

Archive for December, 2013

December 12th, 2013

Mission to El Salvador

We are establishing a Christian Montessori Training center in El Salvador. Below are a series of newsletters describing our journey so far in El Salvador.

A Mission Project
Edward Fidellow

Long threads of history.

All of our lives are part of the tapestry of life. We see the tapestry from Earth. God designs it from heaven. Dr. Montessori was gifted with this amazing way to teach in Italy at the turn of the last century. Before the mid-century there was the tragedy of World War II. My Dad was a soldier sent to Europe, my mother was a French war bride. They married and I was born in America. (Would I have heard the Gospel had I been born in France?) When I was five my parents divorced. When I was ten my mother married a man from El Salvador in New York (How would my step-father have met my mother except both were miles from their homes?)

When they married I gained another family (and another country which I also fell in love with.) When I took my bride to El Salvador for the first time 40 years ago she said she would love to start a Christian Montessori school here. Now forty years later due to many threads – running schools for years, setting up the Christian Montessori Fellowship, doing the training on DVD – we are about to start that school. Last year my step-father passed away and returning after his death we looked at each other and said what a fitting tribute it would be to start a Christian Montessori school in his honor. This will be our first international effort and it is more than starting a school, it is also starting a training center at the same time. My wife gets blessed thinking about our starting the first international training center in a small out of the way place (it reminds her of Bethlehem) in a country named after our Savior – El Salvador.

New threads of history woven with mini (and many) miracles.

In November 2011, the director of World Vision El Salvador was in San Antonio. The church we attend sponsors almost 1000 children in El Salvador. We met Dr. Calderon, he visited our school and we had dinner. He shared that they minister to preschoolers in over 300 places in El Salvador. He said it would be great to introduce Christian Montessori to his teachers. We didn't know how God was going to move but that love for El Salvador quickened again. In June of 2012 when my step-father passed away he left us a little money and we thought what a fitting way to turn an earthly inheritance into an eternal inheritance. In November of 2012, we took my step fathers ashes back to El Salvador . During that trip we met with the people at World Vision. They took us to see some of the work they were doing in the countryside. They were also having a teacher training day in the capital and they asked Barbara to present hands on Bible lessons to 150 of their teachers. God spoke through those lessons. During that trip we also got to share the hands on Bible lessons with several principals and teachers and a pastor. Everyone was excited about the possibility of using these great tools to share the Gospel. So before we left, we decided to get an idea of what it would cost us to rent a place to start a school. Our real estate agent was an angel sent by God. Patricia de Barriere showed us four houses. It was the first house that took our breath away. (The other three didn't compare to it.) It was an old house that hadn't been lived in for several years and needed repair but it had a great living room, dining room and covered patio that would make a great indoor/outdoor classroom and it all opened up onto a magnificent garden. It will make a fantastic school and training center. Patricia called an architect friend to go over what it would take to bring the house up to date. It wasn't enough to stagger us (but it should have been) but it was too late because this seemed to be the place that God would use to start the first international school and training center. We had Patricia make a lease purchase offer for us. All we wanted to do was to see what a place would cost and now we were committing.

The two sisters who own the house both live in Europe so there was a lot of back and forth but they finally agreed to a three year lease with an option to buy. "God" I wondered "are you moving this fast? Or am I ahead of You?" The

sisters agreed to come in January to sign the papers. When we returned to El Salvador in January we were ready to sign. We had dinner with an old family friend, a retired attorney, and shared our progress. Barbara did not understand any of the conversation as it was in Spanish but she said she could watch my face drop. I had asked for advice and wisdom and Armando had given me some. Never ask for wisdom unless you plan on taking it. Armando said we should sign no papers until we receive our permit from the Ministry of Education. Otherwise, we would own a very nice house with no children to put in it. (I hate wisdom when it puts speed bumps in the way) but I learn to take it because it is wisdom. The sisters understood and were gracious to offer us 45 to 60 days before they would put the house back on the market. Now, all we had to do was to get permission from the Ministry of Education. So we hired an attorney to begin the process. The process of getting permission can take six months or a year and sometimes two years but we were starting. (It does help to be an optimist, even though sometimes it is not realistic.)

God continually gave the small signs of His presence. We had to go and get a tax id number. It was probably the least expensive process of this whole adventure. It cost \$1.25 to get your card. It cost 8 cents for a copy of the passport. And to get our new tax number laminated it cost 46 cents. As I stood there to pay, I looked at the change in my hand and I had only 45 cents. A lady standing next to me put a penny in my hand. It is very humbling to know that God cares even about the pennies (while we worry so much about the dollars.) One night Barbara was coughing with allergies. We were in the bed and breakfast and it was a little after nine in the evening and there was a knock at our door. The little cook said she was passing by and heard Barbara coughing and had brought her some hot honey and lemon. Humbled again by God's care and love for even the smallest details of our life.

On our second trip (I'm getting to feel a little like Paul in counting up missionary journeys – even though ours are at 35,000 feet and a whole lot more comfortable.) we also met Sissi Gustave de Quintero who also runs a Christian school (another friend of Patricia.) Sissi's daughter, Rebeca expressed an interest in Christian Montessori. Rebeca (that is how her name is spelled in Spanish) has that soft-spoken demeanor you look for in Montessori

guides. Rebeca teaches for her mother. I asked Sissi are you willing to lose your daughter to come with us in Christian Montessori? Sissi replied whatever is in God's will.

We returned home but within two weeks the attorney emails us and says that he cannot file the papers for the permission unless we have a location secured by lease or purchase. Barbara and I looked at each other and all we could do was laugh. She told me that we have come this far by trusting and following God, what is one more step on the water. The papers are signed and the architect begins the remodeling process. And the attorney continues to work on the application.

We return to El Salvador during Spring break. When we walk into the house Barbara's jaw drops – there is no roof on the house, three bedrooms have only dirt floors and one of them has piles of dirt and ditches in it. The side yard is full of construction debris and the front yard is full of neatly stacked roof tiles. Where is the beautiful house? From the beginning the architect had advised that we replace all of the sixty year old wiring and plumbing and to fix the roof for leaks. It was a bigger process than we had anticipated. Wow! You can't make omelets without breaking eggs.

The week was full of meetings (and miracles.) To submit the application the attorney needed for me to get documents from the judicial system and the police. We went down to the first office. There were at least fifty people in line outside. The first guard took us to the head of the line and lead us inside where there were another fifteen or twenty people in line. The next guard took us to the cashier immediately and by passed the line and took us to the counter where they finished the appropriate paper work and we were on our way in less than thirty minutes. (The good news is I've got a clean record!) The next adventure was to go to the police station to get another document. Again, a guard bypassed the line got us to the cashier, somebody then motioned us to go upstairs where there was no line and we filled out the appropriate paper work. We handed it in downstairs and in a few minutes someone came out and took my fingerprints. We bypassed another fifty people in line and were out in thirty four minutes (my wife was counting.) They said we should have our paper work in eight days. Three days later they called and said the paperwork was ready. We went to pick up the paper but the police

station was closed. Our friend Patricia asked a policeman on the corner about getting the document but he said the computer was down. She said the document had already been prepared. He walked back and unlocked the door and we had our document. Either God was parting the seas for us or the guards were worried that we were so old that we might die in line and what would they do with the bodies?

Everyone who has come in contact with this project has taken it to heart and taken it as their own. On our second trip Patricia literally spent morning noon and night with us and now on our third trip she and Sonia were sharing the duties of moving everything along. And then, there is Sissi the friend of Patricia who we met on our second trip. Sissi runs a Christian school and is very interested in Christian Montessori. She told Barbara that they needed us there twenty years ago but she is very glad we are there now. Sissi has dealt with the Ministry of Education for years and God has graced her with all kinds of contacts. She called up one of the directors of the ministry and made an appointment for us on Friday. She explained that the school would like to operate on the International calendar (school starting in August) instead of the national calendar where school starts in February. She is concerned that we are investing all of this money and none is coming in yet. The director told her that the rules ask for the application to be presented in January to open in August (here we are in March.) After some conversation he set up a meeting with two other department heads. The meeting was formal but as we shared you could feel God in the room. The very serious lady began to smile, the other director said that we really need what you have to offer and made suggestions about coordinating with higher Ed people. As we approached the end of the meeting they acknowledged that you can't get your permission until you have all of your papers in a row and you can't get all of your papers until you have your permission and then he said the miracle words, "We are going to give you a temporary permission." We now can start!

Later that afternoon we had a meeting with two ladies from World Vision who continue to be interested in the Montessori to help their teaching mission. Patty de Moran has done her research and is really excited about what we can do working together. In fact Patty is going

to begin to translate materials that we both can use. In our discussion about the progress of the school and the blessings that are being given to us, we remark on how blessed we were to have Sissi with us that morning. Patty said her daughter went to Sissi's school. When I told Patty that Sissi's daughter was going to be our teacher, Patty's face lit up – Rebeca had been her daughter's teacher. Small world huh God?

Before we left our architect took us to her beach house. She wanted us to see their community building in the development. It is only used twice a year but would make a great Christian Montessori school. The children in the neighborhood don't go to school until they are seven. Sonia said that she wanted to start a school there. She might even give up her profession to teach. It is overwhelming to think what God might do.

Future threads.

And the miracles continue. Our friends at Nienhuis Montessori are excited about supporting this adventure too and have committed to help us get started. But we need a couple of more miracles and we pray that you will be part of that. We have raised about a third of the money needed. Prayerfully this is a project that will stir you to support Christian Montessori with your donation and investment in reaching children with the Gospel. From this new school and training center will rise dozens of new Christian Montessori schools and hundreds and thousands of children will be nurtured in the Lord.

Please let the risen Christ speak to you about this great international outreach.

You may send your tax-deductible donations to Christian Montessori Fellowship
22630 East Range, San Antonio, TX 78255.

God bless you for considering this outreach.

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cell

August Newsletter

It is hard to believe we have been here three weeks. It is a different feeling when you are not counting down the days until your "vacation" is over but that you are "home" and working. The first major glitch in this whole project came last month when the building department revoked the building and school permit. So there has been all kinds of maneuvering to get the permit back to at least finish the project. They are supposed to lift the restrictions today (\$700 later.) There are still two to three weeks of work to finish the project. The parts that have been finished are absolutely beautiful.

These last three weeks have been unique for a type A personality. It wasn't even hurry and wait – it was just wait. One week was given to the national holiday – basically a six day festival with not a lot of work being done any where. It has been a time of enforced "idleness" and yet that idleness has been tremendously productive as we have met with handfuls of people who are vitally interested in what we are doing. We just can't show it to them in its fullness. It is not a frustration we feel but a recognition that even in the delay God's timetable will still be accomplished.

School was supposed to start last Thursday according to government regulations. Pray that we can get an extension of time.

Our email fidellow@swbell.net still works. We have a magicJack number to talk over the internet. It has a San Antonio area code 210-607-7086. So if we are near the computer and we hear the phone we can talk; otherwise you leave a message and we call you back. We still get mail (and donations) at 22630 East Range, San Antonio, TX 78255. We have good help to answer it.

Please add to your prayers the sale of our house and our car.

Thank you for your love and concern for us.
God bless.
Barbara and Edward

September in El Salvador

We are starting our sixth week and progress is being made. We received permission to complete the remodeling. We are now waiting to make sure that they have restored the permission for the school. There is always a

challenge. I don't know if it was to make me feel better or not but the pastor of the English speaking church shared with me that their orphanage has been waiting two years to get permission to build new homes. "Welcome to El Salvador." He said. Everything is in God's hands – as if we didn't already know that.

We had a unique experience last week. Barbara got tired of shopping. Well, to be fair, we were not shopping for shoes. Trying to set up the kitchen requires all new appliances. Just the variety boggles the mind. We went to Walmart and Sears – yes, we are still in El Salvador – and a couple of local shops – to check on stoves, dishwashers, freezers, washers and dryers and ventahoods. There is a tremendous variety with products manufactured from all over including the U.S., Mexico, Ecuador etc. Trying to find your price point as well as utility and design is challenging especially when the sales pitches are all in Spanish. But pretty soon all of that will be behind us as it all gets installed in the house. Oh, yes, shopping for toilets, sinks, faucets, counter tops, tile, and light fixtures is not as much fun as shopping for shoes.

At the house, the office and the conference room are mostly done. "Your" guest room is just about finished. The living room – which is the main classroom – needs a second coat of paint, the floors polished and light fixtures but should be finished this week along with the dining room. The children's bathroom is half done. Our bedroom, bathroom and the kitchen are still major projects. The patio ceiling hasn't been done and the patio hasn't been started – which is half of the classroom. The driveway and parking has not been started either but they did remove ten truck loads of construction debris. The architect says two more weeks (or so). We are living with her and her husband so she has great motivation to see it done!

Everywhere we go and share about the project people are excited. We keep praying about how to make this education accessible to as many people as possible. At this point I keep coming back to having the model so people can actually see it. Barbara and I have been rereading Dr. Montessori's biography as we share this with the teacher we are training. Montessori education started in the poor part of Rome and the children were so transformed that people came from all over the world to see these "new" children. We are reminded again that it is not the education that

transforms but the unique God-given insight into the life of the child that transforms. I am anxious to see that again in a brand new group of children and in a society and culture that has not had this experience widely disseminated.

It seems like once a week Barbara and I get a unique dining experience. We went to Pizza Hut with our real estate agent, to Wendy's with the pastor, and to Starbucks with the orphan director. Barbara and I had a date last week where we went to Denny's for a Grand Slam. Among your options are many you've never seen at Denny's- refried beans, plantains, tortillas etc. Everything here is done with a style and grace and so even the major chains are customized - McDonald's has a coffee bar with desserts and couches and chairs.

Saturday, we went with our cousin to see our Aunt who is 95. She is still alert and gracious. All of our early trips to El Salvador were spent at her house and we remember her graciousness to us. She would take us everywhere and would bargain for us at the market. Much of our early household decorations and school materials originated here. Though she is in an assisted living she still wanted to get us coffee or juice.

We are trying to resolve the problem with shipping our household goods to El Salvador. It is coming close to being finalized. It is probably good that it has taken so long because the house is not ready to receive them yet.

Prayer needs:
We have to go to the Ministry of Education to get a variance on the start of school. School was supposed to have started two weeks ago.

We need to make sure that we receive our location permission.

We need to sell our house and our car.

Needless to say, money is always a need.

Also pray that we can continue to sell our training and books. We still market and sell over the internet but that requires a focus too. And right now that focus is a little divided.

If you would like to contact us we have a "Magic Jack" number which is a local number for San Antonio but does not cost you for international phone calls. 210-607-7086. It works wonderfully through the computer. And if we are not near the computer you can leave a message and we will call you back.

Email: Fidellow@swbell.net

Local address: 22630 East Range, San Antonio, TX 78255

We miss you all and think about you often but we are right where we are supposed to be.
God bless.
Barbara and Edward

The Texan and traffic

When we came to El Salvador last year my family here said I shouldn't drive - it's too dangerous. The truth is that it is dangerous if you are not paying attention but it is nothing a Texan can't handle especially if it is not your first rodeo. The rules of the road are basically the same. The catch is in the word "rules." While rules are important they seem to be only guidelines. And it is in how they are applied all around you that counts.

Yes, you have to look both left and right and at the guy coming towards you. You also have to watch the guy passing you on your left and on your right (often at the same time on a single lane street.) And you have to be aware of pedestrians crossing in front of you who seem to occasionally magically appear. I almost scored one the other night as he walked in front of my stopped car in traffic.

Traffic is no worse than rush hour anywhere. The one added excitement for the road are the dozens of buses that weave in and out of traffic. You don't argue with a bus if the driver decides to go from the right lane to the left lane across four lanes of traffic. There are a lot of shiny medium size buses as well as handfuls of old style buses who spray midnight clouds of diesel smoke. And there is nothing like a bus horn to wake you up even if you aren't sleeping. The sidewalks are packed with people waiting for buses. I go to a six A.M. Bible study and the buses are already running and full. In fact, the young men working on the house have to take buses to get home, as much as an hour or an hour and a half each way. (I

wouldn't complain about rush hour!) Early morning the streets are also full of joggers and bike riders.

There are many more motor bikes here than I recall seeing at home. I have not seen any Harleys but dozens of Suzukis. Many motor bikes are used for home delivery of food – pizza, Chinese and even McDonalds. (You have to really have a craving for McDonalds to want home delivery.) Amazingly, you don't see a lot of junky cars. A car is a real resource so they are taken care of.

One of the challenges of the street is there are not stop lights on every corner so there is a bingo component of crossing streets or turning left. We were going to a school meeting some weeks back and we needed to turn left at a major street but there was no way to do it. We had to drive some twenty or thirty blocks before we could even make or find a place to make a u-turn (illegally I'm sure.) Now, trying to turn left at a street where there is no light presents its own drama especially when you have to cross two lanes. You inch your way out until you make one lane have to stop and then you try to inch your way across the second lane which becomes really fun if you made a bus or truck stop in the first lane because you can't see anything in the second lane. Another adventure (which I have not been brave enough to try – yet) is crossing four lanes at that same corner. You have to have nerves of steel – and be deaf as you stop traffic across all four lanes.

Another sport is pot holes and speed bumps. Now, there are some very nice boulevards and brand new black top streets but a lot of the side streets have their share of pot holes. Some come from previous efforts at black topping which leaves the man hole covers below the black top level. You get to know where those are and if you are paying attention you try to miss them. Others are just worn out holes in the street. There was one manhole cover – which wasn't. I would hate to think of running into that hole. Somebody eventually put a tall palm branch in it with a plastic bag attached to it. I think somebody just filled it in with dirt. Speed bumps are like calf-roping. You try to see how fast you can go over them without diminishing your speed to zero or not to jar your teeth out. Each speed bump has its own characteristics.

However, the real rodeo comes at traffic circles. The people who are in the circle have the right of way but trying to get in is like an eight second bull ride. However, you are lucky if you can get in, in eight seconds. Of course, the guy next to you is trying to get in as well. You have to be a hair aggressive (Barbara says – extremely aggressive) to get into the traffic flow. Being a cowboy helps!

Barbara and I went to the dentist yesterday to have our teeth cleaned. We each had our own dentist and started at the same time but she finished before me. I asked, "How come you got to finish before me?" "My mouth isn't as BIG as yours." You gotta love that girl!

Keep us in your prayers as we probably still have two weeks to go before we move in.

People have asked about making contributions. (God bless them!) You can send your tax-deductible donations to Cross Mountain Forum (our corporate name) 22630 East Range San Antonio, TX 78255. Your donation will be processed and your receipt sent.

God bless.
Barbara and Edward

Reflections from El Salvador

This is the beginning of our eighth week here. We certainly don't feel like we are on vacation but neither do we feel settled. God bless our architect and her husband who have graciously shown us hospitality during this time. I kid them that they want to push the construction so they can have their house back to themselves but they graciously tell us that they will miss us. Sonia has told her family and friends how much we have blessed them and taught them while being here. God obviously has other plans than the ones we propose. It does look like another two weeks at least until the house is finished. It is looking beautiful and will be a Montessori showcase – for God's glory.

I am married to a great trooper which is no surprise to you all. She shares with everyone how happy she is to be here and she truly is. She keeps reminding us that we've lived our whole lives to be ready for these moments. Every difficulty we encounter now she reminds me of a similar one we faced in the past – and made it through! Delays in construction here –

a year and a half to build a house there. Losing a building permit here – we lost a building permit there when we had no home and we were taken in by friends. An unhappy belligerent neighbor here – a whole neighborhood there who eventually came around. (No I'm not talking about my Cross Mountain neighbors who we are still waiting to come around – here to El Salvador, the guest room is available.) This is a good place to thank all of you neighbors who have been so wonderful and helpful as we have made this move. In fact the guest room is 98% finished waiting for you all.

The world is very small. And for all the things that are different here there is so much that is just like home. Giant shopping malls which rival the best of those at home. Just about all the major chains are here. We've sort of made it a cultural experiment to frequent each establishment at least once. So we've been to Starbucks, Wendy's, McDonalds, Bennigans, Denny's, Pizza Hut and Chili's. Only the Chili's skillet queso was a failure of expectation.

El Salvador has always been a land of style from the way they decorate to even the way the florist presents flowers; everything, even McDonalds is graced with style. McDonalds has a coffee bar, with unique pastries, there are couches and lounge chairs – “No Toto this is not Kansas” (Wizard of OZ).

Even now that the whole world is a blue jean culture they take it to different heights in El Salvador. I have never seen so many four and five inch heels worn as elegantly as they are here. Almost every business decks their people out in uniforms and most are stylishly created.

Speaking of business the streets are full of them. Just about every corner with sufficient traffic attracts determined entrepreneurs hawking sunglasses, bananas, candy, nuts, clothes, fruits and vegetables and dozens of things I've yet to identify on our often ten second encounters. There are street side restaurants, which is not new to most of us, but these don't have restaurants attached. Someone sets up a folding table or two, puts out some plastic chairs, cooks on the street and serves hungry customers. The tables are always full when we drive by. On our drive bys we see the occasional grandmother with outstretched hands coming to your car, a man in a wheel chair who has staked out the middle of a wide street and the occasional paralytic.

Probably in no greater proportion of what we see on our commutes at home. I am intrigued by the creativity of the entrepreneurs I see. They are motivated – if they don't work, they don't eat. There are even handfuls of street performers – jugglers of all kinds and types of juggling, even people on stilts. I haven't seen any fire eaters but I have seen jugglers juggling fire.

One thing you do note is that businesses seem to over staff but it does give people work. The garbage truck has four or five guys riding on the back. The local home improvement store (and there is nothing local about it as it easily rivals or maybe even surpasses Lowe's or Home Depot) probably has at least one employee per aisle let alone all the people up front or in back. The same goes for the local Walmart. Now that is a cultural experience. You could almost envision that you are in San Antonio – except there are no signs in English. Just about everything you want that you find at Walmart is here. Our experience years ago was that life was less expensive but since El Salvador changed their currency, they now use the American dollar, prices have seemed to climb almost on par with home. And certain things which are not produced locally or in the Central American market are much more expensive – a small jar of peanut butter would be \$4.85. (We are waiting to come home to get some. I wonder what TSA at the airport will think of this dangerous substance – better pack it into the checked luggage. I hope it doesn't expand!

One significant economic note is that El Salvador, the smallest of the Central American countries, has over seven million people. However, there are over three million Salvadorans living in the United States and the money they send home is greater than the revenue raised from cotton, cane or coffee.

This is the rainy season. It usually rains every night but lately we've had some all day rains. Fortunately, most of the outdoor work has been done. We will need to lay down a drive way and finish a little of the outside painting but most work is inside.

Someone shared with Barbara some time ago that they had read that the people in Central America are the happiest people on earth. We seem to find a lot of smiling faces. While there is always a concern about crime we feel as safe as we ever did at home besides if God is with

you, you can't get much better security. Plus there seems to be a security guard with a shotgun on every block. In fact, there is a government facility up the block from the school that has six security guards. Speaking of security, there was an earthquake on the Mexico - Guatemala border last week. The reason I know is that my desk chair moved a little bit. It was a new experience. But God keeps us all the time and there are no surprises in His kingdom. So these days of delay are not a surprise to Him (just lessons in patience for us.) We can use your prayers as we still have a house and a car to sell. We are still trying to ship down our furniture and some school supplies and the shipper messed up the pick up day and wants to charge us \$900 for his mistake. I'm off to see the local shipping company to see how we can resolve this. Blessings to you all and thanks for being our friends. Remember us when you pray. Barbara and Edward

October in El Salvador

Hi Everyone,
We are entering our 11th week here. God bless our architect and her husband who have shown us great hospitality while we wait for our house to be ready. (Actually, that is wait and wait and wait) However, we do see light at the end of the tunnel - we just hope it is not a train. There are always construction delays in any project but this one seems a little longer than usual. Well, maybe by next week we will be able to move in. They began installing the hot water heater today which is an essential sign. Our bathroom is finished so that is good too.

There is still so much construction dust that we can't lay out the Montessori materials. They ran out of tiles for the patio two weeks ago and the patio is two thirds finished. They make these tiles in Guatemala so they have to wait for them to be made and shipped. Since half of our classroom is outside on the patio we can't get it set up yet either.

And then there is the story of our container with the furniture and additional school materials. It shipped from Houston, went to Guatemala and then overland to customs in El Salvador. I went out to the customs warehouse, about an hour's drive, to sign for the container but they said we don't do that here. It will have to be handled somewhere else. Then they said, they would probably have to open the container and inventory every box

- counting how many plates are in each box, how many shoes etc; but they couldn't tell us for sure. They hoped we would have our container Friday. Well, Monday came and went but we were definitely supposed to have it Tuesday. Well, maybe Tuesday is really Wednesday. We will see. The Americans living here, with orphanages and other ministries just smile and say "Welcome to El Salvador." In many ways it is no different than anywhere else (except it is all in Spanish.) God is still on the throne and He still controls our times and seasons. And they did deliver the container on Wednesday!

It has been a very interesting time of a different kind of rest especially for type A personalities. Lots of opportunities to exercise self-control and patience. So that is all good. So many people have been a blessing to us that we are humbled by God's daily concern.

We will be back home in eight days as we are doing a regional Christian Montessori conference in Louisiana. We will get to spend time with our kids and grandkids and a number of friends in San Antonio. We head back to El Salvador on Friday November 8th. We look forward to getting to work and sharing this great adventure. So many here are excited about the possibilities for Christian Montessori and the potential of what it offers to the country.

I've almost become a native with my driving habits and occasionally get scared by a motor bike coming from no where. I am practicing good neighbor and "Christian" driving by allowing as many people as I can to cut in. But not always I'm still no saint!

Can't wait to go home and can't wait to come back. We are still excited about this grand adventure. We appreciate your prayers and support.
Love,
Barbara and Edward

Home

A little reflection on what is "home" now that we are setting up a new home and in a new country. As the old joke goes "home is when you go there, they have to take you in." Home is the safe place, full of love and care. As children home is just home but as we grow it represents an anchor, a point of orientation for

everything else that follows in our life. As we marry and have children and often move away we still talk about going "home" no matter how many years ago we left. And it is from home that so many of our perceptions are born about the world. Home represents things as they should be because to begin with that is all we know.

We grow up, we begin to travel, we go off to school and we see life differently. Things are not like at home. They may be exotic, fast or slow paced, culturally alive, different weather, food, people. And in the back of our minds is always the vague thought, "It's not like home." And it is not supposed to be. You don't go to Paris because it is the same as Peoria. That is the challenge in life – to carve out your own home. You make new friends, find a new church, discover your new favorite restaurant and you live! The Bible talks about seeking the welfare of the city you live in. It is still good advice.

There are so many new experiences – like going to the bank. We opened an account at a small bank. It is probably not larger than 1000 square feet. There are two guards, even for this small branch. There is also another guard in the parking lot. When we go in they usually check Barbara's purse (maybe she looks suspicious.) The bank officers are out front and the tellers are behind bullet proof glass to the ceiling. Our money is safe! I received a phone call while in the bank. The young lady reminded me that it is not allowed. Security! I had written a check that was not honored. It seems that when they opened the account they took my full name off the passport and I had not written it out on the check. Edward Andre Emil Fidellow – it is a good thing I didn't add Junior! But other things are just like home. I go to the ATM and withdraw cash, I check on my balance on line. (It's just like home – with a low balance too!)

Our new house is almost ready, just lots of little details to finish (like gas for cooking – no wait that is a big detail.) There are things to be painted and repaired but the furniture fits – well most of it. And it is beginning to look and feel like home. We tried to get the box spring upstairs but it was too big to make the turn but the mattresses would bend just enough so we could get them upstairs. So when you come to visit your bed will be extra soft as you will be sleeping on two mattresses. There wasn't enough room in the container so they did not

ship our mattress so it looks like we will be going to Price Mart when we return.

We were blessed with the container we only lost two glasses, a small glass table top and three legs off of a bureau. We are thankful. We thought we got rid of half of our stuff before we came (and we did) but there are sure a lot of blessings and memories that were shipped down.

We are anxious to go home to see everyone and we are anxious to return to hit the ground running. There are so many opportunities to bless little children.

Thank you for your prayers and support.
God bless.
Barbara and Edward

Home and Home and Home again!

This whole El Salvador journey is turning into a great adventure. Two weeks ago we left El Salvador to go to Shreveport, LA to do a conference. This was our eleventh annual conference that we have done at Christian Center Montessori School. Getting there is always half the fun.

We started out with a noon day flight. Pastor Raymond volunteered to take us to the airport. His daughter Rebeca is our first student. (And he volunteered to pick us up – bless him.) Everything was great, we were excited to go home and see everybody. Then we went through security and as I emptied my pockets there was the rental car key. Oh Heavens, I thought (or words similar to that!) I kept looking around – just maybe we would run into someone we knew and they could take the keys back. No such luck. We boarded the plane, buckled our seat belts and waited to take off. And we waited. And waited some more. There seemed to be a part that was not functioning up to its potential and they were trying to motivate it to fly. "It is possible that we could fly without this part functioning but we would not be able to fly at our normal cruising altitude." That was great, I always did want to skim the waves. We sat on the tarmac for two hours while they debated the motivation for the part or they would have to get another part from Houston or Chicago.

They took us back to the boarding gate and said they would make a decision in an hour if

we could fly or not. This was a new experience. I don't recall with all of the flying we have done to have had a cancelled flight. And it was cancelled! Now, what? They ordered three big tour buses to take us back to San Salvador, almost an hour away, and they were going to put us up for the night at the Intercontinental Hotel. It is a first class hotel and I wish we could have spent the night. They asked us to be in the lobby at 3:30 A.M. to return to the airport. They also gave us a seven dollar voucher for dinner. Well, you could almost get a sandwich for seven dollars if you held the mayo.

The bus ride to the hotel was fascinating. The driver obviously knew how to drive his bus. I was sitting in the front row and got to observe him miss pedestrians, street signs, cars and motorbikes. He even missed the turn into the hotel. So we journeyed an extra four or five blocks until he could turn down a side street. And I mean side street - two lanes. He then drove a block or two and decided to turn around. It would have been tough to turn a car around but he managed to get the bus headed in the right direction and to the hotel.

We connected with a great group of people from Illinois who were returning from a mission's trip. They had been helping a school and a church in the eastern part of the country. So we had a convivial group of dinner guests to share the evening with. The leader of the group even took our dinner ticket. Small sweet blessings in the midst of everything.

We happily arrived in San Antonio and saw our grandkids (and our kids too!) That night Sheila and Joaquin Mira, our neighbors, hosted a potluck so we could visit with all our neighbors. Our house still hasn't sold so we spent days packing up the garage and all of the things that didn't get shipped. Vows of poverty look better and better all the time especially when you have so many "riches" that just burden you down. We had already given away truckloads to church groups. We had made pilgrimages to Goodwill. And we still had mountains of stuff. Much of it is material for the next school that we will help establish. We have a storage unit that is keeping watch over shelves, Montessori materials, books and tricycles etc. We will be able to help someone get a good start.

Then we went to our next "home". We have been doing seminars at Christian Center for at

least eleven years. And when we go we really do feel at home. Years ago, the pastor shared with us that we had an "apostolic" ministry. We never saw that what we did was worthy of such lofty terms. But on this last trip I asked their meaning of the word apostolic - the beginning of something, the birthing of something. And that certainly is what our mission seems to be - to birth this way of training all over the world.

Our friends in Shreveport wondered why we had not sent pictures. We had turned in our phones when we left the states and had not gotten a camera. They surprised us with a camera. (I suppose they will want pictures of us at the beach, drinking coconut milk under the palm trees.) Wait! Wait! Wait! I remember what they wanted - pictures of the school. They are coming soon.

Now, we have returned home. The house is not quite finished but we came from the airport and declared we were home as we spent our first night in the house. That night we lay down on the box spring (you remember that they didn't send our mattress in the container.) We would have been just as comfortable sleeping on the floor. The next night we went to your bedroom upstairs where we have that nice double mattress. By the time you get here we should have a mattress of our own and we will have washed the sheets on your bed.

Patricia, our real estate agent, called and took us to the store Friday night as we didn't have a rental car yet. Plus we had no gas for the stove so we bought Frosted Flakes for breakfast. We now have gas and we can cook when you come to visit.

When you receive this letter you will know that they have installed our internet connection. Soon you'll see pictures but Barbara won't let us open the boxes until we dust and mop. There sure are a lot of boxes! (And a lot of dust and dirt!) We look forward to telling you the next adventures of setting up and the beginning of teacher training.

We certainly appreciate your prayers and your support.

God
Barbara and Edward

bles.

Sounds from the Street

If you have lived in New York City you get used to the sounds of the street. You live in proximity to so many people that there is hardly ever silence. Many of us are suburban dwellers where our streets are quiet and our neighbors are silent. Our experience since moving into the house has been interesting as we follow the rhythm of the street.

We live on a one way street that is not really a major thoroughfare. Half a block down the street turns to the right and four blocks later intersects a major city street. After dark the traffic subsides and it begins to become quiet but the rest of the city sounds still echo down our street.

In El Salvador the sounds of the street begin early and the day begins really early. Our day begins with a neighborhood rooster who has no internal sense of time and begins to crow at 3 A.M. I am sure he believes that it is 5 A.M. somewhere. Then our neighbor's dogs across the street (our windows are wide open to enjoy the great breeze and morning coolness) begin a conversation with the rooster, sometimes in barks and some times in howls. Soon thereafter, the birds begin to fill the silence. There is the gentle cooing of doves. There is a bird that has a two part note to his song, a short "who" and then a long whistle. (He gets your attention for sure.) And then the parrots come over in formation with their raucous squawking.

Then you hear the first horn of the morning as the bread man peddles his bike sounding his distinct horn "ooo", "ooo". His bicycle has a three foot basket mounted on front full of fresh bread, with other bags of bread hanging from the edges. The back of his bike has another basket full. His day starts early (at least earlier than I want mine to start.) Next you might hear a horn of someone hurrying to pick up someone for school. Some schools start at 6:40. There are also the voices of people walking to work. Their voices climb our wall and echo in our windows

When I leave for Bible study at 5:30 the streets are full of people going to work; the buses are already full and the streets are full of joggers and bicyclers. Soon, the traffic picks up the morning has started. You hear the diesel truck go by. By seven o'clock or seven thirty the trash truck is out front as it lumbers and grinds its way down the street. Monday, Wednesday and Friday the trash truck makes it

appearance. Four men ride the back collecting the trash and changing positions on the back of the truck like choreography as they hop on and off.

The traffic ebbs and flows as there is a light at the corner. Sometime later in the morning or in the afternoon you hear the "ting", "ting", "ting" of the ice cream cart bell. Somehow we are shielded from the sounds of the buses that pass half a block away. And another sound that we don't hear is the reverberations of car radios driven by seemingly deaf youth as we often hear at home.

Dusk has fallen and the sounds begin to fade. Soon the street will wrap it self up for the night and their will be long stretches of silence until our neighborhood rooster wakes up on the wrong side of the bed.

God bless.
Barbara and Edward Fidellow

Off and Running!

After months and months of patient (?) waiting we finally moved into the not completely finished house and began to invite people to experience an introduction to Christian Montessori. I almost hate to admit that the experience of waiting has not been all bad (I'm nervous that God might take that as a sign for more waiting.) But during that time God gave lots of new insights into what we need to emphasize with the training.

Six things form the basis of what we are doing. First of all, it is a relationship with Christ that makes this whole Montessori journey possible. Respect for the child has been a missing element in most education. Practical life is more than washing dishes or folding cloths, it is the training foundation for all academic and personal excellence that follows. A hallmark of Montessori has always been giving children time. A Montessori classroom is more of a family than an arena of competition. Finally, Montessori is about finishing what you start and finishing well. When these six things are in place the dynamic success and life changing transformation becomes possible.

Early (really early!) I woke up (either the call of the rooster or the bathroom) and as I was thinking about the teaching I was given a totally new insight into what Christian

Montessori is all about. What makes a Montessori classroom so special is that it is a reflection of the philosophy, the care of the environment but above all it is a reflection of the teacher's heart. Montessori teaching is not a job; it is a whole way of living.

If the teacher's whole decorum sets the tone, if the teacher's understanding of the philosophy sets the tone, if the teacher's set up of the environment sets the tone, if the teacher's love for her children makes the difference – then the preparation of the teacher's heart is the most critical part of the training. That is when you begin to see that the teacher needs to have the "Fruit of the Spirit" coming out of their lives. What a difference it makes to a classroom when the teacher begins her experience with "Love, joy, peace ..." (It is the one that comes next that I could do without – patience. Wait! Wait! Maybe that is the one I need!) Then we have kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and xxxxxx. (Oh! OK. Self-control.) Maybe if I had patience self-control would be easier.

It is easier to educate the intellect than it is to train the emotional and spiritual qualifications of the teacher which are the most significant part of the work.

We began our first introductory course mid November. We had four Spanish speaking ladies in the morning and a half a dozen English speakers in the afternoon. Each session lasted about three hours. My wife is never amazed that I can talk for three hours. My aunt told her that as a child when I came to visit that after a while she suggested that I run around the two acres several times so she could have some quiet in the house. Barbara asked if I thought in Spanish. I don't think at all. (Which many of you may concur with.) What she meant was do I translate as I speak. The answer is no. It just flows. My students are even polite enough to laugh at my jokes – which my son asks if they are any funnier in Spanish than in English. My Spanish speaking students all speak English and so when I get stuck for a new word they are helpful to supply it. The other day I got stuck on a point and they said tell us in English and we will give you the Spanish word. I looked at them and laughed and told them I couldn't think of it in English either!

There is a lot of interest in what we are doing and when people come to see the environment

and we go through just even a few steps of the program they are blown away by its coherence, logic and beauty as they can actually see it. (We thank our friends at Nienhuis Montessori who have advanced us the materials to set up the training that makes this possible.)

We had a teacher of deaf children come by. She told us that she has been waiting for us for fifteen years. This is exactly what she needs. A representative from the city came by and we discussed how we could implement Montessori education in the nurseries that the city runs for the workers at the market. The challenge in all of this is to find and fund support for the training and the materials.

We have a young (everybody is young to us!) lady from the Ministry of Education who is really taken with the project. Moving large organizations is a challenge so you begin one individual at a time. From the Ministry of Education we had the head of private schools for dinner. He is supportive of our efforts. There is also a factory that has a daycare that has expressed real interest in the Montessori education. There is a lot of slow progress being made – encouraging progress.

Another highlight is that we have a carpenter who is making hands on Bible material for us. He is doing a beautiful job. Now we just need to let people know. This is something we are sure that schools and churches would like but have had to make them all on their own. One more project for the internet!

We are having an open house on Tuesday. We are looking forward to introducing this wonderful way of learning and living to more people. Pray for great attendance and interest. We will be starting our training program in January after we return from Christmas break. When people decide to give you money it is a good indicator of their true interest.

Thank you for your prayers and support.
God bless.
Barbara and Edward

Christmas in El Salvador
Christmas for El Salvador
Christmas for much of the world is a universal theme of color, display, shopping and presents and El Salvador follows to suit pretty much. However, there are a couple of main

differences. Christmas seems to start in October as the first decorations hit the stores for sale. Then the malls begin to decorate. By early November Christmas is in the air. I am always taken by the style that El Salvador exhibits. Christmas world wide decorates with beauty and color but there is always something special about the way style is incorporated. Store decorations, street decorations or decorations at home are filled with a profusion of color and design that they become works of art in themselves. And then there is the occasional jarring of Santa Claus and snow, and snow flakes and reindeer especially when the weather is a balmy 78 under the palm trees. (Sorry to all my friends in Texas with the real ice and snow.)

Christmas for El Salvador. We had an open house last night with about 18 attending. It is always an absolute delight to watch teacher's eyes light up (and their mouths drop open) as they see the Montessori classroom and experience the beauty and the coherence of this way of learning. We will be starting our training course January 13th both in English and in Spanish. It is a good probability that we will start with a dozen students. We also hope to start with two or three schools to implement the first steps of the Montessori program. We are trying to get out pictures of our environment as soon as I get some knowledgeable help. However, the environment is absolutely pristine and beautiful thanks to our friends at Nienhuis Montessori who have been working with us to create this training center. When we shipped down the container almost six months ago I asked if we could have 90 days to take care of the invoice. They graciously said take to the end of the year if you need it. Obviously, we needed it. We have been working at reducing the balance and now we are at the end of the year.

Many charities make use of the end of the year to raise funds using the incentive of tax deductions but that in of itself is not a valid reason to give. A valid reason would be that your gift would have an impact even greater than its monetary value. That is what we can offer you. In the five months that we have been here handfuls of people who have come into contact with the project have said to us that what we are doing is going to change El Salvador. That is pretty heady stuff! We are too deep in the trenches to even consider it. But it is being said over and over again and the possibility is real.

You all have been wonderfully supportive and interested in the work of this ministry and might we ask you now to make that support and interest tangible. We need to raise \$25,000. Your tax-deductible checks can be made out to Cross Mountain Forum (our 501c3 organization) and sent to 22630 East Range, San Antonio, Tx 78255 or you can go on line to our website www.crossmountainpress.com and make your donations via credit card. We want to thank you for your love and support and your gracious messages back to us as we share part of our journey with you. May you have a blessed Christmas. Love.

Barbara and Edward