

Our Dear Brothers & Sisters and Friends,

**2015 January & February**

Now if the ministry of death, carved in letters on stone, came with such glory that the Israelites could not gaze at Moses' face because of its glory, which was being brought to an end, will not the ministry of the Spirit have even more glory?

**2 Cor. 3:7**



*Santiago and Mari*

for their baptism as there was for the new year, we know that it was celebrated in Heaven with great glory. Javier Perez from Jicaro Gordo studied with them.

The year 2015 is well on its way with a busy, varied January sliding into a more scheduled, but still busy, February. Being that this is Honduras, the year started out with a bang, or more precisely, a whole bunch of bangs, as the fireworks lit the skies overhead and filled the streets with burnt wrappers of fireworks and rockets.

We celebrated the first day of the year with a baptism of Santiago and his wife, Mari, in the beautiful river of Boquerón. They are from the town of Guayabito and will be involved with the small church there. While there was not the celebration here



*Someone with Dwight's ear*

### **Jicaro Gordo**

On Saturday, Jan. 3rd, Joanne had the first community meeting for the new health and evangelism projects in Jicaro Gordo. There were 63 residents present, making it the largest community meeting she has ever attended. On Saturday, Jan. 17th, our visiting pediatrician, Dra. Katherine from London, saw 28 children in the community with varying issues from infantigo to severe infections. Three children were referred to clinics for further treatment or testing. That afternoon we had the second community meeting to determine the projects of interest to the community and to discuss ideas for small business loans.

The first project will be latrines for the 30+ families that have no sanitation whatsoever on their properties. There are also full latrines that need to be replaced, but with limited funding they have a lower priority. The Saturday after our return from the U.S., on Feb. 7th, 28 residents met to learn how to measure the size of a latrine to last a family 20 years. Because of the loose soil, each latrine will need to be lined with cinder blocks, which increases the expense. Saturday, Feb. 21st was the first "capacidad" meeting to teach residents how to improve various issues of their own choosing. They had previously voted to have the first class on Nutrition, which involved what is best to eat, how to safely prepare and store foods, and how to combine food groups for the best diet.

### **The mountains of La Paz**

Soon after that, we loaded the pickup with equipment, luggage, Magi boxes, and people to head for the mountains of south-western Honduras and the Departamento (State) of La Paz. Instead of just Dwight and the 6 members of the family Perez, this time Joanne and Andrew accompanied us and the young man who teaches the youth at our congregation, Amilcar Ramirez. Since we had so much in the truck (including Drew's car seat), Javier's two oldest children stayed at home. We dropped by a very active congregation outside of Tegucigalpa (San Mateo) for piles of excess clothes that they had. (Thank you, Leopoldo.) We also carried the majority of our food stuffs and Dwight's traveling computer lab. By the time we made our last collection stop the truck resembled one you might associate with traveling gypsies.

We then spent the first night at the home of our friend, Catalina Ramirez de Gomez, who also happens to be the aunt of Amilcar. She lives in the capital city of the province of La Paz, which is named La Paz. So it is La Paz, La Paz (just like New York, New York or Guatemala, Guatemala). We were pleased that another friend - Catalina's granddaughter, Illiany, was visiting from Raleigh, NC.

The next morning we drove to Las Trancas, a cold, windy, and poor village 7100 ft in altitude not far as the crow (eagle?) flies from La Paz, but over two big mountain ranges and several smaller ones via steep, unimproved roads. We were greeted there by many of the men and boys of the village who helped to carry our things to where we would be staying. The people there are such that they don't just give you part of the house to stay in, but give up their whole house.

The community has no electricity, no substantial source of water, dirt floors, outhouses, and loosely slatted wood

walls that allow the perpetual breezes through. It was very much like camping, with only candles for light and all meals cooked over a wood fire. One thing Dwight noticed, but was unable to get on an adequate photo, was how bright the stars and the Milky Way were that high. He said the moon was so bright that he could not look at it. It was reflecting the glory of the sun, just as we are to reflect the Glory of the Son (see beginning scripture).

During the mornings Dwight taught computer classes in the local school house that has installed solar power since his last visit. That made the classes much easier since he didn't have to compete with the roar of the generator to teach. At the same time, Joanne was teaching health and hygiene classes in the community building next door to the school. In the afternoons the Perezes distributed the Christmas boxes the first day and clothing the second day. After dark, Dwight showed movies at the school house using the wonderful projector provided by our church liaison, Mac Safley, and sponsoring congregation, the Raleigh Church of Christ. Both before and after the showing of The Pirates Who Don't Do Anything, Amilcar gave wonderful lessons on the importance of each of us recognizing our gifts and using them to God's glory.



## TX and FL

*Some of the students at Las Trancas*

We flew to the U.S. to participate in Joanne's commencement ceremony on Saturday, Jan. 31st. Our friends, John and Paula Watson, met us at the Houston airport and treated us to dinner on our way to Bryan/College Station (B/CS). It was already colder than we are accustomed to. In B/CS we had a mountain of mail and legal issues to work through that took us the majority of our time in B/CS. But we still managed to have dinner with each of our children and their families and to spend the night at Mary's apartment in Houston before the early morning flight to Orlando. During our absence from Catacamas we missed visits from both Ron Carter and his group, and Mac Safley. But during our visit to TX we were able to visit with the Pine Street Church of Christ in Vivian, LA who have been a constant encouragement and support of our work since our first year here. In addition, Joanne had an opportunity to present a request for help with an upcoming shipment to the Ladies' Bible Class at the A&M Church where she was a former attendee for many, many years. We continue to be blessed beyond measure by all of our brothers and sisters in Christ's body.



*Dr. Joanne*

Our two days in Orlando were very special. We were met at the airport by Joanne's oldest army friend, Dana Spencer and his wife, Mayela. We spent the day with them laughing, joking, and reminiscing. They dropped us at our weekend stopping place, the home of Dwight's oldest FL friend, Charles Wells and his wife Vicki. Joanne's mother arrived from VA via the Orlando airport in a rented car and also stayed the weekend. Sat. morning she chauffeured us to the graduation venue, where we had a wonderful breakfast before Dwight's brother Roger and his wife Laura arrived. We were also joined by Dwight's Aunt Phyllis who is very special to both of us and now lives in Sarasota, FL.

Charles and Vicki made the graduation evening the boast of the weekend, with helium balloons on the mailbox and dining room table when we arrived back in the late afternoon, a wonderful meal with chicken cooked on the grill, and a celebratory cake. There were 17 friends and (mostly) family present.

## Residency

We are now once again residents of Honduras. After a long process (almost 15 months) and many fines for nothing we did or failed to do, but still had to pay, we got our residency cards scant hours before we needed to fly out to Texas for Joanne's graduation. We have great cause for celebration. Unfortunately they are only good until October of this year before which we will have to start the process once again.

## Dra. Katherine

We were so sorry that Katherine's health continued to decline to the extent that she felt compelled to return to England a month sooner than scheduled. She arrived home on Thurs, Jan. 29th while we were in the states and has been adjusting the new medication dosages that are helping her with the arthritis. Please keep her in your prayers as she attends physical therapy and works to complete her medical training in spite of her struggles. We so enjoyed her time with us and will always remember her with fondest thoughts. Katherine, please come back whenever you can!

## Bob Young and HFMM

An almost annual visitor, Bob Young, arrived on Tuesday, Feb 10th to teach a series of leadership and development classes for several communities. We enjoyed his visit but left him in the middle of his stay while we attended the annual retreat of the Honduran Fellowship of Missionaries and Ministries (HFMM). The retreat was held in the cool climate of Siquatepeque, six hours from Catacamas. We drove our truck to the Mitsubishi dealership in Tegucigalpa Thursday morning to have it serviced and rode the remainder of the distance via bus. It was great meeting new missionaries and renewing relationships with previous acquaintances. There were also great workshops on helping the poor, setting boundaries, and recognizing cultural differences. Of course, the homemade snacks and visiting times added an important element to the evenings. Bob left Sunday morning, before Dwight and Becca returned from the retreat Sunday evening. Joanne and Andrew stayed in Tegucigalpa overnight to bring the truck back Monday morning. Changing the diesel fuel filter has given the truck a new attitude on performance - who knew you are supposed to replace it every 15,000 km? Can anyone say, "Turbo-powered"?



*Networking at HFMM!*

## Prayers

Please pray for Joanne's health as she is battling 'Walking Pneumonia'. Pray for Doctor Katherine Fawbert in London as she combats the physical disabilities that are giving her so much pain. Give thanks with us to our Lord for our new residency cards.

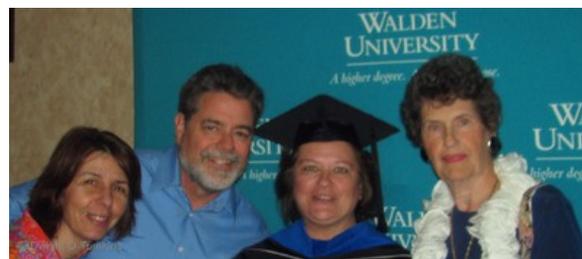
Love, Dwight and Joanne Tomkins

## Life in Honduras

We have shown you some of the decorative plants we see here in Honduras that are beautiful and can only grow inside or protected in the states. Through the years we have shown you some fruits that readily grow here and not there. Here is a plant that is grown as a decoration here, but is quite common in some places in the US. Anyone recognize it?



*Beautiful place for a baptism on Jan. 1 - Rio Boquerón*



*Laura & Roger (in-laws), Joanne, and Aunt Phylis*



*Joanne's Mom, Joanne, & Dwight*

*Photos from La Paz*



*Berries from Las Trancas.*



*The view from El Pelón*



*The best way to toast coffee*



*Andrew and friend on cliff face*