

Porch de Salomon

Panajachel, Guatemala

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*Short-term mission teams
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PorchTalk

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THE "LIFE" OF THE PARTY

by Will Deeds

A man prepared a great feast ...When the banquet was ready, he sent his servant to tell the guests, 'Come, the banquet is ready.' Jesus of Nazareth at Luke 14

An often overlooked truth in scripture is that Jesus really liked parties. Throughout the gospels we see Jesus attending weddings, visiting people's homes, and generally being the "life" of the party, pun intended. He even likens God to a man throwing a party in Luke 14.

I've been thinking about Jesus and his association with the unclean, the tax collectors, the sinners, and the outcasts. The truth is Jesus didn't care about social status, wealth, or religious affiliation. I think what he enjoyed most was open, honest, genuine, and authentic relationships. It just so happens that most of the time you don't find this with the religious elite or those that seem to have it all together.

Last month, Porch de Salomon hosted a group we have jokingly named "Team Moza". "Moza" is a popular Guatemalan beer. They are a group of good ol' boys who work really hard and know how to have a good time after a hard day's labor. Every year our Porch crew looks forward to this group of guys coming down. I think it is because they are some of the most genuine, authentic, and generous guys I have ever met. In our morning devotionals we heard honest, sometimes tearful, testimonies from men seeking to follow God while still realizing their shortcomings; this made for some great, thought-provoking conversation.

These men funded and help build Melchora and Moises' house. This couple's social status wouldn't get them invited to many parties but Team Moza went out of its way to make them feel included and special by serving them all week. We had a great week of work. It was a really refreshing reminder, to me, of the kind of folks Jesus prefers us to be.

In Luke, Jesus tells a story about inviting folks to a party. The elite people had excuses or didn't want to come. So he invites a different sort of crowd: *'Go quickly into the streets and alleys of the town and invite the poor, the crippled, the blind, and the lame.'* After the servant had done this, he reported, *'There is still room for more.'* So his master said, *'Go out into the country lanes and behind the hedges and urge anyone you find to come, so that the house will be full.'*



(Above) Team Brandon/Roper (a/k/a Team Moza). Their work involved crossing Lake Atitlan each day.
(Left) Melchora and Moises' outhouse is indicative of their socio/economic standing.

"For the lost, the least, and the last"

FEBRUARY TEAMS!

In addition to *Team Moza*, Porch de Salomon hosted teams from Heritage UMC (Overland Park, KS) and Team Gina/Amador County (CA).

(Below, left): Team Heritage UMC at Silveria's house site along with our faithful February folk from Wisconsin, and long-time Porch partners Doug and Viv Lees.

(Below, right): This team from the Kansas City area also conducted two days of free village medical clinics.

(At right): Team Moza member "Tex" spent two full days, without help, digging a ten-foot deep septic tank at Moises and Melchora's house site. His handprint will grace the concrete lid. *Party on, Tex!*



GINA Gravatt, and her husband, Rev. Tim Gravatt (along with their co-pastors Tom and Samantha Widlund), led a team to Panajachel for the fifth year. Undaunted, they tackled the difficult, steep trail up to Silveria's house site. All the building material (sand, gravel, concrete, blocks, rebar, etc.) must be carried up the mountain.

(Right: Rebar is "tied" to become part of the earthquake resistant house. *Gracias a todos!*



HOUSE COMPLETED!

Rosario's family (right) provided a humble party for our visiting team, and local helpers, to celebrate completion of their new house (Porch's first of 2015!). This project faced challenges (begun last year—rain, mud, and problems with neighbors resulted in a hiatus) but was well worth it.

Rosario, her family, and Porch de Salomon thank Aldea Maya, Team New Providence Presbyterian (TN), Team Good Samaritan UMC (FL), Faith Presbyterian (FL), Waukeelah UMC (FL) and Providence Christian (KY) for your partnership on this one.



.... and another started! (Above) Silveria, her eight children (one of whom is a mother herself, and is pregnant again) and one grandchild, live in the drafty, board shack shown behind them, in the high village of Xequel (some of the children were away, working, when this photo was taken). They have no electricity or bathroom.

They are amazed, and pleased, to be our next house recipients. The teams love working alongside them!



Silveria's neighbors volunteered and carried buckets of gravel up the mountain trail for her. Teamer Curtis Hoback, from Madison, WI, took this photo. He said that the look on the little girl's face, as she also carried gravel in her handbag, was the closest he's come to "seeing" God in a long time.



PEACE DRAGONS? Former Porch volunteer Jen Abreu partnered with us to bring three high-schoolers, all the way from Beijing, China to make "Peace Dragons" presentations at schools in our area. For more information on this art-based program (like the painted tiles above) see: <http://www.thepeacedragon.com> . The program was well-received and it was good to see Jen again!



Porch's local team pitched in to support Panajachel Colegio International's annual Mardi Gras fundraiser (for scholarships).

Our folks built stages, served Jambalaya, donned masks (with some of Gina's folks, *at left*) and provided the sound sytem, instruments, and two live bands for this party-with-a-purpose. Over \$5000 was raised!

We appreciate the opportunity to help bring "life" and light (see page one!) to this fun community party. We also thank you, our mission partners, for supporting all our work.



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