

The silvas CHRISTMAS LETTER



December, Christmas coming... We want to take a moment and give you an update on ministry and family, since many of you haven't heard from us since the summer.

FALL

After an overwhelmingly busy summer, the base moved back to our home village, our summer staff left, we got ourselves re-organized and re-oriented. In October we were **flooded** together with thousands of other people in Guanacaste. We were able to do some flood relief ministry, mostly food distributions – thanks to generous gifts that some of you sent to us.

We finished our first full **Maternity Course** for pregnant teenagers in Guanacaste, it was a success and definitely encouraged us to continue doing it here, especially in the high schools where there are many pregnant students.

The whole fall we have been working on the **construction** again, but it is still not done. It is missing the last details, which are time-consuming and expensive. We try to be patient and let God help us finish it in His way and time. Mostly due to the construction and money we lent to the ministry to purchase a bus, the whole fall has been a stretching time with our personal finances. We are barely making it with our basic obligations and needs, but are looking to see God's purpose and provision in the midst of this season.

DNA-CONFERENCE

In November we had the privilege to participate in a YWAM DNA-conference in San Jose. The founder of the mission was the main speaker, together with another veteran ywamer. The week refreshed us and helped us to keep on seeing the big picture. There was a strong focus on omega zones (www.4kworldmap.com), which are over 4000 zones of all the different nations of the world, divided according to the population, religions, languages, ethnic groups and christianity. YWAM has a goal to send workers to all these zones. In the future our ministry location wants to be part of reaching one of these zones in China. We were also challenged to put our part in giving a Bible to each home on the earth. We made a commitment to give a Bible to each home in Guanacaste and together with other YWAM locations in Costa Rica to get a Bible to each home in Costa Rica. This is a big, but such an important project and we hope to involve outreach teams that come here in making it happen.

It was a blessing to feel part of a big family. In the conference there were over 200 participants mainly from different ywam locations in Central America. Worldwide YWAM has 20 000 full time workers, 1300 bases, 850 university courses and countless different ministries. Since we work in a very small team, it doesn't always feel like we actually are part of a huge organisation.



OTHER NEWS:

★ The summer, the dry season, is beginning. However the Caribbean side of Costa Rica is flooded and lot of help is needed over there. Troy and Julia started their summer vacation and enjoy playing outside, fishing, sleeping in a tent etc. In January there is a gril from Finland coming to help them with Finnish school for about a month. Nic Markus just turned 2 and keeps us busy and entertained from morning to evening.

★ Diego is actually right now on a mission trip in Nicaragua with our church, the Beach Community Church. They are helping with some building projects, doing evangelism and childrens ministry.

★ We were able to do a three-week teaching series on sexuality and abstinence for a youth group of a small village church in Cañal. We had a great time with them and God used that time to challenge the youth in many new ways.

★ In our home village we are developing a micro-enterprise project for families to start getting income through a project like growing vegetables, chicken, sewing etc. We are just starting, and are praying for a spiritual brakethrough to brake a strong spirit of negativity, fear and selfishness that has kept this village from developing for decades.

★ Last week we were witnesses in the wedding of our neighbors Christian and Liliana. They have lived together for several years, but as a result of a discipleship process they wanted to honor God by getting married.



CHRISTMAS...

The original, typical Costarican Christmas is almost vanishing under the Christmas image that the rich western countries give or sell to the rest of the world. Even here, in the tropics, the Christmas songs are about snow, the Santa wears the same hot clothes and the commercial, materialistic Christmas is becoming a 'must' in here too. It is such a shame that the western

culture has that power, because it destroys the original culture. Here the original Christmas is to make tamales and spend time with your loved ones. That's it, that's all... but not anymore, now you have to do this, you have to have this, you have to give this...

Unfortunately there is the same tendency with the Gospel. We so easily preach western Christianity instead of simply preaching the Gospel and let the locals worship God in a way natural and original to them. We clothe the Gospel in our culture and think that's the correct expression of Christianity. It is damaging to the millions of different expressions that God Himself has created among the cultures, languages and nations. Our prayer is that we could learn to differenciate the two things and in our ministry simly preach the Gospel and encourage local, original, expressions of Christianity.

This year we will be spending Christmas here at home with my (Salla's) parents from Finland. At the base we'll also have a group of 7 cowboys on outreach from a YWAM ministry called Cowboys With A Mission. With them we will be doing ministry among the cowboys in Guanacaste.



We want to thank you for being part of our sending team this past year. Thank you for your partnership, friendship and everything you have given! We invite and challenge you to continue supporting us the coming year! Your prayers and even small financial contributions are important. We are committed to continuing in our call at this end and we believe that together we can see great things happen for God's Kingdom in Guanacaste!



Diego & Salla,
Troy, Julia and Nic Markus

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