

VIM EL SALVADOR

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Diocese Prepares Evangelists

The Diocese of El Salvador is preparing ten young people to be lay evangelists in the diocese. After the training, these lay ministers plan to spend a year working in diocesan communities. With the vision of Bishop Martín Barahona, the staff of the Diocesan Centre as well as the Rev. Boanerges Rosa, head of the Provincial School of Theological Studies, has implemented an intensive effort at equipping these young saints for the work of the Gospel. While it is clear that evangelism is the task of all Christians, it is also clear that disciplined and well-equipped leaders can make a great difference in bringing this ministry to life in the Church.

Of the ten young persons selected to participate in this initial program, five students study the basic tenets of the Christian faith, an Anglican perspective of the Church, theology and methods of evangelism, skills as musicians including learning music theory and how to play the guitar, as well as other subjects.

Ed Schmitt, diocesan Programme Director, says, "a primary goal for this

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Fiesta of Santísima Trinidad

With skyrocketes zooming past electric wires to explode high above, the people of Iglesia Santísima Trinidad processed through Colonia Santa Teresa in San Martín where the church is located.

Walking with a variety of guitars, a new group of *músicos* helped the people to shout out some of their favourite folk hymns, such as "*Vienen con Alegría, Señor*" ("They come with joy, Lord, singing...those who walk for life...planting your peace and love.")

The crucifer proceeded the acolytes and parishioners with a plain wooden cross. Clergy followed -- the Rev. Kay Schmitt, Canon Sergio Muscoso of partner Diocese of New Jersey, Bishop Skip Adams of former partner Diocese of Central New York, and Primate-elect the Rt. Rev. Martín Barahona of the Diocese of El Salvador. Several of the smoke-belching busses that normally roar through the streets followed the procession sedately without even once blowing their horns.

To accommodate the larger group, the festival service took place in the street under plastic sheeting strung up to protect the principal players (bishops, clergy, and persons to receive baptism, confirmation and reception) from the sun. Everyone else either stood or sat in chairs placed in the wide avenue

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Youths with rockets



Musicians at celebration



Kay receives communion from Bishop Barahona



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that fronts onto the church property.

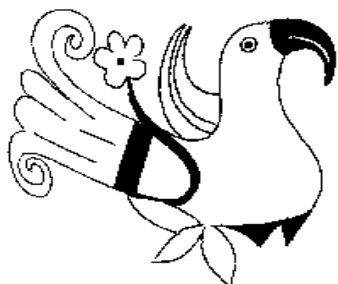
All proceeded normally. Until a deluge of rain just at communion time. Those not desiring communion hastily disappeared, while the others crowded under the sheets that bulged with pools of water. It was body to body as the two bishops attempted to negotiate their way through the crush to find persons who had not yet received. In the end the ritual was accomplished with proper devotion albeit lack of conventional order.

After the service there was a reception featuring hot, home-made tamales and coffee. The tamales were delivered by taxi because the person who had the responsibility for food, pastoral worker Irma Alvarado, broke her elbow in a baseball game shortly before time to pick them up.

Bishop Adams, a longtime friend of the parish, received a plaque from the parish congratulating him on his becoming a Bishop.

On a personal note, the celebration of the Fiesta de Santísima Trinidad marks the completion of one year's service in the parish of Kay Schmitt. ❖

¡Me gustan tamales!



Human Rights Support Offered

From its earliest European origins, the people of El Salvador have suffered constant abuses of their human rights. For example, the identity and dignity of the indigenous peoples were violently oppressed, not only by the Spanish, but even more so after European Salvadorians declared their independence in 1821. However, with the 1992 peace accords, the people have drawn up a new constitution that provides for protection of persons from violation of their rights.

The problem is that many people do not know about these rights. Living in a caste system for centuries has desensitized the population to the ideas of rights. All of the recent civil wars in Central American countries have erupted from the marginalizing of the common people most of whom have indigenous roots. Each of these countries now has a constitution that includes civil rights, but in some areas education of the people about these rights and protection is actively and violently repressed.

Based on the belief that Christ's prophetic message calls us to seek justice in the Church and in the world, the Diocese of El Salvador has recently hired a staff-person to focus on issues of justice within the legal system. José Oswaldo López, the incumbent in this work, shares a small cubicle in the Communications Office of the Diocese. This physical arrangement is in line with the public education dimension of this work. The other two aspects of the project are advising people who ask for support in specific cases in which their rights apparently have been violated and providing legal counsel to the operation of the Diocese.

José, an approachable man with a ready smile, is in the last phase of his legal training at Universidad de Centro América, José Simeon Cañas, in San Salvador. He pointed out that "One dimension of our work is a general education of the people about their rights, duties and responsibilities. Many people have an almost complete ignorance of these issues." "We work to bring practical knowledge of the national and international laws and agreements". To provide education for the people, José offers workshops and talks about spe-

cific areas of human rights legislation and practice. This educational programming is integrated into the various educational and community building programmes of the Diocese and its parishes.

José also responds to specific cases in which a violation of human rights may have occurred due to the action of law-enforcement officers or administrative processes. In this advisory service, Dr. Emilio Arturo Cuchilla, a solicitor and notary, supports Mr. López. Dr. Cuchilla is able to accept some casework for the Diocese in situations in which issues of human rights appear to be involved.

This office also performs regular legal processes for the Diocese. Especially now with the community development programmes of the Diocese there is need for careful work in assuring proper registration of clear titles for land being used to provide housing to homeless families.

CRISTOSAL, a support group made up of members of the Episcopal Church USA, is providing funding and support for this important service to the people of El Salvador. ❖

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Antonio commissioned as evangelist group is to develop a deeper sense of their personal spiritual life as well as gain an enhanced capacity in sharing the personal meaning of the faith with others. Students are in a process of reflection on their faith through Bible study, prayer, celebration, and dialogue". ❖

Church in El Salvador Offers Alternative to Farming.

While delegates deliberate world trading interests at the Kananaskas summit, Maritza Hernández works quietly with little groups of impoverished Salvadorians to create very small businesses. Licenciado Hernández, the diocesan social worker, enters communities in which the church is active and identifies people in need who have interest in setting up small co-operatives. After training and making a business plan, the diocese gives very small loans to help implement these "micro-empresas."

A recent article in San Salvador daily, *El Diario de Hoy*, suggests that widely changing business policies and practices appear as a major cause of increased poverty for the rural populations in El Salvador. The article lists the level of U. S. Government subsidy for various basic cereal crops that graphically reveals the distortion of the market caused by unequal subsidies. Wheat, corn (maize), rice, beans among other foods, according to *El Diario*, receive U. S. Government subsidies in a range between 45 and 55%. (At this writing, Canada is attempting to raise the support for Canadian farmers.) Central American farmers, who do not receive government subsidies, and whose governments have entered into trade agreements that have cut import tariffs, cannot compete in this market.

Salvadorian *campesinos* subsist on home-made whole-grain tortillas made from the corn from *milpas* (fields), along with home-grown dried beans. However, there is little incentive to grow basic commodities to sell at prices depressed by dumping from rich nations.

Clearly, no simple answers exist for this situation. Commodity prices have been falling for at least one hundred years, affecting farmers in Canada, the USA and other developed nations. At the same time, in developing nations such as El Salvador, farming families face malnutrition and deep personal insecurity.

The people of the Church in both El Salvador and the North need to understand the effects of decisions about economy and trade in order to witness for justice for all people in the evolving world community. ❖

Diocese Responds to Epidemic

It was mid-May when the children in my class heard the spray truck coming and raced outside to see the action. I chased after them to try to save them from whatever chemicals were being discharged. Remembering the liberal use of DDT in my childhood, I was not sure exactly what was in these trucks, since chemical companies are notorious for dumping products outlawed in Europe and North America into developing countries.

In June Salvadorian Anglicans began to help deliver to area homes a government-provided chemical to put in pilas and reduce the reproduction of mosquitos. Mosquitos breed in "pilas," the concrete sinks that families use for every kind of washing. These sinks are constantly full of water. If they are not frequently drained and sanitized, the mosquito larvae hatch to join the host of flying creatures that already pose a threat that has reached epidemic levels in San Salvador.

In Instituto Salvadoreño del Seguro Social, the public health hospitals, in San Salvador of 87 cases of dengue, 69 were from residents of this capital city. Medics were on duty 24 hours a day to respond to incoming patients.

Newspapers display photos of dead or seriously ill children, grieving parents, and the crowded waiting room at Bloom Hospital, the children's hospital, where parents sit, sick babes in arms. Photos also show school children marching with placards of information about dengue, and the Minister of Education and Health moving through neighbourhoods inspecting containers of water for larvae.

Preventive measures include washing pilas and water barrels every three days, the destruction of objects that retain rain water that may be in the area of one's house, wearing long pants, and reporting of unoccupied dwellings where water might not have been drained. The Department of Health appealed to residents to allow fumigation in their neighbourhoods.

Salvadorian President, Francisco Flores, declared a state of emergency on June 14 in the Departments of San Salvador, La Libertad, Santa Ana and Cabañas. All government departments were called upon to assist the Department of Health. Members of the Battalion of Military Health knocked on doors and used megaphones to teach about the disease and preventative measures. Medical teams were flown in from Mexico, and others were expected from Miami.

Dengue is common in Latin American countries. However, last year areas that did not have problems with the disease, such as Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama, Ecuador, Colombia, and Venezuela, this year are facing problems. All areas that struggled against Dengue last year, continue to have the disease this year, with the exception of Cuba. Kay Schmitt ❖

Visual Health Clinic Planned at San Martín

The church committee of Iglesia Santísima Trinidad is looking at opening a visual health clinic. Because many people here have incomes less than \$100 per month, the cost of a pair of glasses often is beyond the family's resources.

The group, headed by Nelson Currasco, is working with an optical health project from France. Four young adults will be trained to examine eyes and prepare lenses for members of the community at low cost. The Junta Directiva of the local neighbourhood, the Colonia Santa Teresa, has offered a small house free of charge for the clinic group's use until the new building of Santísima Trinidad Parish is completed.

The committee must find the funding

for training of the personnel at \$40 per month each for six months, and for the purchase of optical equipment and materials. A parish friend from the United States may also be able to obtain optical equipment through the organisation where she works. The equipment must be found before the training can start.

Fees for optical services in the new clinic will range from five to forty-five dollars US, the top price being for bifocals.

In a recent meeting Primate-elect Martín Barahona, affirmed the program as a positive ministry of the congregation. The committee discussed the possibility of extending the project to other Anglican churches. ❖

San Pedro y San Pablo Fiesta

The patronal festival of a parish in El Salvador is an essential way of affirming the life of the community. It has the character of a homecoming celebration in which many people who have roots in the parish return to participate. Doña Mercedes, don Xuipilo and the other elders of the parish are there testifying to the importance of this activity; however, by far the largest part of the congregation is made up of young people. The members are again making a commitment to move forward with the mission of the Church in El Mango, Cuilapa and Colonia Nueva, the hamlets that make up the parish.

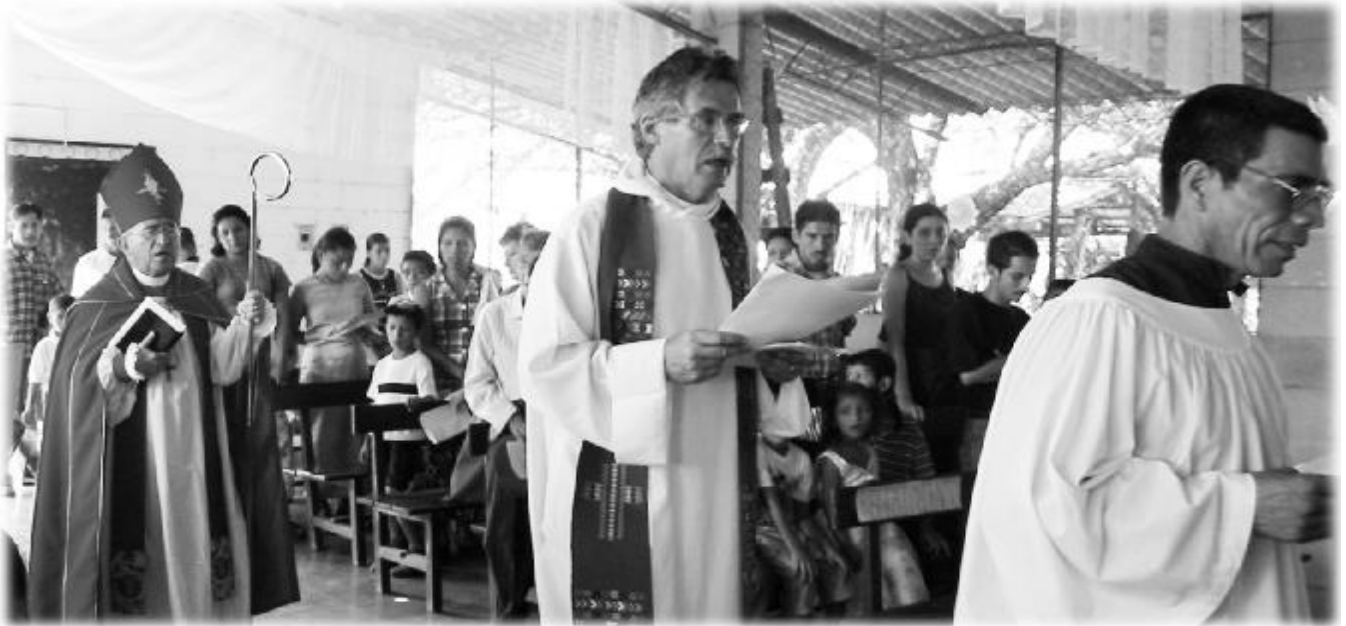
Bishop Martín Barahona presides at the celebration of the Eucharist and Baptism. As well people are confirmed and others received into the communion of the Anglican tradition. These dignified festivities and ceremonies have an integral relaxed feeling. Instead of the smoke of incense wafting through the church the sweet smell of the burning hardwood fires steaming the tamales placed just outside the church provide us with the scent of celebration. In the church garden along with the regular horses are several oxen and their cart that is needed to transport the heavy caldrons in which the food is prepared.

The Church is integral to the lives of this and many rural communities in El Salvador. I have the privilege of being able to serve in one of these.

Edward Schmitt ❖



ox cart with outside the church



Your Prayers are Requested

- @ for Primate-elect Martín Barahona as he approaches his installation on August 24, 2002, in the Church of San Juan Evangelista in San Salvador
- @ for the Most Rev. Wilson, retiring Primate of the Province of the Centre of the Americas and Bishop of Costa Rica, who is dying from cancer
- @ for the first-ever Men's Cursillo in this diocese, August 15-19 of this year; and for the Spanish-speaking Cursillo team from the Diocese of Los Angeles, who will lead this initial event

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