

**Project Amacuapa – The Lord’s Work**  
**By Norberto Ortero, Sam Adams and L. M. Safley, Jr.**

Note: Last Updated October 5, 2009

**Note:** This history was compiled by the authors with assistance from Amy Alfaro, Don Prantl and Angie Fann. Many people have visited Amacuapa and the surrounding communities and have contributed to the success of Project Amacuapa. We have not attempted to identify every person that has contributed to Project Amacuapa, however, rest assured that God knows each person by name.

As early as 1989, Carlos Escobar, a member of the El Espino congregation, was selling merchandise from the back of a pick-up on his sporadic trips from Catacamas to the Amacuapa valley. Besides selling fruit, Carlos was also sharing the gospel with those he met along the way. In Amacuapa he baptized Migdonio Cardona and his wife and a tiny congregation began to meet on Migdonio’s front porch. Carlos Escobar and Carlos Ulate took turns visiting on Sundays, and in 1990 Carlos Ulate took Don Prantl to visit the valley and make plans for improving the local economy with vo-ag projects. By 1992 Juan Mondragon, a preacher in Catacamas, was visiting Amacuapa as well. Among the first baptized by Juan Mondragon were Luciano (Chanito) Padilla and Anael Cardona. Before becoming a Christian Anael was a visiting teacher in the Amacuapa valley for the Catholic Church.

In a visit organized by Don Prantl in late January of 1995, Norberto Otero visited the town of Amacuapa for the first time. At the time Norberto was a missionary based in Trujillo. He was given the opportunity to speak to the Christians in Amacuapa. The congregation did not have a building and met under a tree in front of Chanito and Cristina’s home. After the Bible class Anael Cardona thanked the visiting party and ended his speech with these words “We have enjoyed your visit, we are always blessed by visits from other Christians, but I have a question: Is this the only time you would visit us?” Touched by Anael’s question, Norberto immediately promised to continue visiting the congregation of Amacuapa. That promise was fulfilled when several members from churches in the Trujillo area came with Norberto and visited Amacuapa the rest of the year on a monthly basis. The trip from Trujillo to Amacuapa was five hours. Two other congregations would be encouraged by these visits: San Esteban and Gualaco. Brother Manuel Rubi, a leader in San Esteban and Rigoberto Martinez in Gualaco became enthusiastic about those visits and the wonderful fellowship among the Christians at the time. Later these men would support evangelistic efforts in the Valley of Amacuapa and start new and exciting efforts in the Valley of Agalta.

In March 1995 an evangelistic campaign was held in Amacuapa and was led by Don Prantl. Dr. Amanda Madrid from Predisan joined the efforts to provide medical assistance to hundreds of people from neighboring villages. Members of the Escuela Bíblica Honduras (EBH) Team and apprentices from the Apprenticeship Program in

Trujillo joined the efforts. In May, Norberto decided to move from Trujillo to Amacuapa to help further establish the congregation. Members of the Journey staff and the congregation of Buenos Aires from Trujillo came to help construct Amacuapa's first church building, and later in the summer Angie Gray led a group from Trujillo's VILLA (Village Living Adventure) program to complete the floor of the church building. EBH student interns joining Norberto included Angel Hernandez, Marel Bados, Cesar Osorto and Eberto Rodriguez. Juana Romero came to Amacuapa from Trujillo as their housekeeper and cook. Initially they stayed at the church building sleeping on the floor and later moved to a small dirt house furnished by the kindness of brother Migdonio. Months later Norberto and the students moved to a house in the center of town. This house, finally purchased in 1998, served as a base facility for visiting groups and the newly developed Project Amacuapa.

Many short-term mission groups have come through Amacuapa each year since 1995. Groups from Greater Atlanta Christian High School, Harding University, and the Raleigh churches have traveled to Amacuapa to assist an R.N. in small-scale medical clinics, do various humanitarian work projects, conduct youth retreats, direct vacation Bible schools, build church buildings, participate in evangelistic campaigns, and generate excitement about cross-cultural exchange with the church and the members of the community. Some of the groups' greatest memories were of Easter egg hunts, iguana hunting with Anael, playing with the children, heading down to the river for a baptism, and singing in both languages around a "fogata" (campfire) in the town square.

In March 1996 several students from Harding University led by Bryan Phillips, and including Ben & Amanda (Prantl) Hill, visited Norberto Otero and the congregation in Amacuapa and held a campaign. Jorge Vargas, a student from Baxter Institute in Tegucigalpa, spent six months in Amacuapa helping the congregation. In the summer of 1996, Angie Gray and Melissa Vaca from Abilene, Angie's mom, and Kyle Huhtanen and Amy Alfaro from Raleigh visited Amacuapa and nearby Manto. Several from Amacuapa, including Anael Cardona, challenged Kyle to come to live in Amacuapa. In January 1997 Kyle Huhtanen left his studies in Architecture at North Carolina State University, accepted the challenge and moved to Amacuapa. Kyle lived and worked in Amacuapa for a full two years before leaving in December 1998 to finish his studies. Kyle was supported by several members of Brooks Avenue church of Christ. Kyle worked both in the community and with the congregation of Amacuapa. One of the community projects at the time was the construction of a Peace Corps water system. Twenty three communities in and around Amacuapa worked together to install approximately 35 kilometers of pipeline. Each family was required to dig 12 meters (almost 40 feet) of pipeline each day!

In 1995 Sam Adams, a member at Brooks Avenue, met Norberto Otero via correspondence. Sam became the liaison for what had become known as Project Amacuapa. He first visited Amacuapa in 1997 and continued to visit 1-3 times per year until 2005, first joining and later leading groups.

As the work grew in Amacuapa outreach activities were initiated and Bible studies were conducted in several communities including San Antonio, El Jobo, Río Arriba, Río Abajo, and El Bebedero.

In 1997 another group from Harding University visited Amacuapa. Ed Warner and Amy Alfaro led a group of college students on a trip to Amacuapa in May and Robert Warner and Amy led another small group in October. Also, during the summer, there were VILLA members who came to support the work in Amacuapa and lived with friends and members of the local church in Amacuapa.

In 1998 the work was expanded in San Francisco de la Paz, Manto, El Jobo, Río Abajo and Río Arriba. Sometimes the work was frustrating. Kyle remembers that on one visit that he and others distributed Bibles in Río Arriba. However, on the very next visit, all of the Bibles were given back at the direction of the Catholic Church.

In San Francisco de la Paz, Marel was able to make the first contacts and establish a bold effort to reach many souls in this community. It was said that preachers had come many times to work with the people in San Francisco, but the people were reluctant to accept the message. So the town was given up as an unreachable town. But thanks to the persistence and commitment of Marel and the support of the Amacuapa Team and EBH, such a myth was proven untrue. A campaign was led by Marel and the Amacuapa team and the first Christians were added to the church by the Lord. Marel continued the work and later was joined by Rufino Sanchez, who became part of the team later that year. Rufino was a graduate of a Bible School in Panama and showed interest in supporting the work as a leader and later as the preacher for the San Francisco de la Paz congregation.

In 1998 Victor Flores and members of the Amacuapa team started a radio Bible program in Juticalpa which could be heard throughout the Amacuapa valley and as far as Northern Nicaragua. This weekday radio program was a refreshing voice for many brothers and sisters in the mountains of Olancho and Nicaragua. It continues to this day from the town of San Francisco de la Paz and is a source of outreach, teaching, and communication to the churches in the Amacuapa valley.

On October 30, 1998 Hurricane Mitch devastated much of the Catacamas and Amacuapa valleys. Many were killed. Homes, roads and bridges were destroyed. Kyle's last several months in Honduras were spent working with Norberto Otero to distribute disaster relief throughout Olancho.

Also in 1998 the Brooks Avenue church of Christ made a formal commitment to support Project Amacuapa and Sam Adams was placed in charge of the project serving as deacon. The group house was purchased in 1998, with Juana Romero becoming its manager.

Kyle once again visited in Amacuapa in March 1999, and that year Norberto left the project and came to the US to obtain an MBA, marry and "settle down". Anael Cardona became the leader of Project Amacuapa. A campaign was held that year in Río Arriba.

In late 2000 the Raleigh Church of Christ was formed and accepted responsibility for Project Amacuapa. Sam Adams was appointed the deacon in charge of the project. Also that year, in response to the damage from Mitch and the resulting severe drought conditions, a program was started to provide monthly food supplements to forty families in need. Juana Romero was given the responsibility for managing the procurement and distribution of this benevolence.

In 2003 a new church building and a clinic were constructed in Amacuapa. The land for the facility was donated to the church by Chela Cardona, the mother of Anael. It is large enough to accommodate the large church building, a clinic and courtyard, and a future educational facility of 3-4 classrooms. The church building was constructed to accommodate 200-300 souls, and is used to host regional events as well as the local congregation. Also in 2003, Norberto Ortero became director of EBH in the USA.

In 2004 the Honduras Missions Committee was formed at the Raleigh church of Christ. Members besides Sam Adams included Ed and Sue Warner, Robert and Miriam Warner, Carlos and Fanny Laufters, Carlos and Amy Alfaro and L. M. (Mac) Safley. At the end of the year, Juana Romero returned to Trujillo after many years of good service. Also in 2004 a place of worship was constructed in El Jobo. In March 2004 a group of men from the Raleigh Church of Christ visited Amacuapa (David Bowsman, Brian Janes, Jack Bush, Jeff Cannon, Jack Kochel, Mac Safley). Services were conducted in the Amacuapa Valley. The primary construction projects were to paint the new church building in Amacuapa and the addition of a restroom/shower facility for the clinic.

In 2005 Eduardo Torres and his wife, Ondina Ayala, agreed to manage the Project Amacuapa Group House, which has gradually been expanded. It can accommodate up to twenty visitors at a time. Also in early 2005, the clinic became functional. Nubia Zuniga was hired as the nurse/manager, and Ondina Ayala was hired as the nurse's assistant. The clinic's capabilities have expanded. As many as 100 people receive medical attention each month at the clinic. Some travel more than twenty miles to receive attention. Patients requiring medical attention beyond the capability of the clinic are referred to Predisan, a fully staffed medical facility in Catacamas that is supported by various Churches of Christ in the United States. Patients that can not afford medical attention are assisted by the benevolence committees of their local congregations. In March 2005 another group from the Raleigh congregation visited Amacuapa (Carlos Laufters, Mike Hairston, Brian Janes, James Peterman, Jeff Cannon and Mac Safley). Improvements were made on the clinic and a roof was installed at the new church building in El Jobo. Also a solar lighting system was installed at the Group House.

In 2005 Sue Shamblee (clinic) and Brian Janes (construction) also joined the Honduras Committee. In July of 2005 Sam Adams resigned as the deacon in charge of Project Amacuapa to be able to provide additional support to his wife who was chronically ill at the time. L. M. (Mac) Safley, Jr. was appointed as the deacon in charge of Project Amacuapa. In the fall of 2005 Anael Cardona's title was changed to Project Coordinator. David Chacon agreed to become the Project Administrator, and Kyle Huhtanen was identified as the Predisan Liaison.

In 2006 David Bowsman was added to the Honduras Committee to develop a children's program. During this year several other important things were accomplished. A place of worship was constructed in Rio Abajo. Also Juan Perez began working in Salama. A group (Group of Four -Charles Safley, Jim Morrill, Jim Green, L. M. Safley, Jr.) was formed to work with farmers in the Amacuapa Valley. As a result of some of the efforts of the Group of Four an agricultural cooperative is being formed - Asociacion De Gandaderos Y Agricultores Del Valle de Amacuapa. In March 2006 a group from the Raleigh Church of Christ visited the Amacuapa Valley (David Bowsman, James Peterman, Brian Janes, Jeff Cannon, Kelly Cannon, Tanner Cannon, Tyler Lee, Mike Hairston and Mac Safley). Joining the group were Jim Green (Brooks Avenue) and Jim Morrill (Kansas). Additional improvements were made to the clinic and a concrete floor was installed in the El Jobo church building. Jim and Jim worked with Chanito Padilla on possible agricultural projects. The group also participated in a campaign in Jimasque.

In March 2007 a group from the Raleigh Church of Christ (Charles Safley, Jim Green, James and Ben Peterman, Jonny Cannon, Brian and Brianne Janes, David and Kate Bowsman, Sue Shamblee, Michael Holland, Mac Safley) visited Project Amacuapa. Charles and Jim concentrated on working with local producers in pasture management and business plans. The also helped plant the seed for a garden project. Mac, James, Brian and others installed a solar well water pump system for providing water for livestock and the garden. The Construction Team (Brian, James, Ben, Jonny, Michael) led the effort to build forty beds for children which were delivered throughout Project Amacuapa. Sue Shamblee worked with the clinic staff. David, Brianne and Kate conducted various children's programs at the school and church building. The group also visited Catacamas and coordinated with David Chacon.

In late June and early July of 2007 Mac Safley visited Honduras. The first stop was San Marcos de Colon where Eduardo Torres and Chanito Padilla of Amacuapa were participating in a Healing Hands International (HHI) course on drip irrigation and raised bed gardening. Chanito and Eduardo rode back to Amacuapa with David Goolsby, Dagoberto Nunez (interpreter) and Mac. While in Amacuapa David, Dagoberto and Mac made improvements on the solar water pump system and coordinated regarding the garden projects. We also visited Catacamas to coordinate with David Chacon.

In November 2007 Mac Safley returned to visit Project Amacuapa. The focus was to meet with the ministers to plan for the work in 2008. Dagoberto Nunez served as the interpreter. There was also time to coordinate with Eduardo Torres and Chanito Padilla regarding the garden project. Several raised beds had been constructed and a small portion of the garden had been planted. Anael Cardona announced that he would be leaving Project Amacuapa at the end of 2007. He will continue to preach for the Manto congregation and will be supported by another group.

Another visit was made to Project Amacuapa in March 2008. The group consisted of Heather and Jonathan Holland, Brian and Brittney Janes, David and Kate Bowsman, James and Ben Peterman, Jeff and Tanner Cannon, Sue Shamblee, Jim Green, Mike

Hairston, Charles Safley and Mac Safley. The Children's Team (David, Kate, Brittney, Heather) presented several programs at the local school and coordinated the distribution of shoes (Crocs) and children's clothing. Sue continued her work with the clinic and fitted a number of people with glasses. Brian, James, Ben, Tanner, Jeff and Mike worked on completing a storage building at the group house and made a number of needed improvements to the group house. Jim and Charles worked with Eduardo Torres and Chanito Padilla on the garden (garden and business management). Jim conducted seminars in El Jobo and Amacuapa on pasture management. The garden is in full production and a large quantity of produce has been sold. Eduardo Torres and Chanito Padilla conducted a class to train ten men and women in drip irrigation and raised bed gardening.

In June 2008 Mac Safley accompanied by Dagoberto Nunez (interpreter from Tegucigalpa) visited the Project Amacuapa congregations. All of the Project Amacuapa congregations were visited and visits to homes were made. In addition we met with Chanito and Eduardo who are helping to manage the garden project. Due to the temporary closure of the airport in Tegucigalpa Mac flew into/out of San Pedro Sula.

In November 2008 Mac Safley accompanied by Dagoberto Nunez visited the Project Amacuapa congregations. We visited and encouraged the Project Amacuapa ministers. A dedication was held for the improvements to the clinic in Amacuapa (floor space more than doubled). Each year since 2005 the clinic has had between 650 and 1000 patient visits. A decision was made to turn over management of the garden project to Migdonio Cardona.

In March 2009 Jim Green and Charles Safley accompanied by Dagoberto Nunez visited the Project Amacuapa congregations. Several seminars were held with school children regarding developing home gardens and appropriate food preparation. Jim and Charles also spent time working with Migdonio Cardona on the garden project.

Another group trip to Project Amacuapa occurred in April 2009. Those participating included Seth Cannon, Jonny Cannon, Mike Hairston, Chuckie Hairston, Bill Yinger, Robin Forrest, Bailey Forrest, David Bowsman, Kate Bowsman and Mac Safley. Twenty four beds were constructed and delivered. Significant progress was made in installing electrical systems to the clinic and Group House in Amacuapa. 500 pairs of shoes were distributed to the Project Amacuapa congregations. Time was spent with Migdonio regarding the garden project. Four math classes were presented to teachers and students. Quite a bit of time was spent with the clinic staff. Improvements were made to the Group House.

In August 2009 Mac Safley accompanied by Dagoberto Nunez visited the Project Amacuapa congregations. Three seminars were delivered on establishing home/school gardens and preparation of garden produce for consumption. Time was spent working with Migdonio Cardona on the garden project. It is noteworthy that in 2009 Anael Murillo was able to help start a congregation in El Jute which met in the home of Oman

Almendarez. There have been several baptisms in El Jute. We were able to visit all of the Project Amacuapa ministers.

As of October 2009 the following table summarized the Lord's work in the Amacuapa Valley:

<b>Congregation</b>	<b>Year Started</b>	<b>Minister</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Amacuapa	1992	Chanito Padilla	The first members were Migdonio Cardona, Ilda de Cardona and Chanito Padilla. Typical attendance is 40 adults and 25 children. There is a large, new church building.
Rio Abajo	1998	Francisco Murillo	Anael Cardona began this work. Typical attendance is 20 adults and 25 children. This location is in need of a building in which to worship.
San Francisco de la Paz	1998	Eberto Rodriguez	Marel Bados was instrumental in starting this congregation. Typical attendance is 27 adults and 25 children. There is a good church building and an adjoining minister's residence.
Rio Arriba	1999	Armando Padilla	Anael Cardona began this work. Typical attendance is 25 adults and 22 children. This congregation has a new church building.
El Jobo	2003	Francisco Mondragon	This congregation was started by Chanito Padilla. Typical attendance is 40 adults and 45 children. A new church building is being completed but is already in use.
La Lima	1999	Antonio Padilla	La Lima sits across the river from Rio Abajo and worships with the Rio Abajo congregation.
San Antonio	2008	Vacant	Anael Murillo began this work at the request of Project Amacuapa. Anael left this work in 2009. Currently other Project Amacuapa ministers are preaching in San Antonio. Attendance is approximately 10-15.

<b>Congregation</b>	<b>Year Started</b>	<b>Minister</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Salama	2006	Juan Perez	A small congregation was initiated a few years ago, but the work has not been continuous. Juan Perez restarted the work here in 8/06.
El Jute	2009	Vacant	Francisco Murillo began this work in 2009. There have been several baptisms. Currently the congregation is meeting at the home of Oman Almendarez.