

Our Brothers and Sisters in El Salvador



Overview

- The history and plight of the poor
- The Lutheran Church in El Salvador
- How Lutherans in Milwaukee are walking with the people of El Salvador
- Questions



Central America



El Salvador





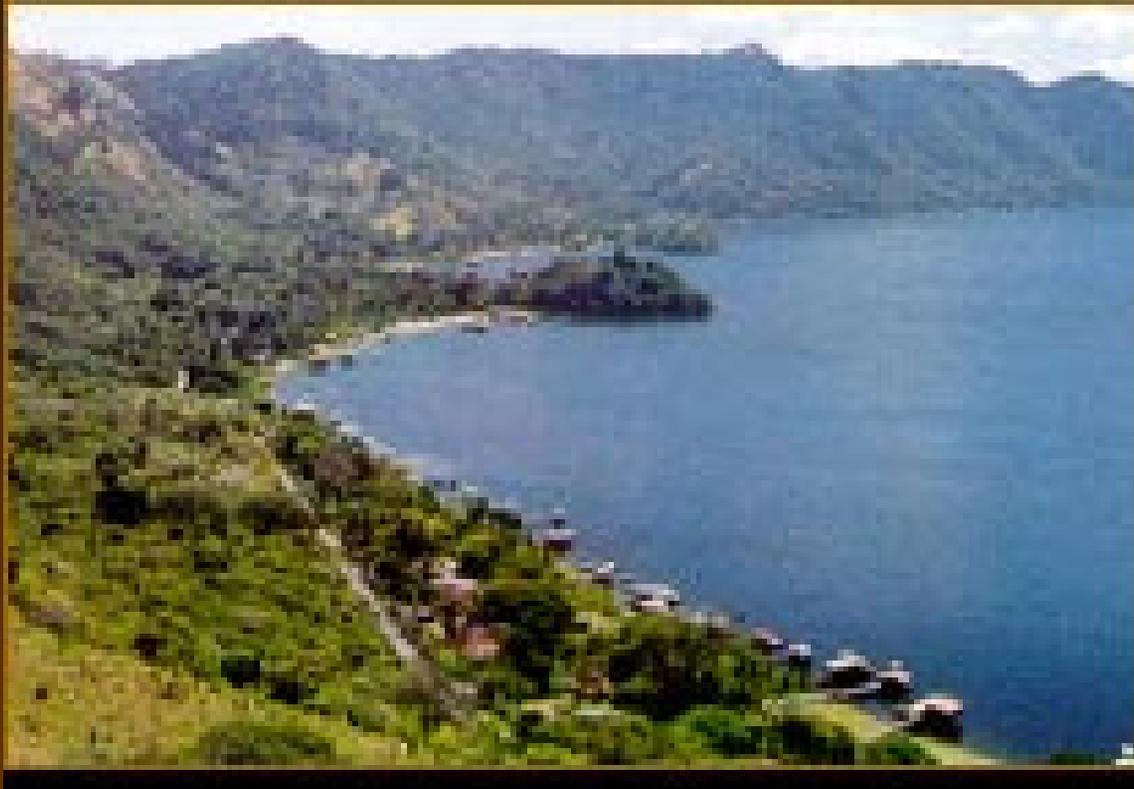
Some Facts

- Population 5.9 million, 1.7 million in San Salvador
- Size – about size of Massachusetts
- Most densely populated country in the Americas
- 20% of population lives outside the country (mostly in US)
- 55% Roman Catholic
- Crops – coffee, sugar, livestock, corn

El Salvador Weather

Month	Mean Temperature		Mean Total Precipitation (mm)
	Daily Minimum	Daily Maximum	
Jan	61.3	86.5	5.0
Feb	62.2	86.2	2.0
Mar	63.9	89.6	9.0
Apr	66.2	90.0	36.0
May	68.0	87.4	152.0
Jun	67.3	85.1	292.0
Jul	66.4	86.2	316.0
Aug	66.7	86.0	311.0
Sep	66.9	84.2	348.0
Oct	66.2	84.4	217.0
Nov	64.2	84.2	36.0
Dec	62.4	85.3	10.0

History of El Salvador



History of El Salvador

- 1524: El Salvador is seized by Spain.
- Fourteen European families control almost all of the land and resources, enslaving native Indians.
- El Salvador obtained independence in 1821, but the same wealthy elite maintained its domination of the land.

- In 1932, there was a revolt by peasants and Indians.
- In response, the Salvadoran army murdered anyone who looked Indian or who supported the uprising.
- 30,000 people were killed during *la Matanza*, the Massacre.

- By the early 1970s, several small guerilla groups had formed, believing change would only come through armed struggle.



- During this time, most Salvadorans were suffering from poverty, unemployment, overpopulation and lack of land.
- El Salvador still had a near feudal land system. Only 2% of the country's population controlled 60% of the farmable land.

- Parts of the Catholic church sided with the poor. The wealthy were not pleased with this new consciousness and accused the Church of becoming "politicized."
- As the poor organized, the wealthy sent their military and death squads to repress anyone who was suspected of being organized, working with the progressive Church, and demanding their rights.

- Monsignor Oscar Romero, the Archbishop of San Salvador, became increasingly critical of the government:

"A Church that does not unite with the poor to denounce, poverty, the injustices committed against them, is not the true Church of Jesus Christ."



On March 24, 1980, Archbishop Romero was assassinated while saying mass in San Salvador. The Sunday before he had called on soldiers to disobey orders to kill innocent civilians.



...That year the civil war began.

- Later that same year four U.S. churchwomen in El Salvador are abducted and killed.



Over the course of the decade, some 65,000 civilians died at the hands of the Salvadoran security forces and their associated death squads. The Salvadoran government forces were supported by US military aid, advisers, and training.



Civilian Atrocities

"...soldiers would invade, and they would kill every living thing - animals and people - everything. We'd flee into the mountains...there were women and they would say, "What would I do out there with my children? I'm staying here." And then they were lined up and machine-gunned to death..."

- Civilian Margarita Acosta de Alas

- Over 1,000,000 people fled the country.



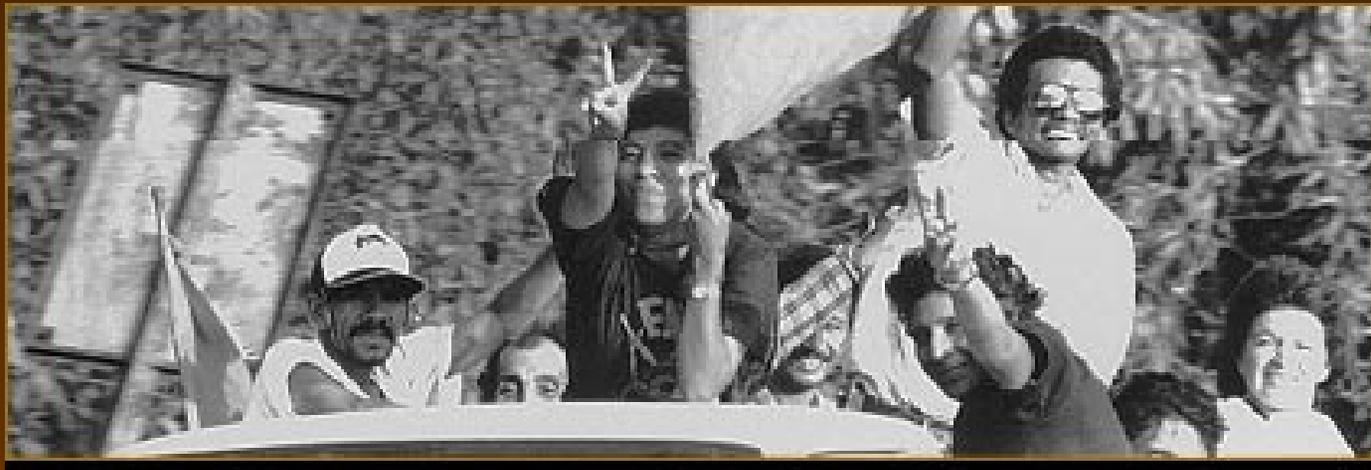
- In November 1989, senior army officers ordered soldiers to kill six outspoken Jesuit priests at the University of Central America.



This unceasing violence prompted both the government and the rebels to begin peace negotiations, under United Nations mediation.



- An agreement was reached on January 16, 1992 which provided for military and political reforms.



Effects of Civil War

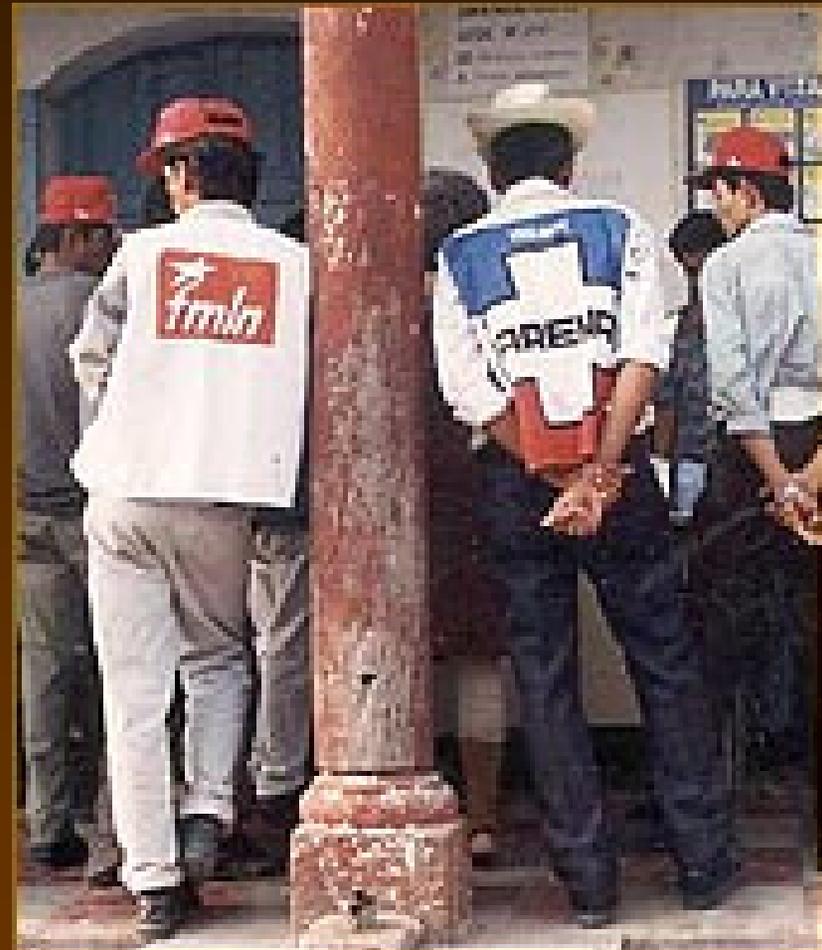
- The 12-year civil war claimed the lives of 75,000 people.
- 600,000 had been displaced inside the country
- More than a million had gone into exile.

Post Civil War

- The Salvadoran armed forces, de facto rulers of the country since 1932, have been removed from the political process.
- A new civilian police force has been created
- Death squad activity has largely disappeared
- The former warring parties are now political parties

Elections Following the Civil War

- 1992 Peace Accords settle the bloody 12 year civil war
- Two Major Parties -- ARENA and FMLN
- Other minor parties
- ARENA has won all three post-war presidential elections
- FMLN won greater number of legislative seats in last election



El Salvador Today

- Recovering from natural disasters
- Poverty and unemployment
- Gang violence
- Struggling with globalization
- Emigration

Life in One Salvadoran Community

Los Heroes en la Fe
Heroes in Faith







































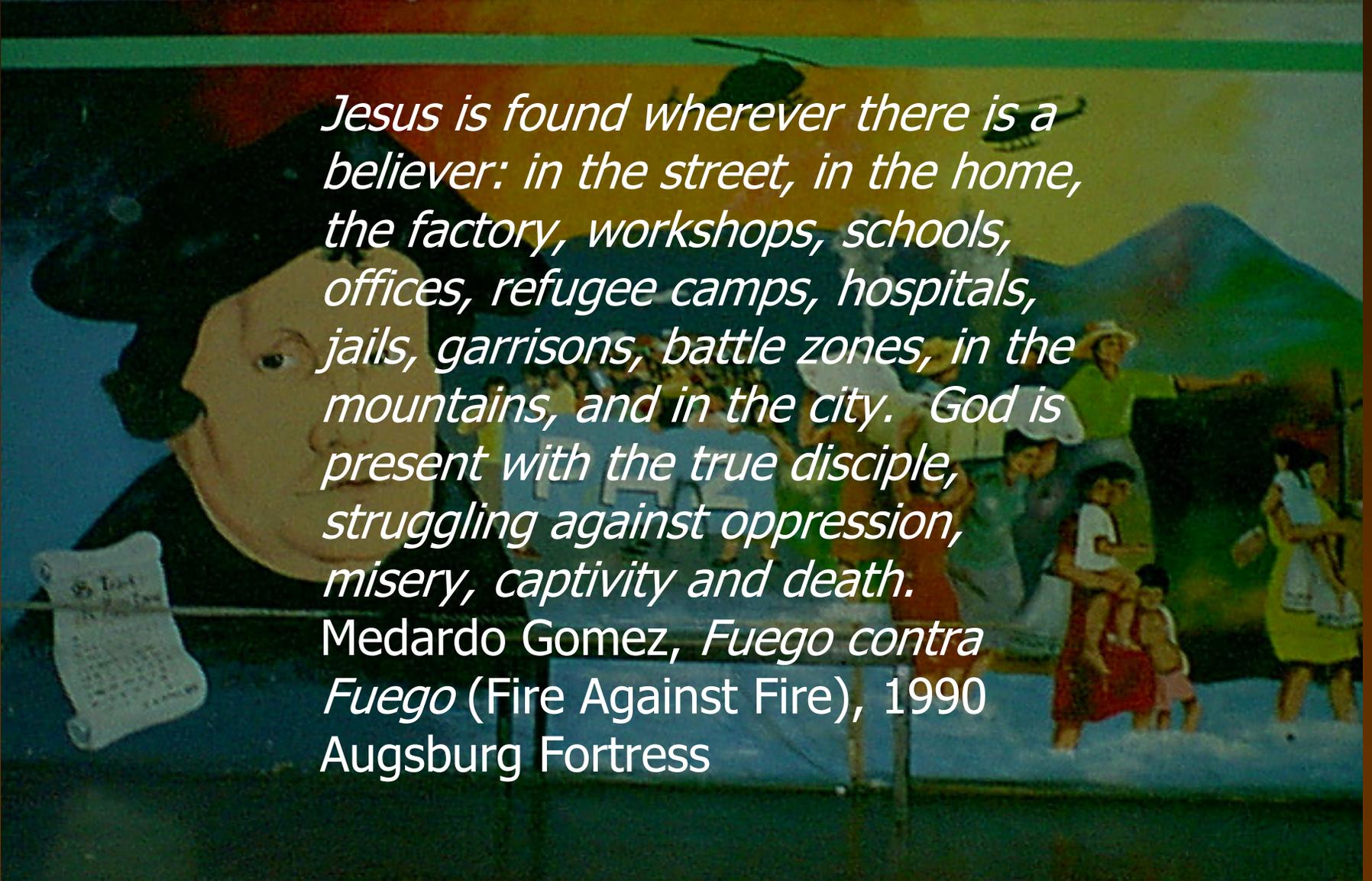




The Lutheran Church in El Salvador

Jesus is found wherever there is a believer: in the street, in the home, the factory, workshops, schools, offices, refugee camps, hospitals, jails, garrisons, battle zones, in the mountains, and in the city. God is present with the true disciple, struggling against oppression, misery, captivity and death.

Medardo Gomez, *Fuego contra Fuego* (Fire Against Fire), 1990
Augsburg Fortress



The Salvadoran Lutheran Church

- First congregation formed in 1952 by a Lutheran missionary from Wisconsin
- First Salvadoran Lutheran pastor ordained in 1961
- Salvadoran church played a prophetic role during the civil war, led by its current bishop Medardo Gomez
- Church ran the Faith and Hope refugee camp during the war.

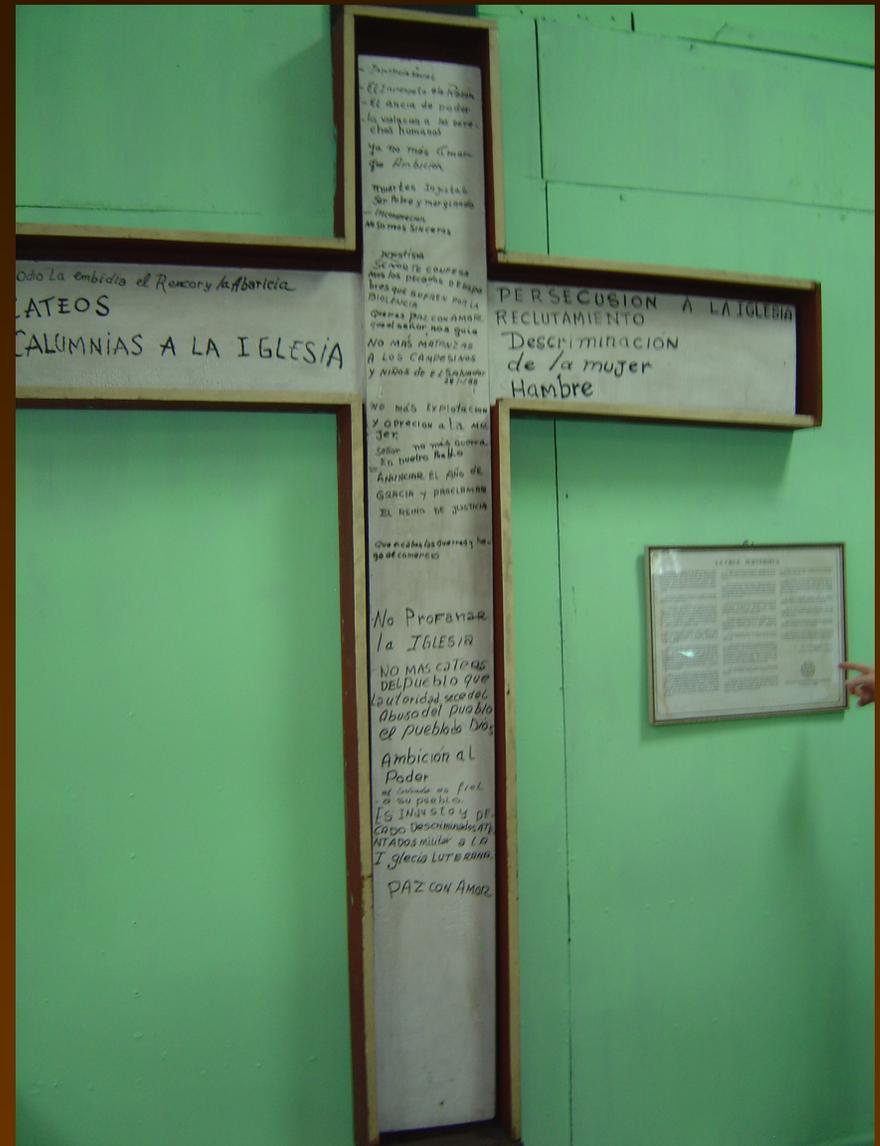
During the war

- Bishop Gomez continues to speak out on behalf of the poor and dispossessed
- Bishop Gomez is abducted and tortured, and let free only after international pressure
- Pastor David Fernandez is killed by death squads
- Canadian Lutheran David Ruhle is arrested on same day as murder of the Jesuits

During the war

- Church establishes Faith and Hope refugee camp
- Church walks with refugees to return to their homes
- Bishop Gomez nominated for Nobel Peace Prize in 1992.

The Subversive Cross





After the War

- The SLS continues to walk with the poor
- Speaks out on important issues
- Runs health clinics and a homeless shelter
- Congregations in the most marginalized areas





In 2005, the Lutheran Church supported refugees from the Santa Ana volcano and Hurricane Stan



Companion Synods

- In 1989, an interfaith delegation returned from El Salvador telling of the need to help Salvadoran refugees return to their war-torn country and reestablish themselves.
- The Greater Milwaukee Synod became a companion synod with the Salvadoran Lutheran Church

How Wisconsin Lutherans Walk with El Salvador

- Prayer and Accompaniment
- Sister Parish Program
- Delegations
- Pastoral Support Endowment Fund

Caravan of Hope

- After the 2001 earthquakes, Milwaukee synod sent the Caravan of Hope with relief supplies
- Caravan including this small school bus, driven from Milwaukee to El Salvador



The Container of Hope

- From October 2004 through June 2005, congregations of the Milwaukee Synod worked to fill the “Container of Hope”
- A 40 foot shipping container sent from Milwaukee to San Salvador



“These people shake us up because they bring home to us that things are much worse in the world than we dared to imagine...if we allow them to share their suffering with us, they communicate some of their hope to us as well...and we recognize that there is something going on in the world that is more wonderful than we dared to imagine.”

Dean Brackley S.J.

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