

## **GREETINGS FROM OUR SISTER CHURCH IN COSTA RICA**

*Janet Anderson*

*Note: Beginning in the mid 1980's The United Churches of Olympia began a sister-church relationship with **Iglesia El Divino Salvador**, a Presbyterian-related church in Calle Blancos, a suburb of San Jose, Costa Rica. In the early 1990's **Dan Andersen** was instrumental in helping them build a new sanctuary both by being on site helping them build as well as working hard to raise money from our congregation through sales of coffee which he called "Supreme Beans." Several other back-and-forth trips were made.*

*On a trip that ten of our congregation made in 2003\*, we noted that the church was suffering.*

*The charismatic (and bilingual) pastor had left. The size of the congregation had dwindled and they needed a new full-time pastor to help pull things back together, but there were too few members to support it. Our group took things in hand. We asked them if they wanted funds to finish their church building, to help with their mission program, or to fund a pastor. They told us the pastor was the biggest need. So our congregation supplied funds to help out. The pastor's salary was to be only \$12,000 per year. We supplied \$6,000 the first year, \$4,500 the second, \$3,000 the third and made a final payment of \$1,200.*

*The following is from a letter written by **Irene Foulkes**, a professor at Universidad Biblica Latinoamericana (UBL) seminary in San Jose who has been our contact there for many years.*

### **No Red Ink**

"Things are going well at the Calle Blancos church with **Pastor Miguel Vargas** in his sixth year with the congregation. How thankful we are for the Olympia donations that made it possible to contract him full time when our membership was so decimated that we could never have managed it on our own. Just as your subsidies were ending, the church became self-sustaining and 2011 was a good year, with no red ink in any of the months.

### **Increased Mission Activities**

As a Pentecostal, don Miguel has come through an adjustment period to a very different kind of congregation, and the church has also adapted to many new things he brought. Overall it's been a valuable experience on all sides, I think. Concern for the needs of the community around us is increasingly part of the message. We hope this will soon move more of our people into acting that out in concrete projects like the soccer clinic for neighborhood children and adolescents, and the library (the **Artie and Arra Bowning** library!) activities for poor kids from a nearby day care center run by an evangelical woman eager for the kind of input they get from some of our gifted teachers.

### **Biblical Prophecy, and the Mayan Calendar Explained**

Other activities include my teaching the adult class of about 40 people in the church where I continue to serve on the ministerial team. Alternating Sundays with the pastor, we're starting the year off with a series of lessons on biblical prophecy in order to deal with all the noise being made about supposed predictions of the end of

the world on December 21, 2012, encoded in the Mayan calendar. We plan to include one Sunday with a UBL professor who is a Mayan himself, well versed in his culture's traditions as well as having been raised in the Guatemalan Presbyterian church, where his father was an elder. His short answer to the entire hullabaloo: yes, a cycle of Mayan time ends in December of this year, but there was always a new cycle of time, so December 21 is not the end of the world according to the Mayans.

There are also a number of popular preachers that come up with detailed "prophetic calendars" of their own, so we'll be dealing with the purpose and meaning of biblical prophecy. In all of this we hope to help our people realize that the prediction of future events is only a part of biblical prophecy, which is mostly concerned with interpreting contemporary events and orienting the people of God away from sin and toward active compliance with God's will in the world, providing hope and strength for them in times of suffering.

We haven't heard from anyone in Olympia in quite some time. I hope all is going well. Hearty greetings and hugs from all your friends here."

\* Pictures from the 2003 trip are at <http://www.oly-wa.us/church/>

*Courtesy of Scott Bishop*