

Friday October 14, 2005

Greetings from Miami!

The first month in Miami was quite an interesting experience. On September 1st 2005, I arrived at Ft. Lauderdale airport and was picked up by Heidi Aspenwell our site coordinator for Miami. She took me to the house that I'm living in, in Little Havana. I live at 600 NW 24th Ave., Miami FL, 33125. I live with five other people other than myself. Megan Burns, who is from High Point, North Carolina; Christy Sears, is from Virginia Beach, Virginia; Delia Tobar, who is from Montreal, Quebec; Justin Jording who is from Seattle, Washington and Robert Midi from Hungary. Robert had a little problem with his visa, so he ended up coming on September 8th. In all, there are 13 people at the program. We are also with D.O.O.R (which is discovering opportunities for outreach and reflection). We all met on the first day of the program which started on Sept. 1st, we had pizza party. The other people involved in the program are Emily Miller, Amber Staley, Rachael Dyke, Amanda and Mark Miller (They are married) and Sarah and James Matickack (I don't know how to spell their name, and they are also married).

The next day, Heidi had us take the Miami Metro transportation system to figure out how to get to our jobs (sites), since most of us don't have cars. The bus system in Miami is slow and the buses are very bumpy. It took us all day to find our jobs and to get on the buses. Our last stop was to visit Justin's worksite. His worksite is in Kendall, and it is called C.I.A (it is an after-school program, serving mostly Hispanic children.) This program is in a church and we met the pastors of the church. When we were waiting for the bus at the bus stop, one of the pastors saw us and offered us a ride to the Metrorail station. He had a small car and already he had his two kids in it. We still got in the car and it is amazing how 8 people can fit in a small compact car, we definitely saw God work. When Justin doesn't have a ride to work or from work, it usually takes him an hour and a half.

Megan works as a HIV counselor at the Center for Haitian Studies, in Little Haiti. Christy works at the Miami Mission Center, Delia works at Touching Miami with Love, which is a Homeless ministry and Robert works at Riverside Men's house, which is like a halfway house. I work at Rader Memorial United Methodist Church as the Christian Educator. This is a perfect fit, since I graduated this May with a Christian Education degree at West Virginia Wesleyan College. My job supervisor is named Pastor Brett Opalinski. So far, work has been a little stressful and as people would say, I'm learning the ropes. I figure that I would feel better about my work in a few months or so. Mostly, I'm reading books that Brett gave me to read. Erin, who was in the Young Adult Volunteer program last year, was Rader's Christian Education, so Brett and the church know about the program.

On Saturday nights, all of the missionaries go to Lighthouse. This is a ministry that goes on every Saturday night at First United Methodist Church in Miami. There is dinner at 6:00, prepared by my mentor, Debbie Fisher. Then at 7:00 there is a worship service. The music is lead by Richard Aspenwell (Heidi's husband). Then after the worship service, there is fellowship time at what the people at Lighthouse call the coffeehouse. The people at Lighthouse are great people and they really care about you. When Heidi had kidney stones and went to Jackson Memorial Hospital, the people at Lighthouse came to see her. Some of the people at lighthouse have been to our houses for our housewarming parties as well.

In the middle of September, my mouth started to ache. So I went to the dentist this Monday and I found out that I had to have a root canal and the ache was not stress, which Heidi originally thought it was. My first root canal therapy was today and it wasn't as bad as I thought it was. The last therapy will be next Friday.

I celebrated my birthday on Tuesday, October 4th 2005. I turned 24. The missionaries gave me cards and a water bottle filled with candy. They gave me a cake. Other than that, it was an ordinary day, which is good because I've grown to the point that my birthday is like any other day.

I'm still asking for financial support and please keep me in your prayers as well.

Margaret A. Maclean