



San Lucas, Guatemala

Volume 4, Issue 1

May 2023

**A'KALA Family Foundation**

P.O. Box 52

Cologne, MN 55322

A week or so after my latest trip to San Lucas, I was praying with the Gospel story where a scholar of the law asked Jesus which commandment is the greatest. Jesus answered him by saying “You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and the first commandment. The second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself” (Matthew 22: 37-39).

For me, San Lucas, like no place else, really allows me to put together love of God and love of neighbor. The natural beauty of Guatemala – the lush green plants and trees, the classic blue of Lake Atitlán, and the vast expanse of the night sky – never fails to fill me with awe and thanks for God’s benevolence. That love of God seamlessly translates to love of neighbor each time I encounter the beautiful people of San Lucas – the smile of a child, the lived and lively faith of the parishioners at Mass, and the good spirit of everyone who endured my attempts at speaking Spanish.



Each time I go to San Lucas, I think I am going to be of service and give to the people. I should know better. My humble works of painting houses, delivering items, or singing with the children is no match for what I receive. I am ever thankful that spending time in San Lucas gives me a chance to refresh and recommit to living my love of God and love of neighbor.

Sister Lisa Mauer



Chona & Sandra



Maria de Los Angeles and her Mother  
This mom gave us the land for the AKALA school.  
Maria has a disease that makes it impossible for her to walk or grow



## Family



Recently my family and I returned from a mission trip to Guatemala with the A'Kala Family Foundation. I have been reflecting on my experiences there since we have returned. I wanted to be able to share the adventure with my wife and children through pictures and stories. Like most adventures though, it is hard to do it justice, and to properly convey the emotions I felt and the impact it had on me as an individual. So, I keep reflecting on the time there, mainly with the hope that feelings and the memories won't fade. I know that sounds selfish. After all, this wasn't a trip for me. It wasn't a retreat to find my peace or renew my relationship with our Lord. We were there on a mission. During that mission, there was one resounding theme that kept coming back to me, Family.

We were on a mission to bring hope, live the Gospel, and do our best to provide for those in need. I do feel selfish though, at the end of it all, I feel like I received way more than I gave. Maybe I should get one of those bumper stickers people get when they adopt a dog from the pound, the "I adopted a rescue, but really, he rescued me" sticker. That sentiment essentially captures

the experience I had there. Like many Americans, I was overworked and burned out. Normally I would say there is no possible way I have time for something like this, I can't miss that much work. I would turn down the chance, cheer on others, and grab my Excedrin and get back to work. Maybe donate some money so I can feel like I did my part. Which leads me to the first blessing given to me.

The idea of this mission trip was that of my Mother. Although older, her age is classified, she is still a powerhouse and unstoppable. She convinced two of my sisters, my niece, and me, to all join her on this adventure. Although it doesn't sound logical, I may have told the Lord that I don't have time, but I can't tell my Mother that. It was just plain fulfilling to go out there and serve these families with my own family at my side. This trip gave us the opportunity to bond more as a family as today's busy world tries to keep us apart.

The second blessing was our team. I really don't like strangers. I'm a grumpy old man that has enough friends, I don't need anymore, that's what I tell my wife. This group of people was just flat out amazing though. Everyone just got along and had one mission, to serve. They all knew we were not here for us, we were here for the families of San Lucas. We were here because God said, "Go". I was just taken by how selfless, hardworking, motivated, and excited to serve that everyone was. As a group, we grew together and bonded almost immediately. My heart, like the Grinch's, grew three sizes that day, and I found the strength of ten Jesse's, plus two! Our dedicated leadership had jobs for the week, and the response by all was pretty much, where do you need me? We divided up and worked through the sweat with smiles. Then each evening recapped the days experience with our group. Now I had a whole new group of friends and family.

By far, the largest blessing was the families of San Lucas. I have lived an extremely blessed life and have visited over 50 countries. I've spent a lot of time in Third World countries, and even places with conditions worse than that of a Third World country. I have seen true poverty and the darkness that comes with it. Those times did not prepare me for this trip. Father Brian would ask us each night if we saw Jesus today, and I would laugh and think, yes, everywhere. These families have nothing, and many had less than that. Yet, they all smiled, they all laughed. There was love everywhere. They welcomed us like family. I just don't really remember being so surrounded by God's love in the most unlikely of places before. Hate, anxiety, jealousy, and sadness seemed to be washed away from me. How could you not love these people? They radiate the love of God. Mass was packed each time, every seat was taken. At Mass they thanked God for all they had and all their blessings. It truly changed me.

It is difficult to capture the whole trip in one little write up. I struggled what to focus on. The story and legacy of Father Greg Schaffer, and the impact he had there would fill a whole book. Next to that book, would be the story of Father Stan Rother, and his path that lead to martyrdom. If unfamiliar, I highly recommend researching the life that these two lived. It is overwhelming. I know not everyone can participate in one of these trips led by the A'Kala Family Foundation. If you can, go. Don't let the world or job hold you back from going, they will still be here when you return. You won't be the same though. Walking around and working all day bathing in God's love will change you. The need down there is real, and we can help. If God calls on you, answer the call, don't wait for your Mother to call.

Jesse Olmstead



Dear A'KALA friends,

Great things are happening in San Lucas! We are building homes for the A'KALA families as fast as we can, the kids are doing very well in school, and everyone is healthy and getting bigger!

Our next group of volunteers will be in San Lucas July 13<sup>th</sup> -21<sup>st</sup>. We have numerous sets of protective fire fighter pants, coats, and helmets for the local fire fighters, we have thousands of socks to give away to the young and old, and will be giving hundreds of pairs of new shoes to the A'KALA children! God is good!



We are blessed to have many medical professionals with us on the July trip. These wonderful people will be working with and teaching the San Lucas medical teams various elements of health care. We have an Army Airborne Ranger Paramedic who will be teaching wound care. A college professor from Minnesota who will be educating them on Physical Therapy Techniques. A nurse practitioner will be offering insights into foot care for those with ingrown nails, corns, calluses, warts, fungus issues. Along with registered nurses and nursing aides who will be offering other aspects of health care, love and friendship.

We want to change to way we communicate with you. Instead of mailing you a newsletter, we want to send you information via email. Please send us your email address so we can keep you up to date as to the events in San Lucas and the ministries you are helping us to sustain. You can send your email to [m.stordahl@akalaff.org](mailto:m.stordahl@akalaff.org) (Don't forget the 2 'f's after A'KALA)

Thank you for your donations, support, and prayers that make the ministry of A'KALA possible! United we are accomplishing great things!

Sincerely,  
Father Brian Oestreich  
507-829-6667  
[b.oestreich@akalaff.org](mailto:b.oestreich@akalaff.org)

Thank you so much for sponsoring a child through A'KALA Family Foundation! We are so excited to be on this journey with you. By sponsoring a child for one year, you provide them and their family with food and education opportunities. This includes monthly food distributions as well as costs for school tuition and supplies (such as uniforms, backpacks, etc.). See our website ([www.akalaff.org](http://www.akalaff.org)) for more information on what your sponsorship covers

#### Here are some details regarding a sponsorship:

- \* A donation of \$480 will sponsor a child for a year. You can choose to either pay this amount month to month or one time a year. We accept PayPal (via the website) and check payments. Please fill out the payment information below indicating how you would like to remit your payment and send either via mail in the enclosed envelope or by email (take a picture of the application or scan) to [j.cink@akalaff.org](mailto:j.cink@akalaff.org).
- \* Yearly payments are due on January 31. If you want a A'KALA sponsorship, please let us know!
- \* Monthly payments of \$40 are payable via PayPal or check and are due on the first of each month.
- \* We encourage continued communication between sponsors and the children/families. All correspondence from either party (letters, pictures, etc.) will be translated and shared via email. Our staff in Guatemala will ensure that these items are printed and given to the family.
- \* If you have specific requests for gifts or donations (for birthdays, special events, etc.) please reach out to a board member and we will help make it happen.

Thank you again for partnering with us, and please contact us if you have any questions!

The people of A'KALA want to pray for you!

If you have a special prayer request please email us and let us know what to pray for. We will send your request to San Lucas and ask all the families of A'KALA to pray for you. Together we are blessed in prayer! You can send your prayer request to [m.stordahl@akalaff.org](mailto:m.stordahl@akalaff.org)



## TONY MELENDEZ Live in Concert

World known musician, Tony Melendez and Toe Jam Productions are coming to help spread the news and excitement about A'KALA! Please join us for one or more of Tony's upcoming concerts! Spread the word and help us raise awareness about A'KALA. At the concerts we will be focusing on sponsoring more A'KALA children. Join Tony and the rest of us for this incredible gathering!



New plot of Land bought to build AKALA houses. Marcos & Israel measuring the plot of land



Sharing bread with the children and mothers of AKALA families



Our winter visit to San Lucas will be  
**January 22 - 30, 2024**  
Please email us if you are interested in joining us.  
Everyone is welcome.

*Please don't forget, send your email to  
[m.stordahl@akalaff.org](mailto:m.stordahl@akalaff.org) so you can receive news  
and ministry information from San Lucas!*

### **Foundation Board of Directors and Contact Information:**

Father Brian Oestreich ~ [b.oestreich@akalaff.org](mailto:b.oestreich@akalaff.org)  
ph: 507-829-6667  
Julie Cink ~ [j.cink@akalaff.org](mailto:j.cink@akalaff.org)  
Mallory Raymond ~ [m.raymond@akalaff.org](mailto:m.raymond@akalaff.org)  
Meghan Stordahl ~ [m.stordahl@akalaff.org](mailto:m.stordahl@akalaff.org)  
Sydney Wittnebel ~ [s.wittnebel@akalaff.org](mailto:s.wittnebel@akalaff.org)  
Ryan Kaczmarek ~ Construction Resource Manager  
[r.kaczmarek@akalaff.org](mailto:r.kaczmarek@akalaff.org)  
Sandra Ajcot ~ Directory of Ministry  
San Lucas, Guatemala  
Marcos Galindo ~ Program Manager



### **A'KALA Team Members**

Katlyn Fischer ~ Social Media Support  
Shari Stordahl ~ Volunteer Resource and Medical Support  
Dawn Mork ~ Education and Translator  
Jill Lora ~ Sponsorship Resource and Translator  
Kris Radermacher ~ Publications and Communications