

## 2018 Guatemala Mission scheduled for March 2 - 9

The **Guatemala-Peten partnership between PMT and the Presbiterio Q'eqchi Peten (PQP)** is in its 17th year, and 2018 will see the sixteenth annual Mission Trip to the Peten, scheduled for **March 2 - 9, 2018**. An informational meeting is scheduled for **January 22 from 6 – 8:00 pm at Second Presbyterian, Nashville**, to include a review of the draft agenda for the trip.

My husband John (Pastor of East Brentwood Presbyterian) and I participated in the 2017 trip. Beforehand, those involved gave us a pretty good idea of what to expect, as we all wondered what we would be able to contribute. They reiterated our purpose would become even more clear during the trip – and that was true. The power in the ministry of presence was perhaps the least anticipated and most meaningful aspect of our journey. We were reminded Dios es amor... God is love.

A simple way to describe what takes place on a trip is that we are helping churches to become better churches, through theological education (including leadership development and training so that churches reflect the Kingdom of God), support Basico education through gifts of scholarships to strengthen communities (our equivalent of primary and middle school,) and empowering women to sustain church engagement and support Christian education for children. Mission values we came to identify include accountability, reciprocity, flexibility, and serving with compassion, dignity and integrity.

My time that week focused mostly on the women. On the Monday after we arrived, all 7 churches from the Peten Presbytery came together in Sayaxche where we also met the 23 middle and high school scholarship students and all the women convened for a leadership





meeting, where representatives from each church met with two leaders from the national Presbyterian Women's Society. They reported on projects PMT helped to fund ("pig project," including one that had shifted to chickens,) and they elected Peten Presbytery Women's Society officers for the first time. It was easy to see how titles and positions meant a lot to them.

For our visits to the villages that week, to engage and connect with the women and children we brought a craft project – tissue-paper "Presbyterian" (celtic) crosses which they could use to decorate the churches. It was surprising how much you can communicate without language and only through demonstration. It was a flurry of activity with lots of silliness and laughter and smiles, and we left behind supplies so they could make more.

We learned during the week that there are some ways we can support the Sunday school or Children's Worship more – and this also helps to get the women more involved with church. For example, they told us they need curriculum, so we'll be trying to help them find some which are appropriate: most women only speak Kiche (not Spanish) and also taking into account varying degrees of literacy.



So much else went on that week that it would take a book to describe, a (first ever!) executive committee meeting on a boat, quite a few services with oh-so-much singing, at least five rugby / soccer games - but the photos speak for themselves....

Those who participated in the 2017 mission included: from East Brentwood - Barb Hall, John and Kira Hilley, Paul and Jeffrey Rein, Aaron Renton; from Hispanic NCD - Teddy Chuquimia; from Second Presbyterian - David Carlton; from Normandy Presbyterian - Mark Riley. The mission was organized and facilitated by Pastor Philip Beisswinger who lives in Coban. We depended so much on Philip's excellent work, and he is truly the glue that holds this partnership together throughout the year. A special thanks is also due to our inspiration - Barb Hall - who has been leading the charge here in Middle Tennessee for each mission since this partnership's inception, as well as David Carlton who has taken the lead in securing gifts for Basico scholarships.







