

All Saints' Day, 2019

Dear friends and family,

I don't know where to start, so I will choose sometime in October. That isn't too far in the past, but if I don't get it written, it becomes a great blur.

Early in the month I took a trip to Canada and the United States where I had fun and fellowship with friends and family. Charles St-Onge had arrived in Montreal about 15 minutes before my plane touched down, so we were able to travel to the St-Onge household together where Deborah waited up for us burning the midnight candle.

The next morning, I breakfasted with Charles, Deb, and their girls, Sophia and Olivia. We then traveled to Ascension Lutheran Church where Charles led Bible study and worship with their mission congregation. What a privilege it was for me to have time with this missionary family serving God in Canada and the Caribbean!

I then went to Quebec where I learned a lot about our French neighbors to the north. From there I landed on daughters living on the East Coast, and met up with our son Will. The purpose of this trip was to divide my dad's things among our children. It gives me pause, to think of my dad on this special "All Saints' Day," and to be grateful for that final call that will bring us all to our heavenly home with Christ Jesus.

We drove from New Jersey to Dallas in a long day-and-a-half. Will and I are both "early birds," so our day started in the night, but that sure helps make a trip seem shorter. I was able to stay with Will and his family for several days, and then traveled on to my college reunion in Colorado Springs.

I returned home before Herb, who was traveling in Guatemala with Roldán Ríos a Lutheran pastoral Colloqui student from here in Orange Walk. You may know that Herb is called to Belize as an outreach missionary, but he also serves as a regional area facilitator for Honduras, Guatemala and Venezuela. In that capacity he was invited by Pastor Jeff Mueller to visit the orphanage that Lutherans have built in San Cristobal on the outskirts of Guatemala City. Herb was able to connect Jeff to two Guatemalan pastors, Elry and Abdiel Orozco, who were students of his "back in the day" when he served as a missionary to Guatemala. What joy we have to see God putting his people together to grow his kingdom!

It was great when we were finally both home in Belize! I have had fun teaching a Kids' Club Saturday Bible school for a group of children in Maya Mopan, a small village on the outskirts of Belmopan. I love teaching children about Jesus and his promises through stories and songs, and I look forward to being part of the "homework help" group that Vicar Benjamin Flores and his wife Karina are starting in Valley of Peace.

We just finished our Belize FORO, which gave us the opportunity to report about ongoing mission here in Belize. We took people to Valley of Peace to see the church and pre-school buildings there, and to learn about the new sports school and after school programs that are being begun by Benjamin and Karina. We showed people the camp property next to our home, and explained our vision for bringing groups here to help us in mission. And then we traveled to Seine Bight on the Placencia Peninsula to dedicate the new church building (Christ Lutheran Church), install Pastor Meissner as president of the Belize Mission Society, and confirm Mariluz Hernandez in the Lutheran faith. What a great time to be Lutheran Christians in Belize.

Please pray for us and God's continuing work here. Herb is trying to recover from one of those nasty coughs that seem interminable, so I would appreciate specific prayers for missionary health. Also, pray for our travels as Herb mentors to pastoral candidates in Chetumal, Mexico and Orange Walk. He is on the road a lot, so we ask that God grants him wisdom and strength in all he does.

Blessings on you and your families as you look to Thanksgiving and our blessed season of Advent. Can it really be that time of year again?

Yours in Christ,
Markie Burch