

Pastor Kory's Page

Faith Lutheran Church, Sioux Falls, SD

August 30 & 31, 2014

Reflections from our Medical Mission Trip To Nicaragua

Where do I begin? Perhaps with a reflection I posted to Facebook after our final day of clinic:

"Sometimes pictures speak louder than words. Sometimes they don't. Here are some words that come to mind, in NO particular order, to give you just a bit of the emotional picture of our last day providing medical care in Nicaragua:

Bittersweet. Enlightening. Tears. Ibuprofen. Laughter. Hearts. Hands. Shoes. Vitamins. Fanta. Maracas. Lozenges. Volleyball. Desperation. Deceit. Disappointment. Satisfaction. Friends. Team. Mission. Love. Progress. Opportunities?! Encouragement. Kick the ball. Family. Mangos. Trade. Broken. Body of Christ. Labels & stickers. Crayons. Students. Vicar. Increasing poverty. Follow-up. Su papel. Breezy. Heartbroken. Impressed. Rationing. Hygiene. Sanitation. Unemployment. Hunger. Dedication. Impact. Translator friends. Gifts. Goodbye. Faith. Van. Luggage. Roadhouse. Leftovers? Grateful. Grateful. Grateful. Relieved. Changed. Possible. Vision. Dreams. Wouldn't trade it for the world. Only the beginning. And our only Savior, Christ The Lord."

These words probably don't make a lot of sense as you read them – there's even a *tiny* bit of Spanish in there! But to those of us who were blessed with the experience of serving in Granada, Nicaragua earlier this month, those words speak loud and clear!

The thing is, people tend to ask, "How was your trip?" and I tend to respond by saying something like, "Do you have a whole day to hear about it?" That's the kind of life-changing experience our mission trip was for those of us on MOST Ministries Team #1421. So as not to make this Pastor's Page as long as an entire newspaper, I'll try to hold myself back to just a couple observations.

You and I are Incredibly Blessed – I really didn't understand just how much of our daily life we take for granted: clean water, ample clothing, air conditioning, excess food, toys, hobbies, top-notch healthcare, employment, peace, retirement, government/charitable assistance, and SO much more of the daily bread and the incredible bounty that our Lord showers upon us in this land.

Our Nicaraguan Neighbors are Blessed – The people of Nicaragua are our neighbors. On top of that, they also became our friends and our inspiration. Despite everything that is stacked against them in their country, many of the people we met were faithful, resourceful, creative, joyful, and eager to learn. The pastors and deaconesses of the fledgling Nicaraguan Lutheran Synod are

hardworking, bold, and determined. They feel blessed to work together with their sisters and brothers in Christ from the Lutheran Church of Canada and the LCMS and from MOST Ministries' teams, yet they are boldly moving forward with the work of Christ's Kingdom as well, as they have already expanded their outreach into neighboring countries, aspire to establish Nicaragua's first Lutheran school, and show no signs of slowing down their mission work!

Eric's Story – The young man pictured with me in front of the school where we held clinic is Eric. Eric has better-than-average English skills. He pitched in around the clinic and was helpful to me several times. Eric was born with a disability in one of his legs (it drags as he walks). We also noticed the large stab wound on the left side of Eric's face. At 16, Eric is the oldest of five children. He's completed his education, and as someone with a disability, probably has no real prospects of finding work (unemployment in Nicaragua hovers around 50%).

Eric is my friend. It was difficult to say goodbye and tears are forming even as I type. Eric received my witness bracelet (and also my well-worn Cardinals cap!) and he traded me a plain black bracelet, one of several he wore. I encouraged Eric to continue to use his English skills to serve, and who knows, he might find some work. In our parting words I reminded Eric that we'll see one another again. He wasn't sure what I meant so I said, "Eric, you trust that Jesus died to take away our sins right? So we're both going to be with him forever." Then Eric understood ... I probably won't get to see Eric again on this side of eternity. But I do know that the pastor and vicar in Granada will be following up with him and his family and inviting them to their church. So Eric is in good hands ... I couldn't save Eric from the terrible situation in which he lives, but I take comfort in knowing that Eric is in our Savior's hands.

Thank you for your generous support and especially for your prayers for this year's team. To God be the Glory! **- Pastor Kory Janneke**
P.S. – Don't miss our team presentation, Sun, Sept 21 at 9:15 a.m. in the Christian Life Center!

