

Costa Rica Mission Trip Thoughts
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Comments to the Congregation July 19, 2015

It has been a month since our group went to Costa Rica and during that time, I have pondered often about the trip.

As the Mission Committee chair, I took on the role of group organizer and was fortunate to work with such a strong and supportive team. When I use the term team, I am speaking about both the participants who went to Costa Rica and about our congregation. Starting with the church's 50th church anniversary, and formulation of the goal to send out an international mission team focusing on young adults, our congregation provided the guidance and resources to make it happen.

- First, the congregation passed a budget that included mission trip funds and allowed the use of long established Imaging Funds to assure all of the team members that no one would have to choose between paying for the trip or paying for college or some other financial obligation
- In March, you came and bought pizza during the Pizza Ranch Community Event fund-raiser and gave generous tips, especially to the singing “delivery man”.
- Throughout the year, on each of the Sundays designated for Youth Leadership & Worship, the offering plate filled with abundant cash donations earmarked for the expenses related to the trip.
- When given a request for useful items to share with the UBL students, donations for things like sheets, towels and medical supplies quickly accumulated.
- When it was time for the trip, there were good-bye hugs and prayers when we departed Casper and we returned home to more of the same.
- The Costa Rica mission trip was possible because of your support, prayers, and commitment and we are very thankful to you.

Our team is all wearing the t-shirt that has recently become the unofficial service uniform of our congregation: “Out of the pews and into the world”. I have been thinking a lot about that phrase and the word that has become the focus of my attention is the little word AND. The internet reports that the word AND is “used to connect words or sentences that are to be taken jointly”. There is a

tendency to look at two things and think that we have to choose the one that is better or more important. The word AND reminds me that sometimes we are to choose both because not only are they both important, they belong together. In this case, those words are PEW and WORLD.

In the last hymn, "*Here I am Lord*", we sang a song that was inspired from the story of the prophet Samuel as a boy. The song powerfully helps us ask Samuel's questions and like him, to state our willingness to be used by God. What is not noted in the song, is the location of Samuel when all of this takes place. It is nighttime and Samuel is lying down in his regular spot, in the house of the Lord, where the ark of God was located. Samuel was in the pew, he was in the house of the Lord. It was while he was in the pew that the prophet Eli was available to help him hear, interpret, and understand as God called out to him.

I believe that we all are out into the world. What makes our journey different is being in the pew first. The pew represents our mutual time of seeking, praying, learning, sharing, and supporting each other. It is good to be in the pew. While on our trip, we prayed and ate our meals together. Each night we had a devotional time, and it was during that "pew time" where we often regrouped, verbalized our thoughts, shared our concerns, and listened to what God might be saying to us. I believe it is the same for us today. The pew and the world belong together. So, now that we have been in the pew, let us go out into the world.