

Presbyterians Sharing . . . December 2009 Update

Presbyterians Sharing is the national fund supporting the mission and ministry of The Presbyterian Church in Canada.

God's treasure

The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field.

Matthew 13:44

At a recent conference on stewardship I was challenged to think about what it is that I treasure, in people, in my community, in the church. I couldn't help but think of the people that I have met over the years ministering in Canada and around the world with The Presbyterian Church in Canada. I have met people sacrificing their time and money, giving all they have to care for children and youth in the inner city. I have seen people poring over the scriptures and translating them so that the good news can be shared in all languages. I have walked alongside people showing love to the most vulnerable. These mission staff, supported by your prayers and gifts to *Presbyterians Sharing*, are treasure, doing God's work. It is a great honour to work with them and it is my hope, throughout the year, to help you discover, celebrate and share in this treasure.

Karen Plater

Karen Plater,
Associate Secretary
Education for Mission & Stewardship



Some of our treasures, clockwise from above: Workshop at the Hakka Presbytery in Taiwan; The Reverend Ed Hoekstra leading worship in Malawi; The Reverend Glynis Williams (far right) with Marguerite Nyandwi (far left), a refugee sponsored from Burundi; youth who are ministered to through the Cariboo Presbyterian Church.



Presbyterians Sharing

Goal for 2009: \$ 8,975,000

Received by Nov. 30, 2009: \$6,082,213

Received by Nov. 30, 2008: \$6,075,655

Thank you for your faithful support of *Presbyterians Sharing*. Let us continue to work and pray together as we encourage congregations to reach and surpass their commitments in 2009. We are currently 0.1% ahead of where we were in 2008.



Finding oneself in Guatemala

Your gifts to *Presbyterians Sharing* support Denise Van Wissen as she serves the *Fraternidad de Presbiteriales Mayas* in Guatemala. A nutritionist, Denise is helping to strengthen the *Fraternidad's* health program. She offers basic nutrition education workshops to women's groups and equips nutrition promoters who work in the communities. Denise writes of life in Guatemala with her husband and one year-old son Jeremy.

One of the questions new acquaintances will often ask me translates literally as 'Have you found yourself here?' It means something between have you gotten used to living here and are you enjoying yourself.

My husband Nelson and I have been living here in Quetzaltenango (Xela for short) for over two years now, so yes, we've gotten used to it. Prior to this I had worked for over ten years as a nutritionist in Nicaragua, where Nelson was born and grew up, and where we met and were married. Since coming to Guatemala we've developed a taste for some traditional Guatemalan foods like paches, (tamales made from potato or rice dough with a small piece of meat inside). We've even gotten used to small, thick tortillas, but still prefer the big, thinner ones of Nicaragua.

An interesting thing about this area of Guatemala, as compared to Nicaragua, is that – despite the myriad differences—it feels a bit more like Canada. The corn harvest is in October and November when the rains end and things start to dry up and take on subdued autumnal hues. December to February is the chilliest time of year, and we're forced to use space heaters in the house.

Xela is Guatemala's second major city, and while big and busy, as a major commercial hub for the surrounding regions, it somehow manages to preserve a distinct cultural flavour. Xela is situated in the highlands of Guatemala, the predominantly Maya region. This region is home to two of the four major Maya groups: the Quiché people and the Mam. (These are the two groups with whom the *Fraternidad* works).

Mornings, I usually work in the office, which I enjoy getting to by bike. I used to lunch at the office with my coworkers, but now head home to get our son Jeremy his lunch. Afternoons, I drive to a Quiché or Mam community to have a session with one of our women's groups.

When it comes to shopping, I like the variety (and price) of

fruits and veg in the open-air markets, and Nelson prefers buying meat from the butcher's. While buying meat without the styrofoam tray and seran wrap seems like a great idea, seeing huge slabs of meat dangling from hooks and the ever-present flies is enough to bring out the vegetarian in me.

Our favourite weekend activity is to head down the mountain to the hot coast to hang out at a pool. At about 200 metres above sea level (compared to Xela way up at 2300 metres), Retalhuleu enjoys a tropical climate, much like that of Nicaragua, so we feel very much at home there. In and around Xela, we often visit a hill-top park with a lookout over the city, and also enjoy hiking.

Returning to the popular question of how we're finding life here in Guatemala, we've grown to appreciate the richness of the culture, and give thanks to God for the privilege of working with and serving our Mayan sisters.



The Presbyterian Church in Canada

50 Wynford Dr. Toronto, ON M3C 1J7

416-441-1111 or 1-800-619-7301

www.presbyterian.ca