

## El Cordero de Dios Baptist Church



### Project: Housing

<b>Total cost of project</b>	<b>\$ 56,416.80</b>
<b>Funding requested</b>	<b>\$ 48,852.80</b>
<b>Match funds</b>	<b>\$ 7,564.00</b>

**Project presented by**  
El Cordero de Dios Baptist Church

**Project managed by**  
Management Board - El Cordero de Dios Baptist Church

**Date of project presentation**  
January 2005

## Housing project

### **The Church**

The Cordero de Dios Baptist Church is situated in the suburb of Zacamil, Mejicanos Borough, in the north of the City of San Salvador. The Church has approximately 40 members, the majority of whom live in Zacamil. Others come from Lourdes, in the Borough of La Libertad, and from Soyapango, Apopa and Ilopango in the Borough of San Salvador. The membership come from a range of backgrounds including students, labourers, accountants, teachers, housewives, carpinters, etc. The Church was founded in 1978 as a mission and was constituted as a Church in 1981 during the pastorate of Virgilio Méndez Mármol and the evangelist Heriberto Pérez Peña, both remembered fondly by the congregation.

The Church is engaged in work in two communities; San Roque in the Mejicanos Borough, and, in the last 3 years, in response to the two earthquakes in El Salvador in 2001, we have opened a new work in the cantons of El Rodeo and El Paraíso in the Borough of San Pedro Perulapan, in the Department of Cuscatlan. We refer to this area as the San Pedro community due to the large incidence of families severely affected by that catastrophe. There is a very large population in this community and we began our work with 26 families. We are currently working with about 50 families who participate in activities together.

### **About the community of San Pedro:**

The hamlets of El Rodeo and El Paraíso, are situated approximately 3 kms from one of the main highways of the country. In spite of this it is a community with a markedly rural identity. Three dirt roads give access to the community but are virtually impassable by vehicles in the rainy season. The transport service is irregular and expensive. Many families have no access to electricity and the drinking water is supplied through a number of public standpipes, generally at a distance from the houses. Water for other domestic purposes is drawn from local wells but is not safe for consumption.

90% of housing was built from adobe, the materials often used by poor families, especially in rural areas. Adobe is a mixture of white earth, grass and other vegetation available in these communities. Such constructions are not supported by metal nor even wood, leaving buildings constructed this way particularly vulnerable to seismic activity.

The principal economic activities of the community are agricultural and craftmaking, producing baskets and mats ('petates') woven from a plant called 'tule'. The women work, principally as domestics, in houses in the nearby town, while others work in the 'maquilas' or assembly plants. Income never exceeds the minimum salary of \$144 per month. Given that families are often large it is difficult to meet the minimum requirements for a decent living.

### **Families:**

The inhabitants of the community are hard-working people with aspirations to improve their living conditions. They participate in all the activities for the benefit of the community. They are joyful, communicative, enjoy studying the Bible and reflecting together. Typically all community activities are characterised by an abundance of children, boys and girls, who run about playing and quickly make friends with visitors. In the visits that are made around the community the children are constant companions. A

very close relationship of equity has been developed with the community in which we eat, work and dream together. The mission of the Church is that these families may know Jesus through a Gospel practise that speaks for itself.

**Activities carried with the community:**

- Bible studies
- Summer schools
- Special celebrations (Christmas, birthdays, weddings, anniversaries)
- Support for the legalisation of properties
- International visits to the community
- House building - to date 11 haouses have been built using a mixed system of construction.
- Health campaigns are planned for the future.

**Reoccurring 'natural disasters' and their effects on the families:**

El Salvador has a population of approximately 6, 276,000 million inhabitants in a territory of approximately 20,700 squ.Kms.

It is a country with re-occurring natural disasters that affect the population in general but especially affect the poorest families. The decades of the 80s and 90s saw two such catastrophes. In 1986 part of the capital city was destroyed by a major earthquake. In 1997 the country was affected by Hurricane Mitch that destroyed some communities in their entirety, especially in rural areas.

At the beginning of 2001 two devastating earthquakes affected El Salvador. The first occurred on 13 January and the second exactly one month later. The two earthquakes affected different areas, particularly in the centre of the country, meaning the range of destruction was greater still. 1,142 people died and more than 8,000 were injured.

Apart from the enormous numbers of dead and injured, the final report of the National Emergency Committee (COEN) said that 25.6% of the population were affected. The 2001 calculated that more than 250,000 Salvadorans were forced into a situation of extreme poverty as a result of the tragedy.

**Reason for a housing project:**

Decent housing is a right and a primordial necessity for family stability and development. In El Salvador the right to housing is only a dream for poor families who are submerged in situations so precarious that a lifetime is not sufficient to save resources enough to own their own home. Conservative estimates from the office of the Vice-ministry put the housing deficit at around 480 thousand homes.

Another important aspect to note is the difficulty faced by families who have no legal security over the land on which their homes are built. The majority of families have lands inherited from their parents and other relatives on verbal agreements only. On many occasions the land has been shared between various relatives. This situation is natural in rural communities but it limits the possibilities of acquiring secure housing since the church, and other humanitarian aid agencies, see holding title deeds to land in the name of the particular family as an essential requirement before support can be offered for housing construction.

These legal transactions are expensive, both financially and in terms of the time required to process them through the State bureaucracies. The offices are also all concentrated in San Salvador.

For this reason we consider it important to include this note in the project since it always means that the very poorest families are excluded from support programmes of this kind due to their inability to fulfil this requisite.

## The housing project

### **Principal problems faced by the families in the community of San Pedro Pedro:**

1. Low economic income does not allow them to meet the basic necessities for decent housing.
2. Problems of legalisation of lands on which they are living due lack of economic resources, the time required for the legalisation processes and the bureaucracy of the governmental offices involved.

### **Project description:**

- Construction of 10 cement block houses approximately 6 x 5 Mts. This project will also intends to offer financial support for costs incurred by families processing title deeds for their homes. (These costs can be around \$500 per home.)

### **Objectives:**

Guarantee access to decent housing for 10 families, offering safe shelter from the weather, raising self-esteem and deepening their sense of belonging in the community, as well as raising the added-value of a house as the families sole possession.

That 17 families may successfully conclude the necessary legal procedures to secure land ownership, thereby removing the risk of losing their heritage.

### **Process of selection for families:**

- Each of the families is visited by Church members together with members of the Solidarity Committee and a record made of each case. An analysis will then be made of each case, together with the Solidarity Committee and the families recognised to be in the most precarious conditions will be chosen. This process will consider particularly present housing conditions, number of children under 5 years of age, single women, income, land ownership, amongst other factors.
- The proposal will then be presented to the assembly of all families so the process will be transparent.
- The families chosen are then on a waiting list until the financial resources are found to begin building the next house.

## **Administration structures:**

### **The Church:**

- A governing Board is responsible for the administration of all the church's resources. The Treasurer is a professionally trained public accountant and works with the National Audit Office of the Republic of El Salvador.
- The Board, in agreement with the church assembly, is responsible for the oversight of all activities carried out by the church in the community
- The church has named a team responsible for the missionary work in the community of San Pedro, although the activities involve the whole congregation. Within the group is a general co-ordinator with oversight of the construction process, especially of the purchase of materials.

### **The community:**

The church has encouraged the creation of a 'solidarity committee' with responsibility for the co-ordination of relevant activities related to the 56 families. The responsibilities of the committee include circulating information of the meetings, meeting together periodically to keep up to date with the situation of the families, keep the church informed of problems and progress within the community, co-ordinate the organisation of working groups and assist with the process of construction, offering skilled and unskilled labour alongside the other families.

The system of construction is one of mutual support. As and when finances are available for a house, the 56 families offer their support in its construction through a system of work groups. This system is a way of being in solidarity with each other.

## **Support for construction:**

### **The Church:**

- The administration, logistics and financing of resources.
- Organisation, delivery and evaluation of construction process.
- Presentation of financial reports and narratives as required by sponsors.
- Legal status of the church as support in the event of any relevant need.
- An electrician and a final year Architecture student are responsible for the technical co-ordination of the construction.
- A Law student is responsible for supporting families through any relevant legal processes.

### **The Solidarity Committee:**

- Supervision and follow-up of construction.
- Organisation and co-ordination of work groups.



30 barrels of water for construction, construction of external corridor (verrandah) with 'rustic' materials and unskilled labour.

**Overall proposal for construction of 16 houses and legalisation of 11 sites.**

Construction of 16 houses	\$	41,152.80
Legalisation of 11 housing sites	\$	7,700.00
Administration costs for project	\$	3,292.00
Contribution from community	\$	4,272.00
<b>Total</b>		<hr/>
		<b>\$ 56,416.8</b>

Total finances required (Construction y legalisation of sites)	\$	48,852.80
Church contribution	\$	3,292.00
Community contribution	\$	4,272.00
<b>Total</b>		<hr/>
		<b>\$ 56,416.8</b>

**Management team (church)**

Nidia Ruth Bolaños de Rodríguez  
President of Board  
Cordero de Dios Baptist Church

David Garay  
Board trustee  
Cordero de Dios Baptist Church

José Francisco Villatoro López  
Board Treasurer  
Cordero de Dios Baptist Church