

been brought home, right into the house, surrounding us in the large veranda, where most of the living happens. One simply has to turn on one's stool to attack the huge pile of dried corn husks awaiting behind. After dining, one simply resumes husking or degrading the dried cobs of this Central American life-blood, soon to be ground into meal to be shaped with awesome dexterity into tortillas, without ch no meal could be considered a meal. And conversation and banter go on.

A novelty this year are the gifts brought by this Santa Claus from the north--inexpensive traditional musical instruments, such as quena and zampoña, a few simple art supplies, and a few mini-trucks to satisfy the more *macho* impulses. It doesn't take much of a financial investment to delight these kids. For the most part, these new treasures are shared amicably and generously among the cousins.

The Salvadoran custom of a "silent, holy" night of firecrackers and fireworks, lots of light and even more sound, was celebrated with admirable moderation here--just a few minutes of very limited and controlled explosions, with little risk of injury, unlike in much of the nation.

Such a Christmas, celebrated in the midst of such a rural family atmosphere, with almost no commercial, or even religious, Christmas trappings, is most inspiring, most renewing. Not that I'll want to miss our next year's extended family Christmas retreat at Camp Kuriakos, *on* Sylvan Lake, AB (literally *on*, since we do lots of skating, skiing and walking on the ice- and snow-covered lake), but this simple, basic, earthy way of celebrating Christmas could become addictive... rather like Bethlehem, that first Christmas?



After all, Jesus is incarnate among us.

Paz,
Brian Rude
Celebrating Jesus' birth with God's people in El Salvador

Mind for Mission

BC Synod World Mission News

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Even though it is already February, let us return to December just for a moment. Here are some belated Christmas news from our missionaries. ¡Feliz Navidad!



Mind for Mission

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Find out more about the ELCIC Mission in the World program by visiting the ELCIC website: <http://elcic.ca/Global-Mission>

Christmas Greetings!

The signs of Christmas are all around us! Even in South America, and even though it still seems out of place (for this Canadian anyways!), the signs of Christmas are here...the trees...the decorations...the lights...in the Scriptures each Sunday of Advent... in the parties and plans we are making to help us celebrate this sacred season...we can see that Christmas is almost upon us!

It seems to be a season for preparation....



And we at San Juan Camino de Esperanza have been actively preparing with faithful and hopeful expectation in these days of Advent not only for the birth of the Christ-child this Christmas, but literally for us, it has been a time of great expectation as we have been preparing for the construction to begin on part of our new church!



We start to have a sense of the hopeful expectation of Mary and Joseph, of the apostles, and of generations of Christians with each step we take in the process to secure a building license. With each fee or tax that is paid, with each document that is ready, and with each step that is completed in this very long process, we are brought closer to that long-awaited time! We will soon begin to build and we will soon have a new structure in which to worship and teach the children of our community! As you can imagine, we are getting very excited!! These are signs and preparations of a different sort, but are filled with much joy and hopeful expectation, too!

And as for me, in addition to teaching music with the children at Cristo Salvador, I have been focusing some effort on preparing, for Navidad/Christmas worship, for the Canadian visitors who will be here in January, making a calendar/rotation to involve two seminaries of the congregation, and developing a work plan for 2010 .

These greetings are sent with my love and best wishes for a beautiful and memorable Christmas Season and a Happy New Year! As well, I bring greetings from ILEP, the Lutheran Church in Peru, and the congregation of San Juan Camino de Esperanza!

Pastora Fran

from <http://fransadventures.blogspot.com/>

Nacimiento de El Salvador -- Navidad en El Salvador

Jesús has long since outgrown his December 24 birth cradle. He has passed the lifespan of the Nazarene whose namesake he is so well-suited to be. Preacher he is not, though itinerant philosopher he certainly is, without a doubt. With no desire to be drawn into any system, he is the natural friend of any outcast. Though with nowhere to lay his head most of the time, he is now occasionally accessible by cell phone... if he hasn't dozed off on one of his innumerable bus rides, thus missing an appointment by an hour or three. All he carries with him is some mind-expanding book, making him an unlikely target for El Salvador's innumerable over-worked bus thieves.

Last Christmas, 2008, responding to months of persistent invitations, I joined Jesús and his family for Christmas-three days of it. In this family of 13 (10 brothers, 1 sister and *both* parents--not so common in this country), his own little family and oodles of mostly nephews, good cheer and entertainment are never in short supply. The family spirit of Christmas in this home is only slightly dampened by the tragic loss of two brothers in recent years. One living room wall is filled with dozens of photos memorializing them, honouring their memory. Just as on that first Christmas, there are no Christmas decorations or ambience to make one think of Christmas--no tree, no nativity scene, no lights, no carols. It seems this may have something to do with the passing of these brothers.

Farm work continues at leisure. One doesn't have to get up to do it. These days, the field has

