

Guatemala Partnership

Health Ministry

The **Presbytery of Western North Carolina** enjoys a remarkable partnership with **two presbyteries in Southwestern Guatemala – Suchitepéquez and Sur Occidenté**. The partnership has 31 churches in Guatemala paired with churches in PWNC. **This is a newsletter updating you on our partnership's health ministry.** *Spring 2009*

In Guatemala every year some people, mostly children, die from diseases associated with unsafe drinking and cooking water, and poor sanitation and hygiene. Children's health, growth and development are compromised by poor nutrition. Sadly, these problems are preventable.

But, these health issues are also things that you can help change. Your prayers and your actions can help the Guatemala Partnership Health Ministry make the necessary difference.



What can you do? Begin by writing with intention, intention to be informed, to join, to encourage, and to being a part of building capacity in Guatemala to improve health.

In rural areas family drinking water is usually taken from a hand dug shallow well. This water is unsafe for drinking as it is polluted by nearby pit toilets and by domestic animals. In towns and cities when municipalities provide water it is usually not safe to drink. Purchasing safe bottled water is not affordable by many families.

Write your partner church and ask a few open questions and be prepared to respond. We, the Health Ministry Team, will be happy to help you with that further response.

- ✓ **Please tell us about your church's health program?**
- ✓ **Who are your health promoters?**
- ✓ **How does your church participate in the Children's Health and Nutrition Programs?**
- ✓ **What are the most pressing health issues in your church and community?**

Building a capacity for health. Our Guatemala partners embrace a definition of health that also includes spiritual health, care for the environment, economic development and social justice that is necessary to achieve healthy individuals, families and communities. The health project continues to be built on basic health promoter training started more than 10 years ago. Members from the Guatemala partner churches were selected for training in preventive health care. The program leadership is working toward empowering promoters to more effectively teach in their communities and assisting them to identify community health needs and gain health promoter certification. The program is working to help more families be able to purchase family water filters and access to clean water, construct composting latrines and improved stoves, improve their gardens, and in some communities help cooperative groups of women so they can build ovens for baking breads which can then be sold for profit. The health promoters have also begun to formulate specific herbal medicines. All churches continue to participate, though at different levels, with the children's nutrition program. This year they are working to strengthen children's nutrition and are combining Christian education and parental nutritional education.

If you need additional information on specific aspects of the Guatemala Health Ministry, please ask. Likewise, if you would like assistance or a member of the WNC Partnership Health Ministry to work with you as you become actively involved in the health life of our brothers and sisters in Guatemala, please contact Doug Michael by email dougmichael@charter.net.