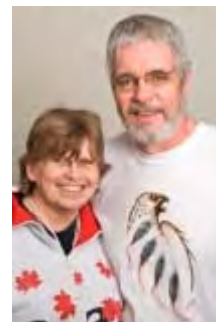


Letters from Overseas

Deborah Elliot and Donald Gibson Write from Nicaragua

December 2009

“During the rule of Herod, King of Judea, there was a priest assigned service in the regiment of Abijah. His name was Zachariah. His wife was descended from the daughters of Aaron. Her name was Elizabeth. Together they lived honorably before God, careful in keeping the ways of the commandments and enjoying a clear conscience before God. But they were childless because Elizabeth could never conceive, and now they were quite old.”—Luke 1:5–7 (*The Message* by Eugene Peterson)



You know how the story continues. The impossible becomes possible. Here in Nicaragua you have to believe that the impossible is possible. Otherwise you get overwhelmed and want to quit. So the question is, how do we live out this constant hope?

The poverty here looms over every conversation. I was with a woman this morning that I am quite sure is having gall bladder attacks. The doctor told her she had to go to Managua to get it fixed. She makes a living selling bags of juice out her front door for two cordobas a bag. Two cordobas is about 13 cents Canadian. She is one of many who cannot afford health care so they just stay sick. I have to believe in the impossible.

You would think that the poverty would mean that people are sad or depressed. I remember times when the money was tight and I worried about it constantly. Yet here I find much joy. People love their church, are fervent in their prayer life, and talk about how some people don't spend enough time helping the church. I witness the impossible every Sunday. The joy overflows....The hope is solidly in place.

Garbage is a problem here. The municipality rarely picks it up. We have an older gentleman who comes every two weeks with his trusty horse to pick up the garbage. I have conversations with folks...the little store has started getting glass coke bottles. Glass is better than plastic, so one little step...The impossible is possible.

The church is getting ready for Christmas. The tree is up and decorated. The big hand-made star is hanging from the ceiling. There are no ladders so we wondered how on earth they got it up there. Ah...

a young man climbed into the attic and opened a hole and lowered the star. Creativity and ingenuity is alive and well so the impossible becomes possible.

There was a young girl. An angel scared her one day and said something quite unbelievable. She was going to have a baby. *Impossible*...she had not slept with her fiancé. Not only does she have this baby sent from God but he goes on in life to bring a revolutionary message to the world.

It is hot and there is no snow, however the Spirit of Christmas is alive and vibrant. We will celebrate worship on Christmas Eve, on Christmas night, and then with six hours of service on New Year's Eve, starting at 6:00 p.m. until midnight. Imagine getting people to spend New Year's Eve in church. In Canada—impossible. But here the impossible becomes possible. Every day this kind of miracle happens.

So with great joy and great expectations, we enter the season of Advent waiting and believing that wonderful things can happen and will happen. So may the peace that passes understanding be upon all of you and may God's Spirit move in you during this season, that you too might believe that the impossible is possible.

During this time of giving, I would ask you all to remember a gift to the Mission and Service Fund. I have seen evidence of the miracles because of the M&S Fund. A health clinic in Managua. A level sidewalk and ramp into the church. A presence standing in solidarity with Nicaraguans. All because of the support of the M&S Fund. Our work benefits from this fund as well, so a wholehearted thanks to those who have already given.

Merry Christmas to all and the blessings of God be upon you.

Your brother and sister in Christ
Deborah Elliott and Donald Gibson

Deborah Elliot and Donald Gibson are United Church of Canada overseas personnel serving with the Moravian Church in Nicaragua. The work of this ecumenical partner and the work of overseas personnel are made possible through your gifts to the Mission and Service Fund of The United Church of Canada.

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