

Our Experience at Jehova Jireh Presbyterian Church

By Elaine Boyd, pastor at First Presbyterian Church of Amboy

On Sunday our team to Guatemala had the opportunity to attend worship at Jehova Jireh Presbyterian Church (God Provides) in the city of Xela. While it may be true that some members of the congregation where I regularly preach may sometimes think I am speaking a foreign language, my Sunday experience in Guatemala was the first case where it was actually true. As I preached in “tongues” (that is, English), the message was ably translated into Spanish by Edith Alvarez. We were warmly received by the small congregation there and by their Pastor Samuel Espana.



The group from Jehovah Jirah Presbyterian Church

The worship space at Jehova Jireh was probably the most like our own of any that teams visiting the churches of Occidente Presbytery have experienced. Unusual for churches there, there is a cross in the front of the sanctuary, two pulpits, and a communion table. Although it was all in Spanish, we easily recognized the worship forms of confession/forgiveness, and communion, as well as many of the tunes of hymns they sang. It was truly meaningful to be able to celebrate communion with them as Presbyterians and brothers and sisters in Christ.



The street outside Jehovah Jirah

During worship at Jehova Jireh, we were treated to an Easter cantata by the choir from Bethel Presbyterian, a larger church in Xela. Before the service, I went up to talk to the young man accompanist on an electric keyboard as he “warmed up.” He spontaneously flipped open the music and played for me to sing “Were You There When They Crucified My Lord?” Although language was a barrier between us, music became a connector.

After the service, we met in the church building with Pastor Espana, his wife, Vianney Vasquez, and some of the other members of the congregation for lunch. The conversation was made easier for those of us who don’t know much Spanish, because both Vianney and another woman present, Rubenia Sanchez, spoke excellent English and could translate. Their congregation is about 23 years old, and their church was built about 10 years ago. They told us that their church is at the edge of what is a very poor area in Xela, and so they have been raising funds to provide supplies for needs in the community. They have been working on their facility because they would like to provide a place for therapy and recreation for seniors. There is also a neighborhood school nearby. Pastor Espana, Vianney and Rubenia all work with some non-profit organizations that might be possibilities for mission partners. We were able to see some real possibilities for working together in mission.



Rubenia Sanchez