



DECEMBER 2020
FRIENDS OF ESQUIPULAS
c/o 1226 WEST OAK STREET
LOUISVILLE, KY 40210



Feliz Navidad/Greetings of the Season! As this difficult year draws to a close, the board of Friends of Esquipulas offers its sincere hope that this letter finds you well and in good spirits. Despite the pandemic, we have remained in close contact with the community in Nicaragua as they responded to the dual challenges of the virus and successive hurricanes. We would like to update you on conditions there.

Pandemic. Here's reason to celebrate--No cases of Covid-19 reported in Esquipulas! The relative isolation of Esquipulas and surrounding villages, and the community's adoption of WHO recommended precautions have effectively shielded them from the virus.

- The health clinic supported by your generosity and the parish radio station have actively promoted mask wearing and social distancing. The clinic continues its normal operations, and the doctor has been able to conduct clinics in the outlying villages as usual.
- The water filters provided to many families with your support continue to protect the health of families without access to safe drinking water.
- A small pharmacy offering low cost or free medicines has been part of the parish clinic for many years. The pharmacy reports a sizable increase in utilization as many people struggle with increased food costs due to the second 2020 challenge to life in Esquipulas:

Hurricanes. In rapid succession, hurricanes Eta and Iota struck Nicaragua in recent months. Although Esquipulas is far from the coast, torrential rains caused major damage in their agricultural sector as well as damage to roads. But our Nicaraguan partners are resilient! In response to our expressions of concern, they were upbeat, reporting that there were no deaths in their community, homes are intact—and they promptly gathered donations to assist the devastated areas on the Atlantic coast! Nevertheless, major crop loss has occurred in a community that subsists on its food production:

- Corn (20%) and bean (50%) crops, essential to daily nutrition, were lost
- Small scale vegetable producers of the Organic Project lost 80-100% of their crop, within weeks of harvest
- Women of the Nutrition Project, learning to grow vegetables to improve family health, also lost 80% of their gardens

In the coming months these losses will affect nutritional quality, and the ability of the Organic farmers to pay their children's tuition. But they remain hopeful amid adversity. Preparations are under way for the next planting season, and their sub-tropical climate allows two or three harvests per year.

The global pandemic may be reminding our world to always be hopeful. We can report that the Esquipulas community is hopeful, and your generosity is a big part of the reason. Technicians employed in our sponsored projects are pillars of support for the small farmers and moms growing kitchen gardens. The physician and pharmacy are major resources protecting public health.

We hope you will consider including the Friends of Esquipulas in your year-end giving plans. Through the kindness of many supporters, making gifts large and small, so much good is accomplished for very hard working, severely impoverished people. All administrative expenses are paid by our board members, 100% of your gift will benefit the people of Nicaragua. If you are able, please help us continue the blessing! Checks made payable to Friends of Esquipulas c/o the address above, or using our PayPal here: [FriendsofEsquipulas.org](https://www.paypal.com/donate/?url=https://www.friendsofesquipulas.org).

On behalf of this small community in the Nicaraguan Highlands, we close 2020 with profound gratitude for your help. May you enjoy many blessings in the coming year!

Somos Familia – We are Family!

Tina Blincoe

Tina Blincoe, Chair, Friends of Esquipulas