



# Merry Christmas From Cubulco!

Dear Friends,

Before we knew it, we have reached the last month of the year and with it, Christmas! We have been in this beautiful country for 6 months already and "until here the Lord has helped us". Although we have lived here before, we are always amazed by the richness of its culture, customs and traditions, especially in the Christmas season; there is always something new to learn.

Christmas in Cubulco is a little different than in other parts of Guatemala. It is a Jesus and family centered celebration, which begins with the first Sunday of Advent and reaches its splendor on Christmas Eve. On that evening, even the poorest families have saved enough money to make or buy the traditional Christmas tamales which they will share with their family on that special night of celebration of the birth of Jesus.

## So, how is Christmas in Cubulco different?

As mentioned above, Christmas is a celebration centered on the birth of Jesus and the family reunion! Traditionally, families get together to cut down the Christmas tree and later make the decorations that will be displayed on the tree.



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## OUR LINKS

- <https://impacthope.ca/cubulco/>
- <https://centralchurchcambridge.ca/cubulco-guatemala/>
- <https://impacthope.kindful.com/?campaign=1120508>





*These pictures are some examples of the “Nacimientos” (Nativity scenes) that are on display in churches and houses. In Guatemala we have 4 major ethnic groups (Ladino, Mayan, Garifuna and Xinca). These cultures are evidenced in the representation of the Nativity.*

Grandmothers are in charge of teaching grandchildren how to make ornaments and from there these skills are passed down from generation to generation. The materials used regularly are made from recyclable waste. It can be an empty matchbox, the leaves of corn cobs, moss, pine needles and even "wild apples," (a type of crabapple which can be eaten as dessert as well). Once the Christmas tree is put up, the creativity of children and adults begins with the decorating of the tree. Recreating the stable in Bethlehem where Jesus was born, is another place in the house where families can spend time and make memories talking about Mary and Joseph's pilgrimage to Bethlehem. This particular staging is called "The Nativity".

### **The Aroma and Flavour of the Guatemalan Christmas**

Guatemalan Christmas has its own aroma. Yes, its own scent! The Guatemalan Christmas smells like a manzanilla (wild apple), pine needles and fresh seasonal fruits. Manzanilla is a golden yellow fruit that is harvested during the cold temperatures of December. Manzanilla and pine needles are twisted into a loop which they call a 'worm' of pine needles and this is used to adorn the house. This combination of manzanilla (wild apple) and pine needles is the indisputable aroma that indicates that Christmas has arrived. Almost all the houses are adorned with these two elements which convey a feeling of peace, love, and freshness.



*Homemade ornament*

In addition, Guatemalan Christmas has its own flavour. The flavours that are present on the Guatemalan table are the red and black tamales (in Cubulco the most common are the red tamales), the fruit punch, the hot chocolate and the caramelized manzanilla. On the night of the 24<sup>th</sup> the families gather together to eat and taste all the flavours of what took all day to prepare. The preparation of the Christmas dinner becomes a family affair. The entire family helps out. Some of them make the tamales, others the fruit punch, others the cakes, and perhaps that day is the only day they do not eat tortillas since the pirujo (local white bread) is served with the tamales. The dinner takes all day long to prepare because everything is made from scratch and that makes it so special, because there is a lot of effort and love put into it.

## The Posadas

As a reminder of Luke 2:7 “She (Mary) gave birth to her first child, a son. She wrapped him snugly in strips of cloth and laid him in a manger, because there was no lodging available for them”. This is what a “posada” represents. It is a vivid and didactic way to teach children and adults how our Saviour the Lord Jesus came into this world.

The dialogue, in the form of a song, that is sung while they walk from one house to another that will receive them, is based on the story of the Gospel of Luke about Jesus’ birth.

Those walks are announcing the “Good News” and tells us today too, “Don’t be afraid”, “I bring great joy to all people. The Saviour yes, the Messiah, the Lord, has been born today in Bethlehem, the city of David! (Luke 2:10-12)

*“The Holy Spirit will  
come upon you, and*

*the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the baby to be  
born will be holy, and He will be called the Son of God” (Luke 1:35)*

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### ABOUT US

We are doing well as a family. The children are adapting to the new environment and are getting prepared to go to a local school this coming year. Hopefully they will be attending in person classes in the beginning of February. Abigail, our oldest daughter, will continue with online classes. For the last couple of weeks I have been helping my brother in law fix up his old house and he moved in this week. We began visiting some families who left the church and now they are planning to return. With your donations we will restart the “chicken project” with some families of the church. We will keep you posted in our next newsletter about this matter.

Please keep us in your prayers and help us to be like Mary [we are] “the Lord’s servant. May everything you have said about [us] come true” ... Luke 1:38

### PRAYER REQUEST

- Pray for the members of the church who are coming back to worship with us again.
- Pray for our health and for the three youngest as they get ready to go to school.
- Pray for Guatemala, especially for Cubulco that more people come to know Jesus as Lord and Saviour.