



Sister Parish E-News
Sharing personal stories, resources, news and action opportunities for the Sister Parish community.



St Joan of Arc visits TN2 after waiting three full years

This August, delegates from St Joan of Arc in Minneapolis, Minnesota visited their sister church in Tierra Nueva 2, Guatemala. Some had been waiting to visit for three years. It was as if all the love and pain of the last three years just came pouring out.

Watch the video above as [Sandi, Mia and Rylee share their delegation stories](#) during mass at St Joan of Arc and read [Meghan's reflections](#) shared during the mass in Tierra Nueva 2 during the delegation.

As Meghan said, we "have confirmed that our relationship is as strong as before the pandemic. The most impactful moment happened during a meeting with the committee. We were sharing about all that we had lost during the pandemic, crying, hugging and very sad. Meanwhile the youth of both churches were playing games right next door, a very loud game filled with a lot of laughter. But the loud interruptions did not bother us because it was a perfect example of our relationship sharing our grief and our joy like family. As it says in today's first reading from Isaiah "them I will make joyful in my house of prayer." (56:1, 6-7)"



East Orrington, Virginia start the Sister Parish journey together

A group from East Orrington Congregational Church, Maine visited our sister parish community Virginia, Guatemala for the first time in May 2023, after waiting anxiously for 3 years because our 2020 delegation was canceled due to the pandemic.

If there is one thing that was confirmed for me over and over on this trip is that, as Christians, we are called to great love and unity. And the best way to pursue greater love and unity is to put yourself into the shoes of another and learn from their reality, whether they be next door or on the other side of the world."

Read [more from delegate Doug Fogg](#) on our blog and see [delegation photos on Flickr](#).



Dina builds community at Downers Grove FUMC

In July, Dina from [UPAVIM](#) visited sister church Downers Grove FUMC in Illinois. While there, Dina built community with friends new and old, met the Missions, Justice and Community Committee, taught kids how to make Guatemalan worry dolls at the church's Vacation Bible School, attended family movie night in the church parking lot, spoke at the service, and met with cooperatives in the Chicago-area to share her knowledge and experience.

[Read more from Dina.](#)



U.S. Sister Parish churches gather on Zoom
 In June, we organized a Zoom call with members from different Sister Parish churches in the United States. We played a [recap of our work](#) for the six months prior to the call, shared resources and ideas, and reflected on how these calls can best meet the needs of U.S. churches.

It was a good space for people to meet and share their opinions and support each other. We hope to have more calls like this to facilitate communication between the churches. If you would like to be included in the calls, contact us at usoffice@sisterparish.org.

- Resources**
1. Bruce Sherman's [sermon](#) for Wallingford UMC May 15, 2022
 2. Bruce Sherman's [presentation](#) at WUMC July 2, 2023
 3. [Teach Central America Week](#) - October 2-6, 2023
 4. [Simple connecting activities for U.S. churches](#)

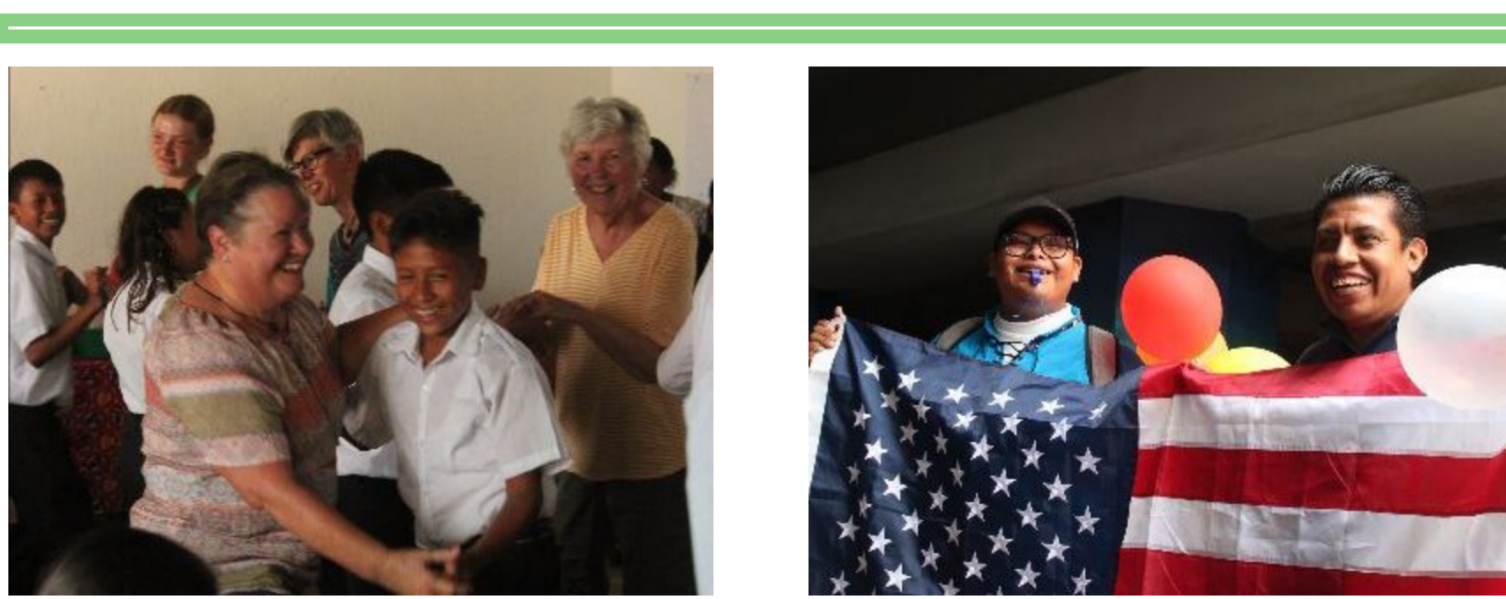


Procession with the figures of Saint Romero and Jesus carried around the community of Los Ranchos, El Salvador.

Commemorations in honor of Saint Romero

On March 24, 1980, Monsignor Romero was murdered while giving his homily at the Divina Providencia chapel. A single bullet from a sniper rifle in front of the chapel went through his heart and ended his life on Earth, but his legacy is still alive and passed on from generation to generation in El Salvador.

Every year the Sister Parish communities of El Salvador commemorate the date with activities in honor of Saint Romero. We are sharing photos from March events in Los Ranchos, as well as more about how [Los Ranchos and their sister church in Duluth honored Saint Romero together](#).



Rediscovering the joy of delegations

We are thrilled we are once again able to organize delegations and in-person visits.

We have a few more delegations planned for this year. In October community members from Guarjila, El Salvador will visit Wallingford United Methodist Church in Seattle. Just a few weeks later, members of our U.S. board and other friends of Sister Parish will travel to Guatemala and El Salvador on the Open Delegation. The focus of the delegation will be to visit and accompany as many Sister Parish communities as possible in 11 days and to learn about the impacts of climate change.

We encourage you to think about traveling on a future delegation. Now is a great time to start [planning for 2024](#).

Please contact the Sister Parish committee in your community or, if you are not a member of a U.S. Sister Parish church, contact us directly about open delegations at delegations@sisterparish.org.

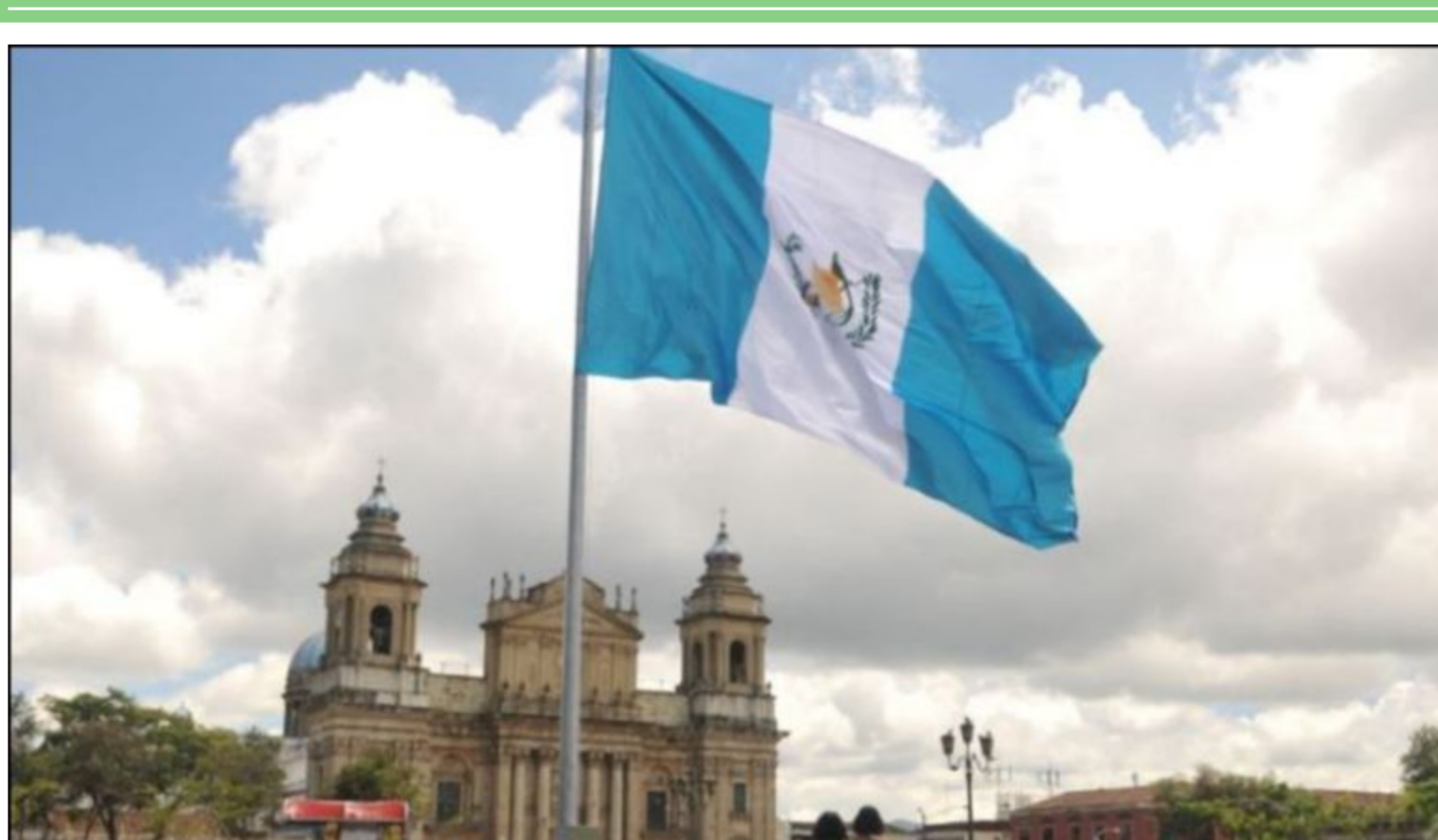


Photo: CHAN ORDONEZ/AFP via Getty Images.

Guatemala anxiously awaits "new spring" amidst turmoil

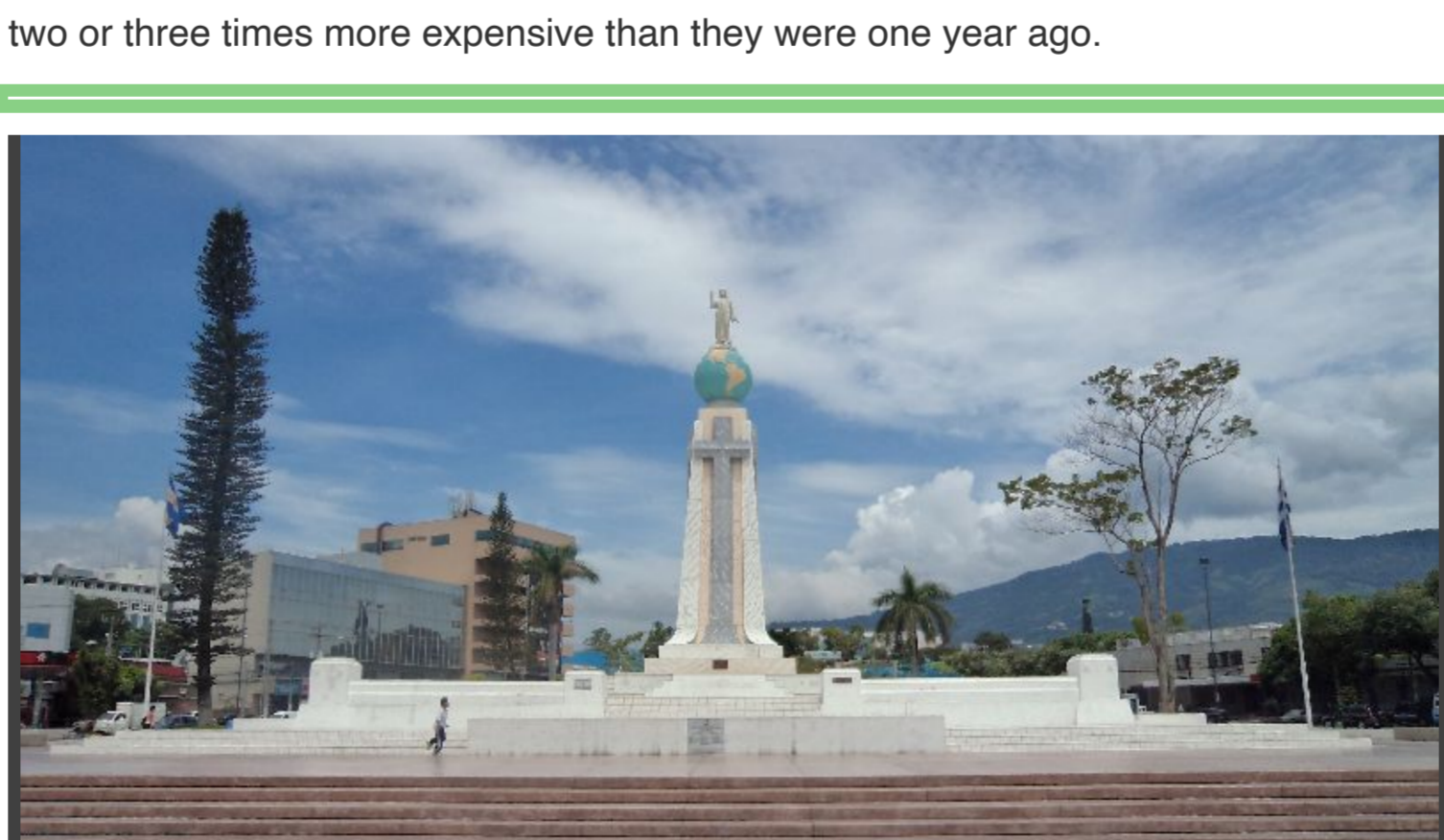
Guatemala has been in political turmoil since the general elections in June, in which over 20 parties participated. In the first round of voting, almost 18% of voters cast null votes, showing a high level of discontent and distrust in the electoral process, particularly after numerous candidates were blocked from running in the first round.

[Unexpectedly, anti-corruption candidate Bernardo Arévalo of the Semilla \(Seed\) party won](#) a landslide victory in the August presidential run-off against Sandra Torres, a veteran politician and former first lady who has faced corruption charges.

Arévalo's father, Juan José Arévalo, won as Guatemala's first democratically elected president in 1944, ushering in a period known as the "ten years of spring" with widespread changes to address inequality in the country.

Although many are hopeful about Arévalo and the possibility of a "new spring", the president elect faces significant challenges. Powerful interest groups seeking to ensure impunity for corruption and other crimes have threatened him and are trying to prevent him from taking office. Since the elections, the Attorney General's office has opened investigations into "fraud" in the Semilla party, requested the cancellation of the party, raided the offices of the party, searched the offices of the Supreme Electoral Tribunal, and most recently the ballot boxes themselves.

While the political situation garners international headlines, [most people continue to struggle with inflation](#), violence, and climate-related issues like drought, extreme storms and landslides. This rainy season has been very dry and many have lost their crops. While general inflation rates appear relatively low, some staple food items are two or three times more expensive than they were one year ago.



"El Salvador del Mundo" monument

El Salvador's state of emergency and upcoming elections

The state of emergency in the country has been extended again and [mobilizations of military and police to the rural areas](#), including Chalatenango, have caused some alarm in recent months. With tens of thousands of people arrested during the state of emergency still awaiting trial, Congress approved mass trials for up to 900 people at once.

El Salvador will have general elections in February 2024 for president, vice president and congress, and elections for mayors and municipal governments in March 2024.

In June this year, President Bukele presented a proposal to reduce the number of municipalities from 282 to 44 and the number of seats in the Legislative Assembly from 84 to 60, a proposal that quickly passed in the congress dominated by the president's party.

These changes will impact the 2024 elections, along with other changes that benefit the largest parties, particularly the president's party.

To learn more, read the blog [El Salvador Perspective](#) by [Tim Muth](#).



Stay up to date on news related to Sister Parish communities

We know many of you follow the work of other human rights and solidarity organizations in El Salvador, Guatemala and the United States. If you would like to be more connected, here is a great list of organizations to follow for regular updates on current events and social justice issues related to our sistering communities.

- [Guatemala Human Rights Commission](#)
- [NISGUA](#)
- [Guatemala Solidarity Network](#)
- [Rights Action](#)
- [U.S. El Salvador Sister Cities](#)
- [SHARE El Salvador](#)
- [Cristosal](#)
- [Colorlines](#)
- [National Network for Immigrant and Refugee Rights](#)
- [Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Services](#)

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