

Good evening!

Today, Sept. 7th, is the anniversary of Hurricane Ivan, which struck Grenada as a category 4 or 5 hurricane on this date in 2004. 90% of the buildings on Grenada were affected, which mostly meant they lost all or part of their roof, as well as many windows, etc. The devastation was so impactful that we still talk about events as BI or AI, which, for us, means Before Ivan or After Ivan. We watched half of our roof leave the house from our bedroom. We have a split roof. The roof was lifted off the house, like a giant was taking it off to see what was inside, and spiraled up into the air. We learned that hurricanes often have tornado events within the hurricane, and so our roof was essentially taken off by a hurricane-driven tornado. We only found out later that the only reason that the other half of the roof stayed on, was because a telephone pole had been knocked over in front of the house (many, many telephone poles were knocked down), and the steel cable that anchored it to the ground had wrapped over the corner of the roof when it fell. When we learned what had happened, we were overwhelmed with a feeling of gratitude as just one of many examples of God's watch-care over us during the storm. (That side of the house had the kitchen, our piano, computer, library - all mostly spared because the roof stayed on.)

We were without pipe-borne water for 17 days, without electricity for 3 1/2 months (the whole electrical grid had to be rebuilt), and without cable/internet for 4 months. (We were able to go to places to access the internet after a few weeks, but we didn't have it at home for 4 months.) It was 2 months before we could reopen the school (without electricity), and we were one of the first schools to reopen. But we felt incredibly protected and provided for during that time. So, yes, we do remember the date that it happened :-)

We went back to school last week. There was a controversy (pronounced kun TRO' ver see with a short o sound in the "tro") over when school should begin. Normally we start school on the first Monday in Sept., which is Labor Day in America, but not here (we celebrate May 1st as Labour Day). The Ministry of Education announced that school would open this year on the 31st of Aug., which was a Monday, rather than waiting until the 7th of Sept. The teachers' union had a big protest., citing that the Education Act stipulated that the school year ran from the 1st of Sept. to the 31st of Aug. While this was clearly referring to what would be considered the fiscal year, the teachers chose to claim it was an injustice to ask them to go back to school before the 1st of Sept. (Never mind that teachers always go back to school the last week of Aug. to get ready for the new school year.) Our teachers do not belong to the union, so that was a non-issue for us.

We are at about the same enrollment as last year - 60 students in the primary (elementary) school and 10 students in the preschool. While Miss Jessemy continues as principal (she was installed as principal a year ago), I continue to do administrative duties, such as paying bills, doing the payroll, making deposits of school fees, ordering curriculum and supplies, as well as processing it through the port and customs, when it arrives in Grenada. I also will continue to go to school 2 days a week to teach Math to grades 4, 5, & 6. (This is a supplemental class to our core curriculum.) I also set up and supervise our online reading program, called "Readmaster". Each student has to be diagnosed and assigned login information (user name and password). The program builds vocabulary, increases reading speed, as well as comprehension. We do this with the students from grades 4 to 6.

This summer Susan & I were able to go up to youth camp for a morning. (We had missed this the last couple of years as we had been visiting our grandchildren during the week of camp. The campground is at the other end of the island, about a 90-min. drive.) I did a chapel session with the campers and then Susan did an art activity with them. Of course when we go to do an art activity, we have to bring all the needed supplies with us. So we had about 40 9"x12" canvas boards, several colors of acrylic paint, a supply of brushes, and little palettes to put the paint on to make it accessible to the campers. She had them paint ichthus fish, explaining how the sign of the fish was used by early Christians and that the Greek word for fish, ichthus, was an acronym, in Greek, for "Jesus Christ. God's Son, Savior". This, of course, made it a very appropriate sign for Christians. So the campers got a little church history lesson, as well as an art experience.

I continue to regularly provide pulpit supply. On the 21st of this month I will be speaking at the Westerhall Church, and on the 28th I will be speaking at the Calliste Church. (Both of these churches are currently without pastors.)

We plan to visit our grandchildren (in Atlanta) the first week of Oct., this year. Stevie is now 13, and Krissie is 11. Since we only get a few days with them each year, the time we have with them is most precious.

We don't have fall colors here, of course, since we are so close to the equator. What we have is a very hot and humid September (September is the hottest month of the year for us, bearing in mind that it is quite hot from May to Oct., with Sept. being very humid as well as hottest) and the awareness that we are in the middle of the hurricane season. It was in September, after all, that Ivan visited Grenada :-)

In Grenada,
Reuben & Susan Mains