



"Connecting and Advancing Leaders in Mission and Service...to Win the Lost for Christ"

**March 2009 E-Letter**

## **Ripping up the Roof!**

In a few weeks I plan to go to Guatemala with some co-workers to help evaluate our CALMS housing program and determine our next steps for growing this ministry. One of the things our team wants to do is evaluate the type of materials we are presently using in the building process to both strengthen the houses and lower the costs. A specific idea that we want to investigate is the possibility of using cement roof tiles instead of the zinc sheets that we presently use.

This idea got me to thinking about the story in the New Testament in Mark 2 which describes some men who ripped up the roof tiles of a house in which Jesus was preaching in order to get their paralyzed friend to Jesus. Jesus, seeing their faith, forgave the paralyzed man, and then healed him!

What this Bible story does not describe is the reaction of the owner of the house when he was confronted with a hole in his roof! We can imagine a conversation like this:

“What were you thinking? What gave you the idea that you could just rip up my roof?! Now, how am I going to fix that big, gapping hole! That’s going to cost a lot of time and money!”

Or, he could have said, “I’ve got a hole in my roof, but hey, it doesn’t matter. Anyway, it is just a roof. When I think about the faith of those guys and the healing of their friend, it really helped me connect with what Jesus was telling us about the kingdom!”

How do you react to this story and which of these two reactions might reflect your personal attitude toward the physical needs of others? And, which reaction most resembles your own congregation's attitude toward the needs of people?

With which response do you most relate? Do you identify more with the first or the second response of the owner of the house? Another way of asking this question is, "Do you find yourself more often focusing on your possessions and material things, or do you find yourself more often focusing on the needs of others and how you can use your resources to help others?"

Also, do you identify more with the friends who took the paralyzed man to Jesus—even breaking through the roof of their neighbor's house to get to Jesus—or, do you think you more often identify with the above hypothetical answer of the owner of the house reflecting anger at having his roof tiles removed?

These questions lead me to think about some other related questions:

1. Do we in the church sometimes get so caught up in talking about Jesus or preaching about Jesus, that we fail to see those still outside the family of God?
2. Do we in the church obsess more about our church buildings than about hurting people outside our church buildings?
3. Are we willing to "rip up the roof"—enduring a temporary physical inconvenience including some cost in time and money—in order to help someone come closer to Jesus?
4. Are we willing to put our friendship with the hurting and wounded of our world (like the paralyzed man in the story) before our friendship with those who have it all together (like the man who owned the house Jesus was using)?
5. Do we ever get more upset when physical stuff gets broken than we get excited when broken people are mended?
6. Do we ever become barriers to Jesus rather than gateways to Jesus?
7. Do we tend to focus on the words of our faith more than the actions of our faith?
8. Do we in the church exist for ourselves and our spiritual needs or to help meet the needs of our community and world?

As I apply this story to our CALMS' ministry in Central America, I can see a number of implications:

1. In the Mark 2 story, Jesus showed that he was concerned about both the physical and spiritual needs of the paralyzed man as he offered by physical healing and forgiveness to the man. We in CALMS need to be a mission agency that focuses less on real estate and more on the spiritual and physical needs of others. Since we don't own any real estate, we are probably doing ok on that front as we use most of our resources for ministry; but, we do need to constantly evaluate our ministry and help our short term teams and Central American partners think about whether we are balancing the focus on spiritual and physical needs of people. For example, as we evaluate our housing program in Guatemala, we need to ask

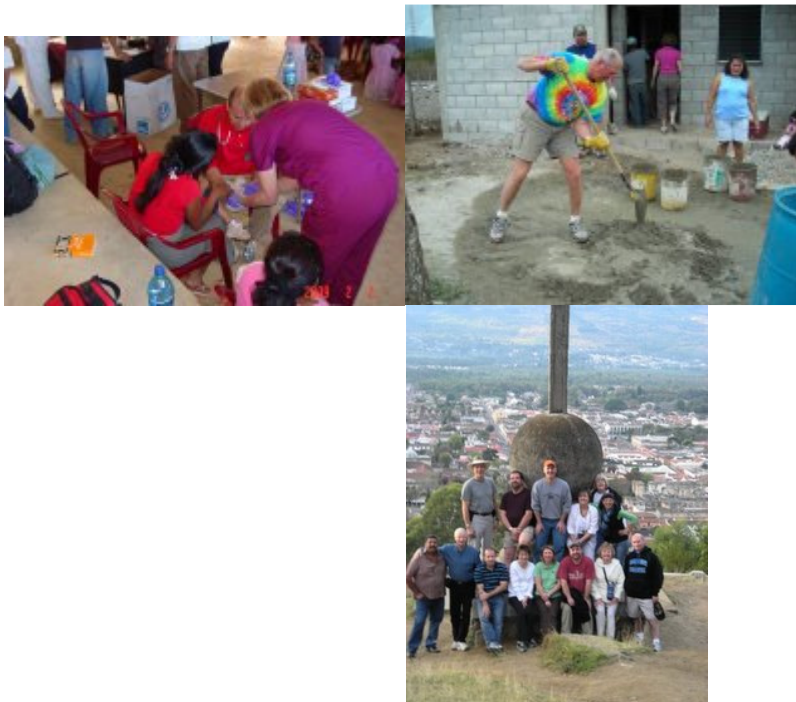
ourselves how we can do more to help families who receive new houses, grow in faith and develop as disciples of Jesus. As we work with medical teams, we need to be more intentional about sharing the Good News of Jesus' forgiveness with people who come to us with physical pain.

2. We need to ask ourselves how we can do a better job of helping all our short-term teams and Central American partners think and act "holistically." Are we helping them think boldly and creatively enough about ways to tear down the barriers (like the roof tiles in the story) between the church and hurting and spiritually dying people as they work in their communities and in Central America?

As you apply this story to your own life and ministry, what issues does it raise and what questions does it cause you to ask?

If you are still with me, would you reflect on this set of questions for your own family and congregation?

"What are we doing to help raise up a family or congregation of "roof-tile rippers" who think first about the needs of a hurting world and less about what others might think? Are we teaching our children to be less concerned about seeking permission to do daring things for God than about accommodating to the world's and sometimes the church's expectations? What are we doing to strengthen an attitude that balances our focus as families and churches on teaching and worship inside the walls with mission and service outside the walls?"



*Top Left: A member of the First Immanuel medical team helps a patient in La Union outreach. Top Right: First Immanuel members worked hard to finish construction of the two new houses prior to their dedication on their last day! Bottom: Members of*

*the short-term team from First Immanuel pose for a picture at the park overlooking Antigua on their day off.*

## **First Immanuel Lutheran Church, Cedarburg, Wisconsin Ministers in Guatemala**

A short-term mission group of 17 including 15 First Immanuel members and 2 from other churches worked with CALMS and Guatemalan Lutherans to accomplish an amazing amount of work during 10 days in late January and early February.

The group was led by CALMS' board member, Lori Newhouse and focused on multiple projects that included sharing the Gospel in word and deed; construction of two cement block homes for families selected by their congregation; replacing a church roof; operating a medical outreach and distributing food to the needy in the mountain community of La Union, a community still devastated by last summer's mudslides.

The medical team provided much needed attention to people who do not have access to regular medical services. They were able to see 376 patients in 3-1/2 days.

As with previous CALMS housing projects, the team worked with the two families and the local Lutheran congregation and its pastor to build the homes which replaced substandard houses. The Guatemalan families nominated by the local Lutheran church, where chosen to receive new houses based on their need and willingness to work with the volunteers from the United States and Guatemala.



*Top left: Pastor Luis introduces the families to receive new houses to the Wisconsin team on their first day in Gualan, Guatemala. Top Right: Team Leader Lori Newhouse poses with neighborhood children near the construction site. Bottom: This is one of the families that received a new house to replace this one.*

## Helped needed for Sponsor-A-Child Scholarships

CALMS is looking for sponsors to provide scholarships to 8 children in Panama who have lost their US sponsors due to our slowing economy. The new school year begins soon (March) and we want to help these children who have been in the program for a number of years continue in school without interruption. If you can help, contact our Sponsor-A-Child coordinator by writing to Cindy Dube at [calmsmail@gmail.com](mailto:calmsmail@gmail.com). Thank you in advance for helping CALMS serve these deserving children!



*CALMS' Sponsor-A-Child Coordinator, Cindy Dube, shares a special moment with one of the Panamanian children.*

## Pray For Us...

Thank God for the awesome outreach ministry of a CALMS' sponsored short-term team from First Immanuel Lutheran Church, Cedarburg, Wisconsin in Guatemala last month! (See previous story above.)

Ask God to bless a special CALMS' mission training trip for seminary students from Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri that is being led by Executive Director Rev. Steve Hughey to Belize Feb 21-28, 2009. Ask the Lord to help the students grow in mission vision and commitment so that they can lead their future congregations in mission service with greater wisdom and understanding.

Thank God for the important work that Holy Cross Lutheran Church in Lake Mary, Florida accomplished at Holy Cross Clinic in Lake Amatitlan as they finished the construction of a new clinic addition which serves very needy people in the area. (The clinic is led by Guatemalan Lutheran physician, Dr. Elry Orozco in partnership with CALMS.)

## This Month's Mission Quote:

**“God steers us in the direction of His kingdom, His purpose and His passions. His desire is not to conform us, but to transform us.”**

*The Barbarian Way* by Erwin McManus

