



**“Connecting and Advancing
Leaders in Mission and Service
to Win the Lost for Christ.”**

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October 2009

A Mother to Thirty Children!

“...how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings...”

Matthew 23:38

Recently in Guatemala while leading a mission trip for a group of pastors and their wives, we were visiting the “Santa Cruz” Clinic, a CALMS’ partner ministry, in Amatitlan, about 30 km from Guatemala City. During the visit, we met a lady who lived in a make-shift house on an abandoned railroad track a short distance from the clinic.

CALMS partner, Dr. Elry Orozco, who runs the clinic, told us that he had recently discovered in the course of examining one of her five children, that the lady had delivered 16 children and that only five were now living.

High infant mortality—especially among the very poor—is not unusual in Guatemala, but according to Dr. Orozco, this was an unusually high number of children for a mother to lose.

As my team and I discussed this lady’s situation in our debriefing time, we could not help wondering how she was able to deal with so much loss—but we also wondered about the challenge of feeding and caring for so many children—had they all lived!



This lady living in Amatitlan near the “Santa Cruz” clinic has had 16 children but only five are living!

Several days later, while in Zacapa, Guatemala, the volunteers and I learned about another lady who has even more children—and they are all very much alive! We met her when we visited the Lutheran School founded in 1953 as a ministry of “Divino Salvador” Lutheran Church—another CALMS’ partner with whom we are building homes for the poor. While at the school, we had a memorable and fun experience serving as coaches for the second grade English class, listening to their songs, interacting with them and helping them to pronounce English words.



CALMS' volunteer, Kathy Schauer, enjoyed teaching English to several second graders at the Lutheran School in Zacapa.

During that visit, I had the idea of asking this question: "How many of you children have a parent living in the United States?"

To my surprise, almost every hand shot up. Thinking that they must have misunderstood my question, I decided to ask it in a slightly different way: "Do any of you have a daddy or mommy living in the USA?" Again, to our surprise, almost every hand was raised!

At that point, I turned to their teacher, Sra. Deisy Méndez, and asked, "Do so many of the children really have parents living in the United States?"

"Yes," she replied. "All the kids in our school know someone in their family living in 'El Norte.' Most of the kids in this class just happen to have parents—including a large number with both parents—living in the United States.

While the kids were involved in learning to pronounce English words with their North American tutors, I decided to talk further with the teacher and the school's director, Sr. Oscar Orlando Canales Vargas about this phenomenon.

They explained that Zacapa is well known as one of the cities with one of the highest number of citizens living in the United States. The director went on to explain that many from Zacapa go to the United States looking for a job and when they find one, they often tell their relatives and friends where to find work. So over time, a large number have ended up immigrating and many have left children behind with grandparents, an aunt or other family member.

"How do you as a teacher deal with this situation?" I asked. A tear rolled down her cheek as Deisy told me, **"I have to be their teacher, and many times also their mother. Sometimes it gets really hard emotionally, but I know they really need me, so I keep doing my best."**



Deisy is both a teacher and mother to the children in her classroom whose parents live in the United States.

Sra. Méndez went on to explain that many of the children in her classroom end up being cared for by someone who may not be fully equipped or financially able to care for the child. She further shared: "Most of the children have been told repeatedly that their parents have gone to make a better life for them and will someday send for them so that they can also enjoy a better life. The family or those with whom they are living tell them this so that they will feel better about their situation and not think badly about their parents."

The volunteers and I went away from that experience amazed at the resilience of these children, but also concerned for their future and for the future of the whole community of Zacapa with so many of its children growing up without parents and with so many families split apart!

Won't you join CALMS in praying for the many children who need the care of loving parents and the knowledge of God's love in Jesus Christ? Especially pray for our partners in Central American and our various CALMS ministries that demonstrate our Father's love including our housing ministry, clinic ministry Sponsor-A-Child ministry and outreach ministries.

In God's Service,

B. Steve Hughey

Pastor Steve Hughey, Executive Director



Oscar Orlando Canales Vargas, Director of the Lutheran School in Zacapa, Guatemala poses in front of the school auditorium.

Pray for Us...



Pray for healing for Maria, a wonderful Christian lady who is receiving medical care from Dr. Elry Orozco. Thank God for the special light treatment that CALMS was able to provide and for Maria's daughter who learned how to use the light machine to help with the healing process.



Photo F – Thank God for the caring ministry of a CALMS team from Gloria Dei Lutheran Church in Houston, Texas who helped build two houses in September for deserving families in Zacapa, Guatemala.



Photo G – Ask God to bless the building of a new CALMS' house in October for the Selvin Aldana family in Los Limones, Guatemala, shown here with Denny Noh, short-term leader from Gloria Dei Lutheran Church.



Photo H – Pray that CALMS will be able to recruit teams to help our partner, “Divino Salvador” Lutheran Church, begin a regular ministry to help the children and families who make their living recycling garbage at the city dump near Zacapa, Guatemala.