



## News from La Paz, Bolivia

by Kari Eller



### El Chairo Boliviano— The Bolivian Stew

March 26, 2010

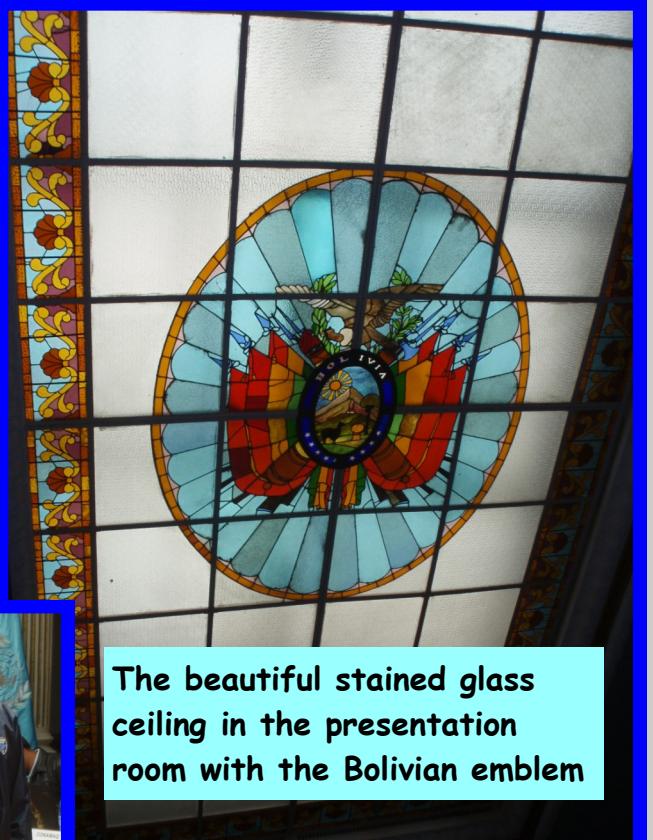


## Greetings from the United Nations' Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues!

This month, Justin, Pastor Francisco Choque and I were invited to represent the IELB at the Indigenous Caucus in the Chancellor's Office. During this event, indigenous voices from Bolivia were heard regarding topics such as the cultural importance of the coca leaf, the voting process for Bolivian representation, and the cry of Pachamama, our mother earth. At the caucus, one Bolivian expressed his belief that all human beings with all of creation form a big family and explained how we should treat with respect and care the obligatory control that has to exist between humans and creation. Another important message from the caucus was that the Whipala, or Aymara flag is created out of different colored, but equal-sized squares. The different colors representing the many nations that make up Bolivia, but the equal squares carrying the significance that we're all equally important. While every caucus is important, this caucus was especially important as the Bolivian caucus presented to the United Nations Permanent Forum, their Declaration on Indigenous Rights. Watching as the Bolivian indigenous voices were heard, we felt a renewed sense of hope for the inclusion of all.

## MORE PHOTOS OF THE INDIGENOUS CAUCUS

Inaugurating the event with a traditional Aymara blessing



The beautiful stained glass ceiling in the presentation room with the Bolivian emblem



Pastor Francisco with other participants from the caucus



A yatiri or Aymara spiritual leader



Inside the press room

# *Spotlight On:*

## **Visits from Foreign Lutheran Missionaries**



This month, the IELB, Justin and I welcomed Marianne Wagner from Germany and Karita Laise and Pastor Kari from Finland. (Yes, for the first time EVER in Bolivia, I found two people with the same name as me...AND they even spell it the same way!).

Marianne Wagner is an employee of GAF, the Gustavo Adolfo Foundation. GAF helps to fund many projects like the ELCA within the IELB. While here, Marianne visited one of the projects they support, the internado "Verena Wells" in Caranavi. Now underway, the internado serves as a boarding house and academic support for 12 girls attending school in the district.

Kari Laise and Pastor Kari work alongside Javier Gutiérrez from the IELB in development providing communities in the countryside with drinkable water, latrines, showers and small greenhouses. Justin and I had a chance to eat with them and learn about the wonderful work they help to provide here in Bolivia with the support of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Finland.

April 20-22nd Bolivia will host the "First World Conference of Towns towards Climate Change and the Rights of Mother Earth." During the conference, participants will analyze proposals in defense of life and the survival of the planet.

## Other Things We've Been Up To Lately...

- Led with Pastor Francisco Choque a meeting with the Bolivian National Missionaries (they are now officially serving the many congregations in their districts!)
- Attended the District Presidents' Meeting where we reported our activities, listened to the activities of others since the last meeting and worked as a national team on the yearly calendar of events
- Taught two hymns in English to youth leaders at their national gathering and spoke about Lutheran identity
- Began a Spanish class for several people who attend an English-speaking church here in La Paz so that they may feel more comfortable adjusting to a new culture and language
- Collaborated with the IELB's office of development by writing a paper on water and theology
- In the process of developing a ministry manual for the Bolivian National Missionaries on the topics of: pastoral identity, Lutheran doctrine, worship and liturgy, the life and works of Luther and stewardship & offering
- wrote an article for the NC Supplement to the Lutheran about our call to Bolivia and what it is we do here
- wrote an article for the Bolivian Lutheran magazine, Nina, about our experiences and warm feelings towards the IELB



A picture of a banner, hung at the Indigenous Caucus showing the coordination of indigenous organizations and intercultural communities in Bolivia

## Embroidery, Weavings, and Crochet Projects



This work of embroidery was hand made by a church member. In the middle you see the IELB's logo.



We recently purchased these two weavings for our home. We just love them!



Our friend taught us how to crochet the border for our aguayos. We use them to carry many things and the border helps the edges to not unravel.





## Our Classes

This month, Justin and I began teaching at the Instituto Superior Ecuménico Andino de Teología (ISEAT). I teach English 1 and Justin teaches Church History 1. In these pictures you can see us in action in the classroom. I also teach English 1 at the office (IELB) and the other two pictures are of my students from the church practicing vocabulary words in order to have a basic conversation with each other in English.



# The Holy Waters of Baptism

On March 14th, Justin celebrated his first baptisms! Ten children ranging from 9 months to 13 years old were welcomed as brothers and sisters, new members in the body of Christ in the church, El Sembrador. It was a very special occasion for children and parents alike!



*As soon as Jesus came up out of the water, he saw heaven opening and the Spirit coming down on him like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, "You are my own dear Son. I am pleased with you."*

*-Mark 1:10-11*

