

## **NEWS FROM OUR SISTER CHURCH IN COLOMBIA**

The Oxford Presbyterian Church has had a relationship with our sister church in Barranquilla, Colombia since the mid-1990's when the Miami Valley Presbytery formed a covenant relationship with the Presbytery of the North Coast in Colombia. When members of our church visited the Seventh Presbyterian Church in Barranquilla in 2013 they witnessed the Goel mission which served the displaced women and children in the El Por Fin barrio. Seeing the dilapidated structure being used for this ministry inspired the women in our OPW group to apply for a Birthday Offering Grant through the national PW organization. Our proposal was accepted and donations from across our nation were collected to fund the proposal to build a new building. Our church sent \$20,000 and the PW birthday offering sent \$100,000 to build the new Bethesda Christian Community Center. In August 2017, another group from Oxford Presbyterian Church traveled to Barranquilla to witness the dedication of the new building. We were welcomed and loved with much appreciation for our Sister Church relationship and our partnership in the Goel mission.

The OPC Mission and Outreach Committee of the Session dedicated \$1,000 this year to be sent to the Seventh church for the Goel mission. This was sent via Western Union to our contact in the Seventh Church, Gina Zabala. Gina is an outstanding Elder in the Seventh Church and the Head Administrator of the Nazareth School which is a private Christian School owned and operated by the Seventh Church. The Nazareth School serves children pre-K through high school and offers high quality academics plus teachings in Christian values. Community service is an important value taught there and the high school students assist the church mission at the Bethesda Center by volunteering with the programming for the Goel programs. The following is an email from Gina:

*"Fraternal greeting, receive all our affection and gratitude. Thank you very much for all your support and love for the blessed Christian community. We want to share with you the photos of the activities that we have done in the past of 2019. In the delivery of the school bags, on February 17, we made an afternoon of fun games, we teach the word of God to the Goel ministry. They were very happy to receive their school bags along with notebooks, colored pencils, pencil sharpeners and all these elements so important for their educational process for this year 2019.*



*The second special activity that we carried out this year, on April 30, was the celebration of the Day of the Child was a beautiful activity we took a group of young people who are very expert in working on issues of*

*values with children. We speak of the wisdom of how to live the values of the Kingdom of God every day and be better boys and girls. Everyone was very happy to receive all that joy and teaching and also to each one of them we gave them sweets, gifts and surprise, in the end it was a really beautiful afternoon for the whole Goel Ministry.*

*Well, these are special activities, but every Tuesday and Saturday we meet in the Christian Bethesda community where we teach the word of God and teach values. We have made craft courses for women so that they can get some extra money so that they can help themselves and at this moment we are starting a course with a psychologist who is a member of our church prevent the sexual abuse of both boys and girls and mothers will also be instructed prevent abuse against children in El Porfin neighborhood."*



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This Spring, the Oxford Presbyterian Women also sent a small gift of money to be used for the mothers and other women being served at the Bethesda Center.

The following is Gina Zabala's description of the wonderful Mother's Day celebration they held:

*"On May 14 we had a very special celebration for mothers. It is the first time we celebrated it in a very special way, we invited all the women of the Christian community of Bethesda, we made a special dinner with special music and we also gave gifts and At the end, baskets full of food, biscuits, and items needed for the home were raffled, the activity was valued as very necessary by the group of women who felt valued, especially by the dinner and the love that was given to each one of them. They were very grateful to us, but most especially to the women of the Presbyterian Church of Oxford for having helped her to attend a very special night, we noted that all the attendees arrived very beautiful, they felt really honored and very special for God and for We thank the Oxford Church and the Presbyterian women for thinking about them."*

Thank you Sue Wilson for this update.