

My first experience with short-term missions was in 1991. Until then, I had never traveled outside the US. In a decision largely prompted by my wife, I signed up for a short-term missions trip to Germany. That decision would change the course of our lives.

As a result of that decision, I became deeply involved in short-term missions work in the Reformed Episcopal Church, culminating in my family's move to Germany in 1997.

Does this mean that if you go on a short-term missions trip you will inevitably move to another country? No! But if you do go on a short-term missions trip, you may be changed in ways that you could never foresee.

How? I'm glad you asked me that!



## **ARE SHORT-TERM MISSIONS WORTH IT?**

### ***The Value For The Sending Church***

The first, perhaps the foremost value is for the sending church. I've been asked "wouldn't it be better if we just sent money, instead of spending it on airfare?"

Over the last 30 years, it has repeatedly been demonstrated that short-term missions trips, rightly managed, are very profitable for the sending church. While it's true that the experience of our family is not typical, it's not completely atypical either.

It is a characteristic work of God's Spirit to change us as we are willing to work for Him. Some call it "going outside of your comfort zone." Peter calls it something else. He says that faithful obedience makes us effective and fruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ (see 2 Peter 1.8 and context). In other words, the Spirit of God particularly

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works in those who are willing to work for him.

This is true for all sorts of godly servanthood. Alpha Evangelism, visiting shut-ins, working in the inner-city, raising godly children, foster parenting – any way in which Christians are working as a healing influence in a broken world can change those who are serving.

Put differently, when the church acts like Jesus Christ commands, then the church finds itself increasingly conformed to His likeness (see 2 Corinthians 3.12-18).

While leading the short-term missions committee, I attended several seminars that

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addressed the value of short-term missions trips. What I learned statistically – that it is a good idea for the sending church – has repeatedly been confirmed by what I have experienced. Actually, many agree that this outcome alone (the profit for the sending church) is sufficient cause to be involved in short-term missions.

### ***The Value For The Receiving Church***

The sending church's profit is not the only reason short-term missions trips make good

sense. Short-term missions trips are also a way to encourage and help the receiving church.

When the sending church has a true “missions mindset” and its people are prepared to be flexible, humble servants, the receiving church consistently reports good outcomes. As mentioned above, those who are “sent” are truly enriched by their experience and those who “receive” are similarly enriched.

The logical question is “how can that be when there may be lack of experience, a language barrier, or significant cultural differences in the way?”

I can only say that when the sending church builds a trusting and trustworthy relationship with the receiving church (and the receiving church does the same), then one sees the meaning of the phrase “the whole is greater than the sum of its parts” in wonderful brilliance.

Here’s an example of what I mean. It is a common mistake for short-term amateurs to let the “project” (a customary part of a short-term missions experience) become the purpose for the trip. If the project falls short of expectations or fails, then the trip becomes a failure. The sending church feels like it wasted time and money. The receiving church may feel defrauded of an expected outcome.

But when the project is only part of the mutual relationship, whatever the planned work might be becomes a means for achieving far greater ends and longer-lasting goals than erecting a roof or clearing brush. The results then become independent of the project.

- Relationships are sealed through prayer, meals, sweat, humor, hardship, and shared vision for next year’s trip.
- The trip next year becomes a richer and more productive event, because of the trust and common vision carved out last year.
- By small steps, the “bang for the buck” literally and spiritually becomes ever greater.
- Spiritual growth takes place.
- The detailed questions about whether we have enough hammers evolve into deeper questions about developing the next generation of leaders.
- One may even find that the local pastor can help the sending church in some way that no one foresaw.

- And as a consequence, a short-term missions trip can almost never be considered a failure for either the sender or the receiver!

### **ST. JOHN’S WORK IN NICARAGUA**

So, is there value in our work in Nicaragua for us, the sending church? That’s easy to answer. Just talk to someone who has been there!

Is there value for the receiving church? That is also easy to answer. Pastor José would quickly acknowledge the importance of our eight years of commitment, financial investment, personal friendships, and mutual affection for each other.

And we can amply testify about the fruit we see. We see those who have increasingly taken leadership in the local churches. We have seen how our few dollars have been used in great ways, including saving lives, providing needed infrastructure, and encouraging education in a country in which the literacy rate is just under 68% (compare 99% for the US).



I went to Nicaragua this year in order to get answers to questions, especially looking for information about certain theological concerns. Those questions were more than satisfactorily answered. I also went with an open heart to see what the future might look like in Nicaragua for St. John's.

As a result, I have no doubt that the last eight years have borne fruit both in the sending and receiving churches. I am confident, if the Lord wills, that the coming years will continue to bear fruit and even more so as our understanding and expertise improve.

### WHAT'S NEXT?

So what's next? Looking beyond this summer's trip, there are several items we need to address.

- 1) The first item is continuity of leadership. Chris Freisheim's leadership has been extraordinary. But we cannot lay the sole burden of the future of this work on his shoulders.
- 2) We are exploring the idea that some special skills may especially be helpful in Nicaragua. We're still exploring this idea. If you have a specialty of some sort that you believe may be useful, come talk to us.
- 3) We strongly believe that the congregation's broad involvement in missions will be vital for our spiritual health as a church. We are not saying that a short-term missions trip to Nicaragua is a necessity! We are saying that this work is one of several excellent ways (don't forget Alpha!) by which God can grow you up in the faith.

**Secondary/High School Students**  
Rider Jose Gomez  
Eyling Elizabeth Romero Vargas  
Wilber Javier Mejía  
Carlos Mario Rios Estrado  
Josseling Sarria Tellez  
Maria Isabel Delgado Gomez  
Zailing Magali Orozco Meza  
Tamara Romero Vargas  
Hernan Tellez  
Josué Martínez Vargas  
Jessica Balmaceda  
Angelo Morales  
Celia Vargas

4) The clergy, the lay leadership, and the Missions Committee are working to find the right "product mix" for our missions endeavors. Outside of the US, we have identified Nicaragua and East Africa (particularly Tanzania and Rwanda) as priorities. Domestically, we need to give better attention to our communities and to "equipping the saints for the work of ministry" to those communities.

Please pray about all of these things.

### LAST THINGS

Above all, we cannot lose sight of the foundational purpose for mission work, wherever and however it may occur.

- 1) The Great Commandment says that we must "love the Lord our God with all our heart and with all our soul and with all our might" (Deut 6.5).
- 2) And our love for God is chiefly demonstrated by obeying the Great Commission, "loving our neighbors" by "going and making disciples of all nations" (Leviticus 19.18, Matt 28.19).

Brothers and sisters, this is "Knowing Christ And Making Him Known!" This is what St. John's must be about!



## Now Comes The Moment of Truth... By Ben Cramer

This month's *Evangelist* is all about St John's continuing mission to Santa Maria, Nicaragua. You've read firsthand accounts, perspectives from the clergy, and seen our students. Now comes the moment of truth. *How will you respond?* This kind of question is generally a great opportunity to guilt people into action—but I will not do that because God may have other plans for you. What I will ask is that you pray. Pray that God will show you how to respond. You will not know what God wants unless you listen.

There are many ways God may have you involved with our mission to Santa Maria. Here are a few:

**Come:** God may ask you to come to Santa Maria this summer. If God is leading you in this direction, start the discernment process by requesting an application from Benjamin Cramer and by talking to folks who have been on the trip before. The application will help you along this path of knowing God's plan for you this summer.



**Donate:** God may ask you to support the trip through a donation of funds or possibly airline miles (American or Continental). These funds will help cover the cost of the summer mission including travel, food, and supplies. If God is leading you to donate, please contact Cindy, or place a check in the offering plate with the note "Nicaragua Summer Mission Trip."

You might also consider a future sponsorship of a Student. \$20 a month may sound small to us, but it can change a Nicaragua family's life. This money enables our teens to study, rather than dropping out to earn \$4 a week in a factory or on a farm. UNICEF recently

stated that student programs like ours are currently the most effective form of foreign aid in Nicaragua. Contact Chris Freisheim for further information.



**Advocate:** Tell someone about your experiences in Nicaragua or the work we are doing. God may be calling them to participate.

**Pray:** God's plans are always richer, deeper, and more Christ-like than we anticipate. Pray for the people of Santa Maria. Pray that we will hear His voice and join in His work. Pray that Jesus Christ will touch the lives of both our team members and those to whom we minister this summer.



Whether God calls you to Santa Maria this summer, ask Him, and listen for His calling. If you have any

questions, please contact me at [benjaminacramer@gmail.com](mailto:benjaminacramer@gmail.com).

*Ben Cramer for Chris Freisheim and Mark Rudolph*

## Faith in Action By Lisa Gentles

On Saturday February 4, a group of over 20 St. John's parishioners participated in Faith in Action's quarterly service project at Sunday Breakfast Rescue Mission. Everyone was able to serve and enjoy fellowship as we worked together with staff in cleaning, carpeting,

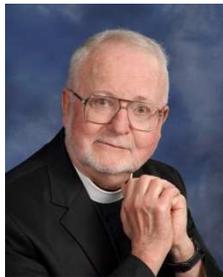


sorting food, leading a worship service, and helping to serve lunch. Perhaps the highlight of the day was when we got to sit down and break bread together with the men we came to serve, and ended up getting blessed in the process. Looking forward to more opportunities to put feet to our faith alongside our brothers and sisters in Christ!

*Lisa*

## *Miracles and Providence* By William C. Kenney

Many of us, when touched by a catastrophe, have called upon God in prayer for him to provide some immediate, miraculous rescue. We may have done this even when we have grown very infrequent in our prayers and grown skeptical about any solid results. We could explore this topic of our attitude toward miracles much more, but I want to draw your attention to a related topic that is often neglected.



That topic is providence. Unlike God's dramatic miracles, God's providence is typically un-dramatic, coincidental, unseen by us while God is doing it, and thus appreciated by us only much later, if then. Providence does not happen at one particular occasion, as a miracle would. Providence unfolds gradually through long stretches of time usually. Occasionally, we can catch glimpses of providence while it is at work in our personal lives. We need to be asking God for these glimpses and disciplining ourselves to receive them. They are wonderful sources of encouragement.

However, God's providence does not shield us from disasters, pain and sorrow. Instead it incorporates such things into a

unified whole in our lives that leads us toward spiritual maturity and deep blessing.

St. Paul put it this way: "All things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to his purpose." He was reflecting on his life experiences involving much trouble and suffering on his part. God was weaving these things together providentially in his master plan to bring the abundant goodness of Jesus Christ to all humanity.

William Cowper put the same matter this way:

"Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take;  
The clouds ye so much dread  
Are big with mercy, And shall break  
In blessings on your head."

"Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,  
But trust Him for His grace;  
Behind a frowning providence  
He hides a smiling face."

"His purposes will ripen fast,  
Unfolding every hour;  
The bud may have a bitter taste,  
But sweet will be the flower."

"Blind unbelief is sure to err,  
And scan His work in vain;  
God is his own interpreter,  
And He will make it plain."

*From Hymn No. 310 vs. 3-6*

*Bill*

## *A Day at the Beach: Our time in Nicaragua*

Written by Chris Freisheim

A day at the beach to many of us seems like a normal occurrence. A quick trip down the AC Expressway has us "down the shore" in about an hour and a half. But the trip I write about today is quite different. This trip began in 2005. I was not sure I wanted to go.

I was not sure what I had to offer. I was not sure how I would communicate. I was not sure about what I would eat. I was not sure why I said I would go.

I went. Then went again, and again, and again and again. And I still go...to Nicaragua... twice every year. I drive the streets of Managua. I shop in the open air market. I negotiate prices. I shower under a single stream of cool water. I eat rice and I eat beans – I don't eat the cheese however! I sleep under a mosquito net. I speak the language. There are certainly nicer places to use my vacation days, but I am sure there is NO better way to use my time and the gifts that the Lord has and continues to bless me with.

This January marked my 13<sup>th</sup> visit to Nicaragua, a country just north of Costa Rica in Central America. Mark Rudolph, Ben Cramer and I departed on January 25<sup>th</sup> from Philadelphia International Airport. This trip was a bit different in that



we wanted to evaluate the ongoing ministry, and ensure that St. John's ministry in Nicaragua continues according to God's will. We wanted to ensure that we were continuing to serve the church in Santa Maria in a strong partnership. We came away from the trip with a greater sense of clarity to continue in our current ministries. Praise God for this clarity.

We arrived in Managua, the capital of Nicaragua, around noon. As is normal procedure, we were greeted at the airport by Jose Domingo Lara, the faithful pastor of the Verbo Church in Santa Maria. He has been making the one and a half to two hour drive to Santa Maria almost every weekend since the establishment of the community in Santa Maria following the mudslide in 1998 which

killed almost 3000 people. It is always great to see his face on the other side of the glass from baggage claim. We know



we are taken care of once again. After getting our bags, getting through customs and immigration, we are on our way in the rental truck to Pastor Jose's house. There we load up the rest of his family and some other faithful servants to make the journey to Santa Maria, passing lakes, volcano's and fields, stopping on the way to exchange money, buy groceries and eat dinner.

We finally turn off the Pan American Highway (also the only main road that goes north to south in Nicaragua) after seeing the signals...the cell phone tower, the bridge, then the peanut factory. There are no signs, so landmarks ensure we make the left turn to the road leading to the village on time. We pull through the gate to enter the church grounds, and are greeted by many familiar faces...we are welcomed home once again.

After a good first nights rest, despite the music of the dogs and roosters, we begin our first full day in Santa Maria. Thursday is to be a day of visiting friends, getting to the market and seeing the new church that Pastor Jose is also running in the nearby town of Leon. Leon is the second largest city in Nicaragua, and is about 30 minutes from Santa Maria. The trip to the market was the normal drive to Chinandega. We also stop to

get gas and other needed supplies. During the balance of the day Thursday,



we enjoyed the time visiting with friends. Around 4 PM, about 15 of us loaded into 2 pickup trucks to visit the church in Leo. Having only been in the center of Leon, it was nice to see a different community and the local church that Verbo is now running. There were a number of folks in attendance for the hour long service which included typical singing, prayer and preaching time. After some fellowship time after the service, we once again headed back to Santa Maria. It is always fun to drive at night in Nicaragua.

Friday was our day to head to the beach. Our plan for the day was to take a number of the young men with us to lunch and the beach. We packed up the cooler with some soda and ice, grabbed the cookies and chips, and headed out. Joining us were Stanley, Jelmer, Lester, Luis, Carlos Mario, and Moises. We left Santa Maria around 10:30 AM heading towards Chinandega once again. We stopped there for lunch at Rosti Pollos, basically for a Nicaraguan version of Rotisserie chicken.

After lunch, we packed ourselves back into the truck to head for Corinto. Corinto is the closest beach to Santa Maria. We turn into the parking area, which is basically the back door into several beach front restaurants, all which have tables and chairs covered under a wooden roof. We park in the shade and headed for the water! It was a great day of spending time in fellowship with some of the young men from Verbo church. After a few hours of swimming, riding the pacific ocean



waves, playing soccer, walks along the water's edge in conversation, we gathered for some ice cold Coca Cola (made of course, with real sugar in Nicaragua!) and chips. It was a wonderful day of fun and fellowship with our friends in Nicaragua. For the guys from Santa Maria, it was a day they will always remember for the fun and fellowship. Here are 3 Americans and one translator from Managua, that just spent an entire day with them having fun. The hardships of Santa Maria and life in impoverished Nicaragua pushed aside for one afternoon. Mark, Ben and I on numerous occasions talked that afternoon about how great a day it was. We are doing God's work, serving and encouraging the people God has put in our care in Nicaragua. We were very thankful for



the time spent with these young men, encouraging them in the faith, as they encouraged us and further cemented lasting friendships. We pray that the Lord used this time for His glory, and that these young men saw the face of our Lord that day.

We made it back to the church about 5 PM that afternoon. That evening, we shared dinner with the entire group that was with us at the beach, and our hosts at Verbo Church. Dinner time is always a relaxing time, eating out on the porch. Not long after, we headed off to sleep, tired from the day, yet encouraged by the blessings of the day.

Saturday began early with roosters, dogs, and the church pick-up truck being moved (not sure why). That morning we held our

meeting with the students we sponsor. There are now 19 students in the school program, 5 of whom are in University. The students are asked to give of their time. They are asked to support the work of the church and attend services. They are learning and learning to serve. Students, parents of students and the director of the local school were all in attendance as the students received their scholarship money and signed the agreement document. This quiet support from many members of St. John's is truly a blessing to the community in Santa Maria. I wish all of the sponsors had the opportunity to personally know their students.

Saturday afternoon was spent visiting Las Casitas, the volcano that was the site of the mudslide in 1998 following the devastating rains of Hurricane Mitch. More than 2,800 people died that day. We got to visit the memorial site and walk around the park created there with a tree planted to remember each of the victims. During our time there, we walked to the location where one of our friends used to have his home. It was a spot that I have visited before. It was at that spot that his older brother was killed, and at the spot where he was rescued. While the mudslide is now 14 years in the past, the memory is vivid for many of our friends in Santa Maria. We spent about 1 hour on the



mountain side before returning back to Santa Maria.

Saturday afternoon

we decided to have a gathering of the young men that went with us to the beach. We wanted to give them the opportunity to have fellowship time with each other and with us. This time was intended to be more informal time sharing about the faith. For the young men of the village, there are many things that keep them from the faith, and we talked about them. We shared testimony. Hopefully, we encouraged them. More importantly, we continued to build relationships that point to Christ.

We awoke Sunday morning for our final day in Santa Maria. Church began at 10 AM, and was well attended. As usual, we got to bring our greetings to the congregation on behalf of St. John's. In addition, Mark preached on

wisdom. The message was well received. It is a great blessing to me to see the number of folks that now attend Verbo, especially the kids, as I am confident that the Lord has used us to support the youth presence at the church. Following the church

service, we began to prepare for our departure. It is always a difficult time leaving our friends, but knowing that we will return again in June makes it easier to manage. Not long after our farewell, we pulled out of the village one last time this trip. For me, leaving is always a sad day. I am truly blessed by the family I have in Nicaragua, and I think often of those who I have come to call my brothers.

We arrived at the Hotel in Managua around 3 PM after a 2 hour drive. We would spend the next day and a half in Managua, visiting the main offices of Verbo Church, including the offices of OrphanNetwork (the organization that sponsors the lunch program in Santa Maria) and the large church there. We spent most of the time with David, our translator

and team member. That Monday we learned so much more about Nicaragua, the people, Verbo church and the future of our ministry. We went to sleep Monday night, confident that the Lord has used us, and will continue to use us in Santa Maria. We are confident that the work begun in 2005 should continue to move forward.

I am very thankful for how God has blessed me through my many visits to Nicaragua. If you have not had the opportunity to go, be in prayer, asking God if this might be the right time. I know you too will be blessed beyond your expectations, and you might even have the most wonderful day at the beach! *Chris*



### **March Birthdays!**

**Matthew Tolbert – March 5<sup>th</sup>**  
**Ken Cook – March 26<sup>th</sup>**  
**David Bodenheimer – March 30<sup>th</sup>**



### **Birthdays and Anniversaries:**

If you would like your special day recognized in *The Evangelist* newsletter, we now have a monthly calendar in the office to write down this information.

If you are interested, please call the Church Office or email the month, day, and what you are celebrating to [cindy@toknowchrist.org](mailto:cindy@toknowchrist.org).

***HE HAS RISEN***

**@2011 Linda Barrett**

In the early morning light  
an earthquake rolled away a stone  
from the mouth of a rich man's tomb  
revealing a miraculous sight

HE has risen!

Flowers and animals open  
both petals and eyes  
leave their burrows and roots  
celebrate the startling surprise  
HE has risen!

Three women and one fisherman  
came to see the empty grave  
where once laid their executed friend  
but didn't believe he'd rise again  
HE has risen!

In an upper room,  
Twelve disciples hid in shame  
stood shocked to see Him  
fully and healthy

Jesus Christ the one without blame  
HE has risen!

The marks of His torment  
still remained fresh  
the nail prints on his hands  
the spear mark in his side

Even Thomas who almost denied  
exclaimed at the event:  
HE is risen!

Today, many refuse to see  
that God sent down His Only Son  
Yet, others believe only this man  
conquered sin and death  
They still shout faithfully:

HE HAS RISEN!

### *Do It Yourself*

When a guy's printer type began to grow faint, he called a local repair shop where a friendly man informed him that the printer probably needed only to be cleaned.

Because the store charged \$50 for such cleanings, he told him he might be better off reading the printer's manual and trying the job himself.

Pleasantly surprised by his candor, he asked, "Does your boss know that you discourage business?"

"Actually, it's my boss's idea," the employee replied sheepishly.

"We usually make more money on repairs if we let people try to fix things themselves first."

Thanks to Pastor Tim for this joke!

<http://www.cybersalt.org/entertainment>  
<[http://www.crosswalkmail.com/vppjvmf\\_gjrjnfygtknkbzqndqfmnyppbbyrhfqvvtvpmjfrpy\\_rtrgrgrvjrjrw.html](http://www.crosswalkmail.com/vppjvmf_gjrjnfygtknkbzqndqfmnyppbbyrhfqvvtvpmjfrpy_rtrgrgrvjrjrw.html)>



Make sure you read the letter addressed to the Missions Committee on page 11 from Missy Gentles at Inner City Movement.



### Upcoming Events!

<i>March</i>	
<i>24<sup>th</sup></i>	<i>Spring Cleaning</i>
<i>30<sup>th</sup>/31<sup>st</sup></i>	<i>Holy Spirit Weekend</i>
<i>April</i>	
<i>1<sup>st</sup></i>	<i>Palm Sunday</i>
<i>5<sup>th</sup></i>	<i>Maundy Thursday</i>
<i>6<sup>th</sup></i>	<i>Good Friday</i>
<i>7<sup>th</sup></i>	<i>Easter Egg Hunt</i>
<i>8<sup>th</sup></i>	<i>Easter Sunday</i>
<i>27<sup>th</sup></i>	<i>Pairs &amp; Spares Bowling</i>
<i>May</i>	
<i>6<sup>th</sup></i>	<i>Mission Sunday</i>
<i>19<sup>th</sup></i>	<i>Faith-in-Action Service Day</i>



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March 1, 2012

Dear Friends,

I write to share with you some glimpses of the awesome work God is doing here at Inner-City Movement. We have been especially busy as we're opening our first production for 2012 called *The Kingdom*, which runs every Saturday and Sunday from 5 to 7 pm in March. God has been going beyond our imaginations as He's provided for this show, giving us clear confirmation that this bold undertaking is in accordance with His will. From the massive set to the professional soundtrack to the selfless volunteers, I am being personally blessed in getting to experience all of this provision coming together in a sphere in which I never envisioned working.

Simultaneously, we're wrapping up our first semester of classes for the new year. Every 3 months brings a new wave of kids to get to know and with whom we're privileged to build relationships. God has been so kind as to allow us to see fruit budding forth in each wave as young godly leaders are moving into their calling, even in this most recent wave that started the journey with us only 2 months ago, and in which I'm teaching both a voice and a piano class.

In addition to all of that, as of January 2012, we have also become a distribution site for Chick-Fil-A sandwiches. This is thanks to an executive whose heart was moved by the vision at ICMovement. Now we not only make \$.50 off of every sandwich we sell here, but we also have a unique and exciting opportunity to share about ICM, and thereby, Christ, with all kinds of people who come in for a sandwich and stay for a set tour—and, prayerfully, salvation!

In the midst of the clamor of 69<sup>th</sup> Street that is overflowing into our theater, we are hearing joy and healing (in every sense of the word) breaking forth, breaking through, and breaking down. Please pray that I would keep my ear fixed on the latter as I'm consumed in working for the Kingdom. Thank you for helping me to do so!

In His Grip,

Missy Gentles