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WORLD
MISSIONS

Caspar & Leanne's Update

Sharing about our ministry in Honduras and Latin America
July 2009



CRWRC
Living Justice, Loving Mercy

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Dear Friends:

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As many of you adjust to the heat of summer, we are experiencing God's blessing of cooling rain. We've also just experienced a surprising change of government as the Honduran Congress and Supreme Court voted to remove President Zelaya and the military carried out the decision. The day of the change was peaceful, but disturbances erupted the next day. We wait, along with all Hondurans, to understand what this means for the country.

From "Farm" to "Community" (by Leanne). For us, the term "farm" generally has positive connotations of crops, animals and production. In many parts of Latin America, though, the *fincas* (farms) are extensive tracts of land, owned by a single family, with a large number of peasants who live on the land and work in conditions closely resembling slavery. Life on a *finca* is not something to be envied. That's why in May, the residents of La Palmera (Guatemala) were excited to tell me the story of how the *finca* became a community.

I was visiting the community with *Vid y Pampanos* (Vine & Branches Ministry), a partner organization of CRWRC that works with churches in the area, including the three small churches of Palmera. I learned that the Palmera *finca* had been owned by a family who produced coffee for several decades. In the early 90s, when coffee prices dropped, the farm was no longer profitable and after exchanging hands a few times, was essentially abandoned for almost a decade.

In 2000, the residents on the *finca* organized themselves into an association and petitioned to purchase the land, citing a Guatemalan law requiring land to be productive or turned over to the state. Finally, in 2004, the land was approved for purchase and the association took out a loan. They were given a couple of years grace to work the land and make it productive.



La Palmera's association discusses the future

"Comunidad" now covers the word "finca"



Although each family is assigned a parcel of land to maintain, the coffee they produce is processed and marketed cooperatively. Last year, they had to make the first payment on their loan and were able to do so with the profits from the coffee harvest. However, once the loan was paid, there was nothing left for living the rest of the year. That's where *Vid y Pampanos* came in.

VyP has a training program for deacons where they first learn about the call of the church to engage in service ministry. The next step provides technical training so the churches become active in that calling! Seeing a sad competition between churches in many communities, VyP doesn't work with any one denomination and

invites all the churches to work together. That idea sat well with the church and association members in La Palmera.

After several leaders finished the diaconal training, they realized the community's most urgent need was learning how to produce on the small plots of land that weren't covered with coffee. VyP shared low-cost organic methods of intensive farming. One of the most widely appreciated was the production of mushrooms. The short harvest cycle meant mushrooms were available to eat and sell at a time when little else is available.

La Palmera still has several years of loan payments to make, and during those years life will be bare bones. But the association members know they are working so that their children will not be landless and required to labor on someone else's *finca*.

Please join us in praying for these things:

- Give thanks for the "just-in-time" training that is allowing families in Palmera to pay for their land and feed their families.
- Pray for continued generous donations for both CRWM and CRWRC, so cutbacks won't be necessary in this program year.
- Pray for Honduras's newly appointed President Micheletti, that he may wisely guide the country through preparations for elections in November of this year.
- Pray for guidance as we look for ways to minister meaningfully to youth in Honduras.
- Pray for safety for Caspar as he travels throughout Honduras, often on difficult roads and currently in bad weather.

Thank you for your continued support.
Shalom from the Geisterfers,

Leanne & Caspar

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