



COMAYAGUA, HONDURAS

WINTER 2017

25th Anniversary



Do Something

By Allen Heerema, President

I simply wanted to take some high school students on a **Serve Project**. Twenty-five years later, it's clear that God had something more in mind. How could I have known that first journey would have so profoundly changed my life, and hopefully the lives of those reading this? Looking back, it's easy to see God's hand in orchestrating every step of the way.

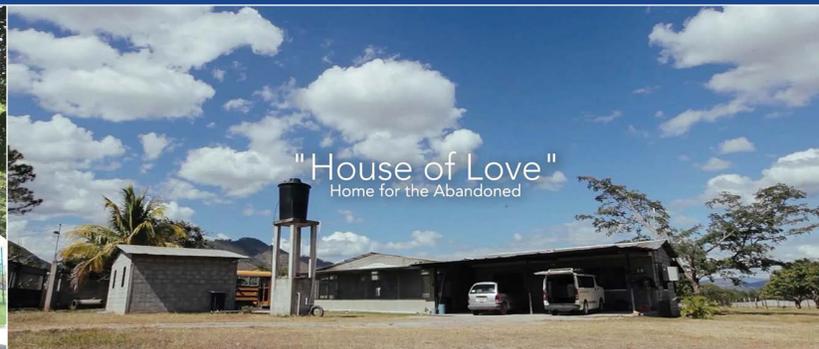
In August of 1990, Wayne & Char Merz led a group of high school students for the Young Calvinist Federation to help build a home for Mama Carmen and the eighteen children she was caring for at the time. I took three guys from Timothy Christian High School and joined that group of 30. During quiet times, I reflected on passages like Luke 4:18 that challenge us to act: "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed." I didn't just want to hear the Word; I wanted to do something about what it said.

Carmen was 18 years old when she first began taking in children. Soon the government was sending children her way. When we first met Carmen, she would not verbalize a need; she would simply bring the children's needs to God in prayer and fully expect God to provide, beautifully demonstrating a child-like faith. Knowing Carmen's needs and that she had no support, Wayne, Char, and Brian Kamstra founded All God's Children. Official incorporation as A.G.C, Ltd was finalized a couple years later. I wasn't part of starting it, but I admire the vision, courage, and faith that enabled that bold step.



Original Hogar building

25th Anniversary



Step one was for that first team of high schoolers to build the Hogar de Niño's on property donated by the Mayor of Comayagua on the outskirts of town. There was no wall for protection, not enough beds or meals, and no electricity but it was home.

Before long, we built dorms on what we call the Granja, or farm, and were sending all the older boys there. Without any walls, Chema & Ada, directors of the Granja, would go to bed in fear of being burglarized or worse. Eventually there was a wall to keep the chickens, cows, and horses in, and the bad out. The boys at the Granja had a wood shop, welding shop, and a soccer field to learn new skills and have fun.

I went back to Hogar every year with Wayne and Char. In 1997 they asked me to be part of the board. Two years later, my wife Gert and I began praying about what was next for us and seeking God's direction. At the next board meeting, Wayne & Char talked about stepping down to pursue other opportunities. We were all dumbfounded, how could we move forward with the

founders stepping aside? The fact that Gert and I were praying about our next step certainly got our attention. Like seriously — God, you want us to do what? God's plan was clear. Gert and I flew down to meet with Mama Carmen and asked her blessing on the change. Carmen accepted me into the new role and I became president on January 1, 2000.

We still are in awe of the vision and courage Wayne & Char demonstrated in beginning AGC. None of us would be involved if it wasn't for their bold steps in faith, answering that call from Isaiah: "Whom shall I send?" They continue to do work in Honduras. Years later Wayne told me that he is better as a starter — getting things started and then moving on. Well you did good my friend, thank you from all of us!

Things didn't get a lick easier once I took the reigns. The government continued to bring so many children that we really couldn't keep up financially. There was never enough money, food, or staff. By God's grace, the staff cared more about the kids and were willing

Continued on page 5



The First Girls

Alba Luz and Maria Elena

Alba Luz and her sister, Maria Elena, were just young girls when their mother died. Before their mother passed, her dear friend promised to look out for her young daughters. A short time later, the friend learned that the girls were being abused in their new home. True to her promise, she removed the girls from that home. Unable to care for the girls herself, she took them to a convent. However, the convent was not equipped to care for young children. Heartbroken upon seeing the girls being turned away, 18-year old Carmen, a nun-in-training, made a quick, life-altering decision to care for the girls.

As Alba Luz (Albita) and Elena walked away from the convent, holding hands, they began an adventure with the woman they would affectionately come to call "Mami Carmen." Carmen provided safety and love as well as the lesson to rely on God to meet their every need from the struggle to provide food, living without running water and windows without screens to sometimes sleeping three and four to a bed. They witnessed as the Honduran government entrusted more children to Mami and the generosity, love and financial support of the serve teams visiting as part of All God's Children.

The girls turned into young women, went to school and married. Albita and Elena have become mothers themselves. Albita married Nester Raul and have Carlos Raul, Alex Eduardo, and Carmen Yisel. Elena married Jose and they have Arlin, Jose, Karina, Judith and Maria.

At 39 years of age, Elena is a proud mom and wife. Her primary job is to care for the needs of her family. Albita, now 37 years old, graduated from high school as an

elementary school teacher and took some university courses. She teaches special needs children at Grandpa Jerry's School in the mornings before helping with household activities at the Hogar in the afternoons. She even tutors some of the elementary and high school girls when they return home from school daily.

The Hogar is truly their family with numerous brothers and sisters. The Hogar is where they turn in times of joy, like when "Papa" Allen walked Albita down the aisle. It is where they turn in sickness like when Elena had extremely painful kidney stones and AGC board member Pam DeBoer was able to take her to the hospital for treatment. And when her daughter needed brain surgery, All God's Children raised the funds needed to pay for the surgery and after care.

A young nun put the needs of Albita and Elena before her own and to trust in God to provide for their every need. Others came alongside to provide support. As a result, almost 600 children have found shelter, love and compassion through the men, women and even children that, through All God's Children, heeded God's call in James 1:27 to "look after orphans and widows in their distress."



"Papa" Allen with Albita on her wedding day

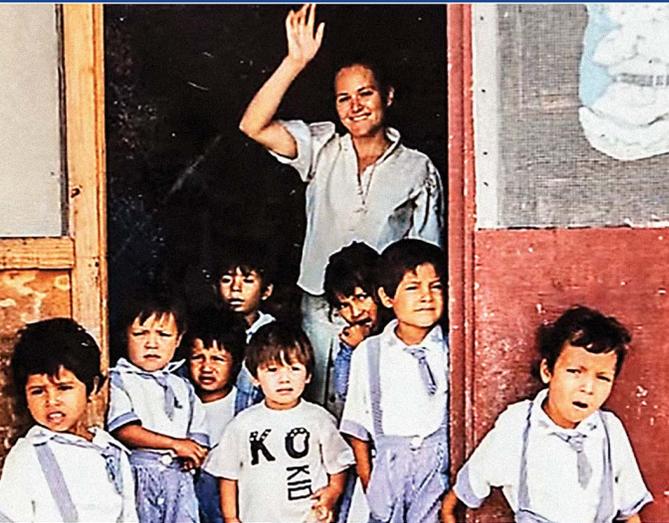


Elena, Jose and family



Albita, Nester Raul and family

25th Anniversary



Dear Supporters of All God's Children,

With great joy I greet you on this, the 25th anniversary of All God's Children. It is very difficult for me to find the words that would express my deep appreciation for all that has been done for our Home. AGC arrived at an opportune moment as an answer of God's providential faithfulness.

As a young woman, I took a step of faith and did what I believed God would have me do to care for the immediate needs of a few children. It was not possible to imagine that God would bring hundreds of children and so many of you to help with the work and with their care. My focus is and always has been the care and keeping of the children. God has been faithful to answer my prayers and the prayers of those who also love the ninos.

God has sent each of you as angels to give love and protection to the children of the great Nazareth Family. I see the love of God reflected in you. The affection that our boys and girls receive from you is deeply appreciated. Over these years, we have been able to observe how the children have found family, truly sent by God, that has filled the vacuum of loneliness from a lack of a biological family. You have been a part of that great blessing.

It has been thanks to the help you have provided that many lives have been transformed, enabling many young people to fulfill their dreams. Without your help, it would have been impossible for our different Homes to function. Thank you.

With great love and appreciation,
Carmen and the children of Hogar Nazareth

“Always be willing to help the one who needs the most.” – Tia Paoli

Tia Paoli has been a steadfast, faithful blessing to Hogar Nazareth from the beginning. On June 1, 1990, Paoli arrived at the Hogar with a local priest who told her a young woman needed help taking care of children. The two-month job to help as needed six days per week would help Paoli provide financially for daughter, Adriana, and Paoli's husband who had lost his sight in an accident.

Soon Paoli fell in love with her job and decided to fight for the children alongside Mami Carmen. Over the years, she has cleaned the house, cut the children's hair, washed clothes, cared for infants and sick children, filled in when Carmen was away from the home, and prepared meals.

Today, Tia Paoli can be found preparing meals or providing a listening ear and loving advice to the children when she is not with husband and their five grandchildren and eleven great-grandchildren. Paoli is proud of each of the children she has seen grow and become good people.



Continued from page 2

to work for free until we could raise enough to both feed the children and pay the staff. We were forced to our knees on many sleepless nights praying to God to provide. It was not easy to feel helpless through those difficult times. But when the goings get tough, you can better see God's hands at work. In Honduras we call them "God sightings."

Finally, we reached the point where we had enough plus a small amount left over. With so many people in Honduras in need, we decided to find someone to partner with that would be a good steward of the small surplus God had blessed us with.

Nelly, founder of CasAyuda, a school for special needs children was that someone. Born able bodied, Nelly was confined to a wheelchair since falling out of a tree at age 15. As an adult, Nelly remembered how God had provided for her and now wanted to help the least of these. We began partnering with Nelly in 2002.

As Carmen's children got older, there was a need for them to go to university in Tegucigalpa. In 2005, after much research and prayerful consideration, a townhouse protected by a wall and an armed guard was purchased so the first wave of children could go off to college. In 2006 a second townhouse was purchased for the college bound boys. Carmen named this project Divine Providencia because of the miraculous way God provided it.

Carmen's heart of mercy led her to ask AGC to start a home for emotionally, psychologically, or mentally scarred women. While our board prayerfully considered the request, Carmen called in tears because some of the girls she had raised for many years could no longer live at the Hogar. They would be abused on the streets if we didn't take action. We couldn't allow that to happen. Misericordia (House of Mercy) began in 2006.

AGC wanted to "enlarge its territory" in God's Kingdom. God used one of Carmen's children to direct us to our next project. Bridys grew up in Hogar when things were very difficult in the days of little food, water, or staff, no electricity and sleeping three and four to a bed. Bridys suggested we help Arvil and Miriam because she saw in Hogar Amor what she lived in as a child. Arvil and Miriam were wonderful people serving the Lord by caring for these children but they were in desperate need of help. AGC began to partner with Hogar Amor in 2007.

Young, single women having babies is an epidemic in Honduras. In many cases the girls are left to raise the baby alone. All too often the perpetrator is a family member, maybe even their own father or stepfather. The government was asking Carmen for help so she



Allen Heerema and Mami Carmen, First Serve Trip, 1990

asked AGC to start a home for these girls. We have always prayed for guidance and direction before making major decisions.

God always gets our attention when it's in His plans and he answered our prayers. One of the girls we helped raise at Hogar left all too early to live with a relative. Soon she was pregnant by an abusive man. God had our attention. We did not want God to ask us one day: "Why didn't you help those girls when I gave you a chance? I showed before that I would provide, why did you lose Faith in Me?" By the Grace of God "Buen Pastor" began in 2008 to care for women with young children. The name "Buen Pastor" translates to "Good Shepherd." Isaiah 40:11 reads "He tends his flock like a shepherd: He gathers the lambs in his arms and carries them close to his heart: he gently leads those that have young."

The last 25 years have been full of God sightings. They haven't been easy, but they have been good. And they have allowed a lot of good people to do something about what the Word says. I don't know what will be the next something for All God's Children to do. But God does. The people of Honduras are truly in the hands of a "Good Shepherd."

25 Years of Help in Honduras

562 children cared for

55 high school graduates

43 attending/attended college

146 Serve Trips

Over 1500 Donors/Sponsors

**SAVE THE
DATE!**

Join us as we celebrate **Juan Francisco and Christina's College Graduation** on Sunday, May 7. Open House from 3:30–6:30pm in the western Chicago suburbs. RSVP by March 31 to allgodschildrenhonduras.org/RSVP to receive official location and details.

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