

Building a Church in La Majada

Those who believe in Jesus Christ in the village of La Majada, had been praying for a church to call their own, and the Mission Committee and people of Liberty Corner Presbyterian Church helped answer those prayers by providing funds and volunteers to build a church on a hillside overlooking their village. In July, 1997 the project was approved and planning began in New Jersey and Honduras.

Construction experts in both countries made building plans and the 11 volunteers took Spanish lessons, and held planning meetings to prepare for their journey. La Majada is a village without electrical power, running water and communications, and thus the group had to prepare for a construction project much different than ones experienced in the United States. The Liberty Corner team included Jim Allen, Paul Bryan, George Curtis, Edith Dobos, Andrea Foote, Greg Hammill, Nancy Hoge, Doug Liguori, Tom Metcalfe, Al Peters and Cliff Tozier.



In preparation for the team's arrival, the La Majada villagers began leveling the volcanic rock on a mountain side, which would become a concrete floor. Using bricks handmade in the village, they had nearly completed the four walls of the church, and had built a cistern to hold the water needed to mix the concrete.

The women of the village walk down a steep hill to a stream to fetch their water each day, carrying it in vessels balanced on their heads. The need for water increased greatly during the construction, and the women were kept busy carrying

water up the steep hill each day. The team began work on November 1 taking the 30-minute ride from their quarters in Santa Rosa to La Majada, which lies at an elevation of 3,000 feet.

A gasoline-powered generator had been brought from Ohio to power the electrical tools needed for the construction. As part of the project, electrical outlets and lights were wired in the 46 foot by 36 foot building, and the generator was installed in a small "shed" behind the rear of the church, so services and other activities could be held at night.

The most difficult part of the project was the roof construction, which consisted of steel girders fabricated in Santa Rosa. Hoisting the long, heavy girders was difficult and attaching the roof panels was a challenge for the team. Helping the Liberty Corner team throughout their stay were many men and women from the village, who were proud to work on what would become their church. One of the men who especially "touched" the team was "Don Cheppe" a 78-year-old grandfather who worked hard all day with the team, only taking short breaks for lunch. A frail man, with a face weathered by a life working in the mountains and coffee fields, he never hesitated to lug the 100 lb. bags of cement, or push wheelbarrows that tested the strength of even the strongest men on the team.

La Majada is the home of many Children, and they congregated at the building site every day. The women of the team taught the Children games, such as the Hokey Pokey and Simon Says, and afternoon games became a fun time for the Children. The one room school in the village is used for Children in grades 1 through 6. To advance further the Children must go to Santa Rosa, and the cost is usually unaffordable for a family.

By working until the last minute, the team was able to finish the church in time for a dedication service on Saturday afternoon. With fresh flowers decorating the church and pine needles on the floor (a Honduran "red carpet welcome"), the ceremony was attended by over 125 people from the village. During the service a young man from the village came forward and expressed how proud he was that he lived in a village that now had its very own church, a place where all could go and worship their God. At a celebration after the dedication service, the villagers, with homemade pineapple cakes and coffee prepared especially for this occasion, honored the team from Liberty Corner. Baking cakes and making coffee for over 100 people is no easy task in a village such as La Majada, since much of the cooking is done on wood burning stone stoves in the homes. They also use "stoves" outside their homes, which have been built with the bricks made in the area.

On the final day in Honduras the team had an opportunity to spend a few hours in the hospital in Santa Rosa in which Nancy Hoge worked. This is a public hospital, which serves over 500,000 people in the five western "states" of Honduras, and in which two patients routinely share a bed. The lack of basic medical equipment, medicine, and supplies means nurses and doctors are often forced to stand helplessly by and watch patients die. The Honduran government has condemned the hospital kitchen, but the patients need food, and thus hospital workers cook tortillas on wood burning stoves, which blacken the walls and create a health hazard. The team learned that through CAMO a new kitchen will be built with donations of freezers, stoves, fans and other needed equipment from American companies. This is one of the many improvements made possible through the efforts of CAMO.

A dinner was held at Liberty Corner Presbyterian Church where the Honduras team showed slides of their trip and spoke of the many moving and emotional moments they had experienced. The visit to La Majada was truly a life changing experience for the team from Liberty Corner.