

Honduras, fall, 2018

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Even though I have been on four mission trips, I never really like the idea of going – until I get there. This trip was no exception. After a travel delay, I finally made it to San Pedro Sula a day late. At the airport, I met up with a team of missionaries heading to the same location in Santa Barbara that I was scheduled to arrive at the day before. Although I had never met my new travel partners, they made me feel like one of their own and took care of me, helping with customs and money exchange at the airport.

Driving in Honduras is like driving in many other third world countries--crazy. We had a police escort and half way to our destination, we encountered some heavy traffic. The police went ahead of us and cleared a path through the traffic, like the parting of the Red Sea. At the top of the hill some poor little man had been hit by a car. His body was on the road and he was covered with greenery. Most people were passing by like it was a common occurrence, seemingly unconcerned. It bothered me a little but we too went on our way.

Arriving at the Casa de David in Santa Barbara surprised me. There was a gate with a young boy stationed to allow cars and trucks in and out. He immediately opened the gate as if it was his number one priority. The compound is encircled by a high stone wall topped with razor wire. "No trespassers allowed" was the clear message. There are two buildings on the property. The larger one (Casa de David) that houses missionary teams ministering in the area and the boys' home (Casa Banks). The boys attend school during the day, do chores and homework when they arrive home, then play outside as time allows. They were excited to see everyone and knew some of the team members from previous trips.

It is hot and very humid, even in the mountains of Honduras. The Casa is hot in the common areas but air conditioning cools things down in the sleeping rooms. There is not a lot of furniture to sit on, but still, a very comfortable place to stay. Two, kind Honduran ladies prepared our suppers most evenings. They were both efficient and good cooks. Team members cooked breakfasts and cleaned up after meals. I never got sick or felt bad. I brought food along with me to make it seem a bit like home. I slept well at night and was ready to go to work.

Saturday, I began working downstairs in the clinic. Two young Hondurans helped me by drilling concrete and pulling wire. We installed metal conduit to pull the wire through. I had never done this before and had to bend all of the pipe. Someone who knows what they are doing will see my work and wonder. We had most of the tools that we needed but one day we had to make our way into town to the local hardware store; very interesting to say the least. They had most everything that we needed and we overcame the frustrating language barrier that hampered my conversations. I speak no Spanish. Google Translate to the rescue!

I worked in the almost-complete imaging clinic through Tuesday afternoon and finished up most of the tasks I had come to do. I installed all of the network infrastructure and maybe will be returning later to do more. Dr. Williams asked me at dinner Tuesday night if I would like to go to the hospital the following day. Working in the clinic downstairs was no different than what I do for a living. This hospital visit would be different than anything I had ever done. It would turn out to be quite unbelievable and totally unexpected.

The local hospital is far different than hospitals in the states, but people are getting care. The medical team had seen over one hundred patients on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday. Of those, they scheduled around 30 surgeries. I put on some hospital clothes and started following Dr. Williams around. I stayed close and was very apprehensive about everything. I was taken into the operating room. With me looking on, Dr. Williams started working on a young girl with a mass in her abdomen. They cut her open and he started telling me everything that was going on. It was absolutely amazing. He removed the mass

and opened it to make sure that there was no cancer. There was not. Her belly started to look normal. Dr. Williams told me to go and scrub in. I went out and washed my hands and they put me in sterile mask, gown and gloves. I stood over the patient and he showed me how to suture her up. I could not believe it. It was the most incredible experience. Thursday was much of the same with more procedures and surgeries.

Friday, we traveled back to the airport in Honduras, flew to Atlanta and then home to Asheville. I arrived home at 12:15 am. 40 degrees colder but home to my own bed. I missed my family and was so very happy to see them. I think this trip to Honduras was the best mission trip that I have ever been on and for several reasons. I felt honored to do the things that I was able to do. To leave behind some of my work that will help others in need is especially gratifying. Meeting the people and getting to know them and understand their lives at least a little enriched mine. Forming friendships with people on the team was special and I really enjoyed it.

God is doing a great work in Honduras. I am privileged to be involved in just a small part. Maybe He will open some doors so I can go again.