

***So we have known and believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God, and God abides in them.*** ~ 1 John 4:16

***So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do everything for the glory of God.*** ~ 1 Corinthians 10:31

***I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another.***  
~ John 13:34

What does love look, act, sound, and feel like to you? Is love a sentiment or something deeper? And what does it mean to *abide* in love? Well, abiding, in a biblical sense means that we actively choose to live according to God's will. It's not a passive state, but an active and ongoing process of trusting, obeying, and loving as demonstrated by Jesus.

Last week 24 members of Ascension which included the three pastors made up the recent delegation of those God gathered and sent to do as God commands and love one another.

This expression of love to walk side by side with our sisters and brothers in El Salvador was a witness of the power of love expressed through presence, the quiet strength of accompaniment, and the deep beauty of relationships that cross borders, languages, and circumstances.

People often go on mission type trips thinking that they're bringing something valuable that others need – resources, knowledge, or service. However, here at Ascension we believe the real mission isn't about what we bring – it's about how we walk together, and that walking together, that *accompaniment*, is an important foundation of our relationship with our global partners.

In El Salvador we encountered people whose lives are marked by a variety of hardships, and yet time and time again what we saw, what we experienced, what we received – was joy, welcome, hospitality, inclusion, and love. When we ate meals together, played games together, worshipped together, adventured, learned, and lived together we did so as siblings and all of it centered in love. God is love and when we abide in love then we abide in God.

What our group received went far beyond what we experienced in El Salvador and through our travels together. As we returned from El Salvador, we are not the same. We were taught, humbled, and transformed. God's love shaped and re-shaped our perspective. Our trip to El Salvador may be over, but our mission isn't – it continues here as we reflect on who God is calling us to walk in accompaniment with in our own communities, who's stories have not yet been heard and shared, and who God is calling us to be in relationship with.

Abiding in love – abiding in God is an active and intentional choice that we are invited to take part in. This is what it means to be the family of God and this fulfills God's desire for completeness – that all may know the fullness of God's love.

On one of our final nights together we had the joy of having dinner and conversation with Bishop Guadalupe and some of her staff to listen to and share in the joys and struggles of ministry in El Salvador. It was a beautiful night together and at one point in the night Bishop Guadalupe shared this sentiment with our delegation – she said, "I see you as messengers of peace."

What an incredible gift to be entrusted with the gifts of God's peace and love and then sent out into the world, into our own communities, into the midst of our families and friends to share this message of peace. My friends love isn't a mission strategy – it is the mission. Let's join together in making love our mission part of our everyday lives and with everyone we meet. Thanks be to God! Amen.

Sunday, August 10, 2025  
John 13:34 (Ninth Sunday after Pentecost)



Ascension Lutheran Church  
Pastor Tony Acompanado

