

January 08 / year 2

in Honduras

Janet Alcántara

“...behold, all things are become new.” --2 Corinthians 5:17

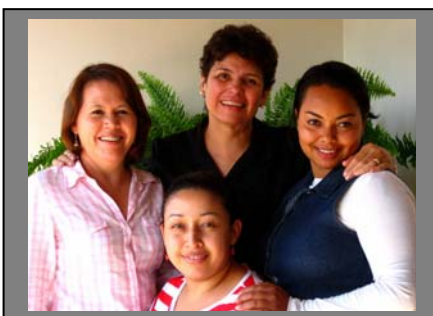
YEAR'S END. My year ended with an HIV-AIDS march where the ICLH was the only church represented (“Why is a church *here?*!” a reporter inquired, scandalized. “To be like Christ, present with the despised and rejected,” explained our HIV-AIDS program coordinator.) While the office staff left for their month-long holiday, I went to Mexico for a week and celebrated Christmas with family there. Back in Honduras, the slightly slower work pace allowed me to get *almost* completely caught up on the reports and projects that backlogged during the extra programs of the past three months.



Sight for eyes in winter-weary climes: all over Honduras, the Madriada bursts into bloom—including these fence posts! Below: Purple starbursts tumble luxuriantly over neighbors' garden walls in Tegucigalpa.



Below: The Women's Spirituality Group for ICLH staff is part of leadership spiritual development. The group's core from the office finds it is life-changing.



NEW WORK PLAN FOR 2008. As the office staff reconvened after vacations, we gathered to plan the year ahead. I received a revised work plan. For my work to be impactful, I felt I could either continue travelling to the communities (my preference) *or* continue to pursue other parts of my job: develop and produce **educational materials**, collaborate with the **health project**, build up **local leadership**, prepare and present **workshop, training, and retreat topics**, and **link ICLH** with our English-speaking church and synod **partners**.

The new plan is a hybrid: the church wants me to continue with all projects, but to cut back and concentrate visits to just one region per six months. I had to say a sad goodbye to the women in Olancho, and will work January-June in the three Lago de Yojoa communities, and then from July through December up in the five La Ceiba mission points.

ICLH IN THE NEWS. ICLH has been on TV several times lately. The latest event was during our participation in the signing of an agreement by historical churches (12 denominations represented) to work towards justice, ecumenically and in coordination with government resources. The President of Honduras, after struggling to read Pastor Armindo Schmechel's name, rechristened him the more manageable *Armando Chele...*!

In faith and service in Christ, *-janet*

Ambiance

No more Maria, Juan. . . When it comes to naming the young, Hondurans prefer creativity to tradition. I attended the graduation of co-worker Herminio's son *Irvin Randold* (siblings are *Nesly, Killer, and Derris*) from a small-town tech HS, and saw this born out in the program. There were 2 Juans, and a José and a Carlos, but therein ended the usual. Some names reflected the exotic tug of the foreign: *Arnold, Fanny Paola, Eddith Jacquelin*. Others paired foreign names with a Spanish one: *Wendy Fernanda* or *Maryory* (Marjorie) *Alejandra*, or with a totally unusual one: *Yohan Argerris* or *Elvin Adalid*. Pentecostal families found inspiration in the Old Testament: *Osmiel, Sarahí, Zinrri Nahún, Edin Josué*. Others fiddled with spelling: *Jessyka* or *Leisy* (Lacey). Some unusual names have been used so often they are now becoming the New Traditionals: *Kellin, Kenia, Maritza, Yadira, Yanory, and Yuliza*. Many names are invented simply for the delight of the sound. All generations favour the woman's name *Suyapa*, to honour the patron saint of Honduras, Our Lady of Suyapa.

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Changing weather. This year we didn't get any really frigid weather, but I'm spoiled by the perfect temperatures we *did* get: no need for a sweater, but no sweating either. The crazy swings in weather these days warn that the scorching months of dry season are on their way. Also, the glut of little sour green mangos presages the many months when the mango is *the* fruit dominating the market.

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Janet Alcántara,
I.C.L.H., Apdo. 2861,
Tegucigalpa, Honduras, C.A.