



From David Feikes, The Shepherd's Work

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Building Update Issue #7

In this newsletter I would like to tell you about my latest trip to Belize. On this trip I had two main goals; pour the concrete floor for the main building and finish the interior cement blocks for the first residential building. I am grateful that Adam Binkley joined me to help with the construction.



It started off raining! I was worried that it was going to be like my last trip in July where it rained for several days. However, this time it only rained for an hour and a half on the first day! After that, the weather was great with a daily high near 80° F and no rain.

For the main building we worked on the underground plumbing for a day and a half. I think I am getting better at plumbing as I only had to make two additional trips to Tai Kong to get more parts. We then put down plastic to stop the moisture from coming through the floor and 3/8-inch rebar crisscrossed one foot apart. We tied the rebar with wire every other joint!

In Belize you have two choices, you can mix the concrete in a machine and then pour the floor, this takes multiple helpers and would take about 10 hours. I decided, as I did on the residential building, to order the concrete from a concrete company, Excel. It costs a little more, but I think it is worth it!



Over half way done

We had trouble contacting the company by phone. We finally found out that they were shut down for two weeks for Christmas. When I finally got the concrete ordered, it was arriving two days before we were leaving.

They were an hour late but that is normal. We hired four extra Belizeans to help with the pour. This crew did an excellent job of leveling the concrete. We also rented a bull float and I ran that. I could tell we had a nice floor. The first two trucks were emptied without difficulty. The third truck did not show up on time. We discovered it at the bottom of the hill; broken down. This meant the drum was not turning and the concrete was setting up. We waited over three hours before it was fixed!

In the meantime, there was a misunderstanding between myself and the Belizean workers. They planned to give the floor a bull float finish. This is fine for a tile floor, but I was uncertain if I would have the money to finish the floor with tile. We tried to rent a cement finishing machine, it has three blades that spin around to finish the floor. I was shocked when the company wanted to rent the machine by the square footage of the building. I was given an estimate of 450\$ US, The Belizeans were great and got the bill down to \$200 US. I ran the machine for a while, but Abel finished most of it and did an excellent job.



The finishing machine!

When the truck finally made it up the hill, we had them empty some concrete on the side. It was lumpy and hot. We sent it back! They finally sent a new truck at 4:00 PM. I cut the concrete already poured back so the seam would fall under a wall. I am happy to say that we got a good finish on the floor with a visible seam that will be covered except in the doorway! We worked 12 hours that day!

Another incident happened that day as well. Because we were waiting so long, Adam and I decided to start working on the steel rebar for the residential building. This week was the first week we had electricity, another blessing, and I was using an electric grinder with a steel cutting blade. I had purchased a grinder in the US, but I bought the wrong blades so I was using Abel's grinder. I am impatient when cutting, and I went too fast, the grinder bounced off and cut my left hand between my knuckles. It bled a lot! The neat thing about this experience is Abel was finishing the concrete and the person I purchased the property from was watching, Mr. Ricardo Martinez. He bandaged me up. He is the same age as me, we are both seventy! I left the bandage on for two days and when I took it off, the wound was not infected. This was another blessing in Belize, and I feel I bonded with the former owner of the land. I also purchased an electronic steel cutter before I left through Amazon, and it was delivered two days after I returned to the states.

On the last day we finished the block in the residential building and cleaned out all the rooms. Please watch the following video of the building!



I also drove to Spanish Lookout, which is about an hour drive and purchased a weed whacker. The brush had grown to six feet high in many places since I left in August. Abel plans on returning and trimming the underbrush! When I returned from Spanish Lookout, my crew was ready to call it a day after the long day from the day before!

We still have a lot to do before we put the roof on the residential building. We have to pour a concrete rim around the exterior of the building and all the interior walls. We have some of the steel made. We still have to run electrical conduit through the concrete rim down to the outlets and switches and then frame the rim with wood! We also have the block to lay on the main building. Abel found a new company with better block for this building!

It was a great trip. We poured the floor for the main building and we finished the block on the residential building. For the first year, I made the offer to purchase the

land last January 2025, I feel we have made good progress. Please consider giving your support for the construction of the buildings but more importantly please keep praying for the success of The Shepherd's Work. I know I repeat myself in the newsletters, but I know that people are praying.

As I often say; something always goes wrong in Belize but it always works out. I am convinced it is because of prayer!

New Charitable Contributions Laws in 2026

The federal tax laws have changed for 2026. Now each individual filer can deduct \$1,000 for charitable contributions and married couples can deduct \$2,000 without itemizing deductions. In prior years, you had to itemize to take the deduction for charitable contributions. If you are able, considering leaving a gift to the Shepherd's Work in your will or if you have an IRS rollover that you need to spend you can donate to our charity. The Shepherd's Work is an official 501 3c nonprofit!

First Annual Gala Fundraiser

Mark your calendars for the first Gala Dinner and Dance Fundraiser for The Shepherd's Work. The event will be held May 9, 2026 at my son's residence, a former church at 3628 W. Johnson Road, LaPorte, IN. We will have an award winning Jazz band. The cost per ticket will be \$80.00 per person and will include a meal with complimentary beer and wine. If you know of a business who would like to donate an item for our silent auction, please let me know. I will send out a notification when the tickets are available! Click the link below to purchase your tickets!

<https://www.zeffy.com/en-US/ticketing/first-annual-shepherds-work-gala>

Future Plans

Return to Belize in May.

Return in late June and will spend the entire month of July in Belize working.

Planning another day camp in late July.

Math workshop for primary teachers August 3-7, 2026 in Belize.

Todos son bienvenidos a La Obra del Pastor!

All are welcome at The Shepherd's Work!

Thank you for reading!

David Feikes

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