

Dear Friends and Family,

We hope you are finding joy in this Christmas season. I know for us, as for many this year, there have been lots of struggles along the way and unexpected changes throughout the year. We had a much longer summer than we expected since the school was making adjustments for how to offer classes in the classroom and online. We had plans to travel to Mississippi to visit my family, but our flights were cancelled and it is too expensive along with too many unknowns for us to consider other options. While we are all sad about this change in our plans, we are each finding joy in staying in Nicaragua for Christmas. From buying our first real Christmas tree, making a Christmas chain, planning a getaway with some friends to looking forward to celebrating with Thomas' family, there is joy when we look for it! Of course the real reason for the season, **Jesus**, is the best source of joy we can have. I have a feeling that that first Christmas looked very different than Joseph and Mary would have imagined, and yet God had it planned down to the smallest detail. So when our plans look different than we might have imagined, it helps to remember that the Creator of Christmas has it all planned down to the smallest detail.

For my scholarship students, this year has been very different than any of them would have imagined. It has been a tough year as many of them struggle to have access to constant internet making online classes very difficult. Three of the first-year students stopped studying because they didn't understand the classes, and it was difficult to communicate with the professors to ask questions. They hope to start again next year but so much is up in the air. A majority of the students persevered, and five students are in their final coursework towards graduation! In the midst of numerous setbacks and difficulties, they have been grateful for the blessing of having their schooling fully funded.

For my kids this school year has been very different than they imagined. Over the summer we weren't sure if classes would be online or in the classrooms. The school went to great lengths to prepare a healthy and safe environment for the kids and the staff to be in the classrooms. I know all of my kids have enjoyed being able to go school to see their friends and learn from their teachers in person even if it meant wearing masks and trying to stay socially distanced. This semester, while different in many details, was a huge success considering all that we are dealing with.

Since so much looks different than I usually imagine it to, I'm having to trust even more that God has it all planned down to the smallest details. For 15 years I have been watching God move in people to give towards education in Nicaragua. In what has been a difficult year economically for so many, I'm praying for God to continue moving people's hearts to give towards buying school supplies for over 600 Nicaraguan children and youth and to help scholarship 45-55 university students. The church in PA that has been supporting this endeavor for 15 years is continuing to raise funds; however, they decreased their goal by \$5000 because they were unsure of how much people would be able to give. In January I will begin budgeting based on the funds I receive. My hope and prayer is to still be able to offer full scholarships to those who currently have them, give out full bags of school supplies (instead of reducing the amount of notebooks given) and be able to offer 4 to 8 new college scholarships. Would you consider giving a gift this Christmas to a Nicaraguan child for his/her school supplies for the upcoming school year? Or for a recent high school graduate to make his/her dream come true in being able to go to college? I thank you in advance for any gift that is given towards this program knowing that you are a part of God's planning down to the smallest detail.

Merriest Christmas from our family to yours and may you have true joy this season!!

With love,

Thomas, Amanda, Samantha, Anthony, Nicole, Sofia and Alexander Gutiérrez

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