

Ambiance

Students here in both state and private schools wear uniforms, most commonly, a white pin-tucked, middy-hemmed shirt over navy pants or pleated skirt. High school girls modeled the dowdiest style I've yet seen: crumpled, dark tan cotton dresses with tan nylon socks and clunky brown shoes. The most progressive uniform outfits guys and girls alike in dark jeans and white polo shirts.



Mango trees now burgeon with heavy green crops. The current fruits in the market are "snack-sized" mangoes with a heady flavor, but so petite, you need to eat four or five for the equivalent of a serving of fruit. Another minute offering is the *ciruela*, the size and shape of a jumbo olive. Consisting mostly of rough white seed and thick skin, a thin, juicy, golden strip of flesh is sandwiched in between, reminiscent of mango in flavor. (It in no way resembles a plum, the literal translation of its name.)



Honduras everywhere bubbles with life: myriads of plants and flowers...and equal battalions of bugs. At my apartment, I am acquainted with *zancudos* (mosquitoes, in a variety of styles: black, brown, grey, striped, lithe and quick or fat and bumbling), sooty-winged sand flies, and voracious no-see-ums that are aggressive at night. All leave a calling card: I sport a sampler of blotches, spots, bumps, and welts of varying longevity and itchiness. Tiny ants, highly curious, overrun the whole house—including my body—and their favored places to hang out are inside the electric teakettle (!) and on the back of my neck. Traveling adds red chiggers to the mix. My latest encounter on the Caribbean coast was with the *nigua*, a fly that lays eggs under the skin that turn into worms that can crawl around in the body for 18 years. The bite causes a blister, which when broken to remove the eggs, leaves a deep crater that takes forever to heal. The folk remedy is to smear the area with flour paste that dries to a scab and asphyxiates the critters.



Feel free to write. Email is more likely to get an answer. dcsjanet@hotmail.com. Regular mail takes about 2 weeks.

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in Honduras

-- Janet Alcántara

"Go therefore and make disciples...teaching them..."

--Matthew 28.19

A major part of my work has to do with teaching. This month:

Church. In Olancho, I recalled my first education class: *"take students from where they are to where they need to be."* I found that these women, having never read the Bible, were clueless as to its overall message or how to find its books. So we had a class on "Bible Intro", began memorizing the books of the Bible, found out how the Bible is put together, and, as I drew an illustrated timeline from Genesis to Revelation, discovered the theme of God's love for God's creation. By the end of the class, the women were tickled to easily find references in Gen., Mat., and Rev. with no help!

Medical training. A Lutheran medical group from Michigan comes annually to train our Health Care Program Volunteers, 13 women engaged in a preventive health program in their own communities. This year the theme was "Self Care". Interpreting for the event, I also lectured on "Boundaries for Health Care Workers", and wrote and produced a skit and developed scenarios depicting real-life challenges for the women to solve and act out. They excelled!

Hospital. I also accompanied the Michigan group to the HIV/AIDS specialty hospital to visit wards. Thinking I was the interpreter, I suddenly found I was "it", so modeled chaplaincy skills, developing rapport with the patients, listening to their stories, and offering to encircle them and pray for them. All patients accepted our prayers.

National Assembly. At our annual National Assembly, the theme was "Ethics of Christian Leadership and Ecclesiology". How do you broach ethics without turning people off? German volunteer vicar Christoph and I developed four 40-minute modules: a humorous then thought-provoking play, small-group Bible study and sharing, and finally a very hands-on and visual act of Confession and Absolution, with an Affirmation of Baptism. Delegates all stayed engaged!

In faith and service in Christ,

---janet

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