

ST ANDREW'S

LUTHERAN CHURCH AND CAMPUS CENTER

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April 2013

SPRING NEWSLETTER

Spring Break Trip Edition

As the sun set and the village grew quiet, we sat together on wooden benches on a small porch huddled around a simple candle with the buzz of the cicadas in our ears, and wondered...

Where did you see God today?
What were your highs and lows?
What do you affirm in members of our team?
What do you understand differently about poverty? About yourself?
Or...What were your noticings?"

During Spring Break of 2013, eleven of us, including eight students, experienced a people and a culture very different than our own. Yet after seven days of being together through work, play, conversation, prayer and challenges, we also discovered that we weren't so different after all.



Eleven crew members represented St. Andrew's on the Nicaragua spring break trip in March.

We traveled to Santa Emilia and LaFlor, Nicaragua, on a trip to "Explore Partnership: A Global Exchange Trip." The primary goal was to know our global neighbors in these mountain communities. We learned about their culture, experienced daily life with them and heard their struggles, hopes and dreams. We visited, worked with, and learned from women who have micro-credit projects, elementary and high school students, subsistence farmers, and community leaders. We helped to build latrines and a pigpen for 2 families living in critical poverty. We worked together as we helped the director of JustHope evacuate from a mountain trail with a broken leg. And, we played, hiking the beautiful mountains, swimming in a waterfall, and observed a "sloth" just hanging out.

And each evening, we wondered. Each evening we reflected and talked. Each evening we deepened our learning, prayed and realized that partnerships are really about our connections, our respect and our shared hopes. We came to know the truth of what Jesus taught us - "where two or three are gathered together in my name, there I am among them."

Please read the reflections of each participant and experience just a glimpse of our amazing week.

~Pr Elaine Olson

Nicaragua Reflections

Ashley Peterson- "One thing I learned a lot about



over the Nicaragua trip was strength. As we heard the stories of the women in the microcredit project, I was struck by how difficult it was just to make a living. These women were fully aware of the struggles they faced, yet they all told their stories with smiles on their faces, joking with us, and overall expressing great joy in their lives. Even

beyond the microcredit projects, I saw joy and compassion in almost everyone we talked to, which surprised me. I learned that it might take work to make a living, but it takes real strength to stay positive when the circumstances are working against you."

Ashley is a sophomore in bioengineering.

Stephanie Slania- "I learned the true meaning of value this Spring Break. After spending a week in Nicaragua, I realized that the things I valued weren't as important as I once thought they were. Witnessing all of the interactions in Nicaragua, I noticed the one thing that mattered the most was family. It didn't matter if they didn't have the newest iPod or the most fashionable outfit, all that mattered was that their family was safe, healthy, and happy. This made me realize that maybe I took things like family and relationships for granted, that I should focus on connecting with others and the other things don't matter as much. In the end, family is the most valuable thing we have and my trip to Nicaragua reaffirmed that."



Stephanie is a sophomore in bioengineering.



Ross Cooper- "Looking back on all of the misfortunes we came across in Nicaragua, I notice how we all came together as a team, worked things out, and carried on. Whether it's here in the US at the airport or in the middle of the Nicaraguan mountains-

that's what we as Christians do. Often times it doesn't even matter if we speak the same language. It is our common bond through God that links us. As Jesus said, 'For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them,' and I think that's what the trip was all about."

Ross is a junior in Global Studies.

Marin Thompson- "My week

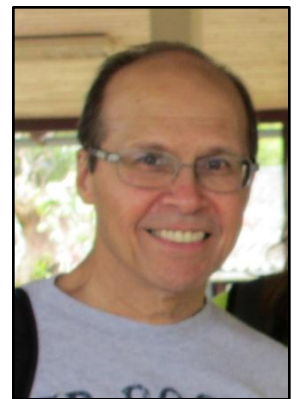
in Nicaragua was a time of renewal and new meaning. I particularly found special new meaning in the phrase 'give us this day our daily bread.' It's a simple line, and one that I have prayed countless times in my life without giving much thought. But a few days into our trip, I was struck by the idea of daily bread and just how important it is. For one week, we ate as a community for three meals a day. We ate together as Nicaraguans and Americans, as Spanish speakers and English speakers. The chatter and laughter mixed and moved beyond language barriers. Our food was simple rice and beans and tortillas, but I always found myself looking forward to mealtime. We had food for our bodies and companionship for our hearts. Eating simply, in order to refuel our bodies for more hours of work, made me realize that when I ask God for my daily bread I am asking for the nourishment I need to survive. I've been fortunate enough to receive my daily bread every day, and I am extremely grateful for that. But I'm also grateful that I had a week to take the frills away from food, so that I can better appreciate that God has given me what I have asked for without any thought."

Marin is a junior in economics and statistics.



Terry Haru- "The

brochure said that the people of Santa Emilia and La Flor have desperately few material resources, but that I may be overwhelmed by their warmth and hospitality. I was. And amid the challenges and hardships of their extreme poverty, I witnessed an abundance of resilience, humor, and pride in what they could accomplish with what they had. I was humbled and filled with the wonder of the human spirit regardless of circumstance. I went to Nicaragua on a trip and came home from a journey. I haven't been quite the same since; for I



now give more thought to the things that are truly important and am less bothered by the things that aren't."

Terry, a community member, works for CCO Heritage Behavioral Health Center in Decatur, IL.

Colleen Roth- "While in Nicaragua, I pondered



one thought in particular: how amazing it was that all the events of my life had lead up to me being there that week, in the state of mind I was, surrounded by the people I was. What was I thinking when I chose to study Spanish in sixth grade? Certainly not that I would one day be speaking it almost fluently with our

Nicaragua van driver, Juan Pablo, all week. What was I thinking when I went on my first mission trip? Or when I chose to attend the U of I? What was I thinking when I decided to start going to service at St. A's? I could not have predicted that those decisions, among others, would lead me down such a blessed path to where I was that week. My week spent away has inspired me to be more willing to take chances and experience new things. It has not only taught me to be grateful for all of the physical things I have, which seems to be a classic answer after an experience with poverty, but really more so to be grateful for my life experiences, my family, my education, the good and bad times that have helped me to grow, and for the love that surrounds me every day, for the blessings that matter most, even if everything else fell away."

Colleen is a sophomore in pre-nursing.

Erik Kountz- "There were many lessons that I learned on my trip to Nicaragua, but the most



important thing I learned was the importance of togetherness. One thing that most showed togetherness was when we had lunch with some high school students. There we talked about our families, our favorite subjects, and most of all our dreams for both ourselves and our countries. I learned that although we live thousands of

miles apart and speak different languages, we share much in common about where we want our lives to go. This similarity showed me that we could truly become friends and not just acquaintances. The other time I vividly saw togetherness was the

next day, right after Leslie broke her leg when we found out that one of our translators was in an accident and our driver and other translator left for them and our group was alone. Though we had no idea how bad the situation was, dealing with it as a group was much better than dealing with it alone. There I also began to see how we were growing together as a group. These connections between us as a group and our group to those around us continued that whole week, and so I learned much about togetherness and want to keep these valuable lessons with me in everything that I do."
Erik is a freshman in physics.

Paige Crutchley- "This past Spring Break, I got the



joy of returning to Nicaragua with JustHope. Two years ago it was the meaning of partnership, and what a blessing that is, that struck me the most. This time, I was reminded of the value of human connections. I also realized that by putting value in those relationships, I could let go of some other "stuff" I valued. The people of Santa

Emilia and La Flor did not have a lot of material things. However, I saw many people living lives full of joy and purpose. These were people who valued their family and their community."

Paige is a junior in integrative biology and religious studies.

Matt Clayton- "One of the many things that struck me in Nicaragua was the music culture. Everywhere we went, I could hear music in some form. Since I want to go into music education, I asked the school leader if they had any music education. He said no, but they wanted to. In the US, we have many music teachers, but are cutting down on music programs. In Nicaragua, it's the opposite. They don't have teachers, but they would like more music education. I used to think when I graduated with a degree in music education that I would have to struggle to get a job. It gives me hope to know that there are still people out there who would like to learn this foreign language called music."



Matt is a member of the community and Walmart employee with a passion for music.

Cindy Shepherd- "What I want to remember:

I listened, determined to get the sense of what was being spoken. I spoke, my tongue struggling to enunciate the few Spanish words dredged out of my brain. It seemed to help to watch the faces and the hands of the person who was speaking, so watch them I did, my eyelids narrowed in concentration, while patiently (always so patiently) my Nicaragua hosts shared their stories. What a gift it is when two people are able, against all odds, to understand one another."

Cindy is a pastor at Philo Presbyterian Church in Philo, IL.



We are so grateful...

Thank you for your prayers, good wishes and financial support.

Thanks for the generosity of the local congregations, family, and friends of the 8 students who traveled together.

And thanks for financial gifts from:

Peter and Kelsey Keefe

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Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, Champaign

St. Andrew's Board of Trustees

Lutheran Student Movement Scholarship

To God we give you thanks and praise.



Scholarship for Byron

During lunch in the school, Byron and Ross sat head-to-head, one speaking English, the other Spanish. Each was trying to learn the language of



St. Andrew's raised funds for Byron Martínez (above) of LaFlor, Nicaragua to attend college.

the other. Each sat listening and worked to affirm the other with trial and error, hand gestures, and much laughter.

Byron Rafael Zeledón Martínez is the recipient of the scholarship St. Andrew's gives to the village of LaFlor and is in his second year of college. He helps his grandfather on a farm during the week and then studies at night and

goes to classes on Saturday. We partnered with Byron for many of the projects during the week, including building latrines and talking with students in the schools.

We ate meals together,

swam, played card games, and engaged in many one-on-one conversations. It became a language school for members of St. Andrew's as well as for Byron. We promised to support him for another year, raising the \$600 for tuition.

And...

Your continued financial help makes it possible for students to participate in faith formation experiences and faithful service doing God's work with our hands for the sake of the world.

Please consider helping with a financial gift of \$100 or more to the annual fund of the Center.

And even more importantly, we covet your prayers for this ministry and God's presence in the life of those who walk and work on this campus.

~Pr Elaine

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