

APA Global Partnerships Ecuador Visit – August 14-21, 2024

Wednesday August 14

The 2024 visit to the Ecuadorian churches began with flights of Bishop David Haines, Fr. Paul Rivard, and Dr. Matthew McBurney (translator and representative of Worthy Endeavors) converging in Atlanta on Wednesday around midday and the team departing together for Quito just after 6PM. Travels were safe and blessed as the team arrived roughly on schedule at about 11:30 and checked in to a hotel near the airport.

Thursday August 15

Thursday began as Deacons Gustavo Aldas and Walter Coro from Riobamba met the team at the hotel for breakfast before a vehicle was rented and departure for Quito (roughly 1 hour drive from the airport) commenced. The goal for the day was to meet with Kichwa community members who were forced to move from the Chimborazo region to the city center in order to find work. Those who had moved to Quito kept together and quickly formed a church body, using donated funds from Worthy Endeavors along with money gathered from their own community to purchase enough land upon which to build a worship space. The new church has taken the name Mt. Sinai Anglican Church and the name is fitting because the land sits at the upper reaches of development overlooking the city of Quito which sprawls through the expansive valley below.

After taking in the view during the afternoon, the team met up with the church members just after working hours when they could all come and participate in a liturgy taken from The Book of Offices entitled “The Founding of a Church.” While the poverty which forced the Chimborazo community members to move to Quito was not ideal, nevertheless, breaking ground on a new church in a major city center is a venture that seems sure to be blessed by God in the years to come.

Breaking ground and blessing the land was followed by the Mass in the space which the congregation has been using, lent generously by a local supporter. Fr. Carlos Ayol, the Canon of the Cathedral of the Holy Family in Guamote, travelled to meet us and Bp. David preached and celebrated Mass. A large meal followed soon after speeches by leaders of the Pastoral and a few gospel songs sung and danced by the traditional Kichwa choir. Festivities were followed by a long trip to Riobamba, Chimborazo where the remaining portion of the visit would be based.

Friday August 16

After breakfast on Friday, Bp. David, Fr. Paul, and Dr. Matthew departed for the home of Fr. Luis Alberta in Riobamba where they met Dcn. Gustavo and Dcn. Walter along with Fr. Luis’ wife Fanni and their children. Joyful greetings were exchanged after

a long time apart and discussion ensued with Fr. Luis, one of the founding members of the Pastoral wishing to address the gathering. Fr. Luis plays an important role not only in the Pastoral but also in a major university in the area where he serves as a Dean. The stress of the positions that he holds is a concern for his wife and him and the discussion of the team led to his request to take a step back from his official leadership in the Church for a period of about a year. It was agreed to call this time a sabbatical.

After the conversation and visit came to a close, the team loaded up into two vehicles and headed out to a rural and agricultural Kichwa community called St. Isabela to see and bless cistern tanks that were constructed along a ridge below a natural spring. The water from the spring, which had already been channeled through a system of aqueducts to nourish the land below, would now be channeled also into this series of tanks so that potable water could be more readily available for livestock and irrigation of crops. The project, supported by Dr. Matt and others, is near completion and the community was overjoyed to see the development of their land and encouraged about the accessibility of pure water straight from the land itself.

After Bp. David and Fr. Paul blessed the cistern project, Fr. Luis and Dr. Matt departed from the rest of the group as the others travelled to the Cathedral of the Holy Family in Guamote where Bp. David would address the clergy and community leaders in a lecture which they requested entitled, "The History of Anglicanism in North America." In attendance were several of the clergy of the Pastoral along with some lay leaders. Dcn. Gustavo translated the presentation into Spanish for the gathering, and by the end, all in attendance had a deep sigh about the amount of difficulty and division experienced in the Anglican church in the last 50 years. The hearers seemed to understand that while regrettable and unfortunate, divisions in the Church are not uncommon, and some were resolved as a result of the presentation to be part of the solution rather than part of the problem.

Following the meeting with clergy and leadership in Guamote at the cathedral, the team travelled with Fr. Carlos, Dcn Gustavo and Dcn. Walter to a community called St. Theresita where a short worship service including a choir performance and greetings from Bp. David was followed by a meal prepared by the local pastorate president. The service was lightly attended since the team's arrival was late and there was a community meeting at the same time, but the choir, full of giggly teenaged girls, happily sang traditional Kichwa songs as Fr. Carlos accompanied on keyboard.

Saturday August 17

A journey to the community of Gramapamba and their church of Saint Paul was the key item on the itinerary for Saturday. The church was surrounded by at least three hundred people, a "banda del pueblo" (saxophone, clarinet, trumpet, bass drum, and

other percussion instruments), and numbers of women who were preparing food for the party to ensue after the service. Fr. Paul administered the sacrament of baptism to four young people as Dcn. Gustavo read most of the liturgy out in Spanish. Bp. David preached and afterward confirmed fourteen. Particularly moving in this service was the local tradition of confirmands first dropping to their knees and quietly confessing their sins to their parents at the front of the church. Several of the teen boys rose from their knees and embraced their parents, each wiping tears from their eyes before the service continued. Both those who received baptism as well as those who were confirmed stood in the crowded area with candles aflame signifying both their new lives in Christ, and the blessing of the Holy Spirit. Fr. Carlos celebrated the Mass afterward and the confirmands eagerly received their first communion. Following the service, a grand party ensued with the band playing, many from the community joyfully dancing, and of course a meal was served for the team and community leaders in a private room where discussion with local leaders ensued. The team returned to Riobamba for the night following the celebrations.

Sunday August 18

The ordination of Dcn. Gustavo Aldes to the sacred order of priests at the Cathedral of the Holy Family in Guamote would be the chief event of Sunday's activities. Arriving at the cathedral just after 9 AM, Bp. David and Fr. Paul began to make arrangements for the service along with Fr. Luis Alberta and several other of the clergy. It was clear that the service which was scheduled for 10 o'clock would begin late and indeed, the service commenced about an hour later than planned. Bp. David preached and Dr. Matt translated from the pulpit near the altar as the congregation and clergy sat to listen. Fr. Gustavo remained standing in the front row of the pews, acknowledging that the sermon of any ordination is truly being preached primarily to the ordinand. Fr. Gustavo lay prostrate on the ground as Fr. Luis chanted the litany, Bp. David read the charge from the Prayer Book ordination liturgy and laid hands on Fr. Gustavo, anointing his hands and bestowing him with chalice, paten, and bible, as before a congregation which swelled to 250 parishioners, Father Gustavo was priested.

Following the ordination and before the communion liturgy began, a gift of a carved icon of "Christ Pantocrator" was presented to the cathedral clergy and congregation on behalf of the APA, and upon blessing the artwork it was placed above the aumbry where the sacrament is reserved.

Eager to begin his new ministry, Fr. Gustavo concelebrated the Mass with Fr. Luis and administered the sacrament for the first time as a priest in Christ's One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church. The service concluded with Fr. Gustavo offering individual blessings to all present, beginning with Bp. David, the other clergy, Fr. Gustavo's family, and finally all others who were present.

A luncheon followed the service in the undercroft of the cathedral and upon completion of those festivities, clergy and lay leadership gathered in the head office to discuss financial and pastoral matters which needed to be addressed. Bp. David listened to many of the clergy speak as Dr. Matthew translated and in the end the bishop spoke, challenging clergy to have courage to speak to one another directly whenever there is a conflict, and to be sure that any conflicts which arose were based on fact and not rumor. His address was greeted with applause and with the meeting concluding, the team returned to lodgings at around 6:30 to await a small dinner party with Fr. Gustavo and his family, Fr. Carlos and his family, Dcn. Walter, and the rest of the team. Dinner and conversation about church work in the Kichwa communities continued until well after 11 PM.

Monday August 19

Monday morning was a time of rest before Fr. Gustavo and Dcn. Walter arrived at the hotel around noon to bring the team to the market in downtown Riobamba for some shopping. After some purchases were made and a few snacks were partaken of all returned to the hotel in mid-afternoon and took rest until Dr. Matthew would depart from the team as his taxi arrived to return him to Quito.

Tuesday, August 20 and Wednesday August 21

Tuesday was spent traveling back to Quito, returning the rental vehicle, and arriving at the airport to await the late night departure back to the United States. The journey concluded the following day as Bp. Haines and Fr. Rivard boarded planes to their respective cities of Wilmington, NC and Greenville, SC.