



August 2009

Dear Friend:

PathLight's second annual Teacher Training Conference was a huge success. In our endeavor to assist the at-risk child in breaking the cycle of poverty through the tool of education, we have come alongside the Belizean teachers with teacher training. It is the hope of PathLight to support their teaching efforts and assist them with the challenges they face in education. How do I find the words to explain the journey of training teachers for a week in Belize? As I sit down to write this letter, I struggle to convey the amazing adventure this week held for the 2009 Teacher Training Conference. I thought you might enjoy reading excerpts from my journal each day to better help you envision what transpired and how God moved amongst the people.

July 18, 2009 (Day of Arrival in Belize)

The team is already working well together and eager to pitch in and help out. I find myself breathing a sigh of relief as I finish my first day here in Belize. It is a great start to our ministry time and I feel this overwhelming sense of peace that all is being orchestrated by Him. God is good. The jungle is beautiful and even though it is warm and humid, I find myself acclimating easily and enjoying all the beauty that surrounds me. I am listening to the many jungle sounds and it is enchanting hearing it from the safety of my bungalow. I am inspired by the creativity of our God.

July 19, 2009

Today was an intense day. It started out with a morning solo time after breakfast and it was greatly needed as the day brought with it many challenges. Mateo's 3-year old boy (Belize staff worker at PL) is still not being able to get treatment for his swollen lymph nodes. As a team we stopped and prayed for this little boy in pain and asked God to intervene. There were many tears as it is heartbreaking and we feel so helpless to see a little one suffer. Along with this grief, we are trying to hold the tension of preparing for our upcoming Teacher Training Conference. Many logistics are needed to help this conference run smoothly and we are all working hard to prepare our individual workshops as well as be flexible at the same time. I simply am amazed at the quality of people I get to serve alongside. Their adaptation to challenges continues to inspire and encourage all around us. The team has a very positive "can do" attitude and with each curve ball thrown at them, they do not waiver. I am blessed to work with such a team as this. Tonight we just finished our worship service. It was a magical moment. We sang as one of our volunteers led us in worship and we were pulled away from the little stories that constantly swirl around us into the larger story that God unfolds for us to live in. I feel such a peace from the stressors of the day and love ending my day remembering that God is orchestrating everything.

July 20, 2009

Our team gets along quite well and it is amazing that we have been friends for such a short time. Everyone has their strengths they bring to the table with a willing heart and an eagerness to serve. They are brimming with ideas, vision and enthusiasm. We each shared today how we had become connected with PathLight. As each person shared, we began to realize how divinely all of us were chosen. Our theme verse is I Peter 1:2 about being chosen by God long ago and how His spirit has made us holy. It was an encouragement to all of us as we realized that we have come from all over the nation and converged at this moment in time to serve this particular need. Tomorrow's the big day!

July 21, 2009

It was a fantastic start to the Teacher Training Conference! We had over 50 Belize educators and administrators in attendance and there is high energy amongst the participants and the volunteers. Everything went incredibly smooth. My opening talk on "Invitation into Literacy" was well received especially as I targeted the importance of reaching the at-risk population. After the opening talk, we broke into our workshops and I was able to visit each one. Our teacher trainers did a fabulous job reaching out to the Belizeans and I am impressed with the quality of their workshops. The most consistent feedback on both sides is that everyone wants more time, more hours, and more days. It feels awesome having just completed our first day with such success. There is a warm, relational and comfortable atmosphere here and the Belizeans love coming even though it means giving up their vacation to be here.

July 22, 2009

In the last 36 hours Michael has become more listless, not wanting to stand, continuing pain in his arms and legs, and he has started having nose bleeds. Today our Executive Director, Adrienne flew with him to a hospital in Mexico that treats ALL (Acute Lymphoblastic Leukemia). Our team continues to hold the tension of praying for the life of this little one while still preparing for the Teacher Training Conference. The topic of cancer and death & dying came up in one of the workshops. It was moving to hear the Belizeans talk about it so freely with our Teacher Trainers and it became a time of compassionate listening and prayer as many of them shared their painful journeys.

July 23, 2009

This team of teacher volunteers consists of amazing educators experienced in teaching and eager to share from their vast resources. I am humbled by their generous spirits and have immensely enjoyed serving alongside them. They are doing breakout grade level workshops focusing on literacy skills. The teacher trainers did an outstanding job at integrating faith within the learning process. As I visited the various workshops, it was inspiring to see the cultural divides minimized as Belizeans and North Americans connected over spiritual concepts and educational ideals. During our evening debrief, we recognized that we face similar challenges as well as share similar passions for our children. It has connected us all in a much deeper way.

July 24, 2009

We are finished! It was a great close to an outstanding week together. The Belizeans surprised us with a ceremony thanking us. They sang their national anthem, and each group sang a song in their native language: Spanish, Mayan, & Garafuna. We were all moved as they thanked each of us personally and gave us a gift from their country. The District Manager from the Ministry of Education also dropped by, and for her to take the initiative to come to Jaguar Creek was an honor. In my closing talk, "Teaching to the Spirit of a Child", many administrators came up to me saying it was a talk that their country needed to hear. They asked me for my speaking notes, and I handed over whatever I had and told them I'd be happy to speak to any of their groups. I was moved at the reception of my talk and felt like God had guided me on what to say. The Belizeans were extremely warm to us and appreciative of our volunteers. I know this trip impacted many of us in ways that will change us forever. Many are already talking about next year. I am very pleased with the outcome of the conference as it far exceeded my expectations. I am reminded of Ephesians 3 where it says that God will give us more than we can dare to ask or hope. This is what has happened on this trip. Thanks, God. Now I look forward to my own bed.

May you be blessed with the reading of this journey and know that your prayers and support are invaluable to PathLight.

Warmly,

Heather Penny
Director of Education, PathLight