

# FROM THE PASTOR'S PEN



August 2008

## A VIEW FROM GUATELAMA

PASTOR TROY

As I was standing on top of the brick building that was designed to be a church, pounding nails through the incredibly dense wood that we had erected as trusses, and sweating profusely in the hot and humid air – I looked toward the village and saw quite a sight. Atop the church roof I looked past the soccer field where the children were playing, without shoes, and looked towards the large tree that seemed to mark this village, the village of La Gomera. Underneath the tree was the make-shift building that housed our medical and dental clinic. And I saw a long line of people, along with our vehicles, making their way from that clinic, making their way towards the church. The clinic was now closed. The medicines which were stored in a temporary pharmacy were now packed. Our short-term mission trip was coming to a close. The long line of people walking towards us choked me up, I hadn't seen this many people gathered together since we'd been there. I guess we wouldn't be leaving this village quietly.

Working alongside Pastor Juan, I pounded one last nail into the truss-support and he looked at me, waved his arms, and said, "no mas." No more. Our work on the roof of the church was done – they expected to finish it the following day with the tin-roof. Now it was time for the closing service. We gathered in the middle of the guts of this exposed whale – a larger church structure than I had anticipated, completely dwarfing their old hut to the side. Pastor Juan gathered the people into a circle underneath the roof trusses, which were still being supported from the ground by beams. Others looked through the open-air windows as we stood on the dirt floor – the village of La Gomera and seven Americans easy spotted in their midst.

Based upon conversations I had during the week – it was safe to say that there were many in attendance for this "closing service" that were not Christians. Some even had assisted in the building of the church. Many had arrived at the clinic. But relationships were being made with the leaders and the LifeWind trainers. And, to be sure, they were intrigued that a small group of Presbyterian Americans would show up.

Pastor Juan spoke for the community and thanked us for taking the time to travel to La Gomera to work on this roof for the worship of the people. His prayer was that many more in the village would become Christians and learn what it means to believe in and follow Christ. The size of the new church was built in hope of such outreach. He thanked our team for their long hours of work in the clinics and their playing with the children. The first day of the clinic had over 88 sign-ins, I stopped keeping count the next two days. Lastly, he asked that we extend their gratitude to our own church, for praying for them, for supporting them in these projects, and supporting the team in going. He said that they now had a debt they could never repay. I responded saying that the only debt that matters has already been paid. We couldn't have asked for a more gracious hosts. We parted ways in prayer and hugs.

I can't tell you how proud I was of our team. They worked tremendously hard all day long. They served these wonderful people with their hearts and their energy. They struggled, at times, with illness and the heat. But they came to Guatemala to serve with joy – and they did. I found myself beaming and choking up at numerous times as I watched our team work. I also found myself thanking the Lord for using us, a small team from a small town, on a short-term trip.

Thank you Escalon Presbytery Church for your prayers, for your support, for donations, for sending us in faith. Yet, this trip is only a small piece of the puzzle for the Christ-centered mission of a church. If we pray that the Lord will open our eyes to more ways in which we can serve in his name – what might we see? What might we do? Where might we go? I dare you to pray it.

