



News from La Paz, Bolivia



by Kari Eller

El Chairo Boliviano— The Bolivian Stew

January 20, 2010

¡Feliz Año Nuevo! Happy New Year!

Every New Year meets us with the opportunity to reflect on the past year and look forward to the coming year. Many people make New Year's resolutions to better the coming year or make a change, but all too often resolutions go uncompleted.

I was recently asked if I knew what the mission and vision statement of the IELB was and while I could make a pretty good guess, I realized that I had never actually read it. I then thought, I haven't even read the mission and vision statement of the ELCA. So, I went home, did my homework, and found out the following.

- The IELB's mission and vision is: To proclaim, announce, teach, testify and live the Good News of Jesus Christ in our reality. To be a solid and auto-sustainable church for the service and practice of the Gospel by means of the gifts of the Holy Spirit.
- The ELCA's the mission and vision is: Marked with the cross of Christ forever, we are claimed, gathered, and sent for the sake of the world. Claimed by God's grace for the sake of the world, we are a new creation through God's living Word by the power of the Holy Spirit; Gathered by God's grace for the sake of the world, we will live among God's faithful people, hear God's Word, and share Christ's supper; Sent by God's grace for the sake of the world, we will proclaim the good news of God in Christ through word and deed, serve all people following the example of our Lord Jesus, and strive for justice and peace in all the world.

When mission and vision statements simply sit in a folder on a shelf they become empty words. After reading through the two mission and vision statements of the IELB and ELCA, I realized that while they help us to think in concrete terms about what we want to accomplish and how we want to go about accomplishing those things, they tell us more about how we should be toward ourselves and others in the world. In this New Year, in 2010, I invite you too to reclaim and rediscover what the mission and vision statements are for your congregation, organization, school, or synod. It never hurts to take a break, sit back and look at the bigger picture. Don't just read your mission and vision statements, but let them guide you back to the qualities that are valued most in the places where you live and work, which are the same qualities that brought you to where you are in the first place. May your mission and vision statements be more than just a resolution and may they inspire you and give you strength as you step forward into 2010. Many blessings and peace, Kari



Spotlight on... *Francisco Mayta Wallpa*

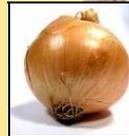


Hermano Francisco is from a town called Llamaway which is located in the District of Muñecas. He has lived there all his life and is very proud of his town and church. Muñecas has a climate that is more frigid as it is part of both the highlands and valleys. Every year, Muñecas produces onions, peaches, potatoes, peppers, and beans to name a few. The people of Muñecas are dedicated to their work with their crops and animals like sheep and pigs.



“As believers, we must always continue to walk forward without fainting. To do this, we must speak daily with the Lord through prayer.”

-Francisco Mayta Wallpa



In Muñecas there are 10 Lutheran congregations, the meeting place for reunions and board meetings being the Centro Ayata. Hermano Francisco is a member of the congregation named Luquiapu. Luquiapu has in between 6 and 15 members and holds its campaña in August every year. During the campaña they spend 3 days together, each church from the district sharing a song as part of their contribution to the event. Other activities include: hearing the Good News, attending Sunday School, receiving communion, participating in the baptism of new members, and of course, eating together. One of the most famous dishes in the Muñecas District is rabbit soup!



The picture above is not a really big green bean, but a picture of a broad bean (haba en español). They are one of the most ancient plants and are known around the world.

Did you know??? That in Muñecas, Quechua is spoken more than Aymara.

Quechua, an indigenous language, is the native language of approximately 6-8 million people located in Bolivia, Argentina, Colombia, Ecuador, Chile, and Perú. Quechua is also one of the official languages in Bolivia.



This year for Christmas, Justin and I had a chance to visit with friends and family. We forgot just how cold it is in Chicago. In this picture, we were waiting at a bus stop and Justin's glasses actually had frost on them from the extreme cold!



Walking into town from the retreat center, we saw these beautiful flowers. The climate is warmer and more flowers were blooming all over the city!



When it is time for lunch, the potatoes must be peeled and cooked. This pot is a big one, but definitely not the biggest!



The inside and outside of pacalla

When there's not a blender on a retreat, you learn to make llawaj by hand! Llawaj is served at every meal and is made of: tomatoes, locoto (spicy pepper), salt, onion, oil, and garlic.



At the youth retreat in Cochabamba, there was a pacalla tree. The fruit in this picture is shown by two of the youth at the retreat. Pacalla looks like a big green bean, but inside it has seeds that are covered in a cottony fruit. I called them natural marshmallows because the flavor was similar and the fruit is a bit chewy.



The picture on the left shows a fruit called chima that is peeled. On the right, the chima is still in the bowl with the skin on it. This fruit was brought to us by a friend. It tastes a bit like yucca.



In Cochabamba, Justin and I visited the Cristo de la Concordia. It was modeled after the Christ statue in Rio de Janeiro, Brasil. This Christ, however, they claim to be a little bit bigger. Walking towards Christ, we laughed quite a bit as a kid yelled out to his mom from inside, “Hey, look at me I’m in Christ’s hand!”



Once inside, there were little holes all throughout the statue, so that you could breathe and get a glimpse of the amazing view below.

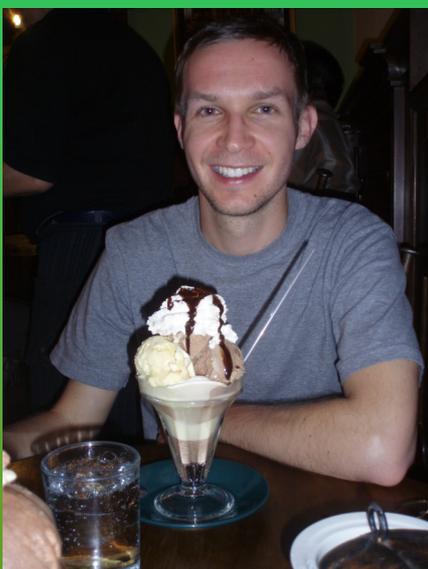


To get to the Christ statue, you had two choices. One was to walk up what seemed like 50 million steps, or for the bargain price of 3 Bolivianos, you could take a teleférico (cable car) up. We chose the teleférico. In this picture we’re headed back down. On the left in the far corner is a lake. The ride wasn’t as scary as I thought.

Happy Birthday Justin!



This year for Justin's birthday, the office held a small party for him after our worship service. Following Bolivian tradition, after Justin blew out the candles on his cake, he took the first bite of it. (This means that your head gets smashed into the cake.) In Justin's words, "I even had cake up my nostrils!" In this picture, Justin's showing off his new abarcas (sandals made from old tires), given to him by friends. Abarcas are what many people in the Campo wear because they last for forever and are a sign of being humble.



Justin and I also later celebrated his birthday in Cochabamba when we found an incredible ice cream shop!



Speaking of Cochabamba, here's just one more view from the Christ statue.



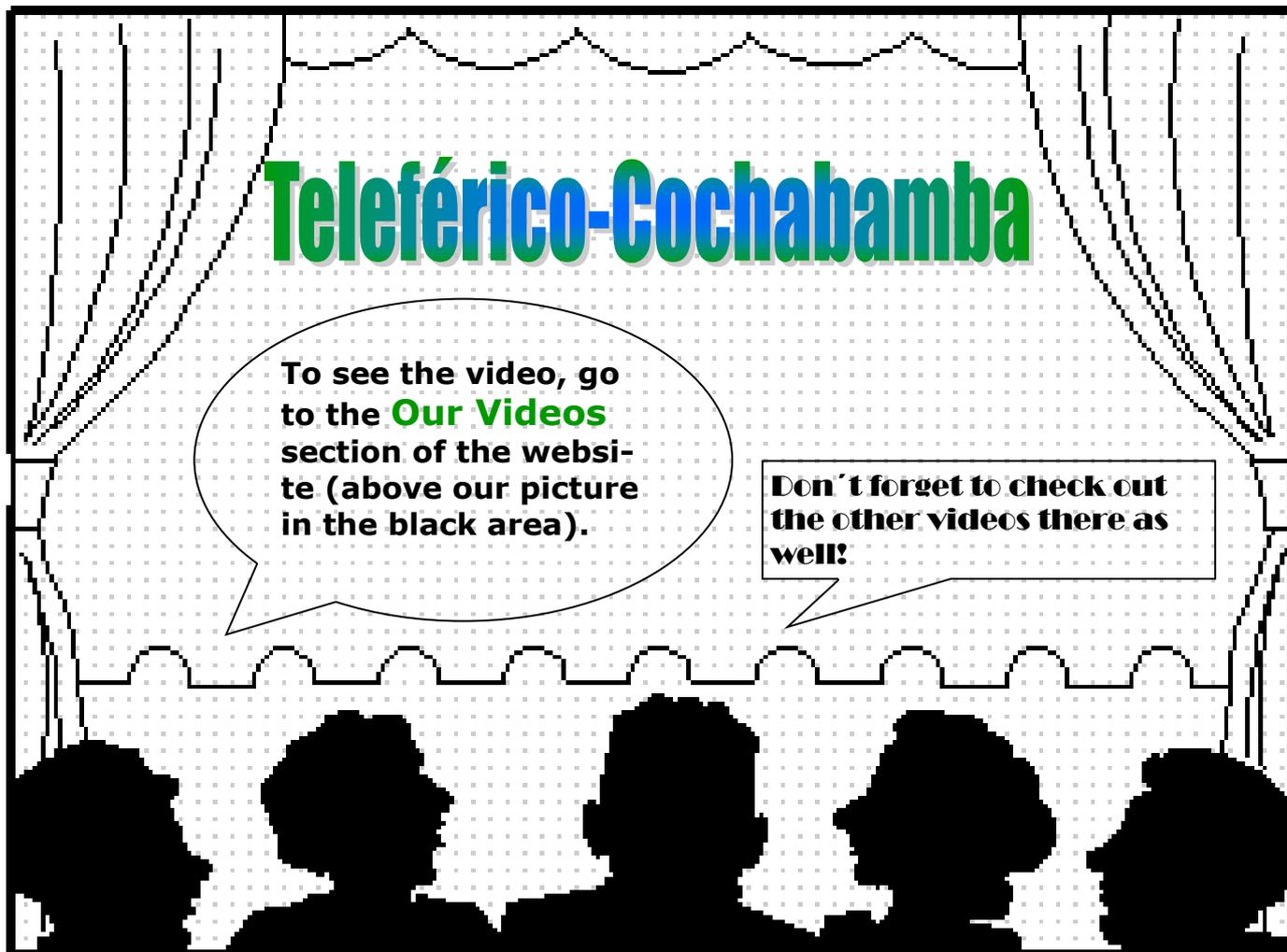
We had a great time visiting with family and friends at Grace Lowerstone Church in Rockwell, NC. There, we gave a presentation on what life is like in Bolivia and what it is exactly that we do. Justin also had the chance to preach alongside Pastor Spencer Swain.

Church Visits Home



Luther Memorial Church in Chicago, IL was also a blessing to our trip home. There, Justin assisted Pastor Tim Brown with two church services by preaching as well.

This month's video feature is:



Also, please be sure to check out Justin's devotional blog: thepilgrimpastor.blogspot.com
& his food blog: thepilgrimpastor.wordpress.com

If you know of someone who would also like to receive this email and who is not currently on my email list, please send me their first and last name along with their email address to: kfeller5@yahoo.com and I'll make sure that they also receive a copy!

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