Many of you have been asking, so let us start this newsletter with an update on Nicaragua as we understand it.

From our perspective and that of those we work with and serve, the unrest is not as restless as it once was\(^1\) and yet, the U.S. Embassy has kept the travel alert level high. This has prevented many delegations from traveling here to volunteer and learn.

In September, there was violence at one opposition rally and a 16-year old boy was killed. One of the government’s responses to the murder was to require that all marches, demonstrations, etc., get a permit before events and if announced that if organizers did not get permits, then people would be arrested.\(^2\) When 20 plus people were arrested for demonstrating without a permit, they were released the next day and so far – at this writing – that teen was the last death that we know of due to the unrest.

Bishop Silvio Báez, the auxiliary bishop for Managua, was recorded calling for the “death blockades” [roadblocks] to be put back up, the execution of Pres. Ortega, and being willing to even work with “abortionists, homosexuals, drug traffickers” and anyone else to overthrow the government.

Some have said that the recording is a fake, but Báez admitted to a reporter that it was a private meeting and “unfortunately someone recorded it.” 500,000 people have signed a petition to the Vatican calling for the Bishop to be removed from his post.

There have been people jailed. How many depends on who you believe. According to the police, over 200 have been jailed for certain, waiting trial for violent offenses such as arson, looting, rape, murder, and torture.

Where we are, things are calm. We have heard that police will stop people and check for weapons and bombs…but in our area, most people want the government to work again to improve their lives…and that is because our area is full of the poor, who have benefitted over the years from positive actions the government has taken to reduce poverty.

People ask us when will the travel alert be lifted? In our opinion, one of two things will have to happen…either Pres. Ortega or Pres. Trump will have to leave office…neither event do we see happening soon.

The U.S. House of Representatives has passed the NICA Act which would prevent international loans coming to Nicaragua, despite the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and the United Nations having praised Nicaragua for its social and economic work. The NICA Act would also require the Nicaraguan government to hold early elections and would increase involvement of U.S. intelligence agencies in Nicaragua. The NICA Act is currently in the Senate. Pres. Trump has called for Russia and China to block all aid coming to Cuba, Venezuela, and Nicaragua.

Some folks also ask us, “How can we help Nicaragua?” Our simple answer is to let Nicaraguans decide their future and allow Nicaragua and all Third World countries to be treated as the sovereign nations that they are.

We from the U.S. are furious that Russia played a role in our elections…we need to not follow Russia’s example but instead stand back and let Nicaraguans decide their own fate; because as you can see, it is the poor who are suffering and who will suffer more with sanctions.

**COPROEXNIC, the organic cooperative of farmers, is continuing to work and make progress, though slowly.**

Barring a late season hurricane or torrential rains, the crops are growing well.

Global Partnerships is renewing their financing contract with COPROEXNIC for another 3-year cycle. The government, which owns the sesame processing plant building, has said that they will give COPROEXNIC a 3-year lease of the building…we are not holding our breath.

The squatters on the sesame plant land have been moved. No one was hurt. The squatters did cut all the eucalyptus trees down that absorb much of the grey water from the plant.

We are investigating the possibility of marketing sesame oil and we think that realistically we can maintain the shipment of one container of sesame a week.

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\(^1\)For more information and background: http://jhc-cdca.org/2018-crisis-in-nicaragua/

\(^2\)For those of you who have never participated in marches or demonstrations in the United States, permits are required. The purpose of permits is to protect the public and those marching. Civil Disobedience is a time-honored approach to change, but it does result in jail. Mike, Sarah and Kathleen have all been arrested multiple times in the States for violating laws as we acted according to our conscience.
Health Clinic:

The clinic work is continuing, though on a lower budget. Our orthopedist, Dr. Luis Perez, retired in order to work more in Panama. As with other staff members who have resigned or retired this year, we are not replacing Dr. Luis because we have instituted a hiring freeze so that we do not have to resort to laying people off during these difficult financial times for the CDCA.

Volunteers are vital to the work of the clinic. Besides the $100,000 that delegations would have contributed to our budget annually, we are also short at least $50,000 in donations of medicines and supplies, which is why we were happy to have Sharon who came and worked with us in September and October when her church delegation cancelled.

And we were thrilled to have Dr. Owen return, an ob/gyn who has been coming now for 14 years as well as Dr. Bill, a pediatrician who sees disabled children. These people come with the Alaska brigade (though Bill is from Iowa).

With them were also Veterinarian Pam and Nurse Practitioner Wendy, who spent the week with the folks at El Porvenir, the coffee cooperative. Pam worked with their animals as she has for many years, while Wendy did triage to get things ready for Owen and Bill who went up the mountain to join them at the end of the week. Wendy also placed birth control implants and took PAPs. This was the first medical care the people in this remote, rural cooperative have received on-site in eight months, since our delegations quit coming.

Our new mothers’ support groups continue and are growing again even though our prenatal care has dropped (the government provides this service). We continue to provide early cancer screening through PAPs and we continue to provide birth control implants and IUDs.

We are anxiously awaiting the arrival of our donated x-ray machine, coming thanks to Dr. Pedro Cordero and Mano a Mano, as well as Peaceworks.

Our dental clinic continues to be full of ORPHANetwork feeding center children, coming from miles away as well as nearby, and other people who cannot get dental services from the government as it has had to cut costs. Our dental intern’s time is now up, but we will have a visit soon from Dr. Dirk who started our dental clinic.

Our chronic care patients continue to receive their medication. Our eye glass clinic still operates three mornings a week. Our counselor sees clients, especially children. Our laboratory evaluates tests. Our pharmacy continues to serve people, although we have cut down on pain medication.

Dr. Elizabeth goes into the community and does anywhere from 75-90 home visits per month, while our lay health promoters have welcomed and treated about 6,000 people in their own homes so far this year!

We keep on keeping on, but we need consistent help. We need you to give monthly if you are able, because our patients are now getting poorer and poorer with the loss of minimum wage jobs, cost of food rising, and the uncertainty of tomorrow.

Casa Ben Linder (CBL), a relatively new project, is hanging on...getting just enough to cover most of its costs. We have been hosting art workshops like water colors (in the pouring down rain) and glass bottle painting. We have had a few guests in the Air BnB section, mostly Nicaraguans.

We are receiving memorabilia for the museum from the 1980s when Ben Linder, an engineer, came to Nicaragua during the Contra War funded by the United States and was murdered by the Contra along with two Nicaraguans, Pablo Rosales and Sergio Hernandez. They were developing a hydro-electric plant for the town of San José de Bocay on the Honduran/Nicaraguan border.
JHCommunity:

We welcomed into our community Samantha Kathleen Murdock Saballos, born the 24th of August to Claudia and Daniel. We all love to hold and rock her.

Sarah went to California to speak about our work. She made good contacts with some Rotary Clubs and we are hoping that an ultrasound machine might be donated with their help.

Becca went to Colorado and New Mexico to speak as well. A silent auction was held for our work and at other events she encouraged people to be involved.

Mike and Kathleen spoke at Bucknell University, Lewisburg, PA, on Solidarity, Sustainability, and International Civic Engagement. They received a Global Engagement Award on behalf of the CDCA, the first ever given.

Much of the planning of this event was to help the CDCA’s work through funding as well as to share our thoughts. We miss our friends at Bucknell. This school year marks their 20th anniversary of sending brigades to the CDCA. Unfortunately, with the U.S. travel alert remaining high, they will not be sending brigade in 2019, so instead they brought us up to them.

THANKS TO ALL WHO HAVE SUPPORTED THE SPEAKING TOURS AND OUR TRAVELS.

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Thank You from Nueva Vida Clinic patients
Bucknell volunteer and kids

REFERENCE:

During this unrest, we hear the word “solidarity” bandied about rather loosely. What is solidarity? What does it mean to be in solidarity with others? How does solidarity play out?

I want to reflect on this from two different starting points. The first for those who do not consider themselves Christians and the second for those who specifically call themselves Christian.

A famous and poignant definition comes from the Australian Aboriginal educator and activist Lilla Watson, who said, “If you have come to help me, you are wasting your time. But if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together.” That is true solidarity, working together towards a shared liberation.

When we consider that our own liberation is tied up in the freedom of others, then we approach solidarity in a whole different way. To be in solidarity with others, we must shut up and listen. We cannot be in solidarity with the disenfranchised, the poor, the oppressed if we get defensive. We must not get defensive, but listen openly as Ben Linder did and was loved because of it.

One clear example of not listening is when the Black Lives Matter movement gets changed to an All Lives Matter slogan. If we, white people, cannot hear the pain and the plea for justice, for equal treatment, for simply living while Black…then we are not in solidarity…we are in denial, defensiveness, and just plain wrong.

Another recent example is instead of listening to the pain of sexual assault survivors, we turn around and worry about our sons, husbands, etc. Let’s acknowledge that we are far from being in solidarity with victims and are instead on the side of the perpetrators.

Being quiet…speaking last or not at all…is the first act of solidarity.

The next act of solidarity is taking our cues from those who are poor and oppressed. It is also how we ourselves become liberated. We empty our minds to learn new perspectives on reality…many that just might save humanity from extinction.
We who come from privilege tend to be focused on our own individual freedom instead of community-based cooperation. We tend to work alone instead of together...the poor must work together, or they die. Whether we realize it or not, working together is reality for all of us now with climate change and threats of war.

The third action we need to take to be in solidarity is not to cut and run when it is no longer easy. We on the left throw the word “solidarity” around willy-nilly but when push comes to shove we, more times than not, run. We do not stand with those who need us with them. In running, we lock our own self-made prisons even more tightly.

If we truly work in solidarity, we might save us all and for sure we will begin to find our own liberation and make incredible friendships.

For Christians: Most of us believe that the birth of Jesus was the birth of God Incarnate. This year as we celebrate the birth of Jesus, let us remember the Incarnation was the ultimate act of solidarity by the Divine with us. In the Incarnation, we believe that the Divine chose to be born poor, become an immigrant, preach good news, heal the sick, spread hope, chose to live without a home or family, and chose to die...never knowing if the death of Jesus, the man, would also be the death of the Divine.

God’s solidarity with us was literally fleshed out in the person of Jesus.

If God was willing to risk all to understand the heartaches, the humanness, the joy, the pain, the sickness, the horrors we as humans endure even unto death, then we who call ourselves Christian must respond in solidarity with the poor, the oppressed, the disenfranchised.

In this Christmas season AND all the rest of our lives, we cannot be inhospitable to refugees and immigrants. We cannot ignore the pain that people of color endure just because their skin color has more melanin than ours. We cannot oppress people different from us. We must give to the poor. We must lift the downtrodden not walk by them. If the Immortal Divine could risk death, then who are we, who call ourselves Christians, to do any less?

Solidarity is our God-given grace and responsibility.

-Kathleen

If you missed Giving Tuesday it is not too late to help. http://jhc-cdca.org/givingtuesday/

At the CDCA we work with people who struggle every day just to meet their basic needs... and in our work, we are struggling to continue helping them. Because our diabetic patients, patients with high blood pressure, children with asthma, etc. can’t survive by taking their medication just once a year, we need your ongoing support.

Our goal is to double the number and amount of recurring monthly donations that we and our patients can count on all year long.

Yes! To help in this time of ongoing need,
I want to support the work of the Center for Development in Central America.

Enclosed please find my tax-deductible contribution of $_________ for ______________________________ (designation if desired)

Please note: you can also give online via https://donatenow.networkforgood.org/jhc-cdca and mark your donation “recurring” if you can.

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For faster delivery of your gift card, please email all orders to: Sarah@jhc-cdca.org.

Mail to CDCA, c/o Donita Miller, 420 Longhorn Dr., Rock Hill, SC 29732-8886.

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