

August 07

in Honduras

-- Janet Alcántara

"...so shall my word be that goes forth out of my mouth: it shall not return to me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it."
--Isaiah 55:11

CHALLENGE. "This church is *dead!* No one comes any more." These startling words greeted me this month in El Olvido. "I am going to a Pentecostal church where there is a pastor, and 300 *gringos* giving money for humanitarian projects," my informant continued, sitting alone in the church, I tended to agree with her: no one showed for the Woman's Group. But...an hour late, there they were, proving to me they had memorized all the NT books, could now find Bible passages on their own, and all had done the homework on how to start reading the Bible. Some of the illiterate women, and ones who cannot see to read, enlisted the help of children, and read together as a family in the evening.

One boy, about 9, reminds me of the child Samuel, or the child Jesus in the Temple: He joins the women, listening with rapt concentration, eyes wide, soaking up every word. He completed all of the Bible readings assigned to the adults. Before I left, I asked him, "Have you ever thought that God might be calling you to be a Pastor when you grow up?" He looked very thoughtful before replying quietly, "Yes, I think he is." This church dead? Not quite!

TRAINING. ICLH staff and congregational leaders spent a week in a workshop on the vision of the self-sustainability of the local church. Speakers led us through theological bases followed by concrete applications. This very appropriate theme challenges a tradition which inadvertently accustomed the Latin American church to dependency.

REVIEW. What a delight to process this year's work with my ELCA/Global Mission Latin America and Regional supervisors, here for the workshop! This first year, being a time of exploration and ex-perimentation, I've taken on too much. I need now to plan for the long term. What needs cutting back? How must I shepherd my resources to make an impact? There are overwhelming amounts of need, and just because I have knowledge in many different useful areas doesn't mean that I should respond to all of them. Pray for my process of discernment.

In faith and service in Christ,

--janet

Ambiance

Mystery Water. At the start of last month, tap water started arriving with a strong smell of insecticide + moldy peat. Why? The press explored the issue, and offered no conclusions. Some people surmise it has something to do with the campaign to eradicate mosquitoes, with insecticide somehow getting into the water source. Unlikely. Starting the day by showering face and hair in what smells like strong poison is not pleasant! The odor lingers persistently in laundered clothing, despite fragrant detergent, wind and sunshine. I won't cook with the stuff!!

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Dengue. Sprayers came twice in August to treat our neighborhood against Dengue-carrying mosquitoes. The men lug ear-splittingly loud atomizers and wear only a light-weight fiber mask for protection. They come into courtyards or stairwells to spray, leaving the neighborhood covered with an evil-looking miasma. People abandon their homes to sit in the street with dogs, birds, and bewildered elderly family members for half an hour, at which point it is supposed to be safe to go back in.

Hemorrhagic Dengue is fairly common here, and with weedy, smelly, grey-water-carrying creeks at either end of our street, we breed plenty of biting insects.

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Traffic protest. Traffic slowed nation-wide today. In Tegus, main arteries leaving the city and some internal streets are blocked, helicopters hover as police face protestors. The death of a teacher in the fray this morning means the cancellation of tomorrow's action so protestors can attend the funeral. Ideal days to stay home and write a newsletter!

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Do write! E-mail is best.
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Regular mail takes 2-4 weeks.

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