

## The box chronicles

Dear Fellow Pilgrims,

The journey often gets complicated and the way strewn with potholes and rocks and it keeps one's eyes open and alert for dangers ahead and the mind distracted, or maybe just focused, and in the meantime, days are ticking away and before you know it, two months have passed without you even being aware! It seems much more difficult these days to stay on top of a monthly letter, so I hope you will be patient if the monthly letter turns into a bi-monthly letter or even worse, a quarterly one! Since I talked with you last, Rick and I had the privilege of visiting our daughters in Texas, oh, and our grandkids! I was able to spend a full two weeks, but unfortunately Rick could only be there a week as he was in the middle of training sessions for deacon and elders in United Church. But, even though the time was short, we had a wonderful time of refreshment and as usual, much too soon the day came for us to head back to Colombia. On our return, we began planning for the ordination service for the first elders and deacons for United Church. It was a very joyous occasion and a new beginning for this only English speaking international evangelical church in Bogota. We have four covenant children on the way and three weddings scheduled before Christmas! Rick and I have been doing quite a bit of pre-marital counseling and other counseling as well, hence, the lack of time for writing the "Chronicles" or even much musing! But, we both do much better with busy, so all is good.

A couple weeks after we returned from Texas, I came down with a most horrid flu that put me in bed with a 102+ fever for three days. I really don't have much recollection of those three fever filled days, but after the fact, I realized that I must have missed taking my low-dose hormone therapy because my emotions were all over the place. I am learning to have compassion for all who are on meds that alter hormones or serotonin levels! Wow! Thankfully, after a week I was more or less recovered from the flu symptoms and have been convinced from now on to get the yearly flu shot. I am not a very good patient, no, I am a horrible patient! And, I have figured out a sure-fire way not to "forget" taking my hormones! Who would have thought that losing a couple little ovaries could cause such a stink?

On the Colombian front.....we are in the middle of a challenging situation with Javier and his wife, Sandra. Javier has been pastoring the Cristo Rey church for about 15 years, but lately, Sandra has been diagnosed with a severe OCD (obsessive compulsive disorder) and can't work and struggles in relationships with people, so Javier has considered resigning. As a result, they have been on a one-month sabbatical to seek the Lord and pray for His direction for their lives. The Colombian presbytery, of which Rick and Joe Harrell are both members have been covering the ministry at Cristo Rey during this month. The sabbatical is now at an end and it seems like Javier won't be continuing on as pastor of the Cristo Rey church. He desires to continue on in full-time ministry, but is looking at other options as well.

To further complicate things, Javier and Sandra have been living on the second floor of the Cristo Rey building, so now, have nowhere to live and no income at present to find a place to rent. We desperately need your prayers for the Lord to make clear to Javier what it is he is to do now and to open the appropriate doors whether it be to return to secular work or continue on in the ministry.

I recently had the pleasure of meeting a sweet Colombian-born young woman who was taken to Florida to live when she was seven by her mother. Years later, her mother married an American citizen, but he didn't adopt Alina, so she never got her papers. Minors can't apply for their own papers; the parents have to petition. Alina's mom finally tried to apply for her papers when she had just turned 21, but then was told that Alina would have to apply herself, as an adult, but that if she did, she would be deported. Alina was in college at the time and did not ever remember living in Colombia, so didn't act. Later she married an American citizen and when in the process of filling out the paperwork for marriage was arrested and put in a detention facility for six months. Two years ago she was deported to Colombia. Can you imagine how frightening that would be; to be sent to a country that you don't remember living in at all and dropped off there? Her husband has been petitioning for her for two years, but she is still here. Alina came to United Church with another young Colombian woman in the exact same situation a couple weeks ago. They are here in the country of their birth, but aren't really Colombian at all. Alina doesn't even know how to read or write Spanish! I thought the immigration problem in the States was so black and white until I met these people. Alina went with me to the ladies bible study yesterday and said that she knows that God has a purpose in her being here even though it is extremely painful to be apart from her husband for so long. She has great hope that she will be able to return home soon. Alina is a third culture person: she's not really Colombian, but she's not totally American either. I have jokingly said that we may need to change the name of United Church to United Church, Home of the Deported! It is such a privilege to be able to minister to these needy believers!

Well, I have been extremely long-winded this time! It has been nice to take a little respite and muse over the past few months of highlights with you. But, it's time to get back on the road. There are many pitfalls that need to be leapt over, rocks that need to be moved out of the way and pilgrims whose hands need to be taken in mine so that we can walk the way together. But, in those times when there is no one else on the path, I know I am not alone.....I walk with Jesus.

Always with Jesus,

***Pam***