



## IGRC-Honduras mission partnership

The Illinois Great Rivers Conference has been sponsoring mission trips to Honduras annually since 2012 and has been working specifically in the capital city of Tegucigalpa on the new Mission HQ site, a five-floor building counting the basement which is a multi-year project.

Freelance photographer Kaitlyn Conrad was part of the 2015 mission team in June and she shares her insights through words and images.

The new Mission HQ project, when completed, will allow the Mission to move out of the rented building that they are presently occupying. It is also going to provide a new worship space for the Tegucigalpa Central Congregation (now meeting on the completed lower level), provide needed housing for mission teams, and a training facility for the pastors and laity from the 18 church plants throughout the country, and badly needed storage for mission vehicles and materials.

In addition to their construction work on the new HQ, the team provided VBS for the children of the Tegucigalpa Central Church and those from the surrounding community.

Individual IGRC churches also continue to be involved in the work of the Mission in Honduras. Alton Main Street UMC made their sixth trip to Honduras this June; Sullivan First UMC has an on-going partnership with the church in La Ceibita; Bloomington Wesley UMC has been working on the HQ project and doing medical missions in Tegucigalpa the last three years, and Fairview Heights Christ UMC continues to be involved with a church plant in the second largest city of Honduras, San Pedro Sula.

If you would like to be a part of the Honduras Mission, the next trip is scheduled for June 18-26, 2016. Scholarship opportunities do exist for those going to Honduras for the first time. Please contact Bunny Wolfe in the Conference Office or Greg Gelzinnis by e-mail at hondurasimt@gmail.com or cell phone at 618-550-9291.





# God is at work in places other than our backyard

STORY AND PHOTOS  
BY KAITLYN CONRAD

I'm not a hero.

People like to do things that make them feel good about themselves. Giving \$10 to a local animal shelter. Getting praise from your boss for the long project you finished at work. Feeling a burst of energy and health after a productive walk. Going on a mission trip feeling you've done a good job to help others less fortunate.

These are all good things. But this little moment in time of "do-gooding" doesn't make us a hero.

About a year ago, I started to think how I hadn't gone on a mission trip in some years. There was a yearning and feeling that I was supposed to go somewhere, but like most of my thoughts and feelings that are different from my routine life, I cast them aside. That is until I was at worship one night at the SIU Wesley Foundation and my campus minister, Sherry Smedshammer announced the 2015 Honduras trip with the conference. Now, I've never been hit by lightning, but the realization feeling I suddenly received felt something like that.

I knew that I had skills I wanted to contribute on a trip like this and it just seemed like this was a path I was meant to take. There are stories all around us and I knew there was a story in Honduras for me.

But there is no story in Honduras for me. It's not my story. It's God's story, and I know that might sound cliché, but it wasn't until I got to Honduras that I realized how wrong I was in my thinking that this is about me.

The story in Honduras is that there is a group of people and workers who work day and night to continue to further God's Kingdom. For me, there is nothing more touching, beautiful, powerful and witnessing than just that. In my short time in Honduras, I saw and learned



exactly what it means to be the hands and feet of Jesus and to have the Holy Spirit shine through everything that you do.

The IGRC team and I arrived at the *In Mission Together* Honduras host house June 21, and it was one of the first encounters (besides the airport) that the team and I had in the Honduran culture. Going to a foreign country is very overwhelming but the love and care that was first shown to us was just proof that God was working in this place.

Monday through Friday the team worked in the Honduran heat on the Honduras Headquarters work site. For many of us, working at a construction site is not something in our everyday skill set. Our team leader, Greg Gelzinnis, encouraged us to form relationships with not only our team members but with the construction workers. Yes, there was work to be done, but that's not always the important thing.

Throughout the week, God's love covered each and every one of us. Karen Chan, our transporter and translator, taught me many important little lessons, but the biggest part of our time together that has stuck with me is her ability to be a selfless servant of our Savior and the way that His love shines through every thing she does.

I also formed a bond with each of my team members. We learned what each other's strengths were and we each had the opportunity to use them. Our backgrounds were all different but we came

together to work on something beautiful.

When visiting a Third World country, you expect to see poverty, but it's so different than what you may see on TV. Your heart is broken when you look at what little some have. But one thing I learned is that while most may not have as many worldly possessions as we have, they are certainly not poor in Spirit. Worshiping alongside those who have no reservations on how God is working through them is one thing I've rarely seen at any church service I've gone to at home.

We are so worried about what others will think of us but worshiping in Honduras showed me how freeing and alive it is to be fully immersed in God.

Honduras has taught me many things, one of the most important being why our partnership with Honduras as a conference is so significant. The four men employed to work on the site live there 6 days of the week. The work they do on this location is helping to build a place where mission workers will be able to stay, a place for those in the community to worship, and a place for outreach to the city of Tegucigalpa.

This is why my heart was so broken when I found out that the funds have run out for the workers to continue to work this fall. There is so much good being done here and it needs to keep happening.

I can't lie and say that going on a mission trip doesn't make me feel good. Being in almost a constant worship setting, doing good work and forming new relationships: it's hard to not feel good about all of that.

But that's not why I went. That's not why we go and do these things. I'm not a hero for going overseas to work. I'm not a better person than you for doing it. I go because God uses each of us to further his Kingdom in ways we could never imagine.

My *why* is to let others know how God is working in other places than just our backyard.

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