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February 2008



Building Relationships and Relating to the Builder

"Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. In him, the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit." Ephesians 2:19-22

As I sit here writing this newsletter, the sounds of construction are once more wafting their way to my house and ears. Such noises have become a familiar and an almost comforting background to my life over the last few months. The Lutz boys always seem to have some project going that keeps their workshop from getting lonely, whether it's a coffee table for me, forms for cement stairs for Liz, a porch for the their house or some other imaginative way to make our lives easier and more pleasant. In a land with few pre-made items and the closest store an hour and a half away, if you want it, you must build it.

I, too, have been building this month, though not the type of building that requires a saw and hammer. Rather, I have been developing a more thorough understanding of the building to which Paul refers in his message to the Ephesians, the building of relationships. Lately, I've discovered that with each new and strengthened relationship, I feel less like a foreigner or alien and more like a member of God's holy temple with Christ as the cornerstone.



Building a porch on the Lutz's house

*"Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing."
2 Thessalonians 4:11*

I have been much encouraged this month by the variety of ways in which relationships have been built up and I have been built up through them. United To Be continues to serve as a loving and supportive community for me, as we learn and work together during our weekly meetings, grow together spiritually every Saturday night during house fellowship and laugh together during movie nights and other "for fun" activities. I also enjoy visiting with the variety of people who come to my door, working with the teachers at various schools, teaching Sunday School and helping the kids prepare a variety of songs, dramas and dances for Holy Week. I've also recently begun mentoring a young girl named Sharon twice a week at her father's request. Teaching her to read in English has not only helped her English, but has also expanded my tok pisin as I try to explain the meaning of each book. I treasure our times together and am grateful that my tok pisin is now at the level that many consider me "fluent" (though I still feel I have a long way to go). With language become less and less of a barrier, each conversation builds me up in new and profound ways.



UTB House Fellowship at my house

"For every house is built by someone, but God is the builder of everything." Hebrew 3:4

This month, God has also continued to remind me that He is the builder of all things, and there are moments when I must merely stand back so that I may appreciate and learn from Him and His timing. Sometimes these moments are filled with joy, such as witnessing a more Western style wedding in Yaramanda as the vicar and his bride were joined together in marriage. Other times these moments are tender and tearful, such as being with a patient and his family at the hospital as his "earthly tent" was destroyed and he took his first steps towards "an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands." (2 Cor. 5:1) Often the moments are personally challenging and enriching, such as learning how to emotionally cope with a series of stomach ailments that sometimes inexplicably interrupt my life and ministry. Yet, through it all, I have come to realize that we can and must rely on our Heavenly Builder who gives us a firm foundation on which to stand.



Wedding at Yaramanda

