

Nicaragua

February 2013

Mission Trip Journal

Members of Fifth Avenue Baptist Church travel to Nicaragua in February to provide medical care to the children of Remar Orphanage and surrounding communities. Read their daily journal below!

Day 1

February 9, 2013

By Kay

Our trip started with a cold, beautiful morning in Huntington, and our flights to Atlanta and Managua were smooth and uneventful. As we left the Managua airport, we were greeted by the warm, soft breezes of the Central American weather. The Hotel Contempo is a beautiful, modern facility. After a good night's sleep, we were treated to a sumptuous breakfast with fresh-squeezed juices. Watermelon juice is quite delicious. YUM!

This will be my fourth time visiting Nicaragua, but the excitement of being here never gets old. It has been great to see old friends and realize we truly have built lasting relationships through missions. God has great plans and knows the future; we just need to trust Him.



The medical mission team prepares to depart from the Charleston airport. The group arrived safely in Managua late Saturday evening.

Day 2

February 10, 2013

By Nancy and Jessica

What to pack for a mission trip? This being our first mission trip to Nicaragua, in fact our first mission trip anywhere, we spent the weeks prior gathering as much information as we could about the things we would need. We had our list: passports, a Bible, insect repellent, lightweight clothing, and an English-Spanish dictionary. (We had the last item covered, as Jessica's first language is Spanish!) So, we had what we thought were the essentials. However, we learned in just the first 24 hours of reaching Nicaragua that we had brought far more important things on this trip. Our team was rich in experience, love, and compassion – and the Spirit of God.

We had the wonderful experience of sharing Sunday worship with the children of Remar and people from the local community. God was celebrated in prayer, music, and dance. We didn't have to speak the same language to worship together. We communicated with our hearts and souls in praising our shared God. We found that the most important thing to pack is an open mind and an open heart, both ready for God's filling.

Note from Laurie

At our evening debriefing and devotional, Ann N. told the story of a family of ducks who made their home at Remar. The mama duck has seven or eight ducklings – and one baby

chicken. Apparently, the chicken egg got mixed up with the duck eggs; and when the egg hatched, the mother duck considered the chicken as one of her own. This chicken is blissfully ignorant that he is not a duck. He is just one of the family, even though he is different. We are all like that family. We may not look the same, we may not have the same background, and we may not speak the same language – but we are all part of the family of God. We love each other, we accept each other, and we don't notice differences, because that is what family does.

Day 3

February 11, 2013

By Marc

Today began with yet another beautiful sunrise. After a hearty breakfast at the hotel, we traveled to Remar to organize the day's activities. A medical clinic was organized in a classroom, staffed with our workers taking vital signs and examining the children and adults from both Remar and the community. Eye and dental clinics were arranged in the adjacent classroom.



It was reassuring to find the children and adults in generally good health. With the exception of a few difficult cases, we found that many of their ailments are the same ones that we struggle with ourselves on a daily basis. We realized that a few

simple recommendations, some reassurance, and a smile went a long way in making these people feel better about themselves. Those who remember the poor health of the children 10-12 years ago should be comforted about the changes that have taken place due to the efforts of previous trips.



Craft stations were organized for the children. Visors were decorated, bracelets were crafted, and games were played. It seems that the kids find the most enjoyment in these activities. Creating something that they can call their own really seems to do wonders for their sense of happiness and overall well-being.



The day at Remar concluded with distributing greeting cards packed with photos to each child from their sponsoring family. While the crafts and games provide a source of fun and enjoyment, the cards and family photos give these children a sense of family and belonging. Watching the children clutch these seemingly small gifts and carry them everywhere all day only confirms that.



Our day concluded with dinner and a devotional time with reflection on the events of the day. The overwhelming opinion was that real change has been made over the years with these children and this community. Our group is extremely thankful that the efforts in Nicaragua have continued over the years. This is a

testament not only to those who are able to travel to the area, but also to the entire church that supports the effort in all other ways. We are thankful because of the impact that is clearly evident.

With that, stay tuned for the days to come...



The girls of Remar loved reading the kind words of their sponsors!

Day 4

February 12, 2013

By Debbie

As part of our medical team, we had the honor and privilege to visit with Dr. David Parajone and his wife, Dr. Laura Parajone, founders and directors of AMOS (A Mission of Sharing), a non-profit medical mission that provides medical and preventive health care to many Nicaraguans not only in Managua but also in 27 rural centers scattered about many remote regions throughout the country, with five more planned to open soon. We learned how God was instrumental in putting the Drs. Parajone together with the facility they were given and how He has provided medical missionaries from all over as well as funding from a variety of sources. We learned that the thrust of AMOS, taking a cue from Mother Teresa, is to be Christ to people by meeting them where they are, ministering to their health needs, and empowering them locally by organizing local health committees, providing lay medical training, and bringing people together in ways previously unimaginable. As proof of their success, the infant mortality rate in one community has been reduced by 50% in just three years.

In addition to the rural program, AMOS also has an urban clinic with a beautiful outpatient surgical center scheduled to open soon, as well as guest houses and dorm rooms capable of housing 40 volunteers. We have many potential exciting opportunities for medical mission work with AMOS.

The medical team regrouped in Casillo de Ortega, a barrio within Managua, setting up an on-the-spot clinic with a couple of tables and 10 chairs, four physicians, an optometrist, two nurses, two priceless assistants, and three invaluable interpreters. Amazingly, things moved like clockwork. About 25 patients were seen in an hour, some with serious medical issues, others benefiting from a dose of reassurance and simple medical advice. It was certainly a lesson in being flexible and trusting God to provide.

Another group within our mission team traveled to a small, poor barrio in Managua. We bagged up 400 pounds of rice and beans to give out in a small church. Most of the families we met were single mothers and their children. They were so appreciative, and we felt blessed to be able to help them. The pastor asked if we could do a medical clinic, and on the spot we arranged for our doctors to come there.



After leaving the church, we went to Huembes Market. Some shopped for souvenirs, and others purchased medicines, a stove, and a refrigerator for the orphanage. We finished the day with a wonderful dinner at a mountaintop restaurant.

We continue to feel God's guidance and His hands at work. Many times a need becomes known to us, and it is almost immediately answered. For example, while filling bags with rice and beans, one half of our group started running out of beans. Someone said, "Don't worry, God will work it out." A few minutes later, a person from the other part of our group which was across the

street came in and said, “Here, we had extra beans left over!” God is good, and when we let go and trust Him, He will provide.



Day 5

February 13, 2013

By Jane

“This is the day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.” -Psalm 118:24, NIV

After last evening, when we dined on the terrace of a local restaurant, overlooking the distant city of Managua with its night lights twinkling like thousands of stars, we were brought back to reality today.

We loaded our bus and a pickup truck and began a two-hour drive to Leon. Leon is a jewel of a city, the second largest in Nicaragua. It is noted for its beautiful Spanish-influenced architecture and a historical cathedral that is a major tourist attraction. Leon

also where the older Remar boys live, in a place called Josue Home.

After our long, crowded journey, we drove into the yard of a public elementary school located near Josue Home. All 27 of us emerged from the bus and pickup truck wondering what we would find in the few hours we were there for our medical mission. At first, we were shyly greeted by over 50 young school children dressed in their traditional navy and white uniforms. They gradually became more comfortable with us and laughed and happily played around us. We quickly rearranged classrooms into medical, dental, and eye examination stations and then took over another classroom for the children to engage in various crafts such as making beaded jewelry, coloring, and braiding bracelets.



It was a heartwarming experience to observe how active young children were willing to wait in line for several hours just to have



a chance to be examined by our medical team. Each child received a physical exam by a physician, a dental examination by our team members accompanied with instructions on the importance of brushing

their teeth regularly, and a thorough eye examination by our eye doctor who also did a visual assessment. We decided at the end of our five hours at the school that this group of children was basically healthy and normal.



We were joined by the seven boys from Josue Home for very late pizza lunch in Leon. We completed our Leon mission by stopping at Josue Home to see what changes have occurred since last



year's visit. We were happy to see that many improvements have been made possible by special donations of money and support as a result of our mission trips. We were especially excited to learn that all of the boys are now enrolled in school. This has been

one of our dreams, and God has answered that prayer! Since today is Ash Wednesday, we conducted a special communion service with scripture readings and a message about the meaning of Ash Wednesday as an introduction to Lent and the coming of Easter.



On our way back to Managua, we said goodbye to our translators, two of whom were young men that we first met as young children at Remar. How wonderful it is to see how they have become

fluent enough in English that we could have this special time with them as members of our mission team.

We arrived back at the hotel at 7:30 and prepared for our final dinner in Nicaragua. Following a delicious dinner with all 20 of us forming a circle, we spoke movingly about what the trip has meant to us and what some of the special “God moments” have been for each of us. Some of the experiences had a humorous quality to them, and other experiences were extremely emotional. We laughed and cried but agreed that God blessed us by giving us the opportunity to be His hands and feet in this special mission that we as a church began 12 years ago. What a journey it has been, and what a blessing it has been to all of us at FAB who have participated through our physical presence, our prayers, and our gifts, but mostly our caring enough to try to make a difference in the lives of these beautiful children of Remar!