

Feliz Navidad
From Panama 2008

This is our first Christmas in **Panama!** Do we miss the cold? No. Do we miss the **snow**? Colleen does. **Do we miss you?** Yes very much!

It is certainly different hearing **Christmas greetings in Spanish**, and Christmas Carols played in different language and venue. We enjoy driving throughout the city to see the enthusiasm to which the Panamanian's enjoy **decorating their businesses and homes**. They are very creative in their expressions and spare no expense!

Christmas here reminds us how our lives changed **drastically** on January 17, 2008. **Drastic** is God's idea of **greater dependence** on him. We learned very early that only dependence on him gets things done! Here's a bit of our adventure in getting settled.

You know you are in another country when...you drive down a wrong way street because the traffic cop directed you there. Another cop stops you. He can't understand **the Spanish** you **speak**. He can't read **the passport**. You could be taken to **jail**. The process **is taking too long!** Then you **start crying**. Finally, they are so **frustrated** they let you go...happened to Colleen!

You know you don't know the language well enough when...you are all alone-- you are craving one ice cream cone with 2 scoops and you end up with two ice cream cones with one scoop on each cone—Colleen really loves ice cream!

You know you are glad to be in the place when the sales lady you meet at the furniture store wants to sell you everything, and when you actually end up buying something from her she gives you a hug! She still gives us hugs when we visit that store!!! Hug evangelism...actually that is typical Panama warmth and welcome.

You know you are getting used to driving among 1.2 million people in a small geographical area when you hold your foot never leaves the brake and you think turning your signal light on will actually help you.

You know you are needy for friends when you invite total strangers to stay at your home, and they take you up on your offer. (Canadian couple stayed with us for 2 weeks, had never met them before, but now they are like family.)

We have since learned a bit more of the language; we can now shop in the fish & vegetable markets and get the right change! We have found some wonderful Panamanian and expatriate friends that have welcomed us with open arms. We **have learned to drive** just like the "Panamanians", and **are learning** to live like them too!

To you who have supported and prayed for us daily to make this our home we thank you so very much! **Continue** to pray that we would be what God wants us to be to the **people of Panama and Latin America and Caribbean**.

Our prayer for you is that God may challenge you to "**drastic changes**"...take him up on it! It's worth the **adventure**.

Love and appreciation -----James & Colleen Gushjolen