



Dear Friends,

Greetings in the name of Christ Jesus! We are writing from Zábalo, the Cofán village where we have been invited to accompany the church leaders, work with children and youth, and support community-initiated development projects.

Zábalo is located on the Aguarico River, a four-hour ride in a motorized canoe from the nearest road. Last year the local church leader, Iter Yiyoguaje, invited us to spend more time here and offered to build a house for us next to his family's home. We have received similar invitations in other places, but this is the first time we have felt God's strong assurance. We agreed to buy the materials and Iter began construction.

We moved in on April 18 and are quickly getting settled. Iter, a talented carpenter, has been busy putting up the last boards of the outer walls and fashioning doors and a table to furnish the house. Jerrell helped install the window frames and screens. Sierra and Jordan cut a trail to the river for bathing. And Jane, Naomi and Teresa set up tents for sleeping and arranged the kitchen so that we can share meals as well as companionship with our neighbors.

Our home has become a place where children and youth congregate to share food, swing in hammocks, talk, laugh and exchange new words in Cofán and English. When they aren't at our home, Sierra, Naomi, Teresa and Jordan are running around the jungle with their Cofán friends, swimming in the river, playing soccer, exploring the area around the village, teaching new games like ultimate frisbee, and learning how to use a machete, plant a garden, pick and eat native fruits and hunt with a slingshot. In the evenings, we have begun gathering at home to play games, sing worship songs in Cofán and Spanish and, on a recent evening, carve wooden figures of boats and fish to help illustrate Jesus' ministry along the shores of Lake Galilee.





Jane spends the mornings preparing Bible stories to tell from memory to the village children after school each day. She uses small figures of people, animals and other

props, such as a pile of sand to illustrate the desert wilderness where Moses, Miriam and the Israelites wandered after their escape from slavery.



Last Sunday we gathered for worship in the Zábalo Church, an aging structure located near the school. The church stood empty for many years, lacking leadership and relevance in people's lives. Two years ago, Iter, Irene and their family sensed God's call to raise up the church and have been leading worship there each Sunday. We were encouraged by the presence of the local school teacher, his wife and her sister, as well as many children. We sang a dozen songs in Cofán, plus a few in Spanish. Iter reflected on John's exhortations to reject the desires of this world and focus on God's will (1 John 2).



Iter then asked Jerrell to share. Jerrell read Jesus' parable of the fig tree and the gardener's suggestion to give the unfruitful tree another year to live, digging around its roots and adding fertilizer in the hope that it will soon produce fruit (Luke 13). We considered how trees in this part of the world, such as bananas, are made fruitful by a process known locally as *limpieza*, cutting away the weeds to provide better access to sunlight and nutrients. We then

asked ourselves what weeds in our own lives need to be cleared to make us more fruitful.

We ask for your prayers for:

- Iter, Irene, their son Charles and the rest of their family – that they may be supported and encouraged in their calling to resurrect the church in Zábalo
- The health of Iter and Irene's ninth child, Romi, whose body has not developed in pace with his heart, mind and soul, as well as the imminent arrival of the family's tenth child
- A positive response from the community to Iter's wish to repair the church sanctuary
- The development of the youth and children we spend time with each day – that they may experience Christ's love and realize their God-given potential
- Our family, as we learn to live and work in a Cofán community

May you experience the love of God, the redeeming work of Christ Jesus and the peaceful presence of the Holy Spirit – today and always.

Jerrell, Jane, Sierra, Naomi, Teresa and Jordan