

***Flash: The Seventh Annual Guatemala Mission Celebration is scheduled for the evening of Monday, May 20<sup>th</sup>! Please save the date for latest information about the Mission!***

**Update on Mission News after December 2018 Visit**

by Donna Connell

**Medical Clinics:** Dr. Jose Miguel, Director and Administrator of the four medical clinics, reported that diabetes, hypertension, and cancer are increasing among adults with heart attacks being the leading cause of death. Education is emphasized at the clinics, including information about prenatal and baby care, vaccines, and nutrition. Dr. Jose Miguel is able to buy medications in Quetzaltenango and thanks Spokane parishioners for their support! Health care promoters, who work at the clinics daily, are studying to complete their nursing degrees.

Thanks to additional funds from St. Mary Church in the Spokane Valley, Dr. Jose Miguel upgraded the medical clinics, by adding new consultation rooms and purchasing furniture for three clinics. They also purchased paint and painted the roof of the clinic in new Ixtahuacan. They replaced a water heater, and bought medical equipment, a projector and medications.

**Our Lady of the Highway Preschool:** Teacher Elena continues to teach in a spirited manner, engaging all students with learning through music, movement and vocalization. These children come from very poor families and could not attend preschool if tuition was charged. Adding a day of school is being considered for the preschool program.

**Nawal Estereo – Radio Station:** Lourdes, Director, reports that the funds that we send from parishioners in Spokane are a huge help! They use the funds for operating costs and emergencies.

Nawal Estereo, founded by Fr. John Rompa in 1962, is the oldest radio station in Nahuala with the goal of serving those in Western Guatemala who speak Quiche. Their goal is to enable the indigenous people, both women and men, to lead a fuller life. The broadcast to about 1 ½ million people in Western Guatemala; however, their biggest audience is international with online streaming.

Transmission is 18 hours each day from 5 am to 11 p.m. They are a public radio so they have some advertising but are regulated. Broadcasting includes a monthly panel discussion on various, pertinent topics, such as immigration, the rights of women, the participation of youth, and discrimination in Guatemala. Local leaders are interviewed on a daily basis.

They recently celebrated 56 years of broadcasting. At the celebration this year, they recognized a woman who worked for the betterment of their town. She founded a group that empowers women to start their own businesses.

This coming year will be national elections so a goal of the radio station is to urge people, especially women and young people (who may not have voted before) to be informed and to vote. This year's theme is: "What can we do to bring people hope." John 10:10: "life in abundance".

Their staff is getting older, and they only have seven staff members. They have not replaced people when they retire due to expenses (there were ten staff members last time we visited). They have formed a support group of young people who are interested in radio who can help with marketing, broadcasting, etc.

**Their only truck is no longer working; so they are in urgent need of a new truck, necessary for broadcasts in outlying communities.**

Nawal Estereo can be heard streaming at: <http://www.liveonlineradio.net/guatemala/nawal-estereo.htm>

**Religious Education Building and Activities in Ixtahuacan:** Fr Nicasio and the team of catechists noted that they have spent all of the funds sent from Spokane to stabilize the building used for religious education for the children of the parish. They furnished a final report which includes bathrooms, sinks, and painting. People from all 29 communities volunteered and worked on the building. They still need to level off the front rock and do some finishing work inside. The first floor is mostly finished with some new windows and paint. No work has been done on the second floor which

has a roof that has holes and leaks. They also need doors, windows, electricity, and student desks. They will send a new request with needs and costs.

They are very pleased and thankful for the work done on the building so far; and ask Santa Catarina to pray for everyone in Spokane!

They have suspended the RE program during this stabilization project but plan on starting again in January. The Marian Center and even the municipal building are used for church activities; so the RE building will be much appreciated. Other uses of the building will include: catechists training (40-80 people), formation of musicians (70-80 people), prayer meetings, youth (teen) activities, lectors and lay minister training, and sacramental preparation classes. All of these activities include people from the 29 surrounding parishes as well as Ixtahuacan proper. They estimated that there are about 10,000 people in all of the communities and about 130 families in Ixtahuacan. About 80-90% of the people in Ixtahuacan are Catholic.

**Other:** Fr. Nicasio told a story about the community of Palamo. He was walking to the church because his car broke down. It was very hot and he had a backpack. He was about an hour from the community when many people came walking to meet him and walked with him for 2 kilometers, singing until they got to the church. They arrived for 10 am Mass at 1 pm. After Mass they fed him and took him home. **Thank you to all who contributed to purchase a new vehicle for Fr. Nicasio! We were able to send enough funds for Bishop de Villa to arrange a purchase!**

### **Family to Family – Adela Tambriz**

Adela picked us up and we toured the Xeul project which was very impressive. A variety of vegetables and medicinal plants along with trees (including Brazil nut, banana, and peach) are being grown by families in the program. Some crops can be planted and harvested four times a year; while others are one growing a year. Produce is given to the families who work at Xeul as well as sold. The chicken project is going terrifically, and we handed out crates of beautiful brown eggs to families - with much ado! The hens are laying forty eggs a day. They also have “fryers” – chickens raised for eating. Food for the chickens is a mixture but includes alfalfa grown beside the pen, and corn ground by riding a stationary bike! They use the chicken manure for compost for the gardens. All is organic. There are ducks and tilapia fish in the pond. Adela even fed the ducks some medicinal plants that they grow beside the pond.

After the tour, we were treated to lunch prepared in the kitchen and eaten outdoors, complete with tortillas (just made by Mikaela), and cooked vegetables and chicken...delicious!

We also stopped in New Ixtahuacan where we saw women weaving, using the back strap looms and women sewing on treadle sewing machines. Another young woman, who is learning how to play the keyboard, sang and played a few songs while we drank “Adela” coffee. Then we “shopped” for items to bring back to Spokane.

### **San Jose Seminario Minor**

We met with Fr. Esequel Xicay, Rector, at the minor seminary, and delivered a Schwinn 5 speed bicycle donated by a Spokane woman. Fr. Esequel reported that he has ordered new cupboards for the seminary with funds donated by a Spokane donor and Our Lady of Fatima Church. They also have added new tile to some classrooms, lighting, and study cubicles with funds from Our Lady of Fatima Church. They have 20 computers in their computer classroom. They have started their kitchen remodel project with a new stove with hood and counter tops with funds from the Spokane donor and the Diocese of Solola/Chimaltenango.

The students were on Christmas vacation; however Fr. Esequel reported that eleven students are coming back for their second year, and there will be twenty-two in the first year, beginning in January. Of this year’s graduating class, eleven were accepted into the major seminary. They must take written and aptitude tests, then be interviewed and selected for the major seminary. All students come back during the December vacation and help one week with maintenance in the seminary and one week to help new students.

Needs at the Seminary are:

- 40 student desks – about \$95 each
- Remodel bedrooms – they are 25 years old. They need to update flooring, ceiling, lighting and beds. There are 5 dormitory rooms and each will cost about \$3300 which includes the cupboards which are already purchased and to arrive in January.

### **Bishop de Villa**

Bishop reported that he has been very busy with his responsibilities as Bishop of Solola/Chimaltenango **and** President of the Guatemala Bishops. The Diocesan Youth Conference is Palm Sunday and will be at San Andreas which is about six kilometers from Chimaltenango. Kevin, the seminarian who was working in Ixtahuacan with Fr. Nicasio, was ordained on Dec. 15<sup>th</sup> along with two other men.

**Convent in Novillero:** Sr. Gloria and Sr. Rosita are residing at the Convent in Novillero, and volunteering in Our Lady of Guadalupe Catholic Church in Novillero. Sr. Marie has retired in New York after over 40 years of pastoral and medical work in the mission. She has trained hundreds of catechists through the years and has served as Administrator of the medical clinics most recently. We thank her for her wonderful work and pray for her health and well-being.

**Colegio Nahuala:** They are very thankful for the support that we send, both monthly and the extra support for the salaries of teachers. Teachers are paid about \$150/month which is less than public school teachers. One teacher told Fr. Benjamin, “Don’t worry – we are happy with our jobs and we do our best.” They have made some improvements to the school and have new desks and chairs.

There are 10 teachers in the Primary grades and 10 in the Basico with 35-60 students in each class! Classrooms are used for both Primario and Basico as the younger students go to school in the morning and the older students, in the afternoon. They are very thankful for the 10 computers donated by a Spokane individual last year! And they still use the manual typewriters for keyboarding practice.