



Winter 2008

Dear Friends,

The landscape of Guatemala is a study in contrasts. The capital, Guatemala City, is situated on a 5,000 foot high plateau, ringed by volcanic mountains that tower over 12,000 feet. Drive two hours south, however, and you find yourself right on the muggy coast of the south -- facing black sand beaches. We took advantage of having Esther here for Christmas to explore some of the more scenic spots. One day we climbed the smallest active volcano in the country and roasted hotdogs over hot vents in the lava field. Another day we bodysurfed in the Pacific, and on New Year's Eve we swam in Lake Atitlan, a mile-high lake dubbed by many "the most beautiful lake in the world." Of course, sharing these experiences with one another was at least half the fun.



The contrasts are more than surface deep. Guatemala City is very developed, with ready access to most goods. If we want pizza for lunch, we can choose from Dominoes, Little Caesars, or Pizza Hut, all within a 10-minute drive from our condo. Yet, less than an hour's drive out of the city, indigenous Guatemalans live in one-room houses and eat the same diet their Mayan ancestors did over a thousand years ago. Basic education and medical care are luxuries they do not have access to or cannot afford. While many would call themselves Christians, much of what they practice is a mix of Christianity and traditional religion. Even in rural areas where there is an evangelical church presence, the pastor typically has only a third-grade education, with little to no Bible training.

Chuck began flying in December. His flights have taken him to within a few miles of the Honduran border to the east, and very close to the border with Mexico in the west. Most frequently, he flies to a mountainous area about 35-45 minutes northwest of Guatemala City where the airstrips are short, unpaved, bumpy, and sloped. He says his MAF refresher training in Idaho, in October, was perfect preparation for conditions here.



Our biggest user to this area is Hope Bible Mission, which has developed a comprehensive program to meet both the physical and spiritual needs of the indigenous population. Regular flights for Hope include Guatemalan graduates of a local seminary who teach a Bible curriculum to pastors, Sunday School teachers, youth, and women. In November, a medical team from the U.S. partnered with a

Guatemalan doctor to address physical problems. One member of the team helped distribute and install water filters to provide clean drinking water. About half the people who received the filters were not Christians, and the local pastor used the opportunity to share with them how Jesus is the Living Water.

While Chuck is out flying or maintaining the airplane, I continue to study Spanish and hone my driving skills going to and from the kids' school, where they are both involved in after-school activities. Becca plays the sweeper position on her soccer team, and Josh has just started volleyball season. We are grateful to God that we are all adjusting to life here, and are SO VERY thankful that a heart echo in December showed little change in the condition of my aortic valve. Thanks to all of you who have been praying! Please continue, and add Chuck's safety to your list. The mountainous terrain and unpredictable weather here make flying a small plane plenty challenging. I would also like to request intercession for the well digging season which is about to begin in Mali. This exciting ministry still holds a very special place in my heart. (www.maf.org/mali)

Last year brought many, many changes to our lives. Through it all, our faithful Heavenly Father upheld us. We don't know what 2008 will bring, but we do know that God will NEVER leave us, and that NOTHING can separate us from His perfect love!

HAPPY NEW YEAR!

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