

News from Suz

November 2007

On the Road...In the US



My trip to the US in October was wonderful, but a bit too busy for this girl who is finally learning to live more tranquilly. I was tremendously blessed by fellowship with friends and family in Texas, Las Vegas and Nebraska as well as interpretation visits to churches throughout Pittsburgh Presbytery (who took me seriously and kept me VERY busy), Berryville VA (who treated me like royalty), and Nebraska (who welcomed me home). See photo of me with a young woman from Berryville as we prepare salsa for real

Huastecan enchiladas! Yum!!!!

The trip also included a small bowel biopsy, a colonoscopy, and a final exam for my Foundations of Leadership Class. I would not call any of these a particular "joy," but I am grateful that each came out in my favor. Many thanks to those of you who were in prayer for me!

In Mexico

I returned to the Huasteca on October 31st...in time to project a Luther movie after a Reformation Day service in Chapulhuacanito. However, the flu bug that hit me just as I began my trip home, really knocked me out for the next week, forcing me into much needed rest time. I felt terrible, but it was SO good to have an excuse to just lay in bed after what proved to be an exhausting month of travel in the US.

No sooner, however, had your brothers and sisters in Frijolillo nursed me back to health (with a wide variety of treatments which did me more good than the antibiotics the doc gave me) than I was on the road again...on a planned trip to northern Oaxaca with Sister Raquel, the missionary of the Chapulhuacanito church. I had originally invited her to accompany me to Mexico City to visit the installations of the National Presbyterian Church of Mexico, its seminary and Bible School for Women, but she challenged me to then accompany her during her trip home to see family in Oaxaca.



I was admittedly not ready to hit the road again, but God confirmed the need for the trip and I am so glad I went. It was such a joy to meet the folks in Mexico City, especially the women of the Bible School and the publications office of the Presbyterian Women of Mexico. I also thoroughly enjoyed the visit in Oaxaca. I spent my time picking beans and corn in the fields with Sister Raquel's sisters and brother in law and eating of the Lord's provision in nature...seeds,



cactus fruits, and a little bug they call “tetesca”. Honestly, it was just so good to work in the field and to enjoy the food and fellowship that only God can provide us. Sister Raquel’s sister is missionary of the Baptist church in the community. I preached three times and Raquel twice. The congregation is small (as is the community of 300 or so), but their testimony in a still quite hostile environment, religiously speaking, is such an encouragement. And it all made the car sickness on the bus there and back very much

worth it. I look forward to a return trip.

Above are a couple of photos....of the three students from the Presbytery of the Huastecas (yes, three of the 10 are “ours!”) proudly showing off their new piano skills to Sister Raquel at the Central Bible School for Missionaries and another of the desert terrain around Chichihualtepec, Oaxaca.

Christmas Preparations

Yes, Thanksgiving has come and gone and the Christmas season is upon us. I guess I should be listening to Christmas music! Of course here in the Huasteca we do not celebrate the American Thanksgiving holiday, but our inner clocks seem to tell us it is the season as November comes to a close and the winter rains begin. The children here at Santisima Trinidad Church in Frijolillo have been practicing for three weeks already! Pastor Abel and Brother Rubén are practicing with adult groups as well. I am not participating in local preparations because I have been asked by the presbytery to assist the pastor and lay worker-less church of Tezapotla with their Christmas preparations. I will spend a couple of long weekends with the congregation, basically as a “presbytery presence” to encourage them during this special time of year. In addition to helping motivate them to prepare music for their December 28th Christmas service, I will preach during regular services while in Tezapotla and offer a three evening special youth program based on the life of Joseph.

Fuller Course Work

During my October trip to the US I was able to complete the final exam for one of the courses I am taking by correspondence (Foundations of Leadership). I am currently pushing through the rest of the class work (book critiques and a paper) which I trust will be done before Christmas, allowing me to tackle the other course during the months of January and February (New Testament: The Gospels). I was too optimistic about my ability to complete two classes this fall. Too many other things demand my attention and many of those other things are taking precedence. But, we’ll get there....I have enjoyed my current course very much and my paper will have something to do with the development of women in ministry in the Mexican church. My trip to Oaxaca with Sister Raquel gave me valuable discussion time with her in regard to the subject and I trust the work will help me be more intentional in the ways I encourage the women here in the ministries the Lord has entrusted to them. For those interested, I can recommend two excellent books: *The Female Advantage: Women’s Ways of Leadership* by Sally Helgesen and *Women in the Church: A Biblical Theology of Women in Ministry* by Stanley J. Grenz and Denise Muir Kjesbo.

Reflections after a Year in the Huasteca

On December 1st I will celebrate my first year on assignment here in the Presbytery of the Huastecas. I enter now a time of reflection, evaluation, and consideration as to the Lord's purposes for me in the coming year. I am inviting the presbytery leadership to join me in this reflection and I invite you all to pray for us as we consider the ways the Lord would have me participate in ministry here. This first year has been one of observation, initial culture and language learning, and doing just about anything I was invited to do. But, I feel it is now time to begin to sharpen the focus a bit. How can I be of greatest support to our brothers and sisters here? It might mean "staying the course", but with greater intentionality with regard to the teaching and preaching now that I am understanding local needs better. This Saturday during a presbytery leadership meeting we will discuss my participation on the faculty of the presbytery's Bible Institute. They have great need for faculty and God has given me a burden for the development of the leadership within the presbytery. I also feel that in 2008 I need to focus on learning Náhuatl and continue spending some time in the fields here in Frijolillo...where I enjoy the hard work as well as the fellowship with my sisters. This time and that spent with the kids are foundational to life in ministry here. The last thing I need is to get caught up in computer work in my home office!

Well, this is only the beginning of a real reflection on my first year here...I will include more as I prepare a "Christmas letter" to be distributed via the Presbyterian Church (USA). In the meanwhile, I thank you for your prayers.

May the peace of Christ dwell in your hearts and be manifest in your spirit as we prepare to celebrate the birth of our Prince of Peace.

Love, Susy

Please pray for....

- Safe travels for youth and other family members who live in the city as they return home to the Huasteca for Christmas and New Years.
- The Lord's wisdom and strength for Susie and other members of the presbytery during this time of increased activity. Pray that the Spirit would prepare our own hearts for the Christmas message and place that message on our tongues as we preach.
- Susie's visits to the Divine Salvador Church in Tezapotla; that her presence would be encouraging and edifying to the brothers and sisters.
- Several families in our congregations are experiencing special challenges at this time. Pray for the unity of the family in the Huasteca. And pray for the youth living in the city in particular, that they would experience personal encounters with the God they were raised to know in Christ.
- The Lord's guidance for Susie as she writes her final paper for her Leadership course. That she can not only just "get it done and out of the way" but that the reflection will be of service to Christ and His Church here in the Huastecas.
- For Rev. Martin Hernandez Antonio, pastor of the Jesus, the Good Shepherd Church in Chancuetlán who has been having chest pain over the past several months. Pray that the Lord would make a way for

appropriate medical treatment if necessary, but above all pray for physical healing and peace of mind for our brother.

- For Sister Raquel, “pastor” of the Most Holy Trinity Church in Chapulhuacanito who on Wednesday was hit on the side of the knee by a “misfired” rock while shopping in the market. She is up and moving around, but has been in considerable pain. Pray that Jesus’ healing hands would be upon her and she might be able to keep her commitments to several congregations during this Christmas season.
- That the Lord would renew His passion in the hearts of his people in the Huasteca, that our hearts would be turned first again to Jesus and then to the majority of our region who do not know Christ. So many are suffering and we too often live so unmoved. May we all be shaken from our slumber this Christmas....and be brought to a place of renewed passion for the Kingdom and the task given us as the body of Christ.