

1986 - 2016



**30** years  
*Transforming Lives*

**October 2016**

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## Celebrating 30 years of service

*By Elizabeth  
Lovell Milford  
Board of  
Directors*

**Thirty  
years ago  
passionate  
Central  
American  
leaders  
from the  
Latin  
American  
Evangelical  
Center for Pastoral Studies,  
CELEP, opened a semi-  
autonomous office in Guatemala  
named CEDEPCA.**

Judith Castañeda was among them, and remembers that “at that time we wanted to change the world! Our great hope was that through the participation of Christians, we could help end the war and begin with a more democratic society.”

What began as a hopeful dream grew into an organization that for three decades has used education to transform lives throughout Central America. Celebrating this mission, CEDEPCA offers tremendous learning opportunities for theological students, women and intercultural travelers, inspiring lives and strengthening faith.

Special anniversary celebration classes have enriched CEDEPCA's regular offerings and expanded its impact. These include the Month of the Bible contextual reading course from Paulo Ueti, and an exhibit at the Juila Esquivel Library.

In 30 years of ministry, Judith reflects on many accomplishments, particularly the reality that CEDEPCA is one of the few organizations led by Christian women working in women's rights



with an ecumenical perspective. She is proud that with “four ministries, we have reached women and men in far places, villages, with a liberating interpretation of the Bible and of life. We have made a difference for women in violent relationships that

have decided to change their lives. We have had pastors in courses adopt our methodology to ‘see, judge, and act.’” CEDEPCA's impact extends to five Central American countries, Mexico City, and to the United States, Canada and Europe, through students and churches serving as volunteers and visiting through the Intercultural Encounters program. There certainly is a lot to celebrate!

At the end of September CEDEPCA planned thanks to God for the blessing of this ministry during a special worship service commemorating 30 years in ministry. Violeta Rocha was invited to preach, following a week of workshops in Guatemala City and Cobán on Women in the New Testament. Others from Costa Rica, Nicaragua, El Salvador, and the United States gathered in celebration.

In the United States, several supporting groups have gathered for their own festivities. Thirty years were remembered in Atlanta, GA, in January; Houston, TX, in June, and will be celebrated in Southwest Virginia by the Presbytery of the Peaks in November. Such celebrations remind us of just how far and wide CEDEPCA's reach has been.

*Photo: Volunteer Judy Moore-Padgett, General Coordinator Judith Castañeda, Rev. Mike Cole General Presbyter of Presbytery of the New Covenant, Intercultural Encounters Coordinator Emerson Morales.*



### **Interview with General Coordinator Judith Castañeda**

**Q: What is your dream for CEDEPCA in the next 30 years?**

**A:** “I am looking forward to the next 30 years. I hope we can strengthen our programs, training more specialists and continuing to work on our contextual reading of the Bible. I dream of growth in Guatemala, perhaps a library here in Guatemala City or a center near Cobán, as well as development in Costa Rica and other countries. Most of all, I hope we will continue to be prophetic in our context, working for justice and democracy.”

**We want you to be a part of the celebration! Post your memories of CEDEPCA on our Facebook page, or better yet, film yourself sharing “30 Seconds for 30 Years” about how CEDEPCA has transformed YOU, and post it to our Facebook page.**

# IE trip inspires water filter giving challenge

By Sunny Stautz  
Board of Directors

"At CEDEPCA, we believe that it is impossible to transform Guatemala in one week, but one week is enough time for Guatemala to transform you!" After a trip with an Intercultural Encounters group, Gwen Wagner, of Camas, WA, knows that statement has been true for her. She came home from Guatemala determined to help make a difference in the lives of the people she'd met, and got her team members involved in a fundraiser for water filters.

"So many things came out of that trip to Guatemala, but when I saw the water filters, I thought, 'There's something tangible I can do,'" said Gwen. She gives credit to her husband, Keith Bloss, who was also on the trip, and other team members for enthusiastically getting involved in the fundraiser. They've raised \$2,000 with more money still coming in.

Before members of CEDEPCA USA's board came to her church to speak, Guatemala wasn't on Gwen's radar. She said listening to the presentation that Sunday and hearing about the upcoming trip plans, she said she knew "God was tapping me on the shoulder to go." Two months later, the Rev. Leslie Vogel, a Presbyterian Church co-mission worker at CEDEPCA, put on a second presentation at her church and answered questions about the trip. After that, "there was never a doubt in my mind I was going." She went home and told her husband, "I want to do this. Do you want to come along?" He enthusiastically agreed.

Gwen returned from Guatemala mulling her next steps. When she was helping plan her church's Vacation Bible School around the theme "Living Waters," everything just clicked. Gwen was on an ambitious mission to buy filters for 100 families who didn't have access to clean water.

At Vacation Bible School, students saw photos and heard stories of children in five different countries who didn't have access to safe drinking water. Gwen showed photos of the community in Guatemala where her Intercultural Encounters group had handed out water filters (Keith & Gwen in above photos). She talked about the people she'd met and the stories she'd heard.



"To think you could affect 100 families with something so simple. You can change so much of their lives by that single gesture," explained Gwen. Her church

members agreed to use all the Vacation Bible School donations toward water filters. They set up a wishing well where children could donate spare change daily.

"I just wanted one filter. I was looking for spare change," she said. But the youth of her church and community donated over \$200, all in spare change they brought daily.

Gwen didn't stop at Vacation Bible School. She challenged her other travelers from the Pacific Northwest trip to speak in their churches about the water filter fundraiser, and to contribute, which group members did. She sent letters to friends and family. She set up a page on the website CrowdRise to allow people to donate directly to CEDEPCA by credit card.

By the end of July, the water filters project had raised almost \$2,000 and Gwen was pleased. She's raised enough to get water filters to 40 more families, almost halfway to her goal. Her trip called Gwen to action, and made her a fan of what CEDEPCA is doing in Guatemala.

"Water is life-sustaining, but when you deliver education, it's no longer about survival, it's about growth and change," she said, change for both the people of Guatemala and the groups who come to share in their lives.

If you'd like to contribute to the water filter fund, go to <https://www.crowdrise.com/a-drop-in-the-bucket-water-filters-for-guatemalans/fundraiser/gwendolynwagner>



## Message shared at General Assembly

By Sunny Stautz  
Board of Directors

"Oh, CEDEPCA! That's so cool!"

"We know about CEDEPCA!"

"We helped at a school there."

The excited group of teens had seen our banner in the exhibit hall at Presbyterian General Assembly. They stopped to share how much their Intercultural Encounter working at a school had meant to them.

Why was it so meaningful? The teens took turns talking about the study they'd done at CEDEPCA offices before they ever headed to the school. That step, they said, helped them really be prepared for the service project they'd done, and how important it was to share meals with people in the community after you understood their story.

When several of the CEDEPCA USA board members volunteered to work at the World Missions Network booth at Presbyterian General Assembly, we had no idea that we'd hear so many stories of people who had ties with the group. And when we weren't talking to passers-by, we were talking with people from other world mission networks who shared our booth—Congo, Cuba, Ghana and Kenya. The focus was changing our interpretation of mission from "build something structural," to "build relationships."

As part of its 30th anniversary, CEDEPCA is celebrating those relationships. For 30 years, CEDEPCA has had a mission partnership with the Presbyterian Church USA and General Assembly was the perfect spot to tell people about that partnership.



*"Now that I have seen, I am responsible.  
Faith without deeds is dead."*

—Brooke Fraser (singer/songwriter)

By Kendra Crabtree

Director of Communications and Church Life, Blacksburg Presbyterian Church

Who knew that traveling to a place so close to our border would change me so deeply? I've traveled a lot; my passport is stamped to the max. But taking part in CEDEPCA's Intercultural Exchange trip through the Presbytery of the Peaks opened my eyes to things I had never seen before, mainly, the surprising negative impact US policies have had on Guatemala. Learning about the many ways that CEDEPCA is bringing transformation through education gives me a deep sense of hope that the trouble the US has brought to this beautiful country will not be what defines it.

I want to support the hope and change that CEDEPCA is creating in Guatemala. Our trip entailed learning about the ministries of CEDEPCA and seeing them in action. After learning about the Disaster Ministry we met with the Corazon de Mujeres women weavers. (Photo above) This is where the idea first hit me to bring back scarves and sell them at our Advent Festival to help support these courageous women. From there, the idea grew.

The Advent Festival this year will also include the opportunity for folks to buy water filters, personal hygiene kits, kitchen kits, and kits for volunteers during disasters. Folks can also support the workshops put on by CEDEPCA to educate and help people through times of crisis. What an easy, accessible, tangible and educational way for us to support the work of CEDEPCA and the people of Guatemala! These water filters, these kits, these workshops change lives. And we can have a positive role in the story by helping to provide these life-altering gifts.

*If you want a flyer for an alternative giving fair this Christmas season like the one Kendra has described, email us at [judy@cedepca.org](mailto:judy@cedepca.org) and we'll send you a PDF you can reproduce of gift ideas like those she mentions in her article.*

# CEDEPCA seminary gets new name in 2016

By Rev. Kevin Frederick  
Board of Directors

The new Biblical and Theological Seminary at CEDEPCA headquarters in Guatemala City has been given a new name, Camino de Emaús Seminario (The Road to Emmaus Seminary).

The origins of the name go back to the first Easter Sunday. On the afternoon of the Resurrection, two disciples were walking together from Jerusalem to Emmaus, a distance of approximately seven miles. The death of Jesus weighed heavy on them, as with many disciples in those days after his crucifixion. As they talked, the resurrected Lord came and walked with them, but they were unable to recognize him as Jesus.

Only one of the disciples walking is named—Cleopas. It's possible that the unnamed disciple accompanying him on the journey was his wife, Maria, who is mentioned in John 19: 25. Neither disciple was a new follower of Jesus, but neither understood the full meaning of his death and resurrection. On that road to Emmaus, they discovered their hearts burning within them as Jesus taught them things about himself.

The Road to Emmaus Seminary is a place where women and men who are already disciples of Jesus will grow together on the road to deeper faith and discipleship by exploring scripture



within the context of the culture of 21<sup>st</sup> century Central America. Emmaus Seminary is a place of learning and dialogue where Latino/a, Ladina/o, and Indigenous male and female Christian disciples study the Bible.

While pursuing a degree in Christian Education, the students will find, as did Cleopas and his companion, that a preconceived understanding of faith and Christianity will be challenged and transformed within the cultural context of Guatemala and Central America. The women, especially, will find their lives and their call to ministry as women empowered by resurrection life and the truth of Christ.

This is an exciting time to be the Body of Christ in the world, and specifically as a vibrant and faithful witness of faith. Together we seek to be the hands and heart of Christ

illuminated by the mind of Christ, in service to the world around us. It is a great time to be Christ's Church in Guatemala.

**Your donations** are what enables CEDEPCA to carry out its mission of "education that transforms." CEDEPCA USA is a US 501c3 non-profit and donations are tax-deductible.

You can learn more about specific needs and causes by going to CEDEPCA Guatemala's new website, [www.cedepca.org](http://www.cedepca.org). Every ministry has a list of items you can purchase that will make a difference. You can pay with credit card, or via PayPal.

You can also pay with a credit card online, via PayPal, on the CEDEPCA USA website at [www.cedepca.us](http://www.cedepca.us)



Don't want to use a credit card? Donations by cash or check can be sent directly to:

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