

Our Dear Brothers & Sisters and Friends,

2012 September

September has been a very fast month, as we played catch up after returning from the states, and as the public schools begin to wrap up their classes for this academic year, which will end in about six weeks.

The Saddest News:

Probably the biggest news of the month involves two family deaths: one on Dwight's side and one on Joanne's. Joanne's Dad passed away on Friday morning, Sept. 7th, only five days after his 72nd birthday. He was hospitalized for a few weeks in August and the doctors confirmed that his time was limited, so Joanne's parents were prepared.



Byron Noé at 6 months

Byron Noé now



Joanne's oldest sister, Mary Ann, who is an RN, flew in the Saturday before and stayed for a week following his passing. Mother and Dad had already determined not to have a funeral nor memorial service for Dad when he passed away, since everyone tried to visit him before his passing. The following Monday, Sept. 10th, Dwight's remaining first cousin on his mother's side passed away after a short bout with pancreatic cancer. She was only 60 years old.

Byron Noé and Maria Fernanda:

When he was six months old Byron Noe weighed 8 pounds and could not lift his head up. Through God's intercessions and the instructions of a neonatal specialist in Tegus (Tegucigalpa), his mother learned better care and nutrition for her fragile son and he is now healthy and thriving. We assisted by providing the infant formula that the family could not afford during the remaining six months of his first year.

Alba Rosa, Joanne's closest and longest friend in the San Isidro community, paid her a special honor on Sept. 7th by naming her new daughter after her; Maria Fernanda shares Joanne's middle name.



Maria Fernanda

Joanne's Classes:

Joanne started new classes on Sept. 4th, with Health Policy Design and her Dissertation Oversight. For the next three quarters she will take one class along with her Dissertation Oversight and then will have one remaining quarter that is strictly Dissertation. She was blessed to find a dissertation Chair that is not only an expert in diverse cultures and community health programs but is also very encouraging, knowledgeable and communicative. Joanne is super excited with the progress she has already made within the first three weeks of this quarter and is often still reading research articles or textbooks on her topic into the evening, which previously was a time for mental relaxation.

Looking to the Future:

This weekend Joanne will host a lunch and craft class for all of the women in the colonia of San Isidro. It is intended as a time to just get together and socialize without a political agenda. She is planning to serve chili because we have found a great resistance on the part of most Hondureños to stray from their familiar staple of beans and rice, but have also found that everyone who has had it enjoys Joanne's chili. So chili seems like a safe bet, but away from their usual. The craft they will be learning, and will be able to take home with them, will be hanging fragrance sachets. We had a few last year that were given to the women who had cooked for six months in the feeding program and they were so popular that several others asked if we had any more. So over the past few trips to the U.S. Joanne (with the help of our daughter, Lydia), has been gathering the needed materials to make them here.

We have also begun conversations on three other important future events: a new congregation to oversee our activities here, a container that will carry down filled back packs and many other items we have been amassing in TX, and the first interested work group for summer 2013.

Annual Celebrations:

It is very interesting to us that the celebrations that are normally exuberantly celebrated during this time of year were very much subdued. For example, during Honduran Independence Day, the 15th of September, the rockets and loudspeakers usually go late into the night and start at 4 (or before) in the morning. The parades are long and full of marching bands and drums. That did not occur this year. In discussions with my friends here, they confirmed my impression and give the cause as the general feeling of depression and discouragement at the state of the economy and the broken system of justice. We are thankful that we serve the One Who is Light and Hope – Acts 26:17-18

Por Los Niños:

Basically just one more month of school for the children at Por Los Niños before they start their vacation time. Dwight is making plans for some special classes during that time, in the lab at the house, in rural areas, and perhaps in the prisons.

Change of Address:

As most of you know, we have been sponsored by the Maple Hill church of Christ in Lebanon, TN since we first began our ministry here in Honduras. We first asked them to sponsor us because we had previous relations through missions and knew them to have a strong overseas focus, especially in Honduras, which is where we first met them. We have formed some very special and lifelong bonds with our brothers at Maple Hill and thank God often for the great blessings they have been to us for these past four years. They have done more for us and our ministry than we could possibly recount to you in one letter. But the missions committee at the Maple Hill church feels they are not providing the oversight appropriate for an overseeing congregation, which we can fully appreciate since they have only been able to visit with us here once. Therefore, they have asked that we look for another supervising congregation. We are in discussion with another congregation to serve as our over-seeing church but conversations are on going. We will keep you posted on that front.

In the meantime, to honor Maple Hill's end of 2012 requested deadline, we have formed a non-profit 501(c)(3) association so that we have the ability to write tax deductible receipts for equipment donations and to process the contributions made to our work. All of our board members are from TX and most live in College Station, which makes keeping in touch and working together very convenient. In fact, we had our first official board meeting in July while we were there for Daniel's wedding. The association is called "The Least of These – Honduras". When you send your checks in the future, please send them to:

The Least of These – Honduras
405 E. Dodge St.
Bryan, TX 77803

We have not received the 501(c)(3) acceptance notification and the IRS told us they are processing applications eight months in arrears. But because we have submitted all the paperwork and it is in process, we were told by the IRS that we could "behave in the manner of a tax-exempt organization". We are moving all of the funding to the new association at this time because the association already has an established checking account, and even when we do confirm a new sponsoring congregation it will take several months to set up a new checking account through them from which we can draw funds. If you have any questions about the change of donation locations please do not hesitate to ask.

Prayers:

Please pray that our Lord will lead the congregation with which we are in plans of taking over our oversight in the direction that will best serve our Lord's work, their congregation, and us. October the annual fair comes to town. Because this brings many people from the rural areas and others who follow the fair who try to take advantage of them, please pray for the safety of our community and for us.

Thank you all for the blessing you have been to us and to all those here in Catacamas, Olancho, Honduras.

We love you, Dwight & Joanne Tomkins

Snapshots of Honduras:

Look at them snappers:

While most people in the U.S. have probably seen lions and tigers in zoos or carnivals, how many have passed them on the road? This trailer was just sitting in the middle of the street one Sunday morning, not in a hurry to go anywhere. The circus was just arriving for a one week stay in Catacamas.

WalMart:

We now have a real live Wal-Mart in Honduras at the Cascadas Mall in Tegucigalpa (4 hours away). It makes finding some of the things that we haven't able to find here, much easier. While it looks much like the Wal-Mart with which you are familiar, how often have you seen traditional dancers at the one in your town?

