

## **Companion Synod Relationship: N/WLM Synod and the Christian Lutheran Church of Honduras (ICLH)**

Initiated in 1996, the companion relationship between the Lutheran Church in Honduras and the N/WLM Synod of the ELCA has modeled growth through ministry together.

### **Companion Relationship Highlights**

#### 1998-2002

- Companion relationship was established.
- Teams traveled to Honduras for Habitat for Humanity and concurrently made brief contact with the ICLH.

#### January 2004

- MI delegates, John Fox & Vicky Carron visited the ICLH to explore ways to grow this companion relationship.
- They visited five congregations and learned strengths and challenges of the communities.
- They learned of local health clinics with inadequate resources; poor knowledge of preventative health practices; common problems of women's poor self-esteem, domestic abuse and AIDS.
- Revealed a, young church with solid faith and commitment to ministering to the needs of the poor.
- Discovered ICLH dream to provide more effective community health support.

#### September 2005

- Salud Para La Vida: Health for Life was launched.

We have a note indicating we would hire a social worker (Glenny at the time) part time as project coordinator for the Health for Life Project. Date:7-1-2005

#### September 1-8, 2005

- Michigan delegation/Team: Vicky Carron, Project Leader, Teresa Burdick, Sheryl Cleland, Charles Converse, Dr. John Fox, Bill and Sara Gregor and Kathy Powers
- Visited two hospitals (San Felipe and Escuela Public Hospital) and Divanna health clinic in Tegucigulpa, worshiped in church/homes in Divanna, San Francisco and Nueva Suyapa ; Kindergarten in La Canada; Training of Health Assistants (15 woman and 5 children) at Loma Linda on Holistic (integral) Health, Handwashing, Nutrition, and Hydration Formula. Gifts to health assistants medical kits.

#### March 16-22, 2006

- Michigan delegation/Team: Vicky Carron, Project Leader, Sheryl Cleland, Ellen Petre, Kathy Towers, Asst. to Bishop John Schleicher, others\_\_\_\_\_
- Stay included Tegucigulpa and San Pedro Sula (2 team members stayed another week)
- Reviewed Holistic Health – the Golden Rule, New: Unconditional Love – Prodigal Son, and Forgiveness (handwashing service)

#### 2007

- Financial support increased to provide the needed full-time coordinator for *Salud Para La Vida*.
- Women of the ELCA awarded grant to support Salud Para La Vida.
- Kindergarten Snack project was initiated.

#### March 14-22, 2007

- Michigan delegation/Team: Vicky Carron, Project Leader, Kwaghdoo Bossuah, Phyllis Lindsay, Justin Ruehs, Asst. to Bishop John Schleicher, Cherry Talsma, Debbie Vogt
- Training of the 15 Health Assistants included Review, Self-care (avoid burnout) Christ cared for Himself, Listening, Creation (stone soup) Gospel Story-bracelet activity.

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### March 5-12, 2008

- Michigan delegation/Team: Project Leader tasks divided up; Pastor Karen Biggerstaff, Dr. John Fox, Bill and Sara Gregor, Bob and Linda Grindahl, Gail Kueffner-Haw, Dr. Bob Mallen, Lois Neves, James Smith
- Two-day Health Clinic (200 patients) held in San Pedro Sula El Buen Pastor (church). It was the consensus of the team and Josefina that we would not do another clinic—no long term benefit to the community.
- Travel to Mt. of Olives Church for baptism of 2 children; met Health Assistants at National Park and Camp Los Pinos and Lake. Training for Health Assistants on “spiritual Needs of the Terminally Ill” (Kubler-Ross). Health Assistants did sociodramas demonstrating what they had learned.

### May 2009

- MI hosted summit with delegates from the ICLH and two other synods in companion relationship with the ICLH
- ICLH presented their innovative plan for a more lay-empowered church

### June 2009

- Coup d'état flares political unrest; Honduran violence escalates. 2009 trip canceled due to political unrest.

### November 2009

- ICLH elects first native Honduran church president

### 2010

- Participants: John & Linnea Fox, Teryima Hemben, Suurnen Bossuah, Vicky & Claire Carron, Bob & Spencer Taylor
- Built relationships, especially MI youth and ICLH youth
- Water filter project launched and participated in the delivery of the first water filters to families.
- Planted trees in La Canada with the kindergarten students and church leaders.
- Developed video clips.

### March 2011 – Support and Accompaniment with ICLH in Tegucigalpa and surrounding areas

- MI sends delegation to provide support during time of escalated violence, poverty and oppression.
- Bishop Schleicher, John and Linnea Fox, Lindsay Mack, Mike and Connie Lenkowski.
- Bishop Schleicher sends letter requesting call to action.

### May 2011

- Northeast Minnesota hosted summit with delegates from the ICLH, the MI synod and New England

### January 17, 2012

- Stephen Deal visits Saginaw.

### March 21-28, 2012 – Synod trip to ICLH

- Michigan delegation/Team of 5 people went to teach a Salud Para la Vida Workshop and to film promotoras telling their stories
- Workshop topics: Teaching Christian service values, holistic health and wound care (physical and spiritual).
- A DVD was made of the trip.

### March 13-19, 2013 – Synod trip to ICLH

- Michigan delegation/Team of 4 people went to offer support to the leaders and volunteers of ICLH.
- Topics: coping with violence; valuing yourself and your work

### November 14-18, 2013 – Consultation of Church Leaders for Renewed Relationships in Mission, Bogota Colombia

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- Participants: Mike and Connie Lenkowski and representatives from Honduras, New England and NE MN.
- Result: 3 year plan for our relationship with Honduras.

March 19-26, 2014 – Synod Trip to ICLH – Health and Spiritual Accompaniment

- Michigan delegation/Team: Pastor John Schleicher, Pastor Paul Busekist, Dr. John Fox, Nurses Vicky Carron and Nancy Scott, Wendy Johnson and Kay Meints.
- Workshop topics: Spiritual Accompaniment and Diabetes Care.
- Visited homes and recorded testimonials on the Kindergarten Program and water filters.

March 18-24, 2015 – Synod Trip to ICLH – Health and Spiritual Accompaniment (Celebrated 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Synod Companion Relationship with the ICLH)

- Michigan delegation/Team: Pastor John Schleicher, Nurse Vicky Carron, Wendy Johnson and Connie Lenkowski.
- Workshop on cervical cancer at the clinic in San Francisco.
- Workshop on living water, presentation of a banner and 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration at La Resurrection, Way of Emmaus and Santa Cruz de Yojoa. All churches sent at least one representative to one of the locations.
- Visited the pre-kindergarten program in La Canada. Made several home visits.

January 27-31, 2016 – Honduras Round Table

- Participants: Wendy Johnson and representatives from Honduras, New England and NE MN.
- Result:

March 9-15, 2016 – Synod Trip to ICLH – Dental and Spiritual Accompaniment

- Michigan delegation/Team: Janet Alcantara, Pastor Sara Cogsil, Kristine Fox, John Fox, Kara Gee, Mary Schmiedeknecht, Linda Stark and Turner Sytsma.
- Workshop on oral health for 35 health volunteers.
- Oral health presentation to the children in La Canada – pre-kindergarten school and 2<sup>nd</sup> graders.
- Workshop on love and compassion vs. stigma and discrimination.
- Several home visits in La Canada.
- First visit to the US Embassy – a topic discussed (as requested by ICLH) is immigration and human rights.

November 10-13, 2016 – Consultation of Church Leaders for Renewed Relationships in Mission, Lima Peru

- Participants: Bishop Satterlee and Wendy Johnson & representatives from Honduras, New England and NE MN.
- Result: 3-year plan for our relationship with Honduras.

August 9-11, 2017 – Summit in Chicago

- Participants: Mike and Connie Lenkowski and Linda Stark from N/W Lower Michigan; Reverend Rolando Ortez - Pastor & President of ICLH, Gloria Erlinda Rodriguez – Communications; General Secretary, Bessy Vargas – Coordinator of Diakonia and Luis Alfredo Matute – Evangelist; Teacher; “Liberation Theology”; 7 members from the NE Minnesota synod; and 2 members from the New England Synod.
- Reviewed and revised the 3-year plan.

August 12-21, 2017 – Honduran Delegation to Michigan

- Visited many churches in Saginaw, Lansing and Grand Rapids.

## **Michigan – Honduras Companion Relationship Brief Summary – Salud Para la Vida**

### Salud Para La Vida: Health for Life!

- Since 2005, 60 Honduran women have been trained to provide holistic health services in their communities.
- Chosen priorities include work in three areas: clean water, domestic violence and HIV/AIDs. Additional topics include: handwashing, nutrition, wound care, coping with violence, diabetes care.
- The N/WLM synod provides financial support, teaching delegations and consultation.
- The ICLH provides local coordination, knowledge and resources.
- The program has been expanded to other communities. In 2013 the NE Minnesota Synod became involved in both the Kindergarten Snack Program and the Water Filter Program.
- In 2014 an ICLH staff member was added to assist the coordinator whose duties expanded beyond SPLV.
- In 2017 staff was reduced to one person.

### Kindergarten Snack

- Since 2007, a daily snack has been provided to pre-kindergarten children in a rural community.
- In 2014 the number of students involved doubled and the snack expanded to a full meal.
- In 2015, ICLH reduced the number of students in the class.

### Water Filters

- Since 2010, water filters have been provided to households in one urban community, eliminating many water-borne illnesses.
- *Salud Para La Vida* resources are used to provide the necessary education and follow up.

### Spiritual Workshop Component

- Requested by ICLH and began in 2014. This was included previously as part of the health training. Topics requested include: spiritual needs of terminally ill, Christian service values, valuing yourself.

### Education Endowment Grant

- HIV/AIDS program began as a 3-year program in 2014. (This annual grant can be directed to any education project administered by the ICLH.)

### Women's Health

- Workshop held on cervical cancer at the clinic in San Francisco in 2015.
- Funding began in 2016 to offer Pap tests with timely reports of results and follow-up care. (This funding was not requested by ICLH.)

### Dental

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- Workshop in oral health in 2016.
- Funding began in 2016.

To get involved in Salud Para la Vida or to get more information, contact:

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