

# THE CORNERSTONE FOUNDATION

*"...the stone which the builders rejected has become the cornerstone." Mt. 21:42*

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*Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.*

**--Romans 5:3-5**

For the time that it takes to recite the passage above, I've been leaning on the *contramarco*, the door frame of the side door of the new Kindergarten building down at the El Camino School of Loma de Luz--leaning on the door frame, looking inside, and watching. I've been down here most every morning since we began construction 8 months ago, setting up the priorities of the work for the day, making sure we would have the materials or tools necessary, doing whatever was needed to move along and get it built. We just completed the building about 10 days ago, and it is a good building. Though rough-hewn, it is solid, square and true. Each person who has worked on it has done a good job, and the result is greater than the sum of its parts. But until last week, it was just a building. Last week Rosanne & the teachers arranged all the little tables and chairs, bookcases, and workstations, added books and posters, rugs, and lesson plans, and finally...children. Then, in some mystical transformation, a building became a Kindergarten, a School.



**El Camino Kindergarten**

Now like a bird on a branch, as I watch from my perch, I see teachers teaching—teachers approving of the stack of blocks of a young architect, handing out crayons to a young artist, and reading books to the young author...directing these tiny little people. I see tiny little boys in navy blue trousers that are beginning to get wrinkled and white shirts already beginning to make their way out of the tucked position. And I see tiny little girls in navy blue skirts kept prim and proper, and somehow *their* crisp white blouses stay tucked in place. Like first flowers in your garden's early spring sunshine, these tiny little people animate the building, their faces full of wonder at all there is to be learned--the books, the blocks, the paints, the stories--their hands and faces and bodies so poised and open to take it all in. From Maria, the most shy, to Carlos, the most bold, to Juancito, already taking his accustomed station in the time-out chair, the countenance of each tiny person beams trust and hope. On the face of each teacher and each little person and particularly on the faces of the last parents just leaving, I see the lines of hope drawn distinctly. I came looking for some hope. I kind of needed a dose of it to face the day.

Fredi, a fragile, one year-old patient, died a few hours ago, early this morning while the stars sang painfully beautiful songs in the firmament above the hospital. I couldn't get back to sleep after that. I lay there thinking about hope. Here is how I sorted it out to myself. There is a hope for this life--a hope for dreams to be pursued, for potential to be realized, for opportunities to be fulfilled. This is the kind of hope that Solomon refers to in Proverbs 13:12. ***"Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but a longing fulfilled is a tree of life."*** And, there is a hope for the next life: ***"Brothers and sisters, we do not want you to be uninformed about those who sleep in death, so that you do not grieve like the rest of mankind, who have no hope"*** (1 Thes. 4:13). At the Kindergarten you'll find both kinds of hope, but certainly more of the former than the latter. At the Hospital the balance is tipped in the other direction, toward the hope of the resurrection. Sometimes that's all you have to hang on to.

Fredi was 12 months old, and yesterday we had to do a big operation on him, a radical nephrectomy, for a massive renal cell cancer, a Wilms tumor. The surgery itself went blessedly well, but in the recovery room Fredi developed malignant hyperthermia, a rare but feared steamrolling metabolic meltdown. We worked on him for 16 hours to turn it around, but in the dark hours before dawn he gave up the ghost and passed out of our reach. So I came down to *the Kinder* looking for a little hope, and sure enough, the room is full of it.

There was a time when the hospital was just a building under construction, and pretty much all that I had to write about was cement and sand, re-bar and blocks. There was hardly any life going on in those buildings; and concrete and rebar alone makes for pretty dry reading. Pearl Buck once wrote, "To eat bread without hope is still slowly to starve to death." It didn't take me long to learn that writing about concrete and rebar without hope is to starve to death quickly. So I wrote about concrete and rebar seasoned with hope. It was the hope for what would be done with those buildings when they would be full of people which allowed you to choke down the concrete-and-rebar stories at all.

Now those buildings we were building, all of the buildings we've been building, have been filled with people, with life. In the same way that the kindergarten building became a Kindergarten by adding teachers & children, these buildings have now become... a Hospital, Kitchens, Laundries, Workshops, School, Children's Centre, Barns, and Homes.

Now there is no paucity of things to write about. Now sometimes there is too much. For, with so much life in a place like this, comes also so much hardship, sadness, and tragedy--so much death. I can't tell you of all of the life and death we have seen here just in the past couple of months. From the grief of the father whose son was murdered down at the bridge at Colonia Allen to the grief of the community after a family was murdered at La Quinta, from the struggles to save Kevin's life to the struggles to save Niria to the struggles to save Regi to the struggles to save Fredi, and many others... too many. It takes a toll. There has been just too much death lately. It's pretty hard stuff to make a steady diet of by itself. It has to be seasoned with hope.

So, I've been to a lot of funerals lately. And, let me tell you, there is a big difference between the passing of a believer from a family or a community of believers and the death of "*the rest of mankind, who have no hope.*" I've seen both.

Strange as it may seem, it has been the funerals of the believers, which have somehow been the redeeming grace of this hard past couple of months.

As you may know, Rosanne's father, Bob Lillard passed away here last month after being cared for here for 4 years in a persistent vegetative state. That is all a bit too close to home to write about yet, but let me say that it was the hope of the resurrection which made sense of it all.

Instead let me tell you of the funeral of Regi Pandy, the father of our friend and employee Howard Pandy. Howard has many times assisted visitors to Loma de Luz, so some of you have met him. Before we could operate on him, Regi Pandy died at Loma de Luz a few weeks ago from complications of a lung tumor. Regi's life, like all those of the children of men, had not been perfect. But after all of the hopes of youth and the hopes of this life had passed, for better or worse, he died in the hope of the resurrection, his loss grieved by a big family and a whole lot of friends.

Regi was buried where he had grown up--in the little community of "Pandytown" on the east end of the island of Roatan. We had gone over on the ferry and then driven over to Pandytown to show support for the family, particularly Howard.

The Pandys are a race of tall & handsome, English-speaking, black Island People. Their home on Roatan has been included in the Spanish-speaking, Latin Nation of Honduras by the whims of history and politics. As far as I could tell, Rosanne and I were the only people in the entire town, not related by blood to the Pandys. Certainly we stood out in that regard in the church, which was packed and spilling out into the streets with friends and family. Still, I did not feel such a stranger.

We walked from the church, and climbed the steep steps to the hillside cemetery above the bay. All the while I thought, "I know this walk, I know this grief, I'm familiar with these steps." We stood in small gatherings around the tomb while the workmen mixed the cement, and the trade winds from Africa blew the sunlight around under the trees.

While they sealed the tomb, we sang spirituals, the church sisters starting them off and holding everyone together with harmonies polished over the years:

*... When the shadows of this life have gone, I'll fly away, Like a bird from prison bars has flown, I'll fly away. ... I'm kind of homesick for a country to which I've never been... No sad goodbyes will there be spoken... There's a land that is fairer than day, And by faith we can see it afar... When His chosen ones shall gather to their home beyond the skies, when the roll is called up yonder, I'll be there.* They knew every word. As we sang, I thought, "I know these songs, I know this hope."

So, here I stand leaning on the door frame of the Kindergarten, looking in and watching these healthy

little guys so full of the promise and hopes of a better future in this life, while the lyrics of spirituals ring in my ears, spirituals full of the promise and hope for the next life, a “hope that doesn’t disappoint us.” Now it’s time to go to work. But, hey, I’ve got hope for a better day.

I pray you do too.

God’s grace & hope,

Jeff McKenney



### **In Memorium: Bob Lillard**

*As many of you know, missionary Bob Lillard died on the field at Loma de Luz in January after four years in a coma. A missionary to Italy for 33 years and then to Honduras, Bob was the husband of missionary Zina Lillard and father of missionary Rosanne Lillard McKenney. He was also a founding member of the Cornerstone Board. We so want to honor him, and I can’t think of any better way to do it than with the words below written by Zina. They are taken from a letter she sent to friends and supporters. --SM*

Dear Friends,

Over the recent years with Bob in a persistent vegetative state at Hospital Loma de Luz, people often asked how He was, and usually I have had to say that he was much the same. That fact remained true for more than four years as he remained confined to his bed and wheel chair. But now I am writing to confirm the fact that Bob passed on to be with the Lord on January 19th of a cardiac arrest shortly after his 85th birthday. He is no longer confined to a bed or a wheelchair, but must be leaping and running and praising His Lord. I thank the Lord that he died peacefully in his sleep, that he was lovingly cared for in his need, and that somehow our last years together on this earth were on the mission field in a testimony

to the sufficiency of God’s grace. I like to think of him waiting for us on our next mission field....

When Bob came to Honduras, to the second phase of his missionary calling, he wrote this poem:

*A wild and untamed mountainside  
On Colón's sandy shore,  
Where palm trees sway, where monkeys play,  
Where dark-skinned people pass the day  
With very little hope.  
He called his servants near and far  
And set their hearts aflame  
To build a city on a hill and act in Jesus' Name.  
Honduras, land in pristine state  
Where mountains soar, where rivers roar,  
And bridges built exist no more,  
They've come to show that mighty Span--  
The bridge that's built from God to man.*

So that is where Bob's remains are now....in Honduras, on the property of the hospital, in a quiet place looking out to the Caribbean Sea....

...Somehow what we shared together with humble Honduran people for the last four years was his frailty and brokenness. The gracious Honduran people responded with genuine love, and were somehow touched by the Holy Spirit. Not a few came to a saving faith as we sat there day after day reading devotions in the chapel courtyard.

One of the many passages which governed his life is found in Romans 1:14,15 *I am indebted both to Greeks and non-Greeks, both to the wise and the foolish. That is why I am so eager to preach the gospel also to you who are at Rome (substitute Balfate).* Then Bob would sum up: **“Why missions? Because I am a debtor.”**

I’ve been asked about a memorial fund for Bob, and believe he’d agree with me that for those of you who would want to remember him this way, please send your gift to the Cornerstone Foundation to help with that work. We would use the fund to rebuild the bridges which have been closed since an accident 10 years ago. Bob’s peaceful grave lies between those bridges. It all seems to fit with the closing lines of the poem Bob wrote: *They’ve come to show that mighty Span, The bridge that’s built from God to man.*  
--Zina

### **From Cucumbers to Palm Oil**

*Finca Loma de Luz (which roughly translates to Loma de Luz Estates or Loma de Luz Farms) is Loma de Luz’s agricultural outreach. Under the care of missionaries Brad and Trish Ward, this outreach is beginning to provide food and income*

***for the Hospital and Children's Centre. The Finca brings blessing to the local Honduran community as well —providing respected employment and valuable training in better and sustainable farming practices. The Finca also makes healthy food available to all nearby. The farmlands are made up of 120 acres of varied terrain producing diverse crops--from vegetables to poultry, from dairy to mutton, from bananas to African Oil Palms. As you read below a report written by Brad, I think you will see that the Finca, like the Kindergarden, is a source of grateful hope for our daily walk. Brad's words follow. --SM***

***De me un pepino (give me a cucumber)! de me un pepino!*** These are the words that ring out whenever I arrive at the greenhouse garden located just behind the Children's Centre on the North Farm. Usually the words are accompanied by five or six smiles and as many hands tugging on my shirt. That a cucumber can bring such anticipation and joy is pretty remarkable. A simple pleasure, cool and crisp, provided through a combination of planning, sowing, and tending, married to God's direction of the symphony of life in the soil and the rain.

Spring is in full swing here on the North Coast of Honduras, and the farms are literally bursting at the seams with the evidence of God's provision and blessing. The three year old oil palms, once barely noticeable against the background of tall grass and brambles, have overtaken the 23 acres that make up the North Farm--their fronds stretching out to one another as if to hold hands. Presenting their first fruits, each tree displays burnt orange colored clusters of palm kernels. Each cluster will be providing much-needed income to help maintain the physical and spiritual healing ministry of the Hospital. Down the road, on the East Farm, the two-year old palm trees are joyfully maturing through their adolescence. Joined by 200 freshly planted seedlings, they will, God willing, begin to bear fruit next year. All told, the almost 40 acres of African oil palm planted over the last 3 years at Loma de Luz have the potential to provide self-sustaining and significant income support--and possibly even eventual energy independence for the Hospital and Children's Centre.

Although oil palm production is the cornerstone of the Finca Loma de Luz farms plan, each crop and animal has an important role to play, not just in providing food and income, but also in providing nutrition, protection, and ecological balance. A case in point are the flocks of sheep and broiler chickens that work in concert with each other to help feed the palms, control weed competition, and reduce insect

and parasite problems. Our small flock of sheep has grown in the last month with the births of 6 lambs. These sheep graze the palm alleys and turn once out-of-control weeds into delicious and nutritious meat. Last month we butchered three nice-sized lambs (about 90 lbs. each), and local demand for the meat was impressive. In fact, we sold it all before Yours Truly got his share.

Behind the sheep come our pastured broiler chickens. These amazing birds grow from fuzzy little chicks to almost 5 lb. monsters in just 6 weeks. The birds spend their first 2 weeks of life in a large brooding pen and then live the next 4 weeks in bottomless pens called "chicken tractors." These chicken tractors are moved each day, giving the birds a clean environment, which eliminates the need to use prophylactic antibiotics, and allows the birds to scratch and snack on the parasite grubs that the sheep leave behind in their manure. Thus the chickens get free protein to help them grow, and our sheep enjoy fewer intestinal parasite problems.

Every 2 weeks we travel to the bus station in La Ceiba to pick up another batch of 100 day old chicks, and every 2 weeks we butcher a mature batch of 100 broilers, providing all of the Hospital's and Children Centre's meat needs and giving us roughly 200 lbs. of healthy, hormone-free and antibiotic-free meat to sell in the local community.

And so the symphony of life is performed on the farms. Our hearts sing along. We praise God for His provision. Along with all of creation, we worship Him. Like children happily calling out *De me un pepino!*, we lift our smiling faces and tug on God's shirt tail, knowing something refreshing and wonderful is about to come from His hand.

--Brad Ward



**Thank you so much for your prayers and gifts. Please keep praying. May you be blessed and praise God on the days when you “see the goodness in the land of the living” (Psalm 27: 13). And, in the hard days of this life, may you look with hope for the days ahead “where joy shall never end” in the full presence of our Good Shepherd.**

**--Sally Mahoney for Cornerstone Foundation**

