

Welcome to our Honduran Partners in Christ

God is at work in Honduras and we were blessed to have four staff members of the Lutheran Church of Honduras (ICLH) spend a week in Michigan in August. Our Synod has sent a delegation to Honduras almost every year for about 15 years to work with our Honduran partners. We have always been welcomed with hugs and sent home with wonderful memories and prayers. Now it was our turn to welcome our partners and show them about faith and life in Michigan and to learn about the work they do in Honduras.

The group included Pastor Rolando Ortez, Gloria Rodriguez, Besy Vargas, and Luis Alfredo Matute. They visited many churches and shared their projects with all in attendance. In Saginaw, they took part in a service at Ascension and Pastor Rolando gave a sermon in a Spanish worship service at Zion where they met some of the young people who are planning to go on a mission trip to Honduras. They also traveled to St. Timothy's in Midland to visit with a pastor who had gone to Honduras years ago and worked with Pastor Rolando before either of them entered the ministry. It was a time of sharing faith journeys.

In Lansing, they took part in the Synod Wednesday Eucharist service where Bishop Satterlee presented our partners with gifts of thanks. The group joined Pastor Jan Hite at a worship service involving the children in the Helping Hands school; this was a special event as some of our guests had children at home who they were missing, and they had many hugs waiting for a little child. Our guests could also relate to this program as they have programs in Honduras that reach out to children – offering education, food and health care. They also visited St. Paul's food pantry and community garden. Both Faith in Okemos and ULC hosted a potluck followed by a presentation from our guests. And, of course, there was a short tour through campus and a visit to the MSU Dairy Store.

From Lansing, they traveled to Grand Rapids and once again, visited with congregations from Muskegon, where they spent time with members of a youth group at First Lutheran, to downtown Grand Rapids at Bethlehem to find out about their social ministry programs. Bethlehem showed off their newest program where they offer daycare for the elderly. Children from the regular daycare program would come to visit. What a great idea!

Our guests participated in a Saturday service at St. Luke's and joined in a Honduras Celebration Sunday at Trinity Lutheran, followed by a community picnic at Peace in Sparta. Presentations followed each of these visits with a time for questions. Leisure time activities included some shopping and a morning visit to Meijer Gardens. There was time to renew friendships with supporters of the Health for Life program.

We found our Honduran partners to be dedicated to their church and to have the needs of the church and congregations foremost in their heart. They were wonderful guests and very appreciative of all that was offered. When asked about their time in Michigan one said, "My favorite part was to know the churches, their stories, their members and above all, the so generous work that they do with the people in need." Another stated, "I have learned that in each country, despite social problems, there are always good-hearted people who serve their neighbor without caring about gender, race, language, because we are all the body of Christ." Another commented when asked if this was a worthwhile experience for them, "Super valuable, a unique experience in my life, unforgettable. I met wonderful people. I am taking much learning for my life and for my church."

We would like to thank all those congregations who welcomed our guests with open arms. We enjoyed the food and fellowship we shared together in your churches and hope that you learned more about the Lutheran Church of Honduras so that we can strengthen our partnership with them.