



# Orientation Manual

*Preparing for a North to South Delegation*

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



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## Preface

**Experiencing another person's culture by living his or her reality is a unique and intimate privilege, which is, for most, life-changing.**

Reflecting individually and communally with members of your faith community on that experience is a precious gift which can greatly enrich your spiritual journey, lend meaning to your life, and help clarify your personal mission and purpose. It is the hope of Sister Parish, Inc. that the orientation process outlined in this booklet will prepare you emotionally, physically, intellectually, and spiritually for your trip to Central America with us and provide you with the tools to involve your entire church in the Sister Parish relationship.

Planning and preparing for your experience as a Sister Parish delegate to Central America takes time. There are many practical details which must be attended to, as with any trip, but most important, is acquiring a philosophical, spiritual, and cultural understanding of the country that you will visit, the community where you will live, the family who will host you, the church and the Sister Parish committee which you represent as a delegate, the international Sister Parish organization of which your congregation is a member, the other delegates with whom you will share this journey, and YOURSELF. The more you learn before your trip, the richer the experience will be.

To allow sufficient time to truly assimilate all of this information, we have structured the orientation process into five (5) sessions. You will need someone from your group to take responsibility for facilitating sessions 1, 2, 3 and 5. The chairperson of your Sister Parish committee, a volunteer committee member or a staff person, are all good choices. The fourth session, which is the last one before your trip, will be conducted by board or staff members of the international Sister Parish organization, or by someone from an experienced Sister Parish congregation in your region.

**Self-explanatory materials are provided for all sessions.**

If you need assistance or have questions, please do not hesitate to call our U.S. office at (612) 326-4361 or e-mail [usoffice@sisterparish.org](mailto:usoffice@sisterparish.org).

It is never too early to begin preparation for your trip. Resource ideas are provided in Appendices G and J. For some background information on how the Sister Parish movement began, please read **En la Buena Lucha- In the Good Struggle**, by Sister Parish, Inc. Co-founder, Richard Fenske. This book can be ordered from the U.S. Administrative Office at [usoffice@sisterparish.org](mailto:usoffice@sisterparish.org).

We recommend the following:

- Begin your first orientation session at least two months prior to your trip and continue to meet on a weekly basis.
- Choose a time when **everyone** can attend. Building community within your delegation group is essential to the success of your visit. If even one person is missing, an important opportunity for getting to know each other and for learning is lost. This can affect the group dynamics on the actual delegation.
- Have a Sister Parish “support group” attend the orientation sessions as well. Ideally, this group will consist of your priest, minister, or pastor, your church’s director of social justice or outreach, non-traveling members of the Sister Parish committee, and past delegates from your church.

The Sister Parish relationship is between your church and the faith community in Central America. As a delegate, you are an emissary. Having non-delegates and staff members of your church who are familiar with the mission and goals will provide an important resource to answer questions related to your church’s involvement and encourage the commitment to the Sister Parish relationship beyond the delegates and committee.

Sessions run approximately **two** hours long unless otherwise noted.

Before you Begin:

- Choose a comfortable, nurturing meeting place, preferably at your church so that it is familiar, relaxing, and central to everyone involved.
- Reserve the room well in advance for all five sessions, and ask that refreshments be made available. If the church is unable to provide them, have committee members take turns bringing food and drinks.
- Start every meeting with a Biblical reading and reflection, and close with a prayer. Suggested readings are provided, but it is a good idea to bring your own Bible to the sessions.
- Always include a quick “check-in” (see Appendix C) to allow participants to share what they are feeling and where they are at.

Please use this process as a personal documentary, noting questions, insights, and feelings that you may have before, during, and after your visit. Keep your notes as a memento of your journey, share it as you feel comfortable to enhance others’ awareness of social justice issues, refer to the materials provided for future reflection, and read it often as a reminder of your personal involvement in making the world more just, humane, and peaceful.



**Faith is not simply proclaiming what we believe, but a willingness to travel in unknown directions.**

**- Author unknown**



**“Our first task in approaching another people, another culture, another religion, is to take off our shoes, for the place we are approaching is holy. Else we may find ourselves treading on people’s dreams. More serious still, we may forget that God was here before our arrival.”**

*Attributed to Max Warren, Maryknoll, 1987, p.2*  
**People, Places and Partnerships**  
*by Sally Evans*



## Session One

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*In this session you will address  
the following topics:*

- What is Sister Parish?
- Why is my church involved in Sister Parish?
- What is the history of our Sister Parish relationship (i.e. hermanamiento)?
- Why am I personally involved as a delegate?
- What are my expectations?
- What are my fears?
- What do I hope to accomplish?
- How much time will my involvement require?
- How much will the trip cost?
- How should I prepare for the trip?





**Opening Activity:** After everyone introduces themselves briefly, the session may be initiated with the following activities:

**Check-in:** *Directions:* Have group members take turns reading how to conduct a check-in in Appendix C and decide which approach to take. Then proceed as instructed in the Appendix.

**Biblical Reflection:** *Directions:* select a Bible passage of your choosing or use the suggested passage below. Follow the guidelines in Appendix B, How to reflect on Biblical passages.

*Suggested Biblical reflection:* **Mark 3: 31-35:** Then his mother and brothers came; and standing outside, they sent to him and called him. A crowd was sitting around him; and they said to him, “Your mother and your brothers and sisters are outside, asking for you.” And he replied, “Who are my mother and my brothers?” And looking at those who sat around him, he said, “Here are my mother and brothers! Whoever does the will of God is my brother and my sister and my mother”. (Text taken from the **Study Bible: New Revised Standard Version**, (1990), Augsburg Fortress)

**Pass around a sign-up sheet so that delegates can list their name, address, place of employment or school, phone numbers, and e-mail. You might want to include birthdays. Ask for a volunteer to type up this information and pass it around at the next meeting.**



## What is Sister Parish?

**Directions:** Read the information provided and share your thoughts/ reactions with the group.



### ***The Sister Parish 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. Delegations travel to the North and South with home stays as an essential aspect in enhancing awareness and understanding, and in nurturing closer relationships.

### ***The Sister Parish 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.** We will seek to transform the world by sharing each other's experiences so that we can better understand and overcome the sources of injustice and oppression.
- **Solidarity.** By putting ourselves in the reality of others and by building an interdependent community of brothers and sisters within and among countries, we will promote mutual respect and dignity for all people, advocate for human rights, and work for social and economic justice for all.
- **Reconciliation.** We will live in peace with one another by finding the courage to recognize our own failings and to forgive each other despite the history of violence that has caused so much pain.

- **Ecumenism.** We will accept each other and respect each person's beliefs and practices, as we unite to work together so that all may share equally in the fullness of God's creation.

**To further this mission and vision,** Sister Parish links churches and faith communities in North America with faith communities, churches, or Christian Base Communities in Central America, so that they may experience the realities of each other's lives and cultures on religious, political, social, and economic levels. Sister Parish believes that these linkages or hermanamientos affirm dignity, deepen faith, reflect a shared spirit, build understanding of issues, and stimulates a new world view to both North and South.

**Hermanamiento (pronounced AIR mah nah mi EN tow):**

It is a Spanish noun that is used to describe the linkage or the relationship of becoming brothers and sisters together.

It is a "sisterhood" and "brotherhood". We use this term at Sister Parish because it most accurately describes the relationships that we are trying to develop.

Once a hermanamiento is established, the North American faith community sends a delegation of between 5 and 10 persons to meet the people in their Central American hermanamiento. The duration of the visit, which involves actually living with the families in their homes, is typically between 7 and 11 days. This first visit marks the beginning of a minimum three-year commitment to build the relationship between the people of both faith communities. To achieve this, both faith communities are encouraged to exchange letters, photos, prayer requests, etc. and to organize return visits. After a second visit from North to South, it is recommended that a delegation from the Central American sister parish visit their northern community.

- Throughout this whole process, the Sister Parish, Inc. team provides advice, support, translations, etc. to help this relationship remain active “between delegations.”

Sister Parish delegations travel as peacemakers and guests who identify with marginalized peoples, recognizing that we are all one in Christ. In building long-term relationships between cultures through visits and on-going communication, delegations can become catalysts for change in the systems that produce poverty of the spirit and the flesh.

### **Hermanamientos/ Linkages:**

Currently there are thirteen active hermanamientos between churches of differing denominations in Minnesota, North Dakota, North Carolina, Indiana, Illinois, Pennsylvania, Iowa, Washington state, Virginia, California, and ecumenically diverse communities in Guatemala and El Salvador.

### **HISTORY: Solidarity not charity... A simple beginning**

The seeds for Sister Parish’s founding were planted in 1987 when Richard (Ricardo) Fenske and Vicki Schmidt met at a social ministry conference. Both had life-changing experiences in Central America, and wanted to share this experience with others. From this first meeting to today, Sister Parish has grown and changed, but the focus on *solidarity not charity*, has remained constant.

**1988** Sister Parish is legally incorporated as a non-profit organization in the State of Minnesota.

**1989** First delegation travels from Lutheran Churches in Minnesota to La Esperanza, a squatter settlement on the outskirts of Guatemala City, Guatemala.

**1990** First delegation goes to Nicaragua. Peace Lutheran Church in Danville, CA travels to San Francisco Libre, Nicaragua.

**1993** First *South to North* delegation travels from San Francisco Libre, Nicaragua to Peace Lutheran Church in Danville, CA.

**1994** First Guatemalan Delegation travels north, from Lo del Bran, Guatemala to Westboro, MA

**1996** First delegation travels to the State of Oaxaca, Mexico

**1997** Linkages are formed between the US and El Salvador.

**1998** Sister Parish, Inc. celebrates 10 years. 50 Delegations in 10 years.

**1998** The Sister Parish Center is opened in Guatemala City, Guatemala to offer hospitality to both US and Guatemalan groups, and to serve as a central meeting point for Central America communities.

**2004** Main Office/Executive Director's Office moves to the Sister Parish Center in Guatemala City.

## Why is my church involved in Sister Parish?

**Directions:** Pass out copies of your church's mission statement and goals. Read them and identify any sections that support your congregation's commitment to international ministry, addressing social justice issues, etc. Discuss the following questions with your pastor or a church staff person present at the meeting.

1. How will the Sister Parish hermanamiento help accomplish our church's goals?
2. Why is our church choosing to extend itself globally, in light of local needs?
3. Why did our church choose to become involved with Sister Parish, Inc. versus some other international social justice organization?
4. What is the long-term goal of this Sister Parish linkage?
5. What are some benefits of a Sister Parish linkage?

**NOTE:** The following are some of the benefits cited by other churches. Please add your own to the list.

- Promotes individual and church thinking about peace and justice issues, potentially enlarging the constituency of peace-making advocates and activists.
- Provides parishes with a model that can be used to face others situations.
- Empowers participants to be more effective advocates in other areas of ministry.
- Enables people in both regions to become more independent and self-reliant.
- Builds bridges of communication and increased acceptance across racial, ethnic, and class lines, through interaction and common projects.
- Fosters community development in the U.S. and Central America

- Energizes participants through the power of purpose and contribution
- Creates a sense of pride for economically poor parishes, who realize how much they have to give affluent congregations
- Deepens understanding of the strength of faith, even in the midst of poverty, pain, suffering or oppression.
- Helps participants to realize that structural and systemic policies are the root causes of social problems.
- Effects positive changes in the previously held attitudes as a result of insights gained throughout experience

### What is the history of OUR hermanamiento?

**Note:** The process of pairing a Central American community with a North American one begins with Sister Parish staff members visiting a community, presenting the Sister Parish mission and vision, and working with community leaders to discern the best way to build group participation in the process of deciding if, when, why, and how to enter into this vision. This usually requires several visits. Once the community has reached a decision to accept a U.S. partner, they provide a profile of their community for use in pairing them with a compatible partner. Your staff liaison can provide the history and rationale for your particular linkage.

**Directions:** If this is not your first Sister Parish delegation to Central America, be certain to invite members of previous delegations to this first orientation session to share the historical information with this new delegation, and bring them up-to-date. Ideally, past and future delegates will have been participating



in your church's Sister Parish committee meetings all along and will be aware of what has transpired since the inception of the Sister Parish relationship. If this is not the case, however, here are some questions that should be addressed:

1. When did our Sister Parish relationship begin?
2. Who initiated our involvement?
3. Why was our church linked specifically with our particular hermanamiento?
4. What is the joint mission and vision our North and Central American sister parishes?
5. What projects have been discussed? **(If this is a first or second delegation, then this question and the following are not yet relevant).**
6. What is the status of those projects?
7. What communication have we had with our sister parish?
8. Is this the first delegation to Central America?
9. If, not, what was the outcome of the previous trip?
10. Are there any sensitive issues that the new delegation should be aware of?
11. Who participated in the first delegation from our church?
12. What are the names and backgrounds of our Central American counterparts who were involved in previous visits?

### Why am I personally involved as a delegate?

People's reasons for serving as a Sister Parish delegate are diverse: For some it is a highly intuitive decision –“it is calling me.” Others have a fascination with other cultures or

are energized by the idea of a trip which offers the opportunity to have a global impact. Some see their involvement as a way to become more personally connected to their church.

**Directions:** The quotations below are some of the motivations shared by past delegates. Can you identify with any of them? Reflect for a few moments on your own reasons for becoming involved, and add them to the list below. Discuss your reasons with the group.

- “I’m feeling the need to make a contribution to society.”
- “I want to do more than just be a consumer when I travel.”
- “I’m a Spanish teacher and would like to increase my language skills.”
- “I want to be a presence for the people of Central America.”
- “I enjoy learning about different cultures.”
- “I find the exposure to different rituals, ideas, and customs stimulating.”
- “I think it will make me grow as a person.”
- “I want to experience the exhilaration of learning and becoming transformed through cultural exchange.”
- “I think it is part of my spiritual journey.”

### What are my expectations, fears, and hopes?

**Directions:** Now that you've gotten in touch with why you are traveling to Central America, take some time to reflect on what you expect to happen while on your trip, what you are most afraid of, what you would like to accomplish while on your journey, etc. If you are comfortable doing so, share your responses with the group.

### **Personal Inventory**

1. I feel...
2. I expect to...
3. I'm looking forward to...
4. I'm anxious about...
5. I'm afraid that...
6. I'm questioning whether....
7. I hope to...
8. I wish that...
9. When I return I think I will...

### **How much time will my involvement require?**

- Most Sister Parish trips to Central America are 7 to 11 days in length, with 10 days as the most common length.
- The amount of time preparing for the trip can be as long as several months.
- The more effort expended in learning about your destination country, its people, customs, language, etc., the more fulfilling your experience will be.
- In addition to the pre-trip preparation and the trip itself, Sister Parish delegates and committee members are encouraged to participate in on-going activities to nurture the relationship.

**Directions:** *As a group, decide how often you will meet to continue your orientation and select the specific dates which are agreeable to everyone. Working backwards from your day of departure for your delegation trip is often helpful. Ask*

for a volunteer to circulate copies of meeting times and dates to all committee members and delegates.

Many churches are forming listservs <http://help.yahoo.com/help/groups/> or “google groups” <http://groups.google.com/> as a means of communicating within the group about the trip details and for circulating relevant communications from their Central American brothers and sisters.

### How much will the trip cost?

- \$1025 per person is the estimated cost for a 10 day trip **PLUS**
- \$500-\$900 per person is the estimated airfare, depending on what time of year you travel and where your flight leaves from.  
**NOTE:** The \$1025 includes \$525 in administrative fees, and \$50 per person per day, which covers all in-country expenses while you travel (Food, drinking water, lodging, in-country transportation, etc).
- Personal spending money: what you bring depends upon how much you wish to use for purchasing local crafts and gifts. This may vary, but remember that the purpose of this trip is to build relationships.
- Your church pays an initial linkage fee of \$1,000 at the outset of your commitment. If you do not travel within this first year, then this will be applied to the following year’s linkage fee. Each year that your church remains involved in the Sister Parish program, the \$1,000 will be assessed.
- Your group will also send in a \$500 deposit to hold your dates (or has already done this). This ensures that you can travel when it is best for your group. This is non-refundable, but there is some flexibility with travel dates (within a month). Dates should be negotiated with in-country staff and your hermanamiento.
- The entire group will be billed for the trip costs a few months in advance of the trip. The \$500 deposit to reserve your delegation dates will count towards the total amount due, unless there is a cancellation that is not rescheduled for within 30 days

of the original dates. In that case, the deposit is forfeited. If a person cancels within one month of travel, his or her amount will not be returned since costs have already been incurred by then. Exceptional situations may be discussed with the Executive Director.

- All monies need to be sent to the U.S. Financial Office at least 10 weeks before the group travels. This can be sent in one check to:

**P.O. Box 5202  
Fargo, ND 58105-5202**

## How should I prepare for the trip?

### **A. Financial considerations**

If you are blessed to have enough resources to pay for your trip personally, you may also wish to consider making a financial contribution to help other delegates who need financial support. Whatever your strategy, be creative and incorporate information about Sister Parish, Inc, its philosophy, and the country with which your congregation is linked. We do suggest that each delegate have a personal financial investment in the trip, even if it is minimal. *Your delegation fees may be tax-deductible.* We recommend you talk to a financial advisor about your particular situation.

Contact the U.S. Regional Coordinator ([usoffice@sisterparish.org](mailto:usoffice@sisterparish.org)) or the Regional Coordinator for your church for support on fund raising ideas and plans.

### **B. Spiritual Preparation:**

As you prepare for your journey, begin a regular devotional discipline or recommit yourself to one that you are already practicing. Consider how the Scripture speaks to you as a person beginning an international adventure, about to encounter a different culture. Include your relationships at home, and your yet-to-be met brothers and sisters in your prayers.

Draw this new awareness into your daily life. Be sensitive to God moving amidst the ordinary to speak to you, to open your eyes and heart to deeper understanding of the

Scripture. These are gifts you will carry with you on your journey and which will enrich your experience.

**Directions:** Select one of the following (Ephesians 2: 14, 19; 1 Corinthians 12: 12-14, 26-27; 2 Corinthians 16-20; or Philippians 2: 1-8) from the Bible and have one person read the passage out loud. As a group, discuss how these verses provide direction and encouragement to engage in a cross-cultural exchange and relationship, such as the Sister Parish experience.

### **C. Mental Readiness:**

Mental preparation is an often overlooked aspect of travel. Now is the time to start your travel journal, before the trip actually starts. Keeping a travel journal can help you reflect upon your experiences on a day-to-day basis and serve as your long-term memory after returning home. Take some time every day to write and reflect on how you are feeling about your upcoming journey and the questions that you hope to have answered as a result of your experiences.

### **D. Practical Considerations:**

**Documentation:** If you do not have a valid passport, it is essential that you apply for one immediately. The information below was taken from the website of the U.S. State Department: (<http://travel.state.gov/passport/>):

#### **New Application for a U.S. Passport**

To obtain a passport for the first time, you need to go in person to one of 7,000 passport acceptance facilities located throughout the United States with two photographs of yourself, proof of U.S. citizenship, and a valid form of photo identification such as a driver's license.

Acceptance facilities include many Federal, state and probate courts, post offices, some public libraries and a number of county and municipal offices. There are also 13 regional passport agencies, and 1 Gateway City Agency, which serve customers who are traveling within 2 weeks (14 days), or who need foreign visas for travel. Appointments are required in such cases.

You'll need to apply in person if you are applying for a U.S. passport for the first time; if your expired U.S. passport is not in your possession; if your previous U.S. passport has expired and was issued more than 15 years ago; or if your previous U.S. passport was issued when you are under 16 your currently valid U.S. passport has been lost or stolen.



### **Do I need a visa?**

At this time, visas obtained in advance are not required for either Guatemala or El Salvador for U.S. Citizens. You will be issued a tourist visa upon arrival at Immigration in either country. In Guatemala this is free, but in El Salvador, you must now pay \$10.

It is a good idea to make copies of the first page of your passport. You can leave one copy behind and carry another with you at all times while you travel, in case the original is lost or stolen and you should need to apply for a new one.

### **E. Health and Vaccines<sup>1</sup>**

No shots are required to travel to the region, however, the Center for Disease Control (CDC) and the World Health Organization (WHO) recommend that you be up-to-date on your diphtheria-tetanus, polio, and measles vaccinations. You should allow yourself 4-6 weeks before you travel if you need to receive boosters.

- A **typhoid** vaccination is recommended, as well as hepatitis A (or gamma globulin). The following webpage has current information on traveling to the Central American region and tips on staying healthy. <http://www.cdc.gov/travel/>
- **Hepatitis B** exposure is unusual on a Sister Parish delegation, but this series of 3 vaccines is widely available now and something that you may want to talk with your doctor about. This inoculation requires a series of 3 shots **over 6 months**, so it is important to set up an appointment as soon as possible with your physician or a travel clinic.
- To help prevent **malaria**, which is present in some areas of all Central American countries (though the risk is higher or lower depending on the season you travel as well as your exact destination), Chloroquine prophylaxis is available. You should discuss possible side effects of anti-malarial prophylaxis with your physician (including sensitivity to the sun).
  - Malaria is not considered to be a risk in the Chalatenango region of **EL SALVADOR**.

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<sup>1</sup> Some of this will be covered again in Session 4, but it is important to talk with your doctor or travel clinic now.

- **In GUATEMALA**, malaria is only considered a risk in rural areas that are lower than 1500 m (4900 ft). This does NOT include Antigua or Lake Atitlan, both of which are considered to be free of malaria outbreaks.
- **Dengue and Chikungunya** are viruses transmitted by mosquitoes that are endemic during the rainy seasons in both El Salvador and Guatemala (May- October). The only precaution that you can take is to cover-up and use repellent to prevent being bitten. Some communities may use mosquito nets.

**Other things to consider:**

- Evaluate your physical health before participating in a Sister Parish delegation. If you are unable to keep pace with the group, or unable to walk **for at least 30 minutes** on uneven terrain, you may inhibit your own and the group's enjoyment of the experience.
- Check and see whether your health insurance policy is valid abroad. Sister Parish does not require travel insurance, but we highly recommend it. Sister Parish is unable to cover significant medical costs that arise during a delegation.
- Schedule a medical or dental exam before leaving to minimize health problems through prevention and basic treatment.

Travel, under the best circumstances, is an intense experience. If you are not in good physical condition, start exercising one or two months prior to departure. Walk, run, bicycle, or swim. When you can walk a few miles comfortably, you're ready.

**First Aid Kit list for Central America**

- Tylenol
- Pepto Bismol (tablets are easiest)
- Ibuprophen
- Cold medicine (tablets)
- Motion Sickness tablets  
(we recommend **Bonine** since they are chewable, don't cause drowsiness, and last 24 hours).
- Rubber gloves
- Gauze pads

- Alcohol wipes
- Antiseptic wipes or iodine swabs
- Assorted bandaids and bandages
- Tweezers
- Micropore tape
- Benadryl or other antihistamine
- Moleskin or other treatment for blisters
- Ace Bandage (for sprains)
- Scissors
- EpiPen (one per group) - in case of a severe allergic reaction to something
- Sting kit for those going to the jungle areas
- Instant ice pack

We do NOT recommend IMODIUM or other anti-diarrheal medications EXCEPT Pepto Bismol because in the event of intestinal parasites or bacterial infections, these medications cause more harm than good.

### **F. Clothing, luggage, and other necessities**

Determine what to bring on your trip now and obtain anything that you may not already have before the departure date. If you don't have all that you need, consider thrift shops, or ask to borrow from someone else, to keep expenses down. Packing lists for your hermanamiento are included in **Appendix G**. In general:

- ✓ Casual, lightweight, wash and wear clothing that dries well in humid climates is most appropriate. Items which do not show dust and dirt are a good choice as you may not have a chance to wash your clothing.
- ✓ One outfit which is a bit dressier, such as slacks or a skirt, may be necessary for certain segments of your trip, such as for church visits and meetings with government or Embassy officials.
- ✓ Cotton-synthetic blends are preferable to either all cotton or all synthetic fabrics. Cotton clothes do not dry quickly and they wrinkle easily, while many synthetics do not breathe well. Blends minimize the disadvantages of both.

- ✓ Modest, respectful dress in public is the rule of thumb (i.e. no short shorts, halter tops, or short tops which show your belly button), and bringing less versus more is advisable.
- ✓ Pack only what you think you need, and then leave **half of that** at home. Gear should not exceed more than one fourth of your body weight.
- ✓ Women in Central America tend to wear skirts more often than women in North America, but bring what **you** are most comfortable wearing.
- ✓ Jeans that are in good condition are acceptable for men and women, but in tropical climates, they may be unbearably hot. They may be the best choice for the cooler, mountainous regions of Guatemala, however.

Try to evaluate what you plan to bring with respect to the:

- **Climate** – will it be comfortable and cover extremes in temperature? (You can also ask your SP staff contact about this if you are unsure what it will be like when you travel).
- **Culture** – Is it appropriate?
- **Wealth** – Does it send a materialistic message?

Although you may use any kind of luggage, a medium size backpack or soft-sided luggage are good choices. Luggage with wheels is convenient throughout the airport, but do not expect to be able to wheel it in your Sister Parish community. **NOTE:** You should be prepared for having to carry your luggage at some point during the trip.

## **G. Money**

### **EL SALVADOR**

- The official currency is now the U.S. dollar, plan on bringing small bills that are in good condition (i.e. ones, fives and tens) to use. Coins are also very handy and widely used.

### **GUATEMALA**

- The local currency is the Quetzal, currently (2015) the exchange rate is approximately 7.6 Quetzals to the dollar. You should plan on withdrawing Quetzals

with an ATM card from a cash machine, if possible. It is increasingly difficult to change dollars at the bank. Check with your bank to make sure your card is accepted internationally and ask if there are additional fees for international use. Please inform your bank that international charges may appear and they should not put a hold on the card. Please consult staff if using an ATM card will not work for you and we can figure out an alternate plan.

**NOTE:** It is often difficult to cash traveler's checks or change dollars at the banks, so plan on bringing quetzals or withdrawing cash for your spending money.

## **H. Cultural Awareness**

The current orientation process is designed to help increase your cultural awareness through structured exercises and presentations of select information about the country you will be visiting. We encourage you to take the initiative to learn as much as possible on your own by reading, studying, and talking to others who are knowledgeable about your destination country. To assist you in this process we have developed a resource list of recommended books and other media resources. In addition, **Appendix I** lists human and additional material resources which can assist you in your cross-cultural journey.

## **I. Language**

One of the most important things you can do to fit into your hosts' culture and demonstrate your interest and goodwill is to learn some key words or phrases in their native language. If you have time, enroll in a beginning conversational Spanish class, or if you already know some Spanish, brush up on your skills through audio tapes, visiting with Spanish speakers in your own community, listening to Spanish TV or radio stations, or reading the local Spanish papers. Many communities now have access to newspapers and other media in Spanish. Sister Parish has some basic word lists available.

If your Central American hermanamiento is indigenous and does not speak Spanish as a first language, some Spanish skills are still useful. We also have some basic vocabulary in the indigenous languages of Guatemala. In any case, don't panic. You will be surprised

at what you will be able to communicate non-verbally, and SP staff will make sure that you have some private translation time with your host families. See **Appendix M** for language lists.

**HOMEWORK:** Review the information in *How I should prepare for this trip*, discussed in this session, highlight the things you need to do and schedule what needs to be done.

➔ **Group Leader:** Make arrangements for a flip chart or newsprint and markers or crayons in various colors to be made available for the next meeting (session 2) for the Tree of Life exercise.

### **Questions for Sister Parish Staff**

Do you have questions or concerns prompted by the material presented in this session?

Sister Parish staff is always available to answer questions or address any concerns that may arise. Feel free to use this space as a place to note these concerns or questions as they occur to you.

### **Suggested closing prayer**

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace;  
Where there is hatred, let me sow love;  
Where there is injury, pardon;  
Where there is doubt, Faith;  
Where there is despair, hope;  
Where there is darkness, light;  
Where there is sadness, joy;

O divine Master,  
Grant that I may not so much seek  
To be consoled as to console;  
To be understood, as to understand;  
To be loved, as to love;  
For it is in giving that we receive,  
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned;  
It is in dying that we are born to eternal life.

--Prayer of St. Francis





## “A Ministry of Empowerment”

**Gratitude is essential to ministry. Gratitude basically means to receive the gifts of others- to say thank-you for being you. It is a central part of ministry to receive the gifts of others. Only when you yourself have experienced your own giftedness can you be free. We have a desire to get things to other people so that we can be on the giving side. We forget that the greater joy for other people is for them to realize that they have something to give to us. [...] The point is that, finally, I have to empower people and say, ‘You have as much to give as I do.’ Ministry always means to empower others to give their gifts to each other. Ministry is about multiplication.**

*“Parting Words: A Conversation on Prayer with Henri Nouwen” in Sacred Journey: The Journal of Fellowship in Prayer. Vol. 47, No. 6: 8-20. (Dec. 1996).*



## Session Two

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*In this session you will address the following topics:*

- Who will I be traveling with?
- What role should the Sister Parish committee play?
- How can my entire congregation share in the Sister Parish experience?
- Am I really the right person to be a delegate?
- What do people of other cultures think of me?
- What are my own cultural beliefs?



**Opening Activity:** After everyone introduces themselves briefly, the session may be initiated with the following activities:

**Check-in** **Directions:** Have group members take turns reading how to conduct a check-in in Appendix C and decide which approach to take. Then proceed as instructed in the Appendix.

**Biblical Reflection:** **Directions:** select a Bible passage of your choosing or use the suggested passage below. Follow the guidelines in Appendix B, How to reflect on Biblical passages.

*Suggested Biblical passage* **Ephesians 1: 5-19**

“I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, and for this reason I do not cease to give thanks for you as I remember you in my prayers. I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation as you come to know him, so that, with the eyes of your heart enlightened, you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance among the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power for us who believe, according to the working of his great power.” (Text taken from the *Study Bible: New Revised Standard Version*, Augsburg Fortress, 1990).



## Who will I be traveling with?

One of the greatest potential benefits of your Sister Parish involvement in general and your Sister Parish delegation in particular is **community**- not just with the people of Central America but with the members of your own church with whom you will share this extraordinary experience. Unless your church is very small, or unless you have been very active in church-related activities, chances are good that you do not know all the people with whom you worship. You may recognize faces and know the names of a few, but that is most likely the extent of it.

Your Sister Parish experience offers you and your fellow delegates the unique opportunity to prepare for a common goal and learn together, live with one another for almost two weeks, and share in one another's spiritual journey. For some, the prospect of this kind of intimacy may feel slightly intimidating at first. Getting to know one another before you leave is the best way to overcome that feeling of uneasiness and to help assure a positive and meaningful trip experience. The following activity is designed to help you get to know your fellow delegates better.

### **Tree Of Life Exercise**

**Directions:** Distribute one large sheet of paper (newsprint or from a flip chart) for each delegate. Have several colors of markers or crayons available in a central location. Read the directions below for the Tree of Life exercise and begin the exercise, taking at least 30 minutes to individually "complete" the drawing. When everyone has finished, tape your masterpieces on the wall, and as a group, walk around the room to view the artwork. Then take turns individually explaining the symbols/milestones on your own sheet to the group.

**NOTE:** this exercise is not a test of your artistic skills.

Draw a tree (whatever kind is appropriate for you, showing its roots below the surface and above ground, its trunk, buds, branches, fruit, and leaves). Now, reflect on your

life and, using the tree as a symbol, label its parts and /or draw small representative objects by the parts as follows:

- **Roots-** your past, whatever made you who you are, influences, people/events (both positive and negative), that shaped you, early on, over the years and into the present.
- **Trunk and branches-** your public person, what supports you, gives you strength and lends structure to your life.
- **Buds-** your hopes and dreams.
- **Fruits-**your achievements.
- **Leaves-**new areas of growth or energy. In the ground below the roots, list your joys and pain, the things which sap your energy.

As you create your tree and draw your symbols, select colors that are representative of your feelings around the events, words, objects, and people that you have noted.

## What role should the Sister Parish committee play?

Not everyone on the Sister Parish committee will be able to or wish to travel to Central America. Whether part of the delegation or not, committee members play an important role in the success of the Sister Parish relationship and trip experience.

Establishing sub-committees within the overall SP committee, as outlined below, with a coordinator for each subgroup, can be an effective way to help the delegation plan their trip.

**Directions:** As a group, review the proposed subcommittee structure provided here and discuss below how applicable it is to your particular situation (modifying it as necessary), how you could establish such a structure for your group, who among you would be willing to head the various subcommittees, and how you could invite others to join and lead the remaining subcommittees.

- **Financial Management Subcommittee:** Assists in raising the needed funds and coordinates other financial and fiscal issues. Possible activities- tracking expenses, preparing budgets to carry out the goals of the committee, etc.
- **Promotion and Recruitment:** Coordinates publicity/ information-sharing and invites participation from groups which may otherwise not be represented on the delegation. Handles communications between the Sister Parish committee and the rest of the congregation. Possible activities: writing articles for the church bulletin, producing a Sister Parish newsletter, weblog, or website, making presentations, etc.
- **Information/ Education Resources:** Collects and disseminates pre-trip preparation materials (country information, current news clippings, magazine articles, etc.) Also collects material for post-trip use, works for political change and collaborates with Promotion and Recruitment subcommittee to educate the congregation on Central American issues. Possible activities: coordinating letter writing /phone campaigns, reviewing / distributing relevant media materials, etc.
- **Spiritual and Cultural:** Assures that committee members planning meetings include spiritual elements such as opening / closing prayer, Spanish songs and relevant readings for use in liturgies, recipes, customs, etc., to share in order to increase cultural understanding. Possible activities- bringing in speakers to build cross-cultural understanding, organizing book clubs, bible studies conjointly with your Central American community, exchanging prayers of the faithful with your hermanamiento, researching/ writing relevant prayers and readings for services, etc.
- **Communications:** Maintains on-going contact with the hermanamiento in Central America and with the staff liaison prior to and in between delegations, i.e. throughout the relationship. Possible activities- translating correspondence, sending correspondence (SP staff will gladly help translate correspondence, when necessary), establishing reliable channels for communication between the two hermanamientos, etc.)



## How can the entire congregation share in the Sister Parish experience?

The Sister Parish experience is much broader than the trip to Central America. It is a relationship that takes the time, understanding, and involvement of many individuals. There are several ways that people within your congregation can participate.

**Directions:** Consider the list below, add your own ideas, and as a group, discuss how you can communicate these opportunities to your church, and how you can motivate others to become active participants in the Sister Parish relationship.

1. Become prayer or letter sponsors<sup>2</sup>
2. Prepare a song/daily reflection book to take with you on the trip
3. Contribute funding
4. Sponsor fund-raising events
5. Arrange for Spanish lessons or teach them if you are bilingual
6. Host a party for returning delegates to share the trip experience with others
7. Monitor, collect, and distribute news items on the country where your hermanamiento is located.
8. Read books on Central America to broaden knowledge and support
9. Produce a Sister Parish newsletter and information brochures
10. Attend and participate in committee meetings and activities
11. Translate letters to and from your hermanamiento
12. Arrange for presentations by delegates to other church committees
13. Add information about your hermanamiento to your congregation's website
14. Organize an airport send-off and welcome home celebration
15. Purchase spiritual mementos for individual North American delegates

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<sup>2</sup> A **prayer sponsor** is someone who agrees to pray for you at a particular time during your trip, preferably every day that you are gone. Some delegates ask their prayer sponsors to write them a simple note about one thing that happened on each day that they are gone. Reading these upon returning can help delegates to reconnect at home.

A **letter sponsor** is someone who agrees to write a letter to take with you. If you will be gone ten days, you will need ten sponsors. You will then open one letter a day. It is important to know that you represent a community and that you carry with you their thoughts, blessings, and hopes for a safe and meaningful experience.

16. Plan and schedule a post-trip report to your congregation
17. Prepare food for day-long orientation sessions
18. Write and participate in a congregational commissioning of delegates. (See sample in **Appendix M**).
19. Be a host family when your Central American brothers and sisters travel on a delegation to the north
20. Host an International Sister Parish meeting in your church (for example, a Board meeting or the Northern Advisory Board meeting).

### Am I really the right person to be a delegate?

Any time God calls us to ministry; it is only human to question whether or not we are up to the task. Fear (**F**alse **E**xpectations **A**ppearing **R**eal) fills our hearts, making us feel inadequate and nervous about being able to accomplish what we have committed ourselves to do. In the first session, we discussed some initial fears of being a delegate, which usually revolve around physical safety, personal comfort, and emotional concerns. Eventually, most of us will also experience a disquieting anxiety which centers on our spiritual capabilities. Getting personal clarity about our self-concept (with respect to our spirituality) can do a great deal to bring about a sense of serenity.

**NOTE:** Referring to your Sister Parish experience as ministry is not meant to imply that it is a charitable venture, but one of **mutual service**. Ideally, in a healthy relationship, the partners minister to one another.

**Directions:** As a group, take a few minutes to discuss possible meaning of the phrases in the questions below. (Some notes are also provided below). Then write down your personal responses, remembering that wherever you are on your spiritual journey, it is exactly where you need to be. As a group, share any insights or concerns that you feel comfortable discussing.

### Faith Questions Which Confront Us as Ministers

1. Do I believe I am enough?
2. Do I embrace my **vulnerability** in ministry?
3. Do I believe in the **ministry of presence**?
4. Do I believe in the **ministry of absence**?
5. Do I trust in the gifts that I possess?
6. Do I understand how my limitations can also be my gifts?
7. Do I accept the **mutuality of ministry**?

#### Notes regarding faith questions:

1. We ask ourselves, “Do I have enough experience, knowledge, faith, and education?” We agonize because we “don’t know scripture” and don’t have all the answers. But, as human beings with experience in living, we are enough. Having desire is enough. God chooses us **as we are**, not as we were or as we are going to be. God provides. In Exodus, the Israelites were afraid they did not have enough to live, but God gave them manna and other things they needed to survive
2. We suppose that we should work from our strengths, but when we work from a position of weakness, we’re more open to God filling us with what we need. It is good to embrace our sense of imperfection and let go of the way we want things to be. In 2 Corinthians we are told that God’s power is made manifest in our weakness.
3. If someone is so present to you that their eyes fill with tears in seeing you or hearing your story, there is great strength and comfort in that. Ministry isn’t always about what the task is, but who you are. You are not what you do, but who you are... a human being, not a “human doing”. There is much presence in silence, not just in words. Some believe that presence is the greatest act of love.
4. It is also important to leave people as well as be present to them. We are not God and cannot totally take care of someone else’s problems, but we can care for them and ask God to be there for them. We are limited and must **let go of control**.

Ministry is not about encouraging dependency but rather about freeing people, about empowerment.

5. What do people compliment you about? Own your gifts. God gave them to you. Gifts do not always have to be of a grand scale. Sensitivity is a gift. Even a cross that you bear may be a gift because it gives you perspective, compassion, and understanding.
6. Sometimes it is our own limitations and need which motivate us to reach out to others. There is self-interest in everything that we do, which is fine as long as it is not always our primary reason. It is important to get in touch with the things that move you, and understand why they do. Perhaps it is an unmet need that drives our emotion. Many times a personal limitation is a blessing because it helps us to learn and teaches others.
7. Receiving is just as important as giving. If we only give and never receive, eventually we will burn out. We can't keep emptying without taking time to be filled. Everyone is capable of giving, regardless of their circumstances. If you always assume that you are in the role of giving, you will miss half of the blessings and enlightenment of ministry, and deprive the other person of the gift of giving.

### What do people of other cultures think of me?

When you see someone from a different culture, dressed in clothing different from yours, eating food which is unfamiliar to you, or speaking in a language which you do not understand, the tendency is to think of **that** person as a foreigner. But just as his/her customs seem strange to you, you are **equally strange** to him/her. What you take for granted, because it is part of your upbringing, may seem rude, funny, sad, disrespectful, irritating, or generally confusing to others who do not share your cultural origins. Being aware of the impression that our way of life creates with others is important. Developing and demonstrating a general sensitivity to the fact that our way is not necessarily the best way in the eyes of people who have different values and beliefs can help ensure positive inter-cultural relations.

**Directions:** Take turns reading out loud the following statements from people of other nationalities regarding "Americans," (excerpted from L. Robert Kohl and John M. Knight's *Developing Intercultural Awareness: A Cross Cultural Training Guide*, Intercultural Press; 2nd edition, June 1994), and the excerpt from the speech by Dr. Ali Jarbawi. When you are finished, discuss:

- a) Which statements you agree with and which you do not, giving reasons to support your opinion;
- b) What they imply about Americans, and
- c) What these beliefs about Americans tell you regarding the values and customs of the people who hold these beliefs;
- d) What the term "Third World" implies.

**Visitor from Cambodia:** "The tendency in the U.S. to think that life is only work hits you in the face. Work seems to be the one motivation."

**Visitor from Indonesia:** "In the U.S. everything has to be talked about and analyzed. Even the littlest thing has to be 'Why? Why? Why?' I get a headache from such persistent questions. I still can't stand a hard-hitting argument."

**Visitor from the Philippines:** "In the U.S. I have observed that the mother is the dominant parent in most families."

**Visitor from Afghanistan:** "I was so much surprised by the many people in America who were under special diet to lose their weight. In our society we are in search of food in order to gain weight."

**Visitor from Lesotho:** "Some Americans I have met seem to like to live with animals, more than with people, and they treat their pets like human beings, even kissing them and holding them on their laps."

**Visitor from Indonesia:** "The questions Americans ask me are sometimes very embarrassing, like whether I have ever seen a camera. Most of them consider themselves the most highly civilized people. Why? Because they are accustomed to technical inventions. Consequently, they think that people living in bamboo houses or having customs different from theirs are primitive and backward."

**Visitor from Somalia:** “I am worried that you have too much democracy in America. There are so many separate voices and so many selfish interests that you cannot accomplish anything for the general good of the country. You are even prevented from controlling your criminal element for fear of denying the criminal his freedom. That’s too much freedom for your own good!”

**Visitor from Japan:** “The Americans were very kind to invite me into their homes for dinner, but always, as soon as dinner was over, they would ask if I wanted to take a tour of their house as if it was some sort of monument. I really did not want to but I could not tell them no, so I said ‘Yes, please.’ They were so proud to show off all their prized possessions. It made me think that all Americans are very materialistic. I was also shocked that the bathtub and the toilet are always together in an American home and at how close the toilet usually is to the kitchen.”

**Visitor from Cameroon:** “It is shocking to me to see how the father and mother in America kick out most of their family, their own children when they become eighteen years of age. The most surprising thing about it all is that the young people do not seem to mind it or think that it is too cruel to be thrown out of their own family, but they accept it as the natural and normal way of behaving.”

**Visitor from Sudan:** “The hardest thing for me to accept and get used to when I first came to your country was how impersonal and inhuman everything was. Whenever I bought a Coca-Cola or a chocolate bar or a postage stamp, I had to buy it from a machine rather than from a living person. You can’t talk to a machine, and even when it gives you a candy bar, a machine cannot give you a satisfying relationship. But in your country many people want to spend their time by themselves rather than by talking to other people in a friendly conversation.”



***Excerpts from convocation speech presented at Augsburg College  
by Dr. Ali Jarbawi, Scholar in Residence.***

“Many people (in the U.S.) tend to hold a misconception, perpetuated by the wealth, power and size of their country, that they are not only more advanced and powerful than others, but also that they are still self-sufficient...that they are not in need of the rest of the world, thus feeling no urgency to learn about and appreciate its diversity. For them, it is the rest of the world that is in need of them, and some go so far as to firmly believe that the rest of the world ...is envious of them and are aligning themselves on one way or another to strip them of what they have. Therefore, through suspicion and mistrust they try only to know whatever is necessary and sufficient to protect themselves and their national interest. This interest, they think, gives them the absolute right to interfere whenever they see fit and through whatever means they regard appropriate, in the affairs of others, not basically to help others in their quest for a better life, but rather to try and shape the world to their liking.”

“...Americans expect when traveling abroad to be granted automatic special treatment from the moment they declare that they are Americans. They expect that all those they meet will speak their language, understand their culture, and cater to their needs. Some of them do not even consider it their own responsibility to try and communicate with others in the native language...This sense of superiority breeds ignorance in its bearer. Nowadays, not many Americans know very much about the world which surrounds them. This is not good, especially for the country that leads the global civilization of today. How, in the future, can Americans continue to assume the leadership of a work that they do not know much about?”



## What are my own cultural beliefs?

Let's see how cultural beliefs show up when your mind reacts to some words....  
 (Excerpted in part from *Working Together* by Dr. George Simons, Crisp Publications, 2002, third ed.)

**Directions:** Look at the words and phrases in the list below. Describe briefly and honestly in the first empty column the picture, words, or scene your mind spontaneously gave you. In the second column, jot down any automatic judgments your mind made. Finally, in the last column, write down where you first experienced your idea or feeling. Identify the source of your attitude, if possible. Remember, notice what your automatic mind and culture say. You are neither good nor bad because of it. It is what you do with it later that counts. Two different people, for example, could come up with quite different answers, as the examples for "Hippie" show.

WORD	IMAGE I GET	JUDGMENTS I MAKE	SOURCE
<i>Example:</i> Hippie	Protester, Musician	Good, alternative values, free lifestyle	My friends
Hippie	Patchouli	Bad, associate with drugs	My dad's prejudices
Money			
Death penalty			
Marriage			
African American			
Gay or lesbian			
Born-again			
Christian			
Hippie			
Vegetarians			
Divorcee			
White male			
Old			

Usually we think of other people as different from us when we in turn are also different from them. Below are some of the most common ways that we differ from others.

**Directions:** Reflect for a few moments on these differences, complete the sentences provided with the first thing that pops into your head and compare your responses with the group.

- Gender: Because we are born male or female, the world treats us differently. The culture we are raised in teaches us how to be feminine or masculine.

**A real man is...**

**A real woman is...**

- Family: The family group makes its own rhythms, customs, and rituals.

**In my family, our birthday rituals include...**

- Age: The generation we grow up in experiences the world in its own unique way.

**In my generation/ age group, we...**

- Race: How people view characteristics which result from a common genetic bond.

**A predominant trait of my race is...**

- Geography and Region: Distinctions we make about ourselves and others on the basis of where they live or where they come from.

**Where I come from my people are...**

- Organization: What we adopt as a result of working together in a specific group or company, our organizational or “corporate culture”.

**At my company everyone...**

- Belief: How we see ourselves and others because of our religion or philosophy of life. We fall into groups defined by faith or personal conviction about who we are and why we are in this world.

**Deep in my heart I believe...**

- Nation and Ethnicity: How we talk about ourselves as citizens of a certain country or as a people with a broad common heritage of culture, belief, and language.

**People who live in my country are...**

**Directions:** Read the brief article below and give an example of a comment you or others may have made unknowingly which indicate ethnocentrism.

### **Ethnocentrism**

“Three hundred years ago people were debating whether the earth or the sun was the center of the universe. Although scientists eventually proved that the earth revolved around the sun, many people still did not accept it. Even today, for the most of us, the sun still “rises” in the east and “sets” in the west. We naturally put ourselves in the middle of the universe. Each of us also looks out from the center of a personal and a cultural universe.

From this *egocentric* or *ethnocentric* point of view, we (and the group we belong to), are in the middle. Other people and events revolve around us. It’s easy for us to assume that the way we see things is the real way things are for everybody, or the real way *things* should be.

People often make the mistake of calling what is familiar “best” when in fact it is only familiar. This attitude can express itself in feelings of cultural superiority. We in the United States must conscientiously increase our willingness to receive the cultural insights and values of others.” (*source unknown*)

### **Cultural beliefs are inherent in motivations**

**Directions:** Consider your motivations for embarking on this cross-cultural journey. Which of the following are included? What do they reveal? What is behind them?

- ✓ *One possible motivation:* Personal pleasure...Learning about the curious beliefs and practices of others; helping others who are less fortunate than you; showing others a better way of life; teaching others what they should know about God, religion, or progress.
- ✓ *Another possible motivation:* Learning from other cultures...Discovering other ways of life that can enrich your own; receiving as well as giving; engaging in a mutual experience of mission and action; openness and sensitivity to human differences; gaining new perspectives on your own culture, faith, and nation; and joining with others in establishing peace and human community.

There are subtle but significant differences between these two sets of motivations. The first set has been the traditional approach to cross-cultural relationships and does have its positive side. The second set of motivations, however, describes a potentially fuller, deeper, more mutually-empowering relationship, recognizing each partner as equally gifted.

### Where you live in the world affects your beliefs.

**HOMEWORK:** Read the information on Central America in the next section and find, read, duplicate copies for each person in your group, one recent article on any country in Central America, but especially from the country where you will be traveling. If you cannot locate a current news item in your local paper or on the Internet, check your local library.

**GROUP LEADER:** You will need to bring a bag of M&Ms or something similar to the next session.

#### Suggested closing prayer

My Lord God,  
I have no idea where I am going,  
I do not see the road ahead of me,  
I cannot know for certain where it will  
end.  
Nor do I really know myself,  
And the fact that I think  
I am following your will  
Does not mean that I am actually doing  
so.  
But I believe that the desire to please you  
Does in fact please you.

And I hope I have that desire  
In all that I am doing.  
I hope that I will never do anything  
Apart from that desire.  
And I know that if I do this  
You will lead me by the right road.  
Though I may seem to be lost  
And in the shadow of death.  
I will not fear,  
For you are ever with me,  
And you will never leave me  
To face my perils alone.

-Thomas Merton *Thoughts in Solitude*, 1958, Farrar, Strauss and Giroux

**We should not go to the people and say, "Here we are. We come to give you the charity of our presence, to teach you our science, to show you your errors, your lack of culture, your ignorance of elementary things." We should go instead with an inquiring mind and a humble spirit to learn at that great source of wisdom that is the people.**

## **Che Guevara**



## Session Three

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*In this session you will discover answers to the following questions:*

- What should I know about Central America?
- How can I better understand the reality of the people of Central America?
- What should I know about our destination country?
- What should I know about our Central American hermanamiento?
- How can I better understand my Central American hermanamiento from a spiritual perspective?





**Opening Activity:** After everyone introduces themselves briefly, the session may be initiated with the following activities:

**Check-in** **Directions:** Have group members take turns reading how to conduct a check-in in Appendix C and decide which approach to take. Then proceed as instructed in the Appendix.

**Biblical Reflection:** **Directions:** select a Bible passage of your choosing or use the suggested passage below. Follow the guidelines in Appendix B, How to reflect on Biblical passages.

*Suggested Biblical reflection: **Micah 6:6-8.** “What shall I bring to the Lord, the God of heaven, when I come to worship him? Shall I bring the best calves to burn as offerings to him? Will the Lord be pleased if I bring thousands of sheep or endless streams of olive oil? Shall I offer him my first-born child to pay for my sins? No, the Lord has told us what is good. What he requires of us is this: to do what is just, to show constant love, and to live in humble fellowship with our God.” (Text taken from the *Good News Bible: Catholic Study Edition*: New York: Sadlier, 1979).*



## What should I know about Central America?

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NOTE: **Latin** America refers to the countries of the Western Hemisphere, south of the United States, having Spanish, Portuguese or French as their official language, i.e. countries where Romance Languages are spoken. In socio-political terms, however, this is narrowed down to include only countries where Spanish or Portuguese are spoken. **Central** America refers to the seven nations south of Mexico and north of South America, on the isthmus-- Belize, Guatemala, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Honduras, Costa Rica, and Panama.

Sister Parish linkages or hermanamientos focus on **Central America**, specifically, in Guatemala and El Salvador.

If you are like many people in the U.S., your knowledge of Central America is limited. The scarcity of available information through traditional media such as television and newspapers and the lack of clarity, and sometimes, secrecy surrounding much of the news (especially in past decades), is part of the reason. Seeking out articles on the Internet, being alert to news items in national newspapers, and sharing this information with one another is an important part of preparing for your trip and continuing your Sister Parish relationship. If you go to the Sister Parish website, we have a resource page with links to essential, current and historical, information on the countries where we work.

**Directions:** Share the articles that you brought in as homework from the last session. Take turns reading and discussing the information that you have found, along with the information found below.



**Statistics from Central America-** Taken from the UNDP Human Development reports <http://hdr.undp.org/en/statistics/>.

	Life Expectancy at Birth	GNI per Capita 2011	Populations in Millions 2011	Adult Literacy Rate 2011
<b>High Human Development</b>				
United States (very high)	78.5	43,017	313.09	--
Costa Rica	79.3	10,497	4.73	96.1
Panama	76.1	12,335	3.57	93.6
Belize	76.1	5,812	0.32	--
<b>Medium Human Development</b>				
El Salvador	72.2	5,925	6.23	84.1
Nicaragua	74.0	2,430	5.87	78.0
Honduras	73.1	3,443	7.75	83.6
Guatemala	71.2	4,167	14.76	74.5

## How can I better understand the reality of the people of Central America?

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Unless you live another person’s reality on a day-to-day basis, it is virtually impossible to truly comprehend what he/she experiences and feels. However, “walking in that person’s shoes” by living with him/her as a guest, or even taking part in exercises which simulate their reality, can lend some perspective. This is what being part of a Sister Parish delegation is all about.

One common misconception is that all Central Americans are alike. We know that in the U.S., there are regional differences in customs, food, language and accents. The same is true for Central America. While there are certain similarities due to the geographic commonality, Central America is actually home to many dozens of different indigenous groups who speak Spanish as a **second**, not first, language. This means that there is an incredible richness of language, customs, foods that are not necessarily generalized from country to country or region to region. It is very important to keep an open mind as you discover these differences. If you have already visited one region of Central or Latin America before, then it will be very interesting to see what similarities and differences manifest themselves on the trip.

### **World food distribution exercise**

**Directions:** You will need a bag of M & M's for this exercise. Divide up into three groups as follows: 15% in **Group 1** (i.e. 3 people if there are 20 total, etc.); 30% in **Group 2** (6 people if there are 20 total); and 55% in **Group 3**. Starting with the first group, give each person a country that they represent. Group 1 can be the United States, Canada, Japan, Western Europe, or the oil exporters such as Saudi Arabia or Libya. Group 2 is Israel, Argentina, Korea, Spain, Poland, Australia, or New Zealand. Group 3 represents the majority of the people in the world, in countries like Ethiopia, India, Bangladesh, Haiti, Kenya, Iraq, Vietnam, Laos, Honduras, Mexico, Peru, Bolivia, etc. Give the first group 70% of the M&M's which your group leader has brought for this exercise. Give the second group 25% of them, and the third group 3%. This is what world food distribution looks like. Each group is to share the candy they have **within** their group. When all the M& M's are consumed, discuss the questions below.

1. How did it feel to have the most, but be the smallest group?
2. How did it feel to have the least, but be of the largest group?
3. What feelings did you experience around wanting more or wanting to share?
4. What conclusions or insights did this exercise provoke?

### **Poverty exercise**

**Directions:** Get two volunteers from your group and ask them to leave the room. STOP! READ NO FURTHER IF YOU ARE ONE OF THE VOLUNTEERS! Have one person blindfold the volunteers and instruct them to ask remaining group members to lend them a dollar, once they are safely escorted back in to the room. Prior to their return, remaining members of the group are instructed to make small talk among themselves and to totally ignore the blindfolded group members. After a

few minutes of having the volunteers attempt to borrow a dollar (to no avail), remove the blindfolds and as a group discuss the following questions:

1. How does it feel to beg?
2. How does it feel to be ignored?
3. How does it feel to have someone begging you?
4. What thoughts went through your mind during the exercise?
5. How must the people in a poor country feel when they see the wealth of others flaunted in front of them?

Most of us cannot literally walk in the shoes of another person in order to understand that individual's reality, but every human being is capable of critically examining another person's world in a dialogue with him or her. Provided with tools for critical reflection, each person can gradually perceive another's personal and social reality and deal with it, becoming an active agent in working to change unjust and oppressive societal structures. Sister Parish invites you to participate in recreating the world by critically reflecting on and questioning injustice versus adapting to it, and acting in whatever capacity you can to make a difference.

### **Cultural Sensitivity**

**Directions:** Review the section on cultural sensitivities below, then pair up with another person in the room and develop a brief role play which revolves around a specific Central American value or custom. (The role play can be between two Central Americans or a North American interacting with a Central American, in the latter's country.) Have remaining members of the group determine if the scenario is representative of the Central American culture/ is culturally sensitive or if the behavior would be considered culturally incorrect/ insensitive and why.

*(Excerpt from the Center for Global Education Travel Seminar Information)*

Each Central American country is different from others and most have significant cultural diversity within their own borders. Nevertheless, although there will be many exceptions, the following are offered as broad generalizations of some key Central American values.

**Time, work, leisure, and *Personalismo*...**

- Value is placed on leisure time. When North Americans say “time is money” they usually mean that time can be used to increase one’s income. But for Central Americans, time is wealth in and of itself and can be used to enjoy what one already has, particularly relationships with family and friends.
- Some North Americans are frustrated by the “mañana mentality” (mañana means tomorrow)- people arriving late for appointments, things getting done slowly or being postponed and the generally slower pace of life. However, such behavior makes sense from the Central American perspective because lingering over lunch or digressing in a meeting to talk about more personal things is not considered “wasting time”- it is a way to strengthen social networks, identity, and community.
- Personalismo, or interpersonal relationships provide connections, prestige, and the potential to make things happen. Above all, one’s immediate and extended family provides support and therefore is extremely important. (Who your family is, is more important than where you were educated. To get things done, who you know is more important than what you know.)
- Punctuality is not strictly observed and does not carry the same importance that it does in the United States. Individuals are considered far more important than schedules.
- It is also important to recognize that Central Americans, especially the poor, work exceedingly hard by North American standards. They often work from dawn to dusk and do not have good health, money or the time to enjoy them.

### **Greetings, Visiting, Compliments, and Eating:**

- A gentle handshake is customary when meeting people (variations on this will be discussed in your in-country orientation with staff). Children appreciate having adults shake their hand.
- Close friends will hug, kiss on the cheek, or pat each other on the back. Female friends or relatives may kiss on the cheek. Rural people may bow their heads and touch their hats in greeting or very lightly touch palms.
- People are very hospitable, gracious and tend to be very willing to help. They will share whatever they have to make a visitor feel welcome.
- Expressing admiration for material goods is not as important as sincerely complimenting others on their good personality traits, their country, their children, etc.
- When entering or leaving home, visitors should greet and then say good-bye to each person present, shaking hands for both.
- In general, lunch is the main meal of the day, and may include soup, a main course, coffee, and fruit for dessert. It is proper to keep one's hands on the table versus on one's lap. When families eat together on weekends, meals may last longer than in the U.S. since the conversation is just as important as the food served.

### **Gender, Social Class, Ethnic Origin, and Family- general attitudes:**

- "Machismo" or chauvinism is prevalent in Central America. For the most part, women are expected to be submissive, or at the very least, in the background.
- Rural dwellers are often looked down upon by urban dwellers. In general, cities are more influenced by Europe and the United States whereas the rural areas seek to uphold traditional beliefs and standards, some of which are pre-colonial (i.e. from before Spain colonized the area).
- Often there are tensions between the mestizos (called ladinos in Guatemala) and indigenous peoples. This may be a mix of social class discrimination, economic discrimination, or ethnic discrimination.
- The extended family and community are the basis of society and exert a major influence on an individual's life and decisions. It is not uncommon to have parents,

grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins living together or in the same family compound. The father is respected as the head of the household, but the mother tends to have the most influence and responsibility in the family's daily life.

- In the cities, and especially the marginalized areas, more and more families are single parent households. This is due to many factors, including immigration of the males, abandonment, alcoholism, and death.

### **Asking Questions, Expressing Appreciation, Leaving Meetings, and Self-Identification:**

- Generally “delicate” or potentially offensive topics will be raised indirectly. This contrasts directly with the North American value of directness and frankness.
- Most questions can be asked, but give careful thought to delicate ways of phrasing things and asking open questions. You may not get the answer you are expecting. Please respect the answer that people give.
- In terms of expressing appreciation, most North Americans feel that a succinct but sincere word of gratitude accomplishes the task, not realizing that to a Central American, this may sound terse. Though you may feel uncomfortable at first, use embellishments and don't be afraid to repeat the “thank-you” in several ways.
- Another common practice by North Americas which could send the wrong message in Central America is the tendency to pack up one's papers and personal belongings towards the end of a meeting while the speaker is concluding the session. This can be interpreted as a signal that you are in a hurry to leave and that the person that you have been meeting with is **not** very important.
- When you have finished a meeting, it is common courtesy for **everyone** to shake hands, i.e. each person from your group would shake hands with each person in the meeting.
- Finally, remember that the people throughout the Americas (i.e. North, Central, and South) are **all** Americans. Some people from the U.S. are in the habit of saying “Americans” to refer specifically to U.S. citizens. You will find that in some places you will be referred to as a North American or (norteamericano) or a “gringo”. Keep in mind too that both Canadians and Mexicans are also North Americans.

Estadounidense is another common term, which literally means a United States-an, and is the most accurate term to use in Spanish.

### **Contrasts between Central American and U.S. values:**

1. *Independence versus Interdependence*- for many in the U.S., personal independence and autonomy form the basis for identity and social relations. Dependency is considered a weakness. **VERSUS** Interdependence among people, esp. within the family, forms the social fabric in Central America. The individual who does not have the obligation of dependencies is considered cold, alienated, or even maladjusted.
2. *Equality versus social hierarchy*- despite the obvious inequalities in U.S. society, equality in personal relationships is considered to be the ideal. Thus, the average U.S. citizen is embarrassed by demonstrations of deference that highlight inequalities between people. The ideal of equality correlates with the social mobility in the U.S. Most people feel that their success in life is due to their own efforts. **VERSUS** In Central America an established social hierarchy governs the form of interpersonal relationships. Acknowledgement of the respective social positions is an integral part of every interaction. An individual's identity is more closely tied to that of the family, not to social mobility.
3. *Technological orientation versus fatalism* – The U.S. culture puts faith in the individual's ultimate ability to conquer nature and control his or her destiny. **VERSUS** The often repeated "si Dios quiere" (If God is willing) is more than a figure of speech in Spanish; it reflects the Central American acceptance of the limitations of one's power over his or her fate.
4. *Individualism versus solidarity*- U.S. individualism is characterized by the ideals of competence, self-reliance, and assertiveness. **VERSUS** The Central American ideal of collectivity results in the identifications of the individual within the group, especially the family. In this context, the most valued personal qualities are loyalty, cooperation, humility, and solidarity.
5. *Future versus the Present*- The future orientation of the U.S. society causes most individuals to view change as progress. Sacrifice for the future is an ideal with

strong moral connotations. **VERSUS** Central American values are more traditional than are the dominant values of the U.S. But the time orientation of the Central American culture is focused on the present. Taking time to enjoy life is an important ideal of Central American life, in contrast to the U.S. preference for efficiency.

6. *Tasks versus people* – U.S. citizens tend to be task-oriented, valuing efficiency and practicality. **VERSUS** Central Americans are more people-oriented, with more attention paid to cultivating the relationships among people.
7. *Protestant versus Catholic influences* – many values in U.S. culture may be traced to the original Protestant heritage- the work ethic, practicality, egalitarianism, puritanical attitudes towards pleasure, etc. **VERSUS** The Catholic influence on Central American culture is so profound that it is often difficult to separate the two. Among the Central American values inspired by the Catholic Church are piety, respect for authority and hierarchy, and fatalism.

## What should I know about our destination country?

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**NOTE:** Your trip, which usually runs 9-10 days, will include an orientation to the country and community where you will be staying. In-country orientation lasts 1-2 days, and includes useful information, lectures, and site visits. The time in your hermanamiento will range from 4-6 days. Then you will have a debriefing, along with time to relax and evaluate the trip.

Typical places and organizations that may be included on your itinerary are community development groups, human rights organizations, markets, massacre sites or monuments, churches, museums, ruins, embassies, etc. All of this will help to acquaint you with the historical, social, economic, religious, and political context in which you will be living during the trip, and in which your brothers and sisters live daily. We strongly recommend that you invite representatives from your sister community to join your group for the days you are not in your sister community. Though not a requirement, some churches have found it beneficial to pay for an extra van for those days so that more people from their sister community can join.



**Directions:** To assure that the itinerary developed by the Sister Parish staff serves the delegation's interests and targets any special focus of your church congregation, please take some time to brainstorm specific activities which your group would like to include in the orientation part of your trip. Make a list of these activities, prioritizing them, if possible, and give them to your group leader to be passed along to the Sister Parish in-country staff liaison that will make every effort to accommodate you. Please also talk to staff about inviting people from your sister community to join the group throughout the delegation, especially if your group would like to invite more than 2-3 people to join you (there would most likely be an additional cost). Sample itineraries for Guatemala and El Salvador are provided for your reference in **Appendix J**.

**Guatemala** is characterized by the following:

- Multicultural and multiethnic, with 21 different languages derived from the Mayan civilization, as well as Garifuna and Xinca languages and culture.
- Spanish is the official language, but indigenous languages add to the richness of this country and often are the primary languages spoken in a given community.
- Your hermanamiento may be “ladino” or “mestizo” (of mixed Spanish and indigenous heritage), urban, rural, or indigenous. We currently work in areas that include the following indigenous groups: Kaqchiquel, Q’eqchi’, and Quiché (or K’iche’).
- Many of the indigenous women (but few men) wear indigenous clothing. It is a symbol of their cultural identity (each town has a specific style of clothing) and resistance to centuries of oppression and acculturation by the ruling oligarchy/aristocracy.
- Indigenous Guatemalans identify themselves according to the name of their indigenous group (the same as the name of the language that they speak). You will find in the indigenous communities that men often speak Spanish, having learned it in school, from family or through travel. Many indigenous women, especially older women, may only speak their maternal language.

- Guatemala officially ended its 36+ year civil war on December 29, 1996.
- Guatemala has been a democratically ruled country since 1985, which is also the year that its current Constitution was written.
- The government is divided into 3 branches: Executive, Legislative, and Judicial. There is a Supreme Court and then a Constitutional Court, which is the highest court, and ensures that the Constitution is followed accordingly.

### **El Salvador:**

- El Salvador is a smaller and more densely populated country, and the indigenous languages are rarely spoken anymore. One of the causes of the acculturation and the almost exclusive use of the Spanish language stems from a massacre of 30,000 indigenous peasants in 1932, as a means of crippling the demands for land reform in the country. From that time on, the indigenous languages of Nahuatl and Pipil went underground, so to speak.
- Sister Parish works in the northern region of Chalatenango, where the predominant language is Spanish. Salvadorans, unlike indigenous Guatemalans, define themselves according to the region that they live in, i.e. “Chalateco” for those living in the Chalatenango department or district.
- El Salvador suffered a civil war from 1980-1992. Peace Accords were signed on January 16, 1992, and the former guerrilla faction (the FMLN) has become one of the main political parties in the country.
- El Salvador has entered into the Free Trade Agreements (CAFTA) with the U.S., and has rapidly changed over the last decade from a primarily agriculturally-based export economy to an industrialized country. More and more factories (sweatshops) have opened up to meet the manufacturing demands of US consumers. The economy has been “dollarized” and more and more imported products are making their way onto store shelves, making it harder and harder for local producers to compete in this market.
- Wages continue to be paid based on what they would have been if the currency was still the colon, but prices for goods are based on US currency, meaning that while Salvadorans are now earning dollars, with many more choices in stores, they are actually able to buy less and less.

- Immigration to the US is a serious problem. Available jobs have not kept up with the overall educational level, so even highly educated Salvadorans have trouble finding jobs at their level. Remittances from families who have made it to the US have become a major part of the overall economy.

In preparation for your trip, you may wish to view country and/or specific videos (contact staff) or search for information on the internet or in a library. Travel books often provide basic, summarized, factual, and cultural information.

Whatever source you use, at the very least, you should find out basic information about your hermanamiento's country. We have already provided some basic statistical information in the table at the beginning of this orientation session, and we have provided short answers to many basic questions in **Appendix O: Country Fact Sheets**. However, it is interesting to compare different sources (for example, the State department, U.S. Embassies, or CIA fact sheets (<http://www.odci.gov/cia/publications/factbook/index.html> ) versus information from solidarity groups like the Network in Solidarity with the People of Guatemala ([www.nisgua.org](http://www.nisgua.org)). Another good place to look for diverse information on different countries is: <http://www.country-data.com/>. The Sister Parish Blog is also a great way to stay up to date on current news in Guatemala and El Salvador. [www.sisterparish.org](http://www.sisterparish.org)

Knowing about your **own** country gives more significance to the statistics and facts about the country where your hermanamiento is located. The following statements were excerpted from different available resources on the United States, including the US Census Bureau country fact sheets (<http://factfinder.census.gov/home/saff/main>) and a Culturegram (excerpted from the Publications Division of the Kennedy Center for International Studies at Brigham Young University, 1996). You can order a Culturegram for \$4 per copy at <http://culturegram.stores.yahoo.net/incul.html>.

### **The United States...**

- Has natural resources of coal, copper, lead, uranium, bauxite, gold, phosphate, iron, mercury, nickel, silver, petroleum, natural gas, and timber, among others.
- Was only involved in the last year of World War I but was a major combatant in World War II.
- Has held elections to determine leadership for centuries, though certain populations have had to fight to obtain and maintain the right to vote.
- Has a population of about 293.6 million (US Census Bureau, 2004 estimate)

- Is the only industrialized country in the world without a national (public) health care system.

### **In the United States...**

- 75.6% of the population is white (U.S. Census Bureau year 2004), however, only 69.1% of those who report they are white are not of Hispanic or Latino origin
- Latinos comprise 14.2% of the total population, and can be of any race (versus 12.2% African Americans, 4.2 % Asians and 0.8 % Native Americans) (2004 US Census Bureau American community Survey fact sheet)
- 18.7% Speak a language other than English at home
- 10.1% of US families live below poverty level
- Most people have telephones
- Many people travel long distances by air
- Private cars are the chief form of transportation
- Only about half the people read a newspaper every day. The rest watch TV for news.
- Health problems facing North Americans are different than those in some other countries.
- Professional sports are an important part of the culture
- Dating is a social pastime
- Casual sexual relationships are common
- Men are often expected to share household duties in homes where both husband and wife work.

### **People from the United States, in general...**

- Are outspoken and appreciate candor
- Value innovation, industry, and integrity
- Appreciate a good sense of humor, including sarcasm
- Value freedom and independence, both as a nation and as an individual
- Do not stand close when conversing, maintaining about 2 feet of distance between individuals
- Are conscious of time and expect an appointment to begin promptly
- Consume large amounts of candy, ice cream, and other sweets
- Eat meat such as beef, pork, chicken, and other fowl in fairly large quantities, though dietary habits are changing with health concerns on the rise

## **What should I know about our hermanamiento?**

Getting specific information on your hermanamiento in Central America will be an ongoing process, especially because there will be changes in the communities over time. Staff begins by providing a brief profile of the community when the linkage was started. From there, staff will provide you with updates, pictures, and reports on their community

visits that take place between delegations. Try to learn all that you can through letter exchanges or any other means available, including phone calls if you have Spanish speakers available to translate. Sister Parish staff members are always available to courier letters between the north and south, and to translate correspondence as needed. Make sure that you have information from staff (and from past delegates or SP committee members, if this is not the first delegation to travel) about who is on the SP committee in your hermanamiento, who community leaders are, and a general history of your relationship together. Gather information over time about your hermanamiento's history, geography, culture, etc, and be sure to share similar information about yourself and your group in your correspondence.

## How can I better understand my Central American hermanamiento from a spiritual perspective?

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Understanding the spiritual perspective of our Central American sisters and brothers is hard to do without understanding the basics about Liberation Theology. The following information is presented as an introduction to this topic. The first part was written by Sister Parish staff, and the second includes thoughts by Peter Eichten of St. Joan of Arc Catholic church in Minneapolis, MN.

### **A crash course on Liberation Theology**

For Catholics and non-Catholics alike, the influence of Liberation Theology in your hermanamiento is palpable, and it is important to understand where this comes from and how it has shaped the lives of your brothers and sisters. Most of you have heard of the Second Vatican Council in the early 1960s. This Council marks an overall shift in the theology of the Roman Catholic Church, from an emphasis on individual salvation and private worship (i.e. the priest with his back to the people, speaking in Latin) to an emphasis on the grassroots church- the social aspects of the Gospel message, the active involvement of people in worship and the need for the Church to focus on working for socioeconomic justice in the real world, rather than remaining within the spiritual realm. The Catholic Church focused more and more on the social aspects of Jesus' ministry, and therefore, the connection between one's faith and one's actions became more important than ever. In fact, faith demands that one be responsible for one's actions.

Thus, it was not surprising that in 1968, at the Medellin Council, in Colombia, the Latin American bishops took to heart the social message of the Gospel, and made even more obvious connections between Jesus' message, current events, and the overall situation between the poor and the rich in Latin America- the need for institutional reforms, and the need for the Catholic Church in Latin America to work for social action, church reform, and raising awareness on social issues. The banner of the Catholic Church became a "preferential option for the poor," a concept that was considered subversive by the conservative, and the rich. It is important here to note that in many countries, El Salvador and Guatemala included, the Catholic Church and its hierarchy had had long-standing ties to the military and the rich. Both groups, as the traditional oppressors, felt betrayed by this "sudden" switch to focusing on the poor. The Catholic Church's demands that unfair socioeconomic practices be reformed were perceived as an attack on the local governments and traditional power structures, and labeled "communist, subversive, and revolutionary".

One concrete result of the Medellin Conference was the formation of Christian Base Communities- of active social (Faith) formation and organization of the poorer sectors of societies. Clergy took an active role, coming down from the altar, being in solidarity with the people, and the training the laity to take on leadership within the local churches. Bible studies shifted away from memorizing church doctrine to actively reflecting on the role that Jesus played as a revolutionary who shook up the dominant system of his times, and how this applied in the here and now.

### **Liberation Theology: An Introduction**

*Excerpted from a presentation by Peter Eichten*

In the parable of the Good Samaritan (reproduced below), Jesus reveals the mission of the Church - to serve. This parable shows us the starting point for thinking and living our mission, which is our neighbor. By asking, "Who is my neighbor?" as the Pharisee did, we are really centering on ourselves, and asking, "Whom shall I love and whom not?" The mission, in these terms, is only an extension of oneself. But Jesus turns the question around, asking, "Who is the neighbor of the victim oppressed?" The answer from the parable is, the

one who approaches that victim with compassion. A Neighbor is someone who has burst the bonds of self and stooped down toward the abandoned other!

Jesus' mission was to first liberate the oppressed (Lk 4:17-21; Lk 7:23; Mk 7:37; Acts 10:38), then to heal the sick (Lk 5:26), then to forgive sinners (Mt 9:13), and finally to serve (Mt 20:28). This is one of the areas where Liberation Theology gets into trouble with orthodoxy—the emphasis on the mission of Jesus as above, NOT TO REDEEM! It is from this idea of Jesus as liberator, healer, servant, that Liberation Theology springs. It is a grassroots theology which comes from the lived experience of the people of Latin America, and speaks to their situation.

The key question for the church at the base is “What does it mean to be a Christian in a world of oppression?” The documents at Vatican II only served to reinforce what had already begun in the early fifties in Latin America --a real ownership of *being* church, of *being* church at the baser (the lowest/grassroots) level. While the documents fell short of the critical social awareness needed in places like Latin America, they did make a huge change in the direction of the church, placing it in the world!

Liberation Theology is unique in that it is a reflection on the concrete practice of liberation engaged in by the poor and by their allies in their struggle—it is not a reflection on the theoretical subject of liberation. It is a critical analysis of the social reality with the outlook of the poor as its starting point, but analysis is not an end in itself. (This is where many theologies stop.) The decisive moment is that of transforming activity.

In light of the practice of Jesus—which is to liberate, heal, forgive and serve—poverty is seen as neither innocent nor natural. It is the product of economic and sociopolitical systems. Therefore, it is not enough to simply condemn poverty. One needs to become active against it. Christians who are not poor have the responsibility to align themselves with the poor, to become instruments in the actualization of social justice through profound structural transformations of society; to overcome racism, classism, sexism, etc. One cannot transform society by simply changing one's heart, one must change the systems. As Christ ministered to the people who were marginalized by the Jewish law, we, too, must be ministers of compassion. We who have a voice must speak for the voiceless.

Although base Christian communities sprung up all over to give voice to the poor, they ultimately suffered persecution. Many people were arrested, tortured and martyred right in their own villages simply because they threatened the established power structure. However, the liberation perspective is having an effect throughout the world. It is the theology of poor, peripheral churches not only in Latin America but in Asia and Africa as well, where indigenous peoples have been held captive by the dominant cultures of the ex-colonists. There are those who combat this theology, accusing it of being Marxist and of seeking to politicize the faith—but these criticisms have not stopped Liberation Theology from spreading worldwide.

**NOTE:** July 1968 is considered the “birthday” of Liberation Theology, when Gustavo Gutierrez, who is understood as the Father of Liberation Theology, gave his address, “Toward a Theology of Liberation” in Chimbote, Peru.

#### **Luke 10:25-37 “The Good Samaritan”**

Just then a lawyer stood up to test Jesus. “Teacher, “he said, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?” He said to him, “What is written in the law? What do you read there?” He answered, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself.” And he said to him, “You have given the right answer; do this, and you will live.” But wanting to justify himself, he asked Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?” Jesus replied “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell into the hands of robbers, who stripped him, beat him, and went away, leaving him half dead. Now by chance a priest who was going down that road; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the others side. But a Samaritan while traveling came near him; and when he saw him, he was moved with pity. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, having poured oil and wine on them. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. The next day he took out two denarii’s, gave them to the innkeeper, and said, ‘Take care of him;



and when I come back, I will repay you whatever more you spend.’ Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?” He said, “the one who showed him mercy.” Jesus said to him, “go and do likewise.” (Text taken from the *Study Bible: New Revised Standard Version*, Augsburg Fortress, 1990)

**The following excerpt is taken from an Encyclical letter (i.e. written by the Pope) and which explains why the Roman Catholic Church has taken the stance that it has with regard to becoming more involved in social concerns and solidarity in the world. This may also help you to understand a bit more about why the Roman Catholic Church has been seen as “subversive” and therefore systematically repressed in countries like El Salvador and Guatemala in the 1970’s and 80’s.**

**Excerpt from *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* (on Social Concern) Encyclical Letter of the Pope John Paul II issued on December 30, 1987 English translation cited from <http://www.osjspm.org/cst/srs.htm>**

It is above all a question of interdependence, sensed as a system determining relationships in the contemporary world, in its economic, cultural, political and religious elements, and accepted as a moral category. When interdependence becomes recognized in this way, the correlative response as a moral and social attitude, as a "virtue", is solidarity. This then is not a feeling of vague compassion or shallow distress at the misfortunes of so many people, both near and far. On the contrary, it is a firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good; that is to say to the good of all and of each individual, because we are all really responsible for all. This determination is based on the solid conviction that what is hindering full development is that desire for profit and that thirst for power already mentioned. These attitudes and "structures of sin" are only conquered--presupposing the help of divine grace--by a diametrically opposed attitude: a commitment to the good of one's neighbor with the readiness, in the Gospel sense, to "lose oneself" for the sake of the other instead of exploiting him, and to "serve him" instead of oppressing him for one's own advantage (cf. Mt 10:40-42; 20: 25; Mk 10: 42-45; Lk 22: 25-27).

“The exercise of solidarity within each society is valid when its members recognize one another as persons. Those who are more influential, because they have a greater share of goods and common services, should feel responsible for the weaker and be ready to share with them all they possess. Those who are weaker, for their part, in the same spirit of solidarity, should not adopt a purely passive attitude or one that is destructive of the social fabric, but, while claiming their legitimate rights, should do what they can for the good of all. The intermediate groups, in their turn, should not selfishly insist on their particular interests, but respect the interests of others. . . .

Surmounting every type of imperialism and determination to preserve their own hegemony, the stronger and richer nations must have a sense of moral responsibility for the other nations, so that a real international system may be established which will rest on the foundation of the equality of all peoples and on the necessary respect for their legitimate differences. The economically weaker countries, or those still at subsistence level, must be enabled, with the assistance of other peoples and of the international community, to make a contribution of their own to the common good with their treasures of humanity and culture, which otherwise would be lost forever.

Solidarity helps us to see the "other" whether a person, people or nation not just as some kind of instrument, with a work capacity and physical strength to be exploited at low cost and then discarded when no longer useful, but as our "neighbor", a "helper" (cf. Gen 2: 18-20), to be made a sharer, on a par with ourselves, in the banquet of life to which all are equally invited by God. Hence the importance of reawakening the religious awareness of individuals and peoples.

### **HOMEWORK for Group leader:**

**Schedule a conference call with the Central American staff liaison who will be leading the delegation. This call should take place sometime during Session 4's orientation session. The call is a chance for delegates to ask any last minute questions before travel. Be sure that in the next**

**session you will have access to a speaker phone so that everyone can participate in the call or a computer that you can connect to Skype.**

If this is not your first delegation, invite past delegates to come to the first part of Session 4 to share their experiences with you. If this is your first delegation, coordinate with staff to have another group come in and share their experiences, when possible.

**For session 4, You will need the following supplies, a blindfold (bandanas work well), 1 box for every 2 people in the group, 1 pair of scissors for each pair, several rolls of cellophane tape, curling ribbon, and wrapping paper. This is an all day session, so please make sure that there are snacks, drinks, and food for everyone.**



**Christ is like a single body, which has many parts; it is still one body, even though it is made up of different parts. In the same way, all of us, whether Jews or Gentiles, whether slaves or free, have been baptized into the one body by the same Spirit, and we have all been given the one Spirit to drink. For the body itself is not made up of only one part, but of many parts. If the foot were to say, 'Because I am not a hand, I don't belong to the body,' that would not keep it from being a part of the body.**

**1 Corinthians 12:12-15**



## Session Four

*In this session you will discover answers to the following questions:*

- What has been the experience of other Sister Parish delegations?
- What should I expect the day of departure?
- What will we be doing throughout our trip?
- What will our accommodations be like?
- How can I best ensure my safety, health, and comfort?
- How will I communicate, knowing so little of the local language?
- Will I be able to take photos?
- Shall I bring gifts?
- Can we offer financial support?
- How shall I respond to street people who approach me for money?
- How can I communicate with family and friends back at home?
- What does my church and Sister Parish committee expect of me?
- How can I process all that I will experience?
- How can I be more sensitive to my host family's reality?
- How can I interact most effectively with my co-delegates and hosts?
- How can I make the trip personally successful?



**NOTE:** This is the last session before your trip. You may divide session 4 into two segments totaling 9 hours: 3 hours on Friday evening and 6 more on Saturday. Check with Sister Parish staff to see if they will be available for part of this session to answer last minute questions or concerns.

**Opening Activity:** After everyone introduces themselves briefly, the session may be initiated with the following activities:

**Check-in** **Directions:** Have group members take turns reading how to conduct a check-in in Appendix C and decide which approach to take. Then proceed as instructed in the Appendix.

**Biblical Reflection:** **Directions:** select a Bible passage of your choosing or use the suggested passage below. Follow the guidelines in Appendix B, How to reflect on Biblical passages.

**Jeremiah 1: 4-7:** “The Lord said to me, ‘I chose you before I gave you life, and before you were born, I selected you to be a prophet to the nations.’ I answered, ‘ Sovereign Lord, I don’t know how to speak, I am too young. But the Lord said to me, ‘Do not say that you are too young, but go to the people that I send you to, and tell them everything that I command you to say.’” (text taken from the *The Good News Bible: Catholic Study Edition*. New York: Stanier, 1979).





## What has been the experience of other Sister Parish delegations?

Other delegations which have preceded you in Central America and have experienced the same trepidation at this juncture in their trip preparation as you may feel now. Despite their concerns and fears, they survived their experience and grew as human beings as a result. We believe that hearing the stories of others who have been there lends comfort, and is an effective way to help you prepare yourself emotionally and spiritually. With that in mind, your group leader has invited a group who has already traveled (either from your own church or from another one) to share with you their experiences and insights.

**Directions:** Have the visiting group sit in a tight circle, then have your delegation sit in a looser circle around them. Ask the visitors to discuss among themselves what touched them most about the trip, what they observed that surprised them, how realistic their pre-trip fears were relative to the actual experience, what was most difficult for them while there and upon their return, what they learned, and how they may feel changed. Your role is that of an observer, listening only. After they have completed their discussion, feel free to ask questions.

NOTE: You can find many delegation stories on the Sister Parish website ([www.sisterparish.org](http://www.sisterparish.org)). Additional stories and videos from past delegations can also be found on [youtube.com](http://youtube.com)

## What should I expect the day of departure?

- Have a copy of the flight itinerary. Read it carefully **as a group**, noting the times of departure. Arrive at the airport at least two hours ahead of time, to allow adequate time to find the group, check-in, say a group prayer, bid friends and family members good-bye, etc.
- Clarify with Sister Parish staff anything that you do not understand at this point. **This is something that you can do through a conference call with the staff delegation leader.**
- You must go through customs when arriving at your destination country. You will fill out a customs declaration form while on the plane, which you will hand in after your passport has been stamped and you claim your luggage. **Most Sister Parish delegates do not carry anything with them that needs to be declared, and so you do not need to do more than just hand in your form and then meet the Sister Parish staff waiting for you outside the airport.** Ask staff for your destination address to write on your immigration form.
- You may be asked to open your luggage if customs officials request you to do so. Have your passport and ticket readily available to present, if asked.
- If you check luggage, **make sure that you have certain essentials with you** in a carry-on bag- such as medications, reading material, your passport, journal, water bottle, and one change of clothing (in case there is a delay with your luggage).
- Relax and rest as best you can. Wear comfortable clothing. Have a jacket or sweater handy to use as a pillow, blanket, or in case the airplane is cold.
- To minimize dehydration (and the possible constipation that goes with it), **drink lots of water** during the trip, and avoid drinking alcoholic beverages or beverages with lots of caffeine.
- Get up and move around on the flight.
- Jet lag is rarely an issue for travelers from the U.S. to Central America (there is not more than a few hours difference).
- Altitude and climate changes may require adjustments.



## What will we be doing throughout our delegation visit?

As mentioned in **Session 3**, your trip will include

- a) Orientation to the country and community that you will be staying in;
- b) 4-5 day stay in your hermanamiento;
- c) Transitional period at the end which will include some fun activities and a debriefing.

You will usually travel as a group in private rental vehicles, either with a trusted, hired driver, or with your Sister Parish staff as chauffeurs. You will be accompanied at all times by the Sister Parish staff that lives in Central America. The **orientation** period takes into consideration your interests, as well as past experience of previous delegations and the Sister Parish staff. The goal is to provide you with a thorough and accurate overview of the country and hermanamiento, within the time constraints of your visit.

During your visit to your **hermanamiento**, your time will be devoted to:

- Building personal and communal relationships through home stays
- Joint meetings with the community members and
- Involvement in the daily activities of community life, including shared recreation, worship, and daily food and tasks.

You will tour the community to learn more about its resources, projects, etc. Sister Parish staff will act as interpreters (both in terms of language and culture). They will interpret all meetings and joint activities, and they will schedule time to visit each home where pairs of delegates are staying to interpret for you and the host family. Most of the time, you will operate as a group, but there will be some time for you to spend with host families. You will also have some time daily as a group to pray and reflect with staff.

**ADVICE DURING MEETINGS:** Please be prepared for changes in the program and meetings that start later than scheduled. People often wait for leaders or for a small crowd to gather before arriving. Everyone shakes hands or greets each other in some way at the beginning, even if they arrive late. You can use the time to journal, relax, or talk to each other. Be prepared for welcome speeches, thank-you's and good-byes that are very polite, but may feel repetitive to you. Speeches in general tend to be long, repetitive, and sometimes vague or very indirect. They may be even longer with translation, and in indigenous communities, there will be double translation (i.e. the indigenous language to Spanish to English). Please be patient as this is the proper way within the culture to show respect for honored guests.

Delegates are paired together (or in small groups) when assigned to host families. Consideration is given to at least one person being able to speak some Spanish (when applicable). You can decide among your group who would like to be paired together, keeping in mind that you may have to share a bed, and that same sex couples should therefore be paired together when possible (unless there is a married couple or life partners traveling in the group). Host families are reimbursed for food, so you should not worry about whether or not there is enough for a family to eat while you are there.

Upon arrival in the community there is usually some sort of welcome celebration to help everyone get to know each other, and staff will also be sure that you learn the names of your host families and community leaders.

At some point each day, time for prayer and reflection will be planned with Sister Parish staff. Some groups assign delegates to lead either daily devotions, or certain reflection topics, some prefer that Sister Parish staff handle this. Please let the Central American staff know how you would prefer to handle reflection time.

## What will our accommodations be like?

### **Housing**

In keeping with the philosophy of Sister Parish, Inc., your accommodations during the orientation and debriefing period of the delegation (i.e. beginning and end) will be simple but adequate. Dorm-style sleeping arrangements and simple meals are typical. During your stay with you hermanamiento, you will live with host families and adopt their lifestyle. Often, the houses are very simple concrete, wooden, or bamboo structures with one or two rooms that are very small by Western standards (the house style will depend on where you will be, i.e. urban or rural, Guatemala or El Salvador, indigenous or ladino communities). Privacy is difficult in homes - therefore, bathing and changing clothes may be difficult or uncomfortable for you. Most host families are gracious enough to leave the house or room when you need to change. You must sleep with clothes on and you may also need to bathe with strategic parts of your body covered, since you may bathe in semi-public (or very public) conditions. Which part of your body should be covered varies from community to community. The packing lists **in Appendix G** will indicate to you what clothing you should bring for sleeping and bathing.

### **Food**

It is common for the guests to be served (and to eat) before the family does, or only with male members of the family. The women normally serve everyone before eating, and may not ever sit at the table with you. This varies from family to family and village to village. It is much more likely in the Guatemalan indigenous villages for the women to remain “behind the scenes,” cooking and tending to children while you eat in a separate room. Sometimes, the reason that guests are served first is very practical- there may not be enough plates or utensils or chairs for a family to sit down together, so eating may be in shifts. You may want to excuse yourself when you are finished eating to allow someone else to sit and eat. You can still remain in the room and visit though.

Some hosts will not allow you to help with anything, especially if you are a male guest, but you can ask (**¿Puedo ayudar?**) and indicate that you wish to share in the chores. Often, a good strategy is to ask your host family to “show you” how they do things

(“**enseñame como**”), and then you have an excuse to join in. One task that people almost always let delegates help with is making tortillas. Most will have fun showing you how to make them, and this is a good way to connect with your host mother. Staff can help make sure your message gets across that you want to learn and help out.

Every effort will be made to house married delegates or life partners together. This may not, however, always be possible.

### **Bathrooms, toilets, stools, latrines .....**

In terms of “facilities,” there is a wide variety in the hermanamientos in both Guatemala and El Salvador. Even in Guatemala’s urban hermanamientos, some people will have indoor plumbing while others may have a latrine. Some may have porcelain toilets but no water connected to them for flushing (in which case a bucket of water needs to be poured in after use, to flush waste away). Toilet bowls may or may not have seats to sit on. Some communities (especially in Guatemala) will have outhouses or latrines, either typical ones or dry composting ones. **Your staff accompanier will always show you how to use whatever facility is available to you in your host home.**

**YOU SHOULD NEVER THROW TOILET PAPER IN THE TOILETS, EVEN  
IN THE CITIES.**

### **Bathing**

Shower facilities will be available to you at the beginning and end of your trip (but in El Salvador, there may not be hot water). In the Guatemala Sister Parish Center, there are shower stalls with (limited) hot water, except when there are local water shortages. Bathing while in your hermanamiento may be limited, due to water supply issues, and will almost always be cold water. Water for cleaning and bathing can be limited, even in communities where there is “running water,” since the water may only “run” for an hour or two a day. Many families in both El Salvador and Guatemala have open water basins/sinks called a “**pila**”, (pronounced PEE lah) and when there is water, this *pila* is filled up, and then water is scooped out with a bucket or small plastic container. The *pila* has one or two flat sinks on either side of the deep water reserve. These are used for washing clothes and dishes and often this is where one bathes, standing in front or to the side of the *pila* and pouring water

over oneself. The water stored in the *pila* should be kept very clean and you should be careful not to waste water. Staff will give you a *pila* lesson when you arrive in-country.

In some rural communities (in **Guatemala**), you may actually bathe in a river or stream with your host family or other delegates. Women should be covered from their **waist to their mid thighs**. Guatemalan women may bathe with their breasts uncovered. Men should wear shorts. We do not recommend that women wear bathing suits to bathe in these situations because, 1) showing the upper thighs is taboo in these communities and 2) in a women's bathing suit it can be hard to clean (and rinse) all the parts that you need to in a modest manner. The best thing to bring is a sports bra, and long, loose shorts, or a dark half slip, or even a sarong to tie around your waist to cover up the appropriate body parts according to cultural norms. See appropriate packing lists for details on your region (**Appendix G**).

### **Electricity**

Electricity may or may not be available, especially in Guatemala, although in El Salvador, there also might be times when the power may go out for a few hours during the rainy season. Most indigenous communities in rural Guatemala, where many hermanamientos are located, do **not** have electricity but they may have a diesel-powered generator to provide limited service in the evenings, especially for community events. In any case, regardless of where you travel, you should bring a flashlight along (handy for night trips to the latrines, which may not have lights, even if the house itself does.) Temperatures range from uncomfortably hot to unusually chilly (check with staff). Rains may be torrential during the rainy season, and it may be very dusty during the dry season. Bugs are usually inevitable.

### How can I best ensure my safety, health, and comfort?

Undoubtedly, many of you have concerns about traveling to Central America. However, Sister Parish staff would not hesitate to cancel the trip should something occur that would make it unduly dangerous to travel to a given area at a given time. This is one advantage of having staff live in Central America year round. They are aware of local events and situations that could affect a trip. As recommended earlier, make sure your

health insurance is up-to-date and is applicable in your destination country. You may also wish to take out special travel insurance, through a travel agent or your insurance agent.

Sister Parish staff meets with host families prior to the delegation visit to talk about all the basics of safe food preparation and safe drinking water. Staff will also make sure that large jugs of purified water are available so that you can refill your water bottle. The responsibility for making wise choices regarding your health and safety rests with you. While it is crucial to graciously accept the generous hospitality of your host and avoid offending them, following the guidelines below will help to keep you well. When in doubt, do not hesitate to ask the Sister Parish staff if something is ok to eat or drink.

### **DRINKING WATER**

Carry a water bottle with you at all times. Sister Parish staff will work hard to make sure you have access to potable water (bottled or boiled), but you will be responsible to see that your personal water bottle gets filled, refilled, and **stays clean** (alcohol wipes or wash and dry wipes are good for cleaning the mouth parts—an easy source for contamination). Dehydration is a risk when traveling in either a hot or mountainous climate, so make sure you drink adequate amounts of fluid (preferably non-caffeinated). Be wary of ice unless Sister Parish staff assures you it is safe, because it could have been made from impure water. To be extra cautious, use only purified water to brush your teeth. If you find yourself needing to purify your own water quickly, two drops of Iodine or Chlorine (bleach) in a quart of water will make it safe (many people find the taste of Iodine less objectionable than Chlorine, and a small bottle of Iodine is cheap and easy for one member to carry in a First Aid kit).

### **FOOD**

Sister Parish staff will be arranging for your meals as a group except when you are involved in home stays with families. Staff meets with host families prior to the delegation to cover the basics of safe food and water. **Nonetheless, please follow these guidelines:**

1. Food that is cooked or boiled is safe.
2. Fruit that you peel is safe (pack a pocket knife in checked luggage).
3. Eat only pasteurized or packaged dairy products.
4. Do not eat food sold by street vendors.
5. Avoid fresh vegetable salads unless you know the vegetables have been soaked in chlorine water (bleach) or are being sold in “tourist” restaurants (if in doubt, ask Sister Parish staff).

After saying all this, you are going to be hosted in homes and fed generously by families who were not raised from childhood on the “germ theory” as North Americans are. You will want to accept what they offer you (graciously) and this may involve violating some of these precautions. Only you can decide in that moment which is worse: to offend your host or to risk getting sick. Some Spanish phrases that might help you are: **No, gracias** (No, thank you); **Estoy lleno** [pronounced 'yeno'] (I'm full); or **Estoy enfermo** (I'm sick).

### **DIARRHEA**

It is not unusual for some delegates to have a little diarrhea, either caused by bacteria to which your bodies are not accustomed, or simply by a change in diet (more or less fiber than what you are accustomed to), or by eating foods that you don't normally eat (lots of eggs, salt, tortillas, and beans). Initially, Pepto-Bismol and a light diet with lots of clear liquids should be tried. Bananas, bread, crackers, sodas, clear soups are recommended.

**We discourage the use of Lomotil, Immodium, Paragoric, or similar medications because they prevent the body from getting rid of the offending organisms. In fact, we ask that you consult with Sister Parish staff before taking these medications. They may permit the use of such medications if a lengthy bus or van trip is to be taken. Please remember that, during the delegation visit, the staff has final authority on health issues because they have the experience and the responsibility.**

If diarrhea lasts more than 72 hours or is accompanied by a high fever or evidence of blood or pus in your stool, let staff know, and they will seek medical attention. There are good doctors, laboratories, and hospitals available.

### **HYGIENE**

- Sanitation in some areas of Central America is difficult because of the lack of amenities such as running water and sewage systems, so careful personal hygiene is a must.
- Wash your hands with soap and water (either letting them air dry or drying them with a clean towel) before eating, before preparing food, and after using the toilet or latrine.

- If you are not able to wash your hands with soap and water, the next best thing is to use hand sanitizer or antibacterial wet wipes.
- Short fingernails are more sanitary than long ones.
- We recommend that you take advantage of **soap and water to clean your hands** whenever possible, and not to depend solely on hand sanitizer, because this will not remove the dust and dirt. Since you will use your hands to eat tortillas, and sometimes other food, the hand sanitizer will leave a bad taste on your food.

For your own comfort, carry a roll of toilet paper with you, since it is not always available in rural communities (especially in Guatemala, though it is widely available in El Salvador), and what **IS** available may be rough on the skin. Please deposit paper in the waste baskets or boxes that are usually placed beside the latrine seat or toilet. In few cases, you will throw the paper into the latrine, but staff will advise you if this is ok to do.

We also recommend that you carry sunscreen and a hat or baseball cap with you each day. The sun in Central America is very strong (you are suddenly much closer to the Equator), even on cloudy days, and unless you do not have fair skin, you will burn very quickly. This is not the time to work on your tan.

### **MALARIA and DENGUE**

Malaria is present in some areas of Guatemala and El Salvador. Dengue is present at certain times of the year in almost all Sister Parish communities in both Guatemala and El Salvador. Both diseases are transmitted by infected mosquitoes and can be prevented by using insect repellent, or by covering exposed areas of skin. DEET is the most effective repellent, though we do not recommend using concentrations higher than 30% DEET. Higher concentrations make you sweat (and therefore dehydrate more quickly), and make it easier to get a sunburn. There have not been cases of malaria reported in the Chalatenango district of El Salvador for many years, (where the Salvadoran hermanamientos are located).

In Guatemala, the tropical (hot) areas of the Ixcán and Izabal are areas where malaria is present, so you may want to consider taking Chloroquine prophylaxis as a precaution. We recommend that you check with the CDC, a travel clinic, and your own doctor to discuss whether or not this is advisable to take. If you do take this medication, it



does make your skin more sensitive to the sun, so sunscreen is even more important to use every day.

There is no preventative medication for dengue fever, which is most common during the rainy season (May through November). The best prevention is covering up and using repellent. It is a viral infection that usually lasts a week.

### **BAGGAGE**

Keep your baggage minimal and easy to manage/carry. While baggage with wheels is very handy in the airports, do not expect that you will be able to use the wheels and pull your luggage in your hermanamiento, and maybe not even in the capital cities, since sidewalks are full of holes or are non-existent. You might want to challenge yourself to see how much you can live without and bring only carry-on luggage. The maximum dimensions of carry-on luggage are 22” long by 13” wide by 9” high for soft sided luggage, and slightly less for hard-shell suitcases. You can also carry on a purse or smaller bag. Limiting the number of bags and things that you carry makes you less of a target for random theft and pickpockets. Also, lugging around large heavy bags in a hot climate or on a rough path is very uncomfortable, to say the least.

#### **TIPS:**

- Roll, don't fold, your clothes
- Enclose medications, toiletries, and small items in several clear plastic Ziploc bags
- Label luggage, inside and out, with your full name, home address, including destination address, and phone numbers.
- To help identify your luggage, affix a strip of fluorescent tape or some other easily recognizable mark.

### **MONEY, DOCUMENTS, THEFT, AND EMERGENCIES**

If there is a place for securing documents and cash where you are staying during the orientation process, staff will advise you (for those traveling to Guatemala, all important papers will be locked in the Sister Parish Center's office during your stay). Otherwise, carry your documents and cash in a money belt worn under your clothing. You should carry a copy of your passport with you, and leave one at home, in case it is lost or stolen, since the

copy will help facilitate its replacement at the US Embassy. Keep a small amount of cash in an accessible pocket so you don't have to pull out and open your money belt in public, which could place you at risk for pickpockets. Be alert on the streets and in restaurants. Take special care of camera bags and packs and keep a leg through your pack straps while seated in public places. While traveling, do not leave valuables unattended in the van, bus, or truck. While in the Sister Parish community, do not leave valuables in plain sight or unattended. In general the risk for theft is very slight in your hermanamiento, but not everyone in the community is involved with Sister Parish.

- ➔ Carry emergency numbers and any medical alert information with you.
- ➔ Know how to contact the US Embassy in the area you are visiting. Staff also has these numbers available. Staff will carry a cell phone, although not all areas have signal. When there is a signal, international calls can easily be made on a cell phone, should the need arise. You can check with your cell phone company as to whether roaming services are available in Central America. In many cases, this is quite expensive, while international calls from one of the staff's cell phone is usually \$0.10 per minute. At some point on your trip, you may also have access to e-mail to contact home.
- ➔ Stay together as a group and be especially alert to traffic. It may not stop for pedestrians.
- ➔ Be mindful of your surroundings, but not paranoid. Please respond immediately to staff requests while out on the street. They are always familiar with the areas that you are traveling in and are always mindful of your security, and they may notice things that you don't.

**Note:** You will receive more information from Sister Parish staff when you arrive in Central America.

### How will I communicate, knowing so little Spanish?

Knowing even a few Spanish words or phrases will be very meaningful to your hosts. Reflect on what you would like your message to be to your brothers and sisters in

your hermanamiento—friendship, love, respect, equality, concern, etc. and then think about how you can communicate that. What you cannot express verbally, you can convey through a smile, facial expressions, touching (when appropriate), drawings, gestures, singing, and being aware of the image that you are presenting. Make an effort to speak some Spanish, however basic and imperfect, and to learn and use people's names. Communicate with your hosts non-verbally - helping with household tasks when appropriate, sharing photos from home, and being warm, friendly, and interested.

### Will I be able to take photos?

IN YOUR HERMANAMIENTO: Videotaping or taking photos of your hosts, their families, their community and day-to-day activities is a good way to bring your experience with your hermanamiento back to your congregation, however, you should ask permission first (**una foto, por favor**). If someone requests money from you in exchange for their permission, politely decline and do not take the picture.

#### **TIPS:**

- Respect the feelings of others. People may not want their pictures taken or they may want you to take them only after they have had the opportunity to dress up for the picture. Some people prefer to pose for pictures and are uncomfortable with candid ones. When in doubt, imagine yourself being photographed in similar circumstances in your home.
- Consider your motivation for taking the photo. The people we photograph will very quickly sense why we are taking it. Are we so eager to illustrate a condition (poverty, oppression, grief) that we find it difficult to see people as individuals with feelings? Are we being sensitive to their underlying emotions and realities? Until we can answer some of these questions, we may not have the right to take pictures.
- When you do take pictures, please print copies to send to your sister community after the delegation (People often remember *all* of the photos you take and would like to see them). Including yourself in some of the pictures will provide you and your host family with a meaningful memento of your visit. The children in the

community may want their pictures taken (over and over) – you can limit how many you take.

- Avoid stereotypical photos. While you may want photos that show some of the hardships that people endure, be sure to take pictures of the times you share together as sister communities.
- Please ask permission before posting pictures on social media sites (and, in some cases, before posting on a blog or website, depending on the photograph and what it depicts). With permission, photos are a great tool for sharing on a blog or website dedicated to informing fellow church members about the trip and the relationship. Talk to staff if you have doubts.

#### DURING THE ORIENTATION AND DEBRIEFING PARTS OF THE TRIP.

When out on the street, assign someone in the group to be the photographer, and then share copies among you. Not having several cameras with you will help to prevent theft on the street. There may be times when you want to take a picture but staff may ask you not to, please respect this request. People we don't know understandably may not want us to take their picture. Also, do not take any pictures of military installments, equipment, patrols, or vehicles. Likewise, do not take pictures of police or private security officers. In some areas of the airport, pictures are forbidden (such as while going through Immigration and Customs). This is true in the United States too.

Don't be afraid to leave behind your camera for the day. It will give you the opportunity to concentrate on observing, listening, and enjoying your surroundings. Sometimes a camera can be a barrier to really interacting with people.

### Shall I bring gifts?

Because of our focus on relationships, solidarity, and mutuality, Sister Parish discourages gift-giving as a general rule, except in the case of something small from one community to another (such as something symbolic for the church building or community center). If you decide to do this, it should be something of little monetary value that is of **benefit to the entire community**, such as a banner, a plaque, a cross, etc.

Personal gift-giving (except for small mementos, such as photos) is strongly discouraged between delegates and host families or between delegates and their friends in the community. This is because it can be divisive, cause jealousies, and convey positions of power. Over the years, when delegates have chosen to ignore this advice, staff has witnessed problems and conflicts, so please do take this request seriously.

**Directions:** Read and reflect on the following passage from Henri Nouwen...

**"Giving is Receiving"** ... Mission is not only to go and tell others about the risen Lord, but also to receive that witness from those to whom we are sent. Often mission is thought of exclusively in terms of giving, but true mission is also receiving. If it is true that the Spirit of Jesus blows where it wants, there is no person who cannot give that Spirit. In the long run, mission is possible only when it is as much receiving as giving, as much being cared for as caring. ... Without this mutuality of giving and receiving, mission and ministry easily become manipulative or violent. When only one gives and the other receives, the giver will soon become an oppressor and the receivers, victims. But when the giver receives and the receiver gives, the circle of love, begun in the community of the disciples, can grow as wide as the world." *From Henri Nouwen (1994). **With Burning Hearts: A Meditation on the Eucharistic Life.** Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, page 89.*

### Can we offer financial support?

The primary focus of Sister Parish is the building of community between and within Central America and North America. Past experience has demonstrated that offering aid in the form of project assistance or financial assistance **at the outset of the relationship** can communicate the wrong message (charity, among other things), raise unrealistic expectations, and create the potential for disunity and division. The whole experience of Sister Parish focuses on empowering both faith communities to grow together, learn together, and value both each other's culture as well as one's own. This empowerment cannot easily happen in a relationship that is based on one-sided giving.

We strongly believe that the main focus is being together, not "doing for" someone else. It is very hard in the North American culture to be exposed to poverty or even to different ways of doing things without jumping in and offering a "better" way, but we ask

you to do just that. There may come a time, after a solid and healthy relationship is well-established, that the Central American hermanamiento will submit a “project” for consideration by their northern brothers and sisters. Sister Parish has developed guidelines to help make sure that projects are 1) Mutually beneficial in some way to North and South; 2) that Central Americans are empowered to prioritize their own needs and to create solutions for them; 3) that the benefit is maximized in a community and is not something that only benefits leaders or a few families or individuals. We recommend that hermanamientos travel at least twice and are in relationship for one to three years before the subject of possible projects is broached.

It is tempting, especially after a delegation visit, to come up with your own list of things that you want to see done in the community to better the lives of your brothers and sisters, but through almost two decades of experience, it is clear that the most successful projects are those that the Central Americans ask for themselves based what they identify as needs. We may want XX community to have a water project, for example, but if it is not the idea of the hermanamiento, it may fail, and that could jeopardize the relationship. It is important to highlight here that in many Central American countries, it is impolite to refuse someone, so if a US group “offers” a project, they will say yes, even if it has not been defined as a priority for the community because they don’t want to offend the US group. Wisdom says to be patient and let the hermanamiento unite and decide, if and when the time comes, what needs could be met by a potential project.

Another important cultural note here is that it is not necessarily “rude” in Central America to ask someone for financial aid or for a gift. In some cases, it may be sign of respect to ask a delegate for something. While staff orients host families and the hermanamientos, occasionally, a delegate is put in an awkward position when someone asks for money. It is important that you politely decline, and let staff know about this so that they can help explain. What staff will talk with the person about is that any assistance given will have to come in the form of a project that is discussed and approved on a community level. Staff will then encourage the person to talk with their local Sister Parish committee about their needs.

Do not promise something that you cannot deliver, and remember that you are a representative of a much larger group, so you alone cannot make decisions with another

individual about projects or financial assistance. Most people will not be offended by saying “no” or even that their request must be something of benefit to the majority, and must be approved by their local committee before it is passed along to the North American hermanamiento. Do not let the impulse of the moment prompt you to offer assistance. Your visit is not meant to be an occasion for establishing financial links between you and your hermanamiento.

What we, who have so much, may intend as a spontaneous expression of generosity, could be interpreted as either demeaning or “playing favorites”. Your host highly values your willingness to come and learn about his/her life. An open, friendly, and humble attitude will be more appreciated than a thoughtless or impulsive display of abundance. What is perfectly acceptable is to empathize with the expressed need or desire.

### **Three Action Responses Exercise:**

**Directions.** Study the responses below along with the agencies and programs that typically carry out that action, and as a group discuss which of the three is most consistent with the Sister Parish philosophy and why. Talk about the self-esteem issues that emerge from giving and receiving charity, teaching and receiving instruction, or having your rights protected as world citizens.

As a person of faith you are called to help others who may need your assistance. In general, there are three action responses, all of which demonstrate compassion and concern.

1. Give the hungry a fish and you feed them for a day. (CARE, Red Cross, Emergency Relief, Food pantries)
2. Teach them how to fish and you feed them for a lifetime (Food for Friends, Peace Corps, Work training, Oxfam America)
3. Move over and share the waters. (Political Systems, Legislature, Third World Debt Relief)

## How should I respond to street people who may approach me for money (outside of my hermanamiento?)

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How do you respond at home? Whether you give to people who beg is a personal decision, usually based on whether you feel the need is legitimate. In Central America, where a far greater percent of the population lives in poverty, any request for a donation is probably based on authentic need. Be forewarned, however, that should you give to one person in view of others who might also have need, you will probably be approached by them as well. This is particularly the case with children. If you do not wish to give, you can say “no” and just walk away. Also be aware that while you are in the capital cities, pulling out money on the street may call attention to yourself and the group.

## How can I communicate with family and friends back home?

The best options are to use the telephone, e-mail, or voice over protocol (such as Skype), when available. Standard mail is not a viable option since it is very slow service. If you are in **Guatemala**, you will have access to e-mail and Skype at the Sister Parish Center (where you will be the first two and last two days). You can “call” another computer for free if they already have an ID on Skype and access to Internet, or you can “call” a phone line in the US for \$0.02 per minute.

If you are in **El Salvador**, you will be sent the phone number of the guest house where you will stay during the orientation part of your trip. If time allows, you may be able to go to an internet café and send e-mails from there at the beginning or end of your trip.

In either case, collect calls are not recommended as they can be very expensive. You can usually buy phone cards locally for making international calls.

Leave a copy of your itinerary with folks at home. Wherever possible, include a list of local (Central American) contact names, phone numbers, and e-mail addresses, and the days you will be with them. Carry a copy of your itinerary with you in case you are separated from the group.

You may also wish to develop a phone tree for family members or set up a special e-mail list for writing home. Don't plan on having much access to communication back home. Please leave cell phones behind when you travel to the community you'll be visiting



so that you can focus on the experience and leave behind the stress of US life. Many delegates say it is a liberating feeling to be phone-free for a week!

### What does my church and the Sister Parish committee expect of me?

It is important to establish a specific objective for the delegation, which will direct its activities, dialogue, and reflections while in Central America. The objective, for example, might be to develop a joint mission statement collaboratively with the Central American hermanamiento, which will serve as a guide to evaluate the appropriateness of future committee activities once the delegation has returned. It may be as simple as “to get to know the history of the community”. Whatever it is, write it down and be sure that everyone traveling knows what the objective is.

In general, the role of delegates is to gather information, build solidarity and help develop the relationship between the two churches, to “widen the circle”, so to speak. Delegates represent the Sister Parish committee and the rest of the congregation but do not necessarily make decisions on their behalf. It is usually best for delegates to defer decision-making until their return home. Delegates’ experience, impressions, and recommendations are essential, but the involvement of non-traveling committee members and other interested individuals in your church is just as important.

Unless people other than the delegates are involved too, the relationship can become insular and relegated to those who have actually traveled to Central America. The input of people other than delegates also provides a fresh perspective and may help protect against decisions which could inadvertently be divisive for either hermanamiento. In addition, deferring decisions until the return home provides an opportunity to gather more information such as budget constraints, for example, and to make better, less subjective choices.

### **Trip Roles**

**Directions:** Review the suggested trip roles below and get volunteers for each function. Record the names and key responsibilities of each volunteer and share this with the Sister Parish staff liaison when the group arrives in Central America.

To help assure that your trip runs smoothly, Sister Parish recommends that you designate people from your group to assume certain tasks or responsibilities during your delegation trip.

- **Logistics:** to coordinate specific arrangements in cooperation with the Sister Parish staff, delegates, and to facilitate adjustments where needed.
- **Worship/ Reflections:** To coordinate group devotions, meal blessings, and guide the group's spiritual reflection and theological insights throughout the trip. Staff can also do this- just let us know! If someone from your group would like to lead the daily reflections, please allow staff to facilitate at least a couple of them.
- **Shepherd:** To coordinate group community life, make sure that everyone is getting along well, and help staff to gather delegates for meetings, etc.
- **Photography/ video:** Document the Sister Parish experience for sharing with the rest of the delegation when the delegation has returned, for uploading onto the Sister Parish blog or your church's website.
- **Journaling/Recording:** To capture the Sister Parish experience in written or audio form, both for sharing with the rest of the church in the north when the delegation returns, for uploading onto the Sister Parish website or weblog, and to help the delegation interpret and evaluate their experience together. This is also helpful in providing continuity for the next delegation that travels.

### How can I process all that I will experience?

Once you arrive in your destination country, your senses will be flooded with new sights, smells, sounds, thoughts, and emotions. Journaling will help you to capture all that you experience. Your impressions, observations, interpretations, and feelings and also help you to distinguish between them. This journal can also help you to remember, evaluate, and process your trip. Noting your feelings is especially important as they are a barometer of what you are experiencing internally and are the starting point for understanding your personal reaction to a situation.

After several days of making entries, look back over what you have written for recurring themes. If you started your journal as part of your pre-trip preparations, as suggested in Session one, you can compare your earlier fears, expectations, and hopes with your actual experience. Discrepancies between the two are often personally insightful.

**Additional items that you may want to include in your journal:**

- Notes from speakers
- Specific quotes which impact you
- Your day to day agenda and personal highlights
- Sights, sounds, and smells that you are experiencing
- Questions that arise
- Stories, poems and prayers that you hear and especially like
- Sketches of what you see
- Hopes and visions you have for people you meet and for loved ones back home
- Commitments you make to yourself or others, especially as they relate to your life back home
- Spanish words that you hear and don't understand, or new words that you learn
- Customs that are different from yours
- Conversations with and reactions of your hosts
- Insights regarding things that your culture takes for granted
- Things that you are learning about yourself



**Observation and interpretation exercise:**

*(Excerpted from Widening the Lens: An Orientation Guide to International Travel, by Meredith Sommers Dregni/ Center for Global Education).*

**Directions:** Look closely at the photograph below. Jot down at least 10 things that you see. Individually, read back to the group what you observed. After everyone

has shared his/ her list, read the following definitions of observation and interpretation and review your lists again, noting which items are actually observations and which are interpretations or assumptions.



Observations: relate to observable facts. For example, in the photo, there is a crowd of people standing around.

Interpretations: are the meanings we give to our observations. For example, you may say that the people are unhappy. This is an interpretation.

(They are waiting in line to grind their corn for tortillas).

During the first few days of your trip, pay close attention to observation and to accurately describe what you see and hear, as well as how you feel. After a few days, start working on your interpretative and analytical skills. When you describe situations and people you see, be sure to clarify the difference between that which you observe and the interpretation that you make about it.

Generalizations, interpretations and analysis without sufficient data or understanding of the rules and norms of another culture are dangerous. For example, in some cultures women laugh when they are deeply embarrassed. Upon seeing this occur, we might conclude, using our own cultural norms, that these women are happy, when in fact the opposite may be true. In the above picture, the people may appear to be very serious, or

even unhappy. However in this particular culture, “putting on a serious face” for a photograph is the norm. Smiling or laughing for a candid shot is considered strange or even inappropriate.

Take time to begin to understand the culture of your hermanamiento before trying to analyze situations. Much of North American culture trains us to look for solutions to problems. In another culture this can cause us to jump to “solutions” without really experiencing or understanding the problem.



### **Two women exercise:**

**Directions:** Look closely at the drawing on the left. Do you see an old woman or a young woman. Study the picture until you find both.

This exercise show that the same picture may be viewed in different ways, just as the same situation may be viewed in different ways. It also shows that it may be difficult to see something differently once you see it in a certain way. You may need help from another person to see the other view. One of the goals of the Sister Parish experience is to open you to new points of view. As you discover new ways of looking at things, be sure to note them in your journal.

### **Group Sharing**

In addition to journaling, sharing what you have experienced with co-delegates at some point during each day during reflection time is another important way to process. While you may feel a sense of risk or discomfort discussing your innermost thoughts, hopes, struggles etc., we encourage you to try and overcome this. The potential benefits of

group reflection far outweigh the feelings of vulnerability for most people. As you listen to others, turn off the urge to compete or to fix, and avoid the temptation to interrupt, teach, or judge.

### **Benefits of Group Reflection time**

- ✓ Self-knowledge
- ✓ Expression and clarification of personal feelings
- ✓ Support, encouragement, and affirmation
- ✓ Learning from each other's experiences and reactions
- ✓ Insights from group wisdom
- ✓ Opportunity to explore the meaning of faith in one's life
- ✓ Assistance in seeing beyond one's own blind spots
- ✓ Help in finding significance and purpose of experience
- ✓ Sharing witnesses to our solidarity, as well as opening us to one another and strengthening us as a group

### **How can I be more sensitive to my host family's reality?**

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What are the things which fill your day-to-day life? Traffic jams, meeting deadlines, work, driving your kids to activities, shopping, getting together with friends, reading the paper, cleaning the house, doing volunteer work, having the car serviced... We all have routines and responsibilities which keep us busy. But our reality may be different from that of many of our brothers and sisters in Central America, where the health and welfare of one's family is often an all-consuming concern. The simulation exercise below is designed to help you better understand that reality.

**The Caal Family exercise-** updated and adapted for Sister Parish. Originally from Meredith Sommer's *Rigoberta Menchu: The Prize that Broke the Silence* (1992)- Resource Center for the Americas Curriculum.

**Directions:** Ask for 6 volunteers to be members of the Caal family. Have them place their chairs in a small "family circle". If you have enough people, form two families of 6. Ask each person to choose the role of one of the family members and to read out loud "the Caal Family" and their individual roles.

Review the situations facing the Caals and as a family unit work through the problems and come up with responses and decisions. (If you did not have enough people to make up a second family, have people share roles, trading off for each new situation.)

Family members are to seek decisions that benefit everyone as much as possible. Each situation should take between 5 and 15 minutes.

**NOTE:** Although the Caals are an indigenous family in Guatemala, their situation could be representative of a poor or marginalized family in any of the places where Sister Parish has linkages.

### **INDIGENOUS FAMILY LIFE IN GUATEMALA: THE CAAL FAMILY**

We are members of the Caal family. We are subsistence farmers in the lowland areas of northeastern Guatemala. Our great grandparents say that our family has always lived here, that we come from this earth. We believe that we have the right to go on living here because this is where our ancestors are buried.

We are indigenous people. We are Maya Q'eqchi's. We speak the Q'eqchi' language and practice Q'eqchi' customs. We wear traditional clothing that helps us to teach our history to our children and to maintain our culture.

Our house is made of bamboo and wooden slabs. The roof is tin and when it rains it is very noisy. We try to keep the house clean because we all live in one room. We do our cooking in a separate room, and use wood, but firewood is scarce. The nearby hills are stripped bare because everybody uses wood. We do not have electricity, except when the community buys diesel to run a small generator for an hour or two at night. We do not have running water in our home, but we do have a faucet in our yard and an hour or two each day we fill-up our water jugs and a large basin, so that we have water throughout the day.

On our tiny plot of land, we raise most of our food. We grow corn for our tortillas, which the women make each day. For lunch and dinner, we eat **frijoles** ( black beans) or an egg with the tortillas. Sometimes we buy rice or pasta, and for special occasions we eat chicken soup. In season, we have tomatoes, cacao (where cocoa comes from), plantains, bananas, chili peppers, and oranges. Although there is not a great deal of variety, we are healthy when we have enough food. We also grow some cardamom to sell to the trucks that come here. We are not sure what it is for.

There are some things that we need to buy, such as firewood for cooking. The sun goes down around 6 pm year round, so when the generator is not on , we buy candles so that we have light in the evening. We have no insurance of any kind, so we try to save a few **quetzales** (cents) each week for emergencies. We also have to pay rent for the land that we grow our food on.

Nearby, there are huge coffee plantations where we can find work. These lands are owned by rich people who live in Guatemala City or Germany or even the United States. Recently, the land owners began to allow strip mining on the land that used to belong to our family. The mining company exports everything to the United States. We would really like to have that land to produce food for our family and we are really worried that the water supply will be contaminated because we have heard that they are using poisons.

Although we are very poor, we are able to live together with our community and carry on our traditional ways. It is here, on our sacred land, that we feel happy.

### **MEMBERS OF THE CAAL FAMILY**

I am **Grandmother** Caal. I have lived 55 years. That is a long time. Most indigenous people in Guatemala only live until about 60 years. I help to take care of the children. I love to tell them stories about our ancestors. I also tell them about our community so that the culture will not be forgotten. For many of us who have never had the chance to learn to read or speak Spanish, the only way to keep this knowledge of our past alive is through telling stories. There is an ancient sacred site near our community where we go for ceremonies. The Spanish built a church nearby, so we combine our traditions with that of the Catholic religion. After all, there is one sun that is our father in the sky- Our mother is the moon and she lights our way in the dark.



I am **Pedro** Caal, the father of the family and the son of Grandmother Caal. When I was 5 years old, I began to work in the fields with my father. I still cultivate one acre of that land. My two brothers have the two acres next to mine, and then I rent another plot that is 30 minutes away so that I can grow enough food for my family. I sell whatever food we don't eat, and the cardamom in order to buy sugar, coffee, oil, rice, and candles. I also work part of the year at the coffee plantation that is nearby. I work 10-12 hours a day, 6 days a week, for 3-4 months of the year. For this, I am paid \$3 per day, minus the food that I eat. I never went to school. It didn't seem important when I was young since I wanted to live like my parents and grandparents. The school was also pretty far away and we didn't have the money for shoes or books. I did learn some Spanish though. I would like my children to go to school so that maybe they will have more options in life. I am a leader in my community. If something happens to anyone in the whole community, I make sure that they are given care.

I am **Teresa** Caal . I am the mother of the family. I care for our children, I prepare and cook the food for the family. I wash our clothes in a nearby river and I keep our house clean. I also do the laundry for the plantation owner's family. I wash their clothes on the same rocks that I use for my family's clothing, but for theirs, I use detergent. They pay me \$5 per week to do this. I am a midwife and I attend to the women while they are pregnant. In our community, mothers give birth to their babies at home. A new baby is very significant for the entire community, not just the parents, and everyone helps to raise the children. I hope that my children will always live close by, because they are the most important part of my life. I love the fiestas that we have at planting and harvest time. Everyone in the community, even the small children, join in the ceremonies to thank the earth for the gift that it gives.

I am **Carlos** Caal. I am 14 years old. I am called the second father in our family because I am responsible for my brothers and sisters. I go to school in town. It takes me about a half hour to walk there from my home. The teacher wants me to learn better Spanish, but I am not so sure that it is necessary because all my friends speak Q'eqchi'. After school, I go with my friends to gather firewood to sell- Then I can buy school supplies or a soda. I like to spend my time outside learning about animals and plants. When I watch the clouds and listen to the wind, I can tell what the next day's weather is going to

be. When I grow up, I want to be a teacher and help the children to know the laws. Then we can stand up to the people that try to trick us out of our land and tell us that we have to move.

I am **Juanita** Caal. I am 12 years old. I have two brothers and a sister. I had two more sisters but they both died when they were babies. I used to go to school. I learned to write my name and to read a little. But I don't go to school anymore because I have to help my mother with the laundry for the plantation owner's family because we need the money. Our water comes from a stream about a mile from home. It is piped in a tube to our house for an hour a day, but we have to go there to wash clothes because the water is not enough to wash clothes with. I also help my mother to cook and to watch my younger brother and sister.

I am **Jose** Caal. I am eight years old, but most people guess that I am 5 or 6 because I am not very big. My parents say that I am small for my age because there wasn't enough food to eat when I was a baby. They say that is why I can't see very well either. I don't go to school. I am lucky that my grandmother lives with us. She helps take care of me and my baby sister when everyone goes away from home. She teaches me lots of things and then I make up songs to remember them. I like to sing and play a clay whistle that I made. It looks like a bird. I know all the songs of my community. Sometimes I play my songs for our fiestas. That makes me happy.

This is baby **Maria**. We all love to carry her around and play with her. Maria is six months old. We think she is very special.

### **SITUATIONS FACING THE CAAL FAMILY.**

1. Baby Maria is not gaining weight because she is not getting enough milk from her mother, Teresa, who breastfeeds her. Teresa has heard an advertisement on the radio for formula saying that it helps infants to become big and healthy. The cost of the formula would be \$50 per month (including transportation to the city to buy the formula), plus the cost of the firewood to sterilize the water to mix with the formula. On the other hand, if Teresa ate more eggs and chicken, she might have more milk for Maria. When there are eggs and meat for the family, Teresa always makes sure the children and Pedro eat their fill first. It would cost about \$45 per month for more chicken and eggs. If Teresa quits breastfeeding, she cannot begin again. To pay for this, Juanita has offered to go to live with

a wealthy family in a large town and do their laundry and cooking. Her wages would be \$50 per month. What do you think the family should do?

2. Grandmother is ill. A visit to the doctor is recommended but the doctor is 5 miles away. Medicine, if purchased, will cost \$25. To pay for this, Teresa has offered to sell her indigenous clothing to a tourist. Jose has offered to go farther into the mountains to cut firewood and sell it. Grandmother says that it is too expensive to go to a doctor no matter what. What do you decide to do?

3. Heavy rains have destroyed the bean and corn crops and you know that there won't be enough food for the family during the next 6 months. Carlos has offered to go and work on the coffee plantation instead of going to school. His wages would be \$10 per week since he is so young. Pedro could get a loan from the store in the plantation. The interest rate is 15% per month, which would be deducted from his wages. What other options do you have? What do you decide to do?

4. The heavy rains have hurt the coffee crop on the plantation where Pedro works. To preserve profits, the plantation owners refuse to pay the workers. In response, the workers organize a labor union and decide to go on strike. Unions are officially sanctioned in the Guatemalan constitution, but people are afraid since union leaders are harassed, and in the past, were killed by the army. If Pedro joins the union, he may lose his job and never recover lost wages. If he doesn't join, he will be ostracized by other workers and may lose their help and friendship. Whatever he decides, his wages are non-existent at this time and he cannot provide what the family needs. What do you decide?

5. Three of the above situations occur simultaneously to the family. They are short of food, baby Maria is not gaining weight, and the plantation owners are withholding wages. The family is in crisis. Pedro and Carlos offer to immigrate illegally to the United States. They will have to come up with \$2000 each to pay for the coyote who can take them through Mexico and across the Arizona desert. Half of the money must be paid in cash up front, but the rest can be paid off when they get jobs in the US. This will mean that they

will not be able to send money back to the family for several months. Since there are no phones in the area, they will not be able to communicate regularly with the rest of the family. The journey is riskier than ever since the US is building a wall and has increased patrols along the border. Several people have died recently, not only in the desert, but in Mexico, since often people are transported in small, unventilated spaces built into cargo trucks and drug trafficking cartels and other organized crime networks are now targeting migrants. What are your options? What do you decide to do?

### How can I interact most effectively with my co-delegates and hosts?

Communal living is challenging. Please be aware of your own habits which may irritate others. Try to be sensitive to people's need for space. Take time out when necessary and give others the opportunity to do so as well. Having a check-in time with delegates and SP staff is important to iron out tension and prepare for group reflections. Group reflections will help you to process what you are thinking and feeling so that you are not overwhelmed.

#### **Skill Building Exercises**

**TRUST:** Earning someone's trust takes time, but trust is an important trait to develop with your hosts and delegation group. If you tend to be self-sufficient, trusting others may not come easily. The Backward Fall exercise is designed to help you trust others. **Directions:** Ask for a volunteer. Have the remainder of the group form a tight half circle behind the individual and extend their arms outward. Ask the volunteer to wear a blindfold, cross his/her arms over his/her chest, and fall backwards into the arms of the group. One by one, have each person in the group fall until everyone has had a turn. Talk about your feeling while catching your co-delegates and while falling. What, if anything, did you learn?

**COOPERATION AND COMMUNICATION:** Living together amicably requires cooperation and communication, which can be particularly difficult if there is a language barrier. How are your skills in these areas? The following exercise may give you

some insight. **Directions:** Divide up into pairs. Ask each twosome to stand alongside their partner and put their inside arm around the other person's waist. Now, functioning as one person, have each pair wrap a present, complete with decorative paper and a tie-on bow, provided by the group leader, **WITHOUT USING WORDS TO COMMUNICATE WITH ONE ANOTHER.** When each pair has finished, discuss the experience of having to depend on someone else to accomplish a task. How did it feel not to be able to communicate verbally while trying to accomplish your task?

**SENSITIVITY TO PERSONAL DIFFERENCES:** Being aware of another person's need for privacy, nurturing, understanding, etc., is an important component to getting along. The exercise below will help you evaluate your powers of observation regarding other people. **Directions:** Have the group form pairs (different combinations than the last exercise) and stand facing each other at a distance of approximately three feet for 5 seconds. Then have them turn away from each other and take turns telling one another 5 things that they observed about them, for ex., wearing a headband, hair parted on the left, etc. Have the pairs face each other again to verify whether their observations were correct. Then have them turn away from each other again and each change 10 things about their appearance, for ex., removing one earring, adding a pencil to a shirt pocket, untying a shoe, etc. Have the pairs turn and face one another for the last time and list the changes that the other person has made.



## How can I make the trip personally successful?

Developing or exercising the traits below can make a big difference in the quality and results of your experience to Central America, or elsewhere, for that matter.

(the following is adapted in part from Robert Kohl's *Survival Kit for Overseas Living for Americans Planning to Live and Work Abroad*, 1996, Intercultural Press, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed.)

**Directions:** Discuss the meaning of those phrases that you don't understand.

Circle the three traits that you feel are the most important and discuss why.

- Think communally
- Focus on spiritual and cultural exchange versus project orientation
- Participate whenever you have the opportunity
- Process what you've observed and are feeling
- Develop your awareness of mutual differences
- Expect the unexpected
- Show respect for each other
- Have tolerance for ambiguity
- Continue to communicate if only through smiling and gestures
- Be open to learning
- Develop a sense of curiosity and ask questions
- Only make promises that you are certain you can honor
- Get others' impressions
- Be flexible and adaptable
- Have a sense of humor
- Keep an open mind and suspend judgment
- Adopt a low goal/ task orientation
- Be receptive to failure
- Work at extending genuine warmth and interest in relationships
- Travel in a spirit of humility
- Be sensitive to the feelings of others
- Cultivate the habit of listening and observing.

**NOTE:** Kohl's top three choices are 1) a sense of humor, because it is the ultimate weapon against frustration, which is inevitable during international travel; 2) low goal/task orientation to avoid the disappointment of not achieving unattainably high objectives, which people from the US tend to set; 3) and the ability to tolerate failure because everyone fails at something overseas, it is built in.

**HOMEWORK:** Check the list of necessities and recommended items to bring on your trip. Make a small photo album of your family and life to show your hosts, pack your bags and ask God to guide you and bless your delegation and members of your hermanamiento. Have a great trip!

**Group leader:** Make arrangements with someone in the church to plan and implement an airport send-off, which could include a Bible reading, a song or two, and individual mementos for delegates as a symbol of the church's hopes and prayers for their safety and health. Crosses, small cards, or lapel pins are small, inexpensive, and meaningful, and won't take up too much space. You can find these kinds of items in stores that sell spiritual books and gifts. Schedule the post-trip session (5<sup>TH</sup>) before leaving for Central America. Ideally, this should take place within a week after you return.

### **Suggested Closing Prayer**

**O Lord God who has called us your servants  
To ventures of which we cannot see the ending,  
By paths as yet untrodden,  
Through perils unknown;  
Give us faith to go out with good courage,  
Not knowing where we go,  
But only that your hand is leading us  
And your love supporting us,  
Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**



**We Believe, By Dom Helder Camara**

I will not believe in the law of the strongest,  
In the language of guns,  
In the power of the powerful.  
I want to believe in the right of all,  
In the open hand,  
In the strength of the non-violent.  
I will not believe in race or riches.  
In privileges,  
In the established order.  
I want to believe that all human beings  
Are human beings  
And that the order of force and of injustice  
Is a disorder.  
I will not believe that I don't have to concern myself  
With what happens far from here.  
I want to believe that the whole world  
Is my home, the field that I sow,  
And that all reap what all have sown.  
I will not believe that I can combat oppression out there  
If I tolerate injustice here.  
I want to believe that what is right  
Is the same here and there  
And that I will not be free  
While even one human being is excluded.  
I will not believe that war and hunger are inevitable  
And that peace is inaccessible.  
I want to believe in the love of bare hands,  
In peace on earth.  
I will not believe that any effort is in vain.  
I will not believe that the dream of human beings  
Continues being only a dream  
And that death is the end.  
*But I dare to believe in the dream of God:  
A new heaven, a new earth  
Where justice reigns.*



## Session 5 (post trip)

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### ¡Bienvenidos! (Welcome back!)

*In this session you will talk about the following*

- What did the trip mean to me?
- What were the personal highlights of my travel experience?
- How has my perspective changed?
- How did the people of Central America or the trip there affect my faith?
- Who should I share my experience with?
- How can we continue the relationship with our Central American hermanamiento?
- What I wish I had known/ done before going on the Sister Parish delegation



**Check-in** **Directions:** Have group members take turns reading how to conduct a check-in in Appendix C and decide which approach to take. Then proceed as instructed in the Appendix.

**Biblical Reflection:** **Directions:** select a Bible passage of your choosing or use the suggested passage below. Follow the guidelines in Appendix B, How to reflect on Biblical passages.

**Acts 2:43-47.** “Many miracles and wonders were being done through the apostles, and everyone was filled with awe. All the believers continued together in close fellowship and shared their belongings with one another. They would sell their property and possessions, and distribute the money among all. According to what each needed. Day after day they met as a group in the Temple, and they had their meals together in their homes, eating with glad and humble hearts, praising God, and enjoying the good will of all the people. And every day the Lord added to their group those who were being saved.”  
(text taken from: *The Good News Bible: Catholic Study Edition*. New York: Stanier, 1979)

## What did the trip mean to me?

Understanding the significance of your trip experience will not necessarily occur immediately upon your return home. You may feel a bit overwhelmed by all that you did, saw, heard, and felt. You may even have a sense of frustration about your seeming inability to “put it all together.” Be gentle with yourself and recognize that wisdom is a process which takes time. Revisit your journal and make new entries in it as questions and insights present themselves. Continue to reflect with your co-delegates, pray and dialogue with others. Your journey will undoubtedly influence you for many years. Whether it was one of the highlights of your life, or a topsy-turvy experience of shifting emotions, it has offered you an opportunity to see the global community, and to know some of your brothers and sisters in Christ.

**“Many people who have visited El Salvador claim that a conversion takes place—a conversion of heart which pulls one wholly into the lives of the poor and victimized of El Salvador. After my trip, I joined the list of the converted. I was touched in a very lasting, profound way.”** Eileen Rudzinski, Visitation Parish, Kansas City, MO.

## What were the personal highlights of my travel experience?

What impacted one person may not have been significant for another. The Sister Parish experience is a very personal one which touches different people in different ways, as you may have discovered in your reflections while in Central America.

**Directions:** Take some time as a group to individually share your personal Sister Parish highlights, noting any key people who you especially remember and the reasons why, any sights which were particularly powerful for you, and any words that you heard which you will carry with you. Hearing others' highlights will help you to understand your co-delegates better and discover new personal insights.

**NOTE:** Even though you may have shared some of this in your debriefing meeting before you left Central America, some things might have changed for you upon your return to your own community.

## How has my perspective changed?

Living with marginalized people is a humbling experience, which leaves most Sister Parish delegates changed. Things you may have taken for granted may now seem like luxuries. Things that stressed you out before may seem less important. People you thought were different from you may seem much more similar. A lifestyle you once viewed as comfortable may now seem excessive. “Normal” consumption of resources may feel wasteful. There are a number of ways that you may view the world and your life differently now. That is the purpose of “transformational education” (such as the Sister Parish experience) – to provide participants with: a) a new way of seeing or perceiving reality; b) a

new way of acting based on a new way of seeing; c) and a new way of feeling-transformation of one's values, according to Alice and Robert Evans in their book *Pedagogies for the Non-Poor*.

**Directions:** Share with one another any new viewpoints you may have developed as a result of your trip to Central America, and any ways you may feel inclined to change or take action as a result.

### How did the people of Central America or the trip there affect my faith?

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It is sometimes difficult to articulate how one's spirituality is affected by the Sister Parish experience. Intuitively, we may feel more aware of our relationship with God as a result of witnessing the faith of people who have so little in terms of material wealth, but seem to have so much spirituality.

**Directions:** Read the article on the Four stages of Solidarity in Appendix P and as a group discuss any insights that you may have regarding your own faith with respect to our Biblical commitment to the marginalized.

### Who should I share my experience with?

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It is important to share your Sister Parish experience with your entire church (the sooner, the better), your sponsors, your family and friends, other churches, the media, and anyone else that you can think of. Sharing the story will help you process what you are feeling and what effect the trip had on you, and it will help generate awareness of social injustices in Central America. You've been there, you've talked to the people, you've seen many new things. And you have your journal to help you recall and describe that experience. Some suggestions, taken from *Sharing Your Experience With Others* by Beth Graybill (courtesy of MCC Self-Help Crafts) that have proven helpful to other delegations in developing an effective presentation follow:

Begin with the basics. Start by addressing the five fundamental questions of newspaper reporting:

- Who? (Don't forget to introduce yourself and the people of your hermanamiento by providing a brief descriptive profile).
- Where? (using a map or globe to show where you were is helpful)
- When? What? (What were your expectations and concerns?) and
- Why? (What were your reasons for making the trip? As a person of faith, what called you?)

**Be descriptive.** Your presentation will be more interesting if you try to think in word pictures, describing how things looked, smelled, sounded, tasted, and felt – i.e., “We crossed Lake Atitlan on a two decker speedboat that smelled of diesel fumes. The sound of the water sloshing inside the board under the flooring made some of us nervous.”

**Don't forget to describe the setting** – i.e., “We drove for two hours in a bumpy van over a rocky, dusty road, and then walked through dry corn stalks for half an hour. The women were dressed in traditional, hand-woven clothing of striking pinks and blues. Their vibrant colors in the midst of the dry cornfield took my breath away.”

**Tell stories from the heart.** Think about what was personally most moving for you. How and why did it affect you? It's appropriate and even desirable to let your emotions show when talking about your trip. Let people know how you were feeling – i.e., “I felt guilty about being one of the rich.” This helps to draw your listeners in.

**Plan what you want to say and say it.** If you feel more comfortable, write your entire presentation exactly how you would like to say it. Practice it out loud and then reduce it to an outline or brief notes, not the original written-out version. Telling others about your experience is far more effective than simply reading a presentation, no matter how polished.

**Use select slides or crafts as part of your presentation.** PowerPoint presentations are easy to create and can be saved to a DVD or a CD and can be shown on a television screen. Holding up a weaving made by the people of your hermanamiento or showing a close-up shot of some school children, for example, will help your audience to visualize what you experienced. Keep the images moving and don't dwell too long on any one slide. They need not necessarily related to a specific point in your presentation and can be used as a background while you speak, to show life in general in your hermanamiento. (Set your presentation up in advance so that it is ready to go, any technical glitches can be worked out, and you know how to use it.).

**Provide specific ideas for your listener to get involved.** Assume that most of your audience is interested in what you're sharing—why else would they be attending your presentation? They may be unaware of how they can personally get involved and ally with the people of Central America. If you are comfortable doing so, offer some suggestions and/ or tell your audience what **you** plan to do. (I.E. After two weeks in Central America, I came home determined to look at my own lifestyle and think about ways that I can simplify it). If you are asking for money to help support a Sister Parish project, tell your audience specifically what their contribution will be used for.

**Recognize that you have something important to say.** And, that YOU are the best person to say it. You may not be an expert, but you know more than 99% of your listeners. Relating your experience to the media will take some preparation as well, but it is essential to do so, in order to raise consciousness. You can write a letter to the editor, an opinion piece, or even arrange to be interviewed by local TV, radio, or newspaper reporters for a human interest story.

## How can we continue the relationship with our Central American hermanamiento?

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Your trip to Central America is part of an ongoing relationship between your church and your hermanamiento in Central America. There are many activities that can help foster and maintain that relationship. Sister Parish recommends that both churches jointly develop

a **mission statement**, which reflects the discussion between both groups in Central America as well as the new relationship that has developed as a result, and then establish specific goals surrounding that mission. See **Appendix K** for a sample shared mission statement.

If the mission statement and goals were not an outcome of the trip, develop them now and ask your Central American hermanamiento to do the same. Exchange your statement and goals and send the final draft back to them for input and approval. Once you have consensus, use the joint statement and goals to help you stay focused when you brainstorm activities to continue the relationship.

**Directions:** Discuss your ideas for developing a shared mission statement (if you do not already have one). After you have an established mission, use the suggestions below to generate ideas for continuing to build your relationship, and as a group, decide who will take responsibility for arranging the activity, and by what date the activity should be completed. Share your activity list with your hermanamiento so that they are aware of your efforts, and ask them if they would like to develop and exchange a list of activities with you. Be cautious of getting involved in projects or activities on behalf of your hermanamiento which may reflect **your** priorities and interests rather than theirs. Remember that Sister Parish is about mutuality.

- Send thank-you notes and several copies of photos taken on the trip to hosts and other people in the community. Please make sure that all hosts receive something.
- Continue to exchange letters, using staff (or another person) as a translator. Ideally correspondence should be printed to be sure that it is legible. Encourage church groups, such as youth, to write.
- Develop a Sister Parish newsletter or e-mail group and send copies to your hermanamiento.
- Plan the next Sister Parish delegation.

- Invite your choir or music group to record special music and send it to your hermanamiento, and ask them to do the same (Sister Parish southern staff can record on cameras or MP3 recorders).
- Exchange children's artwork, crafts, poems, etc. Such items communicate love and strengthen the relationship more than gifts.
- Arrange a phone call or computer connection to your hermanamiento. You can set up a speaker phone so that your committee can listen to the conversation. Consider broadcasting a conversation as part of a church service. Staff can also help facilitate communication by sending short video messages from the south.
- Pray for your hosts and their country. Make it a regular weekly/monthly event. Pray for particular people as you are acquainted with them. Ask your pastor or priest to include the hermanamiento in prayer requests at each service.
- Make a bulletin board display or keep a church scrapbook of news and articles and journal entries about your hermanamiento. Don't forget to include photos and letters, or other significant items. Spread the enthusiasm!!
- Enter into a simultaneous Bible study and exchange regular information, approaches or insights.
- Introduce both churches to a hymn or song in Spanish or the Mayan language of your hermanamiento and provide your hermanamiento with an English song or tape that they can sing during services.
- Learn a few phrases in the language of your hermanamiento for a liturgical response, and provide your hermanamiento with the English version so they can do the same.
- Arrange a series of forums about the country in which your hermanamiento is located.
- Do a series of articles for your church newsletter, including something written by your hosts, if possible. Publish the letters that are written back and forth.
- Read about relationships between the United States and the Central American country. Discuss advocacy activities which your committee might become involved in. Maintain a file of related articles and keep a bulletin board of current events.
- Encourage ongoing photo or video exchanges between the two communities showing aspects of daily life.



- Make a liturgical banner or quilt symbolic of key elements in your church's spiritual beliefs, hopes, and practices. Display it for several months in your place of worship, and then send it, along with an explanation of its significance, to your hermanamiento for them to display as well. Ask them to create a symbol of your relationship. NOTE: some groups have created a symbol as part of a delegation activity, and this can go a long way in bringing two groups together!
- Establish a book club that focuses on texts that provide insight into the culture, history, and struggles of your hermanamiento.
- Exchange recipes for traditional dishes representative of Central American and US cultures.
- Research how various holidays, festivals, and life events are celebrated in your hermanamiento, and incorporate some of those customs into your day-to-day life, asking your hermanamiento if they can do the same so that you are sharing a part of each other's realities.
- Include homilies or sermons on the topic of liberation theology from time to time, so that the people become familiar with the spiritual reality of your hermanamiento.
- Have someone on your committee become a member of a political action group which specifically addresses social injustice in Central America, to keep aware of the issues and developments on an ongoing basis.
- Participate in letter writing campaigns to local and national legislators in the United States and Central America to urge necessary changes in order to correct injustices.

### **Potential pitfalls of Sister Parish relationships**

Like any other relationship, Sister Parish partnerships can erode without due care expended and effort exerted to keep the relationship healthy and alive. Based on the experience of churches whose relationships have faltered, we offer the following list of potential pitfalls to be aware of.

- 1) The relationship becomes solely financial. Despite the best of intentions, relationships between churches created and maintained a sense of dependency

(lower income and higher income) and attitudes of church members were left unchallenged.

- 2) Difficulties determining gifts and needs. Affluent churches have trouble coming up with needs, making poor churches feel bereft of gifts to contribute. Consequently, churches either abandoned the idea, or anxious to begin some action, came up with an activity in which only a few people participated.
- 3) Misperceptions and misunderstandings. Some church members felt that money was all the poor church wanted, yet members of the poor church told interviewers that they did not like this kind of relationship (based on money).
- 4) One or two leaders. The partnership often depended too much on one or two leaders. If they left, the relationship ended. It had not become a church effort.
- 5) Impatience. Many parishes underestimated the amount of time that it would take to form a solid, mutually-beneficial partnership with another church.

### What I wish I had known/ done before going on the Sister Parish trip

It is our hope that the material provided in this orientation program helped to make your trip a positive and personally meaningful experience. It is our prayer that the information and suggestions that we offered will continue to facilitate a mutually rewarding, long-term relationship with your Central American hermanamiento.

**Directions:** Please take a few minutes to reflect as a group on how Sister Parish, Inc. might improve upon this orientation or the trip to Central America. Note your ideas and suggestions on a piece of paper and send them to our office in California, or by e-mail to your Sister Parish coordinator. **MUCHAS GRACIAS!**

#### **Suggested closing prayer:**

*Our Father, Mother, who are in the world and surpass the world, Blessed be your presence, in us, in animals and flowers, in the still air and wind. May justice and peace dwell among us, as you come to us. Your will be out will; You will that we be sisters and brothers, as bread is bread, water is itself. For our hunger, for our quenching thirst. Forgive us. We walk crookedly in the world, are perverse, and fail of our promise. But we would be human, if only you consent to stir up our hearts. Amen. - Daniel Berrigan.*

## Appendices

### Appendix A: How to recruit and select delegates

There are many ways to recruit and select delegates. This appendix is meant to provide you with some general considerations to help you. Probably the **most important thing** that we have learned over time is that a PERSONAL INVITATION is very important.

Some churches advertise for delegations through newsletter articles, bulletin board notices, e-mails. This is a good start for putting out the word that a delegation will be traveling. It plants the seeds.

Another way to recruit delegates is for members of the Sister Parish committee to attend different meetings of the various church groups, and to talk about the hermanamiento with each group. It is important to try and make the delegation group representative of your church when possible.

One church that has great success in recruiting uses personal invitation as the primary tactic. The committee decides ahead of time how many people they would like to try to recruit, and from what groups, i.e.: a health worker, a married couple, a member of the youth group, a return delegate, and so forth. Some of the delegates that eventually travel are people that otherwise would not have responded to a general, impersonal invitation.

In terms of selecting delegates...this is mostly necessary when there are more people recruited than can go. One way to select from among the candidates is to ask people why they would like to go, what they are prepared to give to the group, and what they will do when they come back to share their experiences with the larger church community.

The ability to pay for one's self is not a good criterion to use for delegate selection. There are always ways to fund raise, and the more diverse the group, the more each can learn from each other (and the wider the circle grows within the church community). Many great delegates are people who do not have the means to pay for the trip, but can do fund-raising to help. The larger church community can also become involved in general fund-raising (Contact the U.S. Coordinator at [usoffice@sisterparish.org](mailto:usoffice@sisterparish.org) or the Regional Coordinator for your church if you need support).

## **Appendix B: How to reflect on Bible passages**

1. Read the Biblical passage in silence. Have individual group members re-read the passage out loud. Ask the group to summarize the story in phrases without looking back at the text, in response to the question, “What did you hear?”
2. Determine as a group the historical setting and circumstances of this Bible passage.
3. Identify the key problem, principle message or challenge in this passage.
4. Discuss how people responded to the problem, as recorded in the passage.
5. Discuss the relevance of the problem or situation to life today and to you personally. What insights or answers does the passage offer for dealing with your own life? What does it say to you as you prepare to become part of a delegation to Central America?

## **Appendix C: How to conduct a check-in**

The purpose of a check-in is to mention what influences you as you come to the orientation meeting (or any other group encounter). It could be excitement, tiredness, a sore body, frustration, sadness, fear, anticipation, etc. All of this can cause you to react differently in the group. It's helpful if others are aware of these feelings. Each person should take no longer than two minutes to share how they are feeling. This is something that is also important to do before daily reflections and devotions while you are on your delegation.

### **Check-in can be done in a variety of ways:**

- (If the group is large) the group can be divided into small groups of four or five.
- Each person can make a name tag that states on one side how they feel tonight and on the other side, what they need from the group.
- In a large group, you can go around the circle and have each person state in a word or two how they feel at that moment.
- People can check-in about what they are thinking about the last session. This can fit well after sessions where there was a lot of emotion and/or energy generated.
- Each person can share a high and low from the day or session.
- Each person can share one thing they are glad they learned and one thing they are going to learn more about for next time.

## **Appendix D: Sister Parish Staff and Volunteers**

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(612) 326-4361 (U.S. Skype number)  
carrie@sisterparish.org (email)  
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Gary Larson, *Accountant*

### **Guatemala Office**

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### **CCR/CORDES**

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## **Appendix E: Sister Parish Board of Directors**

**Nancy Wiens, *President***

(St. Joan of Arc Catholic Community, Minneapolis, MN)

**Tom Pouliot, *Vice President***

(Wallingford United Methodist Church, Seattle, WA)

**Ginnie Berge, *Secretary***

(Faith Lutheran Church, West Fargo, ND)

**Michael Spellman, *Treasurer***

(Incarnation Lutheran Church, Shoreview, MN)

**Luis Cuyun**

(St. Joan of Arc Catholic Community, Minneapolis, MN)

**Greg Huang-Dale**

(Church of the New Jerusalem, Fryeburg, ME)

## **Appendix F: Sister Parish Linkages**

### **EL SALVADOR**

- Decorah First United Methodist Church (Decorah, IA) and Potrerillos, Chalatenango
- First Lutheran Church (Duluth, MN) and San Antonio Los Ranchos, Chalatenango
- Trinity Episcopal Church (Newtown, CT) and San Jose La Montaña, Chalatenango
- Wallingford United Methodist Church (Seattle, WA) and Guarjila, Chalatenango

### **GUATEMALA**

- Christ Episcopal Church (Blacksburg, VA) and San Andres Itzapa, Chimaltenango
- Faith Lutheran Church (West Fargo, ND) and Tierra Nueva 1, Chinautla, Guatemala
- First United Methodist Church (Downers Grove, IL) and UPAVIM, La Esperanza, zone 12, Guatemala City
- Incarnation Lutheran Church (Shoreview, MN) and Chontala/ Ruth and Nohemi Cooperative, El Quiché
- St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Community (Raleigh, NC) and Las Margaritas II, Ixcán, El Quiché
- St. Joan of Arc Catholic Church (Minneapolis, MN) and Tierra Nueva 2, Chinautla
- St. Thomas Lutheran Church (Bloomington, IN) and Chichipate, Izabal
- Danville Congregational Church (Danville, CA) and San Antonio Cunén, El Quiché



## Appendix G: Packing Lists for Different Central American Hermanamientos

### El Salvador

#### Packing List for all communities in the Chalatenango region

*Items starred below are especially important- there may be limited access to water at times*

#### What you should know ahead of time

- **Tropical climate** - hot and humid all the time. It is slightly better from Nov. – Jan. The hottest months are Feb. - April.
- **Rainy season:** It rains from May to December, so be prepared to get wet during those months! It occasionally rains at other times too.
- **Physical activity:** We will walk a lot so be sure that your shoes are comfortable and sturdy. The general terrain can be hilly. Paths may be unpaved and can be muddy at times.
- **Health:** Malaria has NOT been reported in the area, but there have been cases of dengue. The mosquitoes are endemic so bring repellent and wear protective clothing.

The group should bring a **basic first aid kit** (see page 24 of the orientation manual for a more complete list) with them to deal with blisters, sunburn, insect bites, sprains, colds, headaches, allergies, and if there are people with lots of allergies, you might want to include an “Epipen” in case of an extreme allergic reaction. Each person will need to decide whether or not to take malaria prophylaxis.

#### GENERAL LIST: (Interchangeable for men and women)

- ✓ Passport and two photocopies
- ✓ 1 pair of sturdy walking shoes
- ✓ 1 pair of *Tevras* or similar sandals for bathing in and for the heat
- ✓ Socks, if you bring shoes along with sandals
- ✓ Underwear (enough for the trip.)
- ✓ **Sleepwear**- shorts and a t-shirt or tank top work well- remember that you have little privacy and the bathrooms are away from the houses- you should be comfortable wearing this in the public eye
- ✓ Lightweight sleep sack. We recommend sewing an old sheet at the bottom and on the side as a cheap option. This will help prevent bug bites.
- ✓ 1-2 lightweight long-sleeve shirts –to prevent sunburn and bug bites
- ✓ 3-4 long, crop pants or Bermuda type shorts- lightweight
- ✓ 4-5 short-sleeve shirts/ tank tops
- ✓ Very lightweight rain jacket, poncho OR umbrella (during rainy season, see above)
- ✓ Lightweight sweater or jacket (could be useful if you travel in Dec. or Jan.)

- ✓ Personal toiletries (soap, shampoo, floss, toothbrush and toothpaste, razor, comb, etc). You can buy this in the stores in El Salvador if you forget something.  
**Remember to place liquids in plastic bags**
- ✓ Any personal medications that you use along with a list of them
- ✓ Contact lenses and enough solution for 10 days, if you wear them (**Note: it may be tricky to deal with contacts when it is dusty, this can also cause problems. You may want to consider bringing glasses.**)
- ✓ Refillable 1 liter water bottle\* / alcohol swipes to disinfect the lip of the bottle (**SP provides drinking water for you throughout the trip**)
- ✓ Lightweight towel and washcloth (fast-drying camp towels are best). Don't plan on using a towel to cover-up after bathing, just to dry you off.
- ✓ 1-2 bandanas to be used as sweat rag, bandage, sun protection, dust protection, etc
- ✓ Sunscreen \*
- ✓ Hat with a brim\*- best if it covers your neck and ears.
- ✓ Sunglasses
- ✓ Swimsuit
- ✓ Flashlight with batteries\*- (**can be esp. useful for night trips to the bathroom**) we recommend the 8 in. mini Maglite, since it has a feature that converts it into a standing light.
- ✓ Hand sanitizer and/ or moist towelettes\*
- ✓ Bug repellent (we do NOT recommend 100% DEET as it can melt plastic and paint and can accelerate sunburn. A lesser concentration should be sufficient and is better for your health.\*
- ✓ Spending money in **cash**/ money belt for carrying it under clothing
- ✓ Small pocket knife for peeling fruits (Needs to go in checked luggage)
- ✓ Flea collar (dog or cat)- this is good to keep fleas away from luggage and bedding. Staff will explain its use in orientation.
- ✓ A few pictures of your family, community and church to share with your host family- It is a nice gesture to leave some of these behind as a sign of friendship and appreciation.

**NOTE:** make sure that bills are in smaller increments of \$1, \$5, \$10 or \$20. You will use change too, so you may want to bring some with you.

**WOMEN:** You may want to bring skirts or lightweight dresses (if you are comfortable in them). You may be a lot cooler in them.

- Please also bring a sarong or shorts and a tank top or sports bra to bathe in or to wear to and from the bathing area- You want to be covered-up with more than a towel as you walk to the bathing area. Some homes may have an indoor bathroom and shower stall, some may just have an area that may be covered with plastic walls. Be prepared.

Please do NOT bring military style or camouflage-colored clothing or hats, expensive or flashy jewelry or accessories. Plan on a wash and wear hairstyle- you do not want to use a blow dryer in a hot climate!!!

**Optional items that can be helpful/useful**

- ✓ Small daypack for carrying around things in the community (water, repellent, sunscreen, raingear, dictionary, t.p., bible, etc)
- ✓ Compact umbrella – this is very handy for both SUN and RAIN protection. You will be walking in the hot sun and may need your personal shade!
- ✓ Sanitary pads or tampons (if necessary- but can be bought there)
- ✓ Small packs of tissue or travel toilet paper (This can be bought cheaply in El Salvador)
- ✓ Pepto Bismol tablets (travels better than the liquid)
- ✓ Lip balm (with SPF)
- ✓ Travel alarm clock
- ✓ Ear plugs if you are a light sleeper
- ✓ Camera, batteries and film
- ✓ Spanish/English dictionary
- ✓ Bible in English
- ✓ Notebook and pens for journaling
- ✓ Extra plastic bags for dirty laundry/ wet items/ or items to keep dry or clean
- ✓ You can try natural repellents- Besides natural sprays and balms, you can take 1 tablet of Thiamin supplement at each meal, and as you sweat it out of your system, bugs are repelled by it. A new Thiamin patch is also available, however, in either case, please consult your Dr. before using vitamins as repellent.

We do NOT encourage bringing lots of small gifts for families or children, NOR candy (tooth decay is already a big problem).

- Activities that can be fun to share while you are in the community are songs, bubbles, pictures to show what your community and church look like.

We also discourage leaving items behind in the homes as this can create jealousy between families that host and those that do not. It can also send a message that the people are only worth what you no longer need. The best present is your PRESENCE and your friendship and solidarity!

## Guatemala:

### **Packing List for Chichipate, Las Margaritas II, Guatemala**

*Items starred below are especially important/ there is no electricity and there may not be access to water at times*

#### **What you should know ahead of time**

- **Tropical climate** - hot and humid all the time. It is slightly better from Nov – Jan. (it will be cooler, however, in Guatemala City at the beginning and end of the trip)
- **Rainy season:** It rains from April to December, so be prepared to get wet during those months! It occasionally rains at other times too.
- **Physical activity:** We will walk a lot so be sure that your shoes are comfortable and sturdy. The general terrain is flat, except Bongo which is hilly. Paths are unpaved and can be muddy at times.
- **Health:** Malaria has been reported in the area, and there have been cases of dengue as well, the mosquitoes are endemic so bring repellent and wear protective clothing.

The group should bring a **basic first aid kit** (see page 24 of the orientation manual for a more complete list) with them to deal with blisters, sunburn, insect bites, sprains, colds, headaches, allergies, and if there are people with lots of allergies, you might want to include an “Epipen” in case of an extreme allergic reaction. Each person will need to decide whether or not to take malaria prophylaxis.

#### **GENERAL LIST: (Interchangeable for men and women)**

- ✓ Passport and two photocopies
- ✓ 1 pair of sturdy, closed-toe walking shoes or hiking boots (sometimes you will see snakes, bugs and scorpions, and this may help you feel more comfortable, just in case)
- ✓ Second pair of comfortable shoes (preferably not white, which will get VERY dirty)- can be sandals
- ✓ 1 pair of *Tevras* or similar sandals for bathing in (you may be in a creek, so you want protection from rocks and garbage)
- ✓ Socks
- ✓ Underwear (enough for the trip.)
- ✓ **Sleepwear**- shorts and a t-shirt work well- remember that you have little privacy and the bathrooms are away from the houses- you should be comfortable wearing this in the public eye
- ✓ Lightweight sleep sack. We recommend sewing an old sheet at the bottom and on the side as a cheap option. This will help prevent bug bites.
- ✓ 1-2 lightweight long-sleeve shirts –to prevent sunburn and bug bites
- ✓ 3-4 long or crop pants- lightweight: these are important to prevent bug bites
- ✓ 4-5 short-sleeve shirts/ tank tops

- ✓ Very lightweight rain jacket or poncho (during rainy season, see above)
- ✓ Lightweight sweater or jacket for nighttime and for the time in Guatemala City
- ✓ Personal toiletries (soap, shampoo, floss, toothbrush and toothpaste, razor, comb, etc) **Remember to place liquids in plastic bags/ we will be changing altitude a few times on the trip.**
- ✓ Any personal medications that you use along with a list of them
- ✓ Contact lenses and enough solution for 10 days, if you wear them (**Note: it may be tricky to deal with contacts because of a lack of clean water, and when it is dusty, this can also cause problems. You may want to consider bringing glasses.**)
- ✓ Refillable 1 liter water bottle\* / alcohol swipes to disinfect the lip of the bottle (**SP provides drinking water for you throughout the trip**)
- ✓ Lightweight towel and washcloth (fast-drying camp towels are best). Don't plan on using a towel to cover-up after bathing, just to dry you off.
- ✓ 1-2 bandanas to be used as sweat rag, bandage, sun protection, dust protection, etc
- ✓ Sunscreen \*
- ✓ Hat with a brim\*- best if it covers your neck and ears.
- ✓ Sunglasses
- ✓ Good quality flashlight with batteries\*- we recommend the 8 in. mini Maglite, since it has a feature that converts it into a standing light.
- ✓ Hand sanitizer and/ or moist towelettes\*
- ✓ Bug repellent (we do NOT recommend 100% DEET as it can melt plastic and paint and can accelerate sunburn. A lesser concentration should be sufficient and is better for your health.\*
- ✓ **ATM card** to withdraw **spending money** (inform your bank and check on any international charge fees) / money belt for carrying it under clothing
- ✓ Small pocket knife for peeling fruits (Needs to go in checked luggage)
- ✓ Flea collar (dog or cat)- this is good to keep fleas away from luggage and bedding. Staff will explain its use in orientation.

### **Dress in Indigenous Communities of Guatemala**

Men and women should not wear above-the-knee clothing while in the community, and should wear clothing that covers shoulders for church. It is fine to wear lightweight, loose pants or culottes also. A camisole/swimsuit/sports bra and undershirt or sarong is perfect for women bathing in places where you may be seen in public. Men can wear shorts for bathing. We do NOT recommend that women use bathing suits to bathe in while in an indigenous community since “showing thigh” is taboo.

If you are unsure about what to bring, ask the contact person for your community.

**NOTE:** make sure that bills are in increments of \$10 or \$20 and that there are no rips or tears in the money. It can be difficult to cash traveler's checks. A debit card to use at ATMs is the simplest option, but be sure to check on international fees at your bank.

**WOMEN:** You may want to bring below-the-knee skirts or lightweight dresses (if you are comfortable in them). You may be a lot cooler in them, and most indigenous women wear skirts.

- Please also bring a sarong or long shorts and a tank top or sports bra to bathe in- You may have to bathe in public and want to be covered up.

Please do NOT bring military style or camouflage-colored clothing or hats, expensive or flashy jewelry or accessories. Plan on a wash and wear hairstyle- there is no electricity in the community for hairdryers or curling irons.

**Optional items that can be helpful/useful**

- ✓ Small daypack for carrying around things in the community (water, repellent, sunscreen, raingear, dictionary, t.p., bible, etc)
- ✓ Compact umbrella – this is very handy for both SUN and RAIN protection. You will be walking in the hot sun and may need your personal shade!
- ✓ Extra shoelaces
- ✓ Sanitary pads or tampons (if necessary)
- ✓ Small packs of tissue or travel toilet paper (Can be bought cheaply in Guatemala)
- ✓ Swimsuit
- ✓ Pepto Bismol tablets (travels better than the liquid)
- ✓ Lip balm (with SPF)
- ✓ Travel alarm clock
- ✓ Ear plugs if you are a light sleeper
- ✓ Camera, batteries and film
- ✓ Spanish/English dictionary
- ✓ Bible in English
- ✓ A few pictures of your family, community and church to share with your host family- It is a nice gesture to leave some of these behind as a sign of friendship and appreciation.
- ✓ Notebook and pens for journaling
- ✓ Extra plastic bags for dirty laundry/ wet items/ or items to keep dry or clean
- ✓ You can try natural repellents- Besides natural sprays and balms, you can take 1 tablet of Thiamin supplement at each meal, and as you sweat it out of your system, bugs are repelled by it. A new Thiamin patch is also available, however, in either case please consult your Dr. before using vitamins as repellent.

We do NOT encourage bringing lots of small gifts for families or children, NOR candy (tooth decay is already a big problem).

- Activities that can be fun to share while you are in the community are songs, bubbles, pictures to show what your community and church look like.

We also discourage leaving items behind in the homes as this can create jealousy between families that host and those that do not. It can also send a message that the people are only worth what you no longer need. The best present is your PRESENCE and your friendship and solidarity!

## **Packing List for Tierra Nueva 1, Tierra Nueva 2, UPAVIM, (i.e in and around Guatemala City) Guatemala**

*Items starred below are especially important/ there may not be access to water at times*

### **What you should know ahead of time**

- **Temperate climate-** warm/ hot in the day and cooler in the evenings. It can be chilly, or even cold, from Nov – Feb. Average temperatures are similar to spring or fall in the Midwest.
- **Rainy season:** It rains from May to November.
- **Physical activity:** We will walk a lot so be sure that your shoes are comfortable and sturdy. The pavement is uneven and at times, just gravel.
- **Health:** There are no reported cases of malaria in the area, but there have been cases of dengue, chikungunya and zika, especially in the rainy season, so bring repellent and wear protective clothing. You can bring a mosquito net, if you wish. There also may or may not be fleas.

The group should bring a **basic first aid kit** (see page 24 of the orientation manual for a more complete list) with them to deal with blisters, sunburn, insect bites, sprains, colds, headaches, allergies, and if there are people with lots of allergies, you might want to include an “Epipen” in case of an extreme allergic reaction. Each person will need to decide whether or not to take malaria prophylaxis – talk to staff if you have questions about the incidence of malaria in the specific places you will be traveling.

### **GENERAL LIST: (Interchangeable for men and women)**

- ✓ Passport and two photocopies
- ✓ 1 pair of sturdy, closed-toe, walking shoes or hiking boots (preferable water resistant if it is the rainy season)
- ✓ Second pair of comfortable shoes
- ✓ 1 pair of flip flops for bathing in
- ✓ Swimsuit
- ✓ Socks/ consider bringing a pair or two of polypropylene sock liners for blister prevention if you are not used to walking much.
- ✓ Underwear
- ✓ **Sleepwear-** shorts or lightweight sweatpants and a t-shirt work well- remember that you have little privacy and the bathrooms may be across a patio- you should be comfortable wearing this in the public eye
- ✓ 1-2 lightweight long-sleeve shirts –to prevent sunburn and bug bites
- ✓ 3-4 long pants or nice jeans (**women-** see below for options).
- ✓ 4-5 short-sleeve shirts
- ✓ Lightweight rain jacket or poncho
- ✓ During rainy season, a compact umbrella is VERY useful.
- ✓ Lightweight sweater or jacket for nighttime or chilly days

- ✓ Personal toiletries (soap, shampoo, floss, toothbrush and toothpaste, razor, comb, etc). **Remember to place liquids in plastic bags/ we will be changing altitude.**
- ✓ Any personal medications that you use along with a list of them
- ✓ Contact lenses and enough solution for 10 days, if you wear them
- ✓ Refillable 1 liter water bottle\* / alcohol swipes to disinfect the lip of the bottle (**SP provides drinking water for you throughout the trip**)
- ✓ Lightweight towel and washcloth (fast-drying camp towels are best). Don't plan on using a towel to cover up after bathing, just to dry you off
- ✓ Sunscreen \*
- ✓ Hat with a brim\*
- ✓ Sunglasses
- ✓ Flashlight with batteries (this is handy for nocturnal trips to the bathroom).
- ✓ Hand sanitizer and/ or moist towelettes\*
- ✓ Bug repellent (we do NOT recommend 100% DEET as it can melt plastic and paint and can accelerate sunburn. A lesser concentration should be sufficient and is better for your health.\*
- ✓ **ATM card** to withdraw **spending money** (inform your bank and check on any international charge fees) / money belt for carrying it under clothing
- ✓ Small pocket knife for peeling fruits (Needs to go in checked luggage)
- ✓ Flea collar (dog or cat)- this is good to keep fleas away from luggage and bedding. Staff will explain its use in orientation.
- ✓ A few pictures of your family, community and church to share with your host family- It is a nice gesture to leave some of these behind as a sign of friendship and appreciation.

**NOTE:** It is difficult to cash traveler's checks and increasingly difficult to change dollars at a bank. A debit card to use at ATMs is the simplest option, but be sure to check on international fees at your bank.

**WOMEN:** You may want a skirt, casual dress or two if you are comfortable in them, but pants or crop pants are just fine.

Please do NOT bring military style or camouflage-colored clothing or hats, expensive or flashy jewelry or accessories. Do not bring any gold jewelry, even if it is not expensive. Plan on a wash and wear hairstyle.

**Optional items that can be helpful/useful**

- ✓ Small daypack for carrying around things in the community (water, repellent, sunscreen, raingear, dictionary, t.p., bible, etc)
- ✓ Extra shoelaces
- ✓ Sanitary pads or tampons (if necessary)
- ✓ Small packs of tissue or travel toilet paper (this is also widely available, but it doesn't hurt to have a small packet)
- ✓ 1-2 bandanas to be used as sweat rag, bandage, sun protection, dust protection, etc
- ✓ Pepto Bismol tablets (travels better than the liquid)
- ✓ Lip balm
- ✓ Travel alarm clock



- ✓ Ear plugs if you are a light sleeper
- ✓ Camera, batteries and film
- ✓ Spanish/English dictionary
- ✓ Bible in English
- ✓ Notebook and pens for journaling
- ✓ Extra plastic bags for dirty laundry/ wet items/ or items to keep dry or clean
- ✓ You can try natural repellents, but they are reportedly not effective in preventing dengue, chikungunya or zika.
- ✓ Acidophilus tablets to help with any stomach distress.

We do NOT encourage bringing lots of gifts for families or children, NOR candy. A small, symbolic gift for each host family is good.

- Activities that can be fun to share while you are in the community are songs, bubbles, pictures to show what your community and church look like.

We also discourage leaving items behind in the homes as this can create jealousy between families that host and those that do not. It can also send a message that the people are only worth what you no longer need. The best present is your PRESENCE and your friendship and solidarity! Please talk to staff if you have further questions.

## **Packing List for the highland area of Guatemala (San Andres Itzapa, Chontalá, San Antonio Cunén)**

*Items starred below are especially important/ there may not be access to water at times*

### **What you should know ahead of time**

- **Cold to temperate climate (i.e high altitude)** - warm/ sometimes hot in the day and cooler in the evenings. It can be quite cold all day from Nov. – Feb. Average temperatures are similar to spring or fall in the Midwest. There is no indoor heat in houses, and temperatures at night can drop to the 40's from Nov.- Jan.
- **Rainy season:** It rains from May to November.
- **Physical activity:** We will walk a lot so be sure that your shoes are comfortable and sturdy. The pavement is uneven and at times, just gravel or mud. In Chontala, the “roads” are sometimes slippery paths, and the terrain is rough- either uphill or downhill throughout the community.
- **Health:** There are no reported cases of malaria in the area, but there are still mosquitoes, so bring repellent or wear protective clothing. Fleas can also be a problem in the communities.

The group should bring a **basic first aid kit** (see page 24 of the orientation manual for a more complete list) with them to deal with blisters, sunburn, insect bites, sprains, colds, headaches, allergies, and if there are people with lots of allergies, you might want to include an “Epipen” in case of an extreme allergic reaction. Each person will need to decide whether or not to take malaria prophylaxis.

### **GENERAL LIST: (Interchangeable for men and women)**

- ✓ Passport and two photocopies
- ✓ 1 pair of sturdy, closed-toe, walking shoes or hiking boots (preferable water resistant if it is the rainy season)
- ✓ Second pair of comfortable, sturdy, shoes
- ✓ 1 pair of flip flops for bathing in
- ✓ Socks/ consider bringing a pair or two of polypropylene sock liners for blister prevention if you are not used to walking much.
- ✓ Underwear
- ✓ **Sleepwear-** Lightweight sweatpants and a t-shirt work well, heavier clothing if you come during the cold season- remember that you have little privacy and the bathrooms/ latrines may be across a patio- you should be comfortable wearing this in the public eye
- ✓ 1-2 lightweight long-sleeve shirts –to prevent sunburn and bug bites
- ✓ 3-4 long pants or nice jeans (**women-** see below for options).
- ✓ 4-5 short-sleeve shirts (depending on season)
- ✓ Lightweight rain jacket or poncho
- ✓ During rainy season, a compact umbrella is VERY useful.

- ✓ Warm sweater or jacket for nighttime or chilly days, some also bring gloves or hats if they come at the end of the year when it can be cold
- ✓ Personal toiletries (soap, shampoo, floss, toothbrush and toothpaste, razor, comb, etc). **Remember to place liquids in plastic bags/ we will be changing altitude.**
- ✓ Any personal medications that you use along with a list of them
- ✓ Contact lenses and enough solution for 10 days, if you wear them
- ✓ Refillable 1 liter water bottle\* / alcohol swipes to disinfect the lip of the bottle (**SP provides drinking water for you throughout the trip**)
- ✓ Lightweight towel and washcloth (fast-drying camp towels are best). Don't plan on using a towel to cover up after bathing, just to dry you off
- ✓ Sunscreen \* (**in high altitude, even when it is cold or cloudy, you can burn**)
- ✓ Hat with a brim\*
- ✓ Sunglasses
- ✓ Flashlight with batteries (this is handy for nocturnal trips to the bathroom).
- ✓ Hand sanitizer and/ or moist towelettes\*
- ✓ Bug repellent (we do NOT recommend 100% DEET as it can melt plastic and paint and can accelerate sunburn. A lesser concentration should be sufficient and is better for your health.\*
- ✓ **ATM card** to withdraw **spending money** (inform your bank and check on any international charge fees) / money belt for carrying it under clothing
- ✓ Small pocket knife for peeling fruits (Needs to go in checked luggage)
- ✓ Flea collar (dog or cat)- this is good to keep fleas away from luggage and bedding. Staff will explain its use in orientation.
- ✓ A few pictures of your family, community and church to share with your host family- It is a nice gesture to leave some of these behind as a sign of friendship and appreciation.

**NOTE:** make sure that bills are in increments of \$10 or \$20 and that there are no rips or tears in the money. It can be difficult to cash traveler's checks. A debit card to use at ATMs is the simplest option, but be sure to check on international fees at your bank.

**WOMEN:** You may want a skirt, casual dress or two if you are comfortable in them, but pants or crop pants are just fine. Dress for the climate.

- Please also bring a sarong or long shorts and a tank top or sports bra to bathe in- You may have to bathe in public and want to be covered up (see below).

### **Dress in Indigenous Communities of Guatemala**

Men and women should not wear above-the-knee clothing while in the community, and should wear clothing that covers shoulders for church. It is fine to wear light-weight, loose pants or culottes also. A camisole/swimsuit/sports bra and underskirt or sarong is perfect for women bathing in places where you may be seen in public. Men can wear shorts for bathing. We do NOT recommend that women use bathing suits to bathe in while in an indigenous community since showing thighs is taboo.

If you are unsure about what to bring, ask the contact person for your community.

Please do NOT bring military style or camouflage-colored clothing or hats, expensive or flashy jewelry or accessories. Plan on a wash and wear hairstyle- there is not always electricity in the community for hairdryers or curling irons.

**Optional items that can be helpful/useful**

- ✓ Small daypack for carrying around things in the community (water, repellent, sunscreen, raingear, dictionary, t.p., bible, etc)
- ✓ Extra shoelaces
- ✓ Sanitary pads or tampons (if necessary)
- ✓ Small packs of tissue or travel toilet paper (this is also widely available, but it doesn't hurt to have a small packet)
- ✓ 1-2 bandanas to be used as sweat rag, bandage, sun protection, dust protection, etc
- ✓ Pepto Bismol tablets (travels better than the liquid)
- ✓ Lip balm (with SPF)
- ✓ Swimsuit
- ✓ Travel alarm clock
- ✓ Ear plugs if you are a light sleeper
- ✓ Camera, batteries and film
- ✓ Spanish/English dictionary
- ✓ Bible in English
- ✓ Notebook and pens for journaling
- ✓ Extra plastic bags for dirty laundry/ wet items/ or items to keep dry or clean
- ✓ You can try natural repellents.
- ✓ Acidophilus tablets to help with any stomach distress.

We do NOT encourage bringing lots of small gifts for families or children, NOR candy (tooth decay is already a big problem).

- Activities that can be fun to share while you are in the community are songs, bubbles, pictures to show what your community and church look like.

We also discourage leaving items behind in the homes as this can create jealousy between families that host and those that do not. It can also send a message that the people are only worth what you no longer need. The best present is your PRESENCE and your friendship and solidarity!

## Appendix H: Maps of El Salvador and Guatemala



Note: Map copied from [www.retiredexpat.com](http://www.retiredexpat.com)



Note: Map copied from [www.soymapas.com](http://www.soymapas.com)

## Appendix I: Resources

### General Resources on Latin America

Freire, Paulo. (1970). *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. New York, NY:Seabury Press.

Gilkey, Langdon. (1991). *Through the Tempest: Theological Voyages in a Pluralistic Culture*. Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress Press.

Gutierrez, Gustavo and Shaull, Richard. (1977). *Liberation and Change*. Atlanta, GA: John Knox Press. **About Liberation Theology in Latin America.**

Lernoux, Penny. (1982). *Cry of the People: The Struggle for Human Rights in Latin America- the Catholic Church in Conflict with US Policy*. New York, NY: Penguin Books.

Nelson-Pallmeyer, Jack. (1992). *Brave New World Order*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books.

Stokes, Kenneth. (1989) *Faith is a Verb: Dynamics of Adult Faith Development*. Mystic, CN: Twenty-third Publications.

Galeano, Eduardo. (1997) *Open Veins of Latin America*. Monthly Review Press, 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Edition.

### Websites:

[Human Rights Watch: Americas www.hrw.org](http://www.hrw.org)

[Rights Action: www.rightsaction.org](http://www.rightsaction.org)

[STITCH \(Women Organizing for Worker Justice\): www.stitchonline.org](http://www.stitchonline.org)

[WOLA \(Washington Office on Latin America\): www.wola.org](http://www.wola.org)

[Mining Watch: www.miningwatch.ca](http://www.miningwatch.ca)

[For information on Free Trade Agreements \(CAFTA-DR\): www.stopcafta.org](http://www.stopcafta.org)

[Common Dreams: www.commondreams.org](http://www.commondreams.org)

[Upside Down World: www.upsidedownworld.org](http://www.upsidedownworld.org)

[Latin America Working Group \(LAWG\): www.lawg.org](http://www.lawg.org)

## Resources specific to El Salvador

Americas Watch. (1991). *El Salvador's Decade of Terror: Human Rights since the Assassination of Archbishop Romero*. New York, NY: Yale University Press. **A comprehensive report of the human rights situation in El Salvador in the 1980s by a prominent international human rights organization.**

Argueta, Manlio. (1983). *One Day of Life*. New York, NY: Aventura (Vintage Books). **A novel by a Salvadoran author on life and political stirrings among the campesinos in El Salvador in the late 1970s.**

Argueta, Manlio. (1988). *Cuzcatlan: Where the Southern Sea Beats*. New York, NY: Aventura (Vintage Books) **This novel is set during the Salvadoran civil war.**

Berryman, Phillip. (1984). *The Religious Roots of Rebellion: Christians in Central American Revolutions*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books. This history of Central America covering the period up to the early 1980s has a substantial chapter on El Salvador.

Berryman, Phillip. (1994) *Stubborn Hope: Religion, Politics and Revolution in Central America*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books.

Best, Marigold, & Pamela Hussey. (1996). *Life Out of Death: The Feminine Spirit in El Salvador. Women in Conversation*. London: Catholic Institute for International Relations. **Articles on a variety of women, their experiences and projects.**

Brockman, James R., S.J. (1989). *Romero: A Life*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books. **The definitive English biography of Archbishop Romero.**

Carrigan, Ana. (1984). *Salvadoran Witness: The Life and Calling of Jean Donovan*. New York, NY: Ballantine Books. **Story of the lay missionary killed on December 2, 1980, with three US sisters.**

Clements, Charles, (1984). *Witness to War: An American Doctor in El Salvador*. New York, NY: Bantam Books. **A report on the life of a US pacifist doctor, a former Air Force pilot in Vietnam, working with civilians behind guerrillas lines on the Guazapa volcano, El Salvador in the early 1980s.**

Danner, Mark. (1994). *The Massacre at El Mozote: A Parable of the Cold War*. New York, NY: Vintage Books.

Dennis, Marie, Renny Golden, Scott Wright, ed. (2000). *Oscar Romero: Reflections on His Life and Writings*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis. **A good collection of quotations and anecdotes about Romero.**

Dilling, Yvonne. (1984). *In Search of Refuge*. Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press.

Doggett, Martha. (1993). *Death Foretold: The Jesuit Murders in El Salvador*. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press. **An exhaustive account of the November 1989 killing at the Salvadoran Jesuit university and the following cover-up, investigation, and trial, prepared for the Lawyers Committee for Human Rights.**

Erdozain, Placido. (1981). *Archbishop Romero: Martyr of El Salvador*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books.

Galdamez, Pablo. (1986). *Faith of a People: The Story of a Christian Community in El Salvador, 1970 - 1980*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books.

Hammond, John L. (1998). *Fighting to Learn: Popular Education and Guerrilla War in El Salvador*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.

Hassett, John & Hugh Lacey, ed. (1991). *Towards a Society That Serves Its People: The Intellectual Contributions of El Salvador's Murdered Jesuits*. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press.

Lauria-Santiago, Aldo, and Leigh Binford, ed. (2004) *Landscapes of Struggle: Politics, Society, and Community in El Salvador*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press.

Lopez Vigil, Maria. (2000). *Oscar Romero: Memories in Mosaic*. Washington, DC: EPICA. **Stories and recollections of Archbishop Oscar Romero by people who knew him provide a very human portrait.**

McClintock, Michael. (1985). *The American Connection. Volume One: State Terror and Popular Resistance in El Salvador*. London: Zed Books. **An investigative report on the development of the apparatus of terror in El Salvador with documentation of the role of the US in initiating counter-insurgency strategies.**

Montgomery, Tommie Sue. (1995). *Revolution in El Salvador: From Civil Strife to Civil Peace*. Second Edition. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Murray, Kevin, with Tom Barry. (1995). *Inside El Salvador*. Albuquerque, NM: Resource Center Press. **A basic source book and comprehensive guide to the politics, economy, society, and environment of El Salvador.**

Noone, Judith M. (1995). *The Same Fate as the Poor*. Maryknoll NY: Orbis Books. An account of the lives of three Maryknoll nuns who made an option for the poor in El Salvador.

Pearce, Jenny. (1986). *Promised Land: Peasant Rebellion in Chalatenango, El Salvador*. London: Latin American Bureau.



Peterson, Anna L. (1997). *Martyrdom and the Politics of Religion: Progressive Catholics in El Salvador's Civil War*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Romero, Archbishop Oscar. (1993). *A Shepherd's Diary*. Cincinnati, OH: St. Anthony Messenger Press.

Romero, Oscar, (2004). *The Violence of Love*. Compiled and translated by James R. Brockman, S.J. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books.

Romero, Oscar Arnulfo. (1985). *Voice of the Voiceless: The Four Pastoral Letters and Other Statements*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books. **These major pastoral statements of Archbishop Romero, including his last homily, provide insight into the theological and spiritual roots of his commitment to the poor.**

Santiago, Daniel. (1993). *The Harvest of Justice: The Church of El Salvador Ten Years After Romero*. New York, NY: Paulist Press. Stories of the Salvadoran reality, the terror and the hope, through the eyes of Salvadorans, as told by a North American Catholic priest-anthropologist who has worked for several years in a Salvadoran parish.

Sobrino, Jon. (2003). *Witnesses to the Kingdom; The Martyrs of El Salvador and the Crucified Peoples*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books.

Sobrino, Jon, Ignacio Ellacuria, et al. (1990). *Companions of Jesus: The Jesuit Martyrs of El Salvador*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books.

Whitfield, Teresa. (1994). *Paying the Price: Ignacio Ellacuria and the Murdered Jesuits of El Salvador*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.

Wood, Elizabeth Jean, (2003). *Insurgent Collective Action and Civil War in El Salvador*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Wright, Scott. (1994). *Promised Land: Death and Life in El Salvador*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books. **Reflections of the journey of faith of a North American working in El Salvador from 1981 to 1989, mostly with rural communities in conflictive zones.**

Wright, Scott, ed. (1990). *El Salvador: A Spring Whose Waters Never Run Dry*. Washington, DC: EPICA.

### **Articles:**

Bakhtiari, Bahman. 1986. "Revolution in the Church in Nicaragua and El Salvador," *Journal of Church and State* 28: 15 - 42.

Berryman, Phillip. 1986. "El Salvador: From Evangelization to Insurrection," in *Religion and Political Conflict in Latin America*, Daniel H. Levine, ed.

Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press: 58 - 78.

Blee, Kathleen. 1991. "The Catholic Church and Central American Politics," in *Understanding the Central American Crisis: Sources of Conflict, U. S. Policy, and Options for Peace*, ed. by Kenneth M. Coleman and George C. Herring (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resource, 1991): 53 -75.

Caceres Prendes, Jorge. 1989. "Political Radicalization and Popular Pastoral Practices in El Salvador, 1969 - 1985," *The Progressive Church in Latin America*, Scott Mainwaring and Alexander Wilde, ed. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press,: 103 - 148.

Caceres Prendes, Jorge. 1983. "Revolutionary Struggle and Church Commitment: The Case of El Salvador," *Social Compass* XXX/2-3: 261 - 298.

Cardenal, Rodolfo. 1990. "The Martyrdom of the Salvadorean Church," in *Church and Politics in Latin America*, Dermot Keogh, ed. London: Macmillan: 225 - 246.

Crahan, Margaret E. 1988. "A Multitude of Voices: Religion and the Central American Crisis," in Nora Hamilton, Jeffrey A Frieden, Linda Fuller, and Manuel Pastor, Jr., ed., *Crisis in Central America: Regional Dynamics and US Policy in the 1980s*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press: 227 - 249.

Melendez, Guillermo. 1992. "The Catholic Church in Central America: Into the 1990s," *Social Compass* 39, #4: 553-570.

Richard, Pablo, "The Role of the Church in the Central American Revolutionary Process," in *Towards an Alternative for Central America and the Caribbean*, edited by George Irvin and Xabier Gorostiaga (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1985): 215-230.

Schubeck, Thomas L. 2001. "Salvadoran Martyrs: A Love That Does Justice," *Horizons* 28/1 (Spring 2001): 7-29.

### **Movies / Video:**

*Innocent Voices*- Powerful account of the war through the eyes of a young boy.

*Romero*- one depiction of Romero's life and death, starring Raul Julia.

*El Salvador* - fictional account of the war in the eyes of a U.S. journalist

*Roses in December* (the Jean Donovan Story) – a documentary

*Women of the War* – a documentary following six women's stories - [available online](#)

### **Websites on El Salvador:**

[CIS \(Center for Exchange and Solidarity\): www.cis-elsalvador.org](http://www.cis-elsalvador.org)

[CISPES \(Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador\): www.cispes.org](http://www.cispes.org)

[SHARE Foundation: www.share-elsalvador.org](http://www.share-elsalvador.org)

## Resources specific to Guatemala

Esquivel, Julia. (1994). *Threatened by Resurrection: Prayers and Poems from an Exiled Guatemalan*. Elgin, IL: Brethren Press. **This book is bilingual.**

Falla, S.J., Ricardo. (1998). *History of a Great Love: Life with the Guatemalan "Communities of Population in Resistance". A Spiritual Journal*. English edition. Washington, D.C., EPICA. **Excellent inspirational book.**

Goldman, Francisco. (1992). *The Long Night of White Chickens*. New York: Grove Press. **Fictional story about the war. Very good novel.**

Goldman, Francisco. (2008). *The Art of Political Murder. Who Killed the Bishop?*

Manz, Beatriz. (2004). *Paradise in Ashes: A Guatemalan Journey of Courage, Terror, and Hope*. Berkley: University of California Press.

Melville, Thomas R. (2005). *Through a Glass Darkly: the U.S Holocaust in Central America*. Philadelphia, PA: Xlibris.

Moller, Jonathan. (2004). *Our Culture is Our Resistance: Repression, Refuge and Healing in Guatemala*. New York: Powerhouse Books. **Photodocumentary.**

Monahan, David (ed.) (1984). *The Shepherd Cannot Run: Letters of Stanley Rother: Missionary and Martyr*. Oklahoma City, OK: Archdiocese of Oklahoma City.

Ortiz, Dianna (with Patricia Davis). (2002). *The Blindfold's Eyes: My Journey from Torture to Truth*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books.

Recovery of Historical Memory Project (REHMI). (1999). *Guatemala, Never Again*. Guatemala City: ODHAG- **published in English through Orbis Books. This is a book that talks about the civil war from the perspective of the victims.**

Sanford, Victoria. (2003). *Buried Secrets: Truth and Human Rights in Guatemala*. New York, New York: Palgrave Macmillian.

Schirmer, Jennifer. (1998). *The Guatemalan Military Project: A Violence Called Democracy*. Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press. **Fascinating book.**

Schlesinger, Stephen and Kinzer, Stephen. (1999). *Bitter Fruit: The Story of the American Coup in Guatemala*. Harvard University David Rockefeller Center for Latin American Studies; Expanded edition.

Simon, Jean-Marie. (1987). *Guatemala: Eternal Spring, Eternal Tyranny*. Norton and Company.

Wilkinson, Daniel. (2002). *Silence on the Mountain: Stories of Terror, Betrayal, and Forgetting in Guatemala*. New York, New York: Houghton Mifflin. **This book is particularly interesting because it deals with the agrarian reform and the war in the San Marcos department in Guatemala.**

Wilson, Richard. (1999). *Maya Resurgence in Guatemala: Q'eqchi' Experiences*. University of Oklahoma Press.

### **Movies / Video:**

*abused*, a documentary about the Postville raid and its effects on communities and families.

*Voice of a Mountain: Life after the Guatemalan Civil War*, a documentary about the lives of rural Guatemalans during and after the 36-year Civil War

*Granito: How to Nail a Dictator*, Skylight Pictures documentary about seeking justice for crimes committed during Guatemala's war.

*The Echo of the Pain of Many*, a documentary about one woman's journey to discover the history of family and country.

*Gold or Life*, a documentary on community resistance to mining in Guatemala.

*Discovering Dominga*. HBO documentary about Denise Becker's past- she was a war orphan from Guatemala adopted in the US.

*Daughter of the Puma*. A classic Scandinavian film that is a fictionalized (but accurate) account of one family's story during the civil war.

*Men with Guns*. This movie is loosely based on Frank Goldman's novel *The Long Night of White Chickens*.

### **Websites:**

[Guatemala Human Rights Commission – USA: www.ghrc-usa.org](http://www.ghrc-usa.org)

[NISGUA \(Network in Solidarity with the People of Guatemala\): www.nisgua.org](http://www.nisgua.org)

## Appendix J: Sample Delegation schedules

### EL SALVADOR

#### **Decorah United Methodist Church to Potrerillos El Salvador Nov 16-26<sup>th</sup>, 2005**

##### Wednesday Nov 16<sup>th</sup>

Arrive: SAN SALVADOR CO 826 12:34pm  
4:00 Orientation- Rick Jones, Catholic Relief Services  
Sleep at Alfalit  
5:30 Supper  
6:00 Reflection  
Rest

##### Thursday Nov. 17<sup>th</sup>

7:30 Breakfast (Alfalit)  
8:00 am Leave for Potrerillos/ Chalatenango  
10:00 Visit C.C.R. in Chalatenango  
12:00 Lunch in comedor Tita  
1:30 pm Leave for Potrerillos  
3:30 Arrival  
4 p.m. Install ourselves in first home (bathe)  
6:30 p.m. Supper: Casa Comunal with leaders  
7:30 Reflection

##### Friday Nov. 18<sup>th</sup>

7:00 Breakfast together  
8:30 Each pair goes to host family  
9:30 Tour the community  
12:00 Lunch together  
1:30 Group Reflection time  
2:30 -3:45 Rest or bathe  
4:00- 6:00pm Meeting with leaders- learn their history (tell yours too!)  
6:30 Supper with families/scheduled translation in homes

##### Saturday Nov. 19<sup>th</sup>

7:30 Breakfast  
8:30 Meet in Casa Comunal  
9:00 Community work (this may be painting or other general jobs towards community improvement)  
12:30 Lunch together  
1:30 Reflection time  
Rest and relax  
4:00 pm Mass (Note= the time is pending.....this could change)

5:00 Youth Festival - activity with CCR and youth from surrounding areas  
(Until we drop...)

Sunday Nov 20<sup>th</sup>

7:00 Breakfast

7:30 Leave for Nombre de Jesus to experience market day there

12:30 Lunch in Potrerillos

1:00 Reflection

2:00 Afternoon of sports events with community youth

Supper with families

Monday Nov 21<sup>st</sup>

7:00 Breakfast

9:00 Leave for Nombre de Jesus to visit the municipal offices and learn about the organic fertilizer project

12:30 Lunch together

1:30 Reflection together

Afternoon free...spend time with your families and with translation

Tuesday Nov 22<sup>nd</sup>

7:00 Breakfast

8:00 Visit the Sumpul River with Felipe Tobar and folks from Potrerillos

Picnic by the river; learn about the massacre of Las Aradas

SWIM

4:30 Reflection then rest

7:00 Meet at Casa Comunal for group evaluation and Good-bye Party

Wednesday Nov 23<sup>rd</sup>

5:00 am Leave

6:30 Pupusas for breakfast in Chalatenango

Head to San Salvador with some folks from Potrerillos

9-12 Museum of the Word

12:30 Lunch

2-4 UCA (Jesuit University)

5 Parque Cuscatlan, Monument to the Victims.

Supper

Reflections

Sleep in ALFALIT

Thursday Nov 24<sup>th</sup>

Breakfast 7:30

9-11 Divina Providencia, Chapel where they killed Romero

Good-bye to Potrerillos folks (they return to Potrerillos)

Lunch

Visit Cathedral/Parque Libertad

Sleep in ALFALIT

Friday Nov 25<sup>th</sup>

Free day- head to beach  
Last reflection/Debriefing/ evaluation  
Sleep at the beach

Saturday Nov 26<sup>th</sup>

Breakfast  
Good-bye to Decorah FUMC  
CO flt. 827 1:20 pm

<b>GUATEMALA</b>
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**Delegation from Raleigh to Las Margaritas II**  
**July 25- August 3, 2002**

**Thursday 7/25**

11: 53 Arrival (brief stop and prayer where Sr. Dianna was held)  
PM Orientation part 1/ reflection (stay at SP Center)

**Friday 7/26**

7:30 Breakfast in SP Center  
9:00 AVANCSO meeting re: land situation  
11:00 Visit San Sebastian Church (Gerardi Monument)  
12:00 leave for Cobán (lunch on road)  
4:30 Arrive in Cobán, relax a bit  
6:00 Supper in hostel  
7:30 Orientation, part 2.

**Saturday 7/27**

8:00 Breakfast in Cobán  
9:00 Leave for LM  
1:00 Arrive in Cantabal/ lunch  
2:00 Visit Catholic church in Cantabal  
3-4:00 Arrive in LM  
4:00 Welcome activities / settle into homes  
6:30 Supper to be planned by community.

**Sunday 7/28**

7:00 Breakfast with families  
9:30 Eucharist celebrated by Fr. Bill  
12:00 Lunch with Community  
2:00 Demonstration of Artisans' work/ walk around community  
6:00 Supper with families

**Monday 7/29**

7:00 Breakfast with families  
8:00 Visit school  
12:00 Lunch (to be decided by community)

3:00 Visit fields (maybe talk to health promoters)

6:00 Bible study

7:30 Supper with families

**Tuesday 7/30**

7:00 Breakfast with families

8:00 Meetings with different committees(Land committee, water committee, Youth Group, etc.) with coffee break included

12:00 Lunch (to be decided by community)

3:00 Mtg. with SP committee

5:00 coffee with Sisters

7:00 Supper with families

**Wednesday 7/31**

(Fr. Bill and Jeannette leave for Guatemala – 5am)

7:00 Breakfast with families

10:00 Women's tea

1:00 Lunch to be decided by community

3:00 Swim in river/ relax in homes

7:00 Good-bye FIESTA with community

**Thursday 8/1**

5:45 Breakfast and good-bye with families

7:00 leave for Cantabal

8:00 Meetings in Cantabal with mental health team and Social Ministry office

9:30 Leave for Guatemala City, arrive in the early evening (stay at SP Center)

(Meals on the road)

*(Jeannette takes Fr. Bill to airport around 10:30)*

**Friday 8/2**

9:00 Breakfast

10:00 Shopping in Central market

12:00 Lunch (place to be decided by group)

3:00 debriefing and final evaluation (Stay at SP Center)

**Saturday 8/ 3**

9:00 Breakfast at SP Center

10:30 Leave for airport/ plane leaves for Raleigh (12:58pm)

*Have a great trip!!!!*



## Appendix K- Sample of a Shared Mission Statement

### SHARED MISSION STATEMENT OF TIERRA NUEVA 1 AND FAITH LUTHERAN CHURCH

We, as brothers and sisters of faith and hope in God, and who trust in prayer, want to live our relationship with an attitude of trust, respect, honesty, and love. Based on personal and group self-knowledge, we live in solidarity with each other, and give and receive who we are and what we have, by being committed and accountable to each other and to the group.

By maintaining timely communication, openness, and educating ourselves and each other we can achieve the growth of the group and the continuity of this relationship through future generations. We are committed to working for the common good of the two groups, and of both countries.

---

*Nosotros, como hermanos y hermanas de fe y esperanza en Dios, y quienes confiamos en la oración, queremos vivir nuestro hermanamiento con una actitud de confianza, respeto, honestidad y amor. Basados en un auto-conocimiento personal y grupal, vivimos en solidaridad, con actitud de dar y recibir lo que somos y lo que tenemos, siempre con un sentido de compromiso y responsabilidad para con cada persona y con el grupo entero.*

*Manteniendo una comunicación puntual, con apertura y educándonos a nosotros mismos y a los demás, podemos alcanzar el crecimiento del grupo y de la relación a través de generaciones. Estamos comprometidos a trabajar por el bien común de los dos grupos, y en ambos países.*

## Appendix L- Sample Commissioning Service

A wonderful way to involve the entire congregation in an upcoming delegation is to hold a commissioning service just before the group departs. This serves as a means of raising awareness about the trip and about the Sister Parish relationship, as a way to make church members who are not traveling feel more involved, and increase delegates' comfort levels by showing them that they have the prayers and blessings of the entire church.

Generally, the pastor/ minister/ priest asks the congregation to extend their right hands in prayer/ blessing over the delegates who stand at the front of the church. In the sample commissioning below, the congregation shares the reading of the litany with the pastor/ minister/ priest, so all would need to have copies.

(To the congregation)

XXX, XXX, XXX, XXX (individual first names of the delegates) and sisters and brothers in Christ:

You are now about to embark on a mission to our brothers and sisters in the congregation/ community of XXX (name of Central American hermanamiento) in XXX (name of Central American country). You go in the name of Christ and on behalf of XXX (name of your church). You are our delegates. We are entrusting you to the name and spirit of our congregation- to carry it, to carry us, with you.

The words you speak there will be our words. The hospitality you receive there will be as though we, too, are being welcomed.

The prayers you offer there with the people of XXX (Central American hermanamiento) will be joined by the daily prayers of those of us who stay behind. The feeling you will feel, and the changes that are made in you, we expect you to share with us on your return. We know you will come back to us as changed persons- with attitudes and commitments adjusted to a larger reality. We, then, will invite you to confront our sameness and lead us into some measure of the risk that you will have experienced.

As you share with our brothers and sisters in the congregation of XXX (name of Central American hermanamiento) the gifts and symbols of our faith community, of our life here in XXX (city and state where your church is located), of our care and concern for them, do it as a way of illustrating our commitment to a continuing friendship. This is a large undertaking, and as such, happens through the grace of God. As you go for us in these next days, will you go in the spirit of these commitments and promises?

If so, answer, "Yes by the grace of God."

(To the congregation)

As members with them, will you speak about their journey- its meanings, and will you pray for them both in private and in our corporate life?

If so, answer, "Yes by the grace of God."

Let us pray. Let your blessing, God of love, rest fully on this delegation. Keep them in safety, open them to receive all that is offered, strengthen their faith, and be their companion along the way. Bless also, God of generosity and justice, those who will receive them into their homes, their communities, their hearts. May their imagining of the scope of your Kingdom be enlarged and their sense of hopefulness increased. We pray this through Christ our Savior. Amen.

CONGREGATION: Go into the world in peace!

PASTOR: And take peace to a world that desperately needs it.

CONGREGATION: Go into the world in faith!

PASTOR: Trusting God to lead you, trusting people to receive you.

CONGREGATION: Go into the world with hope!

PASTOR: With God's presence before you and human dreams to carry you.

CONGREGATION: Go into the world with love!

PASTOR: Serving with those in whom Christ lives and laboring for those for whom  
Christ died.

ALL: Go in peace, faith, hope, and love!

ALL: Thanks be to God.

So, you are commissioned; you are sent. God with our blessing and with confidence in the Lord's care.

## Appendix M- Language Lists

<b>English/Spanish Common expressions</b>	<b>Expresiones Comunes</b>
Yes	Si
No	No
Please	Por Favor
Here you are	Aquí tiene
Thank you   Thanks	Gracias
You`re welcome	De nada
Excuse me	Disculpe
Perhaps   Maybe	Tal vez/ Quizás
Hello   Hi	Hola
Welcome!	Bienvenido(a)
Have a good trip!	Buen viaje
Good-bye	Adios, Salud (used in El Salvador)
How are you?	¿Cómo estás?
I am doing great	Estoy muy bien
I am well/fine/alright	Estoy bien
I`m not very well	No me siento bien
Nice to meet you	Mucho gusto
Good morning	Buenos días
Good afternoon/evening	Buenas tardes
Goodnight	Buenas noches
What is your name?	¿Cómo se llama?
How old are you?	¿Cuántos años tiene?
I am ... years old	Tengo ... años
My name is...	Me llamo...
What time is it?	¿Qué hoar es?
I don`t know	No se
I`m ready	Estoy listo
Let`s go	Vamos
I`m sorry	Lo siento
I`m going to miss you	Voy a extrañarlo/a
We`ll see each other soon	Nos veremos muy pronto

I am hungry	Tengo hambre
I am thirsty	Tengo sed
I am sick	Estoy enfermo
I'm not going to eat	No voy a comer
I'm going to rest	Voy a descansar
The water is purified?	Es agua salvavidas?(Gt) Es agua cristal?(ES)
It's tasty	Esta rico
It's a lot of food	Es mucha comida
Can I have less?	¿Puede darme menos?
I am very full	Estoy muy lleno/a
May I come in?	¿Puedo pasar?

**Understanding each other**

**Entendiendose el uno al otro**

Do you speak...?	¿Hablas...?
I speak...	Yo hablo...
I don't speak...	No hablo...
I speak a little...	Hablo un poquito...
English	Ingles
Spanish	Español
Mayan language	Idioma maya
Do you understand me?	¿Me entiende?
I understand you	Le entiendo
I don't understand	No le entiendo
Could you please repeat that?	¿Puede repetirlo por favor?
Could you please speak more slowly?	¿Puede hablar más despacio por favor?
Could you write it down please?	¿Puede escribirlo por favor?
I don't know how to say that	No sé como decir esto
I don't know the right word	No sé la palabra correcta
What did you say?	¿Que dijo?
How do you say that in...?	¿Cómo se dice eso en...?
How do you write that in...?	¿Cómo se escribe eso en...?
How do you pronounce that?	¿Cómo se pronuncia eso?
Can you translate this for me?	¿Puede traducirme esto?
Did I say that right?	¿Lo he dicho correctamente?

**Emotions**

**Emociones / Sentimientos**

Do you like it?

¿Le gusta?

I like it

Me gusta

I'm happy

Estoy feliz

I'm angry

Estoy enojado

I'm disappointed

Estoy decepcionado

I'm content

Estoy contento

I'm tired

Estoy cansado

I'm afraid

Estoy preocupado / asustado

I'm warm

Tengo calor

I'm cold

Tengo frio

I'm sleepy

Tegno sueño

It's (very) interesting

Es (muy) interesante

It's (very) boring

Es (muy) aburrido

He/she is very kind

Es muy amable

Look!

Mire

Listen!

Escuche

Cool!

Genial

Awesome!

Impresionante

**Emergencies**

**Emergencias**

Call a doctor

Llame a un doctor

Call an ambulante

Llame a una ambulancia

Call the police

Llame a la policia

He can't breathe

No puede respirar

He can't move

No puede moverse

He didn't stop

No se detuvo

He ran into me

El se tropezo conmigo

He was driving too fase

El iba manejando muy rapido

He has cut himself

Se cortó

I can't move my arm

No puedo mover mi brazo

I can't move my leg

No puedo mover mi pierna

I've been robbed

Me asaltaron / robaron

Stop that thief!	Detengan ese ladron
My passport has been stolen	Me robaron el pasaporte
I lost my passport	Perdi mi pasaporte
My money has been stolen	Me robaron el dinero
There's a fire	Hay un incendio
Where is the nearest hospital?	¿Dónde está el hospital más cercano?
Where is the nearest police station?	¿Dónde está la estación de policía más cercana?

**Health & Disease**

**Salud & Enfermedad**

I am ill	Estoy enfermo
I have the flu	Tengo gripe/ influenza
I have a cold	Tengo catarro
I have a cough	Tengo tos
I have allergies	Tengo alergia
I'm in pain	Me duele
I'm not feeling well	No me siento bien
I can't eat	No puedo comer
I can't sleep	No puedo dormer
I can't breath	No puedo respirar
I feel dizzy	Me siento mareado
I feel nauseous	Tengo nausea
I have a headache	Me duele la cabeza
I have a stomachache	Me duele el estomago
I have pain in my chest	Me duele el pecho
I have an infection	Tengo una infeccion
I have been stung	Tengo un piquete
I have been bitten	Tengo una mordedura
Are you in pain?	¿ Le duele?
Does it hurt?	¿Duele?
Can you walk?	¿Puede caminar?
I need something for...	Necesito algo para...

**Time**

**Tiempo**

What day is today?	¿Que día es hoy?
--------------------	------------------

What days was it yesterday?

¿Qué día fue ayer?

What day is it tomorrow?

¿Qué día es mañana?

Tomorrow will be...

Mañana sera...

Monday

Lunes

Tuesday

Martes

Wednesday

Miercoles

Thursday

Jueves

Friday

Viernes

Saturday

Sabado

Sunday

Domingo

What month is it?

¿En qué mes estamos?

This month is...

Este mes es...

January

Enero

February

Febrero

March

Marzo

April

Abril

May

Mayo

June

Junio

July

Julio

August

Agosto

September

Septiembre

October

Octubre

November

Noviembre

December

Diciembre

What time is it?

¿Qué hora es?

It's eight o'clock

Son las ocho en punto

It's eight thirty

Son las ocho y media / ocho treinta

It's eight fifteen

Son las ocho y cuarto / ocho y quince

It's eight forty-five

Son las nueve menos cuarto / ocho y cuarenta y cinco

**Personal Pronouns**

**Pronombres Personales**

I

Yo

You

Tu/usted

He

El



She	Ella
It	Eso/a
We	Nosotros
You (all)	Ustedes
They	Ellos/as

**Family**

**Familia**

Parents	Padres
Mother	Mama
Father	Papa
Children	Hijos
Son	Hijo
Daughter	Hija
Uncle	Tio
Aunt	Tia
Grandparents	Abuelos
Grandfather	Abuelo
Grandmother	Abuela
Nephew	Sobrino
Niece	Sobrina
Baby	Bebe
Group	Grupo
Kids	Niños/as
Youth	Jóvenes
Adults	Adultos
Elderly	Ancianos, De tercera edad
Boyfriend	Novio
Girlfriend	Novia
Are you married?	¿Es usted casado (a)?
I am married	Soy casado (a)
I am not married	No soy casado (a)
What does he/she do for a living?	¿A que se dedica?
Do you have children?	¿Tiene hijos?
How many siblings do you have?	¿Cuantos hermanos tiene?

<b><u>Verbs</u></b>	<b><u>Verbos</u></b>
Sing	Cantar
Meet /know	Conocer
Visit	Visitar
Walk	Caminar
Play	Jugar
Bathe (clean up/play at river)	Bañarse
Wash	Lavar
Relax	Relajar
Rest	Descansar
Wake up	Despertar
Sleep	Dormir
Eat	Comer
Drink (verb)	Tomar, Beber
Cook (verb)	Cocinar
Learn	Aprender
Teach	Enseñar
Read	Leer
Study	Estudiar

<b><u>In the Kitchen</u></b>	<b><u>En la cocina</u></b>
Food	Comida
Drink (beverage)	Bebida
Griddle	Comal
Pot	Olla
Pan	Sartén
Chicken	Pollo
Beef	Carne (de res)
Fish	Pescado
Eggs	Huevos
Bananas	Bananos (Gt) Guineos (ES)
Corn /Hominy	Maíz,
Corn on the cob	Elote

Sorghum	Maicillo
Beans	Frijoles
Rice	Arroz
Cheese	Queso
Water	Agua
Tortilla	Tortilla

**City**

**Ciudad**

Plane	Avión
Airport	Aeropuerto
Building	Edificio
Bank	Banco
Central Park	Parque Central
Cathedral	Catedral
Museum	Museo
Park	Parque
Bus	Camioneta, Bus
Car	Carro
Police	Policia
Gun	Pistola
Soldier	Soldado

**Rural Area**

**Campo / El interior**

Person living in a rural area	Campesino/a
Community (town)	Comunidad
Hamlet (part of town)	Caserio
(To) Live	Vivir
River	Rio
House	Casa
Mountain	Montaña
Tree	Árbol
Road	Camino
Street	Calle
Field/ plot	Campo/ lote

Plant (verb)	Sembrar
Harvest (verb)	Cosechar
Harvest (noun)	Cosecha
Plantation	Finca
Church	Iglesia
Soccer	Fútbol
Ball	Pelota
Goal	Gol
Field (athletic)	Cancha
Team	Equipo
Ocean	Océano / Mar

**The School**

**La Escuela**

Kindergarten	Preprimaria
Elementary	Primaria
Junior High	Basico
High School	Diversificado / Bachillerato
University	Universidad
Student	Estudiante
Teacher	Profesor (a) / Maestro (a)
Class	Clase
Math	Matematicas
Social Studies	Estudios Sociales
Grammar	Gramatica
Biology	Biology
Recreation	Recreo
Library	Biblioteca
Book	Libro

**The Weather**

**El Clima**

Winter	Invierno
Summer	Verano
Autumn (does not exist in C.A.)	Otoño
Spring (does not exist in C.A.)	Primavera

Rain (verb)	Llover
Rain (noun)	Lluvia
Weather	Clima / Tiempo
Temperature	Temperatura
It is hot	Hace mucho calor
It is cold	Hace frio
Wind	Viento

**Body Parts**

**Partes del cuerpo**

Head	Cabeza
Eyes	Ojos
Nose	Nariz
Mouth	Boca
Teeth	Dientes
Tongue	Lengua
Ears	Orejas
Chest	Pecho
Shoulder	Hombro
Arm	Brazo
Hand	Mano
Fingers	Dedos de las manos
Stomach	Estomago
Waist	Cintura
Leg	Pierna
Feet	Pies
Ankle	Tobillo
Toes	Dedos de los pies

**Animals**

**Animales**

Dog	Perro, Chucho
Cat	Gato
Rooster	Gallo
Hen	Gallina
Duck	Pato

Goose	Ganso
Horse	Caballo
Cow	Vaca
Turkey	Chompipe/ Pavo
Goat	Cabra
Mouse	Ratón
Snake	Culebra / Serpiente

**Common phrases and words in Q'eqchi (Las Margaritas, Sepalau, Chichipate)**

**English/Q'eqchi Pronunciation in English**

A little- b'ab'ay bah-bay	Formal greeting/man- wa'chin Qua cheen
A lot – na' bal nah- bawl	Formal greeting/woman- na'chin Na cheen
Amen- Jo'kan taxaq Hoe cAHn tah shawk	Good- us OOs
Beans- kenq' kenk	Grandfather- yuwa'chin You qua cheen
Bed - ch'aat chAht	Grandmother- na'chin Na cheen
Beef- tib teeb	He/she is ill- yaj Yah
Brother- as bej Ahss bay	Hot pepper- eeck
Cat - mes mess	Hot- tiq Teak
Chicken- kaxlan cAHsh-lon	I am ill – Mas yajin Mahss Yah heen
Church – iglees ee-gles	I sleep- ninwark Nin quark
Come- kim Kim	I slept- xinwark Shin quark
Cooking stones-k'uub' Coob	Kind – tuulan Too lahn
Cow – wakax wah-CAHsh	Large- nimla Nim la
Cup- sek' sec	Machete- ch'iiich Cheech
Day- kutaan Coo tahn	Mother – na Nah
Dog- tzi' Tsee	Moon – po Poe
Duck- patux pAH toosh	More- chik Cheek
Eat- Wa'in Quah een	Mountain- tzuul Tsool
Egg- Mol Mole	Night- q'ojiik Koeh yik
Father- yuwa You qua	No- In'ca Een kah
Flashlight- kaxchaj CAHsh chah	Pig – aaq Ahk

**Common phrases and words in Quiche (Chontala, Cunen)**

Good morning- Saqarik	Blanket- k'ul
Good afternoon- Xb'eqij	Soap- ch'ipaq
Good evening/night- Xokaq'ab'	Good- utz
Goodbye- Chab'ej	Bad- itzel
Bye. See you soon.- Kimpetik ri	Open- teb'am
Thank you-	Closed- tzapilik
Excuse me- Kyunala	Hard- ko
What's your name?- Su ra'b'i?	Soft- ch'uch'uj
My name is- Nu b'i	Hot- miq'in
Where are you from?- Ja kat pewi?	Cold- joron
I'm from- Ch'qap ja'kin pewi	Sick- yiwab'
Where is the? Ja k'uichi' ri?	North (white)- saq
Bathroom- b'anb'al chulu	South (yellow)- k'an
Doctor- ajkun	East (red)- kaq
Do you have?- K'olik?	West (black)- k'eq
Coffee- kab'e	
Boiled water- saq'li	*From Lonely Planet
Vegetables- ichaj	

## Appendix N: A Delegate's Account

Written by Meghan Grossman  
St. Joan of Arc Church in Minneapolis, MN

*After washing down the last bites of fresh tortilla with sweet hibiscus iced tea in the sunny courtyard of the church, Pastor Tomas requested that one of the Saint Joan of Arc Sister delegates speak at mass for our departing Sunday. I had been thinking that his questions for us all regarding the mission and vision of our Sister Parish relationship over lunch that Friday afternoon were his way of researching his homily topic, in order to best describe us to the rest of the congregation. Surprisingly, he thought it would be best for one of the North American delegates to share reflections in order for the community to hear directly from us. Pastor Tomas laid out the parameters: explain the mission of solidarity and reconciliation, include themes of all three readings for Sunday, August 19<sup>th</sup> and keep it under 15 minutes...*

*Feeling intimidated by the task, I gathered reflections from many of my fellow delegates and TNII friends. Finding time to write it proved to be challenging in between meals, visiting and extended family visits in my host family's home. My host mom ran out to find the correct readings in Spanish for me and another TNII friend proofread my work. I worked late into the night with a flashlight under the covers so as to avoid disturbing the rest of the family. Bleary-eyed, I woke and dressed for 6:00 AM mass. I was so nervous as I approached the altar when invited up by Pastor Tomas and began to share my thoughts in front of a packed church. At one point I made eye contact with a very good (and new) friend from TNII while talking about how much he had helped our group keep God at the center of our experiences. Overcome with emotion I barely finished through my tears.*

*I never expected to feel so deeply connected to a group of people in such a short amount of time. Below you will find the text (in English) of my comments that day that, I hope, begin to capture this unexpected but wonderful connection.*



What is solidarity? I thought that I knew before coming to Guatemala. My name is Meghan Grossman. The delegation has chosen me to speak today. Thank you for the opportunity to share some reflections about my Sister Parish experience with you. With each passing day in Guatemala we have become more aware that our definition of solidarity was incomplete. Today's readings from the Bible show us why.

The second reading today says "Don't be thoughtless." Many North Americans have no concept of the struggle and difficulties of the Guatemalan people. From this ignorance some actions and, worse, some inactions have resulted in injustice. During our trip...we visited the Peace Park of Santiago de Atitlán where thirteen young people are buried, victims of a massacre of the same time period. The people of Guatemala have much to teach us about reconciliation.



In the first reading it says, "...advance in the way of understanding." A young scholarship student from Tierra Nueva II, Celia, gave us an example of this yesterday. When she was asked about the pressure of drugs and violence that she confronts, she responded with wisdom. She told us that in order to live a long life, she needs to listen to and respect her parents because they have already experienced a lot. We have also learned to listen to those who have experienced life, fought for justice and built a community here in Guatemala. We have learned that we do not know the best path. Like Brother Paul says, our sister parish relationship is one of equals, not of charity. We do not see ourselves as superiors or parents or you as poor children. Together we are equals, advancing in the way of understanding.

In the Gospel the theme is communion. There is no better theme to explain our sister parish relationship. As Jesus says, "He that eats of this bread will live forever." To share communion is fundamentally a sacrament of community. We are a community united in a long history, an unconditional promise and in our Catholic faith. The long history began 18 years ago when the first delegation came here from Saint Joan of Arc. Every two years since then members of the church of Tierra Nueva II have received us into their homes as members of their families. Thank you to all the families that have hosted us. Every two years a delegation from here visits us as well. We live together, we pray together and we eat together, as brothers and sisters in Christ. Every year our commitment is stronger. It is our faith that has given us the most. Thank you for always reminding us, even after a long day traveling in the countryside, the importance of confidence in God and always thanking God. Saint Joan of Arc and Tierra Nueva II eat the bread of life together and we believe that our sister parish relationship will live forever.



Solidarity is something that you cannot understand until you feel it. I felt it when: strangers met me at the airport with joy and song, when we laugh and cry together, when, together, we get angry over the injustice of malnutrition, violence and lack of funds for the health post, when Eluvia gives me my daily hug (or hourly hug). Solidarity is a feeling, not an abstract concept that is not going to end or even be put on hold when we return. We are going to strengthen the bridge that we have built through communication, prayer and adding

more people. I am going to be much more conscious of news from Guatemala and North American issues that impact Guatemala. I am going to share what I have learned with everybody and invite them to join us. I also invite you to become a member of the sister parish committee, the Peregrinos (those that reflect on the Bible with members of Saint Joan of Arc) and to pray for understanding, justice and solidarity. In conclusion, thank you for your commitment to this beautiful sister parish relationship. God bless.

Visit [www.sisterparish.org](http://www.sisterparish.org) for more delegate reflections or watch *Through the Eyes of a Delegation*, available at all linkage churches and through the U.S. Administrative Office.

## Appendix O: Country Fact Sheets

The following lists of Q and A may help you to learn basic information about the country where your hermanamiento is located. This is just basic information and does not replace further research. We encourage you to seek out information about your brothers and sisters from a variety of sources. One place to look is under “country packets” at [www.elca.org](http://www.elca.org)

### El Salvador

#### 1. What size is the country?

It used to be 21,040 km but now it is 20,720 km.

#### 2. What countries share its borders?

Situated on the Pacific coast of Central America, El Salvador has Guatemala to the west, Honduras to the north, and Nicaragua to the east. It is the smallest of the Central American countries, with an area equal to that of Massachusetts, and it is the only one without an Atlantic coastline. Most of the country is on a fertile volcanic plateau about 2,000 ft (607 m) high.

#### 3. What are some of its natural resources?

The principal natural resources are geothermal power, hydropower, and arable lands. El Salvador produces energy for industrial and domestic uses.

#### 4. How old is the country?

El Salvador, with the other countries of Central America, declared its independence from Spain on Sept. 15, 1821, and was part of a federation of Central American states until that union dissolved in 1838.

#### 5. What challenges and milestones has it experienced with respect to its governance and sovereignty?

For decades after its independence, El Salvador experienced numerous revolutions and wars against other Central American republics. From 1931 to 1979 El Salvador was ruled by a series of military dictatorships. In the 1970s discontent with societal inequalities, a poor economy, and repressive measures carried out by dictatorships led to civil war between the government, ruled since 1961 by the right-wing, National Conciliation Party (PCN), and leftist antigovernment guerrilla units, whose leading group was the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN). The U.S. intervened on the side of

the military dictatorship, despite its scores of human rights violations. Between 1979 and 1981, more than 30,000 people were killed by right-wing death squads backed by the government military forces. It is not possible to say an exact amount of people killed by death squads, because there are many massacres that have never been mentioned in formal government reports, not even by international organizations. On Jan. 16, 1992, the government signed a peace treaty with the guerrilla forces, as part of a political strategy. This formally ended the 12-year civil war that had killed more than 75,000. In reality, the war just transformed. Repressive policies were still carried out and most people still talk about living in war-like conditions, as violence has risen in the past decade and economic policies keep the majority of the population in poverty.

**6. How many people live in the country?**

Approximately 6.23 million inhabitants. Approximately 1/3 of Salvadorans have migrated to and live in the United States.

**7. What is the ethnic composition of the country?**

Mestizo (mixed indigenous and European ancestry) 86.3%; non-mestizo (European descent, indigenous, black and other) 12.7%, including Indigenous 1%; Black 0.16%; Other 0.64%. Massacres wiped out the majority of the remaining indigenous inhabitants in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

**8. What is the capital?**

San Salvador metro area has a population of over 2 million. Population is 238,244 in the city proper.

**9. What is the predominant language?**

Spanish

**10. What is the predominant religion?**

Roman Catholicism (roughly half of the population), evangelical churches (around 30% and growing).

**11. What values are important to the people?**

Respect, family, education, religion

**12. What schisms exist among the population as a result of gender, ethnic background, power, economic status, etc?**

Since its colonization by the Spanish, El Salvador has been characterized by divisions

based on economic status, political leanings, and ethnic background. While the women's movement is gaining ground, gender inequality is still present. Rural farmers and farm workers are also marginalized. The indigenous population that remains has lost much of its culture and language because of discrimination.

**13. What is the courteous way to greet someone in the country?**

Offer a handshake and say good day (Buenos dias), good afternoon (Buenas tardes), good evening (Buenas noches); or simply say "Buenas" which is the short form for all the greetings mentioned before. Nice to meet you (mucho gusto).

**14. What gestures or behavior, if any, are improper?**

In groups it is polite to greet each person individually at the beginning and the end of every activity. It is polite to greet everyone when entering a meeting, even if you arrive late. Leaving or refusing food that is offered can be considered rude, but talk with Sister Parish staff if you have health needs you need to communicate during your stay.

**15. What food items constitute a typical meal?**

For breakfast, hick corn tortillas, red beans, rice, eggs, cheese or cream, and plantains. For supper; rice, vegetables, meat (lunch in cities and cafeterias). Pupusas (which is a tortilla with a filling of your choice – most often cheese and beans) are common for breakfast, lunch or dinner. Food can vary region by region. Almost all meals include rice and/or tortillas. You may also be served seasonal fruits like mangos, bananas ("guineos"), watermelon, or pineapple. Weak, sweet coffee is served for breakfast and supper, and for lunch, seasonal fruit drinks are served.

**16. When are meals eaten, and what is considered appropriate behavior at meals?**

There are normally 3 meals: breakfast, which is early in the morning, around 7.00 or 8.00 AM in the countryside. Lunch, most of the time, is at noon, sometimes at 1.00 PM; and dinner (supper) is at 5.30 or 6.00 PM. Snacks are not customary, but it is possible for guests to be served fruits or coffee with sweet bread between meals. (See Number 14 for appropriate behavior at meals).

**17. What do the people do for recreation?**

If there is a river close by, people go to the river on holidays. In Chalatenango many people go to the Sumpul River. People also visit each other during holidays or free time. Television is popular.

### **18. What holidays do the people observe?**

January 16 (Signing of the Peace Accords), Holy Week is the most widely celebrated holiday; August 1-6 (patron saint festival for the Divine Savior of the World); August 15, (Feast of the Assumption of Mary); September 15 (Independence Day); Christmas Eve; New Year's Eve; May 1 (Worker's Day); October 1 (International Children's Day), November 1 (All Saints Day); November 2 (Day of the Dead). There are many other dates that people celebrate but are not official holidays.

### **19. How is the government structured?**

The Salvadoran government has three branches of power: The Executive branch is headed by the President of the Republic ([www.casapres.gob.sv](http://www.casapres.gob.sv)), and his cabinet is made up of the ministers (secretaries), vice-ministers, and presidents or directors of autonomous or decentralized institutions. His term is for five years. The Legislative branch's ([www.asamblea.gob.sv](http://www.asamblea.gob.sv)) power is exercised through an assembly of 84 deputies (congressmen) elected for a period of three years. The Judicial branch - the Supreme Court of Justice ([www.csj.gob.sv](http://www.csj.gob.sv)) – is made up of fourteen magistrates, including its president. It has four chambers: the Constitutional, the Civil, the Penitentiary and the Contentious Administrative. Magistrates have terms of nine years

### **20. Who is the current president?**

In 2019, Nayib Bukele, from the Grand Alliance for National Unity (GANU), won the 2019 Presidential Election ending 10 years of FMLN rule and decades of rule by the two major parties (FMLN and ARENA). Bukele was previously a member of the FMLN, but was kicked out of the party and ran on a campaign that criticized the two party system. He was inaugurated on 1 June 2019 for a 5-year term.

### **21. What natural disasters, if any, have occurred in recent years?**

Hurricane Mitch (1998), Earthquakes (largest in 2001), Hurricane Stan (2005). There have been some strong and unusual storms in the last few years.

### **22. What is the state of the country's economy?**

The economy of El Salvador is dependent on, and inextricably linked to, the remittances that migrants send back home from the U.S. El Salvador is now more of a service and industry country. Agriculture is not as significant as it once was (and food tends to be expensive as a result). Products that constitute an important part of agriculture are:

coffee, sugar, corn, and cotton. Beef, dairy products, and shrimp are also important products. In terms of industry, textile factories are very common, as well as the production of geothermal and hydroelectric power.

**23. What factors, positive or negative, contribute to this economic condition?**

Most of the factors that can be mentioned are negative, for two basic reasons: first, businesses are for the benefit of a small group of powerful families (the oligarchy) and not for the population- like the garment manufacturing industry (maquilas); and second, because most of governmental economic projects constitute a threat to the environment; like mining projects, dam and highway construction. Most of the government efforts are focused on this kind of industry and not on sustainable alternative. Economic policies are designed to make the rich richer and the poor poorer- they are neoliberal policies. El Salvador has opened its doors to foreign investment that drains the nation of its resources without providing economic stability to the general population. Benefits of foreign investment are enjoyed by those involved with the government or the oligarchy. Organized crime and common crime create enormous costs and complicate investment.

**24. What, if any, foreign aid helps to support the economy?**

The European Union, United States, and other countries provide aid through development projects, loans, help during disasters, etc. However, the biggest “foreign” aid is what is sent each month through remittances to families, by those who have gone to the U.S. to work.

**25. What are the country’s primary exports?**

Top exports in 2018 were: Knit or crochet clothing, accessories, plastics, paper, sugar, mineral fuels (including oil), clothing (not knit or crochet), knit or crochet fabric, iron/steel, cereal/milk preparations, and beverages.

**26. What is the currency of the country?**

The U.S. dollar has been the legal currency since January of 2001, though some still make reference to the Salvadoran colon, the old currency.

**27. How much of the population lives in poverty?**

31% of the population lives in poverty and 10% live in extreme poverty. The numbers are higher in rural areas (with 36% living in poverty) and for children under 5 (with 25% living in extreme poverty).

**28. What communication and transportation systems are in place?**

Land lines are available. Most people in urban and rural areas now use cell phones and the internet. There are several private bus lines that cover routes throughout the country. Besides buses, there are also “coasters”, i.e. 20 passenger vans that provide transport for shorter routes, but are more expensive than buses. Most main highways are paved now.

**29. What is the educational system?**

As part of the trade agreements, the government has been trying to privatize the education system. The majority of investments in education are focused on elementary school (1st to 6th grade). One of the major social programs of the FMLN administrations when they had power provided uniforms and school supplies for children, hiring local seamstresses to make the uniforms. Middle school and high school are not always accessible to rural communities, though municipal governments in Chalatenango have increasingly found ways to make middle school, high school, and even university more accessible to their population. There are a couple of colleges and universities in the country; one is the National University, with 2 regional branches largely funded by government, the rest are private and smaller. There are a number of private universities that have sites in or near Chalatenango.

**30. What is the literacy rate?**

The adult literacy rate for 2017 was estimated at 88.4% (slightly higher for men and slightly lower for women).

**31. What is the country’s health care system like?**

The health care system is provided by the government, but the service is poor. Public hospitals are under resourced in every way – little to no medication in stock, understaffed, and lacking in basic medical equipment for testing, medical care, and operations. In Chalatenango, the health care system established by Guarjila is quite good, especially for a rural clinic, but this is largely due to international support and the community’s own perseverance. The private health care system is very good, but not accessible for the vast majority of the population.

**32. What is the infant mortality rate and the life expectancy?**

Infant mortality rate: 12/1,000. Under 5 mortality rate: 14.49/1,000. Life expectancy: 74.

**33. What is the country's current relationship with the United States?**

The relationship between El Salvador and the United States is primarily economic. The U.S. exerts considerable influence on the economic policies in the country, and El Salvador was the first Central American country to begin “free trade”, under CAFTA, with the U.S. Honduras, Guatemala and El Salvador have recently collaborated with the U.S. on the Alliance for Prosperity, an aid package and multinational cooperation agreement launched in 2015 “to stimulate economic growth, reduce inequality, promote educational opportunities, target criminal networks responsible for human trafficking, and help create governance and institutions that are transparent and accountable.” Critics have expressed concern about how the stated goals of the Alliance for Prosperity will actually develop and what the results will be in Central America. The Trump administration has placed a lot of pressure on Guatemala to lower the migration rate to the U.S.

**34. What safety issues should travelers be alert to while traveling in the country?**

Crime rates are high due to gang activity, organized crime and robberies, especially in the larger cities. Sister Parish staff remains very well-informed about the safety situation throughout the country, and takes every possible precaution. U.S. travelers do not face the same risks as Central Americans living in the country. Levels of crime are much lower in Chalatenango, but each community will have safety recommendations based on their current reality that staff will share with the group during orientation in-country. Please reach out to us before your delegation if you would like us to address any specific questions or concerns you have.



## **Guatemala**

### **1. What size is the country?**

Slightly smaller than Tennessee

### **2. What countries share its borders?**

To the northwest: Mexico; to the southeast: El Salvador to the east: Honduras

### **3. What are some of its natural resources?**

Coffee, sugar, crude oil, hydropower, precious and semiprecious minerals (gold, nickel, silver), cotton, bananas, precious woods.

### **4. How old is the country?**

Guatemala declared independence from Spain in 1821.

### **5. What challenges and milestones has it experienced with respect to its governance and sovereignty?**

Civil War from 1960-1996, ended officially on December 29, 1996.

### **6. How many people live in the country?**

Approximately 16.9 million (2019)

### **7. What is the ethnic composition of the country?**

Mestizo (mixed indigenous and European descent) 41%, Indigenous 39.8%, European descent 18.5%, Black 1%, Asian 0.6%. There are more than 23 different indigenous ethnolinguistic groups, including indigenous Maya (the majority), Garifuna (mixed African and indigenous Caribbean descent), and Xinka. These numbers are often disputed.

### **8. What is the capital?**

Guatemala City (3 million people in the metro area)

### **9. What is the predominant language?**

Spanish is the official language, but more than 23 indigenous languages are widely spoken, including numerous Mayan languages, Xinka and Garifuna. The largest linguistic groups are Maya Kaqchikel, Maya Quiché (or K'iche'), and Maya Q'eqchi'.

### **10. What is the predominant religion?**

Roman Catholicism (slightly less than half) and Pentecostalism/Evangelical (growing).

### **11. What values are important to the people?**

Respect, family, faith.

**12. What schisms exist among the population as a result of gender, ethnic background, power, economic status, etc?**

Guatemala has power struggles between the “new rich” and the traditional aristocracy/oligarchy. Racism, classism, and other forms of discrimination (based on gender, sexuality, etc.) affect many aspects of daily life and national politics – though please remember this is also true in the U.S.

**13. What is the courteous way to greet someone in the country?**

Handshake and saying good day (Buenos dias), good afternoon (Buenas tardes), good evening (Buenas noches). Nice to meet you (mucho gusto).

**14. What gestures or behavior, if any, are improper?**

In groups it is polite to greet each person individually at the beginning and the end of every activity. It is polite to greet everyone when entering a meeting, even when you are arriving late. Leaving or refusing food that is offered can be considered rude, but talk with Sister Parish staff if you have health needs you need to communicate during your stay. It is polite to say, thank you (muchas gracias), when you finish your food.

**15. What food items constitute a typical meal?**

Corn tortillas, black beans, eggs and fresh cheese or cream (breakfast and supper); soup, rice, vegetables, meat (lunch, especially in larger cities)

**16. When are meals eaten, and what is considered appropriate behavior around eating?**

Times vary between rural and urban settings. RURAL: Breakfast is around 6 or 7 am, earlier for men who work in the fields. Lunch can be anywhere between 11 and 1 pm, and supper is usually between 6 and 7. URBAN: Breakfast is around 7 am, Lunch is usually between 1 and 2 pm, and supper is usually between 7 and 8 pm. (See Number 14 for more information).

**17. What do the people do for recreation?**

“Pasear” which means walking around, and sometimes visiting family and neighbors. This is especially true in the rural areas. In the larger cities, malls and cinemas are increasingly popular places to go. Television is popular. Another popular pastime is to go to a beach, river, or lake during holidays.

**18. What holidays do the people observe?**

Holy Week is the high holiday; August 15 (Feast for the Assumption of Mary) is celebrated in Guatemala City; Christmas Eve; New Year's Eve; May 1st (Worker's Day); September 15 (Independence Day); October 1st (International Children's Day); October 20th (Day of the Revolution); November 1 (All Saints Day); November 2 (Day of the Dead).

**19. How is the government structured?**

3 branches: Executive, Legislative, Judicial. There is no jury system.

**20. Who is the current president?**

In 2019 elections, former prison system director Alejandro Giammatei was elected the next president of Guatemala. He will be inaugurated in January 2020. Presidential terms are 4 years and presidents cannot be re-elected.

**21. What natural disasters, if any, have occurred in recent years?**

Hurricane Mitch (1998), Hurricane Stan (2005), Tropical Storm Agatha (2010), Pacaya Volcano eruption (2010), Fuego Volcano eruption (2018).

**22. What is the state of the country's economy?**

The economy is dependent on trade with other countries – the U.S. is Guatemala's largest trading partner. Tourism and remittances from migrants in the U.S. (both sectors negatively impacted by the U.S. financial recession) make up a significant portion of economic activity, as well as textiles and agricultural exports like coffee, sugar and bananas. An estimated 75% of the population participates in the informal economy, as the formal economy does not generally provide for all of one's needs. Over half the population survives on subsistence agriculture, even though over 70% of arable land is owned by a mere 2% of the population. Driven by the global economic crisis and the resulting rise in gold prices, mining is increasingly pushed as a means to ensure the country's economic well-being and development. The energy sector is also growing. There are 8-15 families that form Guatemala's elite and control and reap the largest benefits from Guatemala's traditional economic sectors (ie. sectors other than those now controlled by organized crime). Organized crime makes up a significant portion of the economy.

**23. What factors, positive or negative, contribute to this economic condition?**

CAFTA is a driving force now in Guatemala (the "free trade agreement" between

the U.S. and Central America. While the number of products that are imported has increased significantly, many smaller businesses are closing down because they cannot compete. This is also happening with small farms that cannot compete with imported agricultural products. Organized crime and high levels of common crime are other factors in destabilizing the economy. High levels of corruption mean that much of the money that comes into the country destined for development does not reach those most in need.

**24. What, if any, foreign aid helps to support the economy?**

Many countries, including the U.S., countries of the European Union, Japan, and Taiwan provide money for development programs, soft credit, and goods.

**25. What are the country's primary exports?**

Natural resources: petroleum; nickel; rare woods; fish; chicle; hydropower. Agriculture: sugarcane; corn; bananas; coffee; beans; cardamom; livestock; fruits and vegetables; flowers. Industry: sugar; textiles and clothing; furniture; chemicals; petroleum; metals; rubber; tourism

**26. What is the currency of the country?**

The quetzal, available in denominations of 1, 5, 10, 20, 50, 100 and 200. The quetzal has 100 centavos or cents, and they are available in .01, .05, .10, .25, .50 increments.

**27. What is the current exchange rate?**

Flexible rate of approximately 7.5 quetzals per dollar

**28. How much of the population lives in poverty?**

About 59% of the population lives in poverty, and 23% lives in extreme poverty. For the indigenous population, the numbers are higher: 79% live in poverty and 40% live in extreme poverty. Income inequality is extremely high.

**29. What communication and transportation systems are in place?**

There are several AM and FM band radios, including many community radios that offer news and information in indigenous languages. There are several cable companies and national television channels. The road system is extensive, however, aside from the 4 or 5 main highways, most roads are in poor condition and many are not paved. There are a wide variety of buses, pickup trucks, taxis, mototaxis, and vans that take people to even the most remote communities. Most services are private, however, and vehicles are in

poor condition. In terms of phones, land lines are available to those who live in large cities. Throughout Guatemala, most people use cell phones now.

### **30. What is the educational system?**

There are public and private schools- and within the public sector, the quality of education depends largely on the location of the school. Private schools do not necessarily offer a better education. Primary school is from 1-6th grade, and while compulsory, many children do not attend, either because the school is far away or because they must work, or their family cannot afford the enrollment fees and school supplies and uniforms. Middle school is from 7-9th grade, and then there are high schools (including vocational and technical schools). Guatemala has one public and several private universities; however this level is inaccessible to the vast majority.

### **31. What is the literacy rate?**

79% average. There are differences between indigenous and mestizo groups, and between rural and urban areas.

### **32. What is the country's health care system like?**

Guatemala has two health care systems: public and private. In the public system, there are hospitals and health centers in each department (similar to a U.S. state). There is also a Social Security system that provides health care to workers who pay into the system. In both cases, there are often worker strikes and shortages of basic supplies, medicines, and blood with which to treat patients. In many rural areas, however, there is no real access to basic health care apart from volunteer health promoters and midwives who have had some training in basic first aid and the treatment of common illnesses such as dysentery, respiratory illnesses, etc. If people who live in rural areas need to go to the hospital, they may have to walk or travel for hours or even days to arrive at a health care center. Cuban doctors have volunteered to visit remote communities in order to see patients and expand coverage. The private system is concentrated primarily in the capital and in major cities. If one is able to pay, then the coverage is very good, with modern equipment, and doctors who are often trained in other countries.

### **33. What is the infant mortality rate and the life expectancy?**

Infant mortality rate: 13/1000. Mortality rate for children under 5: 27.6/1000. The life expectancy is 73.41 average.

**34. What is the country's current relationship with the United States?**

Some say that Guatemala is practically a “colony” of the U.S. U.S. foreign policy plays an important role in how the local government makes decisions. The most important policies are related to the Free Trade agreements and the U.S. war on drugs. Honduras, Guatemala and El Salvador have recently collaborated with the U.S. on the Alliance for Prosperity, an aid package and multinational cooperation agreement launched in 2015 “to stimulate economic growth, reduce inequality, promote educational opportunities, target criminal networks responsible for human trafficking, and help create governance and institutions that are transparent and accountable.” Critics have expressed concern about how the stated goals of the Alliance for Prosperity will actually develop and what the results will be in Central America. The Trump administration has placed a lot of pressure on Guatemala to lower the migration rate to the U.S.

**35. What safety issues should travelers be alert to while traveling in the country?**

While the civil war ended in 1996, violence is still an issue in Guatemala. Crime rates are high due to gang activity, organized crime and robberies, especially in the larger cities and the urban communities we visit. Sister Parish staff remains very well-informed about the safety situation throughout the country, and takes every possible precaution. U.S. travelers do not face the same risks as Central Americans living in the country. Levels of crime are much lower in rural areas, but each community will have safety recommendations based on their current reality that staff will share with the group during orientation in-country. Please reach out to us before your delegation if you would like us to address any specific questions or concerns you have.

## **Appendix P: The Four Stages toward Solidarity**

“We must move beyond compassion and anger to humility and realism.”

By Albert Nolan (source unknown)

In our commitment to the poor there is a spiritual experience and development that goes through four different stages. We go through it as individuals and as a church and the goal is authentic solidarity with the poor.

The first stage, as I understand it, if this commitment to the poor is characterized by compassion. We have all been moved personally by what we have seen or heard of the sufferings of the poor. That is only the starting point and it needs to develop and to grow.

Two things help this growth and development of compassion. The first is what we have now come to call exposure. The more we are exposed to the sufferings of the poor, the deeper and more lasting does our compassion become. Some agencies these days organize exposure programs and send people off to a Third World country to see something of the hardships and grinding poverty. There is nothing to replace the immediate contact with pain and hunger. Seeing people in the cold and the rain after their houses have been bulldozed. Or experiencing the intolerable smell in a slum. Or seeing what children look like when they are suffering from malnutrition.

Information is also exposure. All sorts of information can help us to become more compassionate, more concerned, providing, of course, we allow it to happen.

We as Christians have a way of allowing or compassion to develop, a way of nourishing this compassionate feeling, because we can see compassion as a virtue. Indeed we can see it as a divine attribute, so that when I feel compassionate I am sharing God's compassion, I am sharing what God feels about the world today. Also, my Christianity, my faith, enables me to deepen my compassion by seeing the face of Christ in those who are suffering, remembering that whatever we do to the least of his brothers and sisters we do to him. All these things help, and this developing compassion leads on to action of two kinds.

The first is what we generally call relief work, the collection and distribution of food, money, blankets, clothes, or sophisticated ways of doing that to help the poor. And

the second action would probably be a simplification of our life-style—trying to do without luxuries, trying to save money to give to the poor, doing without unnecessary material goods and so forth. There's nothing extraordinary about that; it's part of a long Christian tradition.

Now the second stage begins with the gradual discovery that poverty is a structural problem. Poverty in the world today is not simply misfortune, bad luck, inevitably due to laziness or ignorance, or just a lack of development. Poverty is the direct result of political and economic policies. The poverty we have in the world today is not accidental, it has been created. It is the direct result of particular policies and systems. Poverty in the world today is a matter of justice and injustice, and the poor people of the world are suffering a terrible injustice.

The second stage of our spiritual development immediately leads to indignation or, more bluntly, to anger. It leads to anger against the rich, against politicians, against governments for their lack of compassion, for their policies that cause poverty and suffering.

Now anger is something that we as Christians are not very comfortable with. It makes us feel a little guilty when we discover that we are angry. There is a sense in which anger is the other side of the coin of compassion. If we cannot be angry then we cannot really be compassionate wither. If my heart goes out to the people who are suffering, then I must be angry with those who make them suffer.

For us Christians there can even be a crisis at this stage. What about forgiveness, or loving one's enemies? Anger doesn't mean hatred. I can be angry with a person whom I love. And mustn't we be angry with a naughty child because of love and concern, to show the child the seriousness of love?

Sometimes I must share God's anger. The Bible is full of God's anger, which we tend to find embarrassing at times, rather than helpful to our spiritual lives. We need to share God's anger, not a hatred of the sinner but a hatred of the sin. The more we understand the structural problem as such, the more we are able to forgive the individuals involved.

It is extremely important for us in South Africa, for example, to recognize that the wickedness, the extreme wickedness of what is happening, is not something that we can



blame P.W. Botha for, as if he were by himself a particularly wicked individual. We blame the system, and if he were to disappear, someone else would take his place and the system would go on. It is not a question of hating or blaming or being angry with individuals as such, but of the tremendous indignation against a system that creates so much suffering and so much poverty.

My suggestion is that the more we have that anger, the closer we are to God. And if we cannot have that anger, not only about South Africa but about any system or a policy that creates suffering, we don't feel about it as God feels about it and our compassion is wishywashy.

As soon as we realize that the problem of poverty in the world is structural, a political problem, then we want to work for social change. Relief work deals with the symptoms rather than with the causes. Relief work is somewhat like curative medicine and the work for social change is somewhat like preventive medicine. We want to change the structures, the systems that create the poverty, not merely to relieve people when they are suffering from that poverty. Both are necessary but at this stage you begin to recognize the need to for social change.

So we get involved in action for social change, trying to fight the system and to change governments maybe, getting involved in politics, campaigns of one sort or another. For some people, all this activity leads to paralysis. After all, what can we do against the system? We can't do anything to affect structural change.

The third stage develops with the discovery that the poor must and will save themselves, and that they don't really need you or me. Spiritually it's the stage where one comes to grips with humility in one's service to the poor. Before we reach this stage, we are inclined to think that we can, or must, solve the problems of the poor.

We-- Europeans and North American, aid agency people, conscientized middle class people, the church maybe, or we, its leaders—must solve all these problems. Governments or people who are educated must solve these problems of the poor. We must go out and rescue the poor because they are helpless.

At this third stage the shock comes, perhaps gradually, that the poor know better than we do what to do and how to do it. They are perfectly capable of solving structural problems, or political problems. In fact they are more capable of doing it than we are. It is

a gradual discovery that social change can only come from the poor, from the working class, from the Third World. Basically I must learn from them; I must lend from the wisdom of the poor. They know better than I what is needed and they, and only they, can in fact save me. I need something that only they can give me.

This can amount, in spiritual terms, to a crisis. It can also amount to a very deep conversion. I myself came first to pastoral work after a doctorate in theology in Rome. I thought I had the answers, only to discover, gradually, that I really knew nothing and that the people, who were uneducated, who seemed to be simple, ordinary poor people. To whom I would have to speak very simply, they knew better than I what faith is about. They knew better than I, for example, what needed to be changed in South Africa and how it needed to be changed.

The poor themselves are the people that God wants to use and is going to use in Christ to save all of us from the crazy madness of the world in which so many people can be starving in the midst of so much wealth. They can become an experience of God acting and of God's presence.

The hazard in this third stage is romanticizing the poor, the working class, the Third World. As soon as we have made this discovery, we tend to put the poor on a pedestal. If somebody is poor then what they say is infallibly true. We must all listen simply because they come from the Third World. And if they do something then it must be right.

That's romanticism and it's nonsense. On the other hand, it is a kind of romantic nonsense that somehow we all seem to need at one stage. As long as we recognize what we're doing, I don't think it is necessarily bad. But it can become a problem at the end of this third stage. We are likely to reach a crisis of disillusionment and disappointment because the people of the Third World or the poor have not lived up to the heroic picture we had of them. We have misunderstood something. Poor people are no different as human beings from anyone else.

The fourth and last stage centers around the experience of solidarity, real solidarity, with the poor and oppressed.

It begins with the realization that the poor make mistakes, are sometimes selfish, sometimes lacking in commitment and dedication, sometimes waste money, are

sometimes irresponsible. They are sometimes influenced by the middle class and have middle class aspirations, and sometimes believe the propaganda and perhaps do not have the right political line.

Nevertheless, I can and must learn from them. Only the poor and the oppressed can really bring social change. It is simply a matter of moving from romanticism about the poor to honest and genuine realism, because that is the only way that we can move into the stage of real solidarity.

Real solidarity begins when it is no longer a matter of we and they. Up to now I have described everything in terms of we and they because this is how we generally experience it. Even when we romanticize the poor, make tremendous heroes of them, put them on a pedestal, we continue to alienate them from ourselves; there is a huge gap between us.

Real solidarity begins when we discover that we all have faults and weaknesses. They may be different faults and weaknesses according to our different social backgrounds and our different social conditions. We may have very different roles to play, but we have all chosen to be on the same side against oppression. Whether we are in Europe or South Africa, whether we are black or white; whether we were brought up middle class or working class, we can be on the same side against oppression and still not ignore our differences.

We can work together and struggle together against our common enemy. The unjust policies and systems, without ever treating one another as inferior or superior, but having a mutual respect for one another while recognizing the limits of our own social conditioning.

This experience, and it is an experience of solidarity with God's own cause of justice, can become spiritually an experience of solidarity with God in Jesus Christ. It is a way of coming to terms with ourselves in relationship with other people, with our illusions, or feelings of superiority, with our guilt, our romanticism, which then opens us up to God, to others, to God's cause of justice and freedom.

This is a very high ideal and it would be an illusion to imagine that we could reach it without a long personal struggle that will take us through several stages—dark nights, crises, struggles, shocks, challenges.

The worst thing that can happen to any of us is that we get stuck somewhere along the way. We are then no longer able to appreciate others who may have gone further. Because we do not realize that it is a process, we also do not appreciate and understand those who are still beginning. We need to understand that we and the church are all going through a process, a spiritual development, a growth, and a struggle. We are in it together, and we need to help and support one another in it.