

March 2019

Update: Wine Tasting, Latrines, 2019 Delegation Review, and More

15th Annual Wine Tasting - April 2019



We are holding our 2019 Wine Tasting Fundraiser at a *new venue* on April 27, 2019:

Wargin Wines
11 Hangar Way
Watsonville, California

The event will be 3 pm to 5 pm. Tickets are \$35 in advance, \$45 at the door.

There will be yummy food, great wines, non-alcoholic options, music by the Barbara Lopez group, drawings for bountiful baskets, and updates on our work in El Salvador. Contact your Santa Cruz al Salvador church representative for tickets, or e-mail info@santacruzalsalvador.org

Fund a Latrine 2018 • Thank You!

Since 2016, Santa Cruz al Salvador has funded 40 latrines, or 50% of the final goal of one latrine for each of the 83 families in the two communities receiving them. Members of El Pilar and Las Orchideas have been instrumental in the latrines' construction, operation and upkeep. All this comes with an associated strong sense of purpose, accomplishment and pride. To the right (or below on mobile screens) is a recent photo of one of the recipients of an Ecko latrine with her son.

We raised over \$12,000 through the Fund a Latrine campaign! Give yourselves a hand! Unfortunately, the company that made the

latrine pictured here is no longer willing to make them at an affordable price. We're currently working with the communities to plan our next steps.



January 2019 Delegation



There were eight participants from local Lutheran and Presbyterian churches with three people going for the first time and five veterans of many delegations. We spent four days in Guillermo Ungo, the community where we have been working for more than 20 years, a day in the nearby tourist town of Suchitoto, a

day in El Pilar where we are doing the Latrine project and four days based in the capitol San Salvador and visiting different programs and going to meetings to learn more about the current realities in the country.

Overall things seem to be progressing well in Guillermo Ungo and the school scholarship ceremony went well with most of the 120 prayer children attending and happily receiving their shoes and school supplies and gifts from their prayer sponsors. The students had their pictures taken and took time to write a letter



thanking their sponsors and hopefully sharing a little about their lives. We also met with over half of the 15 university scholarship students (above) and they each spoke about their studies, goals, families and the challenges they have overcome. They were a truly inspiring group of students who were extremely well spoken and grateful for the help they are receiving. Many said they could not go to the university without our help. Another highlight was having meals in homes of prayer children and getting to know the students and their families. On Sunday we attended worship with the congregation of Nuevo Fe y Esperanza (New Faith and Hope) in Ungo. After the service, everyone processed to the school grounds for the interment of Rev. Larry Morkert's ashes. Rev. Morkert and his wife Kathleen were the founders of Santa Cruz al Salvador.

In Suchitoto we had a number of activities including discussions with mayor Pedrina Rivera and Sister Peggy O'Neill, the energizing force behind the Center of Art for

Peace. Sister Peggy shared some history of the civil war in El Salvador as well as how she came to work there. When she was traveling with people escaping the advancing military, it came time to share their meager supply of food. One of the people poignantly said, "Tonight we share our food, tomorrow we share our hunger."

The overall situation in El Salvador seems to have gotten worse, mainly due to the rise in gang violence which leaves people living in fear in many parts of the country (Currently they do not have a gang problem in Guillermo Ungo, probably due to strong community leadership). We were told that lack of economic opportunity is the root of the problem. It was also discouraging to see that the people in El Pilar continue to be living in severe poverty with signs of malnutrition and poor health evident in some children, though they have made some progress and the latrine project is very much appreciated. We did a craft project there as well as in Guillermo Ungo. Quite a contrast as we had about 50 kids in each location but in Guillermo Ungo we had the school to use with as many tables and chairs as we needed and in El Pilar they had 2 small tables and a patio area to work on. Nevertheless, the kids made do and enjoyed the opportunity to do some art work.

We visited three projects of the Salvadoran Lutheran Church: a homeless shelter, an environmental/sustainable agriculture project and a brand new project in a recently completed building funded by a German pastor where trauma therapy will be done. So far 16 pastors (not all Lutheran) have completed a two-year training program and will each be donating four hours a week of trauma therapy there, as well as using their skills in their own parish. This is a much needed project and gives hope that the cycle of violence which has been so prevalent in El Salvador since the civil war can be stopped. Another interesting meeting was with a group that was helping deportees from the US in their transition back to life in El Salvador. Many of these people are coming back with little family or social support, into neighborhoods that have been taken over by the gangs and having left their children that were born in the US behind. This group is doing great things including sending teams of these returning deportees into high schools to tell the student about what it is really like to make the journey to the US and what the reality is for them once they get here, often working three jobs and sharing housing with 10 people to get by. It is sad to hear that many of the children left behind in the US start to do poorly in school and struggle without their parents' support. Some churches in the US are reaching out to these children and offering support and community.

The Salvadoran people have so much faith, strength, and love, despite their many challenges. Each of the eight people on this year's trip had a wonderful learning experience, a very good time, were greatly moved by their experiences, and made strong connections with the people of El Salvador.

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