

Lutheran Lay Fellowship of Metropolitan Washington DC



LUNCHEON MEETING Thursday, January 2, 2014 – 12:00 noon

Saint Luke Lutheran Church
9100 Colesville Road at Dale Drive
Silver Spring, MD 20910

Opening Announcements

President Bob (Sarge) Sargeant opened the meeting at 12:10 p.m. There were no birthdays or anniversaries to celebrate this month, leading to some discussion of longevity rates. Pastor David Berg offered grace.

After lunch, we were reminded that the LLF membership year begins January 1. Prompt payment prevents the need for follow-up and recordkeeping. John Priebe informed that our membership now stands at 31.

Fred Klein offered New Year wishes from Fellowship Square. He noted that things are going well and support is always welcome. Carolyn Sowinski announced that orders for Gifts of Hope can still be ordered online. There has been \$7,000 in online sales thus far. She does not yet have results from Christmas congregation-based sales.

Pr. Berg announced future meeting speakers. Bob Frances of Lutheran Services in America (LSA) will be our speaker in February. President Maxey, President of Roanoke College will speak in April, and Pr. Amy Thompson Sevimli of the ELCA Metro Synod will speak on young adult ministry in May.

Introduction of Speaker

Dave Lambert introduced our speaker, Harry Engen, whose daughter started a school in Guatemala called Mi Refugio, a non-denominational Christian school for 500 poor children who live next to the Guatemala City garbage dump and in native Mayan villages surrounding the San Pedro, Sacatepéquez school property. The school was started in 1988 by Kari Engen in a step of faith and obedience to Christ's commandment to "go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation" (Mark 16:15). The purpose of the school is to have students and their families know Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior, and to educate the students in the basic academic subjects and in different career fields so that they can become productive members of Guatemalan society and help to bring about change in this dark and impoverished nation. The school provides free education from

pre-school through high school at the San Pedro school campus and scholarships students into career school and the university in Guatemala City. There also is a child care center in the original Zone 7 building by the Guatemala City garbage dump. In addition to a high standard of education, the students are provided two meals and snacks daily, school uniforms, school supplies, clothing, transportation, and medical/dental care.

Harry Engen is Kari Engen's father who travels to Guatemala on a frequent basis with mission teams to assist at the school. Harry grew up as a Lutheran in Chicago, IL and Westfield, NJ. He graduated from Colgate University in New York State and was in the USAF during the Korean War. He spent 35 years as an Executive with Verizon Communications, retiring in 1990 at which time he went to seminary and also served as an inner city missions pastor in a Washington DC church. He and his family have been on a number of mission trips around the world. In 1994 he began taking mission teams to Guatemala to work at Mi Refugio. Each year he takes approximately 300 people to Guatemala from all over the USA and Canada at three different time periods. He has been married to Nancy Engen for 59 years and has four children, four grand children and one great- grand daughter. Nancy is an ordained minister who serves as a volunteer chaplain in the Maryland Correctional System.

Presentation

Mr. Engen traced his Lutheran roots from baptism, through confirmation. When his daughter was 21, she took off to Mexico with \$200 in her pocket to work in drug abuse ministry, which closed in about a year. The Engens were at the time on a mission trip to Guatemala, so she joined them. She was always interested in helping children. While there, she was introduced to a garbage dump where children lived and worked.

A DVD she made about this ministry was shown. Kari has worked there for 25 years, serving first 50, then 200. Today serving some 500 students, with one-third of the children come from the garbage dump, while two-thirds come from surrounding areas. The school day begins with prayer, then breakfast, lunch, and snacks are provided, which may be the only food the children eat all week. After teeth-brushing, they go to class, with the day again ending in prayer. The school goes through 6th grade, with another 70 children being supported in higher grades at other schools. Now grades 6 through 9 are provided, followed by career programs. Also, day care is provided for parents of babies working in the garbage dump. They learn standard education augment with computers, sewing machines, and other equipment. They also teach parents about the need for school, since many are illiterate.

Through the DVD, Kari told of how God provided the means, as well as the mission. One student has completed university and now has a Masters degree in social work. The school runs January through October.

Mr. Engen takes teams there which have constructed the school buildings, a medical clinic, a sanitation system, and now, some homes. Volunteer medical teams from the US go there to provide all kinds of treatment.

Mr. Engen related that a filmmaker came down to film the Guatemalan civil war, met Kari, and now works with her, has become a Christian, and made the DVD film. During the Civil war 200,000 citizens were killed as the military would come in totally destroy villages. Many fled into Mexico, or to the city, growing from 10 million. They worked garbage dumps and scavenged materials to build housing. The school is situated at 7,000 feet, and Guatemala City is at 4,000 feet. Some students begin school at age 3. Many of the current staff are former students.

The school is not affiliated with any organization, but is supported by individuals and foundations. The current property was previously a resort area for wealthy Guatemalans, in the cooler mountains.

He shared that Pr. Paul Wee, formerly of the Lutheran World Federation and now a pastor in Washington, DC, brokered an agreement between the military leaders and the opposition guerillas in Oslo, Norway. This became the framework for a peace accord to end the war in 1995-96. The country is weary of war, but suspicious of government, which has a history of corruption. About 1% of the country is very rich, many are non-native Guatemalans.

Mr. Engen serves as treasurer and secretary. God opens peoples' hearts, money flows in as needed and immediately flows out.

Question: What are plans for continuation when the current leadership is now longer available?

Answer: There is a 501(c)(3) organization with 12 member board of directors, one from Canada, the rest from the US. Indigenous leaders are being developed.

Question: How do they determine who gets to go to the school?

Answer: Kari posts a notice of when there will be registration. She interviews each. They must be poor and parents must commit to continuing their children to the school. She charges one "quetzal" per day. It costs \$35,000 per month to run the school, including food and uniforms, transportation and medical costs. A number of Lutheran churches support this ministry, some here in Metro DC and in Chicago, but the biggest contributors are individuals.

Closing Devotion

President Sargeant concluded noting how many such ministries there are throughout the world which need our prayers and support.

Pr. Berg offered a benedictory prayer asking that God envelope us throughout this new year.



MI REFUGIO

San Pedro, Sacatepequez & Zona 7, Guatemala City / www.mirefugio.org / mirefugiokari@verizon.net

GUATEMALA

The largest country in Central America, yet in size slightly smaller than Tennessee, with a current population of 13.5 million. It is the home to the western hemisphere's greatest ancient civilization, the Mayan, which flourished in Guatemala and surrounding regions during the first millennium AD. It was conquered by Spain in 1524 and after almost three centuries as a Spanish colony, Guatemala won its independence in 1821. During the second half of the 20th century, it experienced a variety of military and civilian governments, as well as a 36 year civil war. In 1996, the government signed a peace agreement formally ending the conflict, which had left more than 200,000 people dead or missing, and created some one million refugees. Some of these refugees found their way from the rural areas to the Guatemala City garbage dump, where today over 1,000 children and their families scavenge for food and recyclables. According to UNICEF almost half of Guatemala's children are chronically malnourished – the sixth worst performance in the world. In most of rural Guatemala, where the population is overwhelmingly of Mayan descent where parents work in agriculture, the incidence of child malnutrition reaches 80%. A diet of little more than a tortilla does permanent damage. The country has a literacy rate of 50%, with a population of 45% under 15 years of age and 3% over 65. The language is Spanish but over 40% speak one of 18 Indian dialects.

MI REFUGIO

MY REFUGIO is a nondenominational Christian ministry which provides free education (pre-school thru college), food, clothing, medical assistance to children and their families who live next to the Guatemala City garbage dump and the Mayan families that live in poor rural villages

surrounding the San Pedro school property and the town of San Juan. The school has been accredited by the Guatemalan government, and all the teachers are graduates from Guatemalan schools with teaching credentials. Kari Engen is the founder and Executive Director of the ministry, living full time at the school property in San Pedro, Sacatepequez, Guatemala.



Top: Kari Engen and a few of Mi Refugio's kids; Above: The kids learning to sew and bake, in addition to their academics.

HISTORY

Kari Engen first went on the mission field in 1978 while attending school by going on short-term summer mission trips to Mexico. In 1984, after completing college, she went back to Mexico full-time, and then in 1985 to Guatemala where she worked with children in several different ministries. In 1988 Kari started MI REFUGIO with 50 students in a rented building next to the Guatemala City garbage dump in Zone 7. In 1990, a second building in Zone 3 was rented for academic classes as the school expanded. The original Zone 7 building was purchased in 1991 and converted into a trade school. In 1995 a 12.5 acre property, with several buildings, was purchased in San Pedro, Sacatepequez to replace the rented Zone 3 building which the owner wanted back.

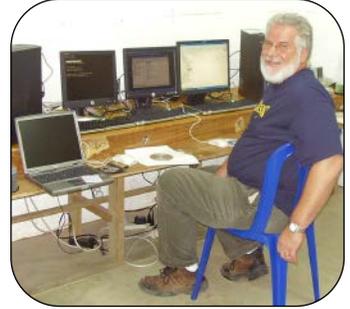
The San Pedro property is 26km from the Guatemala City garbage dump so the children are bused to the school. The school expanded at this time to include children from the poor Mayan Cakchiquel villages surrounding the towns of San Pedro and San Juan who are also bussed to the school. The Zone 7 building is now used for child-care up to 3 years of age and bus depot. Since 1995, numerous renovations and new structures have been added to the San Pedro property by short-term mission teams. The school has an enrollment of 400 students from pre-school (3 yrs & up), primary (grades K-6) and high school (grades 7-9).

MISSION TEAMS

Groups, families and individuals are welcome to volunteer during the school year (January-October). The three time periods for ten day trips are February/ March, June and September/ October. Specific dates are announced a year in advance in our Volunteer Information Sheet. Servants are needed for the following activities at the school, in the Mayan Villages or the Guatemala City garbage dump: Medical/Dental/Eye Clinics; teaching children arts/ crafts, baking, computers, English, sewing and wood working; construction projects requiring some masonry, carpentry, electrical and plumbing skills and kitchen/bakery helpers. Spanish translators and assistants in all areas are needed. The Volunteer Information Sheet containing all the details is available by contacting Harry Engen at the Maryland office address of 4908 Jasmine Drive, Rockville, MD 20853, telephone 301-929-1267, fax 301-929-1235 or e-mail mirefugiokari@verizon.net. Information is also available at <http://www.mirefugio.org>. It is best to plan a trip a year in advance. Approximately 250 volunteers come to the school each year.

CONTRIBUTIONS

MI REFUGIO is a faith ministry, trusting God for every need that they have. Many organizations and individuals support MI REFUGIO with monthly, quarterly, annual and one time donations. MI REFUGIO is a USA tax exempt nonprofit corporation registered in Maryland (#52-1610744). Contributions should be made out to MI REFUGIO and mailed to 4908 Jasmine Drive, Rockville, Maryland 20853. Contributions from outside the USA should be by international money order. Stock contributions are also welcome-call for details. All contributions are banked in the USA and then transferred to MI REFUGIO's account in Guatemala. A tax receipt is mailed. All administrative costs in the USA are donated, so 100% of your contributions go to work in Guatemala. The funds contributed are used to pay salaries of Guatemalan teachers, cooks, bus drivers and maintenance personnel; food for two meals and snacks daily; transportation costs, utilities, school supplies and uniforms, medical costs and scholarship costs for children going beyond highschool. Kari receives no salary as a missionary. You may view our annual financial report at www.guidestar.org. Current monthly operating costs are \$35,000. Any correspondence should be sent to the Maryland address, as mail sent directly to Guatemala is frequently stolen. Packets of mail are sent to Kari through a courier service on frequent intervals. Also, in-kind donations of school supplies, clothing, medical supplies, sewing materials and construction items should be sent to the Maryland address. Please check first by requesting a current needs list. Mission team members and other's traveling to Guatemala take extra suitcases of donated material with them.



Clockwise from top: Volunteers have been involved with carpentry, dentistry, computers, sewing and medical outreaches. Above: The kids going back to the garbage dump on the school bus.

NEWSLETTER

Kari prepares a quarterly newsletter to keep those who have contributed or volunteered up to date with the ministry. We will put your name on our mailing list unless you request that we do not. We never give or sell our mailing list to any other organization. Kari does not come to the USA very often, and when she does, it is for much needed rest and time with family. If you are interested in having someone speak to your church or mission committee about the ministry, her father who travels to Guatemala on a regular basis or mission team volunteers can be available. Also available are two video tapes to see and understand the ministry. Please call the Maryland office to arrange either option.

ADMINISTRATION

MI REFUGIO has a volunteer Board of Directors (10) which handles the administration, newsletter and contribution receipting functions in the USA. All volunteer on a regular basis in Guatemala. We are a small organization and we ask your patience and understanding as we handle your contributions, your requests, pray over your prayer requests and keep things flowing smoothly. Most of all we appreciate your interest and generous support to reach these poor families in Guatemala.



MI REFUGIO

"En Dios está mi roca fuerte, y mi refugio." Salmo 62.7b

Quarterly Newsletter December 2013

Faith is Our Steering Wheel in Life

"Taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the one who takes **refuge** in him." Psalm 34:8

Everyone has been asking how my health is. We are winning the battle to full recovery!

During the 2013 school year I was diagnosed here in Guatemala with ALS (amyotrophic lateral sclerosis), also known as Lou Gehrig's disease, which affects the nerve cells in the brain and spinal cord. When the school year completed in November, I flew to Fort Myers, Florida for a second opinion at the Lee Memorial ALS clinic, which was founded by Nancy Bailey who lost her husband to ALS in 1997. I really believe that ALS is what I had, but now the doctors say I have PLS (primary lateral sclerosis) which is in the same family of motor neuron diseases but progresses more slowly than ALS, and in most cases is not fatal. With this encouraging news, I have decided to put my own letters on the diagnosis, PHOG (Powerful Hand of God)! I am forever grateful to Nancy and everyone for their prayers of healing. A special thanks to John Biffar and his friends in Florida, who made the arrangements at the clinic, and to Sarita Leone and Carol



and Jim Zeart who accompanied me on my travels to and from Guatemala. As I continue to fight a daily battle back here in Guatemala, Rosita, Delia and Cata have been amazing in their assistance to me. My speech comes and goes, and I am slower in my walking, but this too will improve, I believe, as the PHOG draws closer every day. When one goes through a situation such as this, you really



appreciate all the blessings God bestows upon us. He is so faithful, compassionate, kind, loving and powerful. Jesus is all the world to me!



I thank you for your participation in seeing the school progress over these 25 years and seeing God's hand of blessing upon this place. The number of children has increased to over 400 students in pre-school through high school including the scholarship students in career school and the university. The high school students are taller than me and have a

Top to bottom: Kari and Nancy Bailey at the Lee Memorial ALS clinic in Fort Myers, FL; elementary students in computer class; high school students in baking class.

“But my righteous one will live by faith.” Hebrews 10:38

great spirit of serving and helping others. The teachers and support staff have been wonderful. It is a blessing to find so many hands helping to see the school progress for God’s honor and glory. We are currently registering students for the 2014 school year. Many blessings to each one for all that has been done, and will happen in the future. Thank you for helping our brothers and sisters in this country see His will done.

Besides growing in numbers, we have been growing in FAITH! Would you like to grow with us? God is pleased when we continue to grow in our relationship with our Lord Jesus. I would like to share some thoughts and a few verses that are helping me as I continue on my journey with Jesus. The trials and obstacles that we confront are stepping stones to grow closer in our confidence in Jesus. As we give thanks to Jesus in everything that happens, good and bad, difficult or sad, this is a step of

faith showing our confidence in Him through all circumstances. Jesus will guide us in every step, hold our hand, comfort us and be with us always. If our problems did not exist in life, our FAITH would only be a decorative instrument in a tool box. To obtain a victory we must use our FAITH as the steering wheel of our life and not as the spare tire. By holding firm to God, we can take our eyes off of the circumstances and put our feet on the ETERNAL ROCK: JESUS OUR LORD AND SAVIOR. Psalm 34:8 and Hebrews 10:38-39 both speak to this truth. I hope that these bits and morsels of Gods wonderful word will penetrate deep within so that we can stand strong for Him always. Remember these letters, PHOG (Powerful Hand of God). He is with us always. Blessings to all!!

*A servant to our faithful friend,
Jesus Christ,*

Kari

In Memoriam: Adelaide Clark from her family.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION

Mail to Central America is not safe! All correspondence and gifts need to go to Mi Refugio, 4908 Jasmine Drive, Rockville, Maryland 20853-1632. **All letters and 100% of your support will be delivered directly to Kari in Guatemala.** These funds are used for the \$35,000.00 per month operating expenses of the school for 400 students and 35 staff members. All administrative and newsletter expenses are donated by Kari’s family and the Board of Directors. You may view our annual financial report at www.guidestar.org. A needs list, volunteer information sheet and ministry video is available upon request. Please feel free to call (301) 929-1267 if you have any questions. If you no longer want to receive this newsletter please contact us. A phone call or note to the Maryland address will remove you from the mailing list. For tax information, Mi Refugio, Inc. is tax exempt #52-1610744.



MI REFUGIO, INC.

c/o Kari Engen
4908 Jasmine Drive
Rockville, Md 20853-1632

*Praise & Thanksgiving from
the Heart of Mi Refugio*

MI REFUGIO MINISTRY NEEDS LIST
(Questions – Contact Harry Engen in Maryland 301-929-1267)

1. MONTHLY OPERATING BUDGET (1st Priority) -\$35,000 is needed monthly for 35 teaching & support staff salaries, food for two meals and snacks daily for 400 students + staff, bus/van transportation, medical, school supplies, utilities, school uniforms/shoes, maintenance and other miscellaneous expenses.

2. STUDENT SCHOLARSHIPS – Mi Refugio is a primary school (pre-school – 6th) and high school (7th – 9th). Historically children in Guatemala stop school at 6th grade, however, a growing number of Mi Refugio students are continuing on to study accounting, business administration, marketing, bi-lingual secretary, graphic design, construction engineering, computer engineering, teaching, nursing, and medical in career school (grade 10 -12) and the university. Mi Refugio pays **\$1,200** annually for their tuition and books at various Christian schools. **Help support a student.**

3. MAJOR PURCHASES - \$10,000 to purchase materials to build homes for school families who currently live in tin shacks with mud floors.

4. GENERAL SCHOOL ITEMS – all items should be transported to Guatemala with a mission team, visitors to the country or sent to 4908 Jasmine Drive, Rockville, MD, 20853 for delivery.

<u>Classroom</u>	<u>Kitchen</u>	<u>Children Clothing- new or almost</u>
Sewing materials/supplies/patterns	Plastic knives, forks & spoons	Single bed sheets – fitted
Backpacks	Batteries (D, C, AA, A	Bed pillows
Composition Notebook (7x10)	Aluminum foil (large rolls)	Underwear
Rulers – plastic 6”	Plastic wrap (large rolls)	T-shirts
Wood pencils-all colors	Wood matches (large)	Sweaters
Lined cards (3x5, 5x7)	Fly paper	Sweat shirts & pants
Paper clips – sm/lg plastic	Rubber gloves	Jackets
Staples – standard	Duck tape	Jeans (boy/sm men)
Scissors – children	Bath & dish towels (white)	Belts
Glue sticks – small	Sharp Scissors	Shirts (6 to 12)
Erasers – large	Sanitary wipes/gels	Sneakers
Pencil sharpeners – individual	Serving Spoons – large	Shoes
Plastic binding combs – ½”1”	Paper towels/napkins	Blouses

5. MEDICAL/DENTAL SUPPLIES (for school& villages – no expired items- bold are critical items)

Vitamins –children	Anti-fungal ointment	Tooth brush/paste	Dental air/water sanitips
Vitamins –adult	Neosporin	Polytron eye drops	Anesthetic
Vitamins – prenatal	Hydrocortisone cream	Vaseline/chapstick	Suction(assortment)
Antibiotics	Athlete foot	Cough/Cold Meds	Instrument/Surface Disinfectants
Imodium	Psoriasis Gel	Calydrill lotion	Flat ends-composite instrument
Re-hydration meds	Wart medicine	Latex gloves-s/m/l	Bibs/Tray & Head Rest Covers
Parasite medicine	Lice medicine	Soap-small bars	Spoon excavators/Burs
Ibuprofen/Motrin	Antacids –tums	Dental Film Clips	Floss

6. GENERAL CARPENTRY TOOLS and TOOLS to TEACH WOODWORKING to STUDENTS

Cord and cordless drills, circular saws and heavy duty chain saw. Small hand tools to teach woodworking basics to children and use for maintenance projects such as hammers, chisels, screw drivers, small hand saws, measuring tapes, squares, plane, files, wrenches, etc.