

December 2009

Feliz Navidad in the name of Christ, who comes humbly this season seeking to fill every heart! We hope you and your family are doing well and finding time for reflecting on all God's blessings at the end of this year. We have just finished another year of service in Costa Rica, and we're enjoying being home for a few weeks to visit friends, family, and partner churches. Actually, while "home" will always partly mean the United States, we increasingly feel that Costa Rica is our home, having lived there for five years now, and especially after receiving our residency cards this past August. The theme of home has recently been coming to our minds in other ways, too. For example, over the last few weeks the Costa Rican government has been threatening to expel families from their homes in Los Guido, where we serve each Saturday. We keep praying for mercy and peace for each of these families, and for their children whom we have grown to love. Home also makes us think of the Children's Home project, which has seen such wonderful growth this year. While the first house is not quite completed, all of the visible progress makes it much easier to imagine the finished product, and to imagine abandoned children being welcomed into their new homes and families. Perhaps most important in this Christmas season, we've been thinking about God's choice to come down and make a home among us. When John 1:14 says that "the Word became flesh and dwelt among us," it literally means that God set up his tent, made a home, or as Eugene Peterson translates it: "God moved into the neighborhood." Over the last few Saturdays in Los Guido, our message focused on "making a home" for Jesus in our hearts and lives. This is important for each of us, of course, but it is only possible because God first, amazingly, chose to send His Son down to dwell among His fallen creation, and that Son agreed to come and live and love among us. Wherever you may find yourself this Christmas season, our prayer is that you know this Christ who wants to dwell in you, and that you can feel at home in His love.

We thank God for all that He has allowed us to accomplish this year, and we want to share some of the highlights with you. As we mentioned above, we finally received our Costa Rican residency cards, which means we can stay in the country year-round. This is a great gift, which will allow us a better sense of rhythm and permanency to our work. Will's teaching at the Seminary was a blessing to him this year, as always. He taught mostly courses for the senior students, fourteen of whom graduated in a wonderful ceremony earlier this month. He also enjoyed the opportunity to teach two classes in the Methodist University's religion department. Our work with the children of Los Guido continues to be the joyful highlight of each week. We had a good group of helpers this year, and we averaged between 50-80 children each Saturday (although we did have 150 for our Christmas party!). It's been amazing to see the children who have been with us for a while continue to grow in their faith and their love for God and each other, and we give thanks for the newer children who have begun learning about that love this year. In September, Ella began teaching English to a group of children in another sector of Los Guido. This ministry, which she'll continue next year, is a great opportunity to serve the children of this needy area by combining language instruction with the Gospel message. We were also blessed throughout the year to host mission teams from the US who worked on the Methodist Children's Home project while also doing children's ministry in local churches. Each team was filled with hard-working, high-spirited people who

contributed greatly to the church. We look forward to hosting more teams this coming year, as we expect to finish construction of the first house and start work on the multi-purpose building and the second house.

This year it was a privilege for us to directly connect churches and individuals from the States with local needs in Costa Rica, and on a bigger scale than in the past. Specifically, we felt a need for new shoes for our Los Guido kids and for a vehicle for a pastor friend who lives over an hour away from the church he serves, and whose son is in a wheelchair. We were amazed at how, having shared these needs with others, God so quickly met them: Pastor Gerardo received his van in November, and we spent two weeks during that same month outfitting 150 kids with new shoes. These acts were a great reminder of how much God can do with a church that sees itself as the Body of Christ, across all boundaries.

As you can see, the Lord has kept us busy this year, and we are so thankful for all that He allows us to be a part of. We give thanks also for the faithful group of friends, family, and churches who support us with your prayers and gifts. You are truly partners in ministry, and we cannot imagine doing this without you. Above all, we are thankful for the gift of Christ born into the world, the gift of God come to make a home among us. Our prayer is that His Spirit of joy and peace would fill your heart this season.

Please enjoy the enclosed sheet of pictures to better visualize our work, and please visit our website, www.fairclothcostarica.com, for occasional updates and new photos. Also, we'd love for you to keep in touch with us and let us know about all God is doing in your and your family's lives.

In Christ,

Will and Ella Faircloth