

Taking Goshen to Panama

Memories of Don Campbell

Interim Director of Missions from January 2020– January 2022

There is a warmth in Panama that has nothing to do with the weather. As we stepped out into the public area of the David Panama Airport there stood leaders of the Chiriqui association to greet us. Smiles and hugs were the order of the day in this wonderful central American city.

As soon as all the luggage and our team members were in the vehicles we were driven to our hotel to check in and get settled. It very quickly became clear that the volunteers from several Goshen Association churches came well prepared and eager to serve along side

our Panamanian colleagues. Although the rooms in our hotel were private it was easy to hear bible school songs being rehearsed in several rooms.

The volunteers were transported to their churches in the morning to assist with the numbers of children attending. They helped sing and teach and prepare snacks and work with the children doing crafts. After returning back to the hotel the volunteers immediately begin rehearsing for the next morning.

As the volunteers were involved with their church Bible schools we were off into the countryside with several host pastors to become acquainted with all of the churches and pastors in their association and with whom Goshen was in partnership.

The dedication and joy the Panamanian pastors exhibited was contagious. As they proudly displayed their worship or educational facilities, I could not help but think of the pastors doing so much with so little. Several times when I saw a pastor's library I almost felt guilty for my library back home. It was a humbling experience to go from area to area and see the churches and pastors that seemed so very happy to be serving right where they were.

We were there to deliver one visible message and that was "Goshen churches care", Our teams came to Panama to serve alongside not



Jan and Don Campbell

to take over. The dollars we were able to take to Panama were made available because of good Goshen churches and caring Goshen believers.

It was my privilege to sit down for awhile with the widow of a Panamanian pastor who had recently died. We were able to say to her and her children that there were folks in Goshen who cared for her.

During a time when my wife was involved with a women's conference I was just around the corner at the home of a dedicated churchman who talked about his life and family and then offered some amazing coffee in a little mug. Every time I use that mug I find myself on the man's front porch having wonderful fellowship.

I am confident in saying that it is not possible to go on a "mission trip" and return home unchanged. Every trip to Costa Rica, and more recently multiple trips to Panama has held on to part of my heart when I had to return home. Those trips help every volunteer understand how the Lord blesses every believer regardless of geography or economy.

I have never gone on a trip and not been blessed. If I've gone on a trip to help assist with project- clarification I have found myself more than excited about the possibilities our partners are dreaming about. If I have gone to get acquainted with the churches and the leaders I have come home with a dozen new friends.

I have learned to look at life differently by comparing it with the lives I have seen when on a mission trip. In Panama, if it is raining folks will be singing, walking in the rain with smiles. If there is a traffic jam in a small town people just wait patiently and then dart about without horns. People smile, people on the street nod their heads at you. The warmth of Central-America is certainly a wonderful experience.

Goshen Mission Trips: I went to David and Panama City January 24-29, 2020 with Goshen's VBS team to meet with pastors and their churches.

Jan and I went to David April 13-18, 2021 and toured churches while Jan participated in a Ladies Conference.

Previous Mission Trips: I went to Costa Rica as the BGAV State Stewardship Director and served in a Pastor's Conference and also in a Family Camp.

I also was part of a Mission Team to Panama led by Gayton Road Baptist Church where we were part of a weekend conference for Pastors and their families.



Team to Panama led by Gayton Road Baptist