

March 15, 2014

Hello my supporting friends,

I hope that you're witnessing signs of spring everywhere you look, as I understand this has been the worst winter in a century! Bless your patience...

As for Guatemala, we are still firmly in dry season with all the associated levels of dust, smoke, and poor air quality. This has made for my first round of bronchitis, from which I'm recovering well.

These last few weeks have seen me finding and furnishing a house that came available here in Itzapa. It is four rooms empty of everything; cupboards, closets, counters, even sinks! This is common in rural Guatemala, and what seemed very challenging a little while ago, seems normal now. Isn't that the way it goes? One room became a kitchen, a second became my bedroom/office, and the others are on storage duty. I'm enjoying this new space and praising God for providing something that is central to everywhere I need to be, has friendly and helpful neighbors, and allows for the right combination of privacy and accessibility.



*These lovely ladies cooked a wonderful lunch and brought it to my home. One is part of the women's coop with whom I'm working and said she had a few people she wanted me to meet! We sat on the kitchen floor cross legged, talking, eating, and playing with these beautiful children.*

I've been meeting weekly with the shampoo co-op women and am getting to know them better. They are mostly indigenous and are teaching me a few words in Kaqchikel, their Mayan language. We're due to deliver another batch of shampoo at the end of March to the 4 stores that carry it, and take orders for another delivery in a month.

The girls group is also meeting weekly for teaching on discipleship/biblical values, as we discover together, who Jesus is. The ages range from 10 to 15, and their willingness to share their thoughts and feelings is one of the compelling aspects of being here. Self-disclosure is normal for them, and they welcome the opportunity to talk about what is happening in their lives, even if they don't know someone well. This is one reason community bonds are so strong here.

Other aspects of ministry such as times of visitation and prayer, and establishing age appropriate conversational English classes, are also on the table.

As I look ahead to the possibilities of service here in Guatemala, I'm reminded again that it's your kindness and generosity that, together with God's summoning, have brought me here. Thank you all again. Truly, your interest and encouragement are gifts that I deeply treasure.

Rich, overflowing blessings on each and every one of you.

Chris



*This concrete structure is called a "pila" and receives all the water coming in from the town. It's tepid, and is the only source of water in the whole house. I keep it full at all times, just in case we don't have any water for a day or two! It's here that I wash dishes and do laundry.*



*My neighbour's home complete with slanted aluminum roofing to handle the rainy season. You'll notice that it's a dirt floor, but the living area surrounding this courtyard is concrete. Still, when it starts to rain, this courtyard area will be all mud.*



*"Cristina, toma una foto!" Cristina, take a picture! Most Guatemalan kids love hamming it up for the camera, but many others are far more reserved and either turn away, or ask for 8 Quetzales; one American dollar, before you take the shot. These new little neighbors have been so much fun to watch play and get to know.*