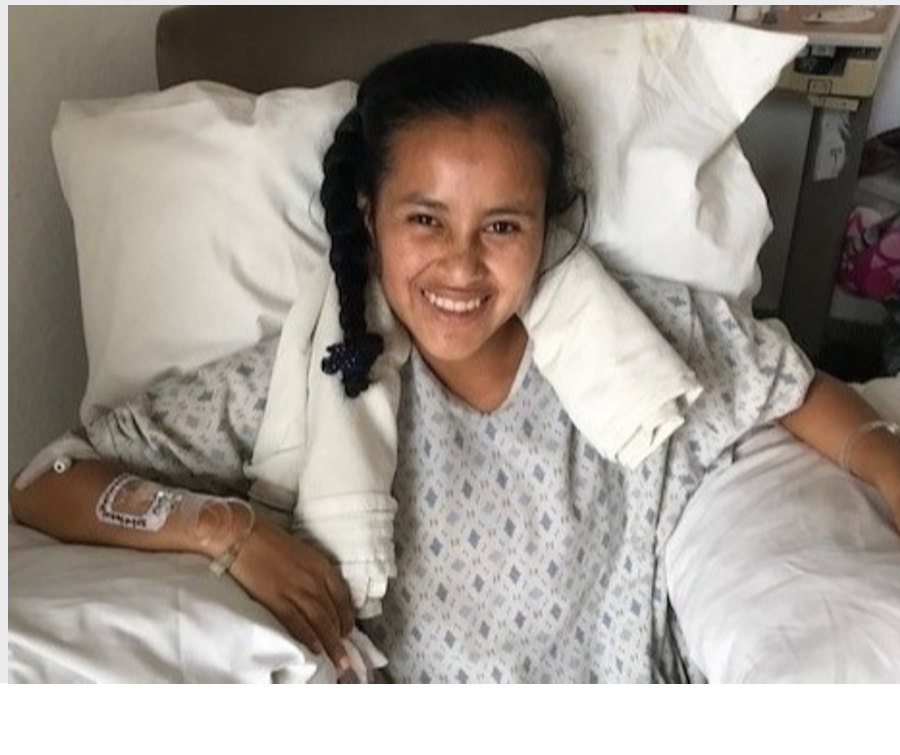


# Faith In Practice

Life Changing Medical Mission



## I Have Faith: Carla

"I need you to know that there are risks to this surgery, and you could die. I also want you to know that I will treat you as if you were my sister or my daughter and that I am trusting God. But you need to know that you could die." As Dr. Sean Boutros spoke these words, Carla nodded. She understood. She also understood that Sean was taking this chance, just as she was, because of his faith. A faith that matched her own. I could see it as Carla looked down at Sean from the exam table, as Sean looked up into the face of this tiny and courageous 26-year-old woman.

I then watched as Carla sat beside her mother, Martina, to explain what Sean had said. Carla's body language was strong, confident, as she told her mother that she had decided to accept the risk. Martina listened, her head bowed.

### Carla and Martina's Story

When Carla was six, the spot on her back began to grow. As it grew, Martina and Carlos, Carla's father, desperately sought help for their daughter. Year after year they invested everything to find a solution. Test after test, doctor after doctor, American and Guatemalan alike. At first, the hope: Yes, we can remove the tumor. Then: No, we cannot. It was worse, said Carla, when the promise came, and they waited, but no answer arrived. All the while, the tumor continued to grow. For twenty years, the tumor continued to grow.

Carla shares that three years ago she said, "Enough." She would not visit another physician, listen to another promise, watch her family's money, the little they had, evaporate because of her. So, when Carla sat before Tagni Moncada, our Medical Clinic Program Coordinator, at the Faith In Practice telemedicine clinic held at Xela Aid, one of Faith In Practice's partners, she told Tagni that she was there for her headaches. By then, Carla's tumor had grown to be approximately one-third of her body mass. She limped for the weight and size of it. Tagni gently asked Carla if her headaches were the only reason she had come to the clinic. Tagni then spoke with Felipe Gutierrez, our Medical Clinic Program Director, and, as Carla says, "The light of hope returned, and I knew it would not go out. They were angels of hope who came to bring me light."

That day was followed by weeks of additional MRI's, evaluations with the Obras hospital to ensure the surgery could be done as safely as possible, consults with Dr. Sean Boutros from afar, his reaching out to other surgeons in the U.S. to assist with assessing the tumor as Jaime de Leon, our Surgery Program Director, and Felipe accompanied Carla through the process. No one had any illusions. It was going to be very challenging. It would take a miracle.

### I Have Faith

The afternoon before her surgery, Carla spoke of the risks. I was struck by Carla's inner strength, this young woman who knew that there was a real chance she would not emerge from anesthesia, and if she did, her recovery would be grueling. She knew that her entire back from the top of her neck to the base of her spine would be skin graft, and that her buttocks and thighs would be the harvest sites. If she survived, there would be much pain, there was a strong probability that all skin grafts would not take, that there were risks of post-operative infection. And yet, she sat before me on the eve of all of this with a clarity of purpose and a calm trust.

Knowing Carla loved to sing in her church, I asked her to sing her favorite song. She said she had two: "I Have Faith" and "God is Victorious." The first, she said, she would sing before her surgery. The second, after.

As Carla sang Tengo Fe (I Have Faith) by Roberto Orellana, there were moments when she broke down in tears, but they were not tears of fear. They were tears of wonder and gratitude.

*I have faith, I am awaiting my miracle today.  
I have faith and I want to thank you today, God of the universe  
For only in you will I hope....  
I have faith. I feel you taking my hand today  
Against wind and stormy seas and I will cross with you.  
For you know I have faith.*

While she sang, I could feel her prayer, and I knew that she had sung this song many times before. I knew that this was her prayer of "I believe, help my unbelief." But now, it was different. Now, she was awaiting the miracle of this surgery that would change her life forever.

### Encouraged in Faith

Our 2021 Gala Encouraged in Faith, which will be held on October 8 (in person and live-streamed), is based upon Romans 1:11-12, where Paul writes, "For I am longing to see you...so that we may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith, both yours and mine."

At the Gala we will be sharing the next chapter of Carla's story. The ways in which God has interwoven her life with that of Sean Boutros, his son, Xela Aid, and Faith In Practice. The faith of this extraordinary young woman. But as you know, Carla's story is not unique in the life of Faith In Practice. For it is because of the Carlas that we return time and time again.

This pandemic has created such longing in us. We have yearned for the time when we might be together once again with our Guatemalan brothers and sisters. The patients and their families, those who work at our partner hospitals and clinics, our Guatemalan volunteers, and each other. The Faith In Practice family. And, they have longed to be with us, too.

Why has the longing been so strong, to return to this land, to be together? I believe it is because we know that when we come together through this mission our individual stories are being interwoven into a much bigger story. Our faith is challenged, strengthened, through this mission as we realize how each of us is uniquely a part of a living, breathing community of faith that God is creating in and among us. And, it is this sense of purpose, this sense of wonder, that our hearts have longed for during this time of separation.

This mission has always been about so much more than the rendering of medical care. It has always been about the Spirit moving among us, drawing us closer to the heart of God, sending us forth yet again. It has always been about the Carlas who have come into our lives who teach us so much. It is about how we know that God is using us in the lives of all of the Carlas out there. It is about the ways in which God is present among us through Faith In Practice, this mission that is God's own.

So, at this Gala, we will be celebrating God's faithfulness with wonder and gratitude. Chaired by those who always place God first. Featuring those whose faith shines through every adversity. Together, as we find ourselves, encouraged in each other's faith yet again. All to God's honor, glory, and praise.

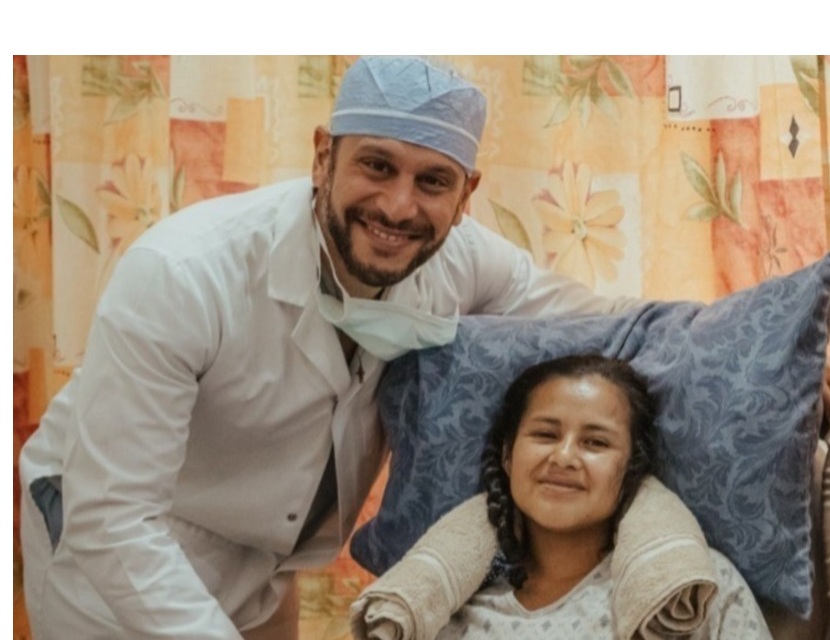
Rev. Linda L. McCarty

*While Faith In Practice teams were evacuated from Guatemala in March 2020, the mission continued. Carla attended a Faith In Practice Telemedicine Clinic at Xela Aid when Guatemala's borders were closed.*

*Our first team returned to Guatemala on May 1, 2021, followed by many more.*

*Forty medical and surgical teams are scheduled for 2022.*

*The miracles continue.*



Dr. Sean Boutros with Carla

### 2022 Application

Now Available



The volunteer application is now open for our 2022 teams! Forty teams are scheduled for 2022, including several new teams. Head to our website to view our list of teams and [trip dates](#).

To learn more about serving in 2022 and our COVID protocols, please read our [Volunteer FAQs](#). Apply now, as together we continue to follow God's call to serve, even as we find healing ourselves through the people of Guatemala.

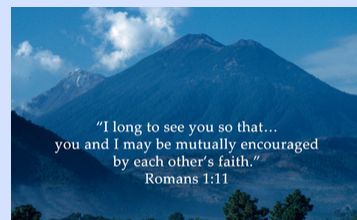
APPLY NOW

### Faith In Practice

2021 Gala:

Encouraged in

Faith



For the first time ever, our Annual Gala will be

In-Person AND

Live-streamed!

OCTOBER 8

Gala Chairs:

Dr. Erik &  
Mrs. Katherine  
Askenasy

Dr. Sean &  
Mrs. Rachel Boutros

Dr. James &  
Mrs. Deborah Bruce

Featuring:

Ms. Carla Arango-  
Herrera

Ms. Anita Garcia

Register today and join us as we give God thanks for this community of faith that is God's own.

REGISTER or DONATE

### New Website



Our new website is LIVE!

This new site will help us better keep you updated on everything that is happening in Guatemala and this mission.

VIEW WEBSITE

### Hope in Motion



Our newest team, Hope in Motion, raised funds for Faith In Practice in July by swimming across Lake Michigan!

This 62-mile grueling challenge was undertaken by swimmers, Dr. Keith Berend, Bryan Chapman, Dr. Steve Herbst, Dan Herron, Kurt Hershberger, Chip Smith, and an entire support team. This new team has made quite the splash already!

WATCH VIDEO

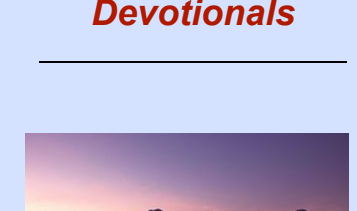
### COVID-19 and Guatemala



Implementing strict safety protocols, Faith In Practice continues to serve in the midst of the pandemic. The healthcare needs in Guatemala continue to deteriorate and our presence there is more important than ever.

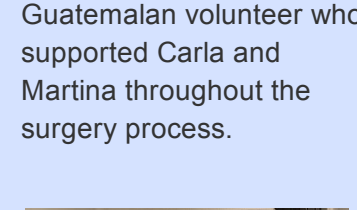
READ MORE

### Monthly Devotionals

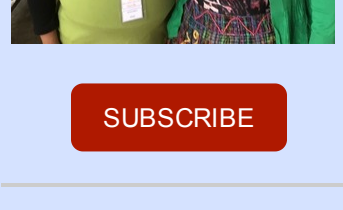


Initially begun as a response to the pandemic, we are continuing to provide these devotionals to maintain our focus on the One who has always and shall continue to sustain us in the good and challenging times.

The most recent devotionals reflect upon [Martina](#), Carla's mother, and [Amina](#), our Guatemalan volunteer who supported Carla and Martina through the surgery process.



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