

December 2013

The Drum Family

Our Family Christmas Tree

We decorated our Christmas tree this weekend. This is our first Christmas season in our new country: first time to try to find a tree, first time to need to buy Christmas lights or candles or decorations or traditional foods. Just the many 'firsts' of the season is enough to throw anyone over the proverbial edge! Add to that the Spanish friend who announced to us that there would be some church members that would not approve of or understand our tradition of having a tree. They would especially not understand our nativity scene. The evangelical church here tries to stay away from anything that the Catholic church might do or celebrate, so Christmas trees and nativity scenes are grey areas for many staunch evangelicals. And, P.S., there is no Santa Claus in Spain... our daughter is a little upset about that. Yep... stress and culture clash is at an all-time high for us this season. In our home, we choose to follow our family traditions, but it is a fine line that we walk and every day is a learning experience.



(On the subject of Christmas trees (just a small sidebar here)... when we were in India last July, we visited a botanical garden. In it, there is a huge pine tree. Beside the pine tree is the identification sign (shown at left). Just to be clear here, I do NOT worship a tree, nor do I hold it up as a sacred part of my religion or beliefs... but I can see why that would be a common misunderstanding among our friends in other cultures and beliefs. I'll blog about that later, but now, back to the story...)

As I sat and reflected and looked at our tree last night, I was reminded of all of the blessings that our family has had over the years. Our tree is not a perfect designer tree with matching ornaments and fancy bows. It is 'a family tree' – it is a hodge podge of homemade ornaments and special keepsakes. There are ornaments on it that are older than we are, handed down from grandmothers and family members. There are ornaments that were favorites from our childhood days (now considered antiques!), and

Christmas Tree...

ornaments from our children's childhoods, with their precious photos and handprints. There are ornaments that represent our brothers and sisters, scattered around Texas and the world.

Some of my favorite things are the ornaments that represent countries and people whom we have served over the years. We have little pieces of Mexico, Jamaica, Costa Rica, Peru, and Spain on the tree, each one carrying a special story and memory and face. I remember the Veli family when I look at each of my carved gourds. They personally made each of those for us. As I look at the tiny sheep and llamas on my tree, I remember all of the sweet little Quechua ladies on the mountain who I spent so many hours with, shepherding sheep as the women spun wool and knitted and crocheted. I look at little pewter crosses and hand painted wooden crosses and remember families in Mexico that we spent so many summers with, and who were present at the baptism of my daughter in a tiny, dusty Mexican church on the border. New to our tree this year are the ornaments that we bought in India, to remind us of the sweet friends we made there and to remind us to pray for them and their work.

On my tree, near the top, there hangs an olive wood angel, bought in Bethlehem when Billy and I traveled the Holy Lands. My heart still breaks



when I see her hanging there, because she carries the memory of the tears that I shed as I passed through the giant iron walls and razor wire that surround this holy city, a city in political and religious turmoil, a city that didn't in any way look peaceful or angelic like I had always pictured it to be. Bethlehem was not at all like my nativity scene, with its quiet sheep and twinkling stars and angel, the pensive shepherds and donkey and cow, and the peaceful baby in the manger – the Prince of Peace. I so wanted Bethlehem to be all of that for

me, and instead I was shattered at the reality of the region and the people who live there. The angel on the tree reminds me to pray for the people of Bethlehem and all of the region that was the home of the Prince of Peace, but is anything but peaceful.

I love our family Christmas tree because of all of the memories that it holds. Each branch holds a reminder – a place in time and a piece of our lives that has shaped us and is special to us and reminds us of our many blessings.

Please be sure to see the Prayers and Praises section (below) to read about some of the blessings we have had just this month, as well as ways that you can be praying for us and for other missionaries.

Merry Christmas!!!!

~Laurie

"Rest isn't the absence of activity. It's the presence of peace."

~ Steve Backlund

Praises... it was tough to have our first Thanksgiving with no mission team and no family around to celebrate with. In Peru, we always had other team members with which to share the cooking and the meal, as well as a few Peruvians who came to the table and shared in the feast. This year, we did not have that, nor were we able to celebrate on Thursday as it is a normal school day and work day here. HOWEVER... PRAISES for our Saturday Thanksgiving!!! We celebrated with a mixed table of Canadian, Mexican, Argentinian, African, and USA! It was truly an "immigrant Thanksgiving" and it was awesome!

Praises for deepening relationships and ministry! Laurie is part of two different groups of women who meet each week for discipleship, bible study, and prayer... all but one of these women is an immigrant to Spain. Such a privilege to be with these women, to study with them, and to be accepted into their circle! Billy is currently meeting with a few different men each week, building relationship and learning culture. One is unemployed and is working on learning English so that he can find a good job, so he and Billy do English homework together for a couple of hours—the trade off for Billy is that he practices his "Spain Spanish" (so different!), he learns lots of culture, and they have a lot of laughs together! Another man is an immigrant who meets Billy for coffee and a snack once a week, and another is a Spaniard who is in an informal coaching relationship with us. **Pray** for us to continue to build relationships and lay the groundwork for ministry here in Spain. Little by little, we are finding our niche.

Pray for the many unspoken things that I cannot tell you... we are in ministry to many people who have security issues and we must protect their identities and confidentiality, but know that they need prayers! Also **Pray** for the many missionaries (like us) who will be away from their families and culture during Christmas.

“What does church and ministry look like for you now, in Spain?”

In Peru, we never found a good fit for us within the traditional church structure. Then, later during our time in Peru, we lived out on the mountain in Patarcocha and our Kuyay Talpu team planted a church in the village we were serving, so church looked like 20 or so little Quechua men and women, plus about the same number of children, meeting in a rustic adobe room, singing in a mix of Quechua and Spanish and learning from the Kuyay team.



In Spain, we are in a completely different situation. We were invited to serve here by a pastor of a church in Antequera. We are so blessed to be a part of this church! It is a dynamic little congregation of both Spaniards and immigrants. In fact, 50% of the congregation are immigrants! The service begins at 11 a.m. each Sunday and lasts for about two hours. The first hour is almost completely filled with worship songs interspersed with prayer. The music and worship is completely led by a group of 20-somethings who are really great musicians and passion-filled worship leaders. Then we move in to a time of announcements, offering, prayer, and a sermon. I love that this pastor is always willing to allow guest speakers and other pastors to give the message and share the pulpit! It is great to hear different teachings from different people on a regular basis.

After church, people mill around and chat, sometimes for almost 45 minutes to an hour. On the first Sunday of each month, we have communion (much like back home) and we have lunch together after the service. On this day, it is not uncommon for the church to invite sister churches to participate and have church with us, or for our church to go visit one of the sister churches at their site. In October, we drove to a small church plant about thirty minutes away to share in their communion and fellowship lunch... lots of fun! The first Sunday is also a time for baptisms. This past Sunday, we had 7 baptisms.

The church houses a food pantry and has a distribution day once a month, handing out large boxes of non-perishables to needy families. We also have a clothes closet ministry to help the needy and those who arrive here in Spain with nothing. A new outreach is in it's infancy... an outreach to the elderly, especially those who are alone or are in nursing homes. Billy is involved in this ministry, as well as helping with the food pantry when he can.

Laurie is involved with two different groups of immigrant women who meet for fellowship, bible study, and prayer. It is a lot of fun to study with and encourage these ladies, and to share life as immigrants / strangers in a foreign land. All of these women are from Central and South America, so we have many things in common (from our time in Mexico, Costa Rica, and Peru) and can share with each other about cultural differences, foods, etc. One of these groups meets in a town that is 40 minutes away, because they are women who live and work in that town and the town (20,000+ population) has **no church presence**. It is a special joy to be there, studying with these women who want to be followers of Christ, but have no access to a church.

So, that's what church and ministry look like for us in Spain!



DEAR BILLY AND LAURIE,

I will pray for you.

As God provides, I plan to partner with you by giving \$ _____ Per month / quarter / year for _____ years.

I would like to donate a one-time gift of \$ _____



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News from Peru:



We were so blessed to receive an email from one of the Kuyay Talpuy teachers on Thanksgiving Day! She wrote to us to let us know of recent happenings in the towns of Iscos, Patarcocha, and Tinyari:

Hermana Laurie—I write to you to tell you that all of the Brothers and Sisters in Patarcocha send you their love and greetings. This Sunday, we are baptizing seven new believers. We have grown in number to 50 in our small church. I am very happy because of all that God is doing here in Patarcocha. In Tinyari, we are now meeting each Saturday from 4-6 in the afternoon in the house of Professor Maria from the school. She offered her house to us for this special work and there are many children who come on Saturdays. Thank you for your many blessings. Give everyone our greetings and our thanks. Love, Rocio