Why do you want to go to Guatemala?

October 2022

Covenant Presbyterian Church

Madison, Wisconsin



Twelve Covenant people are going to Guatemala October 18-25, to learn, serve, and grow. We will worship in Santo Domingo, at the Monte Hebron Presbyterian Church, where we've had connections for many years. We'll meet with students who have received scholarship funds from Covenant to hear their stories. We'll resource a health clinic in Sto Domingo, led by the doctors in our group. We'll also visit Coyolate, another community with Covenant connections, spending a couple of days helping them to build an addition on their church. We'll play and pray together, growing as Christians while reflecting on the Matthew 25 initiative of the Presbyterian Church. (The M25 initiative invites Christians to reflect on Jesus' words about caring for others in light of racism, poverty, and congregational vitality.) We're being hosted by Rev Betsey Moe, a Presbyterian Mission Co-Worker, who partners with CEDEPCA, the Protestant Center for Pastoral Studies in Central America. Please pray for us to be faithful disciples and for the people of Guatemala as we journey together.

I feel this is an opportunity to connect at a heart-level with Christ-followers in a different context than my usual. This is a rare opportunity for me to see the fullness and creativity of God through others' eyes. I don't view this as an opportunity to go and "help people in need." I view this as an opportunity to build relationships, compassion, empathy, and understanding with people who share my heart for Jesus. I expect to be surprised, delighted, and humbled by this rare invitation from the wonderful people of Guatemala to meet them, learn together, and grow in my relationship with God. I haven't even departed yet and already I feel a strong sense of gratefulness for the radical hospitality and care that we will be shown.

--Carrie Sanders

I am going to Guatemala to continue to build relationships with our partners in Guatemala. I am excited to continue our longstanding relationships with individuals and communities that Covenant has supported over the years. I've never been on a church mission trip, so I am greatly looking forward to the work and support we can provide to these communities, of which we have deep connections.

--Jo Wiersema

Through the years my church has sent youth and adult on trips working with people in Haiti, Puerto Rico, North Dakota, Arizona… I've never felt that I could afford the time or the money. I've been curious about different cultures and countries and what their lives are like. What are their goals? How do they live with faith and love and joy or do they? I've gotten older and have limited skills in building but am eager to share whatever abilities I have with this group of people and share labor and skills with people in Guatemala. I hope to learn from the people I work and travel with and grow in faith and understanding of a background different from my own.

--Martha Stoner

Having been on a previous trip, I can't really answer this question without adding the word "again". I think seeing the beautiful country of Guatemala and its loving people make you yearn to go back again, as I do! But more importantly, mission at Covenant is important to me. I truly do believe in the idea that we should walk with our partners in Guatemala, and that means showing up in person. They do very much appreciate the monetary support we give them, but they value our being there in person just as much. And upon return, we can share our first-hand experiences with the rest of the congregation. It's win-win!

--Jennifer Morgan

Both my wife, Nan, and our daughter, Kim, had made at least one trip to Guatemala as part of Covenant's continued association with the community there. Finally, I had the opportunity to go and be a part of that experience. I hope to assist with the building projects and whatever else they may need. I have never made a trip like this and look forward to learning about the country and people that we meet.

--Bob Schaefer

When we joined Covenant in 2008, shortly after moving to the Madison area, I was thrilled to learn about Covenant's missions in Guatemala. Having never participated in a church mission trip, I was glad to learn and experience that our purpose was one of accompanying and witnessing the lives of impoverished peoples there. I'm excited to return to Guatemala for my third visit with the people we support and am glad to have met in my previous trips even as our work there has changed and evolved over time. As a Spanish speaker, I'm especially honored for the practice and opportunity to help with communication on this trip.

--Nancy Gunder

I have had the privilege of going with Covenant folks to Guatemala quite a few times since 2005 and there is a special place in my heart for the partners we have there. Due to illness and Covid, I haven't been able to make a trip there since 2017, so I am really looking forward to reconnecting with the many people we have worked with over the years. I am also very excited that 8 folks who have never been to Guatemala will be on this trip. And one of them is my daughter Carolyn who grew up at Covenant and is now a pediatrician in Vermont. She and Jane Pearson will be the doctors at the medical clinic we will have in Santo Domingo, and they will work side by side with 3 people from the Monte Hebron church who are in medical fields because of the educations they have been able to obtain due to Covenant's scholarship support. What a blessing!! I pray that the trip is a wonderful experience for each of the attendees and for those we will visit and work beside.

--Sally Lorenz

The opportunity to work in Guatemala is very much a dream come true for me. I am looking forward to learning about the lives of our neighbors in Guatemala, and doing my best to be of service to them, as I work with them.

During my time here at Covenant, so many people have shared the joy they have experienced by being a part of this long-standing relationship with the people of Coyolate and Santo Domingo. I am excited to learn and grow as a citizen of the world, as a Christian, and as a member of our congregation.

--Sarah Day

I am blessed to have this opportunity to travel to Guatemala. My hope while there is that I will connect with other people, especially other Christians, as I am reminded of the gift of God's immense love for the world and the worldwide church. I hope to be open to the moving of the Spirit as we work and worship together, learning from our Guatemalan brothers and sisters even as we may not easily understand each other's language. I pray that God might use me – might use us – in some small ways that glorify God and help others to know God's goodness and love.

--Melissa Hinz

Just a few months after becoming the pastor at Covenant in 2013, I went to Guatemala with Sally & Bob Lorenz and Helen Madsen—the pillars of our 20 year partnership. I was impressed with the collaboration in education, health care, and church support, as well as the depth of relationships that Covenant people have developed over the years with people in Santo Domingo and Coyolate. I remain grateful for PCUSA mission work, and I look forward to the next chapter in our common ministry with the people of Guatemala, as we continue to follow Jesus—learning and living God's love.

--Charlie Berthoud

