

Porch de Salomon

Panajachel, Guatemala
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*Short-term mission teams
in Guatemala

*Humanitarian relief for
indigenous families

*Solomon's Porch
café ministry

*Live music outreach

* Helping transform churches



PorchTalk

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Beds and Beggars

by Will Deeds, Ass't Director

I pass by several beggars as they squat on the streets everyday. Each time, they stretch out their hands asking me for help; some days I walk past, ignoring their outstretched hand. It's a constant dilemma we face as we walk the streets of Panajachel. Who do you help and how do you help? The need is on every street

corner and since we walk most places I can't just get in my car and avoid it.

The human interaction from walking the streets (we have no car in Pana) feels like the scriptures come to life; I encounter people on the street-- like Jesus did. The challenge I face is being Jesus to these people. To be honest, I see Jesus in them more than I see him in me.

A verse we used in our Easter Solomon's Porch worship gathering has been on my mind:

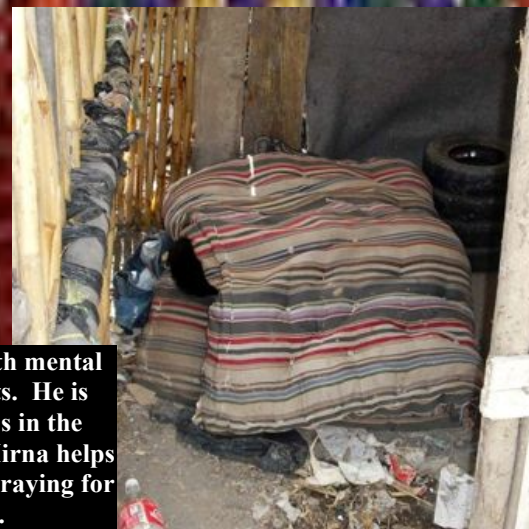
"Truly I say to you that the tax collectors and prostitutes will get into the kingdom of God before you." Matthew 21:31

Jesus was talking to religious people who took this as a great insult. And when it was read, I asked myself the question, "Are these people entering the kingdom of heaven before me?" Then after a bit more reflection, another question came to me, "Shouldn't I want these people to enter the kingdom before me?" If I truly have the heart of Jesus I will have the desire to usher these people into the kingdom before me. *I love the irony of this verse.* The religious people shouldn't have been offended by this. If we have the heart of God, we will be a servant, first offering the so-called "least of these" a place in the kingdom before we take our seat.

(Cont'd on page two)



Maria and Will on the street



(Right): Luis Eduardo is a deaf mute, with mental health issues, who begs on Pana's streets. He is shown curled up inside a filthy mattress in the corn-stalk shack where he sleeps. Our Mirna helps him with food and medicine. Join us in praying for a good in-patient option for him. We seek a donor to cover his medicine cost at \$75 per month.

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

BEDS AND BEGGARS (by Will Deeds, Cont'd from page one)

This is why I love working with Porch de Salomon. On a daily basis I get a chance to serve people. I get the chance to build beds for these children who have never had a bed or be there when a 94 year-old, barefooted indigenous woman stretches out on her first real bed. It is moments like these that make you realize you are rich and that you cannot ignore the needs of others and continue to follow Jesus. I am thankful to be serving with Porch de Salomon and helping usher the "least of these" into the kingdom of God.

"Ask the poor. They will tell you who the Christians are." Mahatma Gandhi. Do the poor know us? And if they do, what would they say about us? Are they entering the kingdom before us and, if so, are we mad about it or are we ushering them in first?

We appreciate Will and Amber and also the faithful support we receive from you, our mission partners, which keeps us all "on the streets" and "in the fields" in Guatemala. Lloyd and Melanie

DESPERATE BEDS

Inocenta is an indigenous widow with three daughters; they live in a leaky, crumbling, dirt-floor room in Santa Catarina Palopo. They weave "tipico" cloth and earn a total of \$25 a week during the tourist season. Sadly, the older daughter has resorted to clandestine prostitution to help provide for the family. One of the other daughters is handicapped and has great difficulty walking. None of the girls attend school because they usually do not have enough to eat, much less money for education. Team Christ the Shepherd Lutheran Youth (GA) will fund and help build them a simple new two-bedroom house in June.



(Above) Inocenta and her daughters. We are taking immediate steps to help the family with food, counseling for the older daughter and an evaluation for the crippled daughter.

(Left) Their kitchen area. They have precious few possessions of any sort. Please join us in praying for this family and our work with them.



UP AND OUT OF BED

Sarah and her physically and mentally challenged daughter Ishbalanque ("EESH BOL AHN KAY," 32) live in the Xecotoj housing project. Porch funded a hoist/winch device which Sarah uses to move Ishbalanque from her bed to her wheelchair. Our Outtown/Canadian Mennonite University team cleaned up, funded and helped build a nice concrete patio so that Ishbalanque can enjoy the outdoors.

Team leader Bethany Bustard noted: *I sat beside these two women, who are so deeply loved by God, and sang and conversed in Spanish and let my to-do list drop to the floor. I was reminded again of the love of Christ and his image that is placed within each of us.*

Singing was one of the things Ishbalanque took joy in... so we sang and danced for hours.

We are thankful for a new Porch mission partner's commitment to fund Ishbalanque's adult diapers at \$95 monthly. *Gracias hermano!*



Q & A with “Guatemala Joe” Swartz:

How long have you been a volunteer in Panajachel and why did you “sign up”?
My wife Kristen and I moved down two years ago. I want to do what I can for the Lord—he has saved my life so many times. We first came down with a team and later decided we could best serve here with Porch.

Do you mean literally saved your life? Yep—a number of times, especially during my “messed up” years. Once I was cut so badly in a knife fight that I was in a coma, for days, from blood loss.

How have these last two years been for you? They have been the best two years of my life. I have worked for a living since I was 16—making a living consumed so much of my time. After I got straightened out, I had two dreams: 1) to fly an airplane and 2) serve God as a full-time missionary. I achieved both!

What happened to your ultra-light airplane? We sold it so Kristen and I could serve down here—it’s OK though.

You often drive teams and workers in the mountains in “Big Blue” (Porch’s ’93 F350 van). How has that been? Three days after I arrived, Lloyd asked me if I had experience driving something big with a manual transmission. I answered “Yes” and he tossed me the keys. I prayed then and still say a little prayer of thanksgiving every single time we make it safely back down the mountain .

Tell us about your clown, magic and unicycle outreach?

Guatemala has a bunch of kids; they are attracted to us “gringos” when we work in the villages. I use my clown/trick act to entertain them or teach them something from the Bible. Learning to ride a unicycle, in my mid-40’s, has been the second hardest thing I’ve ever tried. Learning to speak Spanish has been the hardest!

You spearhead Porch’s bed-building program. What does that involve?

So many people need decent beds; if the indigenous have beds they are just hard boards with a straw mat or blanket on top. Often, four or five people share one of these. The children sleep on top of feed sacks or mats on the dirt floor. Many families have little to no other furniture—not even chairs.

I have built or helped build almost 80 beds, usually at our house. Some are for our new houses and some are for families of alcoholic fathers. We have figured out how to do it well and quick! I love seeing kids jumping on their first bed ever. We also build shelves so that they don’t have to pile their clothes on the floor. My dad taught me how to use carpentry tools, drive a stick shift and play a guitar; those skills, and others he taught me, have been really handy down here.

How does all this tie into building God’s kingdom?

“I have become all things to all people...that I may share...” *I Corinthians 9:22-23* It’s been different showing people the love of God rather than just telling them about it. That has been a big change for me.

Life is rich here; you never know what’s going to happen when you walk around, serve and talk to folks. I like a little bit of chaos. I still get thrilled when some village kid sticks his head out of a chicken bus window and calls me “Yo-Yo!” (my clown name) or tries to demonstrate a magic trick he has seen me do.

*We appreciate Joe’s great example of humility, service and growth.
Check out his photo blog www.guatemalajoe.com*



You can fund a new bunk bed complete for \$100!

We thank and praise God for our faithful mission partners whose money and donations resource Porch de Salomon’s work with beds, beggars, families, widows, orphans, the desperate, the handicapped, the hardened and others. We invite you to *donate now* (see page one) or contact lloyd@porchdesalomon.org or Rex 850.933.0344 if you have questions or ideas. *Muchas gracias!*

PRAISES:

- * Doug and Mary's sale/donation of their beloved convertible
- * Tim and Kelly Jo Clark's (Union Congregational Church (CO) vibe, encouragement and interest in PdS

Please PRAY FOR:

- * Team Memorial UMC (FL) May 11-18: village medical clinics and house construction
- * No more prostitution for Inocenta's daughter

(Right): Santos, Francisco and their family beam as we dedicate their new house in Chuaxic; it was a pleasure to see our Noe in charge of his first dedication ceremony. Mega-thanks to Team Brandon/Roper/Shalley and all their supporters! (Left): Melanie's mother, Virgie, helping Abra Deeds and Rachel Clark make up one of this family's new beds. Virgie has been a faithful monthly Porch donor since 2004; it was a pleasure to have her down.



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