

Faith and Justice in El Salvador  
August 15-23, 2010

An immersion pilgrimage to El Salvador led by Dr. Timothy Wadkins and the Rev. Tracy Daub

**El Salvador: Background Information**

Throughout its history, the tiny Central American country of El Salvador has been the scene of much social and political unrest which has deeply affected Salvadoran faith communities. This is especially the case with regard to the bloody and protracted civil war that officially ended in 1992. Before the end of the war thousands of peasants were killed and numerous church leaders, including Archbishop Oscar Romero and six Jesuit priests at the University of Central America, were assassinated. With their lives on the line, Christians were forced to grapple with issues of justice in new and often radical ways

While the war is still a living memory, today El Salvador struggles with the problems of globalization and modernity. The traditional agricultural and rural way of life has eroded through rapid urbanization, agribusinesses, call centers, first world factories, the Central American Free Trade Agreement, illegal migration over the U.S. border, and the hope for economic lift through remittances sent back to El Salvador.

In the midst of these changes, new religious movements have emerged and El Salvador is undergoing a massive religious revival which is having a major social impact. According to recent statistics, Roman Catholicism, the historic faith of Latin America, has eroded to barely fifty percent of El Salvador's population, while protestant-evangelical groups have risen to over 40 percent and continue to grow. Almost all of these communities come from the poorer sectors of society and belong to the faith-healing, tongues-speaking and boisterous Pentecostal traditions.

**Pilgrimage Components**

This pilgrimage is designed to expose the participants to some of these realities. Participants will hear from priests, pastors, and social scientists who will interpret the issues of faith and justice in El Salvador for us. The trip will include visits to a variety of sites such as:

- The Cathedral and tomb of Archbishop Oscar Romero
- The Romero Center at the University of Central America honoring the martyred Jesuits
- An active Christian Base Community in an impoverished San Salvador barrio
- Elim Mission International, a socially active Pentecostal church and the fifth largest church in the world (with reportedly 150,000 members)
- A major Pentecostal social service ministry in rural El Salvador (an organization similar to VOICE Buffalo)
- A gang rehabilitation center
- A Catholic parish and its dynamic priest which are together striving to minister to the most impoverished and crime-ridden neighborhood of El Salvador

In addition, for two days we will engage in a service project, helping a community in constructing low cost cooking stoves.

We will stay in a safe comfortable guest house in San Salvador (run by Presbyterians!), eat fine meals, and each evening we will reflect, pray and discover how best to be in solidarity with the people of El Salvador.

### **Trip Details**

The pilgrimage is open to a maximum of 10 participants.

Cost for the trip is \$1500 which includes all airfare, room, board, and program costs.

Those interested need to contact Tracy Daub at University Presbyterian Church at 836-7660.

A one half deposit is necessary by April 15<sup>th</sup> to hold a spot with the full amount due by May 15<sup>th</sup>.

### **Trip Leaders**

The hosts for this pilgrimage will be The Rev. Tracy Daub, Pastor of University Presbyterian Church, and her spouse, Dr. Timothy Wadkins. Dr. Wadkins is Professor of Modern Christian History and Director of the Canisius Institute for the Global Study of Religion. Not only is he a specialist in the religious and cultural dynamics of El Salvador, but for over a decade he has been leading immersion seminars in Latin America and other third world locations. He brings extensive experience in helping non-specialists better understand issues of faith and culture in the non-western world. Currently he is engaged in a long term research project on Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity in Central America, funded by the University of Southern California.