

Guatemala at a Glance
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We want to thank those of you who responded to our questions about this monthly news sharing. It's always an encouragement to hear such kind thoughts and to know that you feel a connection to the ASC mission in Guatemala. If you still want to send a thought, please do!!!

Guatemala's Reality

Guatemala's reality continues to be a violent one. And yet we pray God's touch on all of the brokenness and wounding. And pray that our choices speak hope in the midst of the darkness. The violence is blatant and also subtle. It is seen in the continued murders of those who refuse to pay the "safety tax" to extortionists. A family of three from a neighboring village was brutally murdered 2 weeks ago for failing to heed the threats of local gangs. Three families from the Institute moved out of the area due to demands to pay a monthly fee to insure continued ability to keep their small businesses open. The subtle violence is that which is much more institutional— delayed payment of many government teachers (no salary checks since January), a three-month delay in subsidy checks for educational Institutes like ours, arbitrary fines for not fulfilling the latest government paper requirements, and meeting constant contradictions from government officials with whom we need to meet.

The health project is involved in a bureaucratic nightmare as they try to resolve the tax office threats to charge the project 7 years back taxes, claiming they are a for-profit institution. While all proper paperwork was submitted and stamped as received (on the forms given to them) the tax office maintains that the forms filled out were not the correct ones. They themselves admit that most mistakes are due to inefficiency and ignorance on the part of their office, but they shrug their shoulders and insist on punishing the victims.

At the Local Level

There have been movements and moments of hope. We welcomed friends from Ft. Recovery, Ohio, who worked very hard with several different projects, laughed a lot in the borrowed van we used which went dead on the highway, and received many sympathetic glances from those who read the big logo on the side: *Shelter for Abandoned, Elderly Women*. We thank God for these friends and pray blessing on their continuing life journeys. Shortly after, more Ohio friends joined us. St. Mark's Episcopal Church from Columbus came bearing suitcases of books in Spanish for our library and hearts full of openness to this new reality. As I write, they are hard at work building latrines, painting and meeting new friends.

The Precious Blood seminary asked Kris and Dani to give a mini-course on our foundress Maria De Mattias, the spirituality of the Blood of Christ and the mission and ministries of the U.S. Adorers of the Blood of Christ. It was a diverse group of young men from five different Latin American countries. Since we could have easily been their mothers, they were duly respectful and attentive.

Kris made a quick trip to St. Louis to meet with the Justice and Peace Committee of the U.S. region of our community. Priority planning centered on continued efforts to effect just immigration reform and ways to address the world-wide spiraling violence. It is a very good fit with our reality.

So there's a taste of life south of the border. May our borders be ever more porous so that the grace of God might have its way with us so that others might find their way.

Kris & Dani