Slain Canadian Missionary Leaves Legacy of Service

A body found in the country of Guatemala has been identified as that of Brian Townsend, a 64 year old Canadian Adventist, who had been working in the country of Belize. Townsend was first reported missing on December 25, 2013 after his cook found his small house broken into and Townsend missing. There were signs of a struggle and his truck was also missing. A search of the area ensued with the assistance of a local Pathfinder club and one of Brian’s three adult children, Kory Townsend, who traveled from Edmonton, Alberta to find his father.

Townsend had moved to Belize in 2004 to help with the construction of an Adventist school and church in the Valley of Peace area of Belize. After the buildings were completed, he stayed on to continue working in the local community. Kory reported, "He was doing a lot of things . . . He built a school, towards his later years he was doing a vocational school, things like gardening and a wood shop. There are few people who can live a dream or live a goal, and embrace it with the passion he had.” Kory also acknowledged his father's commitment to his Seventh-day Adventist faith and community. "This was a lifestyle for him, it was not just a project or a mission, he lived here.”

Daniel Jackson, President of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America, recalled that at his last meeting with Brian, at an Alberta Campmeeting, Brian shared his passion and joy in serving the people of Belize. Jackson reflected, “Brian was a man who loved to give practical expression to the gospel. His work in Belize is an example to us all. We mourn with Brian’s family his tragic passing and extend our heartfelt condolence to each family member.”

Townsend’s son-in-law, Dr. Ian Lund, of Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, shared some family reflections on the pain of their experience and their recognition of Townsend’s legacy, “It is hard in the midst of grief to see God at all times. When we take a step back we see how much we are blessed by God for the people that love and care for us . . . We have celebrated what Brian has been able to do in Belize and the difference he has made in the community of the Valley of Peace. I challenge each one of you to do the same, make a difference, be that close to home or far away.” (Facebook)