

Presbytery of Baltimore

Guatemalan Partnership Committee

Minutes of October 23, 2002

The Guatemalan Partnership Committee met in a regular meeting in the Guatemalan City International Airport on October 23, 2002 at 10:00 a.m. Present: Bob Ferguson, presiding, Tom Eastman, Bill Clarke, Bonnie Clarke, Mike Weddle, Steve Tisinger, Millie Kreider, recording. The meeting was opened with prayer by Bob Ferguson. The Guatemalan Partnership Committee (GPC) welcomed Dr. Weddle, of First Presbyterian Church of Cumberland and Rev. Tisinger, pastor of Christ Our Anchor Presbyterian Church in Annapolis, as members of the Committee. Mike Weddle has been a member of the Committee since April, 2001. A physician with previous experience in delivering care in Guatemala, Mike has served as medical consultant and has taken the lead in identifying and securing basic diagnostic equipment for the delivery of health care in the Herbert D. Valentine (HDV) Clinic. Steve Tisinger will be planning and leading Mission Service Tours to Guatemala. At the present time Steve is exploring the possibility of Youth Service Tours.

Report on Medical Services: The GPC reviewed the findings on the HDV Clinic. Dra. Patricia Jimenez Buckley, the new physician, completed one year of training in internal medicine, and three years in obstetrics and gynecology, and she has practiced in public health in the Quiche area for twelve years. Dra. Patricia has an automobile, and can provide her own transportation. The doctor is seeing nearly five times as many patients on a village visit than on a typical day in the clinic, and we will therefore increase the number of remote visits from two to six each month. In addition, each month she will spend four days in the HDV Clinic, two days maintaining records and performing laboratory work, and two days (Sundays) in training health promoters. Dra. Patricia is interested in doing research. She researched the malnutrition problem at Labor de Falla, and finds that 100% of the school children have indications of malnutrition, specifically protein deficiency. By June she hopes to implement a nutrition program which will provide a supplemental high protein drink to the school lunch which is provided for all children.

The GPC supports the activities proposed, recognizing that there will be increased costs with the increased number of village visits and corresponding increased number of patients. These costs include increased medication needs, portable equipment and transportation costs. Funds for some of Dr. Patricia's professional needs, such as continuing education, medical journals and some research expenses, will also be included in the clinic budget.

Report on the Technical School: the GPC considered the request to purchase land for the building of the Technical/Theological School. It was agreed that the endeavor should begin with the rent of the land adjacent to the Presbytery Building, and that a multipurpose structure should be built which will allow for expansion of clinic activities as well as expansion of the beginning educational activities. For this year, a budget for

construction not to exceed \$10,000, and operations not to exceed \$2700 was approved. This will include the salary of Saul Perez, administrator/teacher. The school will continue next year with adult students only. The GPC agreed to support the Technical/Theological School under these conditions. It is our understanding that the contribution from Hanover (Indiana) PC will not exceed \$500. The contribution is conditional upon the approval of their Session, and will not be available until after their February Tour.

Scholarship Program: The GPC agreed to provide scholarship funds for fifteen to twenty students in the Kaqchikel Presbytery. Ten students for the primario (grades 1 to 6) school were interviewed and photographed at Tecpan. Another five will be identified at the village of Poaquil. From each of the villages of Labor de Falla, Cerro Alto and Bola de Oro, one student was interviewed and photographed for a scholarship to the básico (grades 7 to 9) school.

Additional educational projects: The village of Labor de Falla has a four room school building. There are two teachers for the six grades; the government provides one teacher for every thirty children. In 1998, the Presbytery of Baltimore contributed funds for an addition to the primario school building at Labor de Falla. Our meeting with the village community was held in one of the two rooms of the addition, and we found the room spacious, but dark, and poorly equipped as a classroom.

The GPC would like to finish the work which was begun there by increasing the light in the classroom through the use of translucent panels in the roof, and by interior painting to reflect the existing light better. School books and supplies are very limited, and the GPC would like to provide adequate supplies for the two classrooms which are currently in use. There is a basketball court at the school, and the idea was floated that a Youth Mission Tour could, as a project, paint the classrooms and the basketball court. School lunch is provided at Labor de Falla by the parents. The existing stove is unvented, polluting the air the children breathe. The GPC is considering the possibility of building a vented Lorena stove. Village elders say that vandalism could be a problem, and that the enclosure for the stove would need to be secure.

The problem of a water supply continues at Labor de Falla. With a drop in the water table due to the drought, the existing 50 foot dug well is dry. A well with a depth up to 600 feet will need to be drilled. To pump water to the surface in a well this deep will require 220V electricity. The nearest terminus for this current is one kilometer distant. The cost to run 220V electrical current from this terminus is estimated at \$50,000. The estimated cost of the entire project is \$200,000. The above projections seem exorbitant, and we are looking for a professional second opinion on these costs. Water is currently brought in to the community in containers by motorcycle. This procedure was established because when the women of the community walked to the nearest well for water, they had to pass a military establishment where some were assaulted and raped. The GPC recognizes the problem of a water supply for the village as pressing, but does not have the resources to respond to this need. Other sources of help (NGO's) will be explored, but we are not encouraged that something can be done to address this problem in an expedient way.

The school building at Cerro Alto which serves the surrounding community is small and overcrowded. There are three small classrooms for 150 students. Classes are held in the morning only. Unfortunately, there is no available land on which to enlarge the school at its present site. Children at the Bola de Oro community attend this school. In the Bola de Oro community, one of the mothers, Miriam, reports that 9 children attend school, 13 do not. The mothers are looking for someone to teach the children who do not attend school.

Partnership Agreement: Tom Eastman's draft of the Partnership Agreement was given to Ronaldo Similox for review and response by November 15. The GPC will meet to consider the response of the Kaqchikel Presbytery on November 20.

Other Business: Bob Ferguson reported that we received a request list from the villages. He noted that there are needs which we cannot meet, but which may be addressed by working with other organizations in the country. For example, there are requests for breeder calves, hogs and chickens. Steve Tisinger will work with Ronaldo to find out what the Heifer Project can do to meet these needs.

There is a need for programs of study for students with special needs. Because of the press of the schedule, no one was able to make it to the Common Hope Headquarters in Antigua. Ronaldo will follow up with a contact. Of particular interest to the GPC at this time is the program for people who want to become teachers in their villages.

Mike Weddle, together with Sandy Rowland who was on the February 2002 trip, will obtain information on non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in Guatemala which offer services which are needed in the communities of the Kaqchikel Presbytery, with the objective of networking with these agencies, as appropriate.

Margarita Valiente de Similox's visit with the Baltimore Presbytery is tentatively scheduled for June 12 to 27. Millie Kreider will continue to work with Bonnie Clarke, Peg Ferguson and Louisa Leslie on plans for this visit. The visit is being scheduled so that it is possible for Margarita to attend the Synod Wide Presbyterian Women's Meeting at Massanetta, and the June Presbytery meeting. An invitation for Josefina Inay Vda de Martinez to come has been extended. In addition, Leila Similox is interested in joining her mother on the visit; she was told that we would explore this possibility, but no promises were made.

Website: Bob Ferguson will work with Barry Sheets, of Deer Creek Harmony PC to activate the website for the GPC. It is hoped that sub pages can be developed for each community which is served by the Kaqchikel Presbytery.

The meeting was closed at 11:00 a.m. with prayer by Steve Tisinger. The next meeting will be Wednesday, November 20 at 5:30 p.m. at the home of Bob and Peg Ferguson.

Respectfully submitted,

Mildred S. Kreider, Recorder