

Our Sister Parish

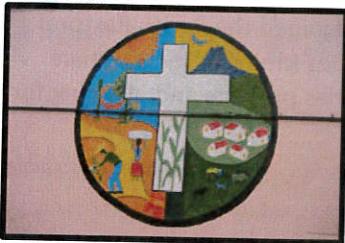
November 2016

*A mission of the Presbytery of Des Moines
in Berlín, Usulután, El Salvador*



Mission Statement

Our Sister Parish mission is a faith-based ecumenical effort of the Presbytery of Des Moines designed to bring hope and social development to the poor of the pueblo of Berlín, Usulután, El Salvador, particularly those who live in the cantóns of Berlín. Our goal is to raise awareness and embrace solidarity by developing committed relationships within churches in the US and with our brothers and sisters in El Salvador. In the relationships that develop between US churches and the poor of the cantóns, faith will grow and the love of God will be profoundly experienced for all involved.



Who Are We?

Compañeros, Presbytery of Des Moines, Iowa

Compañeros, Companions in Christ, is the coordinating body for the Presbytery of Des Moines' Our Sister Parish El Salvador mission. Their responsibilities include educating people in the Presbytery of Des Moines and others about the work of the mission, assisting churches that wish to organize delegations, promoting specific projects that support the mission, and fundraising.

Pastoral Team, Berlín, Usulután, El Salvador

The Pastoral Team consists of three full-time volunteers: Cecilia, Blanca, and Idalia from Caserío Alejandría. Other Team members and volunteers include: Balmore and Jesús, Delegates of the Word who are also from Caserío Alejandría, Margarita, from Colonia Nuevas Brisas del Sol, and Imelda, also from Caserío Alejandría.

Their responsibilities include organization and education for community leadership, project facilitation between the church partnerships and the communities, financial management for projects, and managing other basic requests for health, education, food, and clothing that come to the Pastoral House every day.

Partnerships:

- Ankeny, Ankeny Presbyterian Church with Cantón El Corozal
- Clive, Heartland Presbyterian Church with Caseríos Centro and Cerna, Cantón El Tablón
- Dallas Center, First Presbyterian Church with Cantón Virginia
- Des Moines, Central Presbyterian Church with the Pastoral House
- Des Moines, Westminster Presbyterian Church with Cantón San Francisco
- Indianola, Trinity United Presbyterian Church with Caseríos Casa de Zinc and Casa de Zacate
- Presbytery of Des Moines, Southwest Regional Partnership with Caserío Alejandría
- Presbytery of Long Island, NY with Cantón Santa Cruz
- West Des Moines, Covenant Presbyterian Church with Cantón San Isidro

The following organizations partner with the Our Sister Parish mission to provide support to the mission as a whole or for specific projects:

- Art for El Salvador
- Des Moines, Intentional Eucharistic Community
- Wichita, Kansas, First Presbyterian Church
- Baltimore, Maryland, Brown Memorial Presbyterian Church

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March, 1996 to August, 1996: Annika Lister-Stroope joined the Parish Pastoral Team in Berlin as a representative of Presbytery of Des Moines. Her presence provided support for the sewing and natural medicines projects and planning for the first medical delegation.

March, 1995: A delegation from First Presbyterian Church of Newton visited the Presbytery's partners which resulted in plans for a medical delegation the following Utterings.

1995: The Social Ministries Task Force of Des Moines Presbytery voted to designate parishes. The El Salvador mission as a permanent recipient of half the annual Rural Harvest

AUGUST, 1994: Twelve treadle sewing machines were delivered to the Parish of San Jose in Berlin for the women of El Tablon who had learned to sew. The truck that was driven from Iowa with a *Pastors for Peace* caravan was donated to the mission.

AUGUST, 1994 to July, 1995: Rev. Robert Cook was invited to join the Parish Pastoral Team at the Parish of San Jose in Berlin, which encompasses El Tablon and 16 other communities. Presbytery of Des Moines expanded its relationship to include the entire

993: Participants on the first official delegation, witnessed the need for school uniforms for the children in El Tablon. \$2,000 was raised by Presbyterians from that Presbytery and sewing classes were established for six women from that

May, 1993: A group of 15 people from Presbytery of Des Moines became the first official delegation to the community.

Offering was approved by the Presbytery for the community of El Tablon.

May, 1991: Presbytery voted unanimously to formalize a developmental relationship with El Tablon.

9900: 50% of the Presbytery of Des Moines' Rural Harvest Offering was granted to Tablon, a canton located in the mountains of Usulutan. The \$8,000 grant was for agricultural development in that community of 150 families. In November, Rev. Robert Cook, the Presbytery's Hunger Action Enabler at the time, visited the Catholic Parishes.

The Presbyterian mission began in 1990 when Rev. Robert Cook first visited Berlin as the Hunger Action Enabler of the Presbytery of Des Moines, Iowa. Eventually, he began working with Salvadorans serving with the Pastoral Team of the local

History of the Our Sister Parish Mission

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A group of approximately ten students of diverse ethnicities are standing in a row against a light-colored wall. Each student is holding up one hand to indicate the number of children in their family. The students are dressed in various casual clothing items like t-shirts, shorts, and pants.

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Love God, love your neighbor, and respect the people. Never hand out money in the communities or on the street. Our mission is about empowerment as well as charity, and as such, we want community leaders to help us make decisions regarding who needs our help. Giving aid to some and not to others divides communities and undermines the Directives' leadership. This is not a question of Christian charity or generosity, but rather of power.

Never make promises to anyone you meet that you cannot keep. Promising certain things to others can divide communities and disrupt the pastoral Team. Again, this is about delicate and power, not generosity.

All communications regarding future projects must pass through the Pastoral Team or take place when a member of the Pastoral Team is present.

The 10 Commandments
of the Pastoral House

10 Commandments cont'd...

7. Never eat or drink anything the Mission Co-Worker or Team does not tell you is safe. *Please respect our efforts to keep you healthy and safe.*
8. Never wander away from the group without informing the Team or Mission Co-Worker where you are going.

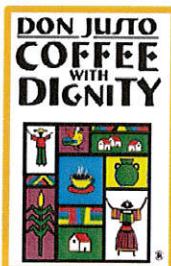
Again, please respect our efforts to keep you safe: your wellbeing is our responsibility and priority while you are here.

9. Refrain from consuming alcohol in public places in Berlín. The Pastoral House has a zero-tolerance policy for illegal drug use.

Alcohol may be purchased and brought back to the house in reasonable amounts and consumed with Christian respect, prudence, and camaraderie.

10. Respect the advice, experience, culture, and suggestions of the Pastoral Team.

They have lived here their entire lives. This is their city, their language, their culture, and these are their people. Do you really think you know more than they do?



History of the Our Sister Parish Mission continued...

July, 1996: Carmen and Don Hampton from Trinity United Presbyterian Church in Indianola visited Berlín to repair and adjust sewing machines in El Tablón and Virginia. They established a repair and maintenance schedule for the project.

August, 1996: The first medical delegation organized by First Presbyterian Church of Newton provided more than 1,000 health exams for residents of Berlín.

August, 1997: Three members of the Parish Pastoral Team in Berlín: Friar Jesus Gomez, Milagro del Carmen Rodriguez Lopez and Juanita Abarra visited with more than 20 congregations in the Presbytery of Des Moines during their ten-day stay.

April, 1998: The second medical delegation organized by First Presbyterian Church of Newton, Iowa, provided more than 1,000 health exams for residents of Berlín.

April, 1999: A delegation assisted the Parish Pastoral Team with development of a solar project that focused on ovens for cooking, dryers for drying fruit and vegetables, and solar panels for generation of electricity. At the time, only one of the cantóns of the Parish had electricity.

April, 1999: The third medical delegation organized by First Presbyterian Church of Newton provided more than 1,000 health exams for the residents of Berlín and also fitted eyeglasses. A recommendation was made to bring 12-year-old Milagro Granados to Des Moines for corrective foot surgery. Joyce and Jim Hoffman from Heartland Presbyterian Church provide three months of hospitality for Millie and her mother, Haydee. The surgery was donated by Blank Hospital.

February, 2000: The fourth medical delegation from First Presbyterian Church of Newton visited the Parish.

September, 2000: Representatives from Heartland, Park Avenue and Trinity Presbyterian churches, a United Methodist church, a Catholic parish and Plymouth Congregational Church in Des Moines visited the Parish of San José.

September, 2001: Rev. Robert Cook was commissioned as the Presbytery's Mission Co-worker to El Salvador and moved to Berlín in October, 2001, to live and work as a member of the Parish Pastoral Team at the Parish of San José.

2001 - 2016: Church-cantón partnerships are established with 8-10 direct partnerships. Churches in the Presbytery provided fertilizer, funds for community buildings, water tanks, latrines, solar panels, and support for a variety of other projects as agreed upon by church and cantón.

2001 - 2016: An average of 10 delegations per year has visited Our Sister Parish, including first-timers' delegations especially for those not engaged in a church-cantón partnership.

November, 2002: A first-timers' delegation of eight carried 500 lb. of coffee from Berlín to the U.S. and the coffee project, Don Justo Coffee with Dignity, was begun.

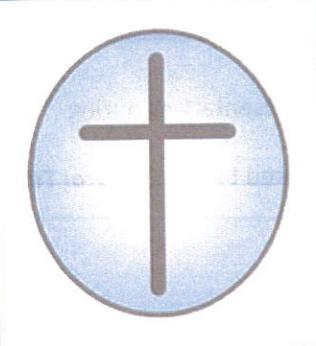
July, 2006: Rev. Robert Cook retires from working with the Pastoral Team.

January, 2009: Kathy Mahler moved to Berlín to become the Presbytery's Mission Co-Worker in El Salvador.

Spring of 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012: The Newton Medical Delegation returned to Berlín and served three to four cantóns each visit.

Throughout 2008: Slow sand water filters were funded by donations from Presbyterians and installed in every home in partner cantóns in collaboration with Rotary clubs in the U.S. and El Salvador.

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Our Sister Parish Partnership Covenant

For: Partner Churches & Delegations, Partner Communities, Compañeros, Pastoral Team & Mission Co-Worker

But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

Jeremiah 31:33

Partner Churches & Delegations:

1. All **Delegations** and visitors shall follow all posted rules at the Pastoral House and verbal instructions given by the **Pastoral Team** and **Mission Co-Worker**.
2. All **Delegations** shall appoint a treasurer and an official delegation leader. The **Pastoral Team** and **Mission Co-Worker** shall be notified of who the treasurer and leader are before the arrival of the **Delegation**.
3. All **Delegations** shall inform the **Mission Co-Worker** of their specific arrival and departure flight times no less than one month before the arrival of the **Delegation**.
4. No monies should ever be given directly from church or **Delegation** members to members of a community, either in person, by means of other **Partner Community** representatives, or via electronic transfer. All funds must pass through the **Pastoral Team**. This includes, but is not limited to: a) small cash gifts presented to families, scholarship students, and others via letters, physical meetings, and third-party transportation, and b) electronic transfers of funds via credit associations, banks, and other means.
5. All **Partner Churches** shall respond to communications from the **Pastoral Team**, the **Mission Co-Worker**, and **Compañeros** in a reasonably timely matter.
6. All **Partner Churches** shall endeavor to have a representative at each **Compañeros** meeting and report relevant information to their congregation's El Salvador committee.
7. **Partner Churches** shall not hire the translators or drivers for their **Delegations**. This is the responsibility of the **Pastoral Team** and **Mission Co-Worker**.
8. **Partner Churches** shall make a good faith effort to visit their **Partner Communities** frequently, preferably at least once every calendar year.
9. **Delegations** cannot approve solicitudes. Solicitudes may be approved (or denied) only after consulting with the **Pastoral Team**, the **Mission Co-Worker**, and other members of the **Partner Church** who are involved in the mission.



- Partner Communities:**
- All members of the **Partner Community** Directives should meet with **Partner Church** representatives during Delegation visits to Berlin and their community.
 - Delegation representatives shall attend the community-wide meetings sponsored by the **Pastoral Team** every two months. Valuable information and ideas are shared at these meetings.
 - Compagnies, the **Pastoral Team**, and the **Mission Co-Worker** shall be willing resources for all parties regarding education, guidance and logistical assistance.
 - Compagnies, the **Pastoral Team**, and the **Mission Co-Worker** shall support the **Delegations** and work of the **Partner Churches** with prayer, advice, moral support, etc.
 - A representative from **Compagnies** shall meet with each **Delegation**, prior to its trip, to provide education and advice related to the philiosophies of **Our Sister Parish** mission and the realities of a **Delegation** trip. If at all possible, the representative should not be a member of the **Delegation** nor closely affiliated with the church or group that is sponsoring the trip.
 - When a **Partner Community** member wishes to ask for something from a member of a **Delegation**, a member of the **Delegation** must be present.
 - Directives from the **Delegations** may help with brainstorming of projects, but priorities for the **Partner Community** will be by the **Partner Church**, or must be presented with the **Pastoral Team** present.
 - Directives with the consensus of the community.
 - Directives from the **Delegations** between **Partner Churches**, **Partner Church** members, and **Partner Church** leaders and **Partner Communities**, **Partner Community** members, and **Partner Church** leaders, whether via written letters, direct verbal communication, electronic communication, or social media should be done with caution.
 - Under no circumstances shall direct communication be used to discuss projects received via the work of the **Pastoral Team** or be used to request or grant financial assistance to specific families, individuals, communities, or intra or inter-community committees.
 - Under no circumstances shall direct communication be used to discuss projects received via the work of the **Pastoral Team** or be used to request or grant financial assistance to specific families, individuals, communities, or intra or inter-community committees.
 - All official communications regarding partner relationships and their connected projects will pass through the **Pastoral Team**.
 - All disagreements, challenges, and suggestions shall be met with respect with the **Pastoral Team**, the **Partner Churches**, the **Partner Communities**, and the **Mission Co-Worker**. Should conflict between any of these parties arise, it shall be resolved by peaceful dialogue in the spirit of Christian love.
 - Decisions about which families shall be included in a list of community members will be determined by the **Community**.
 - Delegations and **Partner Churches** will respect the internal rules, regulations, and institutes of their **Partner Churches**.