

Some Arkansans still serving abroad in Honduras, Belize

written by Aprille Hanson Spivey |

Several parishes across the diocese do mission work and St. Joseph Churches in Conway and Fayetteville have learned from Christ the King's work in Honduras. For the past six years, about five to eight Conway parishioners traveled with CTK to Honduras.

"It had such a long legacy of success, it's a 20-plus year mission. Friendships were formed," said Don Greenland, chair of the Missions Committee Ministry at St. Joseph Church in Conway.

The parish has taken the lessons learned in Honduras and will use them in Belize, Sept. 29-Oct. 5, through the Hand in Hand Ministries to build a home in Belize City for a family in need, Greenland said.

They also have worked with the ministry on a recent men's trip to the Appalachian region of Kentucky to repair homes. Greenland said the parish is also talking to Pax Christi Little Rock regarding their missions to Puerto Rico as well as St. Peter Episcopal Church, also in Conway, which hosts a medical mission in Guatemala.

"We love the ecumenical idea about teaming with another non-Catholic church in Conway to do good," he said. "... We have people in our parish that really like the international service opportunities, and they miss Honduras."

After Father John Antony and a group traveled to Honduras with CTK in 2011, St. Joseph Church in Fayetteville has hosted its own trip to Honduras, going to the small village of Ilanga in the Colón region. Parishioners from Immaculate Conception Church in Fort Smith, which is now pastored by Father Antony, also attend the trips.

"You wouldn't believe how appreciative these people are," said Mark Prenger, Honduras Mission coordinator.

While not in the same location as CTK's Honduras trips, Prenger said they take smaller groups, at most 37, to focus on health care, construction and education/evangelization. Both Father Antony and Father Jason Tyler, pastor at St. Joseph, attend regularly to celebrate daily Mass and hear confessions because the village does not have a local priest.

"There are a lot of Catholics there, but I think unfortunately you're seeing other denominations going to Ilanga," to evangelize, he said.

Aside from the construction team building desks and pews for churches and schools, doctors can see close to 150 patients a day over four days, Prenger said, with four physicians traveling in 2017, the last trip to Honduras. The next trip is planned for Sept. 30-Oct. 6, 2020.