



MIGRANT MINISTRY EXPANDS; COVID CHRISTMAS 2.0

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Dear SIGA Supporters and Friends:

I hope you are all well, as we have been here (in Virginia since March). As most of you already know, my husband Carlos was given permanent residency status in the USA, and this has, as the name indicates, residency requirements. This has kept us in the US for half of the year for the last three years, and it will again next year. We excited to be able to return to Costa Rica in a few weeks, and although much time has passed since my last newsletter (I'm not even sure when that was), ministry still goes forward. This newsletter will update you on few things, including an exciting new project.

FLOODING IN ARBOLITOS DE SARAPIQUI (our hometown)

You may have already know that the northern Caribbean region of Costa Rica was hit with disastrous flooding in July. Floods are not uncommon; our river can swell 20-30 feet in a matter of hours. But our village has never flooded in the 17 years we have lived there, and even the older residents have no memory of it ever having done so. Our library, guesthouse, and other properties were flooded. Thankfully, our little house was spared. Water has since receded of course, but I suspect that any books that we had on the bottom shelves in the library will need to be discarded. I do not know about equipment, except that I understand that we lost two refrigerators and a chest freezer.

We also finally had running water restored to the library and the guesthouse, which we have not had in a couple of years! The regional water project which has been in the works for the last two years is finally operational. We just need to get there and hook up the plumbing, and we will be able to use the facilities once again. Until we know the extent of the flood damage, though, it will be hard to predict when they will be functional. We have our work cut out for us when we get home.

CHRISTMAS OUTREACH / SCHOOL SUPPLIES FOR CHILDREN

Last year, because of the pandemic, we needed to modify our Christmas outreach. Churches and schools were closed, so we were unable to do in-person celebrating. Instead, we left gifts for the children with local pastors. Due to travel restrictions, we sent funds to our two partners in Nicaragua, which were used for the same purposes. For two villages, including Arbolitos, we waited until the end of January to provide backpacks filled with small gifts and school supplies. Since the children were learning virtually (they would go to school only to pick up their assignments), we left the backpacks with the teachers. Everyone was grateful that we continued to remember them, but we missed the personal interaction.



While I cannot say for certain that this will also be the case in 2021, COVID cases have been high, and many restrictions remain in place, so I suspect that our outreach will be similar to 2020. For our partners in Nicaragua, we sent funds for the churches to use in the way they deemed best, whether it be for a children's feeding program, school supplies, or gifts. It's not as fun, obviously, for us, but it does communicate our ongoing love and concern for our friends in these villages. We will need to purchase all items locally, though, so donations would be greatly appreciated.

NEW: WELCOMING THE STRANGER MIGRANT MINISTRY

Since we currently spend several months a year in the US, I have been trying to discern how best to involve myself in ministry here, and as many of you know, I used to live on either side

of the Texas/Mexico border. After watching news coverage of the latest waves of immigration, and making a trip to Baja California in 2019, I had intended to make a visit and see for myself in 2020, but COVID kept me home. We did help churches in Tijuana who were providing food and shelter for thousands of asylum seekers, and also helped to set up a computer lab to be used for education, by working with people I had met on that 2019 trip, and want to help out once again this Christmas season.

This past summer, though, I got to make a road trip, traveling to the Texas border (I purchased a travel trailer primarily for this purpose). While there, we donated cellphone backup batteries and baby wipes (the items most needed at the time) to an organization that receives immigrants that have been legally processed by Immigration and Customs and have been released from detention. Typically, they are families with children.



For 2022 we intend to expand that collaboration and could really use YOUR help. I plan to travel back to Texas in April or May, spend a few weeks volunteering, and take some supplies with me, which will be possible since I will be driving a pickup and towing a travel trailer. In July, the month that I was there, 7,500 individuals were released just in east Texas. Border agents drop the migrants off at bus stations, airports, and street corners, but they need help in order to get to their final destinations. Grassroots organizations respond with meals, temporary shelter, and transportation. They are overwhelmed at times, though, so SIGA wants to help them in their efforts to welcome our new neighbors.



Immigration is a political hot button, as we all know. However, what is happening on our southern border is also a humanitarian crisis. Indeed, it is a humanitarian crisis on our

doorstep that results from humanitarian crises in their homelands. The ones who are released from custody (the majority are sent back to their home countries) have followed the prescribed process of asking for asylum and, having successfully argued that they have a "credible fear" of returning home, they are released to wait for additional hearings. These asylum seekers are *legally* present in this country, and it is our *opportunity* to exemplify what Jesus say would be "done unto" him: "you gave me food, I was thirsty, ... "I was a stranger and you welcomed me" (Mt. 25:35). The Bible admonishes us to "treat the stranger who sojourns with you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself" (Lev.19:33-34), so in this instance we should set aside partisan politics and personal opinions and just do what has been clearly set before us. We may disagree as to whether they should be here, but here they are, strangers among us. And here is a way that you can welcome them in Jesus' name:

Welcoming the Stranger Project



OUR GOAL is to provide assistance to up to 1,500 asylum seekers, working with grassroots organizations to meet them as they are released by border officials, and helping them make their connections at the bus station or airport (so they don't go to Dallas when they should be going to Dulles, or vice versa). They travel with meager possessions and funds, are in unfamiliar surroundings, and do not speak the language. Our goal is to send them on their way with backpacks, sandwiches, bottled drinks, and other basic necessities for the journey. We will drive to the border, volunteer our time, and deliver supplies. For flexibility, economy, and the ability to transport donated items, I will tow my travel trailer and we will stay in campgrounds (hopefully we won't need to worry about COVID outbreaks). The cost is quite affordable enough for just about anyone willing to help: apart from our travel expenses, a mere **\$37-**

\$40 per individual. That does mean, if we are to help 1,500 people, the total cost is over \$50,000, but every little bit helps, and **here are some ways you might be able to help:**

Sponsor one or more individuals:	\$40 / individual
Sponsor a family:	\$120
Pay for a "ready to go" backpack	\$25 / individual
Donate (or provide funds for) USB battery backups similar to photo below (per family):	\$15-\$20
Financial donation of any amount:	\$ _____





This will require the generous hearts of many, but the more we can raise the more people we can welcome in the name of Jesus. So I hope that we all can see the appropriateness of lending a helping hand, and the practical nature and affordability (per person) of this particular project.

Donations may be sent to:

SIGA, PO Box 928, Troy, VA 22974

Muchas bendiciones,

Ruth Clowater

PS: We really could use a web-savvy person to upgrade our website; it is woefully outdated.

Another way to serve!

SIGA is an ecumenical Christian organization that is not affiliated with any denominational organization, and relies on the generosity of donors.

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Financial contributions may be sent to:

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