

September 27, 2010

Dear Friends,

Life continues to be interesting and challenging. It has been a busy month. The level of violence here is escalating. There have been several unpleasant events. While we were in Canada in July a woman was mugged right next to the church. Three weeks ago a man came to the door wanting money. Our housekeeper told him no. Later she left and he was waiting under the house and he yelled at her and made her very upset. He was angry that he was refused. A week later I was in my English class and I sent a young man to go buy some snacks for our break. He was accosted just outside the school and grabbed by someone wanting money. Three days ago our watchman was attacked in the middle of the day in the back yard. The attacker got the machete away from the watchman so the watchman's hands were badly cut and he had blood all over himself. We called the police but no one came (which is standard). Recently we have had young men openly using drugs on the school and church property.

So in light of this we have a new baby in the house. He is six weeks old and still having accidents in the house occasionally. He cries all night long because he doesn't like being alone. He is a cute mutt. Our hope is that he will learn to bark at strangers and make it a little safer here in the house. I give thanks every day that our floor is tiled. It is so much easier to clean up the accidents.

Hurricane Matthew passed about 100 km north of here. Sandy Bay and Waspam received the brunt of the wind and rain. On Saturday four of us went to Waspam and from there out into the communities as far as Koom. It took us 4 ½ hours to drive 125 kms. The road was in horrendous shape. There were many funny moments. Despite the tragedy people remembered to laugh. And of course we got stuck in the mud on the way home. I remembered seeing pictures of Pete Hoyle stuck in the mud pushing a truck. I had no intention of pushing a dirty truck so I suggested that the driver get out and help the men pushing and I would drive. He agreed and together we managed to get unstuck and only wasted about 15 minutes.

Out in the communities the poverty is intense. Matthew flooded out rice and bean plantations. This of course means food shortages and rising

prices. Originally we heard that 8,000 people were evacuated because of the flooding. In Koom the Moravian church had 135 people sleeping in the church. There were several other places where people had sought refuge. The Rio Coco river (the border between Nicaragua and Honduras) was about 4 feet higher than it should be. It continued to rain during this trip so on our way home the road was worse than when we went north. The one big bridge had water right up the beams of the bridge. It continues to rain and my concern is that if that river floods out the bridge there is no way to bring in supplies except by helicopter which is much more expensive. We have had two meetings of the emergency commission and I expect we will meet again soon to figure out how to get aid to these people.

Unfortunately it continues to rain. I understand there is another tropical storm coming up the coast so that will make things worse.

There are also some “good news things” happening. On the 2nd of October we are having an AIDS prevention workshop for women in the Creole church. The nurse plans to also take PAP smears from any women that want the test. I am hoping that all the women will go to this workshop. This past week I visited with the Mayor to discuss the problem of garbage in the streets. I have another meeting tomorrow morning with the person responsible for the environment and the manager of the Mayors office. The Mayor wants a meeting with all the pastors to discuss opportunities for education. I am hopeful that this will lead to some public meetings with the public. The contrast between Waspam and here was phenomenal. Waspam is quite clean. The interesting is that people here blame those who come from the communities yet the communities are much cleaner. The municipal government is really pushing to bring tourism to Puerto Cabezas. So I am hoping that this will mean some political will power to get this situation under control. I remain hopeful.

The regular activities continue. The Bible Study is going well. The young adults are regular in their attendance. I am going to have a discussion with the elders about going back to one service each Sunday. The attendance is poor at both services. So maybe having one service will increase attendance. For this church it is a relatively new thing to have two services. Pastor Edgar introduced the second service. He served here for two years after Pete and Cathy Ann were here. There are several challenges. The PA system doesn't work well and one of the musicians is not very good. All of this affects the worship. Unfortunately I can't solve any of these problems.

We do have a new hymnbook. At least new to us. They are a gift from the Moravian church in the USA. It has some really nice tunes. I plan to have a hymn sing before the service once a month to practice new hymns. It is less painful that way.

I continue to teach at the school three mornings a week. The English club on Saturday mornings is going well. In fact the group has really become a community. They are all Moravians and so they have things in common and their personalities blend well. We laugh a lot and they are learning as fast as I can teach.

The Canadians from Nova Scotia came and went. While they were here they painted ADSIM offices. They also met with several folks in town about the situation down here. They also spent a day swimming at the river in Tuapi with all the kids. They all had a good time. Soon we will start preparing for the group from Queen's. They are coming in February 2011.

Keep these folks in your prayers. Don and Deborah