

Christmas Newsletter from Nicaragua

*There were shepherds living out in the field keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel appeared to them, and the glory of God shone around them, and they were terrified! But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid for I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you, **Christ the Lord**. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger."*

Dearest Covenant Church Friends:

December 1, 2010

We give thanks for you and your faithfulness in your efforts to follow Christ's example. We hope you are doing well and are helping those among you who are having problems. We know that many are without work and losing homes. It is truly a time for us to be about building God's reign here on earth around us. The Biblical literature and Christ's example in the Gospels talk a great deal about "bringing down the powerful and raising up the humble and the meek". We can help do this in the way we live out our faith in our family, our church, our community and our nation. We can influence our representatives in order to get further aid for the unemployed, another large economic stimulus package to create jobs and replace old infrastructure (but no more welfare for the banks and corporations); increase taxes for those earning more than \$250,000 a year in order to fund the other programs; pass the Dream Act that gives children of immigrants a path to permanent residency if they have graduated high school, are of good moral character, and arrived in the US as minors. The kids will have to complete two years in the military or at least two years at a four year institution of higher learning. All these things we can do to concretely bring about the reign of God right here!

We thank you for praying for us and for the people of Nicaragua as well as for your letters and visits.

We give thanks for your Covenant support, given in our names, that goes to Global Ministries to help cover the costs of the entire missionary community. We noticed that some of you had not given this year. We want to encourage you to continue giving through the ADVANCE for Christ Covenant – whether with Miguel or Nan or with another missionary. If you have switched to supporting another missionary – that is fine with us. The important thing to us is for your church to continue to be in Covenant with a missionary. This helps us have missionaries all around the globe.

We will begin itineration in 2011, probably in July. We may only have six months for this (which includes getting ourselves set up and taking some vacation time); so we won't get to visit many churches on Sundays. **Please send us the name of the person we should be in touch with to organize our visit and their email address. Thanks so much!** Our email is nanmigl@yahoo.com (l as in letter after k).

We hope you are with loved ones this Christmas season – that is the most important gift we can give ourselves and others. We are looking forward to the arrival of Nan's niece, her husband and baby as well as six of Nan's closest friends (like family). The big event for us is the wedding of our daughter Nora to Lino Alvarado on Dec. 21st!

With much love, in Christ's example,

Nan and Miguel

Miguel and Nan are your United Methodist Missionaries assigned in Nicaragua. They thank you for being in Covenant Relationships with them. Your Covenant giving helps support more than two hundred missionaries around the globe. Nan and Miguel are assigned to the Women and Community Association, San Francisco Libre, an ecumenical farm women's association whose primary focus is human rights, women's health, leadership development with women and youth, economic development with women and educational opportunities for the most impoverished young people. Some of the W&C life-giving programs are described below. You can give to them through ADVANCE for Christ #13285A, Women and Community.

December 2010

We hope you are able to continue your Covenant Relationships with us! If your church is having a hard time, please don't end the Covenant, but instead share what you can, to help sustain our missionaries around the world!



311 Families in SFL were flooded out at the end of September and most still are. All the governmental institutions are flooded too. W&C has applied to UMCOR for food aid. Women and Community bought land, surveyed the land and built 400 homes, parks, water systems, latrines, and more after Hurricane Mitch. W&C has about 15 acres left and offered this for building a new hospital, primary and high school, Courthouse, Mayor's offices, etc and lots for houses. Two recent VIM teams saw the flooding.

ELVIN PADILLA: Elvin had an operation to reduce the tumor on his cheek in November 2009. Miguel goes to the hospital with Elvin every month. The doctors are studying his situation to see if it is possible to take more of the tumor off of his cheek in another operation. We still have money in the fund for him! Thank you so much!



Elvin getting some much needed dental work!

You could make a gift to the following programs through the ADVANCE for Christ as an alternative way of giving to friends and family at Christmas!

Cows in Women's Hands



Funded by ADVANCE for Christ giving #13285A

To date, 70 women have had training in cattle-raising and W&C has made 68 no interest loans. In 2010 ten more women from the village of La Mojarrá went through the process and are finishing the requirements to get a cow. The women from the first two years now have as many as four or five animals – it has been an incredibly successful program. They feel empowered to have their own animals

titled in their own names. They are able to provide milk and cheese much of the year for their kids and as more of the calves grow they can earn money from selling cheese or they can sell a cow to cover other family expenses. **\$300 covers the cost of a pregnant cow.** In this program we also pay for a fulltime woman agronomist, transportation for regular follow-up visits and training with women about cattle-raising, nutrition and a variety of human rights issues. This is a great alternative to Heifer!!

The Youth Network for Gender Equity and Against Violence.



This program received \$8000 in 2010 from International Ministries with Women, Youth and Children, a program of Global Ministries and the Women's Division. It also receives donations from individuals. Women and Community works with teenagers and young adults in human rights education (especially gender equity, sexual and reproductive health and rights and the right to live without violence). The youth then do workshops with ten to fifteen other youth in their villages on the same topics they've learned about.

The Youth also learned to make community videos about the lives of the youth and to make radio spots to educate other teenagers throughout Nicaragua. The youth formed a municipal-wide youth network and are participating in the town council and other town commissions like one on children and adolescents. This year they did a social mapping to find out what the youth in the entire area know about their rights, including sexual and reproductive rights and the right to live without violence. This year they had a very successful Educational Festival with 350 youth and young adults about Gender Equity. They did a play, made many murals, and young people gave testimonies about how their lives have changed. They also had an interchange with youth in another area. **\$300 covers the cost of a central workshop with 50 youth. For this program you need to send a check directly to Mujer y Comunidad, SFL, APDO 4169, Managua, Nicaragua.**



Legal Advocates in a Training workshop

Human Rights and Prevention of Violence Against Women, Youth and Children (partially funded by your ADVANCE giving to #13285A, Women and Community):

This program focuses on prevention of violence against women, youth and children and promotion of gender equity. Attention to survivors of violence and the educational component in villages are carried out by a psychologist, a lawyer, a social worker and legal advocates (farm women) in each village. They also attend victims of violence who come to the W&C center looking for counseling or to denounce violence, usually by their husband, partner or boyfriend. This W&C program also trains women in violence prevention and gender equity so they can do this work in their communities and accompany victims of violence in their legal and healing processes. The team also trains teachers and students, health workers, police and others to understand the roots of violence against women, the laws that prevent and sanction violence and how to use them. There are ten mutual support groups of women in the villages that meet weekly. \$300 covers a central workshop with 50 women. \$100 covers the costs of accompaniment of 4 women to the Institute of Forensic Medicine in Managua.

Women's Clinic

(partially funded by your ADVANCE giving to #13285A):

The Clinic provides attention to women by a female physician and nurse and focuses on prevention of cervical-uterine cancer, sexually transmitted illnesses, family planning and monthly check-ups for pregnant women. The doctor and nurse attend two days a week in the W&C clinic and one day a week in different remote areas of the county. We take the pap smears to Managua to be analyzed by a pathologist. Due to years of promoting cervical screening exams we now rarely see full-blown cases of cervical-uterine cancer in SFL.

We used to pay for women to go to private clinics in Managua to have their fallopian tubes cauterized (mini-lap). This cost about \$80 per person and the women had to

pay for transportation and food, difficult for many of the women in SFL. Now our nurse accompanies an average of eight women a month to get the procedure at the state hospital in Managua for free. We help the most impoverished women with the cost of their transportation, food and some medicines.

This is the second year that the Women and Community nurse/educator (Maura Delgado) facilitated reflections with pregnant teenagers and with teenagers who gave birth in the last year. She was able to work with 40 teenagers in two different sections of the municipality covering about 18 villages in 14 workshop/reflections. The girls reflect on different topics related to their particular situation, to help them better understand themselves, relationships between men and women, relationships in their families, sexual and reproductive health, gender equity, family planning and a number of things to promote an increase in their self-esteem. The girls are some of the poorest in SFL and with little formal education. We suspect that a high percentage of the girls have experienced violence in their families and even sexual abuse, and/or with their boyfriends. One objective of the reflections is to prevent more pregnancies.

Farm women team up to make animal feed.

Nineteen farm women in a village of San Francisco Libre, La Conquista, have joined together to make feed for pigs and chickens to sell locally. With a no-interest loan from Women and Community, They now have two diesel run motors and two grinders that they are paying off monthly. W&C provided training about organization, administration, marketing and how to make feed. The women were already organized together as a cooperative and previously have received loans for planting. Although they have worked as a cooperative to get training and loans, this is the first time they have actually worked together on a project. W&C made another no-interest loan to another women's coop that will be making high protein cereals out of a local gourd seed called Jicaro. Both cooperatives are paying off their loans – but slowly, due to this year's flooding and loss of crops.

Youth Scholarship Program

Partially Supported by a United Methodist donor and by your giving to advance #13285A

This program provides scholarships and other learning opportunities for kids from impoverished families in remote villages of San Francisco Libre. The program prioritizes the children/teenagers from remote areas and from families without a dad. Girls are also prioritized since historically the families made more of an effort to educate boys than girls. This year we had 26 second and third graders from extremely remote areas; 20 5th and 6th graders from villages without fifth and sixth grade; 56 high school students and 8 college students. There are about 65% girls and 35% boys. Women and Community also provides a larger scholarship to a teenage girl, Yubelca,

who is completely hearing impaired and studies Monday through Friday in Managua. You may know that in the 1980's the deaf community developed their own sign language in Nicaragua. This is what she had to learn first in order to actually study. She is doing great!

The high school students do community service each year. This year they continued to tutor grade school children in their villages who are having problems. Gloria Mayorga, the staff person who coordinates this program, also visits the students who are having problems in school to try to find out what is going on and help them out. Often the student and family will meet with our psychologist.

Every month Gloria facilitates training workshops with the high school and college students. Every other month she facilitates workshops with the parents. Next year we hope to have more money for college scholarships



5 of the College Scholarship students

We believe that education is the key to just about everything. A well-educated population will be able to find solutions to their problems.

Women and Community, San Juan de Limay (*funded by gifts from United Methodists and United Methodist Women*) To give to this program send a check to: *Mujer y Comunidad, APDO 4169, Managua, Nicaragua.*

This program provides training on gender equity, empowerment, self-esteem, violence, sexuality, reproductive rights, sexual rights, etc. with village women in San Juan de Limay, a remote municipality by the Honduran border. Two trained women are available in an office every day where women and youth with problems of physical, psychological or economic violence (child support) know they can come for attention and accompaniment.

The Little Snails School in the Managua Market (*funded by United Methodist churches and individuals*)

This program serves children who live in this impoverished and dangerous area and who would

otherwise probably not be in school. There are three levels of preschool; First grade and an accelerated primary education (first-second in one year, etc.) for older kids and teenagers. The kids get their education, a hot lunch, and some medical care. Some of the kids are children of kids who grew up on the streets in the 90's (the height of neo-liberal austerity measures), sniffing glue. The teachers have had study scholarships for three years.



First and Second graders at the Little Snails School

Baseball Academy “September 14th”



14th of September Little League Champions for the first age level (8,9,10)

Funded by United Methodist Individuals and Churches (To give to this program you can also send a check to: Mujer y Comunidad, APDO 4169, Managua, Nicaragua).

This program provides training in baseball for kids from age eight to age fifteen and supports baseball teams with equipment and uniforms. It also covers the cost of the umpires, record keepers and upkeep for the baseball stadium and grounds. The kids play year round on teams. Half the year they play Williamsport Little League and the other half is a Nicaraguan Federation. Coaches participate in workshops every two months to help them improve their relationships with the kids. Most of the kids are from poor families and have no father-figure present thus the coach plays an important role in their lives and in their development. The majority of the kids are from impoverished families who have family members with alcohol and drug-related problems. Playing baseball is one of the few bright moments in the lives of the children. In 2010 27 teams (432 kids) played ball and received some kind of support in training, uniforms, equipment, etc.

Association of Consumers of Masaya ACODEMA

(Receives a small amount of funding from United Methodists, mainly for their radio program)

This is an amazing group of dedicated people who counsel over 20,000 people a year about their consumer rights and especially problems with electricity, water and phone bills. In 2008 they helped 5,417 individual claims and 117 collective claims. They won 85% of these claims which means that people had heavy debts reduced or wiped out and services improved. They have a daily radio call-in program where they teach about consumer rights. It's the most popular radio call in program in the department of over 300,000 people.

There is a need for consumer associations in Nicaragua because of the privatization of both communications (telephone) and electricity. These previously state-owned companies were extremely profitable and the profits went to benefit the people with education, health and other social programs. As part of the Washington Consensus privatization mandate, the state was forced to sell them at fire-sale prices between 1992 and 2002. Once they were in the hands of transnational companies (part of the electricity generation went to ENRON) prices increased and service decreased. The motive changed from public service or utility to private profit. The private electric company, Union Fenosa has scammed people in many different ways. People owned their electric meters. They forced new meters on everyone and charged them for this. They charge people in poor neighborhoods for street lighting when there isn't any.

Please remember your Covenant church giving as well as donations to these special projects. For the projects ask your treasurer to make the check to your conference, earmarked for ADVANCE 13285A Women and Community, and add an extra note specifying the project. Or you can go to United Methodist Church, ADVANCE, and make an online donation to this number. Thank you so much! Remember, if you want more pictures, just ask: nanmig1@yahoo.com

