

MERRY CHRISTMAS

"FOR UNTO US IS BORN THIS DAY IN THE CITY OF DAVID A SAVIOUR, WHICH IS CHRIST THE LORD." Luke 2:11

Dear Family and Friends,

December 2011

As the special day of Christmas approaches, life is busy, but at a much slower pace than in the States. Here in Belize there are no shopping malls, there isn't even a Wal-mart. There is no traffic, four-lane roads, or even a stoplight. Life is simpler! Though you might see some people with a few gifts in their arms, there isn't even a shopping cart to fill. Most are concerned with food for the week. For Christmas, many will have an extra treat of having chicken with their rice and beans and tortillas and a special cake for dessert, maybe some extra fruit, like an apple, and, at best, one gift per child in the house. Many have no trees, lights, (or even electricity) and will not receive one single gift. And yet, there is an excitement in the air, because it's CHRISTMAS! Christmas is . . . family, friends, special foods, and, best of all, JESUS! My children's choir is SO EXCITED to have their Christmas program on Christmas Day, and they are working hard to do their best. Our teens have a special, and the ladies have been working on a special as well. We are all looking forward to being together at Shining Light Baptist Church for the special day to celebrate Christ's birth.

I truly love working in Belize. Oh, it has many hardships and can be trying at times. Since July, it has seemed that it has been one hardship after another, with obstacles in between. But through it all, "God is good, ALL the time." And often when we are weary and flat on our backs, it makes us look up to Him for strength, guidance, and comfort. And through each trial, we are able to watch our people grow and see God's hand at work in building a core group of people who will reach more for Him. Souls are being saved, and lives are changing. We can see God at work!

This is our first Christmas that our family will not be together. Chad just completed his first semester at West Coast Baptist College and is doing very well there. Matt has recently moved to my sister Tricia's home. Her husband Tony pastors in southern Missouri. They homeschool, and Matt will be finishing his senior year there, while getting a job so he can start saving for college. He plans to attend West Coast as well. The girls are doing well adjusting to no boys around. Jessica just celebrated her 16th birthday and carries many of the responsibilities now at home. She is a lovely young lady who is a tremendous help. Alanna is 14 and is a great help as well. She is very competent in the kitchen, and she and Jessica are becoming wonderful cooks. Alanna is very crafty and is doing well in a little business she has started, selling handmade hair bows. Savannah is 10 and at such a fun age. Now that her brothers are gone, she has more responsibilities as well. She is constantly on the piano, writing, and singing songs. Michayla, age 9, truly keeps me busy. She will rule a country someday with her endless energy and organizational skills. Mike is nonstop with studying, counseling, and constant construction on the church property. Our facilities are really coming along. This past week was a monumental day in the life of our church—after 18 months on our property, we finally have electricity! Can you hear our Hallelujah shout? We no longer have to deal with kerosene lanterns and generators (we have gone through five of them), and now construction will progress much more quickly. Two walls of the building are now complete. Mike has many plans for this next year, so we see another busy year ahead.

Thank you to so many of you who invest in us. We love you and appreciate all that you do for us. Thank you to the family who recently gave towards another church vehicle. We are honored to serve our Lord in this country of Belize. May you have a Blessed Christmas and a Happy New Year; and as you celebrate this season with your loved ones, remember to hold them close and enjoy some of the simpler things in life.

Merry Christmas & Happy New Year,

The Leonard Family

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