

Pennington Presbyterian Church –Water System Mission Trip – July 2013

Kaua, Mexico is a small village in the Yucatan Peninsula situated about halfway between Merida to the west and Cancun to the east. Divino Maestro V Presbyterian Church hugs the curb of Route 180, the main route for tour buses bringing thousands of tourists to the Mayan archaeological site of Chichen Itza each day. The church is home to a vibrant, loving congregation that is bursting at the seams of their current building, in the middle of constructing a large, new sanctuary, and intent on bringing God's gift of clean water to those in the community surrounding the church. Pastor Jesus Salvador Uc Tolosa and his flock waited patiently and faithfully for three years to join in partnership with Living Waters for the World and Pennington Presbyterian Church to make this gift a reality.

During the week of July 6 through 14, Kaua and Divino Maestro became a stop on the main route for Living Waters for the World teams from the United States. While our team from Pennington Presbyterian Church in New Jersey was in residence, a group from Houston visited during their survey trip to nearby Chankom; Joanie Lukins and her Danville, Kentucky team stopped by to see how we were doing as they drove to their own installation site in Campeche, Doug Depies, the civil association leader for the Cancun quadrant, toured the system with our installation leader Chris LaCasse, Pastor Manasses, quadrant coordinator for the Merida section of the civil association, traveled from Merida with his wife to be present at our water celebration, accompanied by an elder from the Emmanuel system in Ticul.

The municipal water supply in Kaua is only available for a few hours twice a day and often breaks down, resulting in long waits for repair. After witnessing the effectiveness of a well that had been dug for the water system we helped install in Sacalum, Yucatan, in 2010, we decided with our partners to dig a well for Kaua. The well had to be drilled twice as deep as originally anticipated, which meant that the funds we had sent our partners were not sufficient to purchase the pump needed for the well. This was a huge worry to Pastor Jesus and his operators, who had decided that they would have to hook up the water system to the municipal supply for the time being and hope for the best.

Fortunately, our project was supported not only by donations from the Pennington congregation, but also by funding from Faith Presbyterian Church in Indianapolis, Indiana, and Niccolls Memorial Presbyterian Church in Old Forge, New York. Thanks to their support, we were able to purchase the pump, pay for its installation, and flush the well during our week there. The heavy weight hanging over the heads of our partners at Divino Maestro was lifted and the way made clear for bringing clean water into the lives of the children and adults in Kaua. God was surely with us all that week!

Faith Presbyterian and Niccolls Memorial both learned about our particular project through the outreach efforts of Living Waters for the World. Faith provided funds for the Kaua installation last spring, which were used by our partners to purchase the raw and finished water tanks, bottles, and other materials that needed to be ready to go when Pennington arrived in July. Niccolls' efforts began with a call from the grandmother of a young man named Cullen Rose, who wanted to donate his birthday money and do fundraising for a project that would provide clean water for a community. Kenneth Strike, the Mission chair at Niccolls, had just returned from Clean Water U and suggested Living Waters for the World as a worthy recipient. After communicating with Joanie Lukins, Kenneth recommended the Kaua project to Kenneth. So far, between Cullen's donations and a match from the Mission Committee, over \$1,200 has been contributed to support this project. Cullen is a shining

example of the work young people are doing in the world to make it a just and fair place for everyone, especially those who are not as privileged as we.

Our visit from the Kentucky team and Doug Depies also prompted us to make a few design changes to the flow of the system, and Nancy Russell, Pennington's education leader, was able to share some of the effective education work done by the Pennington and Divino Maestro educators during the week.

Joanie Lukins matched our congregation with Divino Maestro almost three years ago and as I have mentioned to several people, she is a wise woman! Although our church is over 300 years old and Divino Maestro is much younger, we are kindred spirits. Our towns are both small and situated about an hour away from big cities, both congregations love children (who can be heard loud and clear in worship services in both sanctuaries) and we are both committed to sharing the gift of clean water with all God's children. During the water celebration and worship service, Pastor Jesus stated that he would never forget this day for the rest of his life. Nor will any of the thousands of people involved in this individual water system through the marvelous way God has brought us together in Living Waters for the World.

There is no way that we can truly thank everyone who has supported this project and continues to support it, except to acknowledge that God's sometimes mysterious plan has been with us every step of the way. We can't wait to return to Kaua in 2014 and hope to see lots of teams and partners as they pass through town as they work to help clean water flow for everyone.

Sidebar: During our trip to Kaua, we were able to make a brief visit to the water system we installed in Sacalum, Yucatan in November 2010 with our partners from Divino Maestro I Presbyterian church in the nearby small city of Ticul. The system is operating well and our partners there have been able to purchase new membranes for the RO system and repair electricity after an evening of lightning strikes. Clean water production is up from our last visit in November 2012. Our partners are delivering water by truck to people in both Ticul and Sacalum and providing free water to the local school. How wonderful to be part of two such marvelous systems!