

Newsletter 24 – June 2020



Dear friends and supporters of the Peace and Hope Trust,

I know you appreciate news on how things are going, both in the UK and in Nicaragua, for the Trust and its people. Our monthly prayer points give some of the news, but there is more, and things are moving all the time. This is the latest, as at 4 June 2020. Action packed!

Our finances: After our April newsletter, we received some very welcome donations – a big one from central government, but others from a number of generous supporters. Our thanks go to them, of course, in helping to secure the Trust for a while. It may be that one or both of our cycle sportives will take place in September as the lockdown is relaxed (we hope), but at present we are without any fundraising events for this year.

The shop in Ross is still closed – for now. Ruth Gibbins has kindly started the work (assisted by Mike, Tim Sharpe and others) of trying to reopen it mid-July, but we are very short of volunteers to act as shop-sitters, as the current team are largely over 70. At present we plan to open for one or two days per week, if we can. We are in dire need of younger volunteers, mature enough to handle the shop on their own – **please contact Ruth if you know of someone with the right skills**. We need to interview all candidates, obviously, even in this time of dire need. The shop has always kept us afloat, till now, so we are keen to open it up, but running a shop is much less simple under Social Distancing. You will have seen the arcane disciplines in every other little shop.

Nicaragua: Managua is just starting the rainy season, and we've seen alarming footage of flash floods in the city, to add to the seasonal increase in mosquito-borne disease- Dengue, Chikungunya, Zika etc. Covid-19 is well-established and hospitals are turning away even serious cases – Valeria's family had to resource oxygen at home for one relative, for example. The



Social distancing still isn't practised in Managua's buses

Managua government is still insisting that the country must stay

open regardless of Covid-19, and it's hard to see what approach might succeed there. The medical professionals are under extreme pressure in dealing with the fallout.

There's no question of getting statistics on the rise of infections and deaths in Nicaragua, but the population is thrown on its own resources to stay fed, and somehow reduce its exposure to all these risks. Even if we wanted, we cannot get teams into Nicaragua – there are no flights in or out. The British Embassy is providing one emergency evacuation flight, in the coming weeks, and has warned that it may be the last option for some time.

Amid all this, SIFT's Margaret Storey – herself over 70 – has been treading a line between self-isolation in Bluefields and helping with a feeding programme, though her routine educational support work has been rather crimped by the precautionary closure of the Verbo school (note - state schools are required to stay open). We are in awe of Margaret's example to us all. She is one of our most reliable sources of information too.

Containers: We now have the loan of another warehouse near Ross-on-Wye, and are holding enough hospital beds to fill a container. We're unable to send one off to Nicaragua yet – we can't see a way of loading containers safely and in time, and we also need to watch our finances. Each container we send takes a significant chunk of our remaining cash balances. We are looking for grants to cover our costs – there is every hope that funds will be forthcoming—and we're working on safer work procedures.

School building: We have been promised funds from a single church to cover 100% of our next school building project (which Richard Geary has designed and costed), and this extremely kind pledge is nonetheless on hold – we can't send any volunteers out at present to lead the work.

Electronic Administration: we are used to chatting via Whatsapp with Managua, but since March our Trustees meetings in the UK have also been entirely electronic. The Newent office is closed, and our new administrator, Emma, has gone back to Nursing to help with Covid-19, so much of the admin work has transferred back to other brave volunteers. We are fortunate that so much can be done remotely these days, even if the technology defeats us on occasion. Just be patient, please, if we take time to answer the office phone, etc etc.

That's all we have for this newsletter—thank you for your prayers and support, which do help to keep us motivated and on track. S Ind, CEO

Gorsley's friends in the Philippines send their greetings...



A huge thank you letter from the hospital in the Philippines, which should really have named the Trust's container team – Mike Gibbins, Tim Sharp, Richard Fletcher and a host of others—following the latest shipment of donated goods

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