

When the world caves in, Disaster Ministry responds

By Kevin Frederick

CEDEPCA USA Board of Directors

Following annual weather patterns, each summer and fall hurricanes and heavy floods wreak havoc on whole Guatemalan communities, especially in the mountainous region. Storm and hurricane rainfall often exceeds 12 inches in a single event. Add to this the threat of earthquakes and volcanoes along one of the most active fault lines in the world, and you have a recipe for repeated disasters.

Annually landslides take the lives and livelihood of hundreds of Guatemalans. Such was the case at 9:30 p.m. on Oct. 1, 2015, just outside of Guatemala City. Heavy rains liquefied the surrounding hillsides, and the resulting catastrophic landslide destroyed 150 homes and acres of personal property in the little downhill community of Cambray II. Over 260 people were dead and many others were missing. More than 1,000 were left homeless.

CEDEPCA is one of the leading agencies that responds to such a crisis, through their Disaster Ministry team, known in Spanish as Prevención y Atención a Desastres, or simply PAD.



Within 12 hours after the nighttime event, the PAD team was addressing the emotional and psychological needs of the victims. The team, led by Antoineta de Morales, Ana Paxtor and Luis Sarpec, worked with national governmental and nongovernmental relief agencies.

The morning after the disaster, the PAD team was wading through the mud, assessing the emotional needs of the victims and bringing comfort to those who had lost loved ones and all their meager possessions. Meanwhile, another group at CEDEPCA was busy raising funds to provide for the basic relief of the victims.

For years CEDEPCA, through its PAD team, has gone into Guatemalan disaster

situations, offering counseling and encouragement along with relief supplies. PAD has always remained with the victims long after the other agencies have left the scene. Because of CEDEPCA's reputation for responding to national crises,

PAD is invited to consult with and plan for the ongoing psychological needs of the communities any time a crisis of this type occurs.

As sure as the seasons change from dry to rainy and back to dry, Guatemala will always face floods, earthquakes, landslides and volcanoes. But thanks to the vital disaster ministry of CEDEPCA and its very effective psychological counseling offered to the victims of disasters, the nation will face these tragedies with essential support services that can change the lives of victims and families. You can help bring hope to many people with your ongoing financial support of CEDEPCA's Disaster Ministries.

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Painting for a Cause raises funds for CEDEPCA

Salem Presbyterian Church in Salem, VA, hosted a unique and fun way to raise money for CEDEPCA—a group painting lesson. Karen Nelson and Janet Chisom of SPC organized the event, working with the Salem Art Center.

Approximately 30 people gathered to paint a scene from Guatemala featuring Lake Atitlán. Joe Palotas with the Salem Art Center led the group in the acrylic painting process step-by-step until everyone had a completed painting.

After expenses, a little over \$800 was raised for CEDEPCA. SAC photos



Baltimore partnership lights path of reconciliation

By Elizabeth Lovell Milford, CEDEPCA USA Board of Directors

“Called by God’s grace into one family, commissioned by Christ to bear witness to God’s reconciling love in the world, and empowered by the Holy Spirit to live out and carry forth this reconciliation, the Presbytery of Baltimore and CEDEPCA hereby enter into a covenant relationship, seeking to partner with one another in our work of reconciliation.”

These words begin the new partnership covenant between CEDEPCA and the Presbytery of Baltimore, which includes 68 congregations located in and around Baltimore and across central and western Maryland.

Members of an exploratory partnership team were immediately impressed by the breadth of CEDEPCA’s programs and its clarity of vision, transparency in finance and organization, and commitment to the gospel. Visits in 2015 provided concrete examples of the transforming ministry of CEDEPCA, and team members returned to Baltimore with countless stories of inspiration. These experiences were excellent affirmations of how education transforms lives, from hearing a daughter share her faith after a women’s program to celebrating the graduation from a seminary class. At the end of the trip, members were presented with a candle, representing a light of hope and connection, from their new friends in ministry in Guatemala. They were called to share that light with others.

This new five-year partnership will allow people of faith in Baltimore to connect in real ways with the people of Guatemala, seeking to support and learn from another as they address issues of justice in a variety of ways, including prayer, visits, communication, advocacy, and support. A trip is in the works for fall of 2016.

In the wake of last spring’s riots and decades of strained race relations and issues relating to justice, Baltimore is in desperate need of transformation and hope. Through partnering with CEDEPCA, the Presbytery is encouraged in this work. They are reminded of the power of the gospel to transform lives and make both small and big changes in our local communities and in the world. “The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.” (John 1:5)



The light of one candle may only provide a small amount of light to a darkened room, but when multiple candles are lit, the light begins to spread and the hope of something new dawns. The Presbytery of Baltimore is thrilled to have this spark become a flame, and looks forward to it growing over the next five years and beyond.

To travel safely in mosquito areas, use repellent

Zika prevention important for CEDEPCA travelers

By Paul Lewellan

If you're traveling to Guatemala this year, you probably have concerns about Zika virus, which has been detected in 21 Latin American and Caribbean countries as well as the Philippines, Pacific islands and the United States. The epicenter of the current outbreak is Brazil, with more than 1.5 million cases of Zika reported at the start of this year.

In Guatemala, the areas of highest concern for Zika are Petén, Izabal, the Southern Coast and more tropical areas. Most CEDEPCA Intercultural Encounter groups travel to the Western Highlands but it is still possible to contract Zika there. Because there is no known vaccine, the only way to prevent Zika is to avoid being bitten by infected mosquitoes. CEDEPCA Intercultural Encounters has been working on precautions and has a list of what you need to know before you travel:

The *Aedes aegypti* mosquito transmits the Zika virus, but only about 20 percent of those infected become ill. Sufferers may experience headaches, rashes, low-grade fevers, and joint pain. The effects are typically mild, with few people getting sick enough for hospitalization. Some may not even realize they've been infected. The World Health Organization (WHO) says four out of five people who contract Zika have few or no symptoms. This can be problematic.

Because the virus can remain in the blood for up to a week, it can be passed from an infected person to others through mosquito bites. Infected males may also transmit the disease through sexual contact.

The primary concern is to women who are pregnant or who become pregnant. The Centers for Disease Control (CDC)

and WHO are studying whether the Zika virus may cause a number of birth defects, including microcephaly—abnormally small skulls and brains—in babies born to infected mothers.

In March, the *New England Journal of Medicine* reported a study where doctors noted the presence of Zika virus in the fetus in early miscarriages, and in cases where the babies were stillborn or died shortly after birth. Scientists are still studying the possible links both with birth defects and with a type of paralysis known as Guillian-Barré syndrome.

Since the CDC and WHO warn of the possible link between Zika and microcephaly, and other pregnancy and health concerns, CEDEPCA recommends that if you are traveling to Guatemala this year, you should take the following steps:

1. Wear long pants and long-sleeved shirts treated with permethrin.
2. Bring plenty of insect repellents and apply frequently. A

repellent that contains 20 percent or more DEET can last for several hours. (Mosquitoes spreading the virus typically bite during the daytime.)

3. When possible, stay in places with window and door screens. Use a bed netting if sleeping in areas exposed to the outdoors.
4. Because Zika can be spread by sexual contact, males should avoid sex or wear a condom until the danger of infection has passed. The virus is believed to remain in the blood less than 28 days, but can survive in semen longer than that.

To treat the symptoms if you become infected:

- Drink lots of fluids to avoid dehydration.
- Get plenty of rest.
- Relieve fever and pain by taking medicines such as acetaminophen (Tylenol). Avoid aspirin and other non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs.

Guatemala and other infected countries are acting aggressively to eradicate the *Aedes* species of mosquito (*A. aegypti* and *A. albopictus*). The same type of mosquito can carry dengue and chikungunya, both more painful illnesses than Zika. Until eradication can be accomplished, prevention of mosquito bites is your most effective course of action. Please include precautions in any travel plans you have. Check the CDC and WHO websites for the latest developments.



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Who's visiting Guatemala in 2016?

By Sunny Stautz, CEDEPCA USA Board of Directors

By the time you're reading this, six groups will have already participated in a 2016 Intercultural Encounter, including three college groups. A group from Albany Presbytery in New York came in January. In February it was Mayfield Presbyterian Church, also from New York (Photo of their work at a rural clinic at right). A group from South Carolina and students from Augustana College in Illinois also came in February, and students from Queens University in Charlotte and North Carolina State came in March.

Emerson Morales, coordinator of Intercultural Encounters, said another 15 groups are scheduled to visit between April and December, and they're beginning to schedule groups for 2017. While most of these groups have a set number of participants, some are still open to adding more. And it's not too late to lead your own group to Guatemala in the fall. Contact Emerson (emerson@cedepca.org) or Leslie Vogel (lvogel@cedepca.org) for more information.



INTERCULTURAL ENCOUNTER GROUPS FOR 2016

GROUP	FROM	DATE
Medical group to Cahabón with Anne Sayre & Dr. Liz Knepp	multiple locations	May 7-15
Emory University	Atlanta, GA	date TBA
UKirk, Virginia Tech University	Blacksburg, VA	May 16-22
Grace & Glading Presbyterian churches	Philadelphia, PA	May 20-27
New Covenant Presbytery & Northwoods Christian Church	Houston, TX	June 10-17
Rockfish Presbyterian	Nellysford, VA	June 17-25
Crescent Hill Presbyterian Church	Louisville, KY	June 25
Kirkwood UCC	Kirkwood, MO	June 21-28
Crescent Hill Presbyterian (inquiry)	Louisville, KY	June 25-July 3
Peaks and James Presbyteries	Lynchburg & Richmond, VA	July 23-30
HarborView Presbyterian	Charleston, SC	July 28-Aug. 4
Woods Memorial Presbyterian	Seven Park, MD	date TBA
Second Presbyterian	Richmond, VA	Aug. 5-15
St. Andrews United Church of Canada	Alberta, Canada	Nov. date TBA
PCUSA Immigration "Root Causes"	multiple locations	Nov. 3-20