

Arensman Archives October 2007

Just Back From Belize!



Scott and Sarah at the top of the Mayan temple at Lamanai

We had the opportunity to return to Belize last week with our two oldest children and give them a little experience with the things to expect when we arrive on the field. The time there was busy and seemed to go way too fast. We left on Friday ready to return to our youngest children, but would rather have stayed and had them come to us. This trip confirmed even more that God is calling us to the field in Belize.



Teaching 1st graders at PDS

We spent the first couple of days teaching in both the high school and elementary school. Two very different venues both with unique challenges but also loaded with encouragement. The high school posed the greatest amount of work as we taught a class in creative writing. The students struggle with some of the same issues that English speaking students face as well as many others that come as a result of English being their second language. Sarah and I spent many hours after class editing papers, and giving feedback to the students and their missionary teacher, Julie. The teacher was very encouraged, and expressed an appreciation for the lessons. As a teacher, you hope that the students come away with similar feelings and a greater understanding of what was being taught. The elementary schools were a blast as Sarah and I had the privilege of teaching enthusiastic kindergarten and first graders. We took on the challenge of teaching about body systems including lungs and teeth. We created puppets, blew bubbles, and brushed teeth, along with many other interactive activities, which created an air of excitement for the kids. The greatest challenges here came from the children's elementary understanding of the English language and our marginally functional knowledge of Spanish. The heart language is Spanish and children do not start to learn English until starting school. Nevertheless, we had a good time with this age group. We taught them "Head, Shoulders, Knees and Toes" in Spanish and English, and left the village hearing the song echoing across the campus. A BIG thanks to all of you who donated money and school supply items for our trip! We gave away dozens of pencils, boxes of crayons, folders, stickers, scissors, toothbrushes and toothpaste, and other treats. The kids were thrilled to receive them!

We also had the opportunity to meet with church leadership, and were excited to find out that I could meet both a need and vision of the church. I will be working alongside our team leader Marc, fellow team member Gary and the Belizean pastors helping to develop and implement discipleship and small groups ministries. I am eager to accept this new role although I feel inadequate in many ways. I put my faith in Christ and the wisdom of

the team leadership and trust that I will be enabled to fulfill this position. I have a passion for the Great Commission, and was blessed to hearing my pastor speak on this topic last week. It encouraged me to hear him expound on our role as Christians to bring people into the church and to help teach them. Christ does not require me to be a theologian or even have a seminary degree in order to accomplish this task. I simply have to rely on Him and His word, trust in His infallible message and be willing to do what he commands. Oh, what a joy it is to rely solely on Him!

We did take one day to do a little site seeing with the children and came away with a better feel of this countries history. Boating down the New River to the ancient city of Lamanai, we stood in awe of the rainforest as the monkeys swung from the trees, toucans flew overhead, and the call of a jaguar was heard in the distance. The pinnacle of the trip was climbing 100 feet straight up the tallest Mayan ruin and overlooking the vast expanse of the rainforest. Truly all of creation proclaims the majesty of the Creator.

We continue to raise our support with plans to leave in July of next year. Please continue to pray for us as we prepare, that God's will would be done in our lives. We are anxious, but know His timing is perfect. If you have committed to us verbally would you please send in your pledge card? A running count of these commitments allows us to know where we are in the process. THANK YOU to everyone who has already partnered with us! You are an encouragement and blessing beyond words!

Scott



*Elizabeth and TJ
in front of the 'Face Temple'
circa 100 A.D.*

September 29 – October 5th we took our two oldest children, Elizabeth (12) and TJ (10), to Belize. This was the first time our children had ever traveled outside of the U.S. We wanted to give them a taste of the country and culture and help them know what to expect when we finally make it to the field next summer. It was interesting to watch their reactions to life in a two-thirds world country. Their range of emotions and responses mirrored that of our own the first time we went. The first few days they were so physically worn out from the travel and intense heat, that they were very emotional. In fact, the second night TJ sat in tears on the bed and said “Mom, I don't think Belize is the place for me.” As we spent time in the churches and schools and they had opportunities to interact with other missionary kids as well as Belizean children, their attitudes began to change. By Thursday, they were both telling us that they did not want to leave.

For us “grown-ups” the trip just reconfirmed the calling that we felt last year at this same time. It was good to spend time with the team discussing the vision for the country of Belize. One thing we were able to really understand this time was the difference between being a team that is ‘needs-driven’ and being ‘vision-driven’. As Jesus said, “You will

always have the poor among you.” We could run around for 30 years continually meeting legitimate needs, and never move towards the vision of the team:

To promote God's kingdom in Belize by assisting the national church in its movement of establishing and strengthening churches that are vibrant, mature and reproducing.

Learning how to meet needs strategically and intentionally that support the vision for the Church is a delicate task. We will be seeking God daily for wisdom in this area as we make decisions in ministry. To this end, Scott was able to discuss, at length, his gifts and abilities along with the areas of ministry about which he is passionate. After meeting



Sarah, with a new friend at Unity Church in the burial grounds

with our team leader and Rafael Ku, the Belizean pastor who is responsible for all the PCB churches in the north, Scott's role has been redefined. He will be working with Rafael and another team member, Gary Chambers, to develop and implement small group and discipleship ministries within the many village church-plants around Corozal. In addition, he will be specifically seeking to build relationships with Belizean men for the purpose of mentoring them, bringing them into the church and nurturing them to maturity. This change will allow Sarah, who is passionate about teaching, to teach English (grammar, writing and composition, literature, etc.) on a part-time basis at Cornerstone High School.

We are very excited about this new opportunity. Looking back over the past 6 or 7 years we can see God's hand in our lives, preparing us for this. These roles also correspond beautifully to our individual personalities and gifts. Truly, the Lord is at work!

In the area of the Burial Grounds in Belize City sits a squatter's community built, literally, on top of a swamp. To this area, residents of Belize City bring their junk cars, broken-down appliances and household refuse. Combined with the stagnant muck of the swamp, the trash and junk sit in random piles, rotting away under the violent heat of the Central American sun. My "American" eyes had never seen anything like this. It was a shock to my senses. Unexpectedly, a group of young children came running to our car to



A home in the squatter community

greet our team leader and his wife, who used to serve in this area. We were at the church - Unity Presbyterian is the only church in this community. A little girl ran up and raised her hand to me. She offered me half of an orange. Not knowing what else to do, I took it. She waited expectantly for me to try it; to respond to her gift. So, praying against all the millions of invisible germs that I was sure were teeming on the citrus treat, I took a 'slurp. The child grinned and wrapped her arms around my leg. It was the sweetest gift I think I have ever received.

Stepping inside the open warehouse building that serves as a church, a pre-school and a community center, we were greeted by more cheerful youngsters. They were everywhere! I have never seen such smiles and felt so welcome. The sweetness of that place overwhelmed me. Sadly, my first thoughts were only of the extreme poverty and unsanitary conditions. I immediately assumed that they people here were to be pitied. How sad that my first response was so superficial. The people I met there were some of the most happy, thankful and positive people I have ever had the opportunity to meet.



Unity Church

I am ashamed that my vision is so clouded by ignorance. I have so much to learn about living in another culture. My uneducated stereotypes and presuppositions are being exposed and challenged as the Lord takes me to a new country and culture. I pray that He will continue to change me and make me fit for His service. May I learn that “Man looks upon the outward appearance, but the Lord sees the heart.”

Sarah