

EL CHAIRO BOLIVIANO

The Bolivian Stew

DECEMBER 19, 2011

Monthly Events

October



- Presentation at our congregation about our trip to the States in June, July, and August
- Skype conversations with Moisés Pérez, David Wunsch, and Raquel Rodríguez
- Amazon.com work at ISEAT
- Office Devotional Friendship Day
- Weekly coordination and planning meetings with Pastor President Emilio
- CEBIPAS evaluation meeting with Abraham Colque, ISEAT Rector
- Teaching English, Worship and Liturgy, and Greek 1 Classes at ISEAT



- Global Gift work-Communication
- Christian education meetings with Edson Llanque and Pastor Erlini Tola Medina
- Immigration Forum in Mexico City, Mexico
- Licenciatura graduation- ISEAT
- Pastor Erlini Tola Medina Art Show- ISEAT

❖ *“Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.”* Phillipians 4: 4-7



KARI ELLER

I AM AN IMMIGRANT.

THIS IS MY LIFE.

“Then you shall declare before the LORD your God: My father was a wandering Aramean, and he went down into Egypt with a few people and lived there and became a great nation, powerful and numerous.” Deuteronomy 26:5

HOW DO YOU WELCOME US IN?

October 20-22, 2011 I participated in the 1st Forum on Immigration in Mexico D.F. I heard stories from all over Mexico, Central and Latin America of people who were/are/or wanted to be immigrants or whose lives have been changed as a result of their dedication to immigration reform. Some stories were heart wrenching, as in the case of those who lost an arm and a leg in the hope of providing a better life for their families; while others inspirational, as in the story of an immigrant who did not make it, but found the “home” she was looking for by creating one for others who find themselves in a similar situation. At one point in the forum, we were asked to stand if we were

immigrants. About half of the people in the forum stood up. I did not. I think partially I didn’t because we were talking about people who left one place seeking refuge in another, who risked everything, even their own lives to leave, but maybe I didn’t stand up for other subconscious reasons too. Maybe I hadn’t considered putting myself in that category of people who many in the United States so often stereotype as being willing to do anything in order to survive, rejected, and looked down upon. (Cont’d on next page)



How do YOU welcome us in? (Continued)

There is a lot said about them. They're "uneducated, poor, sometimes smelly and of course, a problem. They are changing cities, bringing in other languages and heaven forbid they get sick and tax money must be spent to help them." Yet, there is no problem hiring them to do the jobs that most Americans don't want to do, eating the fruits and vegetables picked by underpaid immigrant hands or letting them help pay into the social security system. Many people like buying the "ethnic" products because it makes them look more "cultural and worldly" and many like going to visit their countries or at least their "country club" like areas. Many Americans expect to be warmly welcomed in another country, without even considering the reverse hospitality.

On August 26, 2009 Justin and I left the United States as missionaries to Bolivia; in essence, we immigrated to follow God's call. We are educated, although we still feel we have much to learn; not poor, but by U.S. standards definitely not rich, we have food choices and we have the privilege to take a bath most every day. We also aren't illegal, but we have the support of the ELCA who helps us to pay our immigration fees and who gives us the time off from work to take care of the legal processes. Our families are put into category of the working middle class, we went to college and we come from areas in the States where even though employment is low and many struggle, there are programs to help those in need. Our needs are different than many of our immigrant brothers and sisters, but none of that changes the fact that we too are immigrants.

We speak Spanish fluently, but some days we feel less understood than others. Some days are definitely harder than others and our patience is

put to the test as in the days when we are told to wait in lines that to us make no sense, to come back another day, or that the line we were waiting in for over an hour was actually the wrong line (and p.s.- we always ask before getting into line which one we should be in). Other days though, we are inspired by what we see and do. It is a blessing to work with the IELB and they are adding to the core of who we are and what we are about. Living here has given us so many more opportunities to open our eyes and to truly welcome our neighbor into our lives and be transformed by them. And every morning when we wake up and look at Illimani (the mountain) we remember that while our jobs are big, we are only a small part of God's plan.

In the Old Testament, we learn of the radical hospitality that should be extended to orphans, widows and foreigners.

The stranger who dwells among you shall be to you as one born among you, and you shall love him as yourself; for you were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God. Leviticus 19:34

However, the Bible also shows another side, a side against them of "ethnic cleansing" as Luis Rivera Pagán says the Bible shows both xenophobia and xenophilia. So how should we react? To discern wisely, both voices must be read, but for me, the answer lies in God's book of life. What is the kingdom of God? Is it a place? Is it an attitude that we manifest? Will God tell us that we're illegal aliens, say that we're smelly from our journey or tell us if we're among the last in line that it's not fair for us to enter because we haven't put in our fair share of good deeds? To quote a friend of mine, "Aren't we all just working our way home?"

As comfortable as we all are in our own bubbles, we must wake up from our slumber. "Our comfort is," as my husband likes to say, "an anesthetic to reality." When we open our eyes and truly see those around us, when the Holy Spirit moves, the walls that divide us begin to tumble.

So look around you. Who are the immigrants and marginalized in your community? How have you welcomed them, shown them the radical hospitality of God's love?

Maybe I'm writing to a choir member or maybe you are a fellow immigrant who understands what it's like to live in another land with different cultures, languages and customs than your own. Or maybe you're one of those people who hasn't said anything against an immigrant, but maybe you haven't spoken up for them either.

Choosing indifference is, in my opinion, choosing the anesthetic. As was expressed in the immigration forum, "You have to see them, you have to smell them. If you don't, how can you say that you're their brother (or sister)? It's the look of fear and hope. It's the smell of hunger and desperation."

I am an immigrant. I look like many of you reading this newsletter today. How would you prefer me to be treated? How do you treat others like me where you live? In this season of waiting, we reflect on how God unexpectedly reveals Godself to us in our neighbor and as a helpless baby in a manger.

Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute. Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy.

Proverbs 31: 8-9

Love always, Kari

“Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.”

I Thessalonians 5:16-17



DECEMBER 19, 2011

Monthly Events

November

- Day of the Dead Celebration
- National Pastors’ Planning & Gathering
- Christmas Fair Discovery
- Anniversary of our congregation Martin Luther and baptism



- 1st Forum- Lutheran Liturgy in Context, IELB

La Catrina

- Global Gift work-Galilee Lutheran Center and the Lutheran Institute
- Youth Meeting- Martin Luther
- Amazon.com work at ISEAT
- Art and technical Exposition at the Lutheran Institute
- CEBIPAS in El Alto
- Presidential Skype Conference
- Thanksgiving Celebration
- Confirmation Service
- Womens’ Meeting
- ISEAT classes ended
- Theologians Lunch Meeting

COYOACÁN MÉXICO



ALTAR IN MEMORY OF FRIDA KAHLO AND DIEGO RIVERA
FAMOUS MEXICAN PAINTERS



Cempazuchitles or marigolds in Mexico are used to decorate altars for November 1st and 2nd also known as Day of the Dead, a religious holiday when family members and friends who passed away are remembered.

HALLOWEEN AND DAY OF THE DEAD

Our Celebration

This year, Justin and I decided to hold a dual Halloween/Day of the Dead Party. We decorated for both holidays and invited close friends and Bolivian family so that we could learn more about the Day of the Dead and share about Halloween. Everyone had a really great time and I think we have a new tradition!



Day of the Dead cookies made by a guest



NATIONAL PASTORS' GATHERING- NOVEMBER 11-12, 2011

The Trip Begins!

IELB Pastors met at the Central Office in La Paz from all over Bolivia, filled three buses like this one, loaded down with mattresses on top so the pastors would have something to sleep on, and set off on the journey to Lake Titicaca.



The Calamaya Center

During this trip, the pastors expressed how happy they were to finally be able to use the Center after many years of construction. The Center, built by the lakeshore will be a gathering place for meetings, workshops and spiritual retreats. Although there is always work to be done, it is now available for use.



Stewardship

During the gathering, I had the opportunity to present on stewardship and I challenged the pastors through an activity called "Beginning a New Church" to put it into action!

Worship and Recreational Time



The Environment

Dietmar Mussig from ISEAT presented on the environment.

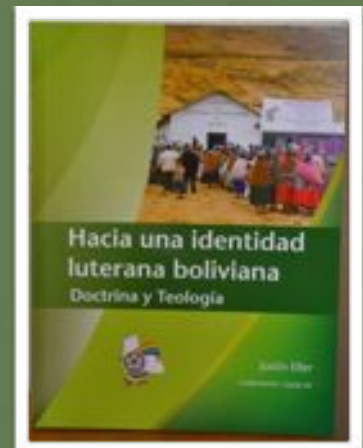


The La Paz Group

Each district's photo was taken by the lake for the Church website.



Justin's module is finally printed! In English, it called "Toward a Bolivian Lutheran Identity: Doctrine and Theology." Each pastor at the gathering was given a copy of the book, which will be used in CEBIPAS. Justin gave them a general overview of the book and together, they talked about other possible uses.



To see more pictures of this event, please visit the 2011 Pictures tab of the webpage!

MARTIN LUTHER ANNIVERSARY AND BAPTISM



November 6, 2011

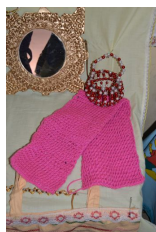
1ST FORUM ON BOLIVIAN LUTHERAN LITURGY IN CONTEXT



The La Paz Group

Pastor Freddy Choque, Justin, Pastor-President Emilio Aslla Flores, and Pastor Herman Loaza presented each from their own perspectives and opinions what it means to be Lutheran and to think about being Lutheran in context.

ART AND TECHNICAL EXPOSITION AT THE LUTHERAN INSTITUTE



"Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing."

1 Thessalonians 5:11



DECEMBER 19, 2011

Monthly Events

December



- ISEAT Academic Council Meeting and Evaluation Work
- Global Gift Work- Lutheran Institute
- District Presidents' Meeting
- National Womens' Gathering
- CEBIPAS Classes and Graduation
- Skype Conferences
- Book Presentation- Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza
- Non-profit meetings
- IELB Directive Council Meeting

A Prayer for Us All



Gracious and merciful God,

We give you thanks for sending us numerous examples of the welcome extended to your people. Help us to be extensions of your hands and feet in the world, sharing with all your love and message of peace. Lord, we know that your kingdom is not of this world and that it includes us all. We pray for all immigrants, that they find your grace and love in their walk, for those that feed them, clothe them and give them shelter that they may have patience, understanding and wisdom as they work within a ever challenging system, for immigration reform, for justice, and for those of us who are aren't immigrants who do have a voice so that we are not afraid to speak up for those who cannot speak up for themselves. May you always be our guide through life.

Amen.



EL ALTO BOLIVIA

THE LUTHERAN INSTITUTE
PROFESSORS

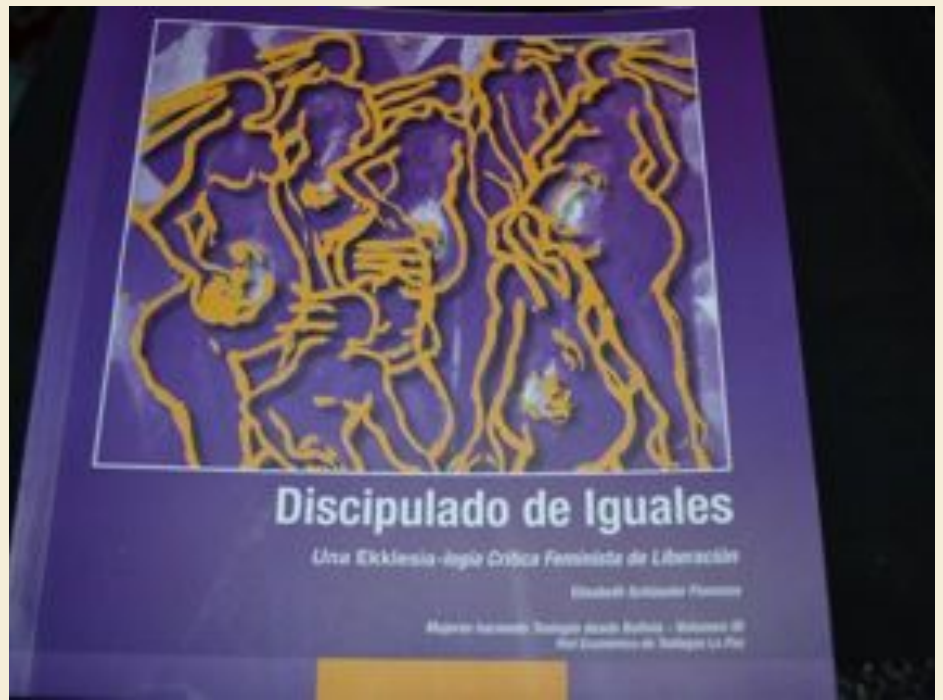
Throughout November and December, the principal, professors and I have met five times working on a global gift project that I hope to soon be able to share with you!

STEWARDSHIP WORKSHOP AND CEBIPAS GRADUATION



The Discipleship of Equals by Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza

It was a honor to be two of the translators of Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza's book, The Discipleship of Equals published by the Ecumenical Network of Theologians here in La Paz, Bolivia. Dedicated to providing material offering fresh perspectives on women's participation within the Church, we gladly put in our time to help translate three chapters. The artwork you see on the cover is art from Pastor Erlini of the IELB. The other two pictures are of us with a few of the other translators and of Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza (she recorded a special message for us). This book is the third book that the group has translated and another step forward on the journey toward more inclusive Churches in Bolivia.



*Our Christmas tree and
our roses in full bloom at
the same time!*



[HTTP://KARIELLER.WEEBLY.COM](http://karieller.weebly.com)

Excerpt Taken from Justin's Blog

A good friend of mine recently told me how her son when he was five years old decided that he wanted to put out the nativity set. When she went to check on him, he was cutting out a heart, which he placed underneath baby Jesus. He looked at her and smiled. As her family gathered around the table for supper her five year old son explained to the family that this year, he wanted Jesus to be born in each of their hearts. This year, this Christmas, may this little story inspire your time with friends and loved ones as we give thanks for the miracle brought selflessly to us from God. Merry Christmas everyone! *Love, Kari*

...Yes, we are midst of the Advent season, which has its flavors of waiting, anticipation, hoping, joy, faith, peace, love, unexpectedness...of the coming of our Lord. And soon, yes, Jesus the Savior of the world will come into our existence once again, to fill our world and faith with light and life. Great things are happening and we hear

God's advice to: "wake up! get ready! expect the unexpected!" (Mark 13:37)...



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