



# Sister Parish, Inc.

## 2014 Annual Report







# Sister Parish Inc. Iglesias Hermanas

[www.sisterparish.org](http://www.sisterparish.org)

## Sister Parish Staff

Brian Alejandro Tyler

Carrie Stengel

David Ericson

N. Julieta Borja

## Our Mission

Sister Parish exists to foster mutual understanding and commitment to peace and justice among people in the United States and Central America. This objective is pursued through intentional linking between churches and Christian communities in the United States and in Central America. Delegation travel to the North and South with home stays is an essential aspect in enhancing awareness and understanding, and in nurturing closer relationships.

## Our Vision

We believe the Kingdom of God is already present but not complete, and the liberating Gospel calls us to work together to build this Kingdom through: consciousness-raising, solidarity, reconciliation, and ecumenism.



**"Because of the relationships we build, we become catalysts for change in the systems that produce poverty of the spirit and the flesh."**

# Letter from Executive Director

## Carrie Stengel

On a very rainy night last August, we gathered in Tierra Nueva II to celebrate the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the relationship between this community in Guatemala City and St. Joan of Arc in Minneapolis. We essentially organized a birthday party for the *hermanamiento*, complete with a chocolate-filled piñata, cakes, games, and a presentation of historical photos. The rain pouring on the tin roof created such a racket that we could barely hear, but we were together. After the festivities, I asked one of the children in our host family what her favorite part was. I expected something about the Snickers bars or the silly songs we sang, but I was wrong. She said her favorite part was seeing the old pictures of her church, seeing how far they have come as a community. A settlement community formed in the 1980s by people migrating to the city, Tierra Nueva II has indeed come a long way. And so has the relationship we celebrated that evening, as witnessed by 10 delegates from St. Joan of Arc and hundreds of people from the host community.

Overall, 42 delegates participated in 7 Sister Parish delegations last year, each with their own stories of celebration and connection. Many more people hosted delegates in their homes, gave tours of their community, taught songs, or brought food to the welcome potluck. As hard as it can be to explain, we didn't build anything out of concrete on the delegations; we built our own capacity for empathy – the kind that makes us seek change in ourselves and in our world. The experience, the knowledge, and the strengthening of the spirit that is gained from that can never be taken away or deteriorate.

After the delegation, Narci from Tierra Nueva II said to me, “I didn't understand before. Now I see how far their mission reaches. They don't come here to travel as tourists. They come to work, to help and inspire us, and to make us stronger...They are doing the same work as Jesus.”

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# Letter from Executive Director *continued*

Although the results may be hard to prove, I have faith in this work, and as staff, I feel honored to support the process however I can. The other three Sister Parish staff give their time and passion to do the same. Last year, we organized 67 community visits, interpreted Skype calls (technical difficulties and all), and translated letters. We planned and guided the delegations, and organized two conference calls for northern church members to share strategies, concerns, and stories.

Board members also connected with current and prospective northern churches to screen the documentary ***Generations in Solidarity***. Jeff and Rita Nohner, and others, coordinated screenings in over 10 different cities and towns across the United States to spread the word about our work.

Thanks to our generous community and the 2013 Founders Match Campaign we provided delegation scholarships to four churches this year. More churches plan to use one in 2015. We hope the scholarships open the delegation door for those who may not otherwise have been able to join us.

After a delegation to California this year, I asked the five delegates from San Antonio Catholic Community what they had learned. “We learned a new way to pray,” they said. “They pray holding hands.” And there, in a small church in rural Guatemala, they all joined hands and sang while I taped a video to send to Danville Congregational Church.

For me, this seemingly tiny piece of learning embodies the spirit of Sister Parish. We see both others’ surroundings and our own in a new light. We question things we never have before. We listen. We expand our definitions of family, faith, and hope.

And then we act on them.





# Letter from outgoing Board President

## Greg Huang-Dale

### US Board of Directors

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**Lord, when did we see  
you a stranger and  
invite you in?  
*Matthew 25:37-39***

Last year a new wave of kids from Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador crossed the Mexican border and turned themselves in to US authorities. The sheer numbers and the media hype around it created a false dilemma: repatriate or appear weak on immigration. Quickly, politicians took sides and the media amplified the extreme opinions. But just as quickly, parents everywhere heard the children's' pleas to be reunited with family members in the US.

Many of us at Sister Parish have felt a certain amount of fear as we stepped into an unknown world, trusting in our hosts to care for us. And our guests have also entered our homes with a look of anxious relief, as they are welcomed with open arms. We have been both host and guest, and through that exchange, we have found our families, our community.

I often think of the scholarship recipients in San Antonio Los Ranchos, El Salvador who told us that most of their classmates opted for immigration to the US over college entrance in El Salvador. College was impossibly competitive and jobs were uncertain at best. The students made it clear that going to the US was often a better choice for survival and success.

And I think of a youth delegation from Iowa to Guatemala. The teens I traveled with seemed fearless, and eager to make friends with nearly everyone. Their sense of adventure and wonder made it easier to set aside my fears and see Christ in the strangers' eyes. It is remarkable how young people can face insurmountable challenges believing in change and making it happen.

In 2015, I hope to see us continue to lean forward and listen to our new generation of Sister Parish members. We are ready to recapture our youthful hope and determination and be led by our children. Let's create unique experiences at our churches in which young people can explore the lives of Sister Parish communities here and abroad. We have lots of great ideas - cook handmade tortillas together, sing songs together, reenact historic events together, design and make Easter *Alfombras* together - wonderful, active, positive, communal ways to keep our relationships alive and growing. Find out more on a Northern Assembly of Churches conference call or read about great ideas at [Sisterparish.org/blog](http://Sisterparish.org/blog). **Truly I tell you, whatever you do *with* one of the least of these brothers and sisters, you do it *with* me.**

# Letter from incoming Board President

Nancy Wiens

## "Who is your community? How do they sustain you? How do they challenge you?"

As I write this at the beginning of a new year, it is the season of Epiphany. I am reflecting on questions posed at this morning's worship service about the story of the three Magi and their epiphany experience.

What is an epiphany? The dictionary defines it as "an appearance or manifestation of God; a moment of sudden intuitive understanding; a flash of insight or an experience that occasions such a moment."

This morning's speaker incorporates the reflections of Father John Dear when stating that among other elements, epiphanies require **community**. "Notice that the Magi travel as a threesome, not as individuals...They worship together as a community. They share joy in the presence of Jesus together as a community, and they disobey the war-making government which kills children as a community." The speaker goes on state that it is in community that we can sustain the resolve we need to live bravely and justly.

Thus the challenge: "Who is your community? How do they sustain you? How do they challenge you?" As I ponder these questions, I think of our Sister Parish community and the real, tangible ways it sustains and challenges me.

I'm sustained and nurtured by the relationships I've developed in my church's Sister Parish in Tierra Nueva II, Guatemala. So many friends' names float through my mind...they teach me, share their lives with me, protect me, pray for me, love me. And I do the same in return.

I'm challenged by the need to grapple with the gap in wealth and privilege, and how that impacts our efforts to build relationships of equality, respect, and dignity. What does it mean for us in the U.S. to stand in faith and solidarity with our sisters and brothers in Central America?

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# Letter from incoming Board President *continued*

Nancy Wiens



And just as the Sister Parish community gives me sustenance, I feel moved in return to give focus, energy, and effort to sustain it. As I begin my term as president of the Sister Parish board, I'm inspired by the dedication of the board members and the passion and leadership of outgoing president Greg Huang-Dale. Greg leaves big shoes to fill and I ask for your patience and support in the coming year.

As we move into 2015, the board and staff are looking closely at ways to reach out to new U.S. churches and initiate new relationships with Central American faith communities. Should you be aware of any Northern churches that are seeking international missions with a focus on building relationships, please contact us at **[usoffice@sisterparish.org](mailto:usoffice@sisterparish.org)** so that we in turn can reach out to them.

Also, we would like to find ways to facilitate more youth engagement in Sister Parish relationships. We hope to generate ideas to foster more youth contact between our communities, more young people on delegations, and more Sister Parish activities in our churches that can include youth. We will be initiating conversations with our Sister Parish communities this year and I encourage you to participate and engage in these discussions.

Finally, we are anticipating that two board seats will open up this year as existing members end their terms and leave the board. If you would like to find out more about being on the Sister Parish board of directors, please email us at **[usoffice@sisterparish.org](mailto:usoffice@sisterparish.org)** and let us know you're interested.

In 2015, my wish is that Sister Parish continues to sustain you and challenge you. I am grateful to walk with you on this journey of relationship and 'community.'

**May you experience many epiphanies!**

**"God is love. This is love,  
us here together."**





# Financial Report

## 2014

### Note:

This report does not reflect the generous in-kind donations from our all-volunteer board and other individuals, or Sister Parish assets and liabilities.

### Income

Donations	\$ 21,387
Projects	\$ 28,546
Delegations	\$ 40,899
Events	\$ 4,718
Member Fees	\$ 11,750
Grants	\$ 8,232

**Total** **\$115,532**

### Expense

Delegations	\$ 22,691
Projects	\$ 28,546
Personnel	\$ 46,820
Assemblies	\$ 2,170
Publications/Mail	\$ 2,131
Facilities	\$ 9,447
Administrative/ Operations	\$ 3,370

**Total** **\$115,175**



**"Sharing the Eucharist with my family at San Marcos Evangelista fed my soul with the true Bread of Life, helping me see beyond my own shortcomings to the fullness of God's grace, and strengthened my desire to live fully with Christ at the center of my being."**



# 2014 Sister Parish, Inc. Donors

## Heroes

Alan and Shannon Jones  
Amy Webber  
Arlene Reed  
David Ericson  
Donald and Marion Hall  
Gary and Melody Larson  
Greg and Jenny Huang-Dale  
Heidi Meyer O'Hara  
Kopp Family Foundation  
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Sarah and Mark Jerde  
Timothy and Cindy Moore

## Friends

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Joan Williams  
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Karen Doering  
Karen Orren



# 2014 Sister Parish, Inc. Donors



**Thank you to all who donated time, energy,  
and in-kind gifts to the Sister Parish mission.**

**We thank all of our supporters for their  
generous, unique gifts to Sister Parish, Inc.  
Special thanks to Gary Larson for the accounting.**

***We apologize for any errors or omissions. Please  
contact us with any corrections or suggestions.***



## **Friends *continued***

Katherine Olguin

Kathleen and Robert Schultz

Kenneth Simmons

Laural Briggs and Timothy Scale

Lin Romano

Lisa Dennison

Lise Trudeau

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**Thank you to all of our member  
communities for your work to create  
a more just world.**

## **Sister Parish Member Communities**

**Christ Episcopal Church / San Andrés Itzapa Episcopal Community**

**Danville Congregational Church / San Antonio Catholic Church**

**Faith Lutheran Church / San Marcos Evangelista, Tierra Nueva I**

**First Lutheran Church of Duluth / San Antonio Los Ranchos**

**Trinity Episcopal Church / San José la Montaña**

**First United Methodist Church of Decorah / Potrerillos**

**First United Methodist Church of Downer's Grove / UPAVIM**

**Incarnation Lutheran Church / Chontalá**

**St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Church / Las Margaritas II**

**St. Joan of Arc Catholic Community / Our Lady of Guadalupe Church, Tierra Nueva II**

**St. Thomas Lutheran Church / Santo Domingo de Guzmán, Chichipate**

**Wallingford United Methodist Church / Guarjila**

***[www.sisterparish.org](http://www.sisterparish.org)***