

May 2025

## **Honduras AR Presbytery Mission Team Returns with Renewed Spirit and Stronger Bonds**

The Arkansas Presbytery Mission Team has returned safely from its 9th mission trip to Honduras, full of gratitude, stories, and strengthened friendships. From March 22–29, 2025, twenty dedicated participants representing churches across Arkansas and students from three colleges joined hands with our Honduran partners to continue our shared ministry grounded in faith, service, and love.



The team spent much of the week at Bethel Presbyterian Church in Guaimaca, where they tackled renovation projects alongside local church members. Funds were sent ahead to replace an aging, damaged roof just before the team arrived. The team's work included cleaning the worksite, building a block wall, and interior painting—all aimed at creating a safer and more welcoming environment for ministry. But even more meaningful than the physical work was the time spent in community: sharing meals, praying together, worshiping, singing, and laughing with old and new friends.

The group worshiped with the congregation at the Peña de Horeb Church in Tegucigalpa on their first Sunday. After, the two Presbyteries celebrated their covenant relationship with a signing ceremony. Later, they visited Cristo del Picacho Park to enjoy the night views of the capital and time together. The team also traveled to Puerto Grande as a day trip, which offered time to visit a more rural church, share a meal, and listen to their desires for future building and program expansion.

One of the trip highlights was visiting a local school for a morning. The students were instantly thrilled to see a new soccer ball and to welcome new playmates as they ran around the courtyard. Team members were divided into small groups in classrooms across the school, participating in Music, English, Home Ec, Computer Class, and Library. Groups of excited children surrounded the team members, requesting signatures as if they were celebrities. Sheer joy on the children's faces was a powerful reminder that this continued relationship and small gestures can carry deep meaning for all involved. The school leadership and teachers were overjoyed at the visit.



The team stayed at Villa Gracia—a conference center run by the Presbyterian Women of Honduras, which once again offered a warm and nurturing home base. From the early morning breakfasts to evening debriefs and mealtime devotionals, Villa Gracia became a sacred space for reflection and connection.



Another special highlight of this trip was a demonstration by the award-winning tree-to-bar chocolate company, Atucún. The week ended with a day of browsing souvenir shopping in Valle de Ángeles while Revs. Jesse Gonzales and Phil Butin visited churches of El Horno, El Sute, and El Inherito, further strengthening pastoral ties. The morning before departing, the team had a brief tour of Comayagua and saw the oldest working clock in the world.

We also said goodbye to Rev. Dori Hjalmarson, as PCUSA eliminated all foreign co-worker positions and closed the World Mission offices, citing financial constraints. Dori lived in Honduras for nearly 8 years and remains a dear friend to many. We wish her the best with God's plan for her future.



We thank everyone who supported this mission through prayer, financial gifts, and encouragement. Your generosity made it possible to extend Christ's love not just through tools and materials, but through presence, partnership, and shared purpose. Together, we raised over \$26,000 through the Synod of the Sun, Presbytery of Arkansas, churches, and individuals. These funds supported trip scholarships for team members, two guitars gifted to Villa Gracia for use by all visiting mission groups, a dozen Sunday School material kits, and 180 Children's Bibles.

Next trip is planned for Spring Break 2026. As we look to the future of our vibrant connection with the Presbytery of Honduras, we give thanks for the Spirit moving through relationships and every block laid. May the seeds planted continue to grow in faith, hope, and love.

*Respectfully Submitted by: Leigh Woodruff*