

October 29, 2010

Dear Friends,

Today is a holiday in Puerto Cabezas. It is autonomy day. As I sit here there is the constant noise of drums from the street. School kids are practicing for the big march tomorrow. Choirs have been practicing and you can hear their voices from this side of the street. The sky is blue with lovely white clouds. Is not hard to recognize paradise.

There is some concern that there might be violence in the streets but so far I have not heard anything specific. It was one year ago when they demonstrated in the streets and people were injured. This region is supposed to be autonomous but is not really. There are tents set up and some streets blocked off so it does have the look a fiesta.

On the Managua side there were reported cases of Leptospirosis two weeks ago up near Leon. It is a disease spread by rat urine. In the past week they are now reporting cases in 10 different departments from Leon to Masaya. Leon is north of Managua and Masaya is south of Managua

It is a nasty infection, bacteria that can kill, especially small children and the elderly. This epidemic is happening because of the flooding caused by Tropical Storm Matthew. There are still lots of flooding which means stagnant water so the bacteria don't get washed away. Once again the people here experience suffering because of a lack of clean water.

Our church held a dinner theatre last Saturday night and everyone got up and told silly jokes or sang silly songs. Don and I did an old George and Gracie skit. Brother Gerry told lots of "pastor" jokes. Willaemae got up wearing a funny cowboy hat and sang a wild song about a dog. (I could not understand all the words because it was in Spanish)

I had a meeting with a few other pastors to discuss the garbage challenge. We are planning to meet with the pastoral council. This group includes the leaders of all the faith groups in town. We are hoping to have an ecumenical approach to this situation. We are planning to do workshops in every barrio. It would seem that we can not expect much municipal support. I did meet with the Mayor and the environmental person. I found out some basic facts. The Municipality only picks up about 25% of the garbage here. 80% of the garbage is organic. Most of the rest is plastic. I am told the plastic can be recycled. So we decided that if we did workshops about composting it would hopefully go a long way towards cleaning up the garbage. The general feeling was that the churches should shoulder this responsibility. The plan is to figure out how to get some money and buy a tractor and hire someone to pick up the garbage. I need to talk to the new Director of ADSIM (this person has not been hired as of yet) because the consensus was that ADSIM already has the infrastructure. So the plan is to continue having discussions and do some educational work around this issue.

The usual groups continue each week. The Bible Study continues to be interesting and challenging. I am trying to find a source for some new Bibles. The ones we use are old and falling apart. I have contacted the Bible Society in Managua and I am waiting to hear back from them.

Harvest Sunday is coming; the date is November 14th. That means a big sale under our house and lots of activity. However to get turkey we would have to go to Managua and buy a frozen one and bring it back. That would make it an expensive Turkey.

The Book of Hope for London Conference has come out. The kids here are thrilled to see their pictures in the book. The photo on the front cover is one I took of a young girl in our school in front of the well. She was thrilled to know she is famous in SW Ontario.

I had a honour bestowed on me this past month. I became a Godmother to two cute little girls. They are the nieces of Jacenia who is our housekeeper. They are cute. The service was across the street in the Miskito church and there were a least a hundred babies to be baptized. Pastor Anselmo agreed to let us go first so we could get back across the street for my regular service.

Don continues to work at ADSIM and still rides his bike across town every day. He is beginning to understand some Spanish but is unable to speak much. I continue to meet with my teacher 3 times a week and I am getting better slowly. I learn a new word every week. If people speak slowly I can understand most of what they say. The challenge for me is meetings where everyone else speaks Miskito.

Don took the picture that I have pasted below. I have Gloria in my arms and her sister is standing in front of her mother (Ana).

We continue to be blessed by our experience here. There are times when we just look at each other and say wow...isn't this great.

Please keep all of us in your prayers. May God bless each and everyone of you.