The Mission is the Church

BY RON BUENO

I can still remember the afternoon when Miguel Angel Duran, a pastor from San Martin, El Salvador, told me that the leaders of their outreach committee had said, “This is not just another committee. It is the church.”

Pastor Miguel started The Good Samaritan church in 1977. Upon God’s calling, he left his home and family to plant a church in an area where none previously existed. Over the next twenty years of struggle they were able to build a one-room sanctuary out of adobe block. Pastor Miguel has always believed that the role of the church is centered in service—thus the name The Good Samaritan. But he could not get the church to truly catch the vision of reaching out to their community. Like many other churches, his members believed that they were too poor and untrained to reach out to others. They had enough troubles meeting their own needs.

In 1997 Pastor Miguel asked ENLACE to help his church spearhead the creation of a community outreach committee. Over the last five years, continued on page 2

Project Hope

BY MICHELLE NEGRON BUENO

Thousands of families throughout El Salvador are starting and expanding small businesses through microenterprise development loans. In places where poverty has beleaguered young and old alike, causing a strong sense of fatalism and fear of the future, communities are being transformed by the hard work and perseverance of poor entrepreneurs and their small businesses. Such businesses—often running on a profit of $3 a day—are providing economic stability for poor families and serve as catalysts that create new opportunities for education, health care, and commerce in the broader community. ENLACE has helped businesses such
this church of 18 members went from focusing on their own needs to becoming a major force within the areas of Las Delicias and San Martin. The church built over 150 temporary shelters after the earthquakes in 2001, rebuilt three houses, started and managed a sustainable medical and dental clinic, and are farming corn and beans to sell at cost to poorer families. In these projects and in others the church body has provided over 90 percent of the resources.

"As my church began to get involved actively in our community they began to feel the heart of God for each other and for their neighbors" said Miguel. "ENLACE helped us to organize and helped us to understand what the needs are right around us. Our church leadership began to understand Jesus’ mandate to share the Good News by going forth to heal the sick, give a cup of clean water, and pray with those who were troubled in spirit."

Even though Miguel lost two of his sons (14 year old Rodrigo and 21 year old Edwin) in the earthquakes two years ago, he has continued to trust in God and experience God’s love in his life and for others. Church services have gone from a specified time of member’s worshipping to a continuous celebration with their community, a celebration in which they beckon their neighbors to accept the invitation to God’s banquet.

The church continues to grow and is now in desperate need of a larger building. "It is Christ who builds the church but our role is to spread the news and harvest any fruit that may come. I am grateful to be a part of ENLACE’s ministry. They’ve helped us to listen to our community." To Miguel and his church body it is in the listening, caring and partnering with their community to create sustainable solutions to their needs that the seed of God’s love and grace is sown. Their labors have produced much good fruit.

As other poor, rural churches get involved in their communities, it is not hard to see the astounding potential for sustainable development in the Salvadoran countryside. Just as deep need abounds so does the opportunity for people of God to reach out to their worlds in love and hope.
From April 21-23, ENLACE representatives, Ron and Michelle Bueno and David and Jenny McGee, along with ENLACE USA president, Larry Kasper, and Priscilla McKinney from the USA board, presented ENLACE at this year’s Southern California Assemblies of God District Council. ENLACE wishes to thank Bill and Marilyn Manwarren, Orley and Lynora Weaver, Lynn Weaver, Jim Hundley, Carlos Duran and Gabino from Bridgeport Builders whose help made this trip a resounding success.

Along with promoting ENLACE’s projects and programs to hundreds of pastors and lay leaders in the Southern California district, they promoted and sold Hope Grown Coffee, an ENLACE project that will help a coffee farming cooperative in Nicaragua and small-scale fruit and vegetable farmers in El Salvador. (To have this gourmet, organic, fair trade brew shipped to your door, please see page 4.)

As bakeries, seamstress shops, eateries, small-scale farming activities, a mechanic’s workshop and in-home kiosks. These businesses—when supported by appropriate credit and ongoing consultation—provide a steady income for poor families and create jobs for other community members. We have witnessed poor entrepreneurs using the profit generated from their businesses to keep children in school, construct better homes, plant gardens, invest in preventive health care, treat unexpected illnesses, and give tithes to a local church.

The program started in 1996 with $1,700 and 14 loans in the small hamlet of Bonanza. It has grown to over 300 entrepreneurs in seven different impoverished populations. The program has maintained an excellent loan repayment rate of 97% and has been able to circulate more than 800 loans for a total of $86,250. Such success is attributed to the hard work of the entrepreneurs and also the training and technical assistance members receive in credit and business management from ENLACE.

ENLACE is pleased to announce that this program was chosen as the 2002-2003 “Project Hope” of the Assemblies of God Women’s Ministries of Southern California. A year of fundraising has culminated in a wonderful gift to ENLACE’s economic development program. This donation has come at the perfect moment. Hundreds of poor entrepreneurs are waiting for the opportunity to create safe homes and nourish their families through the use of these new loans and business support. We are very honored and pleased to be a part of the Southern California Women’s Ministries outreach to the world!
COMMUNITY LIFE HINGS UPON COMMUNICATION BETWEEN PEOPLE. PORCHES, PORTICOS, TOWN HALLS, CHURCHES, COMMUNITY FORUMS AND EVEN WATER COOLERS ARE A FEW OF THE MANY PLACES WHERE COMMUNITY LIFE IS FACILITATED THROUGH DISCUSSION, INFORMATION DISSEMINATION AND DEBATE. SOLOMON’S PORCH WAS ONE OF THOSE CENTERS OF COMMUNITY LIFE IN THE BIBLE. IT WAS NOT ONLY A MEETING PLACE FOR DISCUSSION BUT ALSO A PLACE WHEREIN MIRACLES HAPPENED. YOU MIGHT RECALL, PETER HEADED THE CRIPPLED BEGGAR THERE AND MANY MORE CAME TO BELIEVE IN CHRIST THROUGH THE TESTIMONY OF HIS FOLLOWERS.

SOLOMON’S PORCH

We believe that this publication, Solomon’s Porch, can serve as our virtual porch wherein the community that surrounds ENLACE both in Latin America and the United States can discuss thoughts and concerns about being Christians in a world of need. We also believe that a publication like this can witness and record the miracles that happen when people who serve Christ, follow his example.

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HOPE

BRINGING A BRIGHTER FUTURE TO THE WORKING POOR

THOUSANDS OF FAMILIES THROUGHOUT EL SALVADOR ARE STARTING AND EXPANDING SMALL BUSINESSES THROUGH MICROENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT LOANS. IN PLACES WHERE POVERTY HAS BALEAGUERED YOUNG AND OLD ALIKE, CAUSING A STRONG SENSE OF FATALISM AND FEAR OF THE FUTURE, COMMUNITIES ARE BEING TRANSFORMED BY THE HARD WORK AND PERSISTENCE OF POOR ENTREPRENEURS AND THEIR SMALL BUSINESSES. SUCH BUSINESSES—OFTEN RUNNING ON A PROFIT OF $3 A DAY—ARE PROVIDING ECONOMIC STABILITY FOR POOR FAMILIES AND SERVE AS CATALYSTS THAT CREATE NEW OPPORTUNITIES FOR EDUCATION, HEALTH CARE, AND COMMERCE IN THE BROADER COMMUNITY. ENLACE has helped businesses such

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