltepeque.
- One priest oversees the pro-Cathedral of San Juan Evangelista in San Salvador, and Bishop Barahona tends the diocesan chapel of Espíritu Santo.
- One priest has charge of both the parish and the school of San Andres in Amatepeque, the nearby parish of Santa María Virgen in San Bartolo, and two mission churches in the province of Usulután. One part-time evangelist assists at San Andres, one part-time at Santa María Virgen, and two in San Juan Letran, one of the missions in Usulután.
- Kay Schmitt serves as priest of Santísima Trinidad in San Martín with one young evangelist.
- A new lay volunteer from the USA has just started to create an Anglican presence in the eastern part of the country in San Miguel, the second largest city of the country.
- *The harvest is plentiful, but the labourers are few; therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers into his harvest. (Matthew 9.37-38 NRSV)*

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