

December 2021

Dear Friends and Family,

We hope this finds you and all of your loved ones enjoying a wonderful Christmas season. This will be our second Christmas in a row in Nicaragua and while it is only a little bit chilly here, we have enjoyed singing Christmas songs in the car, decorating the house and remembering Who this season is all about. Life has been quite normal and good this year despite our crazy experience with Covid (see separate letter) and the overall effect that Covid has had on life in general plus the increasing political problems in Nicaragua.

In January we packed up over 900 bags of school supplies and continued another year of offering 49 university scholarships and 24 other scholarships to children in grade school. Thankfully, the scholarship program was fully funded again this year thanks to some very generous individuals and the faithfulness of St Paul's Methodist Church. As the political and economic situation here continues to worsen, there will be more need for school supplies for the 2022 school year. What a blessing it has been for the past 16 years to be a part of helping Nicaraguan children and youth by providing school supplies and scholarships. Please pray about possibly giving towards this program during this month of December!

I also continued to volunteer throughout the year with Word of Life in teaching English. I enjoyed helping young adults take their English to the next level. The curriculum was easy to use and provided for a fun learning environment. Covid definitely affected the program throughout the year in a variety of ways, but thankfully we were able to finish the year well.

As for my family, we are all doing well. Thomas continues to enjoy working and teaching at Nicaragua Christian Academy as well as coaching the high school girls' soccer team. Samantha is in 8th grade and enjoys playing on the basketball and volleyball teams and was in the school musical last year. Anthony is in 6th grade and continues to love playing soccer. Nicole is in 3rd grade and enjoys playing with her friends and doing creative things. Sofia is in Kindergarten, loves to draw and recently has taken an interest in gymnastics and is working on perfecting her cartwheel. Alexander started PreK1 this Fall and is loving his classmates and his teachers.

For the first time in 14 years I have no kids at home. I have enjoyed having my mornings free, but between teaching English and paying scholarships I have found plenty of ways to fill them up. One of the new activities I have recently gotten involved in is teaching a woman how to sew. My aunt gifted me two sewing machines this summer in order to be able to teach. For now I am starting small by working one on one with Ana, a lady who has always wanted to learn to sew but did not have access to a sewing machine. I have loaned her one of mine, and she has really enjoyed learning as well as practicing in her own time. Each time we have gotten together I bring a different project that she can learn to sew such as a drawstring bag, a zipper pouch, a large tote bag, etc. One day I showed up and she had sewn 25 drawstring bags that a missionary friend had asked her to make! I'm excited to see where she goes with her new sewing skills. My hope is that I can give her a sewing machine and then continue to use my travel ones to teach other women.

As we approach the end of the year and Christmas is just around the corner, here are two items on my Christmas list that would bless others here in Nicaragua:

- Donations to the scholarship program to continue providing school supplies and college scholarships to those who cannot afford them.
- Donations towards buying 1 to 3 sewing machines to give to women who have taken an interest in sewing but do not have the resources to buy their own. Ana would be the first recipient.

As we approach Christmas and the end of the year may you take time this season to reflect on the love and greatness of God. May you enjoy His peace that truly passes all understanding. And may you be filled with the eternal hope that He gives in His son, Jesus Christ.

Merry Christmas from Nicaragua,
Thomas, Amanda, Samantha, Anthony, Nicole, Sofia and Alexander Gutierrez

