

Partnership
The Rev. Paul Alcorn

I believe it was the community organizer Saul Alinsky who said, *“Do you think your way to new ways of acting or do you act your way to new ways of thinking.”* For me, more often than not, it is the later. It is experiences which push back the self imposed boundaries around my life which lead to reflection which, in turn, leads to new ways of thinking and living. Here is what I mean.

Other than going to see Niagara Falls when I was a child or driving through a small slice of Canada, the first time I had a passport and the first time I was ever out of the United States was in 1996 when I went to San Simon, El Salvador to help with the construction of a chicken coup. Chicken coup, right? Some wood. A few nails. Some chicken wire. Even if I was told beforehand it didn't register, and so little did I realize we would be helping to build a chicken coup for 400 chickens. The dream of the community in which we were living and workings was to sell the eggs the chickens produced to help provide food for the community and, through the sale of the extra eggs, to fund a literacy program for the village. Also on that trip, I worshiped in the Chapel in which Archbishop Oscar Romero was assassinated and visited his hermitage, and met Rufina Amaya, the sole survivor of the El Mozote massacre who spoke not only about hiding while her husband and children and neighbors were executed, but also about forgiveness and hope and faith.

That experience.
Nine days.
Chicken coup.
Chapel.
Rufina Amaya.
Changed my world.
And my thinking.
And my life.
And my faith.

In the words of my friend, Bonnie Gordon, who is on the staff of Bridges to Community and who lives and works in Masaya, Nicaragua, in that moment my world was turned right side up.