

Our Dear Brothers & Sisters and Friends,

2017 Dec.

Sing to God! Sing praises to His Name.  
Exalt Him Who rides on the clouds — His Name is Yah — and rejoice before Him.  
A father of the fatherless and a champion of widows  
is God in His holy dwelling.

**Psalm 68:4-5**

Let all who seek You rejoice and be glad in You;  
let those who love Your salvation  
continually say, "God is Great"

**Psalm 70:4**



*Tres Amigos at PLN – Carlos, Moisés, & Junior*

If you think you haven't received this newsletter from us in two years, you're correct. It was written several times, but never sent. So some dates may be strange or incorrect. Sorry. We also thank you for your prayers concerning the political situation here. Things seem to be returning to an even keel.

**November 2015**

Andrew, our grandson living who lived with us, finished PreK at a nearby bilingual school, but did not return for kindergarten in Feb. (School years here typically run Feb-Nov.). Instead, Joanne taught him at home and had a Spanish tutor come every afternoon to improve his Spanish through play. This is also the month of the Women of Purpose Revive retreat, which Joanne did not attend for the first time since they began. She did take homemade (not by us) peanut brittle to the people who presented the retreat, and visited with the attendees for a few hours. Dwight finished student exams at

Por Los Niños on Fri Nov 13th and was unaware at the time that it was the last time he would be seeing his PLN students in the classroom. As a result of extreme management and logistical changes, there are now only two people working at PLN who was working there in 2015.

Saturday, Nov 21, we left for TX to celebrate Thanksgiving with our children and to have our first family reunion. We spent the weekend in San Antonio and every had such a great time that they are looking forward to repeating it again, if God so permits. Andrew spent the entire nine days with his mother, which was a special blessing for them both. One of the funnest parts of the trip was a surprise birthday party for Lydia, who turned 30 and was expecting a surprise party. However, she was *not* expecting it on Joanne's birthday, so she was indeed surprised to show up for a dinner in honor of her Mom's birthday that was attended by 15 of her friends and family!

### **More Students**

We returned from TX on Nov 30, 2015 with hopes of attending the annual graduation at Baxter Institute in Tegucigalpa in early Dec. However, for the first times since we have been living in Honduras, we were both sick with head colds and coughs that prevented us from attending. Dwight was able to attend the postponed graduation for the sixth grade students from la Escuela el Buen Samaritano (EBS) - the Good Samaritan School. We brought Bibles with us that had been purchased in the states for the graduation celebration. We were also able to celebrate the



*Daniela and Hector (You may recall Daniela as one of the cute little girls on Facebook: For the Least of These - Catacamas June 2013 )*

graduation from sixth grade of two of the students for whom we furnish scholarships, Hector and Daniela Vargas. While Hector is a year older, they graduated together, just like their two older brothers, Jorge and Miguel, though two years apart in age, graduated together. We were very proud of both Hector and Daniela and took them out to eat and celebrate with the part of their family that could join us. They are both continuing on with their ‘advanced’ studies since it is now required to attend through ninth grade in Honduras. Much thanks to all those who make their education possible, especially Joanne’s cousin, Cathy and Steve Ingraham.

Dwight continues to teach classes at both our in-house lab and in rural areas. This photo is from a series of advanced classes with two young men introduced to him by Lisa Bloecher.



### Visitors

Bob Young, a retired preacher and professor who now spends the majority of his time traveling to teach and



*A loving couple from the Talanga church – with whom we stayed when visiting there.*

family whom they have been supporting for the past two years. Victor Hernandez (from Las Camilas) preaches at a congregation previously unknown to us in Las Macetas, roughly 30 minutes east of Catacamas. The week long visit included lessons taught by both women and men, seeing the new house Victor is building for his family, and a combined worship for the mountain congregations that filled the field beside the church building.

exhort churches in foreign countries, came to Talanga in mid-Feb 2016 and we went there to visit with him and stay overnight to hear him preach at the Talanga church of Christ on Sunday morning. His message was as powerful and encouraging as always. Our biggest surprise and encouragement came from the size and strength of the church in Talanga. We have heard recently that they have started a satellite congregation in La Trinidad Quebrado, a town about an hour from Talanga.

Ron Carter arrived at the end of March and Joanne served as his translator as he visited several congregations and families. During his visit we attended the 30th anniversary celebration of EBS, during which Dwight, Joanne, and Ron were awarded Certificates of Appreciation by the school.

In early May, Joanne once again translated and facilitated for four North Americans who came to visit a preacher and his



*The church at Las Camilas*

In July we were privileged to host Norberto and Marina Otero and their two children in our home for a few days. Norberto was teaching at both the Mission Point Resource Center and at the Escuela Biblica Honduras and Marina was translating for Chuckie Hairston who was presenting women's topics at EBH. We assisted by keeping the young children at our home during the busy weekdays, and Andrew enjoyed the playmates. On Saturday the two Otero children hosted their joint birthday party at EBH for all of the community children, and Andrew also attended.

Chuckie Hairston from NC brought us six complete TV series from the old originals. Now we watch one single episode Monday through Saturday, with each of the different series having their own night of the week, much like if we were living in the U.S. and watching them on TV. It is a nice end to our otherwise very diverse days and often brings back fond memories of times gone by.

## Medical Difficulties

In June 2016, both Joanne and Andrew got second strains of chikungunya; this time with speckled dark red rashes covering the majority of the body. We are thankful to God that these cases were much milder than the first cases last year, with the rash lasting only a week and no other debilitating symptoms. Dwight still has not gotten even one case of chikungunya. He did resort to sleeping in a spare bedroom for a time, however, because there was a mosquito in our bedroom that was aiming to share Joanne's virus with him.

## Medical Assistance

In May 2016, Joanne started helping with the expense accounting for a new medical clinic being constructed east of town by our medical doctor, Sheree Lynch, and her doctor husband, Juan Carlos Romero. The clinic will serve a larger population on a side of town where there is not currently a medical facility. Joanne spends several mornings a week verifying receipt totals and listing them in a numbered spreadsheet that will make their future access easier to locate and to understand. The task took her the better part of many weeks. But Joanne loves working with "other people's money" and has thoroughly enjoyed the time spent with Dra. Sheree and her family. Andrew is the same age as their daughter, Abigail and often plays with Abby while the ladies are working on the accounting. She spent nearly all of the last week in July working on the figures to get them up-to-date for a stateside audit before she left for the U.S. The clinic proudly opened in March of 2017.

## Andrew

The first Friday in August 2016 Andrew shocked us when he said one of his bottom teeth was "bothering him" because there was "something stuck behind it". It turned out that the "something" was his adult tooth! His baby tooth was out within 30 minutes! Three weeks later, while at his mother's apartment in Houston, he lost two more bottom baby teeth in one night! (And we mean "lost" them; one fell out in her walk-in closet and we could not find it, and the other popped across the room and hit the wall when Abuela twisted dental floss around it!)

On Tue Aug 9th, we ended another chapter of our lives as Joanne and Andrew flew to Houston to return Andrew to his mother so he could begin kindergarten there. He was registered at the elementary school only blocks from her apartment and was blessed to start in a Spanish speaking classroom with a Latino teacher, Mrs. Chavez. Surprisingly, all of the public schools in Houston require that the children wear uniforms, so we got him uniforms before Joanne returned to Honduras. While in B/CS Joanne was able to worship both with the A&M congregation and the Brazos Valley congregation. It was a great joy to see so many of our old friends and spiritual families again.

Joanne returned on Tue Aug 22nd with two young interns in tow, who were with us for three months to learn some about our ministry, to improve their Spanish, and to serve in whatever capacities God (or Joanne) calls them to.

## 3-month Interns:

It was our pleasure to host Emma Moore, 17, and her younger sister Libby, 15, from Aug 30 - Nov 22. The girls hail from Jacksboro, TX and have made previous mission trips with a church group that comes to work every Feb with David and Suyapa Chacón who are wonderful evangelists and church planters here in Catacamas and surrounding areas. Their tasks have taken a gambit of forms, from hanging and folding laundry, to entering data in the computer, to playing basketball with the students at EBS, and to writing profiles of some of them. They did sewing, laminating, dusting, painting, organizing, and improving their touch typing skills. They spent some time with Amber Foster working with street kids in Tegucigalpa. The girls are home schooled and are keeping up with assignments assigned by their parents before they came while also taking live Spanish classes (online) twice a week. They have been a great joy and blessing to us and we are thankful for the opportunity to host them.

Dwight took Emma and Libby with some other local youth to a three day youth rally at Baxter Institute in Tegus on the 15<sup>th</sup> of September. All the Baxter students coordinate and about 700 youth attend annually from Central America, mostly from Nicaragua, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Olancho. Dwight stayed in one of the men's dorm rooms with six youth - two of whom were from Costa Rica. He said it reminded him of India, where you had to walk



*Drew showing that he is "on top of his work"! Where did he get those 'ugly color' shirts?*

over other people's sleeping mats to get to the door. There were excellent teachers, classes, and activities. Friday and Saturday night were devoted to talent shows, both from the Baxter students and the youth at the rally.

On Thu, Sept 29th, Joanne took our interns to Copán Ruins for the weekend. They left the house before 6am, and after two more bus changes and 13 hours, arrived at their hotel just before 7:30pm. Friday the girls toured the ruins for two hours with an English speaking guide who is 80 years old and has worked for the archeological park for 43 years. Saturday the girls took a three hour geographical tour on horseback, visiting a high mountain coffee plantation, seeing the back of the archeological park, and even traversing the Copán River. Then they took a "motorized taxi" to the Guatemalan border to get new passport stamps and exchange Lempiras for Quetzales. Sunday they started the trek back at 3:40am and arrived in Catacamas just before 7pm. They returned to their home in northern TX on Nov. 22nd.



Joanne's mother, Barbara, came to visit for a little more than a week. We had a wonderful time. Dwight told her to be careful not to touch the overhead water heater while the water was running since there is always a danger of shock and that they have the

nickname of 'widow-maker'. Unfortunately she was so concerned that she did dare to get in the shower the whole time she was here. Fortunately we enjoyed swimming in the river with her. She spent her days reading and visiting, including a fun walk through our market. And as concerned as she was, not a thing happened to her until she got back to Dulles Airport in Washington, DC and her shuttle bus fell over on its side, injuring her and others. She still works full time at WalMart and took lots of gifts from Honduras for her co-workers.

Other regular visitors are Mac Safley and a group from Raleigh, NC and the churches from Jacksboro and Wichita Falls, TX. One of their regulars, Carole Hobdy, came with her sister, Clela Heartfield, a few weeks ago to visit for a few days with Joanne. Dwight says, "They had too much fun." while visiting many of the special ministries here in which they are involved with their hearts and hands. Doris Clark, one of the founders of Predisán, a health ministry here, often drops by when in town. She well knows where we live, since she lived in the same house for seven years before us.

Other very new, but regular visitors, are Benny and Donna Baker. We are so excited to have them, with their organization, Misión Para Cristo, taking over the oversight of EBS, the good Samaritan School.

We have had so many other special visitors that we can't list them all. But we hope that you will be next.

## **Illegal Aliens?**

At the end of March 2016 we planned to visit Costa Rica to renew our visas, but since all three passports expire in June we were told the border patrol in Costa Rica would not allow us to enter. We were disappointed because we had planned on visiting the hotel and some of the sites we had been to on our honeymoon 32 years ago, visiting with Calvin and Linda Henry (Calvin and Linda were missionaries for many years in Costa Rica before Calvin took on the presidency of Baxter) who were doing a group of seminars, and of course, getting our visas renewed. Instead, we began paying a monthly visa renewal fee through the lawyer working on our permanent residencies and Andrew started accruing a penalty for his expired visa.

Becca arrived on Friday, April 22, and on Monday, April 25th, which was Andrew's fifth birthday, we went to the embassy for an appointment with the passport renewal folks. Only a biological parent can renew the passport, and the absent parent must also sign a notarized consent. That final step proved immensely time consuming and was not accomplished until late July.

In June 2016 we both needed to renew our 10 year passports. It was amazing how quick and simple the U.S. Embassy made this usually time consuming process. We both appeared in person at the embassy, paid the renewal fee and gave

them our current passports. The replacements were ready for us to pick up in less than three weeks. Maybe it's a good idea to renew all passports at the embassy here in Honduras.

But our residency renewals were another thing, and it was just a renewal! After two years, many fines (they didn't have it ready, but we still have to pay), and much back and forth to Tegucigalpa (4 hours by bus each way plus time waiting in Immigration we finally received our renewals. Unfortunately they had run out of the plastic cards. Finally on August 15<sup>th</sup> of 2017 we received our new cards.

## Special Events

One of the special events of April 2016 was the leader's meeting in the church at Nueva Esperanza. The leader's meetings are always a delight for Dwight because he gets to visit with many of the preachers and leaders he has known since we moved here and to always meet new faces.

Another special event is our quarterly combined worships hosted by different congregations. Of those, one of the most special was in Jicaro Gordo, a small town about 20 minutes from Catacamas. We always try to take a truck load full from a congregation that has no one to provide transportation. For this event, we carried a large group from the congregation of San Isidro, the home congregation of Daniela and Hector mentioned earlier in the newsletter. Joanne was not in town for the event, but Dwight had a fellow missionary and teacher from Tegucigalpa visiting, James Hogan. Since the cabin of our truck was filled with older women and those with babies, Jim rode with all the men, younger women, and youth in the pila, or back of our truck. Another visitor, Noé Perez, an elder in Tegucigalpa, did the preaching. He and his wife, Gloria, were glad to take Jim back to Tegus.

At the combined worship, we met under a tent, actually a large group of tarps, with about 1200 people in attendance. The singing was outstanding. Many times for the combined worships we meet in a grove and numerous times we have been in mango groves, though never during mango season. But then that might be a bit dangerous if a mango was shaken free by the singing. Though Isaac Newton would probably approve, as would anyone else who caught it in their hands rather than on their noggin.

## Update on the Hernandez twins

The Hernandez twins turned one year old on June 28<sup>th</sup>, 2016. We are thrilled that several people have donated to help provide soy formula for the lactose intolerant twin and sufficient funds to provide for the other twin as well. We are thankful that they were able to make it through the first year of life.

Santos brought by the grades of one of his other daughters, Sindy, to show us how well she was doing in school. Except for PE (a 78), she had excellent grades. He has reason to be proud of her and all his children.

## Prayers

Please continue to pray for Santos Hernandez, his twin baby girls, and the rest of his family. Please continue to pray for the tension that has arisen between the



different political parties and that there may be peace. And that we may be able to explain the peace and unity that is ours in Jesus Christ.



## Living in Honduras

This little fellow, only about 18 inches from nose to tip of tail, and a couple of smaller companions have taken up residence in our yard. He (or she?) goes by multiple names. In Honduras they are called pichetes. Our interns call them Armando and Roberto. They run on their hind legs when surprised and can actually run for a distance on water (3 -5 meters). Thus they have gained the name, Jesus lizards. We were told that they are strict herbivores, eating mainly fruit. But just recently Dwight saw one grab and eat a large insect. Whoop! Well done, Armando.

## Final Thoughts

I had better close or this won't be sent for another month. We know it takes a unique person, not better and not more godly, just unique, to be willing to

be able to leave their own culture and family and move to another culture to teach about Jesus. We are so thankful that our Lord has gifted us with that ability and that you have helped us on our way with your encouragement, your prayers, and your support in many different ways. Thank you for allowing us to be a blessing to our brothers and sisters here in Olancho, Honduras. And if you would be interested in donating money to this work, EBS needs textbooks for 3<sup>rd</sup> through 6<sup>th</sup> grades. They need \$6500 for this, and so far they have received \$500. You can either donate through:

The Least of These - Honduras, 3806 Turkey Meadow Ct., College Station, TX 77845 (mark EBS books on the check), or

the website of Misión Para Cristo <<http://www.misionparacristo.com/How-you-can-help>> and mark EBS books.

Thank you. We hope you had a wonderful Christmas and a fantastic and blessed 2018.

Love, Dwight and Joanne Tomkins



*The family of Daniela and Hector*



*Andrew using his head.*