

Our Dear Brothers & Sisters and Friends,

2014 December

Rejoice in the Lord always.
I will say it again: Rejoice!
Philippians 4:4

We hope your Christmas was a wonderful joy as we remember the greatest gift of all – our Lord and Saviour, Jesus.

Our schedules cannot get any busier than December was, because there are not any more hours in a day. In addition to the daily visits and ministry requests that make every day different, we had a number of events to conclude 2014....

Computer classes in Nuevo Progreso and San Francisco de la Paz



Dwight has been teaching computer classes in a remote community called Nuevo Progreso since mid November. At first he started with one class, then added a second class in the afternoons, and then taught the first class part 2 in order to complete as much as possible of the curriculum before the end of December.

On the first Wednesday in Dec he also drove to San Francisco de la Paz (2 hours each way) to teach church preachers and leaders. One of the men traveled for 6 hours and had to take 4 different buses to attend the class. We hope to have additional classes there, but Dwight's schedule did not permit another class during December.

Baxter Graduation and seeing old friends

On Saturday, Dec. 6th, we traveled to Tegucigalpa (Tegus) to attend the graduation ceremony of the Baxter Institute School of Preaching, which was our first contact with Honduras back in 1996 when we started coming down on summer mission trips. One of the greatest pleasures of the day was hugging our former church liaisons from the Maple Hill Church of Christ in Lebanon, TN, and then visiting with a long time friend and former Baxter student, Carlos Zuluaga. Carlos is one of our heroes of faith. He has had many trials in his life, especially working in the Cauca Valley of Colombia. But he continues to shine and have great joy. Rebecca and Andrew traveled with us for the weekend.



Joanne with the old, Dwight with the new

One of our less visible ministries involves serving the elderly residents at a local nursing home where Joanne clips toe nails and treats nail fungus. The women of her social group prepare lunch for the elderly residents once a month and the groups leader also cuts hair during the visit. Joanne has been taking Andrew with her, to talk to the older people. In December, the group prepares a Christmas dinner for the residents and staff and also gives presents to the residents. Joanne was pleasantly surprised when they arrived and one of the elderly men immediately greeted Andrew by name. While Joanne has been working with the elderly, one of Dwight's invisible ministries has been spending quality time with his grandson. Dwight is the only other male in the house, with whom Andrew can run, punch, and be rowdy. Playing ball is a favorite of both "boys".



Drew's going to win this one.

Dra. Katherine returns and Becca ages

Originally, Dr. Katherine Fawbert was due to return on the same Saturday as the Baxter graduation and we made hotel reservations for her accordingly. However, a snag in her shot documentation resulted in a delay of her return until Tuesday, Dec. 9th. Joanne bused to Tegus to meet her at the airport and travel back with her. The following day was Becca's 22nd birthday, which we celebrated with a dinner of her choice; sweet ham with pineapple slices, mashed potatoes with gravy, fresh green beans, and dinner rolls. Then a friend of ours and Becca's, Rebekah Madrid, surprised her with desert; pumpkin pie smothered in whipped topping (Becca's request in place of a birthday cake). We all enjoyed the meal and pie immensely.



Rebecca celebrating with her pumpkin pie.

Copán Ruinas

Copán Ruinas (the Ruins of Copán) is a small town just about as far west as one can travel in Honduras and very close to the Guatemalan border. It is the most famous archeological site in Honduras and one of the three major Mayan



One of the many hundreds of carvings at the ruins at Copán Ruinas.

cities and capitals (also being the most southerly). The other two are Tikal in Guatemala and one in the Yucatan of Mexico. The ruins are quite extensive and amazingly well preserved and presented. Katherine, who had just visited the Incan ruins at Machu Picchu in Peru a few weeks before, was very impressed. The town itself is only about 400 feet higher than Catacamas, but always seems cooler. That is probably because it lies in a lush narrow valley not far from either the Caribbean Sea or the Pacific Ocean. It is typically misty and cloudy in the mornings. Being the major tourist attraction on the mainland of Honduras (The island of Roatan being more popular) it has many excellent restaurants. It finally has an airport 'opening' last December 15th, which means that maybe it will be open sometime in 2015.

On Thursday, Dec. 18th, Dwight and Joanne bused to Tegus to meet up with Katherine who had driven in the night before with friends. At 4:15am we were already headed to the bus station to travel to Copán Ruinas for the weekend, only to learn that the direct buses were all booked until Saturday. We were able to arrive at 9:30 that night via a circuitous route and were very thankful we had made hotel reservations previously. There was only one taxi at the bus

terminal at that hour, a miniature 3-wheeled contraption, but they were able to squeeze the three of us and our luggage into one trip. The bus terminal is a distance from the town because the buses now are prohibited from entering the town due to the narrow streets. We were very thankful for the taxi at that hour because it is a bit scary arriving at a strange town in the dark of night. Our hotel was waiting for us and we settled in with no problems, to spend three days sightseeing and shopping. We also visited a natural hot springs and waterfall about two hours away. It was a great respite.

Christmas in Catacamas

We returned home late Tuesday evening, just in time to construct and deliver five Christmas "baskets" to special families. This is the fourth year we have done this, and each year have added another family to our original two. These baskets are not only a great blessing to the families who receive them, but are a great blessing to build and to deliver as well. The baskets contain the



usual Honduran gift items, such as beans, rice, salt, sugar and coffee, but also contain many items that we take for granted but are luxuries to many Hondurans; items such as antibacterial soap, shampoo, toothbrushes and a hairbrush, and toothpaste. This year we made a family outing of the deliveries and even Dr. Katherine joined us. We watched our traditional "It's a Wonderful Life" on Christmas Eve and were made plainly aware of the stroke of midnight by such a cacophony of fireworks and crackers that everyone who had already fallen asleep was aroused and came out to the street to witness the display.

This past week has been relatively quiet, with the exception of Dwight finishing his classes in Nuevo Progreso. But January will begin with a rush including working in the high mountains of western Honduras once more this year. That telling, however, will wait for our next report.

Will we see you?

We will be in Texas, Florida, and points in between from the 20th of January to early February. Joanne will be receiving her diploma for her Doctorate in Public Health in Orlando on the 31st of January. We would love to see you sometime during that time, if it is possible.

Residency!

Still no word on our residency renewal. Of course, much like the states, not a lot gets done in Honduras during December.

Prayers

January and February are still fixing to be very busy. Please keep us in your prayers as we continue to serve. Please continue to pray for our residency and for our travels into the mountains.

Love, Dwight and Joanne Tomkins



Second class and the preacher, Juan Mondragón, at Nuevo Progreso.



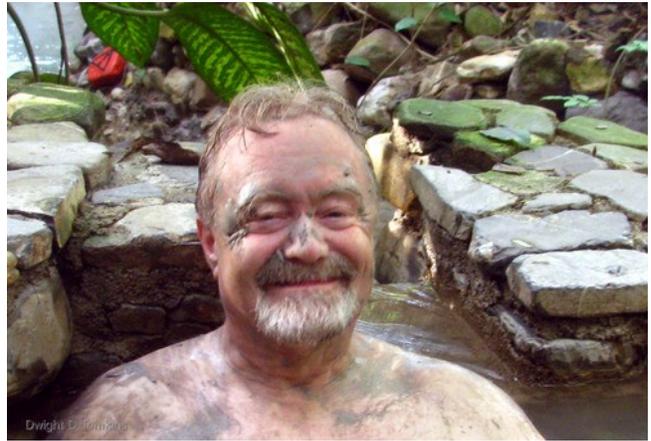
The students (and some hopeful future students) at the computer class in the church in San Francisco de la Paz



Also at de la Paz, while tearing down his mobile teaching lab for transport, Dwight heard some beautiful singing coming from outside. He looked out and some of the students were singing songs of praise with the preacher (in the chair). What a wonderful way to work!



A stone stela carved by the Mayans and found at Copán Ruinas



While this looks much like one of the stone figurines dotting the grounds at the archeological site of the ruins, it is actually Dwight enjoying a mud bath in the hot springs near Copán Ruinas.



Drinking pineapple smoothies at one of the delightful restaurants in Copán Ruinas. We are going to miss our dear friend, Katherine.



Our friend since 1996, Timoteo, graduating from the CELO program at Baxter. He looks unusual without his ubiquitous hat.