

VIM EL SALVADOR

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To our friends and supporters

In El Salvador poinsettias are blooming everywhere; we can see bushes laden with blossoms from the windows of our home. Music of Christmas echoes in the shopping malls, and in the churches all make plans to celebrate the birth of Christ, the birth of the light of God that enters even the darkest places of the human heart.

In El Salvador most people do not go out at night. The danger of violent attack is too real and the memory of wartime curfews with attendant horrors too vivid. The concert of Christmas carols at San Juan Evangelista in downtown San Salvador begins at 6 p.m. and ends in time for everyone to get home by 9. The darkness brings very real fear.

In the Church we are a community that lives toward the light of Christ. This light is simple, like a street lamp that gives us a clearer perception of what is around us, what true dangers exist and where our fears are unfounded. We can see others – and ourselves – more accurately in the context of God's love.

The light of Christ reveals the vision of the coming Reign of God. We receive gifts of hope and love that enable us to live without prejudice or harsh judgment. When this radiance touches us, "clears our eyes," we discover a world different from others, a world in which Love offers us new courage to live for the justice and peace that belong to everyone.

May the blessings of Love this Christmas open your hearts and minds to seek anew the coming of God's Reign.

Ed & Kay Schmitt

Contents

Evangelists on the Job Training	1
Update on community building	2
Santísima Trinidad lays first stone	2
A visit to El Salvador	3

Evangelists on the Job Training

In San Salvador, the compact and populace capitol of El Salvador, it is almost impossible to get away from urban sprawl; however, the Lutheran University provides a sanctuary, not only for learning; but also the presence of a biological reserve. The university, just on the edge of the city, is surrounded by dense tropical forest. Twenty students participate in a survey-course of the Bible in this reserve each Saturday morning. Half of the students are Anglicans who are working as lay ministers in the Diocese. Other students are from the Lutheran, Reformed and Roman Catholic traditions. This course shows the commitment to ecumenical cooperation by churches as they develop programmes of education to meet needs of the Christian community at an appropriate level of preparation .

Participants commit themselves to a disciplined study. As well as reading all of the Bible during the eight months of the course, the students also develop practical projects in ministry connected with the study. Several of the students are holding Bible study groups in their pastoral ministry. These students are all involved in full-time work as well as being students. Vilma, for example, works Monday though Friday in her non-church work. She participates in the four-hour Bible course and serves as an evangelist on Saturday afternoon and Sunday. Obviously, not all of the students have the same level of involvement; however, they must get to the University at 8:00 a.m. For most of them this involves a one and one-half hour bus ride. However students from Cuilapa in the west of the republic and San Miguel in the east have at least two and one-half hours travel.

During the month of December Ed Schmitt is giving the course which is on the letters of Saint Paul. "It is fantastic to be leading this class in which the students participate with great interest in both the written and the interactive components. I continually am impressed by the natural, and to many of them oblivious, way in which the students are able to link the scriptures to their community and personal lives."

This refuge or sanctuary for learning and natural life provides an essential space in which young leaders of the Church come together in order to be equipped for the ministry to which they are called. ☞



Bible students take break at the Lutheran University cafeteria

Update on community

building at Izalco

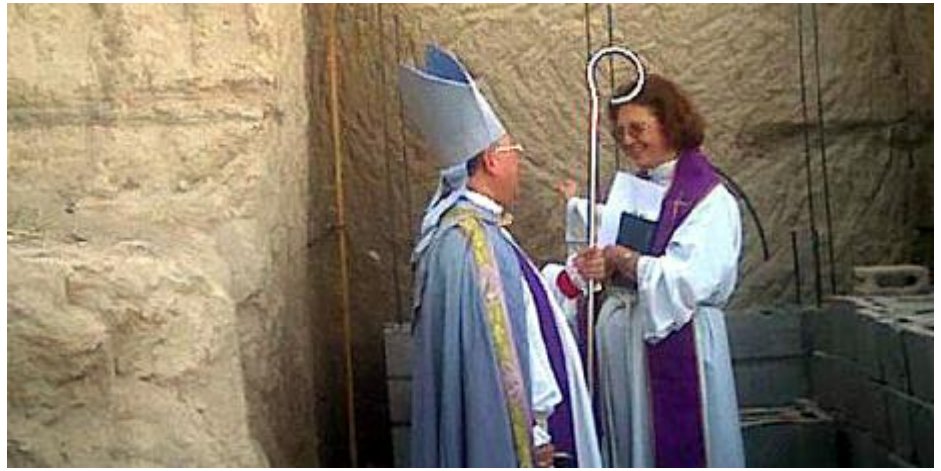
Izalco - On my return trip to my regular Sunday liturgical responsibilities in El Mango, Pat Appavoo, who was visiting with us (see Visit p.3) and I, detoured from our well maintained highway through the village of Izalco past the cemetery over a rocky trail to the Anglican Villa II, San Marcos; to have a look at the site of the developing community. Fortunately, we arrived just as the actual construction of houses was beginning. Pat and I were able to visit with some of the families who were involved in preparations for the construction of their homes. It was great to see this project in action; however, this important stage is backed up with other essential work of community development

The Diocesan community and home building project is now moving into that very concrete stage in which trenches for footings are being excavated by members of families who are soon going to be living in their own new homes. The process of getting to this point has taken well over a year in which locations had to be scouted and purchased, site and building plans developed and government building permits obtained. Realistically, this is a rather rapid response; however, important spiritual and social elements are integral parts of this process.

Another very human aspect of this building project has been in place for over a year. The Church advertised the project, recruited families who were in need and worked in the process of selection of potential community members. After



Young man helping build home in Izalco
page 2



SANTÍSIMA TRINIDAD LAYS FIRST STONE

Bishop Martín and The Rev. Kay Schmitt at building site

San Martín – The Most Rev. Martín Barahona, Primate of the Province of the Centre of America and Bishop of the Diocese of El Salvador, laid the first stone in the new building for the congregation of Santísima Trinidad in San Martín. The service celebrating the event took place on 1 December 2002 at the church. The congregation has long awaited the construction of the edifice, which will at least double the size of the present church. The “first stone” was actually wet concrete placed in a form, rather than something solid like a brick

The building will house both the church and a youth centre. In addition, there will be a small room for a night watchperson, two washrooms downstairs, one upstairs, and a small sacristy. On the upper level there will be a serv-

IZALCO Continued

being selected as candidates, the potential members of the community participated in community building exercises under the guidance of the Diocesan Social Worker, Maritza Hernández, who worked to help the families explore ways in which they could gain incomes that would make it possible to participate in the project.

The families, the engineers, and the professional construction workers are working together building dignified, safe and sanitary housing that is a basic component of a sound community. The church lay ministers and the social worker are also working to ensure that the small community be a strong support for the families. ♪

ice area including a large sink and water reservoir. The church may be entered on either level.

A small decorative patio will adorn the lower floor, which opens onto the wide street that cuts through the Santa Teresa neighbourhood.

Women market vendors in the San Salvador area, and their children who are now becoming young adults, populate the congregation of San Martín. Youth work has been strong in the church, and continues to be ably supervised by Ms. Alicia Avila. The two parish evangelists and a young woman volunteer give support to the group, and Ms. Rosa Cándida, one of the part-time volunteer adult evangelists has plans to work with disadvantaged youth in the Santa Teresa area.

A number of dignitaries attended the service, including VIM Schmitt Support Member Patricia Appavoo, and members of the ERD, the relief and development group of the Episcopal Church in the United States. The ERD supports this Diocese in its various building projects. As well, friends of Santísima Trinidad such as the parish of St. James in Central New York have also contributed generously.

The present church is one of the houses in the Santa Teresa Cooperative Housing Project. The interior walls were cut away to create a larger space in which worship was possible. The expanded space will create opportunities for more community service and evangelism. Although current programming has had

stone continued p.3

stone continued from p.3

to be somewhat curtailed due to the construction, a twice-a-week children's program and a literacy class continue, as well as the regular Friday night Bible study and healing service.

Assisting the archbishop in the service were the Revs. Kay Schmitt, incumbent, and former incumbent, David Alvarado who has contributed substantial energy to the building project. The archbishop commended the Rev. Hannah Atkins, priest for three years during which the building project was initiated. ☺

This fall we received visits from daughter Ursula, Ed's mom, and his sister Phyllis (recently retired). The six weeks of family presence and solidarity for our ministry came at a good time as we move from the first half of our service here into the second half. After Christmas we will be taking our annual holiday to visit our children, Karl and Ursula, and both Ed's and Kay's families. We are grateful for the opportunity to receive their love, and also the great support that the church family both in Canada and in El Salvador continue to give us.



*La luz de Cristo brille
en sus ♥corazones♥
durante la Navidad
y el Año Nuevo.*



Pat Appavoo and Bishop Martín exploring library plans

A visit to El Salvador

Pat Appavoo

In late November I spent a week visiting Ed and Kay Schmitt in San Salvador. The main purpose of my visit was to review and advise on the organisation of the Diocesan Library. During my visit I met with Bishop Martín Barahona and with other church leaders engaged in lay, evangelist and priest training and was impressed with the programs of training that have been established. I met most of the Diocesan staff and had lunch with the lay leaders and evangelists at their monthly meeting. Ed and Kay hosted me, chauffeured me and introduced me to the San Salvador bus system. On Sunday I attended morning service at Ed's parish - San Pedro y San Pablo - in El Mango. This is the oldest Spanish-speaking Anglican parish in El Salvador. The youth group in this parish is very active in the life of the church. On the return journey we visited a community housing project in Izalco funded by the Episcopal Relief and De-

velopment program which will have 45 houses, a church and a nursery school. The families help build their homes, make small monthly payments, participate in community building and eventually will have title to their home. The need for housing has been particularly pressing following the earthquake in 2001. On Sunday evening I accompanied Kay to her parish - Santísima Trinidad - where the Bishop blessed the corner stone of the extension to the church. This parish is in the suburb of San Martín and is reaching out to the youth of the area who are tempted by the glamour of youth gangs.

The library project is on hold pending my report and the preparatory work needed before I can undertake the library collection organisation. In the meantime I have enrolled in a Spanish course to relieve Ed and Kay of their translation duties when I return. ☺

A Publication of Ed and Kay Schmitt

email: <schmitt@integra.com.sv>

web page: <<http://ca.geocities.com/accvim>>

fax (503) 223-7952

mail: Iglesia Anglicana de El Salvador, 47ª Avenida Sur #723, Colonia Flor Blanca, San Salvador, El Salvador, América Central

Distributed by the VIM Schmitt Support Committee, Pat Appavoo, Secretary: <pappavoo@telus.net>

Volunteers in Mission, Anglican Church of Canada, Jill Cruse: <jeruse@national.anglican.ca>

Financial Support for this ministry may be directed to:

Make cheque in the name: VIM Schmitt

The Diocese of New Westminster,

580-401 West Georgia Street, Vancouver, B.C.
CANADA V6B 5A1