

Delegation from Needham Congregational Church to Santa María Tzejá

August 3 - 14, 2011

**Caryl Johnson, Bill Garrett, and Fred Moder, co-leaders, with delegates Maria Paz Casado, Max Cohen-Casado, Katherine and Jackson Kirk, Sam Evans, Luis Solano and daughter Sonya, and Dibby, Emily, Charlie and Daniel Moder.
Our interpreters were Paula Worby and Randall Shea.**

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Introduction

Fred Moder

The membership of this delegation had a number of noteworthy features, including a record for the largest youth delegation. This included Paula and Luis's daughter Sonya, numbering 8 youth. These young people contributed a sense of fun, warmth and sincere outreach to the youth of the village, and as always were our best ambassadors. Our trip was notable for the way Hugo Quinilla stepped forward to invite the youth's participation in the life of the school community. One afternoon, Hugo was observed to be leading a long line of youth down the driveway, following his motorcycle to a gathering at the school. He took time to meet with them during his free time, looking actively for some new models for how we spend our time together. In this regard, the visit by the high school students from Cantabal, on Sunday, was organized to be 2 or 3 small groups with ice breakers and games, rather than a meeting in a large circle. We hoped that this method would generate more conversation between the youth. There was a discussion about whether there might be similar opportunities for adults to have small group conversations which might create better discussions. The delegation was also significant for the number of Spanish speakers, with many proficient speakers among the youth. Maria Paz and Max, who are completely fluent were most helpful throughout the journey.

This being an election year in Guatemala we also saw several peaceful protests of voters walking in Guatemala City showing their support of Sandra Torres, a presidential candidate.

We used the full capacity of the guesthouse, with our 15 delegates. The Moders were very grateful to be able to make this trip as a whole family, and we came away inspired and feeling blessed to have shared this experience. Bill and Fred were most grateful to Caryl, who took on mentoring two apprentice trip leaders, when Alan Clayton-Matthews was not available this August. As always these trips are an opportunity to share and learn a tremendous amount about another culture.

Coyuntura

Fred Moder

Our speaker for this "briefing" was Luis Solano, economist with special expertise in the Ixcan region and natural resources. He is the husband of Paula Worby, one of our interpreters. Luis opened with the subject that was to be one of the foci of our trip, the national elections representatives, and regional candidates. Luis stated that of the Guatemala's population 50% of voters live in Guatemala City, and they tend to vote for right wing candidates. The front runner for president in this election is a right wing candidate. There are 28 political parties in Guatemala. There are three right wing political parties who

have the best chance of winning this year. Rigoberto Menchu is the candidate of a left wing party that is currently in 10th place. Sandra Torres, the wife of the current president has filed to divorce her husband so she can continue to be a candidate in this year's election. All the political parties are committed to ridding the country of drugs and violence. The causes for said violence were all present 4 years ago during the last election cycle. These being; social differences and inequalities, unemployment, and drug trafficking. . Luis believes poverty and daily violence are actually worse now than 20 years ago, adding to the appeal of the firm hand, mano dura, in a candidate like the Patriot Party's Otto Perez Molina.

Guatemala is caught between the United States where the drug users are located, and Columbia and Peru where the drugs are grown. The United States consumes 95% of the cocaine grown in South America Crime associated with the drug trade is the most violent, and due to Guatemala's location in Central America, some 70% of cocaine smuggled into the United States passes through this country. The Army, especially the elite force known as the Kaibiles, are believed to have a role in protecting and profiting from the drug traffic.

But there are some hopeful signs. Luis mentioned the Dos Erres case where the court ruled to sentence Kabile officers to 600 years in prison for massacres that occurred in that community in the early 1980s. This ruling is historic and shows how the judicial system has advanced sentencing people who have enjoyed impunity for almost 30 years. The attorney general's office has been reorganized under Claudia Paz Paz, who has finally made organized crime a target for prosecution in the country. He believes she is also creating more oversight of the fall elections. There are many organizations working to improve the conditions of people in rural areas, where the majority of the poor live. The United States is seeking a more stable Guatemala, recognizing that violence "pushes" a greater volume of emigration to the U.S. Hillary Clinton, Secretary of State, and Arturo Villanueva, Undersecretary for InterAmerican Affairs, have visited Guatemala recently.

CALDH; Center for Legal Action on Human Rights

Director of CALDH; Mario Minera

Caryl Johnson

We walked from the Hotel Spring to the CALDH office in Zone 1 passing through the central park area. We stopped briefly to look at the cathedral and the presidential palace continuing on to the meeting. Ali Durbin was the interpreter and joined us for the 20 minute walk. She directed us by the Archbishop's residence not far from the cathedral and the CALDH offices. She recounted the evening in April 1998 when Bishop Gerdani was murdered inside the garage for authoring the Recovery of Historical Memory (REMHI) project which carried statements from thousands of witnesses and victims of the repression during the Civil War and placed the blame for the vast majority of the violations on the government and the army. The bishop's death took place 2 days after the release of this document. In 2000 three army officers were convicted of his murder and sentenced to prison terms.

We reached the offices of CALDH on 6th Ave, rang the door bell and were allowed to enter. Chairs were set up in the atrium of the building for us to have the meeting. Since construction is on going on 6th Ave to create walking and bike lanes, there was some construction noise in the background.

Mario started by telling the group that CALDH was started in Washington DC in 1989 and he has been the director for seven years. They receive most of their funding from Europe.

He started the discussion with an overview of the elections in Guatemala that will take place in September. There are 28 political parties in Guatemala with 9 of those having presidential candidates

this year. The elections are important because the winners will have the economic and political power for the next four years. The fight for control is between the new and old money groups. The old money being the business elite and the new money is from money laundering, child pornography, people trafficking, and the drug trade. The Ixcan is a coveted region for both the new and old money groups because there is a new highway, African palm-growing for biofuel, and bases of the Zeta drug cartel.

He explained that there is a lot of money in Guatemala. Guatemala has the highest gross national product of Central American but has the second highest poverty rate in the area. There is extreme social exclusion with 56% of the population in poverty and another 25% in extreme poverty. This means the wealth is highly concentrated among a few families. These wealthy elite don't want to pay taxes and they want the government to protect the monopolies that exist. These monopolies are water, sugar, cement, chicken, beer, and flour. The people who work for these monopolies are mostly Mayan who have no benefits, and small salaries. This structural problem leads to inequality, impunity, and racism against Maya. The anti-communist feeling is still around since 1954 which led to an intolerance of different ways of thinking, and the elite families need impunity to maintain their level of privilege in Guatemala. These ways led to the 1980-1985 crimes against the population; 44,000 disappeared, 670 village massacres, 200,000 people killed, and killing leaders of the social movement. The crimes just mentioned are well documented in the REHMI report published in 1998. This document states that 93% of the crimes were committed by the government and armed forces.

CALDH decided to open an office in Guatemala in 1994 after receiving reports from people about being displaced, raped, disappeared, and murdered. In 1999 CALDH met with all the people who had legal cases. The team analyzed the legal cases and deduced that they were logically planned and carried out throughout the country. They found a pattern of threats to villages and village members, disappearances, sex violence, and then massacres. This happened in five regions of the country and this was genocide to destroy Mayan groups.

In 2001 the genocide case just sat there and nothing happened for 5 to 6 years. CALDH met with the victims in 2006. The members of the case were in despair because nothing was happening. The courts wouldn't proceed with the case. They made an important decision to proceed with one region and time to concentrate the information and legal case. The AJR, the organized group of survivors, decided to vote to proceed with this narrower circumstance in the legal courts. This case was the Ixil region case and focused on the March 1982 until August 1983 time frame. CALDH would structure their case against Rios Montt, president during this time, the chief of staff, and the chief of military of defense. Another aspect was to have the military documents of this time period declassified. In 2007 and 08 the prosecutor's office didn't communicate with CALDH but this changed in March of 2009. A judge ordered a hearing to be held and the military documents were ordered to be released. There is also a level of trust that developed between CALDH and the prosecutors. Each legal battle that was presented by the military was won by the CALDH and AJR.

Since this point the legal case has made progress. In December 2010 the president appointed Claudia Paz as attorney general, a well known lawyer who has a background in human rights work. The courts have been quick to rule on various different aspects of the case. The team at CALDH has been working hard to complete the necessary documentation to keep this case moving forward. In January 2011 the court came with an official document with a formal declaration against the mentioned people. A group of seven people came for the prosecutor's office to work with CALDH to create the final document. This document stated that 77 crimes took place and all crimes have supporting evidence. These crimes include surrounding the Ixil population where 8,000 to 12,000 people were bombed, shot, children kidnapped and sold, and starved. In May 2011 they were prepared to make arrests. Rios Montt was in

Congress and had immunity from legal prosecution, so no arrest could be made of him. Instead they brought charges against the chief of staff of the military, Hector Lopez Fuentes. He is currently in jail. There was a hearing for him to present his side and the court was packed with media, survivors, and supporters. Lopez Fuentes is 82 and he arrived on a stretcher saying he was too sick to stand trial. The judge rejected all his arguments. In September, 1 week before the elections CALDH will turn in the final accusations and on September 21 the genocide trial will begin. There are 106 witnesses and it is the first time these survivors will speak in a courtroom.

The concern is that if Otto Perez Molina is elected president during the elections this September all the forward movement in the human rights cases will be reversed. Perez Molina is a retired general who served in the early 1980's in the Ixil region. Also the threat is he may put pressure on Claudia Paz to step down from the attorney general position.

Mario believes that a collective government that respects the 22 Mayan cultures, the African culture, and the mixed group of peoples would result in reconciliation for all of Guatemala. He said that CALDH believes that carrying out these justices opens the door to an improved country in the future. The legal rulings don't always solve what the families need because they want to know where their family members are buried. But justice focuses on the truth which will bring Guatemala to a better place.

Meeting with Steven Steger, Deputy Political Counselor at the U.S. Embassy Fred Moder
Mr. Steger and an intern from New York University met with us at the embassy Thursday afternoon. Cameras and phones were left at the gates, and we passed through an impressive set of security barriers before entering this 3 story building. He has been in his post for 2 of the standard three year term of most embassy workers. He appeared genuinely interested in our questions, and in learning about our partnership with Santa Maria Tzeja. Mr. Steger noted that the outgoing ambassador, Stephen McFarland, had impressed many as a champion for the poor and marginalized people in the country, sitting in the front row at many trials of human rights violators, and giving regular interviews to the newspapers.

He noted there have been recent court victories in the fight against impunity. The murder rate in Guatemala is 3 times that in Mexico, and 10 times higher than in the U.S. Police forces are seen as inept and corrupt, so that in 7 of 22 "departments" (like our states), drug cartels have more control than the government. But the United Nations now has established an organization, CICIG, whose main purpose is to root out the penetration of organized crime into government institutions, and there is proposed legislation giving the government the right to seize the property of drug felons, a major tool of law enforcement that could radically tip the balance of power.

Mr. Steger noted that the United States made big mistakes in its foreign policy toward Guatemala during the civil war, and feels our country is trying to support the development of stronger civil and legal protections for the people. Likewise, the embassy is trying to get Guatemala's private sector to realize they need to do more for public welfare of the people. The skepticism, as always, is "would the taxes go to the right place if the taxes were higher?". The people's faith in public welfare expenditures will rise with the strengthening of the institutions of the attorney general, police, and courts. He noted Guatemala gets \$100 million in aid from the UN Agency for International Development, and our largest Peace Corps contingent is here.

Jackson asked Mr. Steger if something could be done to stop the flow of guns from the United States to

Central America. He replied that the embassies are “an arm of the executive branch of the U.S. government”, and would not be directly involved in enforcement of trade or smuggling across the border. Paula said that she was glad to hear him acknowledge the mistakes that were made in US interventions in the past. Fred asked what could be done to make resource extraction (oil and mining) contracts in Guatemala better serve the interests of its citizens. Mr. Steger felt there is little hope at present for a trusting relationship between the poor, or indigenous peoples (which make 50% of the population) and large corporations.

Mr. Steger closed reflecting on the panel of presidential candidates, and the need for a leader with courage and leadership – a “Moses” figure. Bill wondered aloud whether there might be something for us to gain in developing a relationship with the embassy. Mr. Steger noted that the staff’s changing every 3 years does limit the continuity of a relationship. However, he also took a genuine interest in what we are doing, and we hope our visit could be helpful in a number of ways – understanding US policy and resources, alerting them to our presence and commitment in a region remote to the capital, and perhaps helping when the time comes for people to apply for visas.

Meeting with AESMAC and University Students Fred Moder

On Thursday evening we enjoyed the traditional discussion and pizza dinner with university students and graduates, members of AESMAC. Attending were Edwin Canil, Cesar Canil, Benjamin Perez, (current AESMAC president), Rogelio Hernandez, Amelia , and Ana Lopez. Edwin opened by saying that what is most on his mind is difficult, “so big” to talk about. “How do other countries experience the difficulties we have here?” He seemed to be asking whether other countries have had experiences they could learn from, but I doubt we were able to go very far in responding. Rogelio was at the community meeting in Santa Maria Tzeja after the army incursions. The first time, soldiers came to the health post and “joked” to Pedro Chom “hey we’re back! And maybe there will be war.”. It was not funny. The second time soldiers came at night and stayed the night. The soldiers went to the cooperative building and conducted a search but they couldn’t articulate what they were searching for. The mayor of Santa Maria spoke with them.

It was noted by someone that the 1985 constitution does give the military the right to act on perceived “internal threats”. But the two army visits noted here did not credibly identify such a threat. In one case a soldier said “someone had heard gunshots” and they came to investigate. The community submitted a formal written complaint to the Human Rights Ombudsman’s office. COCODE (the Community Development Council) tried to set up a meeting with the local army commander at the base in Playa Grande.

Edwin feels a change to the constitution should be made to reflect current needs.

Bill feels the related issues facing political candidates; poverty, racism, violence, and drugs all come together. Candidates skirt the way they would solve all these issues facing the country.

Benjamin thinks these issues are huge and complex. He feels the country’s leaders should find areas that they can work on to alleviate the problems. He feels pollution is out of control.. Each person should take care to recycle, educate and take care of their own immediate environment. The candidates always make promises they can’t keep.

Ana spoke to violence from a female perspective. A high number of women are murdered or are

afflicted by domestic violence. Poverty affects women the most with high rates of infant mortality and child malnutrition. There are places in Guatemala where women can't get to a road to seek medical help. Environmental exploitation of natural resources creates contaminated waters/ rivers and women have the first line of exposure.

A follow-up question was asked about the United Nations project to support women during the election by educating them about their rights as voters. Benjamin mentioned that the project didn't go forward because it wasn't the right time, and the AESMAC members agreed there wasn't sufficient time to organize and carry out this project. Ana responded that she felt that the UNIFEM project sponsored by the UN was ready to execute. The UN had agreed to support the project to help rural women read party platforms, and the backgrounds of candidates for the fall elections. This knowledge would have made women better informed members of the community and enable them to vote based on their knowledge. She feels that AESMAC is good with theory but it lacks being an agent for change. AESMAC's 5-year strategic plan is well prepared but the group has not begun to implement what is listed on this document.

Benjamin closed by saying "we are learning we have to make small steps toward change. Education is important – we are making progress there! He added that "it is encouraging to see so many youth here! Bear in mind you will learn some things here that are not taught in school."

Trip to Coban

Fred Moder

Having a party of 15, we took two vans from Guatemala City to Coban, where we settled in to the Monja Blanca Hotel. Dinner with 6 students there included Federico and Natividad, both in medical school and working very hard. Also joining us for dinner was Tomas Manuel Perez Ortiz (Verschoor Kirss partner family) and Celso Ernesto Ralios, Diego Ralios's son. Jackson had been corresponding with Federico by facebook, and their reunion was most enthusiastic. As always, the young people made quick common ground over dinner, and the independence and hard work of these students was very inspiring. We paid for cab rides home for the students. A festival was underway in town that weekend, and we discovered that a dance hall has opened a few doors down from our hotel playing loud music until late.

Trip to the Biotopo

Daniel Moder

At the Biotopo, a tropical cloud rain forest, we took a medium-length hike along a path, through the trees and various wild plants. Although a few quetzals, the national bird, had been seen, we didn't encounter any on our walk. One of the highlights of the trip was visiting a waterfall, around which we tried to climb; unfortunately, a less sure-footed climber fell in. All in all, the Biotopo was an excellent experience of Guatemala's wildlife and a great way start to our trip.

Visit to the Federation of Cooperatives (FICI)

Katherine Kirk

We arrived at the Federation of Cooperatives on Saturday August 6 after a bus ride from Coban. The cooperative in Santa Maria Tzeja is joined by 2 other communities Primavera and Victoria. The heart of palm processing plant and the farm are open five days a week Monday to Thursday. A friendly worker named Julio Andres greeted us and began to give us a tour. First he showed us the plant where heart of palm, pineapple, and honey are jarred. Both the jarred heart of palm and jarred pineapple are not sold under the federation's label, but their jarred honey is. In order to sell jarred pineapple and heart of palm under their own label the cooperatives would have to have a higher quantity of these products. Julio Andres described the life cycle of the heart of palm plant. It takes two years for the plants to grow and

bear fruit after planting. The cooperative has had four harvests so far. Julio Andre also mentioned that the parts of the heart of palm that are not jarred, especially the bark, are not wastefully discarded but are composted organically for future use.

After seeing the plant Julio led us to the nursery behind the plant. The nursery holds many types of fruit trees including cacao, Valencia oranges, Nancy Mandarin oranges, mango tomo, avocado, heart of palm plant at an early stage, and rambotone fruit. There is a very high demand for small fruit trees and the cooperative does not have enough trees to meet the demand. Avocado trees are especially popular in the neighboring communities in the rainy season and are sold at 20 Q per tree. Mango trees are also sold at 20 Q per tree. In addition to fruit trees the cooperative also has hard wood trees grown for forestry. Julio Andres described to us that the seeds of the trees start as seeds in a germinator and then are transferred to bags by hand. After the seed has grown into a plant the cooperative applies a method called “grafting” in which a currently producing plant is grafted onto the new plant. This method can dramatically cut down on the wait for harvest of the fruit. Grafting the avocado plant allows for the harvest after three years, not seven and grafting the mango plant allows for a harvest after 4 years not the original 10 years.

After looking at the nursery we made our way down to where the pigs are kept. Currently the cooperative has 30-40 pigs. At one month the piglets are 20-22 lbs and are sold at 400 Q; when the pigs are full-grown they are sold at 7.5 Q/lb. There is also a lot of demand for the pigs and Julio Andres told us the cooperation is thinking of expanding their pig operation. We asked if the pig farming is organic and Julio Andres said the cooperation tries to be organic but hormones are put into the maize in order to prevent sickness in the pigs. The cooperative has one male pig and each of the other cooperatives have one male pig. Beside the pig farm is a large field of heart of palm which is sold fresh(not jarred) to about ninety restaurants. The three sections that the cooperative runs (pigs, fruit products, and heart of palm products) all bring in an equal amount of profit. Twelve people work at the cooperative. Four of the workers are women and 2 are from Santa Maria Tzeja. As we were leaving, Julio Andres showed us two last things. The cooperative also has about 2 dozen chickens of a hardy stock that can be fed with leftovers that are brought by people in surrounding communities. The cooperative also has a water tank that can be run for a few minutes every morning and allow water access for the rest of the day. After the tour we thanked Julio Andres for the tour he gave us with such late notice. It looked like a great operation.

Bienvenida

FredModer

We gave Hugo Quinilla, principal of the middle school, a ride from the Federation to the village, and while we talked about recent events, he paused to confide that we should be aware that there are a few people of SMT who do not share the majority’s enthusiasm for our visits. He noted that some residents resent the spending of our monetary contributions to SMT on such things as travel and office expenses, rather than concrete products like an extra classroom for the primary school. He wanted us to be careful about locking the guesthouse when we’re away, perhaps feeling responsible to alert us since we were declining the fulltime attendant they had provided for us in the previous delegation.

Our arrival at the village center was so heartwarming! The students had constructed an archway of palm fronds over the road as it rose to the driveway of the guesthouse, and high in the arch hung the words:

BIENVENIDOS A
NUESTRA ALDEA

“Welcome to our village” (in Spanish and K’iche’).

UTZ IPETIK

A white ribbon was strung waist high between the supporting posts, inviting all of us to get out of the vans and walk across the “welcome line” as it were! But here the students (who were assembled with teachers in the shade in front of the first stores) had a bit of fun, for the ribbon was reinforced with strong cord, and after seeing us unable to break through, one of the students came to cut our passage free. Then we exchanged words of appreciation and finished the trip up the drive to the guesthouse. This is now fully electrified, and ceiling fans cool 4 of the 6 rooms.

In the evening we had the traditional celebration in the cooperative building, with welcoming speeches from village leaders, words of appreciation and greetings from Needham by our delegates, followed by songs, dances, and skits presented by children of the primary school. The mood is festive, and as always shows the pride and dedication of this village to its families, youth, and schools.

Church Service and Partner Family Letter Distribution Caryl Johnson

Sunday morning we rose early to attend breakfast and attend the village religious services. It was a beautiful morning to start our week long visit to Santa Maria Tzeja. Walking up to the church it was evident that the church committee had done some outdoor improvements to the building. There was a gravel path from the guest house to the church and this path continues on to the cooperative buildings. In front of the church there was a level area with poured concrete creating a plaza area between the church and the commemorative monument. There were also steps from this level concrete plaza down to the road that runs in front of the village stores. On rainy days this helps keep dirt and mud out of the church building.

The entire delegation was present in their spacious church. There was a band of guitarists, keyboard player, drums, and singers. A number of songs were performed and we identified some familiar tunes. They had several church members speak, read the scripture and give an interpretation of the bible passage of the day. This information was shared in Spanish and K'iche. At the end of the service the delegation introduced ourselves and Hugo Quinilla started reading the names of the partner families. As all ways the church is packed with people waiting to receive their letters. Many people are also standing outside the building looking in windows and doorways listening for their names to be read.

We had a tightly packed day with four meetings scheduled after the church service. As much as it has been enjoyable in the past to stay and watch the letter hand out the delegation had to leave to attend the 11:00am meeting with AESMAC.

EDUCATION

Primary School Meeting

Dibby Moder

Present at the meeting:

Bertilia Canil, kindergarten teacher
Maria Hernandez, 1st grade teacher
Magdalena Us, 2nd grade teacher
Enma Reyes, 4th grade teacher
Valentin Quinilla, principal, 5th grade teacher

Silverio Mejia, parents oversight committee
Francisco Panjoj, parents oversight committee
Romero Perez, parents oversight committee
Randall Shea, translator
Fred Moder, Needham delegation

Valentin began the meeting by commenting how very concerned he and the other teachers were about the news of Tina's illness. They send their "good wishes so she will not feel alone at this time and wish her strength so that she will recover in the near future." He then went on to formally thank the Needham partnership for its ongoing support over a number of years, which has been put to good use, benefitting children, parents and teachers. Among other things, funds have been used for travel expenses for school-related business in the county seat, which otherwise parents would have had to pay for. Also appreciated at the school are the teaching supplies, including the crayons, pencils, pencil sharpeners and sports equipment.

We had a conversation about how valuable our relationship is to both the village and to those of us from Needham. In Valentin's 5th grade class, several students asked about the Needham delegation, so Valentin spent time talking about the history of the partnership. He feels it is important to tell young people how the partnership started and how it has developed over time. He wants to pass on this knowledge so that it will not be forgotten when "those of us who remember the beginning have retired and are no longer around."

We then discussed the use of K'iche' in the classrooms. Randall commented that he has observed K'iche' being used 70% of the time he is in the classrooms, which is impressive. Maria Hernandez explained that in 1st grade, children are taught to speak in both languages from the beginning of the year. However, she commented that it can be confusing for young children to learn two different alphabets and written languages at the same time. Therefore, she starts the year working on reading, writing and spelling in Spanish to establish one language before beginning another. Then later in the year she introduces written K'iche' (reading, writing and spelling). Some children's families only speak Spanish at home; at first these children are often reluctant to learn K'iche'. However, as they learn it they begin to enjoy it and teach it to their parents at home. Children whose families speak K'iche' at home tend to already be familiar with Spanish, although their pronunciation often needs work. Romero asked if U.S. students study two languages from the beginning of school. We replied that in some schools we do not start a second language until middle school (5th or 6th grade). However, some city schools have bilingual education from the beginning, depending on the student body. In addition, parents can choose to send their children to bilingual schools if they are willing to pay for it.

Valentin then brought up the need for more classroom space. The old school building is no longer safe for occupancy, therefore they need four new classrooms. However, the government has made it clear that there will be no funding for more classrooms, given that there are many school systems in greater need than Santa Maria Tzeja. Therefore, with the parents' oversight committee, they have written up a formal proposal for funding from other sources. This proposal includes the number of students, projected growth, and a specific budget. Nazario, the village architect, was paid Q6000 to draw up the document (Q3000 from the primary school parents and Q3000 from community-wide contributions). COCODE has sent this funding proposal to government agencies, foreign embassies, etc. They asked if we knew of any other potential sources for funding and would be glad to give us a copy of the proposal. We agreed to take the proposal back to Needham. They reiterated that the need for more classroom space is very real, as two classrooms are currently in a satellite building, and the student body is growing every year. They are appreciative of any help we can give.

Basico Meeting

Dibby Moder

Present at the meeting:

Hugo Quinilla, Director of Basico

Juana Perez, Student Animator

Maria Caal, Secretary for Basico

Oliverio Us, Phys. Ed. And Dance

Maria Elena Tojin, Math and Home Ec.

Abelardo Ramiro, Physics

Bartolo Tomas, President of Parents Association

Pedro Hernandez, Parents Oversight Committee

Miguel Panjoj, Treasurer of Parents Oversight Committee

Victor Tebalan, legal representative for Parents Oversight Committee

Domingo Ralios, Secretary of Parents Oversight Committee

Randall Shea, translator

Caryl Johnson

Fred Moder

Bill Garrett

Maria Paz Casado

Dibby Moder

The members of the Parents Oversight Committee began the meeting by expressing their appreciation of the support from Needham, and their hope that we will continue our communication and our relationship will grow. They explained that they are nearing the end of their term on the Parents Oversight Committee, so next year we will be meeting with new representatives. They acknowledged that this is the second year we have brought funds to help purchase a marimba for the Basico students, for which they are grateful. The marimba is important to their culture and they are eager for their youth to learn how to play. Bill asked how much more they need to purchase the marimba, so that we can tell the youth in our church a specific target to aim for in their fund-raising efforts. The cost for the marimba will be between Q7000 and Q9000; they have received Q2000 from Needham and Q2000 from another source, so they need another Q3000 to Q5000. If we can continue to help working toward that amount, they will appreciate our support.

In response to our question about the difference between the Parents Association and the Parents Oversight Committee, Hugo explained that the Parents Association was formed last year as a way to allow them to charge more tuition for Basico. The Ministry of Education provides partial funding for the school with the stipulation that tuition will not exceed Q20 a year. However this is not enough to adequately fund all they need for the school, so they started the Parents Association as a legal way to provide more funding for school programs. In addition to the Q20 parents pay in tuition, they are also asked to pay an additional Q20 to the Parents Association, which also goes directly to the school. In addition, the Parents Association also does other fund-raising, looking for outside sources of additional money. While the Ministry of Education's goal is to provide free education for children, it does not provide an adequate amount to cover the expenses for all they want to provide in their school system. They also want to have enough money in reserve so that they can continue the quality of education even if funds should get cut, so they are working on building this reserve. If the additional fee to the Parents Association creates such a burden to a family that it would prevent a student from attending school, the school is willing to waive it. They have identified 3 students this year for whom that is the case, and these students receive financial support. Members of the Parents Oversight Committee also serve on the Parents Association.

We then asked about how students are doing academically. Several teachers described their students' progress:

Maria Elena – I have taught math since 2005. I have shared a lot of what I know and also have learned a lot from my students. Teachers are not all-knowing but are also learning. I give an overview of the

topic we will be learning, then I assign exercises and homework. In any class, some students learn quickly and others need more time and practice. I try to address their questions in class and also offer help after school. Sadly, there is a small group of students who don't try hard and don't put in a lot of effort – it's not so important to them. Others are self-motivated, they are the ones who do well. During the second quarter, I had the students research math concepts that had been previously introduced in primary school. Some students only remember information until the test and then forget it after that. So I asked them to review these concepts and share what they learned with the class. Some worked hard on their research and some did not. But once they realized their grade was impacted by their work, most of them tried harder the second time we reviewed concepts this way. I also try to motivate students by telling them they need to use their math, it's doing the exercises that helps them understand the concepts.

Oliverio – I teach dance in all three grades. Students learn regional dances throughout Guatemala, and also in other countries. I use videos from YouTube to have kids observe the dance first. It gives them a better idea what the dance will look like. They are learning swing dancing and cha-cha-cha in 9th grade and other unfamiliar dances that are fun to learn. Some students are reserved and shy, but I encourage them to try. They learn one new dance a quarter.

Hugo added that the Ministry of Education requires dance in the curriculum, suggesting more formal dances, but that would require a professional to teach it. Caryl mentioned that our fund-raiser this year was a workshop for learning 'salsa' and 'merengue' dance steps, which was a lot of fun.

Abelardo – I teach 9th grade physics. It is my first year teaching. I am motivated and glad to be supporting the school, learning a lot from the students at the same time as I'm teaching. My methodology is to explain the content, then give one or more examples so students can understand the explanation. Once most of them understand, I give exercises to work on in class and for homework. I offer extra help if anyone needs it, or I suggest asking a friend who understands it for help. Some students seek help when they don't understand, others don't do anything when they don't understand. It's a small group that doesn't understand. Most are doing well, and will seek help when they need it. Currently I am at the university studying auditing. Before that I was in a 2-year accelerated high school program studying construction.

Juana – I am the Student Animator. I am in the school while the students are in classes, so my relationship is directly with teachers and students. If a problem comes up, I'm there to talk with the students and/or teachers, for problem-solving. Students may have low morale or don't do their homework. There will always be some highly motivated and high performing students, and others who are not. When there are behavior problems or low performance we may eventually need to talk to parents. When we work together, students learn they are not alone, their parents are there to support them. There were a lot of students not doing homework, so we now have a communication process: if a student doesn't do their homework, it is reported to me and I will talk with the student. If there are several episodes of that, parents will be notified. We are finding that more homework is getting done now because of this new system. Homework is important because when students have to do it on their own, they show their understanding, and practice is important for learning. When a problem persists, we may involve the Parent Oversight Committee. Teachers don't always have a full range of professional preparation, but they put a lot of effort into their teaching.

Dibby asked whether teaching continues to be done in K'iche' as well as Spanish at the Basico level, as it is in the Primary School. Hugo replied that it is harder to do that because the topics are more complicated. He said, "It is unfortunate that there are important topics we cannot talk about in our native language. We do offer a class in Mayan language and culture in an effort to rescue our native language."

Bill asked if there are any national standardized exams to compare students' performance with other parts of the country, and whether there are different "tracks" at the Basico level. Hugo replied that there are no standardized exams. Up until now there has only been one core curriculum in preparation for High School, but they are currently in contact with an organization named INTECAP, which gives technical training at the Middle School level. They are considering working with them next year. This would mean that some students would be excused from a portion of the 15 classes that are currently required, to get technical training.

When asked if they ever use a peer tutoring system to help students who are struggling, the teachers replied that they may suggest that they ask friends for help but there is no formal system. The 9th grade accounting class is particularly challenging for many students. This teacher has made himself available every Sunday from 3:30-5:00 for extra help. In fact, with the parents' agreement, he has begun to require that students who are failing must come on a Sunday. Unfortunately, some still do not come for extra help.

At the end of the meeting, Fred presented school and sports supplies, the directory of our Middle School students, inspired by what the Basico students had created, and photos from the February delegation.

AESMAC Meeting

Caryl Johnson

Present:

Santiago Boton, reporter for Television Guatevision

Hermelinda de la Cruz Hernandez, teacher

Carmelina Perez, 3rd year university student in business

Rolanda Garcia

Paulina Panjoj Perez

Estela Garcia Hernandez, teacher in S M Delores and in 3year training program

Hugo Quinilla, principal of the middle school

Romaldo Panjoj Quino, agronomy student.

Bill, Dibby, Caryl, Paula, Maria Paz, and Randall.

The agenda was set;

1. Summary of Activities
2. Scholarship Students
3. Elections

This year AESMAC's strategic plan was approved. They also held elections in April with newly elected officers currently in positions. The group has also been active in the elections.

Currently there are 3 scholarship students that have passing grades but they are not doing super. AESMAC selects their students that have low income resources and have a social interest to bring about change. These 3 students feel good about where they are and what they have accomplished. The first student is in a bilingual major and this person is not from SMT. The other 2 are majoring to be forestry technicians. Their school combines classes and technical training. These young people's parents have shown active interest in how their children are progressing.

AESMAC doesn't have a political position and they try to stay neutral. Rolanda has been participating in the elections this year and she feels it is her right as citizens to do so. She supports the URNG, Guatemala National Revolution Unity, party which started as a guerrilla movement. This party addresses racism where as the right-wing parties do not discuss racism. She has been sharing ideas and preparing radio spots for the URNG candidates. She has personally gone 3 times on campaign visits. Hugo mentioned that in other parts of Guatemala spouses travel with candidates but not so much in the Ixcán. Santiago added that for publicity purposes a party may have all men as candidates so they ask their wives to stand on stage to show equality and a progressive slate. Romaldo mentioned that 4 years ago during the elections a wife voted against her husband. Every one knew she didn't support him. Bill asked what is the role of local media in these campaigns. Rolanda answered that media in the Ixcán sells air time for radio spots but there are no debates held on the radio. Luis asked if Santa Maria Tzeja organized a debate for the candidates. Rolanda said 4 years ago Santa Maria coordinated all the candidates in a debate. They paid travel expenses for radio station to come and cover the event. This year COCODE didn't have enough money to pay the expenses of the radio station. She continues by saying that there are 9 parties in the Ixcán that campaign and only a few have the money to have their message on the radio. The URNG party has made many visits to communities but there has not been much radio coverage due to the tight budget. Santiago feels national and local elections are a myth of democracy. There are 9 parties participating in the Ixcán, and 8 of those 9 parties are so similar and he feels they don't address the needs of the people. There is one good thing and that there have been 3 forums for the candidates to share their ideas. He continues by telling the story of his grandfather who 30 years ago was asked to commit fraud by voting multiple times. He refused and spent time in jail. This year there has been threats saying that, if the people don't vote for Sandra Torres, money to the Ixcán will be cut back. Sandra Torres lost her appeal to stay in the elections for president. Santiago thinks there is hope at the municipal level. He mentioned that all URNG candidates are elected and the party listens to the people.

It was an interesting meeting and sharing of ideas from the AESMAC members.

Scholarship Committee (CHE)

Caryl Johnson

The delegation met with CHE Thursday morning after breakfast. We headed for the CHE offices by the cooperative and were redirected to their new entrance through the fence directly by their building. The CHE committee decided that it was too hot inside and meeting outside in the covered area near the cooperative store we could catch the breeze.

Agenda-

1. Introductions
2. Financials
3. Delegation questions
4. Letters
5. Closing

Eduardo Hernandez Gutierrez	President
Francisco Mejia Larios	Vice president
Maria Senovia Reyes	Secretary
Felipe Canil Lares	Treasurer
Miguel Panjoj Quino	Member at large 1
Martina Quinilla Taperia	Member at large 3

After the introductions Felipe Canil started to share the financials. He had a handout that listed the 17 current scholarship students and their expenses year-to-date. It was noted on line 9 and 17 the missing numbers in the expenditure and balance columns. Felipe continued his report by sharing the requirements that the bank made of the committee during this money transfer from Needham to the CHE bank. This year the bank required several documents, and as of the meeting the money was not yet in the CHE account. Therefore the exchange rate and the amount in quetzals could not be recorded. In the past 2 weeks every time Felipe went to the bank, the bank required him to produce a document. He made 3 trips to Cantabal to comply with the banks demands. His last trip, the day before we met the bank needed all three documents in a package. The committee suggested that we bring the money in a check or another suggestion is to change banks. Felipe will speak with the accountant to have the spread sheet updated and to inquire about the current bank situation.

We asked about the 2012 budget and noted the higher costs for travel, office supplies, and legal services. It was stated that the van ride costs have gone from 10Q one way to 13Q one way. When a member travels to Cantabal they use to receive 60Q but now that has been raised to 70Q for expenses. It was also noted that the legal fees for registering tax returns has gone from 200Q to 600Q. The committee will check with the accountant for other areas where the cost of doing business has raised the budget.

The high school student who is finishing a 2-year program has asked that his last year of his 3-year scholarship be set a side so he can use the money for university.

We asked about the college student who may start in January 2012. The committee said they had 2 applicants last year for the scholarship. They felt they should slow down the process to get a better pool of candidates. If no one applies they will speak with the donor about the next steps. The process to enter the university is extensive. The requirements for the scholarship will be posted around Santa Maria Tzeja. The cut off date for people to apply for this scholarship is December 15. First the prospective person must take up to 5 entrance exams that the university requires. The committee calls for a receipt from the university stating the applicant has passed the entrance exams. Then the committee will make a decision on who will be awarded the scholarship.

A delegate asked how many high school scholarships are currently given to students. There are the 17 from Needham and 5 more from a group in Costa Rica for a total of 22. Randall also talked about his scholarship program for people studying at the university level. It is a set up where he gives different amounts of support for people who work in Santa Maria versus people who work in different communities and also which year they are studying. The amount these people receive is between 2000Q and 3500Q based on the criteria mentioned above.

On Thursday night the accountant, Santos Quinilla, was in the village to discuss the CHE finances.

Teaching guitar and Music at Basico

Sam Evans

On two occasions a few of us in the delegation had the pleasure of teaching music to kids at the Basico school. On Monday, our second day in the village, we went to the Basico and taught a few boys how to play guitar. Rather, that was the plan. When Catherine, Emily, and I got there a few reluctant souls dragged some guitars from the school's supply and we started the long process of tuning the guitars.

This took a good fifteen minutes as I individually tuned each guitar, but the other kids were patient. While we were tuning, not before we got there, we thought of songs we could teach them. The kids that had shown up were mostly boys my age and only one or two had any serious experience with a guitar. The song we picked, on the spot, to teach the kids was “Heaven” by the Los Lonely Boys, a simple two chord song that Emily happened to know the Spanish words to. This song worked exceptionally well and attracted more kids. In a few minutes we had 7-8 guitars going and about 15 people singing. It was inspirational almost when we were playing and singing and everyone was having a good time.

Then on Thursday we went back to teach more formal music classes in the middle school, also mostly unprepared. We decided that they would not want to hear us fail at trying to teach music with Spanish words so we decided on two classic western songs, Let it Be and Amazing Grace. We started with Amazing Grace and taught them the first verse. Then we practiced the song in a round. That worked well and the kids seemed to like it. Then we taught them ‘Let it Be’. We sung the verses and they sung the chorus. That also worked well. In the second class we taught them Amazing Grace and ‘Let It Be’ also in a similar fashion. Because we were more experienced in our teaching it worked well and we ended with a little extra time. The teacher suggested that I play guitar while one of the kids in the class sung a song that he knew. Although I struggled with the chords, we got through the song and everyone seemed to enjoy it. That moment especially was powerful because it symbolized the two cultures coming together and working together to create something cool, music.

Then after we finished teaching the two classes, we were sitting outside waiting for instructions on where to go next and the teacher of the second class came up to me and asked me how I was playing the other songs and if there was anything else I could show him. I found this really exciting because I like sharing with other guitar players in Needham, but this was in a whole different country which was amazing. We exchanged some ideas and I tried to explain what the “Blues” were but “Los Azules” doesn’t exactly translate because it’s a cultural expression we have. That aside, on the last day in the village I left the guitar, which had been my Mom’s, in the village so that they could have more music in their lives too. Maybe when I come back to the village I will see that someone has learned how to play some serious songs on the guitar I left; I hope so.

Trip to Middle School

Daniel Moder

On our trip to the middle school, “Basico,” we had a number of activities, including Frisbee, chess, guitar playing, and basketball. The Frisbee game was more like a game of rugby, with kids running everywhere and the play never stopping, and even though the rules were very unclear, and most of the kids could barely throw a Frisbee, all of the students had a great time. Another highlight was the guitar playing; the students first learned the guitar chords for the songs, and although it was a little shaky, as soon as the kids started singing, droves of others came over and sang along.

Activities at the School:

Charlie Moder

The youth of the delegation spent a lot of time teaching classes and leading activities at the Basico middle school. In fact, an entire afternoon was dedicated to various games and activities organized by the youth. There were some long, back and forth, games of chess, as well as a very popular adaptation of ultimate Frisbee that was played. Also drawing a large crowd was the musical performance, bringing out both guitarists and singers to join in. Finally, to top off the afternoon, there were a series of basketball games played including one game of the Needham youth versus a team of village youth. Of course, this

left everyone terribly sweaty, so it was promptly followed by a refreshing trip to the waterfall.

A few days later, the youth made another trip to the school, some even getting a ride of Hugo's motorcycle, to teach some classes. There was, again, more of the very popular music as well as English classes. In those classes, students were taught words and phrases concerning animals and food, including the word for chocolate covered pineapple, which was a very tasty frozen treat sold in the village. All in all, the youth of Needham and Santa Maria Tzeja had a great time together, playing games and learning.

Improvement Committee

Caryl Johnson

Attendees

Paulina Panjoj

Florinda Ralios

Estela Garcia Hernandez

Hugo Quinilla

Dibby, Fred, Caryl, Maria Paz, Bill, Randall, and Paula interpreting

We first discussed the woman who was hired in February to be a security guard and clean the guest house during that visit. There are concerns for our belongings and keeping them safe. They suggested that we use the salon which we could lock for hanging clothing to dry. Fred shared at a later time that Hugo had mentioned in the van ride from FICCI to the village that there are people in Santa Maria that do not appreciate our visits. These people think the money we bring is being spent too much on travel expenses and there isn't enough to show in concrete for money spent. We also added a conversation with Emiliano Panjoj to the schedule on Wednesday as well as the community meeting on Sunday of the political rally. The high school committee was taken off the schedule due to no new news to share since February.

Financials:

Exchange rate 7.73Q

Total received 47,059.20. Q

Committees 42,515.00 Q

Marimba for middle school 1,816.55 Q

Library Furniture 2705.00 Q

Extra 22.00 Q

The committee held a workshop which cost 300Q to teach communities members how to complete a spread sheet. There was a large turn out from the community and as a result all village communities submitted their paperwork on time to the Improvement Committee.

A conversation was had about using monies that we send for large projects that benefit the entire community and not to give out monies to committees for travel expenses. Randall mentioned that the spread sheet can have lines added or removed if the Improvement Committee sees it is feasible. Randall suggested adding a line to the spread sheet for a new school building and using some of the monies donated by the partnership to start funding that line. The money can be held in reserve and added to as more finances are realized. We agreed with this philosophy and stated we had suggested a "saving" type of arrangement on prior delegations. Note on the ACTA the monies for the infrastructure project for the elementary and middle school.

The committee had anticipated a conversation about the partner family letter project. We brought a

proposal asking for a person in the village to help coordinate this for smoother letter writing between members of the 2 communities. It was mentioned that the drop off in letter writing from Santa Maria could be because people don't know where the money goes or are unhappy with how the money is spent. So the committee will try to be clearer about money usage. The partner family letter liaison proposal was given. It was noted that 4 new relations started in February 2011 and one new relation in August 2011. Hugo suggested taking the letter bag from us and carrying it around the village. The partner family list was e-mailed to Randall to share with the committee.

At our second meeting we were given the spending decisions for the ACTA. Note that the travel expenses were lowered to 500Q for most all committees. Hugo decided to be the first partner-family liaison person in Santa Maria Tzeja. He felt he could try the job on and see what was required for skills as well as time commitment to do a through job. He and the other committee members were logging in letters from villagers as they were returned to be sent with us to Needham. Several announcements were made to the village as well as reminding students in school to write their Needham families before we left the village.

Trip to Puente Antigo (the old bridge)

Sam Evans

On Tuesday morning, after everyone got back from breakfast, we all gathered and assembled our hiking clothing as we were to trek out to the Puente Antigo, "the old bridge". To get to the bridge the group walked about 2 miles in the heat of early morning lead by our guide Abel Bolaños who brought along his horse and his dog Manches. Fortunately for me I got to ride the horse most of the way to the bridge because I had a mild fever, but never the less, it was a long hike. Along the way we talked with Abel who told us about a huge four year tourist project that many villages in the area were contributing to. When we got near the bridge he pointed out that past the cornfields on one side of the road you could see the two mountains. Between these mountains flowed a non-contaminated river. To raise money, Abel and his committee, along with other committees from surrounding villages were going to create a sort of resort, because of the beautiful scenery and the clean water. This resort would include a stretch of restaurants and a long scenic walkway. The transportation up the river to this resort would bring in much needed money for the participating villages. We parted with the horse and ventured into the woods. I have to revise that, we walked into the jungle.

While walking through the jungle to the bridge, I noticed that there were a lot of plants that were different from those you would find in a New England forest, being bamboo shoots and red flowers that resembled banana clusters. It was like the general style of plant was just different and it was refreshing and interesting to trek through. When we arrived at the bridge that is now not much more than a couple metal cords and a few planks of wood, we were reminded of the major importance of this bridge to the people in the area. The bridge was used by refugees to escape the military violence and go to Mexico.

After coming back out of the jungle we walked down to the river and took a short break in which people had some snacks and a few people cooled off in the river. Then we packed up and started to walk back to the village. This time the horse was shared with some of the other youth delegates. On the walk back to the village we passed the portable water project where large diameter pipe was being installed from Dolores to Santa Maria. We also heard a loud noise off in the jungle which sounded like large 18 wheeler trucks gunning their engines. Abel told us this was the voices of several howler monkeys in the canopy of trees about a half mile off the road. The time of day was closer to noon and the sun was high in the sky making it much hotter to walk back to the village. The road winds around many curves and goes up hill, down hill and then back up hill. One a large up hill section many delegates felt the heat and

were ready to be back in the village. Like a mirage the village homes on this side of town came into view. A house on the right with large shade trees in the front yard looked like a perfect place for us to rest. Abel told us it was Lionel's mother's home. We sat down in the shade and Abel produced a canvas of Lionel's art work to show the group. Bill had been to visit with Lionel in North Carolina. He spoke through an interpreter to her that he had spent an afternoon with her son the summer before. Lionel had given him a painting of the chicken and Bill had taken a photograph of the painting and would like to give her the photograph.

We thanked Abel and Lionel's mother for the use of her front yard for a resting spot to regain our strength to walk to lunch.

Political Rally and Meeting with Emiliano Panjoj Emily Moder

Political Rally:

We were extremely fortunate during our stay in Santa Maria Tzeja to be present for the political rally of the village's very own Emiliano Panjoj, previous mayor of Santa Maria and director of the Federacion de Cooperativas. He is running as candidate for vice-mayor of the Ixcán as part of the Partido URNG, which has Rigoberta Menchu (a well-known advocate of indigenous rights) as its presidential candidate. While she is not expected to win the presidential election, we were told that the URNG party has a lot of support in the Ixcán, and the party is very hopeful for a victory on election day.

The rally itself featured a speech by Santiago Boton, who we had met during the AESMAC meeting earlier, and I was incredibly impressed by his talent at public speaking. Even when I couldn't understand the Spanish, his energy and enthusiasm kept my attention. He talked about how every representative from the URNG part is nominated by a popular vote, as opposed to other parties where candidates often buy their way to candidacy. He urged the people present not to allow their vote to be bought ("El 11 de Septiembre, su vota no se vende!"), referencing the practice of many parties to give out free food and small tokens in order to win the votes of the rural population. Instead, he said, the people of Guatemala need to look to and plan for the future.

One of the issues that Emiliano emphasized at the rally was protection of the area's rich natural resources from exploitation by large corporations. He cited the success story of the Xalala Dam project, which would have caused widespread flooding and environmental damage, as well as displacing countless people, in order to produce hydroelectric power for large corporations. The URNG party helped organize countermeasures, which successfully prevented companies from bidding on the project. It seemed clear to me that these people are incredibly intelligent and determined to fight for the best interests of the people of the Ixcán.

Possibly the most memorable part of the rally was when Emiliano told the crowd, "When people unite, the authorities tremble." In a country where money is power and impunity seems like the law of the land, it is so encouraging to see a group of people intent on standing up to those forces through sheer numbers and strength of will. I very much look forward to the days following September 11 (election day in Guatemala, mark your calendars!) to see the results, and wish Emiliano the best of luck!

Meeting with Emiliano:

Following the political rally, we were again lucky to have our own private meeting with Emiliano to learn more about his personal take on the campaign. He elaborated on the party's view on how the funds should be spent - most governments undertake so-called "gray projects" - infrastructure projects often involving concrete. They are popular among rural Guatemalans because they yield immediate results and popular among the wealthy politicians because they can give the project contracts to construction companies they are allied with, and skim money from the project funds. Emiliano told us that the URNG party sees the importance in health and education projects, which take the form of a more gradual change, but in the end are more permanent and benefit more people.

As part of their campaign strategy, they are travelling to communities all over the Ixcán, no matter how small, to spread their ideas and encourage people to vote. It is a time-consuming, fairly expensive, and sometimes even dangerous job, but Emiliano seemed very excited and optimistic about the elections; even if they don't come in first in the elections, he told us that he could still be elected as a representative in the municipal council. Again what stuck with me most was his message of unity - there are 13 different ethnic groups in the Ixcán, but to accomplish great things they must all come together and work towards common goals for the region they share.

Addendum (Fred): Some statistics Emiliano gave us included the Population of the Ixcán = 92,000 people, of which 29,000 are 18 years or older and registered to vote. (Paula noted that about ½ the population of Guatemala is under the age of 16!). 55% are women, and the registered voter turnout is about 70% - high for our standards, though we probably have a much higher percentage of citizens registered to vote. Cynicism regarding the government is an obstacle to participation, but teachers are informing people of the importance of voting. There is a risk of fraud in counting, and observers are recruited.

Emiliano received our heartfelt encouragement in his campaign, and we appreciated the chance to contribute by purchasing URNG party t-shirts with the corn symbol. Emiliano invited the church in future visits, to make a stop at the government office!

Celebration of First People's International Day

Fred Moder

A parade into the center of town was a grand sight, with youth, teachers, and other adults dressed in clothing from a number of Central and South American cultures, and a number of youth walking (or dancing!) on stilts of incredible height. The parade ended at the basketball courts, where the students did many beautiful dances. It was quite festive, and much of the village turned out.

The Survivors Group

Fred Moder

This was, as always, one of the most moving meetings of our week, and the only one attended by our entire delegation. I think it is particularly powerful for the youth, who are much appreciated by the survivors. Passing along the memory and testimony of these events is very important to the people of SMT. The collective memory of the trauma is vitally important for them to preserve, and the shared collective memory is something that makes Needham's relationship dear I believe.

We heard that 50 members of the AJR (including the people in the room with us) were present in the courtroom for the verdict and sentencing of the Kaibiles for the killing of 100 community members in

Dos Erres. “There may be a road to justice”. The case against Fuentes (see CALDH visit) will continue in September, and the AJR will be present in solidarity.

Sam asked how people decided in 1982 whether to flee to Mexico or stay nearby? Estela said her father was killed when a false invitation by the army was issued to return. Katherine asked if most of SMT supports pursuing justice? Yes. After the army’s recent unannounced visits to the village, a town meeting was held and the vote was in favor of filing a protest. Dibby noted she could understand people’s fears about standing up to the army, “which makes your resolve, persistence, all the more admirable”. (Daniel later said the stories of violence and survival made him realize how small his own trials in life were by comparison.) Paula asked what their role will be in the trial going forward? “We will be present. Of course, we’d all like to have our day in court, but if the Ixil case succeeds, this will achieve our objective”.

COCODE (Community Advisory Board for Development) Fred Moder
Nazario Gutierrez
Paulina Panjoj
Silvano Canil
Emelia Raymundo
Bill, Caryl, Fred, Maria Paz, and Dibby

They presented to us a table of 9 village projects, organized by type, and their current status, titled Projects under COCODE (Community Advisory Board for Development) management from 2001. These included infrastructure projects (proposals for new primary school and administration building, and a plan for a commercial area in the town), community plans for management of the Cerro Cantil (preserve of collectively owned forested land), a study of terms for a proposed cell phone tower, an urban plan that would create zoning for future building, and a proposal for solid waste disposal.

The Guillermo Torres Foundation is helping with the association of communal lands. The community has submitted a request to legalize the communal Santa Maria forested lands to the Land Fund of Guatemala. They have gone through several government stages and are waiting to hear what steps if any are next. There are 600 hectares involved in this request to the government.

Meeting with the Library Committee M^a Paz Casado

On Monday, we met with the Library Committee with the following members:

Pedro Us – President
Carlos Juárez – Vice President
Luciano Herrera Treasure
Ventura Bolaños – Member at Large
Lucia Guadalupe Toj Botón – Librarian

This committee changes every six months. We introduced ourselves and the SMT members updated us on the work that they have been doing.

Library construction: They haven’t made any progress with the library construction since February 2011. They are still working to clean up from the wall that collapsed.

- They still don't have enough money to repair the wall that collapsed. They need to build a new retention wall to protect the building from mudslides.
- They have cleaned a few times with no success. The dirt is very sticky, they need to remove it with their hands, and the water is getting in the building.
- They will have to install a PVC drain for the rain.
- They put some of the materials that they will need to finish the library inside the building, so they will not be ruined.
- They don't know if they will get the money that they need to finish the library during the dry season. (March, April, & May)
- They have sent the proposal to the improvement committee.
- The library location is very humid. The wall that collapsed was made of cement blocs. These didn't work. The new wall has to be made of only cement with the iron rods inside for reinforcement.

Library schedule: After analysis of the library use, they have decided to change the library schedule that they established when it was founded.

- It used to be open on Sundays but this a very busy day when people have lots of activities, meetings, etc. Some children used to go on Sundays to the library and sometimes they decided not to go to the Sunday Services or they will be late. Also the person on duty in the library couldn't attend to any activities or meetings on Sundays. Finally to prevent all of these, they decided to close on Sundays and instead to open on Fridays when it used to be open.
- Now the library is open from Tuesday to Saturday.
- Básico uses it from 8:30 to 11:30 and they can take home the books. Primaria uses it from 12:30 to 5:30. On Mondays and Fridays, it is still used by the literacy specialist for the women literacy program.

Library usage guidelines: The library has established guidelines for use of the library.

- When a child wants a book, the librarian registers her/his name with the name of the book and when he/she needs to return it.
- They can have the books for 6 days; she also checks that the book is in good condition.
- Everybody is very responsible for returning the books.

Library collection:

- They have a good balance of storybooks for Primaria and literature books for Básico.
- Until now all the books have been donated. The founders have brought most of the books; the Congregational Church of Needham has contributed many, as have the two teachers from Guatemala that studied in the refugee camp in Mexico.
- The librarian still would love to get popular Guatemalan music books with the musical notes and instructional books for learning how to play various instruments.
- She thinks that it would be very helpful to have different sports rules so the children learn to play appropriately.

Librarian salary: The librarian is doing her community service commitment. AESMAC has a norm that these students receive a monthly incentive of Q700 or Q800 when they are doing their service. She would like to apply for this job after she finishes her community service.

Luis presented the library with a gift of his book on environmental health, titled "Salud Ambiental"

We finished the meeting visiting the library and taking pictures.

Computer Center Committee

Max Cohen-Casado

On Monday afternoon, we (Bill, Randall, Max) met with the following members of the Computer Committee when we visited the Computer Center.

Nazario Gutierrez Ozorio- President
Santa Ralios- Vice President
Martina Quinilla- Committee member
Rodolfo Javier Urizar- Teacher/Director

Nazario gave an update on the Computer center, explained the impact of the new Internet café in town, shared the center's new schedule and spoke about the economic state. Although computers are replaced from time to time, the committee decided not to purchase three more computers because the number of users has not increased. The committee also considered increasing the centers bandwidth, currently at 1250 megabytes per day, to increase their Internet speed. However, they also decided against this purchase of approximately Q5000-Q9000 because of the installation of the Tigo cell tower, scheduled to be put in within the next year. This tower would also allow users to have an Internet connection in their homes; thus, reducing the number of internet users and making the faster internet connection unnecessary.

Nazario also explained the situation regarding the Internet café. When the café first opened, the Computer Center lost many customers. The café, located in the center of town, is more accessible to users. It is also open more hours since there are often school classes in the Computer Center. To recover their customers, the committee implemented new strategies. They reduced the prices for color printing (1/2 Q per page). The committee also lowered their prices for CD/DVD burning. The committee also decided to change their hours to allow customers more time to use the center and Internet café. In addition to their previous hours, the Computer center is open from 5pm-8pm every day specifically for Internet café usage. Although these strategies only increased customers slightly, the center didn't return to its original user base until about one month ago (7/11) when the Internet Café in town went out of business. The committee is happy to have recovered all of their clients and has decided to keep the new schedule in order to avoid confusion.

Regarding the Computer Center's economic state, Nazario said that the center is in good shape but is not self-sustaining. This year, Jeff Taylor very generously donated \$8500 to the Computer Center. In addition to Jeff's donation, \$2000 were also donated this year through Randall Shea's donor network. However next year, Jeff plans to half his donation to the center, creating a problem for the Committee. They came up with four solutions. Their first idea is to ask Randall to find more donors to finance the center. Their next idea is to increase fees for Internet café time, but Nazario explained this solution would be a catastrophe since the prices were already raised earlier this year (prices explained in February Delegation Report). Their third idea is to ask Needham to donate, since the delegation does not give any aid to the center. The committee's last option is to formally annex the Computer Center to the Basico in order to cover the center's costs. Nazario says this solution isn't favorable either, since it would mean less money for the Basico. He believes the best solution is to ask Randall for more money from his donor network.

In short, Nazario and the rest of the committee gave us an informative update. They touched on key issues with the Computer Center and how they plan on fixing them.

Meeting with Health Promoters and Health Committee

Bill Garrett

Health Committee members in attendance:

Vilma Gutierrez Osorio

Rosa Garcia

Catalina Tomas Perez

Salvador Castro

Pedro Chom Tum

Felipe Panjoj

The focus of the meeting was primarily on preventive health measures being taken in the village and the comparative results of those efforts. However, the Committee did report that they have heard reports of increases in Dengue fever in the region. Pedro believes there have been about 10 cases in the village based on clinical assessments, but it has all been regular or classic Dengue fever rather than the more serious hemorrhagic type. There have been no alerts from epidemiologists. High temperature is the most common symptom, but this does not present a serious danger. Dengue is a virus that is treated by rest and control of the temperature. It usually runs its course in 5 days or a week if patients follow directions.

The Committee has been working on hygiene and pollution control. One strategy is to work through the Schools. Talks and videos have been offered in classrooms. There is a program focusing on why humanity is sick, and it contains six sections including nutrition (why water is better than coca cola), emphasis on eating more fruits and vegetables, disadvantages of processed foods. Children are making better food choices as a result, and there is an effort to acquire local food for snacks in schools. In the middle school there is curriculum on family planning, first aid, pollution, and dental hygiene. Students have built and placed wooden garbage cans in the village and worked to clear garbage along the waterways. Signs have been designed for the school to promote water quality and there is discussion of instituting fines for littering. Six women are now training on water and the relationship to health issues. They are leading thought about how to conserve water and improve water quality.

SMT is now composed of 246 families for a total population of 1,179. There are a comparable number of families in neighboring Dolores, but we were told that 2-3 times as many families in SMT have received improved housing. An important result of that is that by eliminating dirt floors a significant source of infection for children is removed. They also noted that the river in SMT is much less polluted. Compared to SMT, there are huge lines for health care in Dolores, and much higher incidence of skin conditions, kids eating worms, and generally low awareness of health problems. Birth rates are also much lower in SMT. Dolores has 50-70 births per year, while SMT has averaged about 23 over the last 5 years. Year to date there have been 17 births in SMT. There have been no fatalities for children this year.

Felipe talked about eye care being integral to the overall health of the village. It has been seven years since they instituted preventive eye health and supported treatment and surgery. Villagers are experiencing 80% success rates from eye surgery. While Scott Pike's Enfoque Ixcán supports several communities, SMT definitely benefits from the activity being based here. Enfoque Ixcán comes to the village every six months and Felipe triages cases in the interim. He is equipped to deal with emergencies and sees 40-45 people every two months for various consultations. There is a free eye hospital in Vera Paz (near the Scarecrow).

Meeting with the Widow's Group

M^a Paz Casado

In a very hot and humid afternoon like the February delegation, we set up chairs in the shade behind the guest building.

María Solís was the first arriving. She told us about her family tragedy. First she lost her husband in an accident and one year later she lost one of her sons. After awhile, some of the members of the widow's group arrived.

Marta Castro Micaela was representing her mother in law, Juana Juarez

Cristobalina Quinilla Manuela was representing her mother in law, Juana Cos
Petrona Hernández de la Cruz

They were late to the meeting because that morning many women went to the MoscaMed workshop and they finished late. MoscaMed is a Government program to eradicate the Mediterranean fruit fly. This was her first time educating the women about this issue. She also was taught how to bake oat 'tortitas', "incaparina cookies," and banana bread. She was going to come back in three months.

Corn harvest: The widow's group has received money to plant corn. It needs to be harvested. It is almost ready. Some of the widows needed to pay somebody else to plant the corn because their children were busy at school or they needed more help to plant and weed it. The corn price is higher. If they have a good harvest, they will be able to survive for the year and they will not have to buy it.

Cow herd: We asked about how they were doing with the cows. They are in the second round with the calves. Some cows are milk cows, while others are not. They can sell the calves after eight months. They used to pay Q 2,000 for an eight-month calf, but now the price has dropped to Q 1,000.

The widows asked us how we live, and if we plant corn or other vegetables. We talked about the farmers market, the community gardens, etc. Marta told us that they cannot plant green vegetables because they don't survive. They don't have enough water during the dry season and during the wet season they wash out.

We talked about how much we enjoyed eating the corn tortillas; in Massachusetts they are not that good. They asked if we drink "Atol de Elote" (It is a thick drink, based on fresh corn.) We showed them pictures from our hard winter. We talked about how much snow we got and how cold it was.

The conversation changed to food and children. They told us their different experiences and how their children adapt to the quantity or kind of food that they have at the time. It is very hard for the widows being by themselves at home, taking care of the children and not being able to work.

It was a very warm and friendly meeting, and we all enjoyed talking and taking pictures.

Present at the meeting:

Lucia Toj, Treasurer
Emilia Raymundo, President
Olivia Quinilla, Member-at-large
(2 more members joined us later)

Caryl Johnson
Maria Paz Casado
Dibby Moder
Paula Worby, Translator

Paula began by asking if there was an agenda or a topic for discussion they were interested in. Lucia began by saying that the Women's Union has 97 members. They have a proposal for funds to build new 'pilas' for water storage in their yards. Depending on the season, they would be used to collect rain water (rainy season) or to store piped water (dry season), so that they have water readily available. When it rains a lot, the rivers and wells become muddy and unhealthy to drink. These 'pilas' are made with cement and reinforcement. Many people have them but they are old and cracked, and need to be replaced. They have not yet submitted this proposal, although they have submitted a proposal for Q1000 to cover travel expenses. Caryl explained that they should draw up a proposal and submit it to the Improvement Committee in the next few days for funds coming next February. When asked if they know how much they will need for the project, they replied that they had spoken with a mason who quoted Q103,000 for the materials. The women would then need to find a way to provide the labor involved. Because of the high amount, Caryl suggested that they either submit a proposal for a third of the total and do it in stages, or submit it the entire amount and hope to get some part of it. It is unlikely they will get funded for the whole amount in February.

When asked why some women do not join the Women's Union, they replied that some choose not to join because of other responsibilities or obligations. For example, if you do not attend all meetings, you will be fined (Q5 fine if you miss three meetings) and there are 2 or 3 meetings a month. In other cases, their husbands may not let them attend. In meetings they discuss their ongoing projects, such as the cattle project, running the corn mill, and the micro-loan project.

When asked how life has changed for women in Santa Maria Tzeja over the generations, Lucia commented that in her mother's generation women were not encouraged to go to school. Their fathers would say that they did not need an education because their job would be to take care of their husbands. Now the presumption is that girls should at least go to Basico, which is the level of schooling currently available to the community. It was also pointed out that when women are educated, they are better able to help their children with their homework. We were told that at least half of the adult women in the village cannot read or write. Juana Perez, the Student Animator at the Basico, has been running an adult literacy program for women for the last two years. One woman said that she tried to learn to read and write in this program, but she does not speak much Spanish, and her eyes have problems and she gets headaches, so she quit.

Our conversation shifted as we began to compare life in the village with life in Needham – the school year, the seasons and climate, nutrition, how we get our food, what foods each country exports, how young people dress and who determines that..... It became a mutual sharing about aspects of our daily lives, both the commonalities and the differences between our two communities.

Church Committee

Fred Moder

We met in the shade behind the church for this meeting, joined by Pedro Us, president of leadership council of the church, Gabriel Perez, Magdalena Us, vice president, Marta Castro Tol, church treasurer, and Maria Hernandez. Bill and Fred from the delegation had the assistance of Randal for translation. The committee thanked us again for the money to make improvements, and showed us the four speakers installed in the sanctuary that have helped a great deal with sound. We noted the attractive cement stairs in front of the church now, and heard that there is a proposal to build a fence that would keep out animals (that eat the flowers) and discourage drinking on the front steps.

A religious celebration of The Ascension of the Virgin Mary was planned for the following weekend, and will include communities and musical groups from Dolores and San Jose la Vente. Padre Luis will be joining them this year. There has already been a week of evening rosaries and songs. The events will include a procession, serenade to the Virgin, a breakfast, 2 weddings (including Petronila and Marcelino –Randal’s brother in law), 4 first communions (including 2 of Randal’s children), 2 baptisms (with Randal’s youngest), and a traditional dance with masks (“convite”). We noted that Randal will be quite busy, and expressed our regrets to be leaving a day too soon!

Bill made some comments. “We come as part of a wide humanitarian effort, but Christian to Christian, I feel I can tell you that coming here is a religious experience for me, to be in such a beautiful place and among people who care so much about preserving its beauty.” “Our church ministers tell us the church is not for us, its for the world. And we encourage our kids to get out in the world. Its good to know our church’s spirit is with you.”

The committee then read a letter for Tina, which read in part: “For us it is an honor to greet you. We send our sincere and profound sentiment regarding your health, and hope you will recover soon.” We will have Tina in our prayers, they said.

Potable Water Committee

Fred Moder

Caryl, Bill, Emily and Fred met with the members of the committee: Jose Quixan, president, Arnaldo Cano, member at large, Tereso Urizar, treasurer. Randall translated for us.

The pipeline from SMT to Dolores (6 km) is now 80% completed. The work was delayed when pipe rated 150 psi was delivered, rather than the required 260 psi. The source of the water is 48 km from Cantabal, which is 16 km from Dolores. The project was begun this year. Other challenges were more bedrock than expected, and finding the River Tzeja too deep to lay the pipe on the bed, so it will now hang from the bridge.

The laborers are all volunteers (engineers and machine operators are employees), from 19 different communities which paid Q10,000 for the initial studies, with the rest of their investment in “sweat equity”. The project began 12 yrs ago, received a boost with the election of Colom 4 years ago, and overcame the opposition of a town adjacent to the water source, by purchasing roofing material for all the houses in that town.

The InterAmerican Development Bank loaned the Guatemalan municipal development authority (INFOM) Q 22 million for the project. The 12% VAT and other taxes will repay the loan. 166 SMT families are participating. Others wanting a hookup to their homes later will have to pay Q10,000, while children of members will pay Q6500.

Despedida

Fred Moder

Here again the youth came through in great style. When the group as a whole was behind schedule on rehearsing our farewell song, the youth came up with “Send Me On My Way” and rehearsed this themselves before teaching the older generation most ably. Sam accompanied us on guitar. He also did the opening act, a solo performance of “Alelulah”, that had the crowd spellbound, and set off more camera flashes than the rest of the night combined. There were many fine tributes given in our spoken farewells.

Trip Evaluation

Fred Moder

The trainings held before our trip were felt to be well organized, helpful, concise, with good written material. The getting-to-know-each-other exercises were felt to be valuable. Scheduling them was a challenge, with activities keeping people away at times. There was a suggestion that there is so much to remember that reminding people of important points, perhaps at the first check-in, could help.

Youth felt the mingling activities with village students (chess, Frisbee, basketball) went very well, while the get acquainted exercises were awkward at times. They noted teenagers often disappear during family meals, and perhaps there should be a “teen dinner”. There was a suggestion that teens from SMT and delegation could plan some joint performances for the ‘despedida’. Hugo had suggested “maybe we are stuck in old patterns and we could change things to make it deeper, instead of simply giving reports to each other”. Later it was noted that many meetings were long, and the women’s and widows’ groups were refreshing because they were “real conversations, not them reporting to us”. Youth noted that it pays to prepare for what and how you want to teach *before* you get in front of the classroom.

The trip to the old bridge would have been better with more presentation of the history. But seeing the jungle, now reclaiming the bridge, was a reminder to one youth that in 1970 the whole area was jungle, a reminder of the hard work done to clear paths and build a town. The embassy trip was a first time in making a connection with the US arm of foreign policy, and the variety of points of view was interesting.

The medical kit could include aloe vera for sunburn, a thermometer, and an anti-emetic.

Meals were the best part of the trip for many, and yet a challenge when our wish to chat conflicted with the host’s busy tasks of preparing the meal. Someone noted the discomfort of hearing the long list of money disbursed in the Acta, which felt like it set us up in a “rescue” or “saving” position that was uncomfortable. One youth wondered if we might be able to give the villagers something we’ve made by hand, similar to the weaving they sent us for the anniversary?

Between the Community of

Santa María Tzejá, Ixcán, Quiché, Guatemala and
The Congregational Church of Needham, Massachusetts, U.S.A.

August 2011

On August 11, 2011 in the community of Santa María Tzejá, Ixcán, Quiché, Guatemala, the members of the Congregational Church of Needham, Massachusetts who are present in the community dedicate ourselves to continue in our relationship of friendship and solidarity with Santa María Tzejá.

The friendship began with a public act in August of 1987 and will continue today with the signing of this ACTA. The purposes of this friendship include the following: mutual understanding, solidarity, peace, mutual support, cultural exchange, the exchange of letters by families, and projects determined by, and in benefit of, the community of Santa María Tzejá.

Representatives of the Needham church have met with: the Improvement Committee, the teachers in the Primary and Básico (Junior High) schools, the Library Committee (Biblioteca Euskal Herria), the Computer Center Committee, the Scholarship Committee, the health promoters and Health Committee, members of the student and professionals' association AESMAC Kemb'al No'j (both in Santa María Tzejá and in Guatemala City), the Women's Union, the Widows' Committee, the Church Committee, the Potable Water Committee, the group of victims of the armed conflict, and representatives of COCODE (the Community Development Council).

The representatives of the Needham church respect the democratic decision-making process and therefore have understood that the Improvement Committee in its work represents the entire community. Consequently, decisions regarding the use of funds for general projects of the community are in the hands of the Improvement Committee.

The Needham representatives and the Improvement Committee have reached agreement on the following points:

The Church brings funds to benefit general projects of the community.

The Needham church sent funds for the community by wire transfer to the bank account of the Improvement Committee. The wire transfer of six thousand eighty-five dollars (\$6,085.00) which equals forty-seven thousand and fifty-nine 'quetzales' (Q47,059). This amount is to be divided in the following manner:

- a. The amount of five thousand five hundred dollars (\$5,500.00), equal to forty-two thousand five hundred and fifteen 'quetzales' (Q42,515.00), is for general projects of the community, as designated by the Improvement Committee;
 - b. The amount of two hundred thirty-five dollars (\$235.00), equal to one thousand eight hundred sixteen 'quetzales' (Q1,816.00), is for the Básico (middle school). These funds come from the 7th and 8th grade students of our church and are for the purpose of buying a marimba for the Básico.
 - c. The amount of three hundred fifty dollars (\$350.00), equal to two thousand seven hundred and five 'quetzales' (Q2,705.00) is for the Library Committee and new furnishings when the library is completed.
3. The Needham church sent funds for scholarships and related expenses by wire transfer to the bank account of the Scholarship Committee (CHE). The wire transfer equaled eighteen thousand

nine hundred and ten dollars (\$18,910.00). The equivalent in 'quetzales' will be determined when the bank makes the money available to the CHE's bank account.

4. A matrix annexed to this document indicates the balances, the money spent, the quantity received, and the total available for the various community projects.
5. **FUNDS FOR EDUCATION:** To benefit education in Santa María Tzejá, the Church sent the previously mentioned eighteen thousand nine hundred and ten dollars (\$18,910.00). The Scholarship Committee will use these funds as follows:
 - a. High school scholarships: the 'quetzal' equivalent of eighteen thousand dollars (\$18,000.00). And nine hundred and ten dollars (\$910) are designated for the expenses detailed below.
 - b. For the payment of accounting services: three thousand six hundred 'quetzales' (Q3,600.00).
 - c. For travel expenses: one thousand four hundred twenty-five 'quetzales' (Q1,425.00).
 - d. For administrative and office expenses: one thousand one hundred seventy-five 'quetzales' (Q1,175.00).
 - e. For publicity and marketing: two hundred 'quetzales' (Q200.00).
 - f. For payment of legal expenses: six hundred 'quetzales' (Q600.00).
6. **FUNDS FOR COMMUNITY PROJECTS:** For general community projects, the Needham church donated the amount of five thousand seven hundred thirty-five dollars (\$5,735.00), equal to forty-four thousand three hundred thirty-one and fifty-five one-hundredths 'quetzales' (Q44,331.55). The Improvement Committee has designated that these funds shall be utilized in the following manner:
 - a. Q500 to the teachers of the Primary School for travel expenses.
 - b. Q1,000 to the Primary School for equipment maintenance and gas for the generator.
 - c. Q1,000 to the Primary School teachers for student materials
 - d. Q500 to the Primary School for teaching materials.
 - e. Q500 to the Primary School Parents' Committee for travel expenses.
 - f. Q500 to the Primary School for energy expenses.
 - g. Q4,000 to the Primary School for an infrastructure project.
 - h. Q1,500 to the Básico for office expenses, computer maintenance, etc.
 - i. Q500 to the Básico for fuel or service to the electrical system.
 - j. Q2,000 to the Básico for teaching materials.
 - k. Q200 to the Básico for sports equipment or activities
 - l. Q1,816.55 to the Básico for the marimba.
 - m. Q3,800 to the Básico for an infrastructure project.
 - n. Q300 to the Library Euskal Herria for travel expenses.
 - o. Q500 to the Library Euskal Herria for office expenses and equipment maintenance.
 - p. Q4,200 to the Library Euskal Herria for the librarian's stipend.
 - q. Q1,000 to the Library Euskal Herria for the improvement project.
 - r. Q2,400 to the Health Committee for health promoter stipends.
 - s. Q10,200 to the Health Committee for the community health facilitator's stipend.
 - t. Q1,000 to the Catholic Church for installing a circular kitchen with screens.
 - u. Q500 to the Improvement Committee for travel expenses.
 - v. Q1,000 to the Improvement Committee for office expenses and fuel.
 - w. Q1,615 to the Improvement Committee for improvements to lodging.
 - x. Q500 to the Mayor's office for travel expenses.
 - y. Q500 to COCODE for travel expenses.
 - z. Q500 to the Women's Union for travel expenses.

- aa. Q1,300 to the Widows' group for clearing land for corn.
- bb. Q500 to the Potable Water Committee for travel expenses.
- cc. Q500 to the Forestry Association.

The Needham church brought supplies for the Primary School and the Básico. The church brought medicines and supplies for the health post. It also delivered books for the library, two toilet seats, and some sports equipment that were given to the Improvement Committee. Sam Evans donated a guitar to the Básico. The Kirk family donated guitar strings.

Once more, we want to express our profound thanks to the community of Santa María Tzejá for the hospitality and friendship that you have offered us during these days. We want to assure you that you will continue to be present in our thoughts and prayers. We ask the God of love to accompany you in all your efforts to improve the wellbeing of this community, and thus contribute to the construction of the Kingdom of God.

Signed this day, August 11, 2011, in Santa María Tzejá, Ixcán, Quiché, Guatemala.

Handwritten stipulation: In Paragraph 5, subsection a, the correct amount is eighteen thousand dollars (not 'nineteen thousand'). (Translator's Note: English translation reflects the handwritten correction in the text.)

(Followed by signatures of the Improvement Committee and delegation members)