

Our Dear Brothers & Sisters and Friends,

2014 July

Shout with joy to God, all the earth!
Sing the glory of His Name,
Make His praise glorious!
Say to God, "How awesome are your deeds!"
Psalm 66:1-2a



I'm sailing, I'm sailing!

July was another very busy month, but not in the usual way. In addition to working with our own ministries, we assisted a visiting team from the states and then went to visit a work in Campamento, about two hours from here, where our former neighbor and fellow church member from College Station was working for a week.

Chip and Lisa Bloecher's group

Chip and Lisa Bloecher with their daughter, Hope, arrived on July 3rd with a group of 40 workers to build 10 houses for church members on land donated by the city's mayor. They have two great practices each year that we look forward to enjoying; an awesome fireworks display and cookout on July 4th, and wonderful nightly devotions with harmonized singing IN ENGLISH (which is not to say that we don't enjoy singing praises to God in Spanish, but there is just something special about singing in one's native language). The cookout this year was located in the large Central Park, and Chip's group fed every person in the park that night, which is no small feat. Later in the

week they had some vehicle malfunctions and we were able to assist with transporting portions of their group to various locations. Sadly, they also experienced the death of one of the women with whom they had developed close bonds over the years. Dwight helped transport the mourners to the graveyard as well.

We are excited that the Bloecher family are moving to Catacamas at the end of this month. Lisa has started a mission effort called Mamas in Catacamas which is helping many of the single mothers here. Chip will continue to serve the church in many areas.

As Chip's group was leaving, we had an opportunity to ride half way with them, to Campamento where they were stopping to see a daycare and farm project of the Christian Relief Fund. As God would have it, our former neighbor and friend from the A&M Church of Christ was with the group. We had already arranged the week before to visit with Rhonda Lazenby during her first mission trip to Honduras and the trip was made all the sweeter by the chance to travel with and talk to the departing group. We were both impressed with the free daycare being developed and run by Donnie Anderson, and his vision for the future of the work to be self sufficient in a few short years. Dwight also took the opportunity to visit with Bob Wilkerson, whom he has desired to meet for several years. (Bob, now in his mid-80s, has been a missionary in Campamento for nearly 20 years.) Before we returned home, Rhonda and a friend of hers shared many of their special snacks they brought for their trip. What an awesome blessing those snacks were; things we cannot easily get here, such as dried apricots, almonds and pistachos.

A secure wall for the Saenz family

Also during the first week of July, men from Lidio Saenzes congregation and other close friends of the family began construction of a cinder block wall around the family property for better protection. With three women in the home and the only male being 13 years old, there was strong possibilities of robbery or abuse in this dangerous location. The eight foot wall was completed in less than four weeks and Maritza says she feels much safer now. Before the end of August, work will begin on the construction of a closed in and roofed bathroom and wash area with a sewer line running to a new septic well. Right now they are still using an open stall secluded only by half walls of press board. If funds allow, we also hope to provide electric sockets to the inside kitchen. Because they have only one electrical outlet in the entire home, their new refrigerator is currently located in the living room.



A group of mama's singing at the funeral of another mama.

Residencies

We have been waiting on our Honduran residency renewals since Jan 8th. They were promised within 90 days, but this is Honduras and we've learned to go with the flow. On Monday, July 21, we bused into Tegucigalpa to be at Immigration first thing Tuesday morning to pay a penalty for an expired tourist visa as well as the hopes of getting our new cards before leaving the country late that evening. Instead, we ending up paying three separate penalties totaling over \$520 (US). The good news was that we were done with all fines and penalties and they would now "begin to process our residencies"! This week we paid another administrative fee of \$50 to file a new status, so at least they are moving forward now.

Family FUN

On Wed., July 23rd we arrived at Joanne's sister's house in Myrtle Beach, SC to begin two weeks of travel and family fun. All four of our daughters and their families were able to drive there for a weekend family reunion, where there were a total of 23 present at some point on Saturday. Four of Joanne's six sisters were represented by either the sister or a daughter. Joanne's mother from Strasburg, VA was also there for the weekend festivities. It was a great, great time of sun, fun, beach and games, and making memories that will last a lifetime. Thank you, Renee, for making it so special for everyone. One entertaining side event was Dwight's gallant rescue of a Frisbee throw into the ocean that cost him his glasses to the tempest of the waves. By God's design, he already had an appointment with an eye doctor early Thursday morning because his glasses were worn anyway. We received the glasses at our last stop and he returned to Honduras with "new eyes".

For the next week, our daughter, Mary, graciously agreed to be our driver to many destinations along the east coast. Early Sunday morning we headed to the Raleigh church of Christ in NC, where we shared in their worship and enjoyed a very special time with our church liaison, Mac Safley and his wife, Pam. Both Mary and Dwight were enthralled with a special collection of items Mac had. Dwight was blessed to speak to the congregation about our work and ministries at an evening gathering, followed by the ever popular ice cream social. Then, Monday morning we stopped for lunch with our first friend here in Catacamas, Tara (Ulmer) Yale and her new daughter, Mary. Tara spent a year here as a volunteer English teacher at EBS (The Good Samaritan School) and was here when we arrived. We shared many bonding episodes, such as a 10 day outage of both power and water, being the closest confidant to our teenager for her first months in country, a trip to Copan Ruinas, and saving the life of a newborn, baby Sam, during our short time with her here. Monday night we were especially blessed to visit with Tara's parents, Ernie and Denise Ulmer and another family, Richard, Angie, and Tiffany Burgin, all of whom have given of their time and efforts to work here in Catacamas with us. That was one of the highlights of our trip.



Tara and her daughter, Mary



Dwight, Barbara (Joanne's mother), Mary, Joanne, and Cathy

Tuesday and Wednesday were enjoyed at a lake house at Smith Mountain, VA that belongs to several of Dwight's cousins. We spent a lovely time with Bruce and Ellie Meade. We even took a boat ride with them to visit the site where the movie, What About Bob, was filmed (re the caption on the first photo) before we traveled all the way up to the Finger Lakes in NY for the annual Tomkins Reunion on Aug. 2nd. Before the reunion we stayed with our 'Texas' cousins at their home on Lake Cayuga. Although Steve was traveling on business and was not there, Cathy Ingraham was a grand hostess.

Joanne's mom traveled with us and enjoyed a wonderful time with her cousin. You may remember that we had a special visit with Steve earlier this year when he visited us here.

At the reunion hosted by Paul Tomkins III and his wife, Amy, Dwight had a great time catching up with many of his cousins and meeting new family members, and Mary especially enjoyed hearing stories about her father and about Pop, Dwight's father. A highlight of the day was meeting relatives from Switzerland whom we hope to visit next summer. Finally, we topped off our travels with a stop at Niagara Falls. Mary put us on a plane in Niagara Falls, NY late Sunday night before heading back to TX early Monday morning. We spent two days in Miami with the same folks Joanne stayed with last fall when she went to help with Jalynn Orr and her premature baby. It was great for Dwight to meet Juan Carlos and Zoby Perez and for them to get to know him. The scriptures are so true in saying that we have so many, many more families and homes in Christ! We arrived home before 3pm on Wednesday, Aug. 6th, exhausted and happy; ready to begin another month of ministry and service.

Día de Lempira

Or also known as the Day of the Indigenous People (Indians) occurs on July 20th in Honduras. It is a fun day at Por Los Niños because all the students and teachers dress up in traditional costume. Lempira, himself, was a Lenca chief who was very successful in organizing the many different tribal groups in Honduras to resist the conquering Spanish in the early 1500s. Dwight thought about dressing up as a conquistador, but decided it might be pressing his luck..

Prayers

Thank you for your prayers for the Saenz family and for our travel. Your prayers were answered in an astounding affirmative by our Lord. Please continue to pray for our residency status. Our papers are still somewhere in the entrails of the Honduran government. Please pray for the Bloechers as they move here and set up residence.

We pray that you are blessed as you and your families end the summer and move on toward the school year and the activities that come with autumn.

Love, Dwight and Joanne Tomkins



An artist's rendition of Lempira on the one Lempira bill.



Renee (Joanne's sister), Rebecca Hardwick, and Joanne at lunch in Myrtle Beach, SC.



Eat the food, or else! Renee and her husband, Donnie.



On deck with Ellie and Bruce at Cousin's Point, Smith Mountain Lake, VA.



The view from the deck at Smith Mountain Lake



Tiffany, Mary, and Denise looking at some jewelry that Kati, the daughter of recently deceased Lidio Saenz, made to help support her family.



Mary at Taughannock Falls, NY



Mary, Joanne, and Dwight at Niagara Falls