

December 2009

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THE EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF WEST TEXAS WORLD MISSION

Where in the world are we going? ...thanks to YOU...

The Bishop as Missioner

Catherine and I had the pleasure of participating on a mission trip to SE Mexico in November. There were twelve of us from the diocese, four clergy and eight lay. It was truly a blessing to share this time with the people of SE Mexico, their bishop Benito Juarez, and our diocesan team. The “Threads of Blessing” team worked with a group of women to create beautiful needlework which will be the foundation of a micro-business for these women. In fact, all of the things with which we are involved in SE Mexico through our World Mission Department are directed toward helping start micro-businesses for the people of the small villages in the diocese.

I was one of the presenters at their clergy conference for continuing education, speaking about the stewardship of our ordination vows. I found this to be a time of personal re-commitment to my vows as well as a time to get to know fellow clergy who minister in very different daily circumstances than do we. At the same time, human needs transcend borders and we all are working for the same Lord and have many things in common that bind us together in ministry.



We also had the opportunity to celebrate Bishop Benito’s 10th anniversary as Bishop of SE Mexico and, as part of that celebration, to dedicate a new diocesan building that West Texas has helped to construct. There is still a financial need to complete the kitchen and the bathrooms. Over 300 people attended this service, which was held on Tuesday morning and afternoon. Following a glorious Holy Eucharist, we shared a meal which was provided by the various congregations, each bringing a dish from their particular area and tradition. We were then entertained by local dance groups of high school youth from around the area and the churches. A truly fine day.

On another day, Catherine and I accompanied Bishop Benito and his wife, Angelica, to three of the villages that West Texas is supporting through a variety of ministry initiatives. These initiatives include providing ovens for small bakeries on the church grounds, cattle for both beef and dairy, and a one room corn mill also located at one of the churches in the villages. Catherine and I also heard from two young ladies (ages 11 and 13) about their education and gratitude for West Texas as our diocese is providing both with scholarships to attend school this year. We expect to provide up to seven such scholarships next year as well.

While there is no doubt that our mission efforts are changing lives in SE Mexico, the life changing nature of our relationship goes both ways. I speak for all mission teams when I say that we ourselves are changed by (contd. on page four)

The Art of a Thankful Heart by Fr. Randy Melton, Epis. Church of the Messiah, Gonzales

The average lifespan in Uganda is about 52, due mostly to the AIDS epidemic over the past few decades. For all intents and purposes, there's a lost generation between the very young and the very old.

In 2006 I was in Kisoro, Uganda, visiting the 52 orphans my parish sponsored. It's amazing how much I learned from these children and their guardians about what it means to be gracious. The first orphan I met was Wilbur, a 10 year old boy whose parents died of AIDS. He's the primary caretaker for his blind, one-legged grandmother, who's raising Wilbur and his younger sister. He helps bathe her, collects fire wood and roots, and provides her with food and water.

What a lively, beautiful woman this elderly matriarch is! She's obviously the safe place, the heart and soul of Wilbur's world, and a paragon of faith. We heard and learned our first Urufumbira words from her lips, words that were repeated over and over during our visit the next ten days. "Imana ishemwe! Imana ishemwe! Imana ishemwe!" which means, "God be praised!" Then she said, "Wakosi, wakosi, wakoski chayne!" which means, "Thank you, thank you so very much!"

The language itself is colorfully woven with an attitude of gratitude that permeates the very culture. I asked the bishop how to say "You're welcome," and he replied, "Wakosi Gushima!" which means "Thank you for thanking me!" A response to gratitude is even a response of gratitude!

As a thank-you gift for hosting my son and me in their home, I gave the bishop's wife a gardening stool with a few digging tools. She promptly and profusely thanked the Lord...not me, but the Lord...for giving her this gift through me. Her depth of faith was remarkable and not unique among Ugandans. It was both humbling and instructive to me, as I became aware of the shallowness of my own faith in comparison.

It's often said that the little things in life are valued most. Typical Americans visiting Uganda will complain about inadequate lighting to shave by, no hot shower water, or no shower at all, a TV with no reception, a lack of food choices, no restroom facilities like we're accustomed to, and not enough rest time after being in the hot sun all day. It's definitely the little things that count in terms of our comfort.

Ugandans are also interested in the little things, but in a very different way. Little things provide the seeds of gratitude that praise God rather than complain. Having clean water to drink and enough food in their stomachs, a roof over their head---even if its made of mud, the love and support of a caring community, the opportunity to attend school, sharing a common meal with new friends, generously and joyfully sharing what little they have with others as a show of hospitality, showing a genuine interest in the life of a total stranger, and always responding with smiles and friendly gestures. These little things elicit "Imana ishemwe!"

Read more from Randy about being thankful next month.

This Is Why We Pray from George Olson, missionary in the Philippines

Dear praying friends and family,

Wow, that was something else! The other night I couldn't sleep, and so I got up to check and see if I had locked the front door. As I was standing by the front door, I felt something cold go across my left big toe. I looked down, and there it was, a snake!! With banded blue and white stripes, and it saw me and quickly slithered off to hide between the wall and the wall plate. Oh great!



A snake in the house, hiding where I can't even chop at it with a knife or machete! I tried all kinds of things to make it come out so I could kill it, but it stuck itself fast in there and wasn't going to move until I went to bed.

So I whispered a quick prayer – Lord please help me figure out how I can get rid of this snake so it doesn't bite one of us... Then it came to me – aha! So I put some water on the kettle and boiled it up, then took it over and poured it in the crack where the snake was hiding! It came out, of course, dead and cooked! Yum! The boiling water method of snake killing – tried and true! When I told some of my tribal friends how I had taken care of the snake, they laughed and laughed!! They had never heard of doing something like that.

It turns out that it was an especially good thing I killed the snake. In my snake guide..., I found that this snake was a *blue krait*, one of the most deadly types of snakes in the world, with venom 16 times more poisonous than a cobra! They are not a particularly aggressive type of snake, though, and only come out at night, so it is very rare that people get bitten by them. In fact, we have another missionary staying here with us for the week who lived in another area... for 17 years. In all his time here, he said he has never seen that type of snake! I hope I don't ever have to see one again either!

*He who does not live in some degree for others,
hardly lives for himself. Montaigne*

Sponsors Needed for 4 (or more) Orphans

The Episcopal Church of the Messiah sponsors 18 Ugandan orphans, enabling them to get an education, which is not free in their country. We currently have 4 who are without sponsors. If you would be interested in sponsoring one of them, or one of the 400+ orphans who are on a waiting list, the cost is only \$250 for secondary and \$200 for primary. This covers school fees, uniforms and a few incidentals necessary to their education like lanterns and fuel for the entire year of 2010. I will need to wire the money in December. I'd love to share this ministry with the wider community. I'm available for presentations as well. If interested, please contact Fr. Randy Melton at 830-672-3407 and I'd be happy to talk to you about it. If you don't get an answer, leave a message and I'll call you back.

The Bishop As Missioner, contd.

participating in mission work, and that God speaks to us through the people whom we encounter, near or far. Mission trips are not simply a matter of us taking something to someone else, but they are a matter of Jesus continuing to form us in His image as we cast our bread on the water and as we offer ourselves to God's holy purposes.

I want to take this opportunity to once again sing the praises of our outstanding World Mission department and thank all who make these missionary endeavors so meaningful and so spiritually successful. There are certainly ongoing and ever-present challenges, but changing lives begins with small steps. I am so thankful to have had this recent opportunity to grow in my relationship with Christ through the people of SE Mexico.



Finally, I encourage you to support World Mission in any way that you can, including taking a mission trip, praying for a mission trip, and/or financially supporting this fine work. All of us can participate at some level, and I assure you that you will be blessed by your participation. ***Glory to God whose power, working in us, can do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine: Glory to him from generation to generation in the Church, and in Christ Jesus for ever and ever. Amen.*** (Ephesians 3. 20-21)

(The Rt. Rev. Gary Lillibridge, Bishop of the Diocese of West Texas)

Shoebox Ministry by Karen Melton (Messiah, Gonzales)



Though we may be small in numbers, our church family loves to give to our community — both near and far. For this reason we were pleased to ask our congregation to bring toys and other items for the Samaritan's Purse Shoebox ministry. One of our members owns a boot company and so donated many extra large shoeboxes for us to fill. Parishioners were generous and brought items to church on Sunday. Then members of our Monday yoga class stayed after class and prepared the boxes.

This was a lot of fun, and we plan to do this again!

World Missions Annual Report

The 2009 World Missions Annual Report will be available after December 30, 2009. Highlights include Ministries, Countries Visited, Number of Teams and Team Members, and other information pertinent to the Diocese of West Texas World Missions Ministry. Call or email for your copy: 888/210-824-5387 or mcurry09@sbcglobal.net

Upcoming Mission Trips and Prayer List:

January 1-10. RUSSIA. Renee & Greg Sethness. Work in orphanages.

January 5-13. RUSSIA. Steve Denney. Work in orphanages.

January 5-9. HONDURAS. Louis Manz & Weldon Hammond (Weldon returns on January 12.). Water exploration.

January 8-February 6. HONDURAS. Water Well Ministry. Terry Hayes & John Martin, Team Leaders.

Trips in Planning Stage:

ECUADOR. St. Thomas, San Antonio. Tom Rickey, Team Leader. (trickey@satx.rr.com)

NORTHERN MEXICO. St. Thomas, San Antonio. Wayne Currier, Team Leader. (wecurrier@msn.com)

MADAGASCAR. Work with Global Teams missionaries. St. Matthew's, Universal City.

DIOCESE OF SINGAPORE. Bp. John Chew Hiang Chea. Looking for mature Christians to teach ESL.

Alternative Christmas

Casa Bethesda Orphanage (Piedras Negras, Mexico) is a lifelong orphanage for children and teens with severe disabilities such as autism, Down's syndrome, epilepsy, and other handicaps.

The Island of Hope in Minsk, Belarus, is one of only two privately-run centers for disabled children and young people with learning difficulties in Belarus. A range of lessons featuring practical life skills as well as dance, woodwork, crafts, and ceramics fills each day to help disabled young people realize their full potential.

Severe droughts in **Honduras** wiped out crops for many farming communities. With the next planting, floods took away not only the standing produce but also the seeds, leaving thousands destitute. DWTX has bought seeds and food staples for many families in rural communities, but the need continues to be urgent.

The Trinity Dental Clinic in Liberia (see inside article) needs funds for supplies and drugs.

Send your gift for one or more to **Episcopal Diocese of W. TX., POB 6885, San Antonio 78209**. Include honoree's name and address, and tell us how you want your card signed.

To Get More Involved in World Missions

To contribute to World Missions, write your check to DWTX and send to PO Box 6885, San Antonio, TX 78209, ATT: World Missions. 100% of your gift will go to the ministries of World Missions.

For more information on any of our ministries, call Betty Chumney or Marthe Curry at 888 (210) 824-5387 or email us at chumneyb@aol.com or mcurry09@sbcglobal.net.

