

CHRIS AND LINDA HAINES' MISSION NEWS FROM UTILA

ISSUE 3 OCT 22

“Preach the word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage – with great patience and careful instruction.” (2 Tim 4:2, NIV)

Welcome to the third instalment of our adventures in Utila, not long after the last one as that was rather late. We have made progress on two fronts since then- with Linda videocalling her mum 3 times a week now, a great relief, and the freight finally arriving (while we were away!). As well as the printer, I'd missed my field guides (to birds of central America etc), while Linda had missed our pictures and personal effects most. We have now unpacked and put our pictures and ornaments up, and the mission house looks much more homely.

We have settled into the different patterns of life, waking up and going to bed earlier, shopping for different things in small supermarkets, a bakery, fruit stalls, and a hardware shop (searching for a sieve-cleaning brush). Though many Utilians speak English, some words are different- I was baffled by 'wex' (to irritate) until I realised 'v's are pronounced as 'w's here. Drinking water is delivered, as is coconut water, a refreshing change. We also have stocks of rice, beans, matches, and candles in case the boats don't come in storms. The Harbottles' advice during our training also alerted us to solar lights and emergency money, for times such as when the banking system went down for most of the week before we went to the mainland.

We have become used to (though not happy with) mosquito swarms in the rainy season, and also tropical storms, which brought several jetskis and a 'Holy ship' into our marine 'garden', along with the usual frogmen (tourists learning to dive). We have also been struggling with our Wifi signal, which has been frustrating when trying to work (even Word is affected on my laptop). Linda has failed to access her Spanish lessons online, and I am struggling to fit in mine from my books, but my Spanish is improving with plenty of practice. Last week I attended and took part in the weekly Spanish-language service for the first time, I also spoke in Spanish in the high school assembly, as well as taking my first lessons without a teaching assistant to translate. While my colleague was away in the US liaising with potential work teams, I did the Communion visits with a steward, including leading an extempore communion in Spanish (with help from the Holy Spirit). I'm still really struggling to pray off the cuff in Spanish though.

Linda has been greatly encouraged by the friendships and fellowship of the Women's Group, who enjoyed her September sermon so much a dozen of them travelled across to the Cays for her first 'solo' service there. She has also been out visiting with them- we have both been struck by the poverty levels here, with one lady living with three children in a single room which floods (which is currently being floodproofed by the men's group while she seeks better housing). The first time I made it to the Men's fellowship, I was asked for a spontaneous sermon, so I chose James 3 which had just been read- I have been back since though. Linda and I also continue to be involved in Sunday School, Teen Tuesday and Christian Endeavour.

Another pastoral visit led to a Godincidental meeting with the Mayor on his motorbike. Our driver stopped him and informed him of the muddy puddles we'd had to wade through to get to the house. Later that afternoon we heard from the lady's daughter that the muddy puddles had been filled in in record time- I am inclined to suggest we send the Mayor to Greater Manchester to deal with their dreadful potholes. On the subject of transport, our golf cart hire ran out, so we have

updated it for another two weeks. While doing so, I sought their advice as to handling the obstinate vehicle, illustrating the issue by doing kangaroo jumps in the street, which resulted in our immediately getting a better cart of the same type.

School has taken up a lot of time this month, filling in taking lessons for absent volunteers (Linda also took her first lesson this month), and having lots of school board meetings. Their role is different to English Governors, as we are also responsible for employing all staff annually after individual meetings with us before the exams at end of the school year (in November), to review their year and express their plans. The Board also discusses our response to disruptions caused by school being cancelled by Government order for tropical storms/hurricanes, among other things. There have been many church meetings this month too. We had our Congregational Council (like a Church Council) at Mizpah, electing representatives to the Circuit Council, and a very positive meeting at the Cays, the first one for some time, which generated a prayer meeting and opened a possibility for a (Spanish-speaking) Sunday school for the first time in some years, in conjunction with another church. We also had a very long Connexional Zoom meeting (meetings here can last more than 3 hours), which was largely drowned out by the disco along the street.

The Circuit Council took place in La Ceiba on the mainland. We went early to shop, eat out and try to visit Parque Swinford, their Tourist Attraction, which was locked due to the pandemic. The pastoral meeting was Thursday evening, and Friday was a day of meetings- Development and Resources, Organisations and Education, Mission and Evangelism, and finally the Circuit Council itself, after which we were exhausted. Linda left on Saturday morning with the others, I stayed over to lead a Communion service and preach at Zion church. I also appear to have volunteered to help train Local Preachers on Zoom, with the help of a WhatsApp group set up for preachers, which I run from my laptop. I can foresee some difficulties with this, as I'm not sure how many have good internet access, especially if it includes people from the Spanish-speaking part of the Circuit.

After arriving at the port, I spent my time watching a frigatebird skilfully manoeuvring to harass a gull into dropping its fish supper. Their agility is amazing for such a large bird (wingspan 7-8 feet), magnificent frigatebird is a good species name. It was almost dark when I got home, but Linda was waiting on the quay. I also wanted to mention Linda's birthday, which we celebrated visiting a deserted private beach and floating in the sea watching pelicans catching their supper around us, followed by a lovely meal at a local restaurant.

Here are our November prayer requests:

Wisdom making difficult decisions for the school board regarding purpose, staffing & unity
Increased competence and confidence in speaking and understanding Spanish
Wisdom in drawing up the Circuit plan and trying to support preachers across the Circuit
For the Holy Spirit to move during and following the mission weeks at the Cays and Mizpah
For Belize, after Hurricane Lisa and for practical arrangements for our November visit
Continuing discernment for how to best use our skills in existing and new initiatives

Wishing you all peace, love, joy and blessings,

Chris and Linda



Linda and the ladies at the Cays



The 'Holy Ship' in our 'garden'



One of our house geckos



Steam train, Parque Swinford



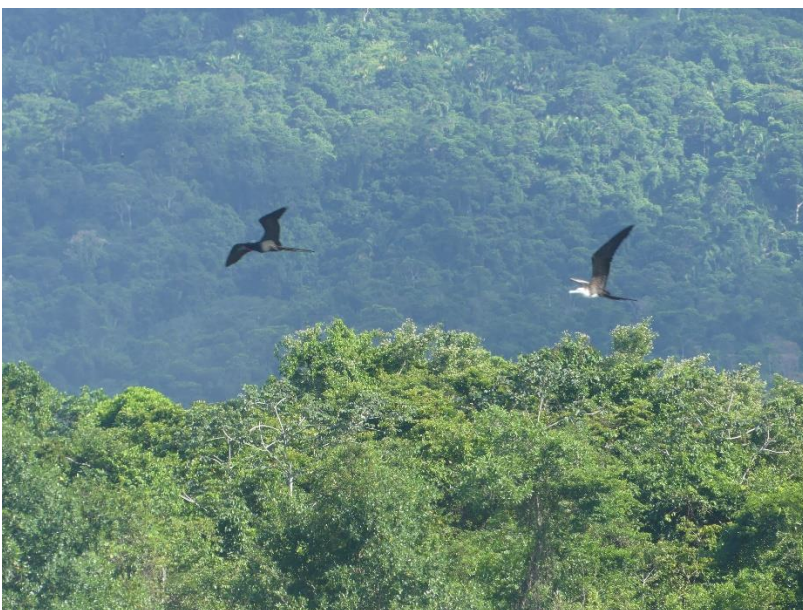
Statue of Lempira, an indigenous warrior hero, after whom our currency is named



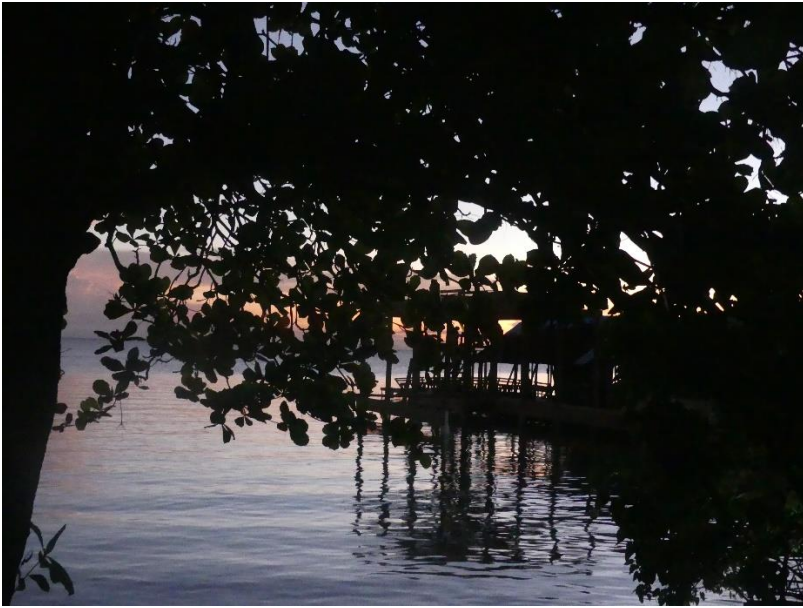
Boleadas stalls, La Linea



Zion La Ceiba church



Pair of frigatebirds



Mission house sunset



Replacement golf cart



Muscovy duck in our garden



Linda swimming, Bando Beach



Bando beach from the sea



Me going in again



Mangroves and mountains



Brown pelican fishing



Bando beach sunset