

Dear friends and family,

I thought you might want an update about Belizean life here on the Banana Bank. It has been fairly uneventful (although busy), so it may not seem much like news.

Last week we had over 10 inches of rain in three days. The Belize River was higher than I have ever seen it; we have not had rains like that since our early days here. There were people in the area that saw flooding, and several of the folks who work around here found themselves on islands, but no one that we know had to evacuate. Still, it took some time for folks to dry out.

The big “take away” for us is that we needed to shore up the water harvesting lagoons that we have built here on the property to capture water before it flows off to the river. Lake Marietta, “on the camp property,” required some added excavation because it was not big enough to hold all the run-off from the gutters of the buildings there. We hope that all these excavations are improving the supply of ground water beneath our feet.

I have been cleaning the medical equipment that the former GEM ministries used. We are photographing the pieces, and will try to find new homes for all the devices. I hate to think of the things getting any older without being used, but it is hard to figure out how to get things to places that can actually use them.

School grades have arrived, and I can't imagine what they are based on! The kids have been out of school for months, trying to keep up by long-distance solutions. Education continues to be a huge issue here. Most kids don't qualify for secondary education, but those few who have the opportunity to go must pay at least \$300.00+ USD. If that weren't hard enough, many children have not been well prepared for the rigors of a secondary education, and fail the first year. We are weighing whether or not to help Juanita continue after a dreadful first year. In Belize people feel shame if they need help, so oftentimes people just suffer in silence without letting anyone know they need help.

Speaking of Juanita reminds me how grateful we are for her and her family. They continue to open their home to us for “Kids Club” on Saturday mornings, and when I realized that most kids don't know their basic math facts, I asked if I could come on Wednesday mornings to help them with their math concepts. I'll tell you, it is a lot like teaching bees to have kids at all different levels. I certainly commend the teachers who taught all grades in the one-room schoolhouses years ago.

I took Angelina, Juanita's mother, to the doctor to see if they could figure out why she has been ill for so long. They diagnosed her diabetes very quickly, and with diet adjustments, she is beginning to feel better. That news is positive, but she does not want to go to the neurologist in Belize City to see why she has such blinding headaches. She is now beginning to experience weakness in her arm, hand, and leg, so I have my suspicions, but for now, will you please put Angelina, Juanita, and their family in your prayers for healing and guidance?

“Drumroll!!!!” I have started going through the curriculum we purchased and downloaded for “Little Lambs Preschool.” It is called, “God’s Little Explorers,” by Stacie Ann Nelson. I’m doing the first preparation of the lessons, and then will discuss strategies with the teacher. Herb and Benjamin have begun talking about school enrollment, and I hope we will have news about that the next time I write. I am buying some materials, but we plan to purchase carefully to not fill the place with clutter. There is a fine line between having enough materials to think and learn, and having too much to use well. The airport here is still closed, so it will be hard to bring books down from the US.

We have again begun to travel as part of our outreach to Seine Bight and Riversdale, as well as north to Orange Walk to support the ministry of Rodán Ríos. Last week when Herb and I arrived in Orange Walk, we learned that the road to San Román was under a couple of feet of water. The people there have been cut off from shopping and work until the water recedes. If one must travel to Orange Walk, there is a man who will take you in his boat for \$5.00 one-way. A \$10.00 round trip cost one quarter of a laborer’s daily wage.

Herb bought a floor covering material that pours onto clean cement to make a seamless durable floor that is easy to clean. Clifford and Daniel put in the new floors in the camp’s bathrooms yesterday; they look great! It is always tricky to do something for the first time, but I think they learned a lot, and are now clearing out the kitchen so that we can put down a new floor there. Please pray for the camp property and the property at Valley of Peace. We are still waiting for the deeds to be issued, and hope to hear some news soon.

Speaking of learning how to do new things, Herb and Benjamin improve every week as they post our service to the Facebook page at [Lutheran Mission Belize](#). We still are ironing out the wrinkles, but I think this is a great way to spread the Gospel of our Lord during these difficult times. I hope to announce that we will soon have the service in Spanish as well. I will let you know; it’s a lot of work to get a service ready for production, so one language may be all that we can handle at present.

I hope this has not put you to sleep. I know it is a lot of little news, but it might give you a better idea of our lives as we: Share the Gospel of Jesus Christ, plant Lutheran Churches, and show mercy to folks here in the Caribbean part of Central America.

Yours in Christ’s love,
Markie