



Honoring The Rt. Rev. Thomas Ely

With deep love and gratitude, we honor the life and legacy of **The Rt. Rev. Thomas Ely**, Bishop of Vermont (2001–2019), bishop provisional of North Dakota (2021–2024), and beloved member of Cristosal’s board of directors (2003–2018), who passed away on August 30.



Bishop Tom (tallest in back row, right) with fellow board members in 2014

A graduate of the University of the South in Sewanee, Tennessee, Bishop Tom was ordained a deacon and priest in 1980 in the Diocese of Connecticut, where he served in many roles, including head of diocesan youth ministry and its retreat center, before he was elected Bishop of Vermont. Throughout his ministry, colleagues and friends knew him as a courageous champion for justice, an advocate for LGBTQ+ inclusion in the church, a proponent of ending gun violence, and a bridge-builder committed to communion across differences.

Bishop Tom also carried a determined heart for justice in the wider world. His commitment to Cristosal and to El Salvador was a defining part of his episcopal ministry. As a Cristosal board member, his steady leadership guided the organization through moments of discernment that shaped our identity as a human rights organization and deepened our mandate to accompany victims. His vision ensured that Cristosal grew in reach while staying rooted in the spirit of its founding.

As his friend, colleague, and fellow Cristosal board member, The Rt. Rev. Gladstone “Skip” Adams shared: *“Tom embodied in his own heart and soul Cristosal’s mission as an unwavering voice for the powerless.*

Seeking justice was Tom's way. He asked the best questions at our Board meetings, always leading us to deeper understanding, clarity, and commitment to our purpose for being."

Tom was not only a leader to Cristosal; he was family. In 2006, he spent a month of his sabbatical in the rural municipality of Jiquilisco in eastern El Salvador with his wife Ann, living in close solidarity with the community. Even in retirement, he remained connected to Cristosal, sharing wisdom, encouragement, and support through the board alumni group, including in the final weeks of his life.

We will remember Bishop Tom for his warmth, his courage, and his steadfast commitment to justice. His legacy continues in the work of Cristosal and in the countless lives he touched with his compassion and conviction.