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**“It’s so good to be here today...”**

Esquipulas Solidarity Supper Speech Excerpts, written by Benjamin Cortas, March 25, 2017

There is so much beauty in the people and land of Nicaragua that I know I could not do them complete justice, but I will try. The places I traveled and all of the wonderful people I met during my time in Nicaragua, will be in my heart and in my prayers for the rest of my life. I know I not only speak for myself, but also for Katie and Aidan, when I say that our time working with the compassionate loving people of Nicaragua moved us more than I previously believed rowdy teenagers could be moved. By the time we were packing up, heading home from Esquipulas, Nicaragua, we were leaving a second family.

This is the kind of generosity that greeted us everywhere that we went. Wherever we stopped, people came out to greet us, sometimes singing, sometimes dancing. Some had bands who played songs for us and in some communities the little girls dressed up and performed for us. Their generosity was genuinely moving to me. Not just bound to material generosity, but also in the ways that our new friends always made us feel so welcome, and always wanted to engage with us, whether telling stories, sharing our lives, or walking us through their farms.

All of the technicians (who manage the projects funded through Friends of Esquipulas) inspired me everyday with the ways in which they walk through life. Juan Gea, Chepe, Pablo, Leo are so compassionate and loving. They have dedicated themselves to the projects. Just as we rely on them and their gracious hands to do great works, so do they rely on ours. Without our help, without our support, these projects would be incredibly hard to sustain. The projects that let the most inventive and audacious of our friends in La Enea grow tomatoes up the side of a mountain. The Nutrition Projects that allow the caring mothers of El Portón to feed their children in healthier ways, with gardens in their backyards. The projects that help guide people like Juan, who has since graduated from the Organic Project, to grow huge amounts of cucumbers up a hillside...



Esquipulas group with youth delegates and adult companions, Don Pitts, Shannon Queenan and Dawn Dones



Youth delegates to Esquipulas (l-r) Katie Dace, Ben Cortas and Aidan Grant

There was once when we were at a ‘youth encounter’, and after a long discussion and a lot of singing and dancing (a lot.), they asked if we had anything we wanted to share with them about our faith. I’ll be honest, I was at a loss. When it came to my turn, I haltingly started about our calling from God. That, while the presence of God is undeniably felt within the walls of a church, God simultaneously exists outside of the walls of a church. It doesn’t have to be about traveling great distances, it is as

simple as just helping your brothers and sisters around you that you know, or even just know about. It is about helping the God in your homeless brothers and sisters. It is about walking the journey and sharing a burden with the God in our brothers and sisters that have been marginalized. It is about speaking up for the God in our brothers and sisters who are not allowed a voice. To engage in the struggle for equality and to work for liberation from oppression, is to be Christian.

But to want to walk alongside those struggling and to help them, to know their names, to talk and share stories together and then try and help, is what makes us human and alive. By building these bridges, we allow ourselves to be moved. If we lean into these relationships, working not only for our friends, but with them, we will allow ourselves to be truly transformed in that love.



Over 200 people attended our Annual Solidarity Supper. The amount raised was \$17,130, with an additional \$18,930 pledged over several years. 100% goes directly to funding Esquipulas projects!



Friends of  
Esquipulas  
1226 W. Oak Street  
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Welcome St. Guillermo Clinic  
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An Outreach Ministry of St. William Community

## How to donate!

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## Thanks for your support!



The Friends of Esquipulas  
Board provides funding for  
internal administrative costs  
(including this newsletter) so  
that 100% of donations go  
directly to benefit the projects  
in Nicaragua! Thank you!!



### Summer 2017 Delegation to Esquipulas

This summer's delegation  
includes Meredith Doll, Tina  
Blincoe, Michael Wade and  
returning delegate, Diana  
Pantalos. They are looking  
forward to seeing the projects on  
the ground, visiting with our  
friends, meeting the new doctor at  
clinic and going to the  
community's new green market!  
Stay tuned for a report back when  
they return!



On Saturday, June 24, members of the Friends of Esquipulas Committee spent time volunteering to paint a new large public space at LaCasita Center, which provides important services and accompaniment for the Louisville Latinx Community.



FE Newsletter is published twice a year. If you would rather receive it electronically, please email us at:  
[Friendsofesquipulas@gmail.com](mailto:Friendsofesquipulas@gmail.com)