

First, I would like to thank you all for your support, prayers, happy thoughts, notes, etc that you have sent my way over these past many months of limbo as we have been awaiting decisions from MCC (Menninte Central Committee, the international development org/ my placement organization) and SEMILLA (the Seminary where I have been working since April 2007 in Guatemala).

And I ask for your forgiveness for my very sparse updates thees past several months - my primary excuse being that I was waiting for actual news to give (i.e. decisions to be made) before writng a newssletter! And decisions weren` t being made in the timeframes I expected. So I was in semi-hiding, or so it may have seemed.

So to recap again, as you may remember, SEMILLA, MCC and I entered into conversations in January 2008, at my request, about my position as the CASAS Director (Central American Study and Service) a program that offers language training and cross-cultural studies for university students and groups in the context and reality of Guatemala.

It is a good program, and one I believe in. But also one who needs a Directore that I couldn` t be. That was at the heart of the discussion that began those many months ago, and and on August 31, 2008 I was officially resigned from the post as CASAS Director. The Seminary`s Board decided not to hire an interim person, and so the Seminary Rector has neared himself to the program in this period of transition.

In September I worked with new a new professor (Anthropologist) for CASAS, who came to help facilitate the Fall term semester, work on a curriculum revision project we had outlined, and consider whether she might like to apply for the Director position when it came available. We spent a lot of time in conversation, and I was able to "hand over" ideas and brainstorm new ones for ways that the program could be improved for the future - new themes, visits, speakers, perhaps a new program for "professionals" as a sort of "orientation" to those going into development work in Central America or currently in human services in the US/Canada working with Latin American Populations, etc.

In September I also helped to train a new Communication Coordinator for CASAS, who had worked with MCC in Honduras and also years ago was a CASAS student, so knows the program well. He will handle correspondence, promotion, and leading and organizing the short term learning "delegations" that CASAS receives (in addition to the 3 semesters) - about 10-15 per year.

These two additions were definitely blessings to the program - as the Communications position had been vacant for three years (so assumed by the Director role), and the semester facilitation, curriculum revision and development, etc of the program have been part of the over-burdened Director role .

I had hoped (before a serious date for my resignation had been established) to pilot this idea - with the Communications/delegations position filled and the Professor/Curriculum developer role tweezed out of the Director role to make two distinct positions that would

be manageable, the Director position more sustainable, and the program to be healthier in general: students well-attended to, staff well attended to, programming and local partner agencies we visit with students well attended to, anthologies and curriculum updated on a regular basis to keep info current and relevant, and administration chaos attended to :) , etc. The sad part is I couldn't personally last to be in the Director role with the support figures in place, but hopefully it offers SEMILLA a glimpse of what could be for the future if it seems to work well in this pilot period.

In October I then shifted gears, while discussion was still in place with whether I would continue in SEMILLA in a different role or not, and focussed on putting in writing various half-done projects in CASAS, and future ideas for the program, etc. That felt good to have that time to type up and turn those items over to Willi Hugo, the Rector - hoping that it will help this time of transition , both for him, and the new Director, when I won't be around to help orient in person.

Late October we finally came to a semi-decision. The decision was basically that MCC or I or both had nixed the two SEMILLA Board's options for my continuing service in the Seminary as a full-time worker in another role (both in the "Promotion" realm).

So that left:

- a) Wrap up by mid November 2008 with SEMILLA
- b) Work on one final project for SEMILLA's board (I won't bore you with the details, but I think it's fun!), First draft due mid Nov and final for board meetings in Feb 2009

Without official approval from MCC to SEMILLA for me to work on this project, I have just been getting started on it until official word, and I just found out today that MCC, SEMILLA and I will meet to define all this coming Tuesday.

So I am finally getting to my point of this letter!

Which is, that in initial conversations with MCC, it looked as if, even if I were to end my tie with SEMILLA; I would fall back to MCC as my placement organization, and perhaps continue my term with another partner agency.

However, now, based on recent news from MCC, it looks like this will not be the case, as there is only one position open in Guatemala through MCC that they do not consider me a good fit for, so will not be asking me to apply. And therefore, that whatever end date with SEMILLA is determined is also my end date with MCC here in Guatemala.

So on a variety of levels I am reeling, and not fully aware of what this all means on a professional, personal, emotional, spiritual level. So I ask you for your prayers especially these coming days and on Tuesday when we all meet together to define my final date here in SEMILLA and with the MCC-Guate team.

With much appreciation, and prayers that you are well in your respective lives, homes, states and countries.

Paz,
Shannon