

Congratulations to Hogar grads Sara & Mario who were married on April 5, 2014! Blessings!



The 10th annual AGC golf outing is scheduled for Friday Sept. 26 at Pine Meadow Golf Club in Mundelein, Illinois. The shotgun start at noon will be preceded by lunch and registration. Awards and a silent auction will follow the golf day. For registration and further information go to: <http://www.golfdigestplanner.com/26023-10thAGCOpen>



Juan Francisco putting at Pine Meadow last year. Too much posing, he missed by a mile.

2014 Charity Navigator Rating

Recently AGC received a congratulatory letter from Charity Navigator, the well respected and leading evaluator of Charitable entities, for its 4th consecutive 4 star rating.

We wish to congratulate All God's Children on achieving our coveted 4-star rating for sound fiscal management and commitment to accountability and transparency....

Receiving four out of a possible four stars indicates that your organization adheres to good governance and other best practices that minimize the chance of unethical activities and consistently executes its mission in a fiscally responsible way. Only 7% of the charities we rate have received at least 4 consecutive 4-star evaluations indicating that All God's Children out performs most other charities in America. This "exceptional" designation from Charity Navigator differentiates AGC from its peers and demonstrates to the public it is worthy of their trust.

For further information about our rating go to www.charitynavigator.org

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For sponsorship opportunities, the history of Hogar de Niños and more information about AGC visit our Web site: www.agcltd.org

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Summer 2014

Comayagua, Honduras

Dear sponsors, friends, benefactors, and AGC Board.

Hogar Nazareth sends you a respectful greeting, wishing that God is blessing you all abundantly. All our children and youth have been in good health and busy with their classes thanks to God's blessings.

The children from Maranatha Bilingual School are already on vacation. They finished very well. We are glad that all girls and Miguel are on the honor roll.

The public education system in the country has greatly improved so children and adolescents are busier now doing homework.

All girls and teenagers who studied in Victoria and Baptist Schools, were moved to the Eben-Ezer public school. Also all the girls from the Good Shepherd program were moved to Eben-Ezer. All of them have learned a lot in the past few months.

Of the four girls enrolled in the teachers school only Nordana Alvares continues to study there. Elsa Marina Domínguez withdrew at the beginning of the year; she said that she did not want to study because she wanted to be with her family. Then Melady Monico and Sandra Chavarria, did not want to continue studying in school. We talked to them and insisted that education is very important for their futures but at the end they decided not to continue studying. Melady wanted to be with her family and Sandra continues in the orphanage, helping and learning how to cook.

Roxana Pérez, Gabriela Orellana, and Ginny Matamoros, have learning difficulties. They completed 6th grade, with grade repetition; therefore, this year we enrolled them in a sewing workshop program but they didn't do well either. Roxana and Ginny are not studying but Gabriela continues doing the best she can in the workshop program.

The university students did very well in their first semester. We thank God for them because they are using their time wisely.

The boys from the Farm began to grow corn; we hope to have a good harvest.

The girls from the Mercy and Good Shepherd project are doing great.

The boys from the Farm and girls from the Hogar had a spiritual retreat from May 23- 25. They were very glad to share with other young people from different parts of the country.

Thank you for being a vital part in the lives of our children and youth. Thank you for your unconditional support.

God bless you all
Carmen, children and youth.

"Whoever welcomes one of these little children in my name welcomes me." Mark 9:37

The American Dialect Society holds its annual meeting each January in Minneapolis. Among the items on its agenda is the selection of the word of the year (the “woty”), the newly coined word or phrase that has been introduced into common usage in the past year. Last year’s word was “selfie,” the self-taken (and generally self-promoting) cell phone photo. Previous words of the year include “truthiness,” a Stephen Colbert invention describing the degree to which a statement (usually political) achieves objective accuracy; “fiscal cliff,” the economic precipice from which we are likely to take our collective swan dive; and “Plutoed,” recalling Pluto’s humiliating demotion from planet status to that of mere oversized asteroid.

Not bad, but I have my own nomination. It’s not exactly a new word, nor very original, but I think worthy nonetheless. My woty is “grace,” for this year and any other. It’s a really good word and my favorite word. At first glance it’s simple, one syllable, a long vowel, kind of rolls off the tongue. Yet there may be no word that has more profound meanings and more varied uses. Let’s consider some of them.

We think of grace first in its common usages. It’s the short prayer we recite before devouring our turkey sandwiches at lunchtime. There is physical grace, the kind expressed in the fluid movements of ballerinas and gymnasts. Courage has come to be defined as grace under pressure, the poise and presence of mind that never falters even in the face of great danger. Good manners and high etiquette define social grace, while good penmanship (a skill that has totally eluded me) is the mark of graceful handwriting. Finally, let’s not forget the grace period we all have to pay our bills.

Then there are the theological uses of the word. I can accept grace defined as “the free and unmerited favor of God.” It seems to incorporate many other virtues like thankfulness, forgiveness, and mercy. But no one wants to leave it at just that, so we have God’s Riches At Christ’s Expense, common grace vs special grace, and Philip Yancey’s elegant definition:

Grace means there is nothing I can do to make God love me more....And grace means there is nothing I can do to make God love me less.... Grace means that God already loves us as much as an infinite God can possibly love (See “What’s So Amazing About Grace”).

The 18th Century slave trader John “I once was lost but now am found” Newton gave us the sweet sounds of Amazing Grace. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a 20th Century martyr of the faith warned us about cheap grace. C.S. Lewis reminded us that grace is the doctrine that distinguishes Christianity from all other religions. Let’s not forget about ordinary grace, the everyday caring and respect we are compelled to show others in our lives, which is the theme of last year’s best novel of the same name.

So much talk about grace, but Hogar is the place where grace has been best defined for me. It’s visible first in Carmen whose faith and fierce devotion to her children still drives this place and inspires those around her. The staff at Hogar, Buen Pastor and Misrecordia display it in their compassion for the children and the disadvantaged, and in their commitment to maintaining the daily routines that are so essential to these places. And we see it most unmistakably in the special bonds of affection and loyalty among the ninos. It’s a family.

Grace is on display every time I visit Honduras. I find it most noticeable in the late afternoons at Hogar, when our day of moderate work activity is done, and we spend an hour or two engaged with the ninos. We get to be a part of the spontaneity and playfulness that permeates the atmosphere. Clusters of children, staff, and North Americans fill the play areas. The never ending soccer game on the basketball court engages many of us, some as players while others simply watch from the stairs with ninos on our laps.

There’s lots of other activity. Adults push the youngest girls on the swings and slides, while crafts and story books spread out on the tables and benches occupy many others. Antonia and Xiamora hold court with the older girls, and clearly enjoy filling the role of big sisters to the teens rather than only being their Tia’s. Uno and other games abound, while our hard guy bus driver Dago jumps rope with giggling adolescent girls.

I think it’s a special time for God, gringos and ninos at Hogar, and a grace filled time. My son Jon described it best after his visit several years ago:

It was difficult to figure out exactly what kind of service was going on. I had no chance of framing this week as my “service” or “sacrifice” to the ninos when they showed me persistently what joy made flesh looks like. And I couldn’t understand the trip as service to God without immediately remembering that it’s also a gift from God, that affection and community abounded not only with the kids at Hogar, but also within our church group. So I was frequently left grateful for everything about the place, and grateful that every time I tried to sort out who’s-offering-what-to-whom I was instead shown the wonderful messiness of grace - that you can’t untangle who’s really offering what to whom among God, gringos, and ninos.

The wonderful messiness of grace. Let’s just call it grace, the Hogar kind.

DORIS AND CHRISTINA ENROLL AT DOMINICAN UNIVERISTY

Francisco 15 months ago, Hogar grads Doris and Christina began their year long study abroad in June. Following the course charted by Juan Both are students in the International ELS (English as a Second Language) program at Dominican University, a Catholic school located near Chicago. Both are living with families of local Hogar supporters, Doris with Mike and Margaret Jones and Christina with Joe and Kristen Baker. Both young ladies had to meet difficult entrance requirements just to be accepted into the program, which numbers 300 international students from all over the world. Even so, one of the most difficult hurdles for Christina was the rejection of her US visa application on 3 separate occasions, only to receive it, almost inexplicably, the day before Doris and her sponsor Pam DeBoer were set to depart for Chicago. A God sighting no doubt!

Al and Gert Heerema with Doris and Christina

