



Volume V
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The Solidarity Supper was attended by over 200 people and raised \$9,000 in cash plus \$45,000 in pledges over the next three years. See the back page to learn how 100% goes directly to funding projects!



In a Perfect World

I had the privilege of visiting Nicaragua with Witness for Peace in the early 1990's. The country had me at "hello." The people are beautiful and resilient and I knew I had so much to learn from them. Sadly, when I visited again in 2012, this time with a delegation from St. William Church, it was clear that recovery from the war years is incomplete. Because U.S. policy contributed to the country's economic poverty and political instability leading up to and including funding the Contra war, I hoped to see an equal and opposite contribution to the country's recovery and stability. It is not to be seen. Perhaps that is why, then, I feel so compelled and honored to cast my lot with efforts controlled by the Nicaraguan people themselves. It was one concrete way that I can help balance the scales – for women, for farmers, for the environment, for health, for economic self-sufficiency, for the beautiful brown-skinned people of a Central American country.

The lens through which the projects supported by Friends of Esquipulas are carried out is important. In the opening presentation to our St. William 2012 delegation, when the church and project leadership described the context for their work, they spoke of inadequate land distribution and women's empowerment and, in fact, gender equality. They addressed the crisis of heads of households leaving for Costa Rica to work. They spoke about environmentally sustainable practices and the challenges of deforestation. They are a church-based project, and their motivation for the projects is clear. They said it this way: "You can't bring the gospel to people who are hungry."

Then, in visiting communities where the agricultural technicians train local promoters, support the men and women who are large-scale organic vegetable farmers, and teach gardening skills to women with children, we met the people who work so hard to improve their lives and we heard the values from which they approach these efforts:

- In Zapotal, Margaurite's sense of class and justice was clear when she said, "Vegetables are not just for people who go to nice restaurants. They are for my children, too."
- In El Porton, Geronima talked about how the whole community was stronger because Evangelicals and Catholics were working in partnership, building trust and respect.
- The farmers from La Luna honored the work of Marta Lorena and said they've learned that women can work alongside them, as equal partners in farming and marketing their produce.
- Every person we met thanked us for supporting them, asked for our continued prayers, and assured us they **we are in their** prayers. It is so clear that the relationship is the foundation. And in this relationship, we are not the patrons and the Nicaraguans are not passive recipients.

Leonardo made this really clear for me:

We were in Zapotal and we met a group of women who participate in the nutrition project. As an ice breaker, we did that thing where you have a skein of yarn, you toss it to someone else and I think we said our name and our favorite vegetable or something, then toss to another person. There's lots of giggling and fumbling, which needs no translation... and at the end of the game, we had a beautiful web. We were taking it in, and Leonardo asked for the floor. He said, "Like our relationship with our friends in Kentucky, love does not go one way. It is not one sided. It goes both ways."

Near the end of our visit, we were eating breakfast with Marcos, our delegation translator (also resident botanist, theologian, philosopher, historian, cultural interpreter..). It was at this moment that I realized that Marcos and I were exactly the same age. But, oh my, how different are our lives! When I turned 18, I went to college. When Marcos turned 18, he went to war.

He didn't want to talk much about the war, and I can only imagine what kinds of atrocities he witnessed, what kind of deprivation he suffered. After a long pause, this beautiful man said, "And so here we are today, trying to make a new history, in peace, working, trying to get ahead, and help the people."

True enough, Marcos, here we are tonight.

Trying to create a new history.

Doing what we can to build a more perfect world.

Solidarity Supper 2016
Remarks
Maria Price



Friends of Esquipulas

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An Outreach Ministry of St. William Community

How to donate!!

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Donate with Paypal on our website:
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Thanks for your support!

Friends of Esquipulas Board provides funding for operations so that 100% of donations go directly to benefit the projects in Nicaragua! Thank you!!

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

A Note from Youth Delegation 2016

There are six of us going to Nicaragua July 21-August 5, 2016. We are (back row L>R, Don Pitts, Ben Cortas, Aidan Grant, Dawn Dones; front, Shannon Queenan and Katie Dace) very excited and honored to represent the Friends of Esquipulas as the first youth delegation. We have been preparing since January of 2014 when the group made the commitment. One unique thing about the youth delegates is that the teens will spend some significant time paired with a youth in an Esquipulas community. Our hope is to help the young people form lasting relationships, strengthening the bond between our two communities. We will make a full report upon return!



Casa Materna, Circles of Support and Kitty

Grace brought our friend Kitty to us for another Mother's Day. She brought us news of the Casa, the mothers and staff. We learned that Gladys is still spending a lot of time in Managua for health treatments. The big news at the Casa is that staff continues to develop programs that reach into the communities and provide education that improves health and life for mothers and their families. If you would like to get involved with the Louisville Circle of Support, contact peg.schervish@gmail.com



Check out the full color version of the newsletter on our webpage at <http://www.friendsofesquipulas.org/current-newsletter.html>