

Redeeming Christmas 2.0 - Water for Los Vasquez!

In 2019, Pastor Steve and Tom Koch worked together to form an international mission ministry. They were drawn to Central America, since our national church body sponsors CALMS, which is the Central American Lutheran Mission Society.

CALMS guided Cross View to the small village of Los Vasquez, Guatemala. It is one of the poorest villages we visited during our exploratory trip and the village with the most needs.



There are approximately 90 families living in the village of Los Vasquez. The majority of the houses in Los Vasquez are adobe mud brick houses, with dirt floors. Very few of the homes have any inside plumbing. World Vision provided many of the homes with outhouses.

The plumbing fixture you see below with the little girl is a utility sink. This is used as an area to wash clothes, bath and for cooking. There is very little electricity in the village, and there are no refrigerators or electric stoves. Cooking is done using wood fires!

The church is central in the lives of the people of Los Vasquez. Services are well attended and there is often standing room only.

The village of Los Vasquez has an elected village council, known as the cocode. The cocode is well organized and well respected. Our mission team has had numerous meetings and planning sessions with the cocode.

One of the joys in working in Guatemala is working with Charles Cohen. Charles or Carlos is the CALMS missionary, living in La Union, about 45 minutes away from Los Vasquez.

Cross View's first two mission trips were all about building relationships with the people of Los Vasquez. In November of 2019, we led a vacation Bible school for all of the children of the village. We reenacted some of the treasured Bible stories such as David and Goliath.

RoseAnn Meier, Andrea Olson and Vicky Barton, our Spanish speakers, did home visits, passing out wooden crosses made by Steve Koepke.



Cross View has provided scholarships, allowing children to continue their education. One young man is currently going through nursing school, thanks to the scholarship provided by our members.

The members of Cross View have generously donated Spanish Bibles for the adults and Spanish adventure Bibles for the children. The children and adults have treasured these Bibles.

Just to show what a blessing these Bibles have been, a group of about twenty young people have recently started a Discipleship program, studying God's word. Last month, Pastor Toby taught this Discipleship group and mentored them in the study of the Bible.



Pastor Toby also spent time mentoring the deacon from Los Vasquez's church, encouraging him to form Bible study groups.

We have also built relationships by serving a community meal.

One of the traditions in Guatemala is to fly kites on All Saints Day. Our mission team brought materials to make and fly kites.

In 2019, when we originally met with the village leaders or the Cocode, they told us their number one concern was the lack of water. The water is sent down the mountain side about a mile and a half to the water collection tank. The system relies on gravity to bring the water to the collection tank.



As you can see, there are many leaks. There are leaks in the collection tank, the pipes and the distribution tanks. The current water system was built in the 1980's and 1990's, designed for a maximum of fifty families.

Today, there are roughly ninety families relying on this water system that was originally built for fifty families. This water system uses PVC pipes. PVC pipes have a life expectancy of twenty years. When ruptures occur in the pipes, they are virtually impossible to repair since the PVC pipes have crystalized.

Cross View's mission team has had the water tested and they found fecal matter, along with organic debris in the water. The water can be safely consumed only if it is boiled. It is not

uncommon for the people of Los Vasquez, particularly the young and elderly, to suffer from intestinal disease due to the unclean water.



Cross View hired a Guatemalan engineering company to assess the best way to proceed with the water project. It is their recommendation that all of the PVC piping would be replaced, a new collection tank would be built, distribution tanks would be updated and a chlorination system be added.

The proposed Los Vasquez water project will be a joint effort. The community of Los Vasquez will provide all the unskilled labor without cost. Cross View will donate all of the materials and a portion of the skilled labor. The municipality of La Union, will provide a portion of the skilled labor.

As an absolute rock bottom, we are looking for \$45,000.00 to proceed with the bare bones minimum of replacing the PVC piping, building a new holding tank, updating the distribution tanks and adding a chlorination system.

We can make even a bigger difference with additional dollars. The water system in Los Vasquez will be greatly enhanced if we can add additional collection or holding tanks, new distribution tanks, improved home connections, and provide individual water filters for each home,

Redeeming Christmas is a time when we ask: “Can we change up Christmas to change lives?” and “Can Christmas still change the world?” The answer to both question is YES! Let’s focus on Jesus this Christmas. He is the baby who was born to change the world. He has brought love and salvation to the world. We have a chance to share it with our brothers and sisters in Guatemala.



Let us rejoice in the Christmas message and let us rejoice in what we can do for our brothers and sisters in Los Vasquez. Thank you for your prayers and thank you for your support of this important Redeeming Christmas project!