

Guatemala Mission 2024



“Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another.” John 13:34

Two thousand miles south of South Dakota, in a small mountain-top village called La Cumbre, Guatemala, sits the Church of Our Lady of Guadalupe. Upon our church's first arrival to La Cumbre two years ago, the church stood as only four concrete walls with a metal roof and a dirt floor. Today the church has windows, doors, a tile floor, an altar, and a steeple. Our service now turns to focus on the ever-present physical and spiritual needs of its parishioners.

The village of La Cumbre consists of forty properties hosting 120 households. One third of these families belong to the parish. The only way to access the village is a narrow, one-way road up the mountain. Fr. Rudy is the only priest who serves Our Lady of Guadalupe and seventeen other churches in the surrounding villages. He celebrates Mass in La Cumbre once every eighteen days. The nearest school is halfway down the mountain from the Church and is run by Ms. Lopez. With the recent addition of Mr. Luis, she no longer has to teach all six grades on her own. The village struggled with a dependable clean water source, as two wells were difficult to reach. Two years ago, our church built a well on the church grounds, providing higher quality water helping to decrease the workload and stress on the mothers who acquire water for their families.

Our mission in the village is divided into categories: manual labor, school ministry, food ministry, and vacation bible school. This past summer, we sifted sand and made concrete, carried cinder blocks for the steeple, and donated tools to the laborers who would be finishing the church. Last year's mission focused heavily on the school, which was in physical disrepair and had few learning materials or books; this year we were able to supply boxes of Spanish books. Lessons are vital, as many students end their education after 6th grade. Students who wish to continue their education must walk over thirty minutes one way to the nearest high school.

We also focused on food ministry and vacation bible school. We visited twenty-five homes, bringing each family 3 weeks worth of food and cleaning supplies. Food ministry provides families with healthy food and allows us to spend time in community with the villagers. Many families shared similar hardships with us including; loss of loved ones, inconsistent work, undiagnosed illnesses, addiction, and family tensions. One villager injured his arm laboring in a coffee field while simultaneously grieving the recent passing of his wife. A parishioner, Lisbet, was told she wouldn't be able to have children because of a liver illness. When she got married, she conceived a child and the doctors advised her to terminate her pregnancy. Her grandmother told

her to "go to God everyday and pray to see your baby's face." Through her deep faith, in knowing that God will provide, she told us this story holding her child Katerina Sofia of Jesus in her arms.

While the villagers face serious challenges, they also maintain an extreme amount of joy. We joked with the mothers, played with the children, and were told of the many blessings they see in their lives. We prayed with each family for their individual needs and we were met with deep gratitude.

We ended each day in the village teaching vacation bible school in the church, using the same program taught to our own local children. We led the children in a Bible lesson, taught scripture, built a craft, played games, danced to praise and worship songs, and served a snack. Joy and laughter filled the church! As the week progressed, we welcomed more and more children and mothers into VBS. On the last day, we convinced the mothers to sing and dance with us. Seeing the women have the opportunity to be silly and dance with their children brought our mission group immense joy.

Upon their return, missionaries are often asked by friends and family what they built.. Missionary Patrick remarked that this year, "We built friendships." A physical church helps worship God, food donations support life, but human relationships are vital in testifying to God's love. Our goals moving forward include maintaining the well, supporting an ongoing healthy food source, providing health and dental screenings, supplying clothes and shoes for the kids, and helping to find income sources for the families, potentially by teaching them a trade. It will be God's hand that guides this mission. We are exceedingly grateful for all the support and prayers.

Please take time to pray and discern if God is calling you to serve on a future mission or if He is calling you to support the efforts with donations or prayers. Do not hesitate to reach out with questions about the mission or about how to get involved. - Holy Spirit's Mission Team

