

Mexico, NORTH AMERICA

Short background: First Church has partnered with Todd Luke and the Presbytery of Campechano to provide prayers, physical and monetary support for the Chol people of Calakmul rural region.

First Church involvement: Since 1996, Todd Luke has lived in worked in the southern portion of Mexico's Yucatán peninsula. He is a dedicated lay missionary who is ministering in one of the poorest regions of Mexico. The majority of the residents are materially poor Mayan Indians who work as subsistence farmers. Extreme poverty, malnutrition, constant illness, high unemployment, and illiteracy are common problems in every village. Trained as an attorney, he was called by the Lord to build a health clinic for this region and has stayed and developed a ministry that is two fold:

- The first involves teaching and enabling both indigenous (mostly Chól) and Mestizo Mexican Presbyterians to improve their own family's health. Related projects include construction of family owned rainwater cisterns, beekeeping, beeswax pressing, hammock weaving, raising poultry and rabbits, and cultivation of *chaya* (tree spinach) and *moringa* (The Miracle Tree).
- The second involves equipping local Presbyterian leaders with intellectual, spiritual and material resources necessary to plant new churches and further develop existing congregations.

Todd dedicates six to ten weeks each year to hosting mission teams from the United States. These groups work with Chól Presbyterians, building cisterns and operating a Vacation Bible School program. New mission teams are always welcome. He is the son of Ruth Luke who has been the director of First Church's Preschool for many years. He is married to Maria who is from Calakmul. They have three children: Leydi, Marco & George.

Service opportunities: Multiple work trips, perfect for one family to go together. It is best if the group is less than 12, but larger groups can be arranged. On the following pages are a few of the stories and pictures of First Church members' trips to build cisterns. Each of them have returned blessed by the Holy Spirit to see the Lord's work first hand.

XPUJIL STATISTICS	
Population: 3000	
% of homes with 1 or 2 rooms	98%
% of homes with indoor plumbing	1%
% of homes with dirt floors	50%
% of homes with running water (cistern)	1%
% of families with a car 1% town & 3 % rural	



Todd and his family in Xpujil

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MANY ASK WHY CISTERNS? As you leave Todd & Maria's home driving out to rural Calakmul you notice small ponds, these are natural ponds formed by rainwater run-off. The villagers, mostly women, come there every day to get their water. They use wheel barrows mostly to haul the heavy water jugs home. In this water they carry all the germs and parasites found in stagnant water, this is **not** a safe source of water. Notice the goats and sheep in the picture, they not only drink the water but their wastes are found in the water. Fresh clean water is something that we take for granted and without it disease and illness will continue to shorten the life span of the Chol people. Cisterns catch freshly fallen rainwater off of the metal rooftops of the village houses and it flows into these new concrete containers and is safely stored.



The cisterns help to decrease evaporation and keep all sorts of critters out of the water making it safe and keeping the people healthy. Mission work teams partner with the Chol Presbyterians and together build one or two cisterns at a time. First the foundation is cut out of the earth, rebar is interwoven and tied giving strength to the cement and slowly the sides are built, the floor put in and a cover is poured. After this part is done the concrete is allowed to cure and is then treated and painted. It is then ready for rain water to fill it and provide clean water. Clean water is

PARTNERING WITH PEOPLE PROMOTING GOD'S VISION OF JUSTICE.



WORK ON CISTERNS TAKES MANY HANDS. Some of these pictures show our parishioners but others show folks from Castilla Brito, Rotarians from Chetumal and Rotarians from the Las Vegas area building 20 cisterns in 2006 and a family standing in front of their finished cistern. The water of life.

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MAPS, PICTURES, LINKS AND CONTACTS



Links to Presbyterian Church (USA): <http://www.pcusa.org/worldwide/mexico/>
World Factbook on Mexico: <https://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/mx.html>
Todd Luke's email: tluke2300@aol.com

First Church Members who have partnered with Todd in Xpujil:

Sara Gunderson and her two small children (2004 & 2005): "It is my plan to make mission work a part of our family and my hope that by doing so our children will be a little more tolerant, a little more flexible, and a little less frustrated when things are beyond their control."

Steve & Cornelia Sawle, and their three children: Lilly, Carissa & William (Christmas2005): that as a family they "decided to turn their Christmas of receiving into one of pure giving." Steve said, "we thoroughly enjoyed our 'giving Christmas' and better understood the way most people live. We have a better appreciation of the gifts we all enjoy every day."

Graham Lane (2002 & 2003) experience of working with the children was something that he "will cherish forever."

Mission Trip 2007: Alamance Presbyterian Church in Greensboro, NC is sponsoring a group of college students to Xpujil in June 2007, they will be building cisterns and teaching Bible school. Contact person Scott Neely 336-697-0488 or Scott@alamancechurch.org