

Greetings to everyone, from Maggie in Belize.

As I write this, we are still listening to / reading the news via the internet about the general election back in the UK. People here in Belize are talking about it too - and expecting me to be able to answer their questions! I guess maybe by the time you all get to read this newsletter things will be a little clearer!

At the start of March, my friend Joy came to visit, and I turned into a tourist for a few days; we went to some places I hadn't been to before, and for my birthday we went out to one of the Cayes on the reef and did some diving! It was great to have some time away and get in a bit of rest and relaxation!

Since then, it has been non-stop though. It is such a blessing to have Caroline Ely, an EEP volunteer, staying with me and assisting in the work here. She has taken over the English teaching with the Haitians, as well as doing a lot to help in getting things organised for the many activities going on here for the children and youth. Caroline will be here until September, when she returns to the UK to continue her studies.



Teaching English



Youth Forum – 'Get Connected'

In April, two of our circuits had a joint 'Youth Week' full of activities, starting with a youth service at Wesley Church, and including a Bible Quiz, a Talent evening, a youth discussion forum with around 70 teenagers coming out to discuss some of the current issues here in Belize, and giving their feedback on ways to help solve them, and make suggestions as to how they can be more 'connected' with the Church. We also had a (another) sports day -

this one in 35+ degrees in the capital, Belmopan - where it is even hotter than in Belize City.

Also in April, I was offered the opportunity to attend the 'Walk to Emmaus' through Woodlands United Methodist Church in Houston, who are strongly connected to the Methodist Church here in Belize, sending several mission teams every year, working in partnership with us at last year's youth camp, and coordinating the medical and dental teams from Texas (see www.belizemissions.org for more information!). I went on the 'walk' with another youth leader from Belize, and we both found this an amazing experience and would strongly recommend this 'retreat' to anyone who has the opportunity to go - it runs in England too. The church there also donated a lot of (used, but like new) Summer Bible School and church school materials, which we brought back with us - so we were both at maximum luggage allowance on the plane!

We have now held most of our circuit strategy planning workshops around the country, with just 2 left to do in the next 2 weeks. We have had varied attendance, but then, there is a variety in the size of the circuits; most attendees have given us positive feedback. Now comes the hard part - putting some of the ideas which have been suggested into action. One sign of hope is that it is not only those attending the workshops who are saying we need to do things to encourage more young people to get involved in the church - for which we are truly grateful. The more that everyone sees this as a vital area of work in the church, the more likely we are to be able to do something about the lack of children and youth involved in the life of the church here. And there are signs that things are beginning to happen! There is a new Young Adults group at Wesley Church, a new children's fellowship and a new youth group at Ebenezer, and Epworth Church want to start one too. Most of these new groups are very small and very vulnerable - leadership and training for leaders still needs to be addressed, but we seem to be making some progress. Thankfully, occasionally the 'work' is more like time off - such as taking the youth group for a day out at the water park!



At the Youth Enhancement Services, over the last few months, I have been helping to teach a parenting course to the teenage mothers who attend the centre in Belize City.



It's kind of different teaching to a room full of not only teens, but also their babies and toddlers - at times I get the babies to hold while the students take part in some of the activities! Recruitment is currently underway for the next year's intake at the training centre, for 'at risk' young women; the new building there is coming along great; we continue to give thanks to God for providing

ways and means for this development.

May 2010 sees the MCCA (Methodist Church in the Caribbean and the Americas) celebrating 250 years of witness and worship, so events are planned for this too, with some people from each district attending a special conference in Antigua, while the rest of us hold various activities and services at home! Every Church School is being asked to plant a tree, and we have special Church School lessons throughout May to teach our young people about their Methodist Heritage.

Although I have tried to highlight the good things happening in Belize, please remember that the level of violent crime - associated with gangs and drugs - continues, with shootings and deaths of young men now almost a daily occurrence. One of our teachers at the Methodist High School, Wesley College has been intensively involved in some research looking at male social participation and violence, and gave a presentation on this to the Wesley Young Adults group, as well as to Ebenezer Church Congregation one

Sunday morning. In at least one of the South American countries, great strides have been made in reducing the levels of violence, and last week, there was a 'violence awareness summit' led by the Belize City Council to see what can be learned from others to tackle the problems. Our young people are at risk, particularly those living close to the areas of violence, and the fear is pervasive, causing many people to stay at home in the evenings rather than go out, even to church meetings.

So, while we give God thanks for the many positive things happening in Belize, please also keep this situation in your prayers along with:-

- The 250th Anniversary Celebrations of Methodism in the Caribbean at the end of May;
- The planning for the annual children and youth camp, which takes place at the end of June, when we will again take about 140 children away for a week of activities, fun and spiritual development; for the many Belizean Methodists who give of their time and talents to assist in this venture, many of them taking time off work to become camp counsellors for a week.
- The MCCA Connexional Youth Encuentro at the end of July, in Trinidad - I will be going as one of the chaperones with the 23 young people from Belize/Honduras District;
- The children and youth strategy development and training for those working with children and youth. We give God thanks for the increased interest and activity taking place with this age group in our churches around the country;
- The many people who will come to partner with us over the next few months, helping to run summer Bible schools and sports camps for children at some of our Methodist schools around the country; to assist with our various building projects; and to bring in medical personnel to run health clinics. We thank God for their commitment, especially in these difficult financial times, and pray that the experiences gained from their visit will have a lasting effect on the lives of visitors and Belizeans alike, as we all continue to serve our Lord, here in Belize or in other places.

With love, and prayers,

Maggie Patchett

Mission Partner
serving in the Belize / Honduras District
of the Methodist Church in the Caribbean and the Americas (MCCA)

Email mpatchett@gmail.com
tel (501) 223 2610
Cell (501) 628 8004
Skype Id mepatchett

Mailing Address
John and Charles Wesley Centre
75 Albert St
P O Box 212
Belize City, Belize, Central America.