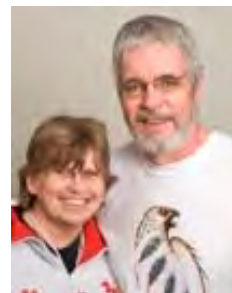


Letters from Overseas

Deborah Elliot and Don Gibson Write from Nicaragua

December 2011

The church is being cleaned. The bookshelves have been moved, for the first time in months, and the women have got out the mops. The floor is being scrubbed and everything is being dusted. The bigger boys have been in and climbed on top of tall ladders to get the walls cleaned. We are in the dry season and dust can pile up quickly. It is beginning to look a lot like Christmas. The church needs to be cleaned before the Christmas tree can go up and of course the Advent Star needs to be hung, one of the most cherished Moravian traditions.



Later tonight, the choir will be practising some special hymns for Advent and Christmas. They are going to practice "Hope Is a Star" out of the United Church hymn book. We will also be celebrating a birthday of one of the choir members tonight. The Sunday school students are practising their recitations and the youth are putting together a drama for the White Gift service.

All this activity is part of how this congregation gets ready for the gift of the Christ child. We begin by cleaning outside of ourselves, and then for the next four weeks we will be preparing inside ourselves.

One of the things that I often reflect upon is that kids are kids and it doesn't matter where you are in the world. They are the same. They are cute and mischievous and go through the same development levels just the same as your children and grandchildren. They get excited, especially at Christmastime. The difference here is that they are not looking for gifts under the tree. They are looking forward to singing and performing and reciting and acting and on the final day having a terrific celebration that will include a huge piñata with lots of candy.

They will wear their very best dresses and their special black shoes, and have their hair brushed and be sharp looking. And they will all come and sit in the front pew of the church and giggle all through the service. It will be a joyful time.

A long time ago a friend of mine from Managua said to me, "You do not visit Nicaragua"—you experience it. How I wish you could all be here to experience it.

Your gifts to the Mission and Service Fund have made it possible for us to participate in this ministry. Thanks to all of you and thanks to God for this experience.

Don and Deborah

Visit our global partnership [photo site](#) to see Deborah and Donald's photos.

Deborah Elliot and Don 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.

