

Open Doors

And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ — Colossians 4:3

From Karon and Wiley Smith
Serving in Belize, Central America
with Mission to the World

April, 2009



Wiley and Pastor Cayo in Santo Tomas, Peru

FRIENDS IN HIGH PLACES

In February, I (Wiley) was blessed to go with a medical team from Georgia to Peru. Led by Doctors Ted and Sharon Kuhn, the team came from the Medical Campus Outreach at Medical College of Georgia in Augusta. About twenty fourth year med students, five doctors, a physical therapist and other helpers made up the team for our two week trip. Our mission was to conduct roving clinics in three locations: the city of Cusco, the town of Santo Tomas and the village of Llusco. All are high in the Andes mountains where the Quechua people live. The thin air gave some, including me, a transient case of altitude sickness.

But so much more good happened that far outweighed momentary discomforts. On the seven days we conducted clinics, hundreds of people came for medical care. Besides their afflictions, there



New mobility for an elderly patient

was a genuine spiritual hunger. The four Peruvian pastors who accompanied the team stayed busy translating the difficult Quechua language and counseling many who wanted to know how they could have the surety of eternal life through Jesus. Just like in the book of Acts, we witnessed whole families coming to faith.

The highlight of the trip for me was worshipping with the Quechua in a small church constructed of plywood. We listened to their unique worship music, sung in a minor key with guitar and drumbeat. Seated next to us were about ten new church visitors who had been among our patients for the three days prior.

The trip was an affirmation of why I should be a leader of short term medical teams— to go to hard places, relieve suffering, and help national evangelists find those who have been waiting to hear the gospel.



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UPDATES, PRAISES AND PRAYER REQUESTS

The cool months are over, and with the arrival of the dusty, hot season comes the realization that our time in Belize is almost over. It seems only a short time ago when our family arrived, not knowing what our two year tour would bring.

Nine years later, we can definitely see how the hand of God provided all that we have needed, and let us witness His redeeming work in the hearts and lives of many here. Some day I'll have to write a book about our experiences, but it will have to be a long one. It will recount the many mistakes we made, and how God even used our errors. It will recount the patients, 12,000 by our latest count of charts, that came to Presbyterian Medical Clinic seeking relief for physical problems, but left with much more, having heard about the Great Physician. It will recount the hundreds of visitors who came to help us, and how the hands of many enriched the work and lightened the load.

Our emotions vary greatly. What will become of the medical ministry in Belize after we're gone?

Are we wrong to leave now? A national doctor to take Wiley's place cannot be here immediately once we leave, but may be able to come at the end of the year. *Pray for God's continued provision for the work of Presbyterian Medical Clinic as a search is on for short and long term physicians to come to Belize.*

Wiley's trip to Peru in February and to Dalton, Georgia in March have helped us be at peace that God has plans for us beyond Belize. Wiley will have two jobs. The two jobs are actually similar, but the locations are quite different. Wiley will organize, equip and lead teams of medical volunteers to go for one to two weeks to overseas locations for Mission to the World. Wiley will work with Grace Presbyterian Church in Dalton, Georgia to start a medical ministry to complement the church's other outreach efforts. In both cases, the goal is to use the practice of medicine to open doors for evangelism and discipleship.

Dalton, the "carpet capital of the world," may seem a strange place for missionary medical ministry. Are there not large hospitals and lots of doctors in our own country? The truth is that there are many who cannot access the medical care system. There are barriers of finances for people who have no medical insurance. Dalton is ground zero of the current economic recession, with over 12% unemployment brought on by layoffs at the carpet factories. The "safety net" clinics that care for the medically indigent are overloaded, and private doctors are refusing new Medicare and Medicaid

patients.

There are barriers of ethnicity. About half of Dalton's population's primary language is not English. For those who have come from elsewhere, the medical care system is confusing and uncomfortable. A third barrier is social isolation. Especially for the elderly and disabled, finding a doctor and getting to the doctor's office is very difficult.

Grace Presbyterian Church, even before the current economic distress, has been working to bring Christ to the community. The church has educational and discipleship classes, sports camps and housing rehabilitation outreach programs. To this we have been asked to start a medical ministry. The model we will start with is the "house call," an old practice that values relationships with patients over efficiency. To the medical attention we will add much more: pastors and lay volunteers, who will provide evangelism, discipleship and practical helps, such as financial counseling and



A tent city for the homeless in Dalton

house repairs.

Will you join us on this journey by prayer? *As we are packing boxes, please pray for our move and the design of the future ministry.* Besides working through all the practicalities of the new ministry, we have a lot of catch-up to do to visit our supporting churches and individuals after we arrive in Dalton at the end of June. As soon as we can, we hope to speak to each church and individual, so that you may know how to pray for us and be encouraged to continue your support.

A number of churches and individuals have told us they must cut back financial support, just at the time when we have considerable moving expenses. As other ministries and our own Mission to the World have made painful sacrifices due to loss of donations, we know that no sacrifice on our part will ever repay what our Lord accomplished for us on the cross. *Pray for God's provision of the finances for our move, and that Christians would see beyond the current headlines. Pray that we will find new opportunities to speak and new praying supporters.*

CONTRIBUTIONS

Thanks to all who support us by prayer and finances. Send gifts to MTW, P.O. Box 116284, Atlanta GA 30368-6284. Gifts should be designated to one of these accounts: Smith family: 016864. Deanna Smith Internship: 017068.



April 4, 2009

Dear friends,

I'm Deanna Smith, daughter of Karon and Wiley. I've been attending Belhaven College in Jackson, MS for the last two years, studying theatre ministry. These studies are to prepare me for Christian work in the world of drama and the performing arts.

During my summer breaks, I've tried to make good use of my time with missions activities. Two years ago I went to Dublin, Ireland with MTW to work at Abbey Presbyterian Church. Last summer, my fellow students in the Joshua Squad and I traveled to Belize to perform for the churches and schools there.

This summer I have another great opportunity to serve through Mission to the World. MTW is sending me to Dalton, Georgia as an intern to work with Grace Presbyterian Church. Dalton, the "carpet capital of the world," is a multi-cultured town that includes many Spanish speakers. This year the area is suffering from high unemployment due to layoffs in the factories. Each summer, Grace Presbyterian hosts visiting church teams who further the evangelistic outreach of the church by vacation Bible school in the Hispanic neighborhoods and fixing up the houses of elderly residents of the town. They also host a very popular sports camp and weekly lunch programs for children. My job will be as a helper and arranger for all the activities, and also to incorporate drama ministry in the outreach. Matt Carr, the youth pastor, has asked me to work with the teens, both English and Spanish speakers, to augment the outreach activities with drama. It will be great to use the Spanish I learned in Belize in drama! I'll also be helping the rest of my family this summer, as my parents and two brothers are moving to Dalton at the end of June to start a new medical ministry through the church.



Please do be praying for me! I've got so many things to do to finish up this semester and be ready for Dalton next month. Pray also for my future planning—I'd really like to continue theater ministry in full time missionary service one day.

And, if you can, please contribute to MTW's support account for my expenses. You can send donations to Mission to the World, P.O. Box 116284, Atlanta GA 30368-6284, designated to "Deanna Smith, account 017068."

Yours in Christ,
Deanna Smith