



South Bay Sanctuary Covenant Newsletter

November 2016

Love, Solidarity and Bravery – A Message of Indomitable Hope at SBSC's October event

A powerful youth-centered vision for development in El Salvador was laid out by Voices on the Border Field Director Jose Acosta at SBSC's fall event in Palo Alto. Youth Delegates Mathew Coleman and Aaron McNelis directed a question-and answer session with Jose and VOTB Executive Director Roddy Hughes, focused on our partner community Comunidad Octavio Ortiz (COO)'s 'Youth of Hope' program, to be launched in early 2017. Communities throughout El Salvador are facing enormous



challenges and have suffered violent setbacks, such as the recent massacre Roddy described in one village not far from COO, where five people were murdered by masked men in the middle of the night. The threat and reality of such attacks have led to much migration, weakening the roots that hold community

members together. The majority of the violence is committed by youth, who have few opportunities for meaningful employment, but get many messages promoting material aspirations. This combination makes gang life alluring, and a violent cycle is reinforced. COO plans to combat this cycle by launching a series of diversionary activities to spark the interest and creativity of youth, especially the ones finishing middle school – the most common age for leaving school and being recruited by the gangs. A mix of music, art, capacity-building and a number of high-school scholarships will be offered to about 80 youth in COO.

'Love, Solidarity...' Continued on page 4

SBSC Providing Sanctuary Support to Toño and his Family

You may remember that in last year's newsletter we reported that the SBSC Steering Committee made the decision in July 2015 to provide Sanctuary to Toño, a young man from El Salvador who fled death threats by a gang. Toño had to leave his Compañera and child behind and undertake a perilous journey through Mexico. Upon entering the U.S, he was apprehended by the U.S. Border Patrol. Soon afterwards Voices on the Border and SBSC worked with immigration attorneys to get him released from custody, in return for agreeing to provide financial and legal support while he seeks political asylum in the U.S.

Continued on page 2

Join in welcoming Toño's family! Meet Celia and baby Jimena

Learn why they fled their community, about their journey to the US & treatment by ICE, about their hopes for asylum, and how you can help!

Sunday Dec. 11th 3-4:30 PM at St. Albert the Great Church, 1095 Channing Ave., Palo Alto

RSVP to Arlene: schaupp@aol.com or 650-494-8340

A Letter From Our Partner Community

Dear Arlene,

It's an honor for us to be able to write this letter to you, to greet you as well as to wish you much success in the exertion of your daily activities, performed together with all those in South Bay Sanctuary your working team with the purpose to offer financial, spiritual, psychological and moral assistance to our communities.

Arlene, we are doing well as a community because God is always with us: day and night.

After this brief greeting I'm going to inform you that here we had a change of the Directiva for the next three years. This event took place on September the 25th 2015. We are satisfied that this new Directiva is composed by young people, male and female.



Concepcion, past President of Comunidad Octavio Ortiz,

As we all know the elderly represent the memories and the young folks the future. The children represent the hope.

Arlene, our thanks to you for never leaving us alone during the most crucial moments like during the droughts and floods - you were always with us with your support. This time we had a long-lasting drought all over the country's west side. However; it makes us happy that the rains are back reestablishing the productive work in this zone of the Lower Lempa River area.

Yours truly,
Concepcion and Family

'Toño' continued from page 1

Toño has been living with an SBSC supporter in the area since his release from custody last year and has submitted his political asylum application. Because there is a huge backlog of asylum cases, his case will not be decided until April 2019. However, he has obtained a work permit and has been working six days a week as a gardener. He studies English at night in an adult education program and was able to give a short update in English about his current activities at our fall event.

Sadly, the violence that forced Toño to flee his homeland recently re-visited his family when a close relative of Alberto's Compañera was brutally murdered in their community and his Compañera was threatened. She and their very young child fled El Salvador to the U.S. after the murder and after a short stay in a U.S. border immigration detention center, have been reunited with Toño here in California. Like Toño, they will be applying for political asylum. We have already received some offers to help but more financial support is needed for both living expenses (rent, utilities, food, diapers, etc.) and the legal fees for applying for political asylum. If you are interested in helping please call Ana at (650) 400-5754 or Mark at (408) 733-3734.

The SBSC community has an exemplary history of providing Sanctuary and support for Salvadoran refugees in the U.S., in addition to its solidarity work with communities in the Bajo Lempa. Your continued support and prayers for Toño and his family, including those family members living in El Salvador, are very much appreciated!

Election Perspective From A Salvadoran

The past few weeks have been quite emotional and a bit tumultuous time for our community. I still recall sitting in my living room on the evening of November 8th, flipping through channels in hope that the results would be different and that the media had made a

'Election' Continued on page 4

WE WELCOME YOUR SUPPORT FOR THE FOLLOWING PROJECTS

\$3500 Youth Development Project: Skills and Tools For Peace. A comprehensive effort to give young people in Comunidad Octavio Ortiz tools and training that build their capacity to live fully and without violence. This proposal by the Directiva of C.O.O. uses trainings in life skills, civics & management, combined with reactivated music, dance and art programs. The goal is to help young people in C.O.O. uncover their inner resources for countering the influence of gangs and living fully in their own community. You can help!

\$2,400 Safe School Transportation. Continuing gang activity has made parents fear sending kids on foot or bicycle to school in nearby Amando Lopez. This item continues funding for transport that picks up kids at their homes in 8 surrounding communities and takes them to & from school. A special focus is on middle schoolers, who are most at risk of gang interference and recruitment. You can help!

\$4,000 Refugee Support. Increased threats to their safety have forced some of our friends from the Bajo Lempa to flee the area. SBSC is helping one refugee family cover legal and living expenses while they start a new life here in the US and applies for asylum—up to a three-year process. This amount will help cover the estimated \$6000 expenses through the end of 2017. You can help! *SEE BELOW TO HELP IN OTHER WAYS

ONGOING COMMITMENTS:

\$ 900/mo. Voices on the Border Executive Director, Roddy Hughes, and El Salvador Field Director, José Acosta, to ensure our donations are used effectively, to keep us informed about the needs and the people, provide training and support for Salvadorans who administer our projects, and to lead SBSC Delegations.

CHALLENGE GRANT

Donations postmarked by December 31, 2016

WILL BE DOUBLED by anonymous donors up to a total of \$5,000!



Please cut off the form below and mail in the enclosed envelope!

YES! Today I donate \$_____

Name _____ Phone _____ Email _____

Address _____

Make tax-deductible check to University Lutheran/SBSC

HELP YOURSELF WHILE HELPING A CENTRAL AMERICAN WORKER!

I want help with:

childcare * eldercare * gardening * cleaning *
painting * roofing * gutters * personal assistance *
Spanish lessons * moving * carpentry

Call the SBSC Job Hotline:

(650) 494-8340 or (650) 400-5754

RUPERTO WITH MANY SKILLS:

Professional painting inside and out * carpentry *
tile and brick * roofing & gutters – new and repair

ANA ASSISTS IN MANY WAYS:

Delicious food * house sitting * transportation *
shopping * bookkeeping * bill paying

GUILLERMO FOR SPANISH LESSONS

Guillermo is a wonderful, creative teacher for all
levels, from beginning through advanced speakers,
including high school students.

OSCAR DOES GARDENING & GUTTERS

MATI CLEANS AND WASHES WINDOWS

'Election' continued from page 2

mistake in their predictions. That Tuesday morning, I had awakened early to get to my polling location to cast my vote prior to going to work. Ever since I became a US citizen at the age of 22 I have always liked to physically go in and fill in my ballot as it is a friendly reminder of a right the citizens of this country have. My hope that morning was that finally that glass ceiling would be broken and we would see history in the making by electing our first woman president.

Yet, when I went to bed on the evening of November 8th, I could not believe what had just happened. Being Salvadoran in a country that I have come to love as a place where *The American Dream* is possible because I have witnessed it with own eyes so many times, I felt like we had stepped back in history. The United States is a country where families are politically and racially diverse, and the results of the election have left many of them with unanswered questions, concerns, and fears.

We can't possibly know what the next few months and years will look like, but we do know that there are many anxieties that the Undocumented, Latinos, Muslims, LGBTQ+ and many other minority groups are navigating through right now. When asked, many of my closest friends, community members and students with whom I work have said that they were feeling scared, shocked, confused by what has happened, and worried about the future. They question whether they and their families will have to move, they wonder if they could be targeted by the racial or xenophobic hostility they've watched in the news, and they're confused by the hate they've seen in recent days.

Their questions and concerns transcend political boundaries and parties - instead they grapple with their own, their families', and their friends' safety as immigrants, citizens, all of whom may be seen as not belonging. But we've always known how resilient our communities are especially those of us who have immigrated. Within it all – the confusion, the fear, the anxiety – lies hope. We must rely on our community

members and families during these difficult times because America is still the land of opportunity and that compassion and support each and everyone has received one time or another still exists. I know that this country is not defined by the values of the the president-elect and a silent majority that had their voices heard but on the fact that we all have the right to stand up for what we believe in and work together to build a country that we are all proud of.

Luz Deras

DIALOGUE WITH SANTA CRUZ al SALVADOR

Five of our SBSC Steering Committee met with four leaders from “Santa Cruz al Salvador” in May to get acquainted and share how each approach advocacy and involvement with El Salvador. We discovered that both groups have been involved with El Salvador for over 20 years!

The Santa Cruz group has large delegations each year to their partner communities—El Pilar on the Pacific ocean where they raised funds for a well to provide clean water and are now fund-raising to build composting toilets in that village; and Guillermo Ungo in the central part of the country where they have focused on educational scholarships for 120 kids from kindergarten through high school and also 15 students in college.

In contrast to SBSC their model is church congregation-based: that is, two Presbyterian churches and five Lutheran churches comprise their base. George Bunch from Trinity Presbyterian Church in Santa Cruz is their current board president and another key leader is the Rev. Karla Norton, a Presbyterian minister who went on one of our SBSC delegations. Four from Santa Cruz al Salvador came up for our recent SBSC event: we're beginning to learn from each other!

Dale Bracey

A Welcome Return

In March 2016 I returned to El Salvador after 3 years. I was impressed at the progress in Comunidad Octavio Ortiz on the goals that they'd set. Before visiting COO we spent 3 days in the Capital San Salvador.

Jose Acosta, our delegation leader and Ebony Pleasants, our translator, led us in a very informative delegation in San Salvador, the Bajo Lempa and Morazán.



Translator Ebony Pleasants, Delegation Leader José Acosta, Arlene Schaupp and Anne Fillin

While there we listened to and talked with Francisco Mena Ugarte, Executive Director of CRISPAZ, who told us that many people are over-generalizing the current social situation in El Salvador as hopeless while he and others recognize that there are positive elements. This year CRISPAZ expected to host 17 delegations including four different high school groups.

We also met with Miguel Ventura, a former Jesuit priest who studied philosophy and theology under Father Rutilio Grande and Monsignor Oscar Romero. Miguel used liberation theology to help people understand that they had a right to fight against the disappearances, tortures and killings being done to them by their government during the Salvadoran civil war (1980-1992. Miguel later served as the governor of the department (state) of Morazán for five years. After the war, Miguel Ventura married and was excommunicated from the Catholic Church. He continues to be a pastor and teacher to many,

including a group of 30 women leaders studying Liberation Theology in Comunidad Segundo Montes in Morazán.. His wife Evelyn teaches liberation theology to youth and young adults.

We visited the student house in San Salvador supported by scholarships through the Palo Alto Friends Meeting El Salvador Project. So far scholarships have been given to 111 students, and 75 have graduated. We talked with scholarship students including one who is being supported by members of the SBSC Steering Committee, in his second year at the National University, where he is studying to become a neurologist. He is very disciplined and is getting outstanding grades.

On Sunday, we left quite early to travel to Comunidad Octavio Ortiz (COO) in time to attend 8:30 Mass with the community. It was heart-warming to see the people I remembered from 3 years ago. For me, Mass with Padre Angel was a great way to start off in the community. Among other contributions, Padre Angel has arranged for 3 college scholarships.

We met with the elected Town Council (*La Directiva*) and saw the organized and future-looking work they are doing in the community. On a tour of COO we saw new street lamps, nearly completed houses for needy families, the sand lot futbol field, and the site for a church.

La Directiva has negotiated sand deliveries with the company repairing nearby roadways. The sand will be used to complete the cancha de futbol (soccer field) and 10 new viviendas (houses). The houses are funded by the United Communities of the Lower Lempa (ACUDESBAL) and with grants from Germany. Construction workers will be from the COO including one member of each family getting a house. The families each pay 30% of the cost over 10 years.

This year I got to stay with Elmer (current President of la Directiva) his gentle wife Ana and their 6 year old son, Emerson. Elmer is a civil engineer (He attended University with scholarship arranged by Padre Angel.) He is very dedicated to his community. He has constructed a strong and practical modern house. He and Ana were very welcoming and helpful. I really enjoyed my time with them.

Elmer and the Directiva are very dedicated to engaging the youth of the communities. He showed videos of the sand lot futbol championship this year in the first field constructed around the community center (This center was built tall and strong to handle periodic floods with the cooperation of SBSC.) 10 teams participated in the championship with women from the community selling food. This championship is part of a national sand lot league.

This trip we also got to travel 4 hours north to visit the Christian Base Communities in Segundo Montes, Morazán. The members are very dedicated to creating a vibrant, loving Christian community. Arlene asked for a show of hands of who had been in the refugee camp Colomoncagua (in Honduras) and at once and with pride every last hand was in the air (except for some very young) and with that she explained her history and connection with the camp, which she and four others visited in 1988.

Anne Fillin

Love, Solidarity... *Continued from page 1*

This is a small-scale impulse that Jose explained is aimed at breaking the violent cycle and replacing it with one powered by love and solidarity that inspire the bravery so sorely needed to confront the many enemies of peaceful, meaningful lives. Opportunities for SBSC supporters to help this effort are listed on page 5 of this newsletter.



Salsa dancers performing at the October Event

**We Invite You on our South Bay Sanctuary Covenant
Accompaniment Delegation to El Salvador
February 17/18 – 26, 2017**

This Delegation is EXTREMELY IMPORTANT

To support people in their faith in God and courage. Delegation will have a flexible agenda and focus on increasing our solidarity here and there; Fact-finding about causes of problems and good solutions.

See how Voices on the Border empowers people in rural communities to:

Deal with increased violence, killings and impunity, Analyze information to improve life in their communities.

Enjoy solidarity with Salvadorans and those on the delegation:

Grow in understanding of Christian faith and Liberation Theology; Have a preferential option for the poor and oppressed. Experience great hospitality from friends in El Salvador

Support delegation with prayers and/or positive thoughts and visualizations:

Make prayers and thoughts positive – not protection from potential dangers, but blessings (God's) blessings for those on the delegation and for all in El Salvador.

See how Archbishop Oscar Romero is alive in his people!

LED BY Voices on the Border El Salvador Director José Acosta. **COST:** \$1,175 for lodging, food, transportation, leaders; **PLUS AIRFARE.** IF need a scholarship, request application from Arlene (see below)

OPTION: Go a week early to an excellent SPANISH LANGUAGE SCHOOL

Contact Arlene (650) 494-8340 or Schaupp@aol.com for info & RSVP.

Orientation / Info Session: Sun Dec 11 4:30PM at St. Albert the Great Church, 1095 Channing, Palo Alto

Published by South Bay Sanctuary Covenant, 3290 Middlefield Road Palo Alto, California 94306

Websites: SBSC - www.fprensa.org/elsalvador VOICES on the Border – www.votb.org