



SOLAR UNDER THE SUN

An Ecumenical Mission of the Synod of the Sun, PCUSA

August 2015 Newsletter

Come, As a Child

The children clumped around the Las Glorias community's worksite as soon as we arrived. Curious, laughing, nimbly energetic, they were. The feeling, "These kids are why we came," was inescapable. Children like Wilmond and his sister, Juliette Francoise, were the reason.

Wilmond was born with spina bifida and, because the local school was unable to handle his physical needs, he never started. Nevertheless, a more active child would be hard to find. At the work site, he was quick to pick up an unclaimed shovel and work it into the rocks with his bare right foot. The jagged stone made us cringe but seemed little challenge to Wilmond. Soon, he had filled the wheelbarrow used to clear the rocky pad where a simple, new, two-room home would take shape.



Above: Wilmond Francoise, BELOW: Juliette Francoise

Whenever we took a break from the rock work, Wilmond and Juliette and Francoise were the first to join two of our number, Katy and Hannah, for story time. The children's eyes were electric as they poured over the Spanish language books while sitting on the laps of their new friends.

The "we" was a group of 16 younger and older adults, one high schooler and one junior higher. Some were in college and some just out. There was a lawyer, a small business owner, a religious educator, a church facilities manager and a couple of pastors. Our task was to help Las Glorias' residents build new homes. Each potential new home owner was expected to invest "sweat equity" in constructing a home which would eventually be his or her family's. The work was hard, hot and thirsty. Chipping rock is grueling but it had to be removed before footings could be filled with hand-mixed cement. It was shovel and pick and pry bar work in clear, baking, spunk draining weather.



Wilmond and Juliette Francoise

Tim and Gloria Wheeler, our Honduran co-worker hosts, encouraged us to be open to what might happen. Our goal was not to finish building several houses but to help forge community through working, eating and living together. Others had come before us to survey the Las Glorias area and discover significant needs. We helped move a bit closer to meeting some of them. Others have followed to build upon what is already being done. By the summer's end, affordable reliable energy, powered by the sun, will be available to our Honduran brothers and sisters. It is a privilege to learn from those with whom we work and to witness the power of faith placed in our generous God. The light and life we are blessed to share through Solar Under the Sun are gifts that return many times over. Hands get tougher; hearts more tender. It seems to happen all the time.

—Bill Galbraith, General Presbyterian
Presbytery of Arkansas

Solar School #13 is Almost Here!

Solar School # 13 will be held September 10–13! If you would like to help a community in need of solar energy, come learn how. Perhaps your church already has a mission outreach in a remote area of the world, we will train your mission team to provide this necessity for them.

Solar School is held at the beautiful Ferncliff Camp and Conference Center just outside of Little Rock, AR. Two courses are taught simultaneously: Solar 1 and Solar 2. This is done so that each team can send members to both courses during the same session (each installation trip requires at least one person from each course). Solar School runs from Thursday at 10:00 am. through Sunday at 10:30 am.



Solar School #12 Students, May 2015

Solar 1: Leadership, Partnership, Development, and Surveying

This course includes:

- Exploring the theology of doing mission in partnership
- Developing partnerships and organizational skills
- Trip management and leadership
- Evaluating sites for solar projects
- Increasing cultural awareness
- Negotiating covenants

Solar 2: Installation and Equipping Partners

This course includes:

- Assembling off-grid solar energy systems
- Emphasizing systems to power clean water systems and more
- Assessing electrical loads
- Learning system designs
- Practicing safety and maintenance

Plenary sessions include:

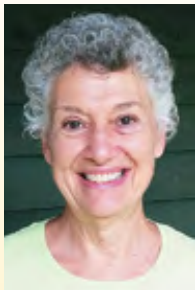
- Mission strategy session
- Fundraising Devotions
- Small group reflections
- Cultural differences between countries

The cost for Solar School is \$485 per registrant, which includes room, board, instruction, and training manuals. The cost for commuting registrants is \$375 per person.

Please register online at www.solarunderthesun.org/getinvolved/solarschool.cfm. For any questions concerning registration, please call Ferncliff Camp at (501) 821-3063.

God's Littel Light Bulb: Mary Ellen on Joining Solar Under the Sun

I first heard of Solar Under the Sun when I was a commissioner to Synod of the Sun. It was still very new. At each meeting I heard a little more, always positive. As the details emerged meeting by meeting I was more and more impressed. Everything I'd ever heard about doing mission well, Solar seemed to be doing.



There was a need in Haiti and other countries for a dependable source of electricity. The original idea was to provide electrical power for the water purification systems that our neighboring synod provides through Living Waters for the World. These teams had discovered that electrical power was not always reliable in the places where their water purification systems were installed. When the electricity failed, communities had to substitute generators. These are expensive to rent or buy, the fuel is expensive, and

transporting both machines and fuel is a challenge. On top of all that the diesel fuel pollutes the air with carbon dioxide and many toxins.

By contrast solar power fuel is cheap, doesn't require transportation, and doesn't pollute or contribute to climate change. Volunteers had designed systems that trained amateurs could be trained to install and that receiving communities could be trained to maintain. The system of charging a little for the product means that the project is sustainable. When something needs replacing, there's money in the "kitty."

All these components resonated with everything I'd learned about good charity and good mission. It's based on trained volunteers—not just trained to install something, but trained to build working relationships with people of another culture. This means that their witness grows out of genuine caring—the only kind that really works for God's glory. I'm also proud of the relationship between Solar and Living

Waters. Solar didn't reinvent the wheel. It has adapted a highly successful model and worked cooperatively across synod and denominational boundaries to maximize the results. It gave me great satisfaction to see our synod devoting resources of talent and treasure to such an innovative program on a scale single presbyteries or congregations could not do as well.

So even when my terms on Synod were done I was bragging on Solar everywhere. And when the call came to serve on the board, I was delighted. On the board, no surprise, I've met dedicated, spiritually vigorous Christians who are a pleasure and an inspiration to work with and know. I am sixty-eight years old, and I've never been on a mission trip. I think Solar is God's offer of a chance to do so, and I'm excited about the future for myself as well as this great organization. Maybe it's for you, too!

—Mary Ellen Summerlin
Solar Under the Sun Board Member



ABOVE: Signing of the Covenants
LEFT: The June 2015 Honduras Team
Front—(left to right) Olvin Duron, Wilfredo Miranda, Ricardo Flores; Middle—Gini Hudson, Megan Rubio, Emily Fausett, Colleen Merritt; Back—Will Pfeiler, Ruthie McRae, Dan Daniel, Bob Merritt, Duke Monroe, Chris McRae, John Bruner, Charles (aka. Carlos) Hudson

The New SP-12 System Has Arrived!

New system is powering eight homes in Honduras!

In the last newsletter, we told you of opportunities opening up to work with communities to install small solar systems in single family homes. We are now excited to be able to tell you that the new SP-12 (single panel, 12 volt) Solar System has not only been developed but is powering eight homes in the rural community of Las Glorias, Honduras! At the end of June, a team comprised mostly of members from Northwest Arkansas churches traveled to (and for some, this was a return trip) Las Glorias to work with the community there on this pilot project of the newly designed, smaller system.

I had traveled or been at solar school with nearly everyone on this team before, and I have rarely had the experience to work with such motivated servants. I think the biggest impression that I have from them is how well they connected and worked with the people of the community. While the Solar 1's were playing and dancing with the children, the Solar 2's were training a team from the community on the systems. I would also like to note that the team from Las Glorias was so well trained by the Solar 2's, that when the time came at the end of the trip to teach the families how to operate and maintain their new

systems, the North Americans stepped back and all of that teaching was done by our new Honduran partners.

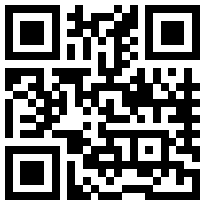
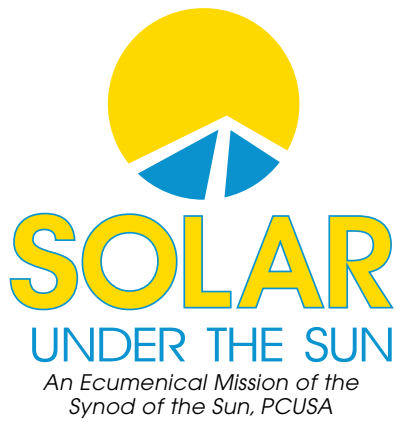
The covenants for these systems were not only signed by the initiating partner from the U.S. and the homeowners, but also by the mayor of Trinidad (the municipality of which Las Glorias is a part). We have since been in communication and the families are very excited about their solar energy systems, which are working great!

There are many other rural communities in Honduras that have come to us, wanting to do similar projects. If you are interested in partnering with them, let us know!

—Emily Fausett
 Solar Under the Sun Director of Development



Sadi Miranda, Training Members of the Community on the New Solar Systems



Scan this QR code
for more information!

Solar Under the Sun Donors!

Thank you to all of our supporters who donated
from March 25–July 29!

Presbyteries

New Covenant Presbytery Palo Duro Presbytery

Churches

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First Presbyterian Church of Fort Smith
St. Andrew Presbyterian Church
St. James Presbyterian Church Adult Sunday School Class
Valley Presbyterian Church

Individuals

Roy and Vicki Deskin	Judy & David Fletcher
Ashley Goad	Joe Hill
Carol McDonald	Eugene & Florence McKelvey
Bill Mendenhall	Mary Ellen Summerlin
Jerry Perry	

In Honor Of

Rose and Red Olander Jan and Harold Skaggs

Without YOU, this ministry would not be possible.

Go Green with Us!

In keeping with our desire to be kind to the world that God has made, Solar Under the Sun would like to offer you the option of going paperless. If you would like to begin receiving this newsletter via email rather than in printed form, please email Emily Fausett at emily@solarunderthesun.org. Simply type "Newsletter" in the subject line and type a short message in the body that you would like to go paperless. Thank you for helping us to protect our environment.

SUTS Blurbs

Upcoming Solar School

Session #13: September 10–13, 2015
Session #14: May 19–22, 2016
Session #15: September 22–25, 2016

Register online at
www.solarunderthesun.org

Upcoming Solar Schools

SUTS VBS curriculum is available for \$50. Please visit our website to order your copy today!

SUTS Stats

12 Solar Schools—245 graduates
64 SUTS solar systems installed through August 2015
51 systems in Haiti 1 system in Ukraine
1 system in Kenya 1 system in Uganda
10 systems in Honduras
48 SUTS systems operate LWW clean water systems
16 stand-alone SUTS systems

Newsletter Information

If you have any stories or photos to share, send them to emily@solarunderthesun.org. Your stories could be featured in our next newsletter or on our website or Facebook page!

Spread the Word

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