A World Beyond Borders

Can you remember your MCC orientation back in August or September 2019? What were your goals, hopes and dreams for your year in IVEP, SALT or YAMEN?

None of us could have known what this year would be like. As I write this yearbook introduction in early May 2020, borders are closed, flights are scarce, most of us are following stay at home orders and about half of you have made the difficult and understandable decision to end your term early. As MCC U.S. Executive Director Ron Byler recently said in an email to staff, “We could not have expected that in MCC’s centennial year, the world would be hit with a crisis of the magnitude of the COVID-19 pandemic.”

Even though national borders are closed, the Kingdom of God transcends borders. Ephesians 2:19 (NIV) reminds us that we “are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God’s people and also members of his household.” Relationships are at the heart of MCC’s ministry and relationships are what endure.

For the past several years during our closing worship service for orientation in Akron we have read a poem by Bishop Ken Untener in memory of Archbishop Oscar Romero. In it he reminds us, “We accomplish in our lifetime only a tiny fraction of the magnificent enterprise that is God’s work... It may be incomplete, but it is a beginning, a step along the way, an opportunity for the Lord’s grace to enter and do the rest.”

As you read the stories within this yearbook, I invite you to look for and celebrate what God has begun in us and through us. Let us pray that the work and our relationships continue so that God’s Kingdom can be seen beyond borders.

Chris Landes, Global Service Learning Director

Prophets of a Future Not Our Own

It helps, now and then, to step back and take a long view. The kingdom is not only beyond our efforts, it is even beyond our vision.

We accomplish in our lifetime only a tiny fraction of the magnificent enterprise that is God’s work. Nothing we do is complete, which is a way of saying that the Kingdom always lies beyond us.

No statement says all that could be said. No prayer fully expresses our faith. No confession brings perfection. No pastoral visit brings wholeness. No program accomplishes the Church’s mission. No set of goals and objectives includes everything.

This is what we are about.

We plant the seeds that one day will grow. We water seeds already planted, knowing that they hold future promise. We lay foundations that will need further development. We provide yeast that produces far beyond our capabilities. We cannot do everything, and there is a sense of liberation in realizing that. This enables us to do something, and to do it very well. It may be incomplete, but it is a beginning, a step along the way, an opportunity for the Lord’s grace to enter and do the rest.

We may never see the end results, but that is the difference between the master builder and the worker. We are workers, not master builders; ministers, not messiahs.

We are prophets of a future not our own.

Bishop Ken Untener
in memory of Archbishop Oscar Romero
IVEP participants

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Global Service Learning (GSL) Department’s purpose and mission is to develop and resource short-term, introductory service-learning opportunities within MCC, with the aim of facilitating increased understanding and relationships among communities worldwide. Current programs include: SALT, IVEP, YAMEN! and Seed. GSL also resources Work and Learn Teams and Learning Tours, SOOP (Canada), Summerbridge and Summer Service.
Theophile Koumnonssen Batein (Chad)
Collaboratory, Sustainability Office, Messiah College
Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania, USA

First Impression or Differences: Everything is big here. Big cars (trucks), buildings. Also, the streets, roads are so clean. I was worried about how this year would be like far from home. Then God opened this opportunity and gave me this grace to meet and be hosted by a wonderful family. They give me the privilege to be a part of their family.

Memorable or Funny Experience: My first time having and seeing snow in my life. It is so pretty and nice to see the snow falling; how wonderful God made this. We had built a snowman with dad Jim and brother Saleem. Then we had fun by making a snowman and snowballs. It was nice, but cold.

Faith Journey: Every day is a new experience of faith with God. I learned to not be worried and trust in God because whatever happens it is because he wants that to be no matter if it’s a good or bad situation; he is the one that created me. Day after day it is a new day, new opportunity, new grace and honor to still live. Glory be to his name forever. I have been blessed in many areas of my life.

Career/Professional Development: I learned a lot this year. Every day is a day to learn while I’m living here. An important thing that I learned is professionalism, organizing, schedules and time.

New Perspectives: I am grateful to God, to MCC, to MCC staff and all IVEPers for this program because in every moment and situation I felt the love and peace of God. God bless you.

Future Plans: God willing when I go home, I will be a sister at Anafora. I will tell my friends and my community about what I learned and saw here.

Ereny Botros (Egypt)
Elkhart County Clubhouse
Goshen, Indiana, USA

Memorable or Funny Experience: It was funny how people asked me many questions about how we live in Egypt, like, do we live in tents? Do we only use camels?

Do we have houses and cars? And do we walk like an Egyptian (American song about Egypt)?

Faith Journey: I was thinking before I came that maybe I would not have a good relationship with God, but I was mistaken. I thank God that I have a deeper relationship with my Heavenly Father.

Career/Professional Development: I thank the Lord for this gift of coming to work with people with mental illness and homeless people. I have learned how to at least listen to people even when I may not be able to solve their problems.

New Perspectives: I thank the Lord that he gave me this gift to come here. He shows me that he loves me. About my country and my church, I love them more, and I pray for them.

Future Plans: God willing when I go home, I will be a sister at Anafora. I will tell my friends and my community about what I learned and saw here.

Andrea Ricardo Castro Serrano (Colombia)
Site/Volunteer Coordinator, Casa Alitas
Tucson, Arizona, USA

First Impression or Differences: Human beings are incredible across the whole world. I love the inspirations that I see in Tucson: for immigration, community, to be in solidarity and spread love for strangers, being inclusive and open-minded to differences. I’ll always remember that we are under the same moon.

Memorable or Funny Experience: The trick to happiness is to smile all the time. This experience gave me a lot of fun moments. I remember it was a Monday and when I got to the shelter the door was closed. I called to see what was happening and they asked me why I went to work when it was a holiday. I didn’t know whether to laugh or cry, so I laughed at myself 😊

Faith Journey: God is in the air, in the smiles, in the hugs. I learned this year to see God’s love in the people around me, in the silences, in my workplace and in the play with my host brothers. For this reason, my coworkers and I decided to make Tuesday a romantic day where we’re aware of falling in love with the world; we decided to dress fancy and wear lipstick for a kiss with life.

Career/Professional Development: Art and justice need to walk holding hands. So, I want to be creative in supporting justice. As a psychologist, I would like to get a job with MCC in the context of immigration.

Ereny Botros (Egypt)
Elkhart County Clubhouse
Goshen, Indiana, USA

Memorable or Funny Experience: It was funny how people asked me many questions about how we live in Egypt, like, do we live in tents? Do we only use camels?
**New Perspectives:** In this experience, I saw God differently in this culture. I didn’t always know things, and that was okay! I learned to go and enjoy being out of my comfort zone.

**Future Plans:** When I return, I will share many experiences, anecdotes, and learnings with my community. I will enjoy a shower on the beach, and I want to keep giving the best of myself.

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**Cui Cui** *(China)*  
Intern, Fresno Interdenominational Refugee Ministries (FIRM)  
Fresno, California, USA

**First Impression or Differences:** I was so excited when I first arrived in the airport in Pennsylvania and met Chris from MCC, and we waited for other IVEPers from South America. The first time, I met other IVEPers I felt very excited and close to them. Because we are all participants in MCC I felt belonging even from the first time we met. A difference was how everyone says “Hello” the first time we meet. The ways other IVEPers say hello is very warm, like shaking hands, big hugs or “Hello” on cheeks, ha-ha. In China we only say hello and maybe shake hands. I loved to say “Hello” these other ways.

**Memorable or Funny Experience:** I had an awkward and funny experience when chatting with my boss. One work break time, he told me, “You’re just like my brother and sisters,” and I answered him “Yes! Yes!” Because he talked very fast, that’s what I thought he meant. What he actually said was, “You should meet my brother,” because he was very interested in describing his brother, who is single, and he thought I was interested to get to know him. I realized we misunderstood each other. So, I explained to him later. I took this opportunity to study English harder, so I don’t get embarrassed again like this!

**Faith Journey:** In the IVEPer year, there are many different aspects of gains. But the biggest gain for me was to get back to “My first love of God.” He fixed my broken heart. He never gives up on me. He loves me and cares for me, more than I love Him. God gave me the best of best things. I am so grateful that God has been guiding me through different people and in different ways.

**Future Plans:** I plan to get a job and work hard to make a difference in other people’s lives. I’m still planning details on what direction I will go or what direction God will guide me. For my Christian journey, I will grow my faith and continue a good relationship with God.

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**Issaka “Carlos” Dabonne** *(Burkina Faso)*  
Administrative Assistant, MCC Central States Material Resource Center  
North Newton, Kansas, USA

**First Impression or Differences:** I was full of energy and nervous. Full of energy because I was excited to serve in a new country; nervous because I was wondering what I am going to bring at my work service.

**Memorable or Funny Experience:** I had lot of funny moments at work because I always confuse words in English (e.g., turkey & tricky).

**Faith Journey:** Being here really showed me my grade in my faith with God. In fact, God wanted to see how my relationship with him would be without my family, my church and pastors, my friends. God planned to equip me in how to be near him in a new area and showed me that he continues guiding me wherever I am.

**Career/Professional Development:** My placement allowed me to boost some of my capacities particularly in organization and communication. I learned how to list and inventory stuff in the warehouse and store them. With my supervisor I learned how to communicate with a financial partner. I also learned to do marketing. My professional aspirations would be to work with organizations and associations working in development and relief. In development I want to bring my know-how and gain more experience for my studies in economics and development management, and work in humanitarian work to serve my neighbors who are in need.

**New Perspectives:** I see myself as a seasoned person and equipped to be a peacemaker. This experience will allow me to better understand another culture.

**Future Plans:** Next, I will continue my studies and look for a job. Also, I will share my experience with my church, my family and friends.

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**Frederick Dandure** *(Zimbabwe)*  
Technology Assistant, Dock Mennonite Academy  
Lansdale, Pennsylvania, USA

**First Impression or Differences:** I loved the roads in the U.S., beautiful roads different from my country. The roads are much wider and more developed. I also noticed at home that we eat dinner/supper early around 5 pm and that was new to me. In the church community, everyone comes on time and everyone gets free coffee after the Sunday service.
Memorable or Funny Experience: On December 31st, New Year’s Eve, we were playing board and card games with my host mom Linda and sister Angela. We had a wonderful time. Lucky enough everyone won that night. All of us were so competitive – our game nights were usually intense. Everyone was in good spirits that night. After playing the games, my host dad Eric played a song and we all danced and laughed celebrating year 2020.

Faith Journey: I started off on a rugged path. I didn’t connect to God the way I thought I would. It was painful also not being able to make relationships with the congregants and I didn’t like going to church, but toward the fourth month I started making meaningful relationships and going to church has never been more fulfilling.

Career/Professional Development: I have learnt to be more confident in solving IT problems. Whatever technology I will meet in the future, I will be able to handle it. From here I will spread my wings and dive into Software Engineering.

New Perspectives: Now I have fewer stereotypes and have come to the realization that we all share one thing in common – humanity.

Future Plans: I will definitely share my experiences and bring what I have learnt into the community and church activities. I’m also going to start my Software Development journey.

Tinotendashe Hazel Gumbo (Zimbabwe)
Assistant Member Service Representative/Receptionist, Everence Financial
Harrisonburg, Virginia, USA

First Impression or Differences: The first major difference that I noticed between my home country and my host country was the amount of food-related choices that people have to make every day. A simple task such as picking out which cereal to buy at the store would take long because deciding was hard and overwhelming for me; I was not accustomed to having more than 10 types of cereal. We have variety in Zimbabwe but it’s not as much as in the U.S., here people have so many dietary restrictions and personal preferences and as a result there are a lot of different options for people to cater to their needs and wants.

Memorable or Funny Experience: Whenever I would get into the passenger front seat of a car I would go for the left side and end up with the steering wheel in my face LOL. In the U.S., people drive on the right side of the road while in Zimbabwe we drive on the left side of the road hence the driver’s seat is on the right so I would unconsciously go to the left every time and it was always funny because I would do it without even thinking about it.

Faith Journey: During my IVEP year I have seen God’s presence in my life through the people He has put around me. Being in a new country, staying with a new family and starting a new job can be a very difficult experience. It is especially hard because I am away from my faith community at home, but my time here has shown me that as diverse as we all are, we all worship the same God. I saw that in the love and kindness I was shown by my host families, my coworkers and my church communities. People would go out of their way to make sure that I am comfortable and happy, and nothing portrays Christ’s message of love more than being kind to a stranger.

Career/Professional Development: I have learnt a lot at Everence, I already had a little bit of experience in the finance world but working at Everence has helped me to see how faith-based finance is handled through socially responsible investments and encouraging stewardship. This has helped me understand the idea of integrating faith with finances. I will continue on this financial career path and I hope to use what I have learnt in my next job.

New Perspectives: My view of the world as a whole has definitely changed because of this cross-cultural service. I now understand how people all over the world are very different but at the same time very similar lol. That may sound confusing but that’s the only way I can explain it. While we all come from different backgrounds and cultures, we are all still part of the human race. I have learnt that we should acknowledge our differences while still remembering that we are all human and should treat each other respectfully. Due to the cross-cultural service I now understand another culture and that will make me a bridge between two cultures. I am excited at the prospect of helping people understand each other a little better.

Future Plans: When I return home, I plan on looking for employment. I hope I will be able to put to use what I have learnt from my placement here in the U.S. I also plan to further my studies with a master’s degree. I plan on educating the youth at my church about all the things that I have learnt throughout my IVEP year.

Nsofwa Kaseketi (Zambia)
Teacher Assistant, Lake Center Christian School
Hartville, Ohio, USA

First Impression or Differences: My first impression of the U.S. was definitely close to what I had imagined. I remember looking at the beautiful clean towns upon arrival, the smooth roads, experiencing the friendliness of the Americans and enjoying the surprisingly good weather. My assignment community, however, was very
different from what I had expected. My expectations were that the community I lived in would have tall buildings like skyscrapers, uncountable people, huge malls, colleges, a variety of eating places and so on, but surprisingly it was small, quiet and surrounded by farmland. There are, however, so many differences between my host country and my home; some of the basics include the diverse American culture, food, dress code, language and weather.

Memorable or Funny Experience: Going ice skating and visiting the Sky Zone Max arena for the first time with my fellow IVEPers was definitely my favorite memorable experience. The number of times we fell and got back up was literally the funniest thing to experience with them and it will be forever be an unforgettable memory.

Faith Journey: I have definitely been put to the test as I’ve been here in the U.S. It has not been easy. I’ve had to develop a more personal relationship with God and most of the time it’s been a struggle, but it’s also helped me grow spiritually on my own without the help of my pastor, mentor or parents. In the beginning, I was told by my pastor that this experience would either break me or make me. As much as I may have struggled in the beginning of my journey to keep my relationship with God close, I found solutions that would keep my faith alive through the help of MCC staff members, fellow IVEPers and even my host parents. It’s been a rollercoaster of emotions and it’s all been worth it.

Career/Professional Development: I’ve had the opportunity to learn a number of skills from my colleagues at work. These have included the participation of aiding students in the comprehension of informational text through questioning, explaining and discussing text together. Writing initial weekly communication to all parents via the weekly 6th grade newsletters, utilizing classroom management skills to maintain an ideal learning environment and many more other skills. This experience has influenced my career aspirations in such a way that I’ve been exposed to different new ways of teaching; it has also enhanced my ability to be creative, attentive and more observant. I have felt encouraged to upgrade my education and teach to the best of my ability.

New Perspectives: My perspective of how I view myself after this experience has changed in that I have become more aware of my attitude, behavior and reactions toward a number of things that I’ve faced. I have learnt more about my personality and who I am. This has been enlightening for me. I’ve grown to understand others more. I believe before I was too quick to judge people, but this experience has shown me to be patient with others and understand that we all come from different backgrounds. I have also had the opportunity to learn more about my home country. I just realized that it took me several months being away from home for me to understand more about my country, as well as understand more about the American country. It’s been enlightening to see the differences and similarities of the two countries. As for the church aspect, there’s been a number of differences and very few comparisons. Being exposed to the churches here in the U.S. has also made me appreciate my church back at home now more than ever.

Future Plans: I will begin with upgrading my education and finding a job. As much as it is difficult to find jobs back at home, I am dedicated and determined to achieve my goals. I am also looking forward to sharing and teaching my fellow youth at church and people in the community about the skills, fresh ideas, games, as well as qualities I have acquired while in the U.S. These may include sharing the knowledge I have acquired by exposing the youths to the differences in churches in the U.S., how services are led, songs, games and dances I’ve learnt and basically ways that can help the church youth improve their communities.

Jinbee Kim (South Korea)
Exchange Teacher, Hinkelton Mennonite School
Ephrata, Pennsylvania, USA

First Impression or Differences: I met Amish for the first time and experienced a really new culture. What’s interesting to me is that there are people who ride in carriages. We believe in the same God, but it was amazing that we could live such different lives.

Memorable or Funny Experience: My host family is memorable. I spent a lot of time with them. My family is Russian American. So, I lived in America but ate mostly Russian food and I learned how to make Russian food, and I learned Russian language. This was a new experience for me, and I was glad to be with them.

“Спасибо”

Faith Journey: The hardest part was to talk about how I felt and how I felt about God in English. But the good thing was that I could hear the faith of my friends living in other countries. I was glad to meet my friends who live in other countries who believe in God and talk about their faith.

Career/Professional Development: I learned how to teach children with a Christian background in my workplace. I was impressed by the teachers because they taught Christian goals and differentiated lessons according to the students’ characteristics.

New Perspectives: Work and faith could be combined into one. The people I met at work treated me like family, not as just a coworker, just like the Lord does to me.

Future Plans: I will show my new experience to my community through behavior.
**Esther Lee (South Korea)**
*Intern, Women’s Bean Project*
*Denver, Colorado, USA*

**First Impression or Differences:** First impression was quite surprising, because the lifestyle and culture here were similar to Korea. I realized it was because of the globalization. But there are still diverse cultural differences and it is fun to talk about them. For example, individuality is affirmed as a good quality in the states. On the other hand, Korea has a group-oriented culture, so group identity is more important than individuality. I learned that what is right in this culture could be what is wrong in another culture. Therefore, there is no right or wrong. There exists just difference and diversity.

**Memorable or Funny Experience:** My work involves supporting women with felonies, long histories of addiction and who haven’t had a job in more than a year. One day, I toured at the Denver Women’s Correctional Facility, which is one of our partners. I hadn’t imagined that I would visit a correctional facility in the U.S. Inmates I met there were friendly and some of them even showed us their rooms. It was such an interesting experience for me. Most of the women I support here have parents who are addicts, have had lack of opportunities to learn, and have had no role model around them. Through them, I’m learning not to judge people so quickly. There are a lot of bumpy lives I haven’t noticed before.

**Faith Journey:** I’ve met many Christians who have diverse opinions, values and world views. Sometimes it makes me confused, but it has also helped me gain a wider perspective. I’m still a seeker and will keep following Jesus.

**Career/Professional Development:** I wanted to experience a social enterprise, so I’m fortunate to work at the Women’s Bean Project. It was not an easy decision to quit my stable job in Korea. But I’m super grateful to participate in IVEP because this experience helped me to stay motivated.

**New Perspectives:** During this period, I’ve spent enough time to get to know about myself better: Who I am, what I like and what is important for me. Korea has a social standard about good life: a good university, a stable job and marriage. At some point, I forgot what I really liked and what I want. But now, after I get back home, I’ll remember what makes me happy and alive.

**Future Plans:** I don’t know yet what I might do next. The sure thing is that I will pursue what makes my life and community meaningful and worthy, instead of just choosing a safe life.

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**Brayan Javier Márquez Rodríguez (Colombia)**
*Communicator, Eastern District & Franconia Mennonite Conference*
*Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA*

**First Impression or Differences:** Akron was like a ghost town with empty streets. Church and communion were different. In the U.S. there is a hot sun in summer. I remember the drive from Akron to Philly. I was the last one and Hendy arrived late in on a rainy afternoon. I was with Andrea and we had eaten lunch at a Mexican restaurant. It was magic, listening to him, trying to see everything, nature, and thinking that I will live with the guy on my left for a long time – an Indonesian guy!! Amazing! I was really excited. We arrived in Philly at night, and it was really beautiful. Hendy chose the longest way to Philly, just to show me the streets at night, city hall, we drove over the river on the bridge. I was really amazed with the big buildings, the people and the life rhythm. We went to a Starbucks and got Indonesian coffee (it was prophetic). The main room was really cold, thanks to the air conditioner, but outside was warm… totally weird for me. The first weeks I got lost a lot in the streets. It was really confusing – I thought someone was joking with me – the same house, the same number, but different people! And the trains… OMG! One day I waited for a bus for hours, until 2 a.m., because I did not understand the instructions and Google maps was not clear to me. I felt really emotional, I even cried. Never have I been so disoriented. In Bogotá and Suacha, I used to be proud of my capacity to move around myself, to find directions. Here, totally not. After three or four months I started to understand the suburban train station in city hall, an underground station. Getting around was slow, with my bike, with Hendy (I really love this guy), with my own feet, because I decided to walk more and use the subway less. Slowly, I began to recognize the streets, the names of the blocks, the buildings, even the restaurants. Also, thanks to the salsa class, I met more of Philly. I wrote a poem one day on the train:

**OCTUBRE EN TREN**

Veo que llueve, aquí también llueve.  
El sol me sofoca, aquí también hay sol.  
Hay flores,  
Nuevas flores,  
Pero las flores no venían en mi maleta,  
Aquí también hay flores.

Cuando se mueve el tren,  
también se mueve el tren.  
Y cuando estoy mirando por la ventana,  
También pasa el mundo.  
Y si miro hacia atrás,  
Veo pasar y no venir.  
Pero voy.  
Aquí también.
Aqui también hay extremos; 
Aquí poco a poco me acostumbro a decir, 
Allá, para decir hogar, 
Igual a los días que salí de Suacha. 
Aqui también la gente sigue señalando 
A los pies cuando señalan el sur, 
Y la gente vive también sin historia.

Es cierto, el horizonte de aquí 
Tiene otros colores, 
Pero también tiene colores. 
El sol y la luna de aquí son solteros 
Sin cama, sin montañas. 
Y siguen siendo los dioses de las gentes.

Aqui también las gentes andan, 
Hacia todos lados, 
Hormigas, y miran el tiempo; 
Aqui lo que es tarde pues es tarde, 
Así los significados sean diferentes. 
Aqui lo relativo sigue siendo relativo 
Y se relativiza. 
Igual, tan igual, tan parecido, 
Tan diferente, tan opuesto. 
También y no obstante.

Aqui, de todos modos, 
También hay poesía y nostalgia, 
Y perdidos, gente de limpio corazón 
Y pasiones alborotadas; 
Las palabras se liberan 
A la vez que se acomodan 
con la diferencia de horario. 
Y la nostalgia ya no es solo bolero, 
Ahora además son estaciones, 
Y también la poesía empieza a ser otoño 
Y deja de ser verano, 
Y la nostalgia ahora llora sus velas, 
Extraña su clima subdesarrollado, 
O mejor dicho, mal comprendido.

Memorable or Funny Experience: At orientation time, with all the IVEPers and SALTers, I realized that I have some natural cultural customs. One is using my lips to point to a site, and another is saying Hello by winking one of my eyes. I did this to one SALTer and she was confused. She explained that here people wink when they are flirting. I told her I was not flirting and that I would remember her advice in the future. Then during coffee time, I was carrying coffee in one hand and a notebook in the other – my eyes were free! And she came by, and I said hello again with a wink! The second one was my last train experience, which was one of my first virus experiences. I was going to Souderton because there was a MCC activity with some IVEPers, and my boss and I were preparing the devotional to this activity. I was going to Frederick's house and on the way my boss and Kim let me the event had been canceled. Nevertheless, I decided to go and stay with Frederick. It was a good time, although I was a little scared at his host house because there were a lot of toy dolls everywhere, and it reminded me of all the different scary movies I have seen. After this day I went to the North Wales station to get the train to Philly. The first problem was that the ticket counter was closed due to a new virus schedule and I had not been able to buy the ticket with my debit card. So, I needed to buy the ticket online, which I tried, but the train arrived, and my card was not available to pay. The guy on the train told me I had to get off at the next station: I told him I didn’t have any cash, but that I had a debit card and he said it is not possible to use it. So, I left at the next station and I saw the same: closed counter. I tried to look for an ATM. I found one, and then realized my bank account was empty. I was in a big trouble. Everyone was beginning their quarantine time and I here I was in this suburb without a way to get back. I thought about the possibility of staying all the night, but I thought it was not a good idea because of the cold. I tried to call a lot of people, but nobody responded. I called Hendy and he told me to get on the next train and talk with the guy and if necessary, he would talk with him. I said okay, but I thought it would not work. In the end I decided to do it. I got on and waited for the guy to come for my ticket. This time was a woman. I gave her my septa card, but no good for regional trains. I offered her my debit card, and she tells me it doesn’t work. She said I had to get off, but not at the next one, but the one after since it would be easier find an ATM there. I said okay knowing that the ATM wouldn’t help. I repeated this process many more times, and a trip of 45 minutes became almost 5 hours until I arrived at city hall. I saved $9 and realized a way to travel for free!

Faith Journey: Ooooph. This is one of my most valued experiences. I have found my faith is stronger than before. Here, and before, I have been learning about a personal faith in my life, with my shape and my way, but also connected with the community. In all the churches I have been I have seen the love of God and the different colors of God. I had learned a lot, even if I do not understand anything, like when I am at Indonesian Light Center. But at the same time, I realized, even when I used to feel comfortable, I have not necessarily felt at home. It is beautiful to share with other brothers and sisters, but I also understand I need to take care of how I share what I honestly believe. It is something I am learning – how to stay with other brothers and sisters with different points of view and ways to love Jesus but at the same time not negate who I am, just to make sure they don’t feel uncomfortable. I can be respectful and connect with people: Andrea Castro, Frederick, Theo, Tino, Aldo, Hendy, Marco, Emily, Steve, Jena, Chema, Chantelle... People I saw who also have questions and feel God goes beyond the walls of our church buildings.

Career/Professional Development: Being a pastor is hard; they are busy people, sometimes proud, sometimes kind, always different. I chose and defend what kind of work I want to do even if others do not understand. I had needed to write, and now I love it. Also, I have needed
to learn not be a procrastinator – I am into this process and I think I am improving.

**New Perspectives:** Me: I can always learn more about new things, but also about old things. Others: Listening needs constant practice and is not an ability we are guaranteed to have.

**Home country:** I really love my country. I feel Colombia is one poem, one project, one home, an amazing soup of flavors and colors, a wild and magical country. Colombians are a testimony of all the good and all the bad of humanity.

**Future Plans:** Now all is harder. But one of my projects is to move out of my parents’ house. Graduated, I need to find good jobs. With my home community I just want to be present, share with them, give and receive smiles and hugs, and also joke. And find a girl to kiss, I have a lot of love in my tank.

* * *

**Estefanía Martínez** *(El Salvador)*

MCC Washington Office
Washington, D.C., USA

**First Impression or Differences:** In my country, I live in a small town call Metapan. It is a very small town and people move from one place to another by walking, using mototaxis or tuctuc (in India they call them that) or by bus when you need to go to another town. Here in D.C., I had to learn to use the metro or subway. It is crazy – a lot of people going in and out of the metro stations and cars. The metro has five different colors of lines so you have to be cautious because even when some lines pass through the same metro station there can be a point where the lines take different directions. Also, if you are not paying attention, you will miss your stop. Guess how many times have I missed my stop? You are right… a lot!!!

**Memorable or Funny Experience:** When the weather was nice during summer, fall, spring and some days of winter I walked home from the metro station to home, like 25-30 minutes. It was such a nice walk and I enjoyed the weather, seeing the trees turning red and orange colors, losing their leaves in October and get ready for winter. I really admired how the trees recover their leaves and turn green and how the streets are filled of different colors like pink, yellow, purple, red, orange, etc. As with the song of the birds, my walk was filled with music during spring.

**Faith Journey:** Before I decided to do IVEP, I had a job and I finished my studies. I wanted to study for a master’s degree, and I had planned my life for the medium term, so do IVEP was a step of faith for me. I had to let go of the helm of my life and give it to God, trusting that he would take it and that he would guide my way, trusting that his plans are better than mine and his way is better than mine. So, I came to D.C. without a plan for my future. This was the first time that I really didn’t know what to do in the future or what I would be doing after my IVEP year. But God took the helm and little by little he showed me the way. He was planning my future. Now, I know what I’ll do after the next three years.

**Career/Professional Development:** I work for an advocacy office. I had to learn about politics, specifically U.S. politics. I learned about how a bill become a law; I learned about U.S. congress and I learned about immigration policies. Working in the MCC advocacy office and reading a lot about politics has helped me to develop my critical thinking, make critical judgments and think on creative solutions and ways that we can use to communicate our ideas and proposals to congressman and constituents. All this experience has motivated me to want to study and learn more about communication and tools for better communication.

**New Perspectives:** Living and sharing with IVEPers from different countries, parts of the world, with different cultures, helped me to broaden my perspective. It helped me to understand that God is a creative, diverse and multicultural God who doesn’t have a single way of manifesting himself; he doesn’t have a single way of praising him. It also helped me to understand that despite our cultural differences we are a great global family and that I am part of this great global family, because the IVEPers, my host family and coworkers became my family, my global family.

**Future Plans:** Well, for the next three years I will be serving with MCC in my country El Salvador and Guatemala as Seed Facilitator. I think that with my experience doing IVEP I will be able to understand, accompany and give advice to the participants of Seed and I can talk to them about my experience in order to encourage them, to share with them that we are here to serve, to be Jesus’ hands and feet in this world. With the things that I learned about advocacy, maybe we can think in creative ways that we can implement to ask for better, just and fair policies in Guatemala, El Salvador and nearby communities.

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**Maria Elena Moshan Álvarez** *(Mexico)*

Indigenous Family Centre
Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada

**First Impression or Differences:** I was surprised by the presence of Indigenous people and their spirituality and world view; it is very similar to the original people in Mexico. I am happy to learn about their history and associate with them because somehow, it connects me with my culture and my roots. The differences, it is so
quiet here in the stores, on public transportation, even in the home. In Mexico, people turn up the volume of the music. The water and food are also different, in my country. The food is saltier and spicier and here it is sweeter. Here I can drink water from the tap – that is awesome. In Mexico, you need to buy bottled water.

**Memorable or Funny Experience:** One day when I finished a meeting with the other IVEPers, the coordinator took me home. When I got out of the car I walked up to my home. I was very sure that it was the correct home, but when I was in front of the door I saw that it looked different and I turned my head and saw the next house and said to myself, “This is not my home! It is the next one!” I ran and turned my head to see if my coordinator’s car was still there, but I didn’t see anything. I was very embarrassed, but at the same time I was amused because I could laugh at my confusion. For me all the houses looked the same, but in time I could distinguish my home from others very well.

**Faith Journey:** My mom taught me to pray every day for every moment; she is a wise woman. This teaching helps me so much here because it doesn’t matter if I have a good or bad time, every day I pray because God is there; in the snow, trees, rivers, birds, wind, moon, sun and sky, in the people as well, in all creation God is there. God teaches me goodness, patience, love, humility and gratitude for the life and for the family that I have in Mexico and my family here in Canada.

**Career/Professional Development:** The language is the principal skill, during this time my English has improved. I’m so glad for that. The other skill is working with beading. It will be good having this knowledge.

**New Perspectives:** I feel encouraged and able to do anything. It doesn’t matter how old you are, if you have dreams you can reach them. Diversity is a gift and I can celebrate that diversity. I have learned to know new people with different culture, language, religion but with a great heart. And I learned to look for the peace, within myself and in my relationships with others.

**Future Plans:** When I go back home, I want to work with communities with food security, resilience and preservation of nature and continue to serve in my church. And I will share how to make earrings and mittens in different places like communities or churches.

**Maiga Muga** *(Tanzania)*  
*Intern, Agriculture & Community Development,*  
*Hungry World Farm*  
*Tiskilwa, Illinois, USA*

**First Impression or Differences:** After I landed at the Dulles Washington Airport, we drove from the airport to Akron, PA. This was the first time I saw the U.S. with my naked eyes. I was so impressed to see the good infrastructure with roadsides. It was summer so all the vegetation was green. I noticed how people respected the road signs when they drive, even when they drive outside of downtown.

**Memorable or Funny Experience:** Here in the U.S. I was changing the clock every time I crossed another time zone and also at Daylight Savings Time. My phone did this automatically but when I looked at my clock and saw the difference I got confused, and I did not know which one was correct. This was very fun because sometimes I woke up late.

**Faith Journey:** One of the challenges was the worship style. The church I attended was a challenge because the services were quiet and short compared to my church in Tanzania. But as the days went on, I started to adjust, and my first host family and church members helped me a lot to grow in faith in the new environment.

**Career/Professional Development:** I am a teacher in my country, where I teach Geography and Swahili. Being in an agriculture placement was a golden chance for me to learn different techniques of farming, especially organic farming, about how we can farm without disturbing nature. In Geography we teach Agriculture and Climate Change, so this opportunity gave me a chance to learn and experience things by doing and seeing. As a teacher I will use my knowledge and experience that I’ve learned here to educate my students, farmers and other stakeholders in the environments (environmentalists).

**New Perspectives:** We belong to each other and we need each other to grow spiritually, physically as well as emotionally. Human beings are not an island; we live in the world where we need one another so what I have experienced is that we should not ignore the power of interaction.

**Future Plans:** My plan is clear; I want to use my teaching profession to impart knowledge to others in my country. More than 70 percent of the population are farmers but these farmers are lacking knowledge because some of them they still practice agriculture where they do not make a profit to sustain their living expenses, so I want to establish a learning center for smallholder farmers where we’ll provide agricultural education about how they can take care for creation. According to research, agriculture is the leading factor for climate change. People are lacking knowledge and I will be happy to impart knowledge to them and see changes in the agriculture sector and in our environment.
Yerxiong Navongxai (Laos)
Management Intern, Crowded Closet Thrift Shop, MCC
Iowa City, Iowa, USA

Memorable or Funny Experience: My time at Crowded Closet, where I experienced people with different backgrounds was memorable. Everybody was so nice, and they made it a fun environment to work in. Also, my first host mom, her name is Barbara Freyenberger, she is a wonderful mom to me. She loves me, and her family makes me feel like they are my family. I can feel the motherly affection from her and the moments we’ve had together. Lastly, at my second host family (Malinda and Lee Turnbull), I will always remember when Malinda cooked for us and taught me how to play piano, when we go on our walks, when we spend time watching movies together and letting the dogs out and spending time with their grandkids.

Faith Journey: One of the many difficulties that I faced here is the language barrier because I can only understand some words at church. But even if I don’t understand what they’re saying, I know that we are still glorifying God and their love for one another like how Jesus loves us.

Career/Professional Development: I have learned to be a cashier, a cashier and retail assistant, a greeter, and how to work in housewares, the shoes department, adult clothing, sunglasses, books department, and stocking items out in the retail flow; I worked at silent auctions, donation receiving, deposits, and took pictures for the volunteers to put on the wall.

New Perspectives: From my perspectives of my home church in Laos and the church in the U.S. that I am attending, there are differences. There are fewer younger people in church here than in my home country. Sometimes it makes me feel lonely because of the language. I didn’t understand well and everything is very different from my home church but if I think about all these problems, I just pray to God that I want to understand more English and want to get closer in my relationship with God. I know that all different people and different churches all only worship one God.

Future Plans: When I return home, I would like to find a job as a sales manager. I want to start my own business too, because I would like to use what I have learned. It will be good for me to get more income to help my family then I will be able to buy land for building a house in the big city of my country. For my church, I would love to continue teaching English free for the kids at my church during Saturday morning or evening time because I see some of the kids really want to study English. I want to give them the same chance as other kids. I would like to share my experience and my skills with all my friends and family.

Lungelo Sethu Ndodana (Eswatini formerly known as Swaziland)
Merry Lea Environmental Learning Center, Goshen College
Goshen, Indiana, USA

First Impression or Differences: Most people in the U.S. are punctual; they are aware that time is the most important weapon in life while back home there are only a few people who arrive on time to any certain event. Back home, we eat lunch at 1 or 2 pm, and eat supper at 7 to 8 pm, depending on the rules of that family while here that is not the case. At home you are not allowed to call somebody who is older than you by their name; we consider that a sign of disrespect yet here it is not a problem. Eye contact when talking to my parents is not allowed and females are not allowed to wear pants or trouser, especially in my family, and a married woman must cover her head while here that is not the case.

Memorable or Funny Experience: Playing soccer indoors, ice-skating, playing broom ball on a lake and dancing with my colleagues at church.

Faith Journey: For as long as I can remember, my faith has been a part of my life. Growing up, our family attended church every weekend and on special days. Church was the beginning of my faith. My Mom, Dad, two sisters and I, knelt down around one of our table each day before going to bed to pray together. Our prayers were memorized words. Today my prayers are more of a conversation with God, and I enjoy and rely on this part of my faith life. My parents taught us that in everything that we do we must invite God because without inviting Him we cannot succeed. Today, Jesus is the center of my life, my family as well as my friends. We all know that life is not perfect nowadays, but with Jesus this is the greatest adventure I have ever experienced. Having Him in the center gives me assurance that everything is going to be okay, no matter what. When this life is over, I trust I will see His face welcoming me into eternity.

Career/Professional Development: Skills I learned here include milking a goat, identifying fruit trees using a phone app, watering plants using an advanced irrigation system and interacting with people of different tribes and ages. Also, I learned about recycling, living with people other than family, how to manage a farm and what one needs to be a manager. All these things I am looking forward to transforming into my dream of being a successful entrepreneur.
**Future Plans:** As an ambassador of my church, I see an increase in my maturity since I have been in a well-developed country. I have to show my family and friends, as well as everyone in my society, that my mentality has increased.

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**Tom Nussbaumer (France)**

*Site Assistant, Camp Charis*

*Chilliwack, British Columbia, Canada*

**First Impression or Differences:** My living place in Canada could be described as “beautiful landscapes” and “loneliness.” British Columbia is a majestic place between the ocean and the mountains. I'm used to often being surrounded by people; here it turned out that I was taking meals alone and I was spending a lot of time alone.

**Memorable or Funny Experience:** Because there was another “Tom” in my workplace and because I did not correctly pronounce my name in English, I received another name: “Thomas.” This new name is a symbol of my new identity acquired during this year. I am at the same time different and similar to who I was in France before this IVEP year.

**Faith Journey:** During this year, I have developed a faith more focus on my relationship with God as a father. My father in heaven revealed himself through amazing and countless ways: walks in the forest, books, a smile, a sunbeam, visions, songs, poems... God is bigger, better and nearer than what I thought he was.

**Career/Professional Development:** In France, we don't have Christian camps like Camp Charis. However, it could be awesome to have some. I don't know if it is possible, but I am definitely convicted about the relevance of this type of Christian camp. More personally, I have learned so many manual things because my work was very diverse. More surprisingly, because having a mentor and participating in Christian events in the camp, I am feeling more confident to enter into the ministries one day.

**New Perspectives:** Wow, my perspectives are wider for sure. It is difficult to describe. What I can say is that I don't consider myself as a French Christian guy but as a world Christian guy. I no longer want borders, which are shifting and have always shifted in the past, to define my identity. I no longer want to see people as a stranger, but as different.

**Future Plans:** Back in France, I will go back to my studies, but I definitely want what I have learned during these months to impact my daily life. I would like to continue to develop my faith (take time with God, mentoring...), to develop my openness to people different than me, and to develop my character.

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**Joyce Obando Valle (Nicaragua)**

*Casework Assistant, Della Lamb Community Services. Kansas City, Missouri, USA*

**First Impression or Differences:** I flew into Washington, D.C., airport, and to be honest, I felt a little overwhelmed to see so many people in the immigration line. During the 20-minute immigration interview, I experienced a little discrimination for being Latina. On being allowed in I thought I'd have to deal with discrimination, stereotypes and prejudices around me. Then I met the MCC staff and SALTers, many of whom I was able to connect with; they seemed to be young people with a great sense of social justice. After my experience at the airport, I was scared about the dynamics at work and with my host family. However, after spending time with my host family (a single mother and her adorable baby) and integrating into the work team (Della Lamb Staff), I felt more secure. I had a very good impression of my environment. Well, like everything in this world, not everything is the same color. I found it a little difficult to get used to the fact that the American citizen is more individual than collective. In my country the opposite is true. For us community life is very important. I think that has been the most heartfelt difference for me.

**Memorable or Funny Experience:** I used to sing a nursery rhyme all the time to the baby in my first host family’s house. The baby’s mother heard me sing it many times over several months and didn’t say anything about it. Then, one day I was singing it to myself while working. A case manager at work asked me what I was singing and asked me to repeat it. I didn’t understand why he started laughing. When I asked him why he was laughing, he laughed more. I was singing was “Twinkle, twinkle little star,” except that I was singing “Tinkle, tinkle little star.”

**Faith Journey:** Well, my journey of faith has gone through highs and lows. I have felt very strong and confident at times. I have also had gray days where I feel lost and I wonder what God’s purpose is for my life, and I can’t make any sense of my life, with many questions in my mind and my heart. It is only then the Lord’s Words come to mind, “Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord and puts his trust in Him. It will be like a tree planted by the water, extending its roots toward the current, it does not fear that the heat will come, and its leaves are always green. In the dry season it does not worry, and it never stops bearing fruit.”

“When you cross the waters, I will be with you; when you cross the rivers; their waters will not cover you. When you walk through the fire, you will not burn, the flames will not burn you.” “He will not allow your foot to slip; he who cares for you never sleeps.” Then my strength and confidence feel renewed. I can say that after so many falls and rises, my faith has gone through
a process of metamorphosis; it has made me a person who recognizes how good God has been with me, and that it’s not always evident to human eyes to see the work that God is doing in each of our lives. But if you stop to do it with spiritual eyes you will be able to see all the wonderful work that God is doing in silence. You can cross the waters without drowning and walk through fire without getting burned. I trust Him with all my heart.

Career/Professional Development: I’ve learned how non-profits struggle for money, and the large amounts of paperwork and documentation required to meet guidelines that go with funding from American Federal Government departments. I believe this will help me integrate more easily into a job doing social work, and hopefully help me get funding from international aid agencies and non-profits that fund social work in Central America.

New Perspectives: Before I came to the U.S., my view of the U.S. and its people were based on pop culture. I was worried about how I could deal with refugees, because of their going through very traumatic experiences. I now realize that we are all the same – the same things bring us joy and happiness, we have the same fears and dreams for our children and those we love. Americans have been very welcoming and helpful. I have been impressed by the sense of humor and joy shown by refugees, and how they can still laugh at themselves and at the smallest things. This will help me when I face my own troubles, and I know I will deal with them with courage – very little compared to that needed and shown by the refugees.

Future Plans: I want to do social work for my church and to help give back to my community. As an IVEPer, I have realized I can work effectively with people of all backgrounds and very different cultures. I have learned how to diplomatically shift perceptions gradually, without being obvious or confrontational about it. This has given me confidence that I can do what I want better than I could have without my IVEP experience. The culture and church in Nicaragua is very paternalistic, and I hope that I can use my experience to show people that women also have a lot to contribute intellectually as well as socially.

Michael Antonio Quezada Somarriba
(Nicaragua)
Spanish Assistant Teacher, Eastern Mennonite University
Harrisonburg, Virginia, USA

First Impression or Differences: When I came to Akron, I was impressed by the greetings and farewells that are usually short. Some people don’t spend a lot of time talking with someone especially when you meet them for the first time. During our orientation, we had such great experience getting to know all the IVEPers and SALTers. When we reached Harrisonburg, I met my host family. They had been in Central American countries for a long time. I enjoyed spending time with them. My favorite seasons are Fall and Winter. I had a great experience skiing in the snow and making a snowman.

Memorable or Funny Experience: My favorite experience was spending time with the Conservative Mennonites in the Dayton community, seeing up close their beliefs and how they support each other as a community. We spent a weekend with them. We went to the church with their horse and buggy. I will say, they have the best food that I have ever eaten before. I had the opportunity to help and learn the process of the meat canning; it was a neat experience.

Faith Journey: I struggled for one month to get to a new church because I have never been away from my church, however, I learned that God put me in the correct place to do something. I’ve been feeling blessed at my workplace. Being surround by teachers, host families, friends, and colleagues has been a great opportunity for my faith to grow.

Career/Professional Development: This experience helped me to identify what I want to be in the future, and I found myself in the correct place to learn. Through this program, I learned a lot of teaching resources and ideas. I realized the importance of teaching students according to their different levels. Recently I learned how to work online using Zoom due to the situation that we are living right now with COVID-19. I found some interesting books about teacher resources at Gift and Thrift. I recommend, if you are a teacher, go for it.

New Perspectives: Through this cross-culture service, I could work on my self-confidence. I had the experience to interact with other people from different backgrounds and it allowed me to describe this experience in three words: Explore, Learn, Respect. They are very powerful words that help to get to know new people from other countries. I learned as well that God speaks in different ways, in a loud or quiet service. It doesn’t matter what religions we are; Jesus is looking for our heart, and the love that we show to our neighbors and our testimony as Christians.

Future Plans: I plan to get a job as an English teacher. I want to help my community and church by sharing my experience about how God changed my life through this program. Life is a circle of happiness, sadness, a hard time and a good time. Have faith that a good time is on the way. God bless you!
**Waega Paul Samwel (Tanzania)**  
*Assistant Teacher, Eastern Mennonite School*  
*Harrisonburg, Virginia, USA*

**First Impression or Differences:** Education system: In the U.S., education is more advanced in term of technology – very different from the technology we deploy in the education system in Tanzania. Moreover, education is structured in different levels. For example, in Tanzania we have 7-4-2-3, meaning seven years in primary school, four years in secondary school, two years in high school and three years in university. In the U.S. the structure is five years in elementary school, three years in middle school, four years in high school and four years in university. Furthermore, in the U.S. there are enough supplies and learning materials such as books, apparatus, laptops and other tools. Health system: In the U.S., for someone to get health service he or she has to be documented and making an appointment to see a doctor may take a long time. In Tanzania, anyone can go to a hospital at any time and get medical care, although in Tanzania if someone is injured from an accident or fighting, he or she has to get a license from any police station nearby that will allow them to get treatment.

**Memorable or Funny Experience:** The Amish lifestyle: They can get a ride from another person in their car, but they cannot own a car due to their religious belief that owning such property is sin. Also, in their churches the men and women sit on different sides. Their way of dressing, both women and men, is different too. Generally speaking, the Amish lifestyle will be memorable.

**Faith Journey:** Homosexual relationships in churches: Every human being has freedom to choose what he or she wants. In Tanzania, there has been a tendency of believing against people’s decision and inclusion in churches. When I came to the U.S., I realized churches allow people to decide what they like so people of same gender can announce their engagement in church and there was no problem with that. According to my faith background faith in Tanzania it was a challenge observing all this in churches. But generally, I can judge anyone on his or her decision to decide what he or she wants since all human beings have the right to choose what we want.

**Career/Professional Development:** In school, I have learnt different teaching strategies and methodologies regarding managing a classroom for the prosperity of student’s futures and the next generation as a whole. For example, I have learnt how to use PowerSchool technology, which allows teaching and doing different presentation using projectors.

**New Perspectives:** I used to think that I already knew English, but since I met people in the U.S., I need to go back to school to increase my English skills in speaking, writing, listening and reading. There are aspects we need to change in our churches and others we need to add.

**Future Plans:** I will do a presentation to young people in our church. I will do seminars with my colleague at the school where I will work.

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**Sochetra Soeun (Cambodia)**  
*Museum & Archive Assistant, Mennonite Heritage Museum*  
*Abbotsford, British Columbia, Canada*

**First Impression or Differences:** Canada is such a beautiful and safe country for me. I love snow and my first time seeing it I felt really excited and blessed. I can say that it is colder, much colder, than Cambodia, even when it is not winter. I have only two seasons in my home and here there are four. The people I met are friendly and helpful. I love my workplace and my host family. The time is different. The way we talk is also different sometimes. I don’t take public transportation and walk a lot in my home country and most of the time I use my motor bike but here I really enjoy walking and learning to take the bus to work. The environment is very clean because people know how to separate the garbage really well. I love the traffic in my place where I am serving.

**Memorable or Funny Experience:** I took the wrong bus from work to home and spent almost two hours on the bus. Another day I got off the bus at the wrong bus stop because it was foggy, and I could not see the road well, so I had to walk to my workplace about half hour more than usual. I’ll always remember seeing, touching and tasting snow for the first time. I was really excited!

**Faith Journey:** I try keeping and building my faith by praying, reading, listening and attending church. I always read one chapter and pray every day before I go to bed in my own language, so it is really helpful to me. When I look back on my life, especially the time while I am here and away from my home, I see His protection, guidance, mercy and blessings to me, even if it is sometimes small, I can say that I am very blessed. He has been teaching me a lot about how to be faithful in all circumstances even when sometimes it is hard, but I can see the joy in that situation. He always has a purpose for me.

**Career/Professional Development:** I can say my English and communication are getting better, so it really helps my career. Besides that, I have learnt about Mennonite history, worked as a librarian, receptionist, in a bookstore and coffee shop and learned how to make a
brochure in Microsoft Publisher. I can say all these new things I learnt from here are important and help to add beauty in my future job. Through serving and working here I have more interest in research and reading books. That is not what I liked to do, but now I feel that I love reading books more than before.

New Perspectives: I have seen some changes in me. I realize that if there is something I don’t like to do now it does not mean I don’t want to do it for the rest of my life. Trying something new is not bad. Understanding, forgiving, loving, sharing, is the best key to getting to know each other even when we are from different places. In Christ we are one family. It has really inspired me that we all over the world can know each other through this program and have the same God for worship. We should not judge and assume about other people unless we get to talk and hear from them. People have their own value and right even if they are poor or disabled.

Future Plans: I will work in an accounting job, learning more about taxes and helping my church with finances and I am willing to do some translation work for church.

Maria Paula Suarez Peña  (Colombia)
Pastoral Intern, Ebenezer Mennonite Church
Abbotsford, British Columbia, Canada

First Impression or Differences: Each first impression is unique, for me it was like a dream – OMG FINALLY!! Everything was la vie est rose, until the cultural shock hit me, and I realized that this journey was with more colours.

Memorable or Funny Experience: In December, my friends and I had the chance to visit the Christmas market here in B.C., and afterward we got together in my home for food!! I made spaghetti and we were sitting together when my friend said I was her first kiss. I froze and everybody was quiet… I took some time to think because I didn’t kiss anybody. Then she clarified that I gave her a kiss on her cheek, HER CHEEK so we laughed, but of course I felt super embarrassed. Since I came here, I felt that I respected others’ personal space, but it wasn’t like that, and giving hugs and kisses is how I show someone I appreciate them.

Faith Journey: This is up and down, but no matter what God is Good. He always Is, so it can be hard to connect because all your context is different, but step by step you would see how He Is and Continues to Be.

Career/Professional Development: We are continually learning – to start a list of my skills would take more than my 700 words, but you know, always be humble! Having the chance to participate in a program like IVEP was more than just professional; I have been allowed to grow in so many areas of my life.

New Perspectives: Have you ever felt that the world is super small? That’s a good way to describe how my perspective has changed, to see how we are so interconnected to each other, to have the chance to love someone that lives on another continent, laugh with a person who thinks in another language. Sometimes we separate from each other because of our differences. I found that for me, even though I’m Colombian, I am part of the world, so sometimes thinking about labels, like culture, can create division. So apart from all that, I’m just a citizen and all the people I had the chance to meet, I see them as citizens just like me.

Future Plans: Sadly, this is so uncertain. I have a lot of dreams to achieve, but our world is massively changing, so all I can think of is making a contribution to my country and to the world, even if is small.

Somita Tamang  (Nepal)
Life Skill Coach/Caseworker, Utturn-Youth for Christ
Brandon, Manitoba, Canada

First Impression or Differences: Without any doubt, the first impression of Canada for me was beautiful snow and pretty houses. I was so excited to see snowfall and make a snowman for first time. I was enjoying the snow outside by myself and that made me feel sad that people were not enjoying it and just staying inside. But later, after six months of continuous cold and snow, I realized the reality of Canada. I began to see snow as nothing too exciting, hahaha. WELCOME TO THE COLDEST PROVINCE OF CANADA! 😊

Memorable or Funny Experience: The staff at my workplace were very funny and liked to joke a lot. I will never forget how we used to throw stress balls at each other, and I used to tease them a lot. I am short (sad to say) so I had a sore neck as I had to look up to talk with everyone. While shopping for groceries, I couldn’t reach top shelves, so I had to jump or wait for some random person to help. It was embarrassing because the shelves were not even that far to reach for others. At home too, I had to use small chairs to reach shelves. Another funny thing was falling while walking on icy roads; it was painful too. I can’t forget that. And I had to buy clothes from the kid’s section only and that was funny too, but it was cheaper too.

Faith Journey: I never thought I would be coming to Canada as a part of the MCC IVEP program. So, I am always grateful to God and MCC for this opportunity. It is not common for me to talk about God at work in my country so the fact that there were pray meetings
and bible study and prayers before starting the workday made me feel like I was close to God every day and I could feel his presence in my life. There were times of loneliness, sadness, disappointment, doubts, fears and hopelessness, but my faith in God has gotten stronger and he has always been so good to me. I also got to meet these incredible people at my work who appreciate my presence, my host family who wants me to have the best experience, the good coordinators of MCC who check on me and listen to my worries and my friends who always try to make me laugh. So, I have become a very optimistic person and believe in God and his work in my life. I had a hard time in church because I didn’t enjoy the service, but later I realized God is the same and no matter how we worship or pray, he is the same God who is by our side and sees our heart. So, I started to enjoy the services and his presence in me. I was once hopeless, but I am returning with a heart full of hope and love.

Career/Professional Development: Working in ‘Youth for Christ’ as a Life skill coach for homeless youths to provide support they need was not easy. At first, I thought I wouldn’t be able to do it as I have never worked with youth so closely before. But slowly I learnt different skills from my coworkers. I learnt the value of listening and having compassion without any judgements. I also learnt computer and organizational skills. I was involved in every area of my work placement and I found myself with a changed attitude and more open toward my job. I studied social work, so I believe I have learnt the value of serving and the cost of being a social worker to support vulnerable people with compassion, love and a mindful attitude.

New Perspectives: I have always underestimated myself but coming here made me realize how God wanted me to know that he can work through every person in different ways. I was not open to other cultures and beliefs before coming here but now I have started loving different cultures, their values and their faith. I enjoy being part of their culture too. Most importantly, I realized how I love serving people and I will be doing that from now on. I have realized the value of being a social worker, so I am hoping to contribute more to social organizations, like MCC, that work for peace and development.

Future Plans: The first thing I will do is share my experience as part of this program. I will start working with youth in my church and talk about depression and addiction among youth. I have become very open to this topic now and I think it is very important to talk about it. I would also like to work with MCC in the future in this capacity.

Abigail Tangbuin (Nigeria)
Assistant Teacher, Central Christian School
Kidron, Ohio, USA

First Impressions: Arriving at the Washington, D.C., airport at 8:40am, it was a warm day and at first the sun reminded me of my home country, which is warm, but after being here for almost a year, I realize it was one of those days with perfect weather. The first things I noticed at the airport was orderliness and technology at its peak. I was picked up at Harrisonburg airport and some things were fascinating to me like the traffic with no honking, the perfectly smooth roads and people drove with their car windows closed. Then I understood the concept, which is the difference between developing and developed. Cars moved at a certain pace and it seemed like my eyes and ears were deceiving me because everywhere was so quiet, and I couldn’t see people hawking and screaming. At some point I realized I was going to miss seeing people on the street hawking and screaming for me to buy their product. Also, I couldn’t just yell through the car window when I saw people I knew.

Memorable Experience: The whole year has been memorable, from cooking in the kitchen together and dancing at the same time, eating together, attending family gatherings, cleaning together, shopping and our every Sunday evening hangouts at grandpa Garry and grandma Diann’s house. Just being part of the family, and everyday I spent at the Miller’s, is memorable and I cherish it.

Faith Journey: This experience has been humbling in regard to my faith. I saw where so many times my faith in God has been tested during this experience. Sometimes, when I think of life after this program, it’s disturbing but every morning and night I open my devotional and I always see God assuring me every single day and night to trust him and constantly reminding me about how he has plans for me. My family and church have always been encouraging through their acts of love and teachings about God’s word. Right now, I am growing every day and my knowledge of who God is and how he works have been broadened. As my faith has grown and matured, I have this innate desire to communicate with God more through mind, body and soul. My knowledge about God is better now than it was years ago. And, it continues to change as I read, learn and dive deeper into God’s word.

Career/Professional Development: The whole experience this year has helped in building my capacity as a teacher and as a social worker. I’ve learned how to work with little children and even though the educational system in my home country is different, working at Central Christian as an assistant teacher has broadened my knowledge.
New Perspectives: My perspective about myself has changed. I have become humbler by challenges and by the love that has been shown to me. When I talk about challenges, they are more psychological, fear of the unknown (future). I would say I have grown more emotional and spiritual, which works hand in hand. I have experienced love from people around me and these acts of love have made me learn to love people more regardless of who they are or where they come from. I have also discovered that my relationship with God has grown and I recognize the extent of his love.

Future Plan: I'm planning to further my education (MSc) in peace and conflict resolution. While I study, I will also look for a job or start a business.

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Kwanele Nkululeko Thembani (South Africa)
Assistant Pastor, Madison Street Church
Riverside, California, USA

Memorable or Funny Experience: My host family was not very extroverted, but since I have been with them, it has been so amazing how much they have grown into being a little bit extroverted.

Faith Journey: My faith has grown so much since I have been here. Having someone like my supervisor has made it so easy for me to work on my faith and to grow so much.

Career/Professional Development: I think the thing for me that stands out is public speaking. That has been the main thing that I have been challenging myself with.

New Perspectives: I used to limit myself so much in terms of me only being only able to communicate to the kids at the kid’s church. I also never thought I would be able to grow in my faith outside of my home and my faith.

Future Plans: I want to take the lessons I have learned through MCC and apply them back in my community and my church.

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Bemnet Tsegaye Metaferia (Ethiopia)
Activities Assistant, Living Branches
Lansdale, Pennsylvania, USA

First Impression or Differences: My first weeks were really hard in trying to understand why people are the way they are in the U.S. I was surprised that people talk about the weather every time. I was overwhelmed by the same questions asked from everybody again and again. I was surprised by how everybody is fast and busy. It was hard for me to go at the same pace with Americans. I was curious if people will be welcoming like my home country, but I was blessed with an amazing host family and many kind residents who made sure I’m enjoying my stay.

Memorable or Funny Experience: Every get-together we had with Kim and the East Coast IVEPers has always been memorable. I won’t forget the neat experience we had with the Old Order Mennonites, the time I went to Sight & Sound, Ocean City, the aquarium, Longwood Gardens, concerts and many more places. When my host parents, Javi and I went to a hockey game in November was amazing, as was my birthday celebration with my host parents, Fred and Jinbee; and Jinbee’s cupcakes. But above all Christmas will always be the best time. From the lights to the gifts and all the crazy shopping, I’m definitely going to miss Christmas here.

Faith Journey: I have learned to be real in my walk with God. I have learned to show my weakness to God, and I saw him help me. I have learned to worship him in another culture. I have been reminded of the price Jesus paid for me and to never take it for granted. God proved to me that wherever I go, he’s there with me.

Career/Professional Development: I have developed a skill of communicating and having a good time with older people. I have seen a lot of women standing up for themselves and being leaders, which influenced me to be like them. Through my cultural presentations I was able to learn about cultures I didn’t know about in my own country and I was able to understand the difference between my culture and the U.S. culture. I have improved my guitar skills.

New Perspectives: It made me think globally. I learned all the myths I hear about other countries are only about a few people and aren’t true. It was a blessing to know everybody and share their culture. Though we are all different in language and culture we were able to share so many laughs, tears and understand each other. There’s no language or race in heaven since we are one in Christ who makes us united. IVEP was like a glimpse of heaven for me.

Future Plans: I want to continue my MA studies and find a job in social work. I will try my best to influence my community with all the good parts of the U.S. culture I have learnt this year.
Andrea Castro (Colombia) experiencing her first snow while visiting host-grandparents in Indiana

Javier Marquez (Colombia), front center, and Frederick Dandure (Zimbabwe), back center, at an IVEP potluck with Frederick’s host parents Eric and Linda Bishop

East Coast IVEPers and their coordinator at the Virginia MCC Relief Sale

West Coast IVEPers enjoying national forests in California: Kwanelo Thembani (South Africa), Andrea Castro (Colombia) and Cui Cui (China)

Central States IVEPers experiencing the Wichita Kansas Botanical Garden Winter Lights Festival with their coordinator, Abby Endashaw. Left to right, Carlos Dabonne (Burkina Faso), Joyce Obando (Nicaragua), Joao da Rocha de Lima (Brazil), Abby, and Yerxiong Navongxai (Laos)

Ereyn Botros (Egypt) enjoying fall colors and weather in Indiana
Maiga Muga (Tanzania) riding a Christmas sleigh in Illinois

Michael Quezada (Nicaragua) doing MCC meat canning with new friend, Mary Ella Knicely in Hinton, Virginia

Esther Lee (South Korea) volunteering and showing wares at the Rocky Mountain relief sale in October 2019

Gabi Furman (Brazil) and Nsofwa Kaseketi (Zambia) knotting an MCC comforter for the MCC Great Winter Warm-up

Joyce Obando (Nicaragua) putting all to her work at Della Lamb Refugee Center, Kansas

Maria Alvarez (Mexico), left, watching a hockey game with host dad Gerald and host sister Kim
Nunee Inthaphone (Laos), center, sharing Valentine gifts with her co-managers at Save and Serve Thrift Shop, Ohio.

Sethu Ndodana’s (Eswatini) walk on the ice river, Indiana.

Right to left, Maria Paula Suarez Pena (Colombia) with Sochetra Soeun (Cambodia), and Sochetra’s host parents John and Ruth Schmidt.

Somita Tamang (Nepal), center front, posing for a photo with her work colleagues at Youth for Christ in Brandon, Manitoba.

African ladies at the International Worship Festival during the Mid-Year conference (from left to right) Abigail Tangbuin (Nigeria), Ereny Botros (Egypt), Nsofwa Kaseketi (Zambia), Bemnet Tsegaye (Ethiopia) and Tino Gumbo (Zimbabwe).

A trip to Washington D.C. From left, Tinotendashe H. Gumbo (Zimbabwe) with Steffi Martinez (El Salvador), Waega Samwel (Tanzania) and Michael Quezada (Nicaragua).
Carlos Dabonne (Burkina Faso) is always up for something new...like roller-skating during orientation!

Bement Metaferia (Ethiopia) with hosts Dave and Bonnie Moyer

Carlos Dabonne (Burkina Faso) is always up for something new...like roller-skating during orientation!

Yerxiong Navongxai (Laos) in traditional Hmong new year clothing with her first host mom, Barbara Freyenberger

Halloween pumpkin carving in California with Kwanele Thembani (South Africa), Thomas Adlard (West Coast MCC Coordinator) and Andrea Castro (Colombia)

Learning to ice skate in Wichita, Kansas: Abby Endashaw (Central States Coordinator), Carlos Dabonne (Burkina Faso), Esther Lee (South Korea), Yerxiong Navongxai (Laos) and Joao da Rocha de Lima (Brazil)

Merry Christmas from hosts Monica, Brandon, Katelyn, Benjamin and Lucas Miller with Abigail Tangbuin (Nigeria)
**Adventure**
Not only have I explored the world on a broader scale, I have also explored my mind and learnt more about myself.
(Tinotendashe Hazel Gumbo, IVEP, Zimbabwe to USA)

**Adventures “Aventuras”**
I discovered a lot about people, places and myself. To perfectly sum up my experience I quote Michelle Obama: “BECOMING is never giving up on the idea that there’s more growing to be done.”
Descubrí mucho sobre la gente, los lugares y yo mismo. Para resumir perfectamente mi experiencia cito a Michelle Obama: “Llegar es nunca renunciar a la idea de que hay más cosas por hacer.”
(Nephtalina Ramille, YAMEN, Haiti to South Africa)

**Adventures “Aventuras”**
It is full of excitement, self-discovery, educational and experience.
Es una palabra que implica la emoción, el autodescubrimiento, la formación, y la experiencia.
(Sunny Kumwenda, YAMEN, Zambia to Lesotho)

**Amelioration**
I’m choosing this word because it’s one I learned while editing documents at my placement. It means “the act of making something better” and I think this year has been one that has helped make me a better person.
(Elsa Lantz, SALT, USA to Vietnam)

**Awesome**
Because I have learnt so much and met wonderful people from all over the world and have become better than I was before as a person, spiritually, socially and psychologically.
(Frederick Dandure, IVEP, Zimbabwe to USA)

**Bloom**
Flowers don’t always bloom as expected. Sometimes they are dug out, separated from the others and replanted somewhere else. Sometimes they seem to have died and then they spring up a year later. Either way, something deep and meaningful is taking place within the life of the flower, regardless of what it may seem like. Often this year has felt slow, unexpected and confusing. At times it was easy to think that it was for nothing, but in reality, I truly believe that God is always at work. The things I learned might still be unknown but someday they will take hold and bloom into my life.
(Kailey Schroeder, SALT, Canada to Nicaragua)

**Challenge**
It is a challenge when I asked the question if I will be up to doing well what I would be asked to do in an environment different from mine.
(Issaka Dabonne, IVEP, Burkina Faso to USA)

**Challenge “Desafío”**
Because it has been another challenge in my life to overcome in order to grow in maturity and grow spiritually. Porque ha sido un reto más en la vida a superar, para crecer en madures y Espiritualmente.
(Yosmel Delgado Henríquez, YAMEN, Cuba to Bolivia)

**Change**
I like to do what I don’t like to do before and try something new. For example, reading books and researching.
(Sochetra Soeun, IVEP, Cambodia to Canada)
Compassion
Because being compassionate is a sample of being Jesus.
(Andrea Ricardo Castro Serrano, IVEP, Colombia to USA)

Compassionate Person
Because I have started to love serving people. I am ready to help people
and do my work with love and compassion.
(Somita Tamang, IVEP, Nepal to Canada)

Confidence
This word has continued to come to mind as I think of what this year has meant to me. I’ve always
had a confident personality, but when it comes to deeper issues of identity and important decision making,
I’ve always found it hard to feel like I can trust myself to make a good decision. This service year
I have stepped into a much greater confidence in myself and what I am capable of, learning how to
advocate for myself, take care of myself, and trust myself in the process.
(Madeleine Cameron, SALT, USA to Bolivia)

Contentment
I learned to be content in the situation in which I am now and not looking always for something else.
(Tom Nussbaumer, IVEP, France to Canada)

Courage
Throughout my SALT term I have had to be courageous and have been courageous in so many different ways and
situations. I have prayed for courage and have surprised myself with what I have been able to do and the courage that I
have.
(Erin Moyer, SALT, Canada to Burkina Faso)

Creativity
Every day I’m using my creativity to live in a new country with a different context from mine.
This creativity has permitted me to reinvent my life here in Canada.
(Maria Elena Moshan Alvarez, IVEP, Mexico to Canada)

Daring “Atrevido”
I don’t mean it in a reckless way, rather it is about being daring to speak up for yourself and make your wish
or hope known to others kindly. I find it helpful especially when living in a new community.
No lo uso en una manera imprudente, sino de atreverse de hablar por sí mismo y hacer que otros sepan
de tus deseos o esperanzas. Lo pienso útil especialmente al vivir en una nueva comunidad.
(Ratna Windhi Arsari, YAMEN, Indonesia to Laos)

Elevating “Elevar”
It was both strengthening and encouraging me to be a better version of myself. I am now strong,
patient, confident and future driven. I was risen to another level.
Tanto me forteleció como me animó ser una mejor versión de mí misma. Ahora soy fuerte, paciente,
segura de mi misma, y dirigida hacia el futuro. Se me elevó a otro nivel.
(Perseverance Ndlovu, YAMEN, Zimbabwe to Colombia)

Exciting Adventure
Because this has been like an adventure for me since it’s my first time in another country.
It wasn’t boring, but exciting and a learning experience.
(Bemnet Tsegaye Metaferia, IVEP, Ethiopia to USA)
Expand
This year was all about being challenged to “make room” … not just in the stomach for mezze or kenefe. But also, in the nervous system for new stresses, in the heart for new people, and my mind for radically different, often co-existing, ways of seeing life.
(Evangeline Hammond, SALT, Canada to Lebanon)

Faith
Faith can move mountains; Christ Jesus is the center of our faith.
(Maiga Muga, IVEP, Tanzania to USA)

Faith
Because of the sickness that’s been going on and some of those things that are out my control, I have to faith. It’s in Jesus’ hands; He will take it away. And even though I am far from my family, but I know that Jesus is with me every moment, protecting me and he will never leave me alone.
(Yerxiong Navongxai, IVEP, Laos to USA)

Faithfulness
In times of emotional hardship, physical weariness, and psychological doubt, God has proven His steadfast love to me and others I hold dear. In Hurricane Dorian, God preserved my Florida family and friends, while throughout my experience in Cambodia, God surrounded me with people to explore, fellowship, and learn from.
(Anneliese Hardman, SALT, USA to Cambodia)

Fate “El destino”
When I least expected to be here – as I was supposed to be an IVEPer to Canada – through His infinite love God sent me to Indonesia to learn and serve His purpose.
(Cuando no esperaba estar aquí como se suponía que iba a ser un IVEP a Canadá, entonces a través de su infinito amor Dios me envió a Indonesia para aprender y servir a su propósito aquí y no en Canadá.
(Olicky Muchindu, YAMEN, Zambia to Indonesia)

Fearless “Audaz”
Not as in “not afraid of anything,” but this year I was trained to just set aside the fears and doubts I have, be courageous and adventurous, try new things, meet new people, and reinforce in my head that God has my back all the time.
(No Sin miedo, sino a “no tener miedo de nada”; pero este año me preparé para dejar de lado los miedos y dudas que tengo, ser valiente y aventurero, probar cosas nuevas, conocer gente nueva, y reforzar la idea de que Dios me cubre las espaldas todo el tiempo.
(Mia Michaela, YAMEN, Indonesia to Zimbabwe)

Flexibility “Flexibilidad”
During this year, I had to learn to be flexible every day, everywhere, in all situations and to be ready to have plan changes anytime! It was a good exercise for me to “let go” and let God be in control!
(Durante este año, tuve que aprender a ser flexible cada día, en todas partes, en todas las situaciones y estar lista para cambios de planes en cualquier momento. ¡Fue un buen ejercicio para “soltarme” y tener menos control, dejando a Dios tener el control!
(Jessica Rychen, YAMEN, France to Tanzania)

Go
Because that is all it took for me to find who I am and what God’s purpose is for my life; also, that my journey is not over yet, I should continue to go with my faith.
(Kwanele Nkululeko Thembani, IVEP, South Africa to USA)
Grace
I have had to have grace for myself and for others, and I am so thankful for the grace that I received from my host family, workplace and community.
(Jenna Denlinger, SALT, USA to Nicaragua)

Grace!!
(Koumonnssen Batein Theophile, IVEP, Chad to USA)

Grateful “Agradecida”
All the forces of darkness can’t stop what God has ordained.
I am grateful to God because I got what I never imagine having.
Todas las fuerzas de la oscuridad no pueden detener lo que Dios ha ordenado.
Estoy agradecida con Dios porque tengo lo que nunca imaginé tener.
(Chanmonika Yoeurn, YAMEN, Cambodia to Ukraine)

Grateful
I am grateful for God guiding me and leading me on his way. I am grateful for MCC and FIRM giving me opportunities to serve this special year and for this special experience. I am grateful for IVEPers that we can participate in the activities here, encourage each other and grow together. I am grateful for my family for always understanding and supporting me and encouraging me to make me stronger. I am grateful for my host family encouraging me patiently and caring about me like a real family. I am grateful for everyone I met along the way for giving me a warm smile and sometimes helping each other, making me feel “I am important and a blessed person,” also making me feel “Peace in every corner of the World.”
(Cui Cui, IVEP, China to USA)

Gratefulness
The entire year I kept coming back to this word. I felt grateful for the year and everything I learned from the experience, both good and bad. This year has also taught me to be so grateful for where I come from and the life I have been given.
(Micaylee Pucilowski, SALT, Canada to Zimbabwe)

Gratitude “Gratitud”
There were many events that happened in my life this year and I am grateful to have both the good and bad experiences that have brought me learning moments and the recognition of the grace and favor that I have received.
Hubo muchos acontecimientos durante el año en mi vida y estoy agradecido de tener buenas y malas experiencias que me trajeron el aprendizaje y reconoczo la gracia y el favor que recibí.
(Jose Massada, YAMEN, Mozambique to El Salvador)

Growth
I’ve begun growing in faith, in my Spanish language ability, and perhaps most importantly, in my understanding of myself and my dreams.
(Clare Maier, SALT, Canada to Bolivia)

Growth
My faith journey has been growth.
(Michael Antonio Quezada Somarriba, IVEP, Nicaragua to USA)
Happy “Feliz”
I enjoy the weather, food and clothing here.
Disfruto el tiempo, la comida, y la moda acá.
(Rahil Kumari, YAMEN, India to Nigeria)

Immense
It’s been a year of great challenges and great joys that are sure to change my life forever.
(Lauren Payne, SALT, USA to South Africa)

Intentionality
For me, it’s been really easy to just blend into the background considering I look Nepalese. When I’ve intentionally chosen to get out of my comfort zone, use Nepali and strike up conversations with strangers or extended host family I’ve had good conversations, and sometimes formed good relationships.
(Jose Ortiz, SALT, USA to Nepal)

Intriguing
Working in a Honduran school that is also a non-profit or charity is very different from working in the U.S. public school system.
(Kara Jackson, SALT, USA to Honduras)

Learning “Aprendizaje”
Because I have been able to gain new knowledge and new challenges for my life. It was a year full of good moments and also some unpleasant things, but through it all I have been able to be more expressive and set aside my timidity.
Porque e podido adquirir nuevos conocimientos y nuevos restos para mis vidas, ya que así como fue un año bastante lleno de buenos momentos también fue un año de cosas un poco desagradables, pero de esa cosa e podido ser más expresiva y dejar un poco la timidez por un lado.
(Angelica Natareno Gonzales, YAMEN, Guatemala to Nicaragua)

“Lekil kuxlejal”
This is a phrase in the Maya Tzeltal language that means harmony in life, personal realization, and interior peace.
(en lengua maya tzeltal) que significa armonía de vida, integración del individuo y paz interio.
(Marian Avila Molina, YAMEN, Honduras to Mexico)

Levi
He is one of my host brothers and I always felt that we are alike: exploring the world and life, causing a lot of disorder, eating new foods and trying spicier foods, trying to speak a new language. Many times, we use new words we learned, like when he saw Asher the first time (his new brother) and the first thing he said was, So cute! One hour later he came to the basement where Hendy and I were grinding the coffee beans and he saw a spoon and he said the same thing, So cute!
(Brayan Márquez Rodríguez, IVEP, Colombia to USA)

Life Changing “Transformador”
This is because it has brought in a whole new perspective toward how different life is for the other person. I mostly thought about life from my own perspective but now I appreciate and tolerate differences more than ever before.
Este es porque me ha dado una nueva perspectiva entera a lo diferente que es la vida para los demás. Mayormente pensaba en la vida de mi propia perspectiva pero ahora aprecio y tolero las diferencias más que nunca.
(Victor Michael Odinda, YAMEN, Kenya to Cambodia)
Light “Luz”
In this year, I have been able to focus on the Light found in Jesus and I am reminded that there is Light to be found in every situation.
(Victoria Callow, SALT, USA to Colombia)

Listening
This year has been a year to be quiet, to reduce all internal and external noise and sit down to listen carefully to God, his plans and purposes in me.
(Estefania Martinez, IVEP, El Salvador to USA)

Love “Amor”
Because since I arrived in Bolivia, I have received love from everyone in the team, work, church and community.
(Porque desde que llegué a Bolivia he recibido amor por parte de todos en el equipo, trabajo, iglesia y comunidad.
(Mauricio Rosario Melendez, YAMEN, Dominican Republic to Bolivia)

Love “Amor”
And maybe also trust, the one tied to the other have permanently marked me.
If the love of God had not reached me and I had not put my trust in Him, I believe that I would not have even managed to get on the plane and travel here and take on this challenge.
(Y tal vez también confianza, la una amarrada a la otra me han marcado permanentemente.
Si el amor de Dios no me hubiera alcanzado y no hubiera dejado mi confianza en Él, creo que no hubiera logrado ni siquiera subirme al avión y viajar hasta aquí y asumir este reto.
(Keyla Rocío Ricardo Parra, YAMEN, Colombia to Honduras)

Love
Love of the culture, love for the food, love for the people, love for the work and the kids, and an overall sense of love, even in challenging times.
(Hannah Kurtz, SALT, USA to Bolivia)

Love
It is the first, the second and the greatest commandment.
(Abigail Tangbuin, IVEP, Nigeria to USA)

Mesmerizing
From the geographical diversity and beauty to South Africa’s EXTREMELY complicated social, political, and economic history and current affairs to the utterly evident juxtaposition of wealth and poverty to the vibrancy and energy of its vast array of peoples to the amazing experiences I’ve been privileged to have – I have been both wonderfully and horribly mesmerized by this country.
(Loren Friesen, SALT, USA to South Africa)

New “Nuevo”
Being exposed to almost everything new and different has expanded my being to new thinking, speaking, relating and empathizing and a lot of new areas of personal and professional developments. I am excited to see how these new developments will apply in another context after the YAMEN year.
(Estar expuesto a casi todo lo nuevo y diferente ha ampliado mi ser a nuevas formas de pensar, hablar, relacionarme y empatizar y a muchas nuevas áreas de desarrollo personal y profesional. Estoy emocionado de ver cómo estos nuevos desarrollos se aplicarán en otro contexto después del año YAMEN.
(Jonathan Ngarama, YAMEN, Kenya to Cambodia)
Nurturing
When I use this word, I don’t mean that this year was easy and comfortable. What I mean is that in the stretching, in all the discouraging moments, and in all the new experiences, I felt held and supported by the family, coworkers and friend I found here. I cannot be more grateful for this.
(Nadia Garcia, SALT, Canada to Palestine & Israel)

Opening Up
Being vulnerable, overcoming personal, community and national traumas is so important because lessons learned won’t be repeated and the world is ready for healing!
(Josh Ward, SALT, USA to Nicaragua)

Optimistic
I chose being optimistic because despite being faced with a lot of challenges, I’ve had a mental attitude with the tendency to have a favorable view on situations in life. My own convictions have helped me expect positive outcomes rather than negative ones.
(Nsofwa Kaseketi, IVEP, Zambia to USA)

“Pamoja”
This is the Swahili word for “together” or “as one.” This describes my year because of all my growth and my experience, I found the most influential things in what I did with others. My YALTer group, my host family, the partner I worked with, and Olepolos as a whole showed me what community really means. And you are part of it, “pamoja” or “as one,” working toward a goal or just enjoying time.
(Randall Schmidt, SALT, USA to Kenya)

Patience
With myself in Arabic study and cultural integration, with colleagues and projects I want to be perfect, in friendships, and in the struggle for political change and just peace.
(Dylan Forbes, SALT, USA to Lebanon)

Patient
There were many times where I needed to be patient with myself and others, especially concerning language learning. Almost on a weekly basis I would remind myself to be patient and enjoy the present moment, no matter how challenging.
(Noah Haglund, SALT, USA to Jordan)

Peace
This year for me is so simple and peaceful. It was possible because of all the support I’ve received. I can’t imagine life here without the love and support of my host, friends and MCC. I really appreciate it and I’ll never forget this moment in my life.
(Esther Lee, IVEP, South Korea to USA)

Perseverance
This year was difficult. It was not all adventure, cultural events and taking photos. It involved many moments of isolation and culture shock that I had not anticipated to this degree. I have only been able to persevere thus far by trusting in God.
(Katelyn Quiring, SALT, Canada to Indonesia)

Possible “Posible”
Nothing is impossible with God. I learnt that whatever God wants is possible to Him.
Nada es imposible con Dios. Aprendí que todo lo que Dios desea es posible por Él.
(Enosh Rupamajhi, YAMEN, India to Indonesia)
Privileged “Privilegiado”
When God chooses me to serve him, he doesn’t look if I am worthy or if I am capable; he wants my obedience and he wants me to trust in Him and believe that He is a God who can multiply every little thing that I do.

Cuando Dios me eligió para servirle, no mira si soy digno o si soy capaz; quiere mi obediencia y quiere que confíe en Él que es un Dios que puede multiplicar cada pequeña cosa que hago.
(Minear Mak, YAMEN, Cambodia to Colombia)

Purpose
This word was mine at the mid-year conference. I found being here was for a purpose.

God wants me to learn a lot.
(Ereny Botros, IVEP, Egypt to USA)

Renewal “Renovación”
Time to get away from my familiar and comfortable surroundings to offer my service with love, being transformed in the process. (Compared to the process of renewal of an eagle.)

Tiempo de alejarme de mi entorno familiar y cómodo para brindar mi servicio con amor, siendo transformada en el proceso. (Comparado al proceso de renovación de un águila.)
(Ela Jael Castro Licona, YAMEN, Honduras to Guatemala)

Rest
One Bible verse that has stood out to me this year is Jeremiah 6:16, which talks about the “good way,” where “you will find rest for your souls.” Sometimes I have been in a place of discomfort, seeking that soul-rest, and other times, the slow pace of life and the serenity of my surroundings have bestowed it in abundance.

(Claire Smeltzer, SALT, USA to Uganda)

Right Time
This year is so good for me to learn new things because it came at the right time.

This year is so good for me to learn but next year it will be the best time for me to work because God helps us on time.

Este año ha sido tan bueno para mí para aprender nuevas cosas porque llegó justo al momento propicio.
Este año me es muy buen tiempo para aprender pero el año entrante será el mejor tiempo para trabajar ya que Dios nos ayuda en el momento debido.
(Jeu Song, YAMEN, Laos to Indonesia)

“Sawa”
“Sawa” is a Swahili word that’s used for many things like “ok,” “sure,” “sounds good,” etc. I used it all the time in response to conversations I only half-understood, a change of plans, spontaneous visits to neighbors, and what have you. It really highlights for me just going with the flow and rolling with it.

(Megan Baumgartner, SALT, USA to Kenya)

Self-confidence “Confianza en sí mismo”
If you want to achieve something in life don’t lose your self-confidence.

Trust yourself and trust on God, keep patience and peace.

Si quieres lograr algo en la vida no pierdas la confianza en ti mismo.
Confie en sí mismo y confie en Dios, mantenga la paciencia y la paz.
(Nandita Kumar, YAMEN, India to Lesotho)
Snow
The snow is cold, but it makes people happy. Like this, my life in America was hard, but I experienced various happiness in it. (Jinbee Kim, IVEP, South Korea to USA)

Spontaneous “Espontanea”
I let the day-to-day surprise me, letting everything flow and not trying to force anything.
Dejo que el día a día me sorprenda, dejando que todo fluya y no forzando nada.
(Kathy Figueroa, YAMEN, Nicaragua to El Salvador)

Tenacity
At the risk of sounding dramatic or prideful, I want to say tenacity. I don’t want to make it sound like I’m enjoying this experience less than I am, because it has really been wonderful in many ways. But some of the emotions I’ve been feeling this year have forced me to dig down into my reserves of determination to stubbornly say, God’s got my back and with Her help, I can experience and see the beauty in intense feelings without letting them define me, be they of irritation or satisfaction, loneliness or excitement, jealousy or joy.
(Lilia Mast, SALT, USA to Honduras)

Thank You “Merci” “Gracias”
There are no words to describe this year, but we can say it’s a melancholic year with joy and sadness. Leaving a family for a year is not easy. In spite of this, MCC has filled my void to a great extent so the word is Thank You, with a very joyful heart.
Pour parler cette année il n’y a pas de mot mais, on peut dire c’est une année mélancolique joie et tristesse laisse une famille pour une année c’est pas facile. Malgré MCC a comble mes vides a un fort pourcentage donc le mot c’est merci avec un cœur très jovial.
No hay Palabras que puedan describir este año, pero puedo decir que ha sido un año de melancolía con alegría y tristeza. Dejar a mi familia anfitriona de un año no es fácil. Aunque CCM ha llenado este vacío con un gran alcance, así que la palabra es Gracias con un corazón gozoso.
(Hosnay Bernard, YAMEN, Haiti to Burkina Faso)

Thank you “Gracias”
I appreciate that I have such a wonderful experience to grow further this year through the YAMEN program and that I have been loved the way I am.
Aprecio que he tenido una experiencia tan maravillosa de crecer más este año a través del programa YAMEN y que he sido amado justo como soy.
(Seorin Wi, YAMEN, South Korea to India)

Thank you “Gracias”
Thank you, MCC, for this memorable experience in my life. May God bless you very much in everything that makes you the light of the world.
Gracias, MCC, por esta experiencia memorable en mi vida que Dios les bendiga mucho en todo que hace que sean la luz del mundo.
(Sairoze Nherezane Ndaruza, YAMEN, Mozambique to Mexico)

Thanksgiving
Throughout this year crazy things have happened and through it all, God has been faithful; friends and family near and far have been supportive; and the sun rises on a new day. I am so thankful for all of the lessons, blessings, and learnings that happened this year.
(Lydia Musselman, SALT, USA to Palestine & Israel)
Transformation
I have changed my way thinking, perception and familiarity.
(Waega Paul Samwel, IVEP, Tanzania to USA)

Transformative
I am not the same person as before. From this cross-cultural experience, I have an optimal vision of what God means for my life and what my life and those of others mean to Him.
(Joyce Obando Valle, IVEP, Nicaragua to USA)

Trust
In a year full of so many unknowns, so many new situations, new people, and new languages, all I can really do is trust in something beyond myself, trust in God.
(Andrew Bauman, SALT, Canada to Guatemala)

Try “El intento”
If you don’t try, you will never learn new things.
Si no lo intentas, nunca aprenderás cosas nuevas.
(Maria Sok, YAMEN, Cambodia to Nigeria)

Unexpected
From the beginning, I did not expect to take part in SALT as I thought I would be in grad school this year. Then, having traveled so much in my life, I did not expect it to be a challenge (spoiler: it was very challenging). And last, for my entire year every time I agreed to take part in an event or do anything for that matter, I never quite knew what I was getting myself into; you could say I learned to expect the unexpected.
(Alison Quiring, SALT, Canada to Zimbabwe)

Unique “Única”
I never thought that a journey could teach me so much. It has been an extraordinary time. It doesn’t compare with anything I have experienced before. It hasn’t been easy, but all the good moments outweigh the complicated ones. It has been a marvelous time, so much so that I’m still waiting for the culture shock haha. I feel that from now on I will always carry Colombia in my heart.
(Genesis Katherine Reyna Jaimes, YAMEN, Bolivia to Colombia)

Value “Valorar”
Having, then, what we need to live and clothing to cover us, we will be content with what we have.
(1 Timothy 6:8)
Teniendo, pues, sustento y con qué cubrirnos, estaremos contentos con estas cosas. (1 Timoteo 6:8)
(Karen Díaz, YAMEN, Colombia to Bolivia)
Value “Valorar”
I believe that everyone has a right to add value into their life experiences and not rely on somebody else.
Creo que todos tengan el derecho de dar su propio significancia a las experiencias de la vida y no depender en otro para hacerlo.
(Khaykeo Phouthavong, YAMEN, Laos to Kenya)

Vitality
Meaning the continuation of meaningful or purposeful existence – was the commitment I made to myself and commitment shown to me by those in my community as every day came with new challenges and new experiences of peace.
(Hannah Larson, SALT, USA to India)

Warmth
I experienced the incredible warmth of the sun in a whole new way in the country where I served and I also experienced the warmth of the local community and refugee communities where I lived and worked.
(Anna Selles, SALT, USA to the Middle East)

WOW
I didn’t see that coming, simple word but explains A LOT.
(Maria Paula Suarez Peña, IVEP, Colombia to Canada)
SALT participants

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Global Service Learning (GSL) Department’s purpose and mission is to develop and resource short-term, introductory service-learning opportunities within MCC, with the aim of facilitating increased understanding and relationships among communities worldwide. Current programs include: SALT, IVEP, YAMEN! and Seed. GSL also resources Work and Learn Teams and Learning Tours, SOOP (Canada), Summerbridge and Summer Service.
Andrew Bauman  
(Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada)  
Community Development Assistant, ANADESA  
Santiago Atitlán, Guatemala

First Impression or Differences: I came into the assignment knowing a bit about the history of the town where I was going to be living, especially the tragedies that it had faced in the recent past – from massacres during the civil war to a devastating hurricane. Something that surprised me when I arrived was how cheerful everyone seemed to be despite these recent tragedies. I have noticed people seem to generally be very positive, a lot more so than in my community back home. The people seem to always be making jokes and laughing a lot (especially at my attempts to speak their language!).

Memorable or Funny Experience: A memorable experience for me has been going down to the lake to go fishing with my host family. It first consists of searching through the reeds on the shore of the lake for little water bugs called “skuplin,” which are used as bait for the fish. The fishing is pretty simple, they just use some fishing line wrapped around a can with a hook and a “skuplin” at the end, but it’s not uncommon to come home with about 10 fish! I have found it a pretty beautiful experience, one because of the natural beauty of being down at the lake at sunset, and two just the time spent with the whole family together, something that is pretty rare for this family outside of the house.

Faith Journey: This year has been really positive for growth in my faith. There have been many opportunities when I have really needed to trust in God, especially with so many unknowns and being so far from my friends and family. The exposure to different ways of worshiping God including the hyper Pentecostal “evangélicos” and the catholic church, both with a bit of Maya spirituality mixed in, has definitely broadened my perspective. I have also had a lot more time just to myself than I have had in the past. This has been great. I find I connect most deeply with God when I am on my own in nature. Having so much of this this year has been really rich.

Career/Professional Development: I am not sure what my future holds in terms of career, but this assignment has given me a significant mix of different experiences that could end up being helpful in the future! Through tutoring children, I have discovered hanging out with kids is something I do quite enjoy. I also have been able to give some English classes, which is something I could see myself doing again.

New Perspectives: My time in Guatemala has given me a lot of new perspectives. I have come to understand that despite such significant cultural differences as there are between a small indigenous town in Guatemala and a big city in Canada, there still is a lot that we have in common. I have come to understand that it is possible to make significant friendships despite these cultural differences. Another change that I have experienced in myself is my perspective on tourism. It’s been interesting living in a town with significant poverty, that is close to one of the most touristy spots in Guatemala. I have seen the economic benefits tourism brings, but also some of the harms it has on the local culture. It has caused me to think a lot more critically about tourism and this privilege of travel that I have.

Future Plans: This year has been reinforcing in my desire to work with people, especially from other cultures. I could see myself working with international people back home, or maybe doing something abroad again in the future. Further work with MCC definitely interests me!

Megan Baumgartner  
(Hesston, Kansas, USA)  
Community Development Assistant, Olepolos Community Mennonite Church  
Olepolos, Narok County, Kenya

First Impression or Differences: When we first arrived in Nairobi, it was around 8 pm and already dark outside, unlike the summer going on back home. In the airport, the electricity was out, so we waited to enter the country under security lights, switching lines and trying to find the right forms. In the daylight, the city felt much like the U.S., though the traffic was insane, and I spent each walk to work praying I didn’t get hit by a “matatu” (city bus) or “bodaboda” (motorcycle taxi) driving on the sidewalks. Moving to my placement in the village was a relief; it felt more like rural Kansas. On my walks to work, I went from dodging cars to weaving in and out of cow herds and school children wanting to pet my arm hair.

Memorable or Funny Experience: Many of my favorite memories revolve around my host siblings and our cousins who live on the same farm compound. These include singing Whitney Houston’s “I Wanna Dance With Somebody,” watching the Kenyan soap opera “Maria,” dancing, throwing big beetles at each other, wrestling and chasing each other around the yard, and the birth of a baby sister, Naisoi.

Faith Journey: Living in a Mennonite community in rural Kenya helped give me a sense of belonging as soon as I arrived. However, church services felt very different than back home. I had to learn that church starting at 9:30 am, didn’t mean the service started at 9:30 and it would go however long the Spirit leads. Sitting through four-hour services conducted only in Maa and Swahili was definitely an adjustment. Reading the scriptures selected for the service, but not understanding the pastor’s interpretation challenged me to think about why I believe...
what I believe and how I understand and interpret scripture coming from a different cultural context.

Career/Professional Development: Working in a rural setting, I learned more about the importance of relationships over deadlines. The work will get done but being present in the moment, and with the people around you, is what life’s all about. I was also able to be part of a community-wide survey to help the village reflect on how far they’ve come and what community development goals they still have. It was very cool to be engaged in the entire process, from planning and buying supplies, compiling data and reviewing the budget, to watching the community laugh and dream together.

New Perspectives: Spending a year across the world from my family, I realized just how true the cliché “home is where the heart is” really is. There are reminders every day that I don’t fit in in my village, from the obvious differences like the color of my skin or my accent, to the more subtle differences, like how I choose to drink my chai while I eat instead of waiting to finish my food. But there are even more reminders every day that Olepolos is my home, that I am a member of the Sadera family, and I belong. I’m greeted by name on the road and across fields. A sense of belonging isn’t as much about a place or a culture, but the people you’re with. Community and family can be found anywhere.

Future Plans: My first plan upon returning to the U.S. is to go to Taco Bell. Only God knows the future, but I’d like to visit friends and family for a few months before moving back to Kansas. I’d like to pursue a job that combines the relational and caring aspects that I learned in Kenya with my science education. Maybe a job with less deadlines and more tea breaks.

Memorable or Funny Experience: Hmm, well one time I was trying to make boiled eggs and Abuela said she wanted one too. I boiled the water, put the eggs in the water, and then started a timer for eight minutes. Abuela came in the room and asked how long the eggs had been in the water. They had only been in the water for four minutes, but she said that we needed to take the eggs out. While I knew I wanted my eggs to cook for eight minutes, I panicked and said, Uh sure... So, we took the eggs out. When I went to crack the “hardboiled egg” yolk poured out all over the counter. They were still raw! (of course.) We ate them anyway (they were gross, but I never waste food). Later we laughed about the fact that Abuela wanted a par-boiled egg, but I misunderstood and took all of the eggs out because I was afraid of offending her. Over everything, I learned that even in a different country with a different language, I still know how to laugh, and I know how I like my eggs.

Faith Journey: A new insight that I’ve learned, or re-learned, is that I don’t have to have it all together. I don’t have to be able to communicate perfectly to have worth in the eyes of my Father. I’ve been reminded that through everything, I need to be kind to myself in order to be kind to others. Finally, this year was full of reminders that my worth is in my identity in Christ and in nothing else.

Career/Professional Development: While this year wasn’t exactly what I had in mind, it was full of surprises and newfound love. I was able to help with music classes, learn the guitar, sing with kids in English, as well as work professionally on my English as a Second Language skills. I have also learned more Spanish than I thought possible in the past few months and I’m looking forward to keeping up this new development in the language center of my brain.

New Perspectives: There have been so many perspectives changes this year that it’s difficult to keep track, however, I would say that I have enjoyed new church and worship traditions, new ways to communicate, to pray, having my breath taken away by the mountains every day, and a newfound appreciation of sunsets (from the “more of a sunrise girl”). The main perspective that I wish to take away from this year is that we’re all people with experiences, loves, and heartaches. What a good reminder to have in a world where we often forget our humanity.

Future Plans: I plan to look for English teaching positions in a middle school when I return to the U.S. However, I don’t know if I will continue teaching in the U.S. long term or if I will continue to look for positions in other countries where I can continue learning Spanish. I think that with this uncertainty it will be difficult fully re-integrating into my church/home community. However, through everything, I’ve learned that it’s important to be FULLY where I am, no matter how long I’m there.

Victoria Callow (Ohio City, Ohio, USA)
English Assistant & Youth Coordinator,
Americano Menno School
La Mesa, Colombia

First Impression or Differences: I had a lovely first impression of my assignment country/community. I was (and am) absolutely enamored by Colombia, the myriad of murals, the food, the mountains, and of course, the people. Some differences include bagged water, making sure to shut doors very softly (because only gringos slam doors), the constant presence of shoes (even when inside your house), and greeting everyone with a hug and touching cheeks. While many aspects of life in Colombia may be considered different from the U.S., there are so many similarities and it has been refreshing to focus on unity found in Christ, as well as the unity found in good coffee.
Madeleine Cameron (Pasadena, California, USA)
Educational Assistant, Stansberry Ministries
Santa Cruz de la Sierra, Bolivia

Memorable or Funny Experience: The first night I spent with my host family, I experienced what is now referred to as the infamous cockroach incident. It lasted four hours and I don’t want to talk about it much except to say, yes, they fly; no, I had never seen one that big in my life thus far; and yes, I am now aware of some of the unexpected critters that come with living in a tropical climate! Also, any time I said “tengo hambre” instead of “tengo hambre.”

Faith Journey: My experience here in Bolivia has come with lots of growth and new questions, many of them self-reflective. I am a much different person spiritually than when I arrived: I carry my beliefs more loosely than I did before, but this is not to say that I hold my convictions less firmly. Instead, I feel more open to listening to how others experience and have come to know the creator of the universe, and more willing to let go of beliefs I once held that I no longer believe to be true. Since I’ve let go of the pressure to have everything match my old-world view, I feel the freedom of mercy and grace in my spirit! I have the courage to ask bolder questions, and I am more confident in who I am.

Career/Professional Development: During my time working in the daycare and the children’s home at Stansberry, I have had the opportunity to work in many different areas of the ministry, which has also helped me to develop skills like personal initiative, communication of my needs and hopes, and offering of my personal experience/skills. I now have experience in many different areas, including the children’s home, trauma-informed mission work, homework tutoring, daycare education, translation, and office administration. This is not to mention the fact that I am now semi-fluent in Spanish, a huge personal and vocational goal of mine!

New Perspectives: I am coming out of this service/learning experience with more confidence and courage than I ever imagined I would have. There were many times in the past few months that I thought I had been pushed to my limit, only to realize there was still more I could give, more I could learn, more I could overcome. Over the course of the year I have become so much more aware of my bias toward the western way of doing things. This perspective places higher value on ideas, beliefs, or social structures that are western in nature, invalidating the experiences of other cultures/belief systems. This is what colonization looks like in today’s world, and if we want to be serious about our desire to do helpful global mission work, we (from the west) have to be willing to intentionally deconstruct this mentality and the social systems that support it. In short, I am learning that mission work is not about bringing Christ to a people – it’s about learning from them and alongside of them the ways that God is already working in their communities.

Future Plans: I am looking forward to continued processing of this year (I’m sure there will be many months, and even years of this). I am excited to share with my church community the parts of myself that have changed, as well as the parts that haven’t. I have more clarity as to what kind of work I want to do, and I’m excited to look for job opportunities that will continue to pursue those passions.

Jenna Denlinger (Lancaster, Pennsylvania, USA)
Community Library Assistant,
Centro Cultural Batahola Norte
Managua, Nicaragua

First Impression or Differences: My first impression of Managua was that it seemed much more like a large town rather than a capital city. Rather than being congested with tight buildings and heavy traffic, it is more sprawling and open.

Memorable or Funny Experience: Some of my most memorable experiences have come from using public transportation. One day on the bus a little boy squeezed past me carrying a plastic cake carrier with a clear plastic top, and I had to do a double take when I realized he wasn’t carrying a cake inside the container, but a giant rat.

Faith Journey: My relationship with Christ has deepened, and while at times it was difficult to find Him throughout this year, I realized that He is the quiet voice that invites me to join in the joy that He is doing around me. When I found it hard to see the joy in my circumstances, He reminded me to quiet myself and look a little deeper.

Career/Professional Development: This year I was able to translate documents from Spanish into English for my organization. I hope to be able to further develop this skill and put it to use in my work in the future.

New Perspectives: My perspective on church has changed over this year, I’ve realized the value in having church with small groups of people and have a much greater appreciation for sharing meals and conversation with community.

Future Plans: I will be attending Eastern Mennonite University in the fall to continue my social work degree. I hope to be able to use my degree to work with immigrants and refugees.
have the unique challenge of bridging expectations of all its advantages and limitations. Local organizations experience of working for a small Lebanese NGO, with my position and vulnerable people.

Our dependence on God’s grace and of God’s heart for the privileged, sheltered standpoint) reminded me daily of MCC and my partner organization (even from a instability of Lebanon and Syria through the work and enlightening for my faith. And experiencing the friends I made outside the seminary was also formative we could learn from each other. Listening to the Muslim Christianity more – but we eventually discovered that surrounded by Christians often makes me doubt this proved to be, ironically, hard for my faith – being afraid of heights, I was uncomfortable already, though the views were incredible. At one point, the driver realized he needed to turn around. He attempted to back up and drive forward inch by inch, on a one lane road with a mildly terrifying cliff behind us. Evangeline and I sat in the backseat, shouting fretful nonsense each time he got too close to the edge (which was every time). At one point we really thought we were going to go over! We held hands and reconciled our fate. But somehow, the driver made it work – never underestimate the Lebanese bus driver! We did not tell our reps or parents about this until we made it safely back to Beirut the next day.

Memorable or Funny Experience: When some friends decided to spend the night in a valley famous for hiking through ancient monasteries, we had to hire someone to drive us in a van along the precarious mountain roads. Being afraid of heights, I was uncomfortable already, though the views were incredible. At one point, the driver realized he needed to turn around. He attempted to back up and drive forward inch by inch, on a one lane road with a mildly terrifying cliff behind us. Evangeline and I sat in the backseat, shouting fretful nonsense (attempted Arabic) each time he got too close to the edge (which was every time). At one point we really thought we were going to go over! We held hands and reconciled our fate. But somehow, the driver made it work – never underestimate the Lebanese bus driver! We did not tell our reps or parents about this until we made it safely back to Beirut the next day.

Faith Journey: We lived in a dorm with Christians. This proved to be, ironically, hard for my faith – being surrounded by Christians often makes me doubt Christianity more – but we eventually discovered that our opinions and perspectives were all very different and we could learn from each other. Listening to the Muslim friends I made outside the seminary was also formative and enlightening for my faith. And experiencing the instability of Lebanon and Syria through the work of MCC and my partner organization (even from a privileged, sheltered standpoint) reminded me daily of our dependence on God’s grace and of God’s heart for vulnerable people.

Career/Professional Development: My position and opportunities here have given me the invaluable experience of working for a small Lebanese NGO, with all its advantages and limitations. Local organizations have the unique challenge of bridging expectations of large international funding partners with contextual realities on the ground. This can be tough but also presents an opportunity for mutual learning. Local organizations are the ones who must manage disagreements between these “worlds,” bear the brunt of both local and global economic crises, and hold the responsibility of catalyzing grassroots change. I am immensely grateful for my mentors in this challenging work and context.

New Perspectives: What surprised me initially and continue to surprise me are the layers upon layers of complexity and nuance in this region. Every person I speak to has a different experience of truth, history, and reality. Thus, everyone I speak to opens up a new perspective for me, uncovers another layer of what Lebanon and Syria are. In fact, ALL of it is Lebanon and Syria – the good and the bad, the contradictory narratives – and thus it is a puzzle we will never finish and a story we will never hear the ending to.

Future Plans: After visiting home, family and friends, I plan to return to Lebanon to continue working with my local partner organization. I feel that I only just began to understand what questions I should be asking, and I want the chance to continue asking them after SALT is finished. Whenever I end up in the U.S. again, I hope to bring a lot from Lebanese office culture back with me. For example, every day, all the colleagues would eat lunch together, no matter how much work we each had to finish that day.

Memorable or Funny Experience: My time here has been filled with continuous spurts of amazing experiences rather than one standout experience. Hiking to waterfalls, surfing on the beach, watching rugby and soccer matches, settling in cozy coffee shops, practicing hot yoga, taking salsa and kizomba classes, finding hidden gems at craft markets... To put it simply, every week is different and memorable.
Faith Journey: Refugee Social Services is on the frontline of assisting those forced to leave their countries, their homes, with the desperate hope that they can survive in South Africa. Seeing and hearing their stories, and especially the pain and trauma that they have experienced both as they traveled here and even when they stay here, it is sometimes difficult to continue to have faith that we, even with God's guidance, can correct the deep-rooted issues of this world. It is difficult to trust that things will get ultimately better. It is difficult to truly hope that injustice will be fundamentally corrected.

Career/Professional Development: The biggest lesson I've learned being a Communication Administrator is that you can't wait for the stars to align in order to do work; at some point you must simply go for it and figure it out. We, as humans, learn best by doing, by trial and error, and I've learned that all the planning and potential in the world won't mean anything if you never step out and actually do the work. The CA job is brand new to this organization, so everything I'm doing is essentially from scratch, self-initiated. It's easy in these circumstances to continue to plan and plan, but I discovered that the position itself will build organically through doing, not planning, and by making mistakes and adjusting.

New Perspectives: I've realized I do not enjoy pure independence and isolation as I previously thought: for the first few months I was socially alone, other than my host and the occasional neighbor I hung out with, but starting in January, I began to develop more relationships with people my age and the difference it has made in my overall mood and happiness is immense. I also want to applaud every person that steps out of their home and lives (by choice or not), especially when they do so on their own. Although I have traveled, I've only done so within the cushioned lining of familiarity, usually with family or friends. To come to a new culture, new country, even just a new city and try to integrate is far steeper of a mountain to climb than I previously thought. Finding friends, learning traffic routes, even coming to know where the good grocery store or gym or recreational activities are, simply takes time and effort, and much of it is initially done unassisted. I have newfound respect for all migrants of any kind.

Future Plans: Although I've appreciated working at an NGO like Refugee Social Services, I am very excited to jump into an organization more directly related to my preferred field of interest, journalism. With that being said, the overall topic of social justice and focusing on human rights may still be my main topic of interest and having witnessed the frontlines of refugee work has given me both valuable inspiration and experience in order to continue to pursue this. Perhaps working for a journalist NGO like Amnesty International or working with a documentary crew focused on human rights may be in store for me, but I need to start researching what is out there.

Faith Journey: One might think that visiting the lands Jesus once walked would make one's faith grow by default. I, along with my friends who have lived here for some time, would agree that this is not necessarily the case. So many worlds, religions, denominations and faith perspectives exist on one small piece of land, along with complex political realities, oppression, inequalities, life, and beauty. These complex realities can often make the questions grow bigger and wider. It may be difficult at first, but by truly engaging with those questions and the surrounding reality, faith can be stretched to a deeper place. That is what it has done for me. What I’ve found again in this place, even more than before, is that all humanity still longs for the same things: to belong, to be seen and loved, and to be a part of a community to laugh with, cry with, and dance with. I found such a community of people, and each one of us comes with a different faith journey and experience. It also confirmed what was most beautiful and important to me in my faith – holding on to humility and an openhandedness that allows us all, with all our different experiences and paths, to let this unexplainable reality and mystery that is God challenge us, connect us to one another, and transform us as we seek that Mystery and Love with the people around us.

Career/Professional Development: As a friend said to me, 90 percent of this sort of work is showing up. Being present. Listening. Coming alongside each other, learning from one another, and supporting one another in the
gifts and skills we can offer. These learnings will forever shape the ways I contribute to whatever workspace I find myself in.

**New Perspectives:** As someone who can often feel incompetent in new situations, one of the things I’ve learned personally, particularly in working with partners, is that when I step out of my comfort zone, I really can do things I thought I could not. But it should be mentioned, if it were not for the support, the nurturing, and the encouragement of those around me, I would not have been able to step out and succeed.

**Future Plans:** Following my SALT year, I will go on to complete my studies in international development and conflict resolution at the University of Winnipeg. I will thoroughly enjoy time spent with my nieces, nephew, and rest of my family during the summer as I prepare for the school year ahead, in a city I have come to love.

**Noah Haglund**
*Springs, Pennsylvania, USA*
*Grant Writer, Collateral Repair Project*
*Amman, Jordan*

**First Impression or Differences:** The thing that first struck me was the difference between Jordanians and Egyptians. Before coming to Jordan, I had been to Egypt and have many friends there. Egyptians love to joke and lighten the blood, as is said in Arabic, especially with foreigners. I assumed Jordanians would be very similar, but they sometimes come off as serious. Don’t get me wrong, there are Jordanians who love to joke. Seriousness is just more of a face people put on in public; there’s definitely humor under that surface.

**Memorable or Funny Experience:** One day, a friend and I left from the gym quite hungry and decided to stop into his neighbor’s house on the way back to his place. To our surprise, she cooked us sheep’s head stew. As a person who eats everything, I didn’t shy away, but definitely struggled eating most of it (you know, parts like the brain, eye, tongue). However, I managed to put a dent into it, but it definitely didn’t sit well. My stomach was further put to the test when almost immediately afterward, we ended up at a carnival of sorts, and I rode a ride that flipped me upside down. Thankfully, I kept the sheep down even though I was sure it was going to come up.

**Faith Journey:** To put it briefly, hearing the stories of displacement and war from my Iraqi friends and realizing the utter futility of the Iraq War has further challenged my idea of what is good and what is evil. In many ways, this has and continues to center me in Jesus’s teachings, especially concerning nonviolence and love for one’s enemy.

**Career/Professional Development:** I think a better question is, what skills haven’t I learned? Things that I have really developed while in Jordan include scheduling my time, patience, open and honest communication, Arabic, grant writing, business management software, lesson planning for kids, and working with people in a trauma sensitive way. I definitely want to continue working with nongovernmental organizations, especially with work concerning refugees.

**New Perspectives:** Jordan was the first travel abroad experience where I felt as though I started to break down the language barrier with people around me. There were many occasions where I was the only English speaker in a group and needed to rely on my Arabic to communicate. This has been really humanizing for me, as I understand more and more that even though culture may seem like an impenetrable divide at times, people are people. We have fun in the same way, enjoy life in the same way, have many similar hopes, dreams and desires. In short, people of other cultures and backgrounds don’t appear as distant from myself and my own experience as they once did.

**Future Plans:** I hope to continue to work in the Middle East, if not now, perhaps sometime in the future. In the U.S., I hope to pursue work with development and relief organizations focusing on the Middle East and displacement.

**Evangeline Hammond**
*Lethbridge, Alberta, Canada*
*Emergency Relief Assistant, MCC Lebanon/Syria*
Beirut, Lebanon

**First Impression or Differences:** At first impression, Beirut was a noisy, busy, colourful assault to the senses. It still is, to be honest, but I’ve become an expert at weaving through traffic while dodging scooters! Other fun differences: the wild and wonderful informal bus system, massive heat fluctuations between seasons, body language (e.g. lifting your eyebrows means “no,” not “I’m surprised”), needing to remember to ask how a person is before requesting their help, the huge cultural emphasis on food (e.g. both Lebanese and Syrian people are FIERCELY proud of their cuisine, one must never eat alone, and “tetas” (grandmas) with cookies WILL NOT be refused), and getting used to the fact that there is no societal consensus on facts surrounding either historical or current events.

**Memorable or Funny Experience:** Hilarious fail trying to order a fajita in Arabic, joining a jazz band in Amman, games in the bomb shelter basement during a city lockdown, and almost dying on a back road in the Qadisha Valley. But one of my favourite memories has to be
taking the portraits of women participating in trauma healing sessions in the Bekaa Valley. I won’t forget the way they welcomed me with open arms into their community and stories.

**Faith Journey:** A big factor in the richness of my experience was the classes I got to take at the seminary. Theology classes at 8 am (oof) and heart-to-hearts with the other students put my doctrines through the ringer, all for the better. I think the chance to rethink my faith at such a fundamental level while directly experiencing mass social upheaval has deeply changed how I think about how the Gospel speaks to humanity. I’ve learned to be more patient, trust in slow, complex answers, and rethink how I give myself value.

**Career/Professional Development:** My role really allowed me to grow professionally, specifically in the areas of program evaluation, creative communications, photography and intercultural communication. The best part was getting to experience the inner workings of an international development organization that really thinks critically about its impact and how it can serve more authentically and appropriately.

**New Perspectives:** If I can sum up what I’ve learned, it would be “people are pretty similar wherever you go in the world. And yet, people are really different.” I have been changed by looking at the West through the eyes of the East and see many ways my societal and faith culture could improve. Lebanon has shown me that I can’t underestimate the human capacity for resilience, in that “life goes on” in almost any circumstance – civil war, mass protest, and coronavirus included. Some of the cultural learnings I want to adopt into my life include a people-centered approach, mint lemonade, a love of children and slow tea, lavish hospitality, and some of those brilliant, hilarious Arabic come-backs. But most importantly, that the best revolutions are full of dancing, shared food, laughter, and amazing memes.

**Future Plans:** After this year I’m lined up to start a new job as a Program Manager at a faith-based children’s camp and retreat center. I’m thrilled to see the many connections between my new role and what I’ve learned about hospitality and dialogue in the Middle East. Best thing? My new role might send me back to Beirut for work trips! Lebanon can’t get rid of me that easily!!

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**Anneliese Hardman** *(Sarasota, Florida, USA)*
**Museum Assistant, Cambodia Peace Gallery**
**Battambang, Cambodia**

**First Impression or Differences:** My background differs so much from the community context of my service assignment in Battambang, on aspects of faith, language, and concepts of leisure. As a result, I have learned much about relating to others despite differences. Even though I do not enjoy watching television and video games, this became a way to pass time with my host family. Even though my favorite foods are Italian, I embraced Cambodian foods as a way to share fellowship through meals. I found it necessary to compromise interest and taste in order to build relationships because conversations had more importance than preference. Often, it is by having a conversation with an unexpected person that I am stretched intellectually and emotionally.

**Memorable or Funny Experience:** On New Year’s Eve, I went to a church dinner potluck. Besides playing copious amounts of Uno rounds and balloon relays, we also prayed in the new year together. We sang hymns unto God, asking for His will to be done in the upcoming year. I prayed for direction in relationships when I return home in July, as well as wisdom in figuring out what happens following this year in Cambodia. By committing the upcoming year to God, I was reminded of His faithfulness in just the last year providing the strength to complete undergraduate and discernment to come to Cambodia. I want to spend each of my upcoming New Year’s Eves in the same undistracted way – in prayer and supplication.

**Faith Journey:** While in Cambodia, I read the Psalms. Within these songs of praise and lament to God, I discovered what it means to hope in God. I experienced moments of much sadness being almost 10,000 miles from my family during the holiday season. In this time, God reminded me He is always with me. God does not forget about me, but rather seeks closer and closer intimacy with me. God’s love is steadfast and reveals itself to me in subtle ways that encourage my spirit. For example, I witness His beauty in the sunset and sunrise; I see the hope He gives me when I talk to Buddhist monks about their quest for Enlightenment; and I see how He is providing for me through unexpected opportunities He offers me.

**Career/Professional Development:** As a museum assistant at the Cambodia Peace Gallery in Battambang, Cambodia, my work has linked museums with restorative justice. The museum’s mission is to aid in healing the Cambodian identity through peace education following the Khmer Rouge. Through my work, I have collaborated with local Khmer organizations, like Phare Ponleu Selpak to execute exhibits that celebrate Cambodian resilience and promote efforts to recover from trauma in artistic methods. I have been honored to meet, lead, and converse with learning groups from conflict zones like Pattani, Sri Lanka, and Bangsamoro for the purpose of transferring peace education tactics. This work has equipped me with Southeast Asian museum practices and inspires my goal to work long term in a museum environment that addresses issues of conflict reconciliation.
New Perspectives: I feel that American culture encourages a mindset of individualism; often, success revolves around accomplishment and self-reliance. In Cambodia, I have learned to have healthy dependency on others, fostering trust between me and the family I lived with and friendships I formed. In Battambang, I needed others to show me around, provide friendship, and sometimes speak on my behalf in Khmer. Even though this type of dependency could be mistaken for utilitarianism, it is more based on a social agreement of giving and receiving love. My host family helped me because they integrated me into their family and love me; in return I responded with profound gratefulness. I hope to take this lesson of healthy reliance with me into the future.

Future Plans: Having renewed inspiration to work long term in a museum focused on social justice. I plan to pursue a graduate degree in Museum and Cultural Heritage Studies. Before starting a program based in America, I desire to complete a certificate program in Peace and Conflict Studies at Pannasasatra University in Cambodia. I will continue working at the Cambodia Peace Gallery, using my work experience to inform my future career. Currently, I am a semifinalist for the Fulbright English Teaching Assistant position in Malaysia and am prayerfully awaiting results. I know whatever God’s plans for me during this upcoming year, it will involve using my experience in Cambodia to constructively relate to others and sow seeds of peace.

Kara Jackson (Parkville, Maryland, USA)
Teacher, Amor, Fe y Esperanza (AFE)
Tegucigalpa, Honduras

First Impression or Differences: I had culture shock when I first came to Honduras. It was hard leaving my family and knowing that I would not see them again until a year later. I think transportation, the existence of “pilas” for washing clothes, and the Honduran diet are the biggest differences between the U.S. and Honduras.

Memorable or Funny Experience: One day, while I was working in the nursery, a student of about 3 years of age named Sofia started fighting with another student. When I called her to me, she ran away and tried to hide. After calling her again, she turned around and gave me the middle finger, laughed, and ran away.

Faith Journey: I think my faith has been challenged in ways I never experienced before. First, I was challenged in my priorities. Although I say that I put God first, I discovered that I idolize my family. Jesus asks us to leave everything behind and follow Him, but leaving my family was much harder than I thought. Second, I had to trust God and seek His guidance when I did not understand my purpose for this trip. The first months serving were confusing and difficult, but I started reading my Bible every night and praying for clarity. This created consistency in a time of various changing and uncertainty. I truly had to depend on the Word of God to keep me afloat every day.

Career/Professional Development: I have learned how to lesson plan, create quizzes and tests, facilitate a daily classroom routine, and conduct one-on-one tutoring. I have also gained more experience caring for nursery and pre-school aged children.

New Perspectives: Living in a tight-knit community such as the one I am living in right now has shown me a different way of socializing. In the U.S., I always tried to go out to visit friends because we live far away from each other. In this community, I work, live and go to church with the same people. At first, this felt strange, but now I enjoy the intimacy of being so closely connected. I know it will not be the same when I go home, but I will remember living this way.

Future Plans: I am hoping to become a bilingual educational assistant in my hometown public school system. I want to use my Spanish language skills to help Latin Americans in my community feel more welcome and at home. I also hope to start ESL tutoring through my church as a way to reach out to immigrants in our community.

Hannah Kurtz (Goshen, Indiana, USA)
Classroom & Health Assistant, Guarderia Samuelito
Santa Cruz, Bolivia

First Impression or Differences: We arrived in Bolivia and immediately were greeted with big hugs and a side cheek kiss, a more intimate connected greeting, a beautiful aspect of the culture. Food was also quickly realized to be a source of connection, with sharing and the conversation over food serving as a source of joy. It’s rare you will ever go hungry. Afternoon “cafecitos,” no matter how much work still needs to be done, are almost always taken, enjoyed, and savored, sometimes either preceding or following the daily afternoon nap. Overall, a more relaxed lifestyle is enjoyed, focusing on human connection over productivity.

Memorable or Funny Experience: In November, we experienced 21 days of a “Paro Civico,” which was definitely not a funny experience, but one I will never forget. Not being able to leave your house for 21 days and seeing the protests and unrest on the television that is minutes away, is an experience that is unforgettable. It was an eye-opening experience that instilled lots of gratitude for things I had previously taken for granted. Challenging and hard days, but 21 days I will never forget.
Memorable or Funny Experience: On lunar New Year's Day, my host family visited pagodas in our neighborhood. They do this to pray for good luck throughout the year, and my host siblings receive a small gift from the people at the pagoda for good luck as well. I joined them as they visited the different pagodas, often standing just inside as they prayed. At one pagoda, an old woman gestured for me to sit at a table with her while my family prayed. She gave me a small cup of tea and waved her hand over the trays of snacks at the table, communicating that I should eat. I appreciated the generosity of the woman, who seemed to want to make sure I was comfortable. Her silent invitation to sit and drink tea made me feel included at the pagoda, even though I was a foreigner and couldn’t communicate very well.

Faith Journey: Being in a country that is predominantly non-Christian has given me the chance to deepen my faith because I have to be more intentional about attending church. Answering my host family’s questions about Christianity has allowed me to look at my own faith from an outside perspective. Additionally, learning about Buddhism and ancestor worship here in Vietnam has given me the chance to reflect on the similarities and differences between my own faith and the faith around me. While there are a lot of differences, I think there’s a lot of beauty in that and I’ve appreciated being able to learn more about what the people around me believe.

Career/Professional Development: Working as an editor has helped fine tune my editing skills. I’ve learned to recognize the eccentricities that come with editing a document translated from Vietnamese into English. I’ve been able to develop my own editing style in the process, as the publishing house doesn’t have a set “style” to follow. I’ve enjoyed my editing position and would love to continue editing as a profession in the future.

New Perspectives: Since living and working here, I’ve learned a lot more about the Vietnam-American war. Learning about the Vietnamese perspective on the war and seeing the continued consequences of the fighting have helped to solidify my belief in peacemaking and nonviolence. I also became more aware of how history can be taught in very different ways, depending on who is telling the story. I’m sure that this year has also been impacted and changed me in a number of ways that will be more evident once I’ve returned to the U.S.

Future Plans: When I return to the U.S., I’ll be looking for a job in publishing as an editor. I hope to continue traveling in the future as well but look forward to spending time with family and friends.

Faith Journey: I struggled with my faith at times throughout this year, not always finding the church to be a fulfilling source spiritually or struggling to understand what I believe. I have enjoyed all the love and community within the church, including the one I attend here in Bolivia, while also struggling with some of the judgement or shame that can accompany any religious community. However, we all continue to do the best we can and contribute positively to society, finding new insights that can help us along our faith journey.

Career/Professional Development: After Day One at the daycare, I left with the idea in my mind that one year working with kids was going to be plenty for me, if I can even survive one year of it. I’m now planning on majoring in Education and Psychology, with a minor in Spanish. Funny how things change after becoming a little more accustomed to the work and feeling so much love from the kids and the growing/learning environment.

Bolivia has also gifted me a love for the Spanish language that I hope to continue pursuing and learning!

New Perspectives: Being away from your known culture or routine helps you to change your perspective. I have felt so much generosity and love from so many people here, especially from those who may not have resources in excess. Caring for one another and the idea of “It takes a village” is evident here in Bolivia and proving of the beauty of generosity and living in community. I am also so grateful for the more relaxed culture, that emphasizes conversation and connection, helping to create a tight and loving community.

Future Plans: My next steps are a bit unknown, working to decide what the next steps will be, most likely pursuing Education, Psychology and Spanish at Goshen College. This year has helped me to uncover my love for both plantains and the relaxed human connection-focused culture that can be found here in Bolivia, both things that I will work to incorporate into my life. I hope to continue focusing on community and human connection as it is a source of fulfillment, rather than stressing on productivity or what all needs to be done. I also hope to one day return to live in South America!

Elsa Lantz (New Holland, Pennsylvania, USA)
Manuscript Editor, The Gioi Publishing
Hanoi, Vietnam

First Impression or Differences: My first impression of Hanoi was that it was a very loud city – lots of honking motorbikes, birds chirping, dogs barking, and vendors announcing their goods. I was also surprised at how much greenery there is. Hanoi is a big city made up of a lot of concrete, so seeing palm trees and plant vines hanging down from balconies was a welcome sight.
Hannah Larson  (Vancouver, Washington, USA)
Health Project Assistant
Siliguri, West Bengal, India

First Impression or Differences: Kolkata, India. Stepping outside MCC Guest House gates, I remember my senses being overwhelmed; it was colorful, warm, clamorous, and I was quickly met with sweet chai in terracotta.

Memorable or Funny Experience: From numerous adventures over the 11 months away from the U.S., the five days trekking the Himalayas in Nepal are by any measure the most memorable. Seorin, the YAMENer also serving in India, and I decided to trek in an unfamiliar country without the recommended guide or porter. Although we felt brave and strong for this choice, we felt blessed to be immediately adopted by a Nepali guide and a young Korean man. For the next three days, all four of us laughed, joked, yelled, explained, warned, complained, and shared our stories in a mix of Korean, Nepali, Hindi and English – all while we pushed our bodies further and further up steep stone staircases under the weight of heavy backpacks and the Himalayan mountain range. Just to be present in those places with those people felt like an incredible gift from God and something that I could never had predicted would happen during my SALT year.

Faith Journey: As the daughter of two American pastors, I sometimes convince myself that Christians should prioritize reading the theologians, the academics, and the historians to understand the words of Christ rather than trusting my own personal reading of the Bible. Living in the Hindu-majority nation of India and belonging to a devout Christian family has shown me that for many the Bible, their local church leadership and personal testimonies are sometimes all they have to understand who God is. This community has renewed my energy to study scripture and has taught me to view every person sitting next to me as a fellow theologian with an experience of God to share.

Career/Professional Development: Conducting cross-linguistic interviews for individuals who are HIV+ has given me amazing access to the stories of people on different walks of life and has significantly developed my understanding of qualitative research in ways unexpected. Research methods are always complicated, but I learned that research in sensitive topic areas such as HIV/AIDS, sexual health, or stigma and discrimination can be further complicated when your research participants continue to be vulnerable in their communities. However, sometimes when you find the right questions with the right relationships with participants the interviews can result in powerful self-reflection and empowering storytelling from family and community members present. I’ve loved the opportunity to listen and write so much that I know that I will need continued education in the social sciences and more opportunities to conduct research in the future!

New Perspectives: I have been given the chance to witness and appreciate the seemingly small rebellions of people who would never think of themselves as social activists. Especially in the more conservative parts of India, I sometimes have to fight off the feeling of frustration at the pace of change and the seeming passivity of community members. But it is was important for me to learn that as a cultural outsider I am insulated from the repercussions of challenging systems in a way that those in my community sometimes are not. And once I understood this better, my frustration became more manageable. I was able to look at the people in my life with great admiration – grateful for the small and big risks that they took and appreciative of the path they had cleared for others.

Future Plans: Along with continued service and education in social studies, I am excited to return to my relationships in the U.S. My Indian host family has taught me a great deal about duty, commitment, and unreserved generosity to those who you call your own. I am excited to model the lessons I have learned in India with how I spend my time, energy and resources for my community in the U.S. – while also recognizing the blessings that come from becoming family with people from different tribes, nations, languages, cultures, classes and religions – people that I now call my own.

Clare Maier  (Kitchener, Ontario, Canada)
Project Assistant, El Faro Home & Talita Cumi
Santa Cruz, Bolivia

First Impression or Differences: The warmth and importance of family in Bolivia was a welcome adjustment I’ve made this year. Bolivians live in community, thinking nothing of showing up for meals or an afternoon chat. There is less emphasis on time and more focus on relationship building. These differences made the initial language barrier both easier and more frustrating, I felt loved and cared for and included, but still unable to contribute and be fully engaged.

Memorable or Funny Experience: I worked one Saturday morning with a small group of young teen girls to bake enough cake and sugar cookies for 150 people. The experience really changed how I looked at the children, at the work I was doing, and Bolivia in general. The flour had to be sifted to remove the bugs. There were a million other things happening at the Home that day and so the kitchen smelled like bleach and raw meat. It was peak rainy season and the humidity meant the recipes were absorbing way more flour than normal. And
Despite my best efforts to be finished by lunch, we put in over six hours of work. That day I learned that the kids just wanted to spend time with me and be known as individuals. They were not afraid of hard work and just like me, revealed in the sense of accomplishment at the end of the day. I learned that knowing from a distance is not better or what the kids need. I’ve tried remembering this each day, especially those that test my patience.

**Faith Journey:** I came to Bolivia taking a huge leap of faith. I didn’t speak Spanish and felt unprepared. I came with the conviction that I was going for a reason. Since then, I have alternatively questioned my sense of calling, felt the amazing closeness of God, and marvelled in the wonder of creation. I have struggled with understanding my purpose in relation to my desire to serve using my academic skills and the reality of physical limitations. I have seen the hope that faith in Christ gives those I work with and the ways it is integrated into daily life. It has challenged me to decide how strong a faith I want to settle for and how I want to express that faith daily.

**Career/Professional Development:** I have learned to be my own advocate. To identify what is important to me in a work environment and, respecting the work culture, advocate for those things. I have learned the importance of some idle time, time to rejuvenate to give others your best and to connect with the other workers. I have learned the ways in which my subtle actions and attitude are read by others and how important being fully present is when working with children. I have strengthened my “soft” skills in communication, leadership and cooperation. Working with children in care homes and understanding the greater context of poverty and inequality and gender violence here in Bolivia has only strengthened my belief that I want to work with relief and development organizations providing background research and assistance to make the programs as community focused and effective as possible.

**New Perspectives:** I now view myself as more resilient and able to adapt to new circumstances. I’ve come to separate more clearly my needs and wants, and to feel more comfortable pushing myself out of my comfort zone. I view North America as a very privileged place and, being more comfortable pushing myself out of my comfort zone, I plan to continue following through with my personal growth and apply the soft skills to opportunities to serve within my church community. I would like to seek work as a researcher or analyst with a nonprofit organization, bringing my knowledge and cross-cultural experience with me and contributing to local-focused programming. I hope to continue to be an advocate for those experiencing the impacts of inequality and to remind those within my circles to challenge the dominant North American narrative.

**Future Plans:** I plan to continue following through with my personal growth and apply the soft skills to opportunities to serve within my church community. I would like to seek work as a researcher or analyst with a nonprofit organization, bringing my knowledge and cross-cultural experience with me and contributing to local-focused programming. I hope to continue to be an advocate for those experiencing the impacts of inequality and to remind those within my circles to challenge the dominant North American narrative.

**Jocelyn Martin** *(Newton, Ontario, Canada)*
Refugee Activities Coordinator, Jesuit Refugee Service Amman, Jordan

**First Impression or Differences:** Amman is lovely but does not compare to the vastness of Wadi Rum or the beauty of the Jordan Valley. From desert to rolling hills Jordan is full of beauty. I’ve enjoyed exploring the city on foot even if most Jordanians refuse to walk even the shortest of distance. The staircases that descend the many hills will test your endurance but connect the shopping districts, markets and cafes.

**Memorable or Funny Experience:** I am thankful for the ability to travel and learn alongside other SALTers. Whether it was becoming a tour guide for Jordan or crossing borders to visit neighboring placements.

**Faith Journey:** It is difficult to connect in a new church. However, it was interesting to learn about the people’s perspectives of God from different denominations and faiths.

**Career/Professional Development:** My placement has allowed me to develop my facilitation and teaching skills. JRS even let me complete my TESOL certificate online while on placement. They were very supportive when it came to studying Arabic at work.

**New Perspectives:** Something I have learned is to be generous! The hospitality of Jordan is over the top with people offering you things constantly whether it is tea, coffee or chocolate! A common tradition here is to ask, “do you need anything?” before going to the supermarket or even leaving a room. Even if you say no, you will probably still end up with snacks!

**Future Plans:** I hope I will be able to continue to assist refugees in my future work, both in Canada and abroad.
Lilia Mast (Longmont, Colorado, USA)
Digital Media Specialist, MCC Honduras
San Pedro Sula, Honduras

First Impression or Differences: I definitely started my assignment in a “honeymoon phase.” I was delighted by how warm and welcoming everyone was, especially at church. As for daily life, I had created an image in my head of what it would be like in Honduras, and a lot of things – from my commute to my host room – turned out to be a lot cushier than I expected. I was a little turned off by the amount of cheese I was expected to eat plain (it’s a condiment, not an entree – right?) but other than that, I was loving the pace of life and the general availability of hammocks.

Memorable or Funny Experience: One day in the office, we were sharing language learning anecdotes with our financial auditor. She told us a story about answering her English teacher’s question, “What did you do on Sunday?” with “I put my body in the couch.”

Faith Journey: As I’ve faced struggles in my situation this year, one thing I’ve learned to do is read scripture focusing on the promises God makes to us in certain passages. These three have become quite important to me: “I will make it so that your life draws others to Me,” (Matthew 4:19); “While you continue forward depending on Me, I accomplish things for your wellbeing,” (Exodus 14:14-16); and “You can have My comfort and be satisfied,” (Luke 6:21). God has given me the gift of seeing the fulfillment of one of these promises beautifully unfolding this year, which has allowed me to find assurance in the other two.

Career/Professional Development: For as terrified as I was to quit my software engineering job, two things I can thank God for are how clear He has made it that this was the right decision and the sense of peace I have about having closed that chapter of my life. I have learned that it is more important to pursue purpose than stability.

New Perspectives: I always thought of myself as the kind of person who would have no problems living abroad and would happily live as an expat forever. Although I still like the idea of living abroad in the future, I’ve also learned to value the little things that we take for granted when we live in the culture we grew up in. I felt kind of guilty leaving last August, like I should be using my privilege as a U.S. citizen to make a difference in how my country treats people – starting domestically but also via foreign policy. I think this year has given me more tools and energy to do so.

Future Plans: After my assignment with MCC, I plan to spend a couple months with my family. I will likely live in the U.S. again for a while (not necessarily permanently, and probably not in the state I grew up in, but primero Dios). I may look for work in the community organizing sphere. I would consider code-writing opportunities that would build applications to promote justice, mental health, language learning, or international understanding.

Erin Moyer (Wellesley, Ontario, Canada)
Capacity Builder, MCC Burkina Faso
Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso

First Impression or Differences: When I stepped off the plane one of my first thoughts was that it isn’t as hot as I expected, I arrived at night after a rainstorm, both of these things making it “cooler” than normal. My opinion quickly changed. The busy roads with all the cars and motos were shocking and I could not imagine how I was going to be able to navigate them and bike on them. I was also surprised at how loud things are all the time with sounds of people, traffic, animals, music and mosques making noise at all hours, that took me awhile to get used to.

Memorable or Funny Experience: My host mom invited me to go to a wedding with her for someone I had never met. Where the ceremony took place, they have a wedding every half hour. We had arrived a little early and decided to sit down. Once most other people were in the room my host mom leaned over and said that she doesn’t think this is the right wedding because she didn’t recognize anyone. I had thought it was weird she wasn’t talking to anyone. When the bride and groom walked in, she told me that this was not the right wedding and she does not know who these people are and the wedding we wanted must be the next one. The room was relatively small, and we were sitting near the front and right in the middle. Being the only white person in the room I stood out and am probably in most of their pictures. Luckily the wedding we wanted to go to was next, so we just stayed where we were, however the officiant and other people working there probably wondered what we were doing.

Faith Journey: I have had to make more of an effort with my faith than I have in the past and have had to think harder about what I believe and why I believe it.

Career/Professional Development: I have learnt so much and gained so many new skills! Two of my goals coming in were to improve my French and get a little bit of an understanding of what it is like to work for an NGO. I have definitely achieved both of them! I have gained experience working cross culturally with many different people and have appreciated the opportunity to learn about planning, monitoring and evaluation.

New Perspectives: Being in a very different context has made me aware of the privileges that I have and the effects my everyday decisions can have. It has also made...
me more aware of another part of the world; before I went to Burkina Faso, I really did not know a lot about Burkina Faso or the west African region. Burkina Faso currently has a lot of security issues and it has been eye opening to not just hear about it (or not) from western media but to instead have a larger picture of the situation.

Future Plans: I will be going back to school to complete the one and a half years I have left in my undergraduate degree. I hope to volunteer for a local NGO and be more engaged in my community.

Lydia Musselman  
(Denver, Pennsylvania, USA)  
Research & Administrative Assistant, Sabeel Ecumenical Palestinian Liberation Theology Center  
Jerusalem, Israel & Palestine

First Impression or Differences: New food, new smells, new sights and locations, new flowers, sunrise across the Jordan Valley. When we arrived in Ben Gurion Airport, we did not have the correct paperwork so got to spend at least an hour waiting for approval and our entry Visas into Israel. The next morning, we went on a political tour of East Jerusalem and the settlements and witnessed the stark difference between Palestinian neighborhoods and Israeli settlements. The tour guide suggested we look, notice, no trash on the streets and now there is, playgrounds and fountains, then children playing in the street around a cement block moveable-harrier. Little things that have not left my memory even after so many months being here. First impressions: beautiful inhumane mess that is happening under the noses of the international community

Memorable or Funny Experience: During the first month of being in Israel and Palestine, Nadia and I, with one of our coworkers, went on a Full-Moon hike from a Bedouin camp to the Dead Sea for the sunrise. We watched the sunset with the light of Bethlehem in the background, an abandoned Jordanian prison from 1967 behind us, and a wadi before us. Following the sunset, we ate wonderful chicken and rice cooked underground, star gazed, laughed at camels, and listened to traditional Bedouin music by a local artist. At 4 am we began the 2-hour hike across the desert to the Jordan Valley. We passed Ancient Roman cisterns and beautiful trees glowing in the silver moonlight. Many lovely conversations happened, and friends were made. Arriving at the Dead Sea, we sat and waited as the sky turned lighter shades of grey followed by orange and then the sun rose! Our guides were on the hill next to us with a campfire and tea after sleeping there overnight. We rode back to camp in the back of a 4x4, laughing and holding on for dear life! Before going back to Bethlehem, we shared a traditional breakfast followed by Arabic coffee and laughter.

Faith Journey: As I am serving in the “Holy Land,” one would think I am growing deeper in my faith and understanding of God by default. This is not true. Daily, I am seeing things happen or reading in the news of horrible human right violations that test my faith in a merciful and loving God. Humans hurting other humans, other believers in God, in unspeakable ways. Where is God in all this suffering? However, amid this darkness, there is light! The Palestinian and International Christian community here in Palestine and Israel witness daily through Unity Prayer Services, ecumenical meetings, serving the needs of the people, stepping in and protecting against abuse of power at the checkpoints, and so much more! It is not the teachings in Sunday services or Holy Land pilgrimages (though they are important too), but it is the children of God serving here that is the greatest witness to God’s love and presence in this land. Personally, I am blessed to work at a Liberation Theology Center where twice a week we have bible study and reflections on the liturgical texts for the week considering the current context. In attending a liturgical church in the Old City, I am learning and appreciating the beautiful traditions in the mainstream churches. God is everywhere in this land. He is with the suffering, with the oppressors, with the pilgrims and tour groups coming to visit the Holy Sites, with the human rights workers coming to bear witness to the violations happening right now, with those who “come and see, go and tell” in their home communities. He is in the blue sky, the rain clouds, the wildflowers and trees. He is with the shepherd, the soldier, the young child and elder. He is with the Christian, the Muslim, the Jew in each of their prayers and work to live together in this land.

Career/Professional Development: I am growing in understanding of how to work in a team, especially a team of diverse personalities, cultures, and experiences. It truly has been a pleasure working on so many projects with the team at Sabeel! I’m learning that I may not always be doing a job that is life giving but I can find ways to enjoy the process and find relevance through it all.

New Perspectives: Though I am growing in deep appreciation for the traditional and liturgical church, I am missing the simplicity and community of my Mennonite Church back home in Pennsylvania and Virginia. There are things the Mennonite Church has “gotten right,” that many denominations are still struggling with. My view of the U.S. politics and some people groups have been challenged this past year, in light of the “Deal of the Century,” and so many groups visiting here from churches in America without seeing the “Living Stones.” How can justice reign in this world without all represented at the table? I am gaining new perspective on what it means to truly love your neighbor and pray for those who persecute you. The Palestinian Christians must do just that, daily, even when people they know are being arrested, humiliated, and robbed by the Occupation.
Future Plans: Looking to this next year, I am prayerfully applying to a college ministries position in partnership with Virginia Mennonite Mission and a church in the Harrisonburg, Virginia, area. I would be hosting bible studies, intentional prayer times, fellowship events, and help in the church ministries of the partner congregation. If this does not work out, I will spend time with my family and friends in Pennsylvania and Virginia. I am looking forward to what the Lord has planned for me in this next step of life! I have learned so many things this year – from professional life to my Christian life and everything in between. I hope to apply what I have learned in all I say and do, pray and teach.

Jose Ortiz (Goshen, Indiana, USA)
Nutrition Researcher, Rural Institute for Community Development
Chapagaon, Nepal

First Impression or Differences: I was surprised by how busy of a city Kathmandu is. I had to rehearse how to cross the street considering traffic would not stop for you. The food was oddly similar to Mexican food in that it’s a lot of rice and lentils or “dal bhat,” that is similar to rice and beans, with the occasional “roti” that’s like thick tortillas. I was also surprised by how often Nepalese eat dhal bhat. It’s their main meal: rice, lentils, tons of veggies, and a spicy sauce called “achaar.”

Memorable or Funny Experience: I really enjoy spending time with my host siblings from my city host family and my Chapagaon host family. A good memory with my city host siblings was celebrating “holi” with them, by throwing water balloons and paint on their roof terrace. The celebration in Kathmandu was limited due to coronavirus, but we still enjoyed it together. With my host siblings in Chapagaon we will sometimes go to a nearby long, chain bridge to admire the view. Occasionally we walk there, but with my host brothers, we will often run and bike there, making for a really good time together. Being mistaken for Nepalese is sometimes a fun experience. Now that I know Nepali better, I try to go with the situation, until I have to explain I’m not Nepalese. People are often surprised or get a good laugh out of it.

Faith Journey: I have occasionally attended a Catholic church conducted in Nepali and recently in English as well. It’s been nice going with MCC staff to church and getting to know their family better through that. I think my faith journey is something I’m still struggling with, but I’m hoping that attending the English mass regularly now will help.

New Perspectives: I am thinking about things that come so easily and that we take for granted in the U.S. such as a road system that is always well maintained and quick to repair, and not having huge import tariffs affecting the price of a car, or other luxury items. Also, there is the luxury I gain from simply being born in the U.S. It’s also interesting comparing the lives of Nepalese farmers and people from my community in the U.S. who came from Mexico. There are many similarities that make me think that people around the world are not all that different from each other.

Future Plans: I’m not really sure about future plans right now, but I will likely go back to working at a hospital again and look into grad school programs in public health or psychology.

Lauren Payne (Hicksville, Ohio, USA)
Communications Administrator, Sinomlando Centre
Pietermaritzburg, South Africa

First Impression or Differences: South Africa at the end of August is full of beautiful flowing trees, which was what I was greeted with. The whole time, I was struck by the differences in nature and wildlife – from palm trees and aloe plants (which I’m for sure not used to in Ohio’s climate) to the distinctly South African call of the “hadedas,” which remained a constant throughout the term.

Memorable or Funny Experience: In one of the early meetings I attended with my organization, I was introduced in isiZulu, one of the primary languages of the province I’m in (Kwa-Zulu Natal), which is the language that many of the meetings for this particular project were held in. My colleagues explained that I was an American English speaker, and then a man said something in isiZulu that made the room erupt in laughter. One of the people beside me translated, explaining that he said he’ll find me a Zulu boyfriend, which will ensure that I would learn the language quickly. I’m sure I was bright red!

Faith Journey: At the beginning of my time in South Africa, I was having a difficult time adjusting, and I ended up turning to the book of Jonah. I read the story of a person being called to go do work for God in a place that was not his own. I resonated with many aspects of the story of Jonah – he was in a new land having a new experience. Did Jonah experience culture shock? Did he miss home? At the end of the story, Jonah sits on a hill overlooking the city, awaiting what comes next, and we don’t get an answer to that. I generally don’t like not knowing (who does?) but my faith journey has been one of me learning to trust God when I’m sitting on a hill, not knowing what’s next.

Career/Professional Development: In some ways, I’m still unsure about my career path. However, this experience has influenced my aspirations by affirming that I want to
work—somewhere—with peacemaking and justice, though I’m not yet sure how.

**New Perspectives:** It’s hard to say just one thing, but one of the large perspective changes that comes to mind is that this year of service has made me incredibly aware of the privilege I hold as a white American. I had an understanding of that before SALT, but I’ve been able to see just how easy it is to stay in your safe, comfortable privilege bubble and not look at or listen to people who don’t get to be in that bubble with you. When I’m back in the U.S., I’m going to do everything I can to stay out of the bubble and encourage those around me to do the same.

**Future Plans:** In the immediate, I plan to move back to Columbus, Ohio, where I’ll work with one of the churches I was involved in during my time in college and move forward in discernment to figure out what comes next. I know for sure that I want to do work that furthers the Kingdom through peacemaking and justice—probably with another degree. That may involve nonprofit work, ministry, or something else entirely. I am here to find out where God takes me next—after all, that’s what led me to SALT!

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**Mickeye Pucilowski**  
*(Kelowna, British Columbia, Canada)*  
*Media & Administrative Coordinator, Fruitful Harvest Zimbabwe Bulawayo, Zimbabwe*

**First Impression or Differences:** When first arriving there were many obvious differences I experienced right away such as eating “sadza” every single day with little variety in the food, extreme water and power cuts, the expectation of women’s roles, driving on the other side of the road, and many other small differences. As I spent more time in the country, the biggest difference that became apparent to me was the relaxed way of living. Time really has no meaning, nothing seemed urgent and everyone was very used to a slow pace of life. Even when times would get really hard and difficult things were happening, people would stay very relaxed and brush it off, which was such a contrast to the busyness of life that I am used to in North America.

**Memorable or Funny Experience:** One day my boss and I drove two hours out of town to visit a rural orphanage. We were in an old farm truck driving just the two of us and just as we arrived at the small village our truck broke down. Neither of us knew anything about cars, so we looked around and saw a man sitting beside a tire on the side of the road and we decided he was going to be our mechanic for the day and fix our truck. He was happy to help yet it became quite clear he didn’t know much more about fixing cars than we did. What was supposed to be a two hour wait while he tried to fix the truck turned into a nine hour wait. We were quite a scene on the side of the road in this village and many people gathered around us to see what was happening. We met many people that made our wait on the side of the road more enjoyable. After nine hours, the “mechanic” had broken more parts instead of fixing the problem, but we had to try to drive home before it got dark. Our mechanic nicely drove all the way back home with us to ensure we would be safe in the dark and then ended up becoming our friend and worked for us for a while before he returned home. It was both a memorable and funny experience.

**Faith Journey:** I found that people held very different views and beliefs than I did, especially people my age, and believed very strongly their view was right and everyone else was wrong. At first these differences really made me struggle in my faith. It was hard when everyone around me so strongly believed one thing and then I would be the only one among the group to believe something different. At times it would make me question my own beliefs just because I was the odd one out and it would really frustrate me. Later on, I realized I could learn a lot from others by sitting down with them one on one and comparing what we believed and talking about our different backgrounds.

**Career/Professional Development:** My assignment involved me working with school-aged children and typically when I do a job like this, I like to be the hands-on person working directly with the kids and let others do the logistic side of things. During my assignment I worked a lot with kids, but I was also the one to do the administrative and logistic side of things, working out all the small things that allows an organization to run. Doing more of the behind the scenes work, I had to develop many problem-solving skills as things would constantly come up and someway and somehow, I would have to find a solution to the problem. It definitely helped me to develop many skills to not just work with the kids and let others figure out solutions, but to be involved in the decision making.

**New Perspectives:** One of the biggest perspectives I gained about myself is how much I rely on being busy. Like I said, the African culture is very relaxed, and it took me many months before I could figure out what it even was to relax. I craved being busy and would always find something to do in any of my down time, but I learned that it was important for me to slow down and appreciate down time to learn more about myself and build relationships with those around me.

**Future Plans:** In August I will be starting my graduate classes to get my master’s degree in Occupational Therapy. It will take me two years to finish and after that who knows where in the world I will end up!
**Alison Quiring** *(Brandon, Manitoba, Canada)*  
*Early Childhood Teacher, Sandra Jones Centre*  
*Bulawayo, Zimbabwe*

**First Impression or Differences:** My first impression of Zimbabwe was a series of whirlwind events and emotions. I was met at the airport by my host family and taken directly to their home without the slightest introduction to what differences I might encounter and how I should handle them. Within my first 48 hours (all before orientation began) I had: learned how to eat with my hands, fumbled my way through bucket bathing, been scolded for bathing at night rather than in the morning, been told to change out of my pants and into a skirt for church, discovered how much I rely on electricity, attended a local wedding, and asked myself multiple times what I was doing with my life.

**Memorable or Funny Experience:** On my second weekend in Zimbabwe, my host family had to visit the rural area where my host grandparents live and invited me to come along; I obviously agreed. The whole day from sunup to sundown was quite an experience, especially since I had only been in the country for about a week at this point. Among other things, it was decided that two goats would be slaughtered in honor of my and the other grandchildren’s visit. The whole family thought it was amusing that I had never slaughtered an animal before, so they insisted that I be a part of it. I will never forget holding one of the dead goat’s hooves as it was being skinned while standing next to an overflowing bowl of its blood. When I took a walk to get away from the intense smells of death, I came across my host mom who proudly held up two dead chickens and excitedly said “Our lunch!”. You can bet we ate goat for weeks after that trip.

**Faith Journey:** I have found that people here, generally, understand the Bible and elements of Christianity quite differently from me and my faith community back home. This has challenged my thinking in a lot of ways but, really, has resulted in me feeling more confident in my beliefs than before. It has made me feel quite alone many times but has taught me how to better lean on God and ask for his help.

**Career/Professional Development:** I have been so blessed with my placement and how perfectly it builds off my degree and experience! I have learned so much about educating children with PTSD and adaptations to best assist them with the learning difficulties that commonly arise from that. I’ve developed my lesson planning, classroom management, and Universal Design for Learning skills along with getting the chance to put into practice what I have learned about speech development and disorders. This experience has assured me of my passion for providing education to all children, particularly those who have been “written off” in so many ways.

**New Perspectives:** It’s challenging to articulate how my perspective has changed while still being away from my home community. I would say there are many levels to how my view of the world has been impacted from this year. They range from surface level things such as a greater appreciation for readily available electricity and water to deeper things like a greater understanding of racial and gender discrimination or the feeling of hopelessness in a place with a corrupt government system.

**Future Plans:** I plan to attend graduate school to get my master’s in Speech-Language Pathology and use what I have learned this year to work with vulnerable people in Canada and, hopefully, help give them a voice in a few senses. With a high population of immigrants and refugees I will get to continue practicing my cross-cultural communication at home and, potentially, one day move abroad again to train others in the field.

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**Katelyn Quiring** *(Warman, Saskatchewan, Canada)*  
*Medical Personnel and English Teacher*  
*Jepara / Kudus Indonesia*

**First Impression or Differences:** After only a week or so in Indonesia, just from listening to the tones of people’s voices and watching their body language, I could tell that the people here generally love to laugh and joke around. They know how to take things seriously when necessary, but they sure know how to keep everyday life full of laughter and really connect with their coworkers, neighbors and others around them. Another first impression was the food. Eating rice three times a day is essential for almost all Indonesians, which I am not used to in Canada. They also love to eat spicy food and add “sambal” or hot sauce to everything, which I have eventually come to love. The weather was a hard adjustment at first because of the different seasons and temperatures. Indonesia has only two seasons; an extremely hot season and a very rainy, but still hot season. Women here are expected to dress much more modestly, especially in comparison to at home, where when it is hot outside women can usually wear a sun dress or shorts.

**Memorable or Funny Experience:** I took part in an Indonesian birthday tradition where we threw eggs and flour at the birthday girl to celebrate. It reminded me of the water fights I had growing up, people running all over the church grounds trying to catch each other off guard and get them with flour. I also played Mary in the church’s Christmas nativity drama. The drama turned into a full on musical and they asked me and “Joseph” to do a traditional Javanese dance with very little preparation. We just did our best and had a lot of fun with it.
Faith Journey: Some truths that I’ve learned to cling to this year are: God is faithful through everything; He uses us in unique and unexpected ways; and He is at work even in the mundane parts of life or when we don’t feel like we’re experiencing growth. A big struggle for me this year was learning to love myself for the woman that God has made me, externally and internally. I often received comments about my body size or acne, which really affected my self-confidence. The comments about my body led me to pray a lot and reach out for help from my community, especially those who had been in similar situations. I slowly became aware of how well my body serves me and how it is the way God made me for a reason. I learned that taking care of myself includes treating my body as a temple, loving it for what it is and not comparing to others.

Career/Professional Development: A major skill I have improved is effectively communicating even when a language barrier is present. This can definitely happen in North American workplaces as well, so I think it will be a valuable skill. This experience will help me be more culturally competent in my future practice as a nurse. As I engage with patients from different cultures, I will be more aware of what types of questions to ask to make sure that they receive care that is safe and respectful. I have also learned about tropical diseases and been able to see how the hospitals here respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, which has been a unique learning experience for me.

New Perspectives: I have enjoyed learning about the collective culture here, in comparison to the individual-driven culture in western culture. This has really inspired me to make changes to my lifestyle when I move home to give more of my time and resources to those around me. The SALT program has given me a lot of experiences that have prompted me to evaluate what is most important in life. It has helped me learn to slow down and enjoy day-to-day life after many busy years in university.

Future Plans: Search for a RN job at a local hospital. In the future I would also be open to working for a non-profit or doing volunteer work, potentially in the medical sector.

Randall Schmidt

Health Administrative Assistant,
Olepolos Health Dispensary
Olepolos, Narok County, Kenya

First Impression or Differences: When first arriving in Olepolos, I was immediately met by the differences between adjusting to Kenya in Nairobi and then to the village. Upon arriving, I was really intimidated by my host family, and realized very quickly that they did not know English and I would utilize my two weeks of Swahili instruction. And just general differences, like no electricity at home, using a pit latrine, and doing a bucket shower. I remember my first bucket shower – setting my empty bucket next to the other full of water, taking a deep breath and saying “Well, you’ll figure it out.”

Memorable or Funny Experience: There are two that really stick out to me. The first being taking a motorcycle taxi to Maasai Mara National Reserve where we would go on a walking safari. Not only was the whole experience amazing, but when we found ourselves looking down a burrow, we soon had a warthog charging out at us. Lucky for me, I was able to jump out of the way at the last second! I don’t think my adrenaline has pumped so fast, or I have laughed so hard. My other experience was when I forgot my gum boots at home during rainy season and it poured while I was at work. This led to a flooded muddy road, and a barefooted walk home through deep standing water. I was very happy to wash my feet when I arrived at home!

Faith Journey: Mennonite church in rural Kenya looked and sounded different from home! Services were sometimes difficult to follow, being mostly in Maasai and Swahili. But from what I could understand, and my conversations with my host family, I found myself growing by looking at faith from a variety of perspectives. But I do not think I have seen anyone act more Christ-like than my host mama. She welcomed strangers into our “boma,” fed them, and continually applied herself to our community’s betterment through church or other activities.

Career/Professional Development: Being able to work in a rural healthcare setting showed me the importance of healthcare access on a rural community. I worked extensively with children, helping with vaccines and general growth monitoring. I think the knowledge that I have gained about maternal and child health has shown me a path that I want to go down. It has cemented my interest in medicine, community health, and child health.

New Perspectives: I have had many personal changes in myself over the course of this year! Learning flexibility with daily life has helped me find more comfort in uncertainty, for not only far out future, but also the near future. I think that is something big that I will take with me back home. Facing isolation was difficult and forced me to grow. I had to find ways to feel ok with being alone, especially after always being with people at university in America. I was challenged by it, but I found a home in Olepolos, my host family, and with myself. That being said, community has become essential to me. When you can work and live in a setting with people who love and support you, as well as working with them toward goals you both hold, amazing things can happen. I found so many communities in Kenya, and I look to find and foster those in America when I return.
Future Plans: When I return, I am working on getting accepted to medical school! For me this means taking the MCAT in September, sending in my application, and (hopefully) getting some interviews to attend. I think I am going to take my new perspective of extended flexibility and focus on community into my home and church. I also hope to find opportunities to use my Swahili in my home community!

Kailey Schroeder (Steinbach, Manitoba, Canada)
Educational Assistant, Library of Generando Vida Managua, Nicaragua

First Impression or Differences: It was pouring as our plane landed. I remember feeling so overwhelmed and crying in the MCC office guestroom. However, that same evening our country representatives warmly opened their house to us, making us spaghetti and I immediately felt reassured as to why I was there. Food is a big part of culture and Nicaraguans know how to make rice and beans. Not just rice and beans, “gallo pinto” (there is a difference)! Cheese is different here as well; I remember not liking it at all. Funny how everything I didn’t like at the beginning has become favorites.

Memorable or Funny Experience: It’s September; Friday the 13th. An excited, vulnerable, and a little petrified Kailey is ready to take on her new adventure: taking the bus alone. With about three weeks in Nicaragua, I decided that the longer I waited to go alone, the scarier it would be when I went. I was going to another SALTer’s (Jenna) house to meet up with a Nicaraguan friend to go to a bible study. I confidently went to the bus stop and waited for bus 123. Finally, it came, and I found a window seat. The time is 5 pm and the sun was starting to set but I felt pretty calm because I remembered hearing that the ride itself was about 15 minutes. Forty minutes pass and I have not seen my reference points on where to get off. By this point I’m panicking so I befriended two women near me and try to describe what the bus stop looks like. My Spanish is minimal, so I just keep repeating, big rock, by the big rock. Somehow, we communicate, and they tell me that I was going the opposite way; I should have crossed the street to get to the other bus stop, going the other way. They end up being very kind and found me a taxi to take (even marked down his license plate number). I actually didn’t even know the address of where I was going so, I frantically call and ask Jenna (who had to ask her host parents because she also didn’t know) where she lives. Once I find out the address, I get into the taxi (alone) and pray in my head that this is a legitimate taxi taking me to where I need to go. This drive was another 45 minutes (yes, that’s how far away from my destination I was). At last, after two hours of bus and taxi transportation, I get to Jenna’s house, traumatized, hungry, tired, and in need of a bathroom. However, without sparing a second, we go off to the next destination, bible study. What a night. Sometimes it takes getting lost for two hours to learn the transportation system.

Faith Journey: God is good, God is good, God is good. He challenges me, gives me His hand, asks me to walk out of my comfort zone, to change my whole way of thinking. He is my Provider, knowing exactly what I need in every moment and then going beyond that and gifting me with all the beautiful things of the world. Peace and comfort are always found in His embrace. He has shown me that He is crazy in love with ME. He has reminded me that my position in His heart will never change, no matter what I do. Just about everything went differently than I expected but through every single circumstance, God has remained good. He is faithful.

Career/Professional Development: I have really enjoyed building relationships with the kids here, solidifying my decision to go into teaching! Since I am helping the kids with their homework every day, I am also learning different strategies to explain concepts and new ideas that inspires me to learn more.

New Perspectives: Culture sensitivity is so important. Only after understanding history and who I represent in this context can I accurately represent in the spotlight I’m put in. My world flipped upside down and I thought I had to work at turning it back over, but it turns out I’m the one who had to do a handstand. Do not be afraid to change your perspective. Change brings growth, stubbornness brings ignorance. We’re all God’s children. The differences are there (and they are good) but don’t let that stop you from warmly reaching out to people. The offenses you feel are not permission to stop being vulnerable. I am in charge of my reaction to every situation; nobody holds that power over me. Lean into the goodness within yourself, soak in the sunshine of happiness around you, and cry when sadness fills your soul. All the feelings are valid, absorb each one, giving them importance. I am more capable than I ever imagined.

Future Plans: I will go to University for my Bachelor of Education. Within that, you can expect to find me in the kitchen making my favorite sweets, sewing with my mom, or drinking lots of coffee with friends.

Anna Selles (Grand Rapids, Michigan, USA)
Refugee Caseworker
Middle East

First Impression or Differences: As I arrived, the plane flew directly over the pyramids. It was an amazing bird’s eye view and it gave me my first glimpse of a country where the ancient world is never far from modern life.
Memorable or Funny Experience: At the Refugee Services organization where I served, I helped organize Culture Day, a day to celebrate the traditions of our clients’ home countries. Refugee youth from Eritrea, Ethiopia, Somalia, Sudan, South Sudan, and Central African Republic gave presentations about their countries and performed traditional dances. By the end of the day, the individual dances had turned into a huge multicultural dance party. It was amazing to see over 200 refugees dancing their hearts out together and it was by far the most fun I’ve had at work!

Faith Journey: I’ve struggled in my relationship with God this year as I’ve worked with refugees who have experienced extraordinary suffering. I’ve been confronted by the evil of this world in a new way, but I’ve also witnessed God’s amazing grace and mercy in the lives of my clients and in my own life. In the end, struggling with God has strengthened my relationship with Him.

Career/Professional Development: I learned how to do a completely new job this year. I learned the skills of a psychosocial caseworker and how to manage a caseload of clients. I now know how to advocate for clients, provide counseling, communicate through interpreters, and connect clients to services in a complex humanitarian aid system. I discovered how challenging and rewarding it can be to work with refugees and my experience this year strengthened my desire to pursue a career in refugee-related work.

New Perspectives: This year, I worked with child and refugee youth who had escaped their countries under the threat of death and had arrived in this country without their parents. I have gained enormous appreciation for my freedom and safety at home, for my wonderful family and supportive community, and for all the other opportunities I’ve had in my life. My clients were trying each day to simply survive. I have gained so much gratitude for the ways God has allowed me to thrive.

Future Plans: In August I will start law school at the University of Michigan. I will continue to advocate for the rights of refugees by sharing my SALT experience with my community and encouraging them to get involved in serving refugees.

Claire Smeltzer (Harrisonburg, Virginia, USA)
Health Education Promoter, AIDS Education Group
for Youth
Kamuli, Uganda

First Impression or Differences: When I came to Kamuli, my primary impression was of the culture’s abundant hospitality and immediate welcome of strangers. After our in-country orientation, my host father, sister, and supervisor traveled to Kampala at 3 am to then bring me back to Kamuli, while my host mother prepared an elaborate meal at home. Upon arrival, I was greeted with a swarm of handshakes and welcomes from the neighbors and relatives, who had all gathered at our home. My supervisor helped me make my bed in my new room, and she continued to check in with me over the coming weekend. In the following days, as I cycled through feelings of overwhelm and feelings of contentment, I had the deep sense that even when I felt extremely out of place, I was right where I was supposed to be.

Memorable or Funny Experience: In Uganda, weddings are an extravagant and multi-step affair. Before a “church wedding,” there is a cultural “introduction” ceremony in which the groom’s family and friends come to the bride’s parents’ home to be “introduced” to her family and friends. My coworkers brought me to one of these functions when their friend was getting married. Since he was the groom, we all entered in a ceremonial procession after the bride’s relatives were already there, and, as the foreign guest, I was ushered to the front of our party. Thus, I found myself wearing a long and puffy cultural dress (which had required three people to dress me in) and leading the procession of probably 100 people through a regal-sounding live brass band, while carrying a sizeable portrait of the tribal king, into the wedding of someone I didn’t know.

Faith Journey: Over this year, I have seen my willingness to trust God growing, as well as my honesty with Him. In the early months, I struggled with the feeling that I had been plucked up from my communities and habits at home that kept me rooted in faith, but this caused me to see His constancy and presence, regardless of my situation. As I sometimes experience discomfort in the present or uncertainty about the future, I’ve stepped into a sometimes-messy honesty with God, and I find him patiently gracious toward my confusion, complaints, and childish assertions of my own will. Yet he is also the source of my joy through little moments of unexpected laughter and a surpassing peace.

Career/Professional Development: My career goal is to become a physician, but my work this year has been more on the social work side of health. I have learned so much from my coworkers about caring for people’s psychosocial needs in the midst of chronic illness, listening well, and empowering people to act for themselves. As I carry this knowledge into the future, I hope to invest in understanding and addressing the particular medical needs of whatever community I find myself in.

New Perspectives: This year, I’ve been challenged to think about the privileges of wealth, the impact of colonial history on race dynamics, the strengths and weaknesses of denominational distinctives in the church, and how to parse out the essentials of our faith from the influence of culture. But perhaps one of the most significant impacts...
has been on my experience of relationships. As my ideas about time have become more fluid, I have appreciated the value of choosing to have time for someone to sit, share food, and talk, especially in their own language. Taking time and making the effort to seek to understand another person is one of the greatest gifts we can give each other.

**Future Plans:** When I return home, I plan to make Ugandan milk tea and sit with family and friends to drink it together to practice the Ugandan value of presence. In terms of career, I will get a job or internship for one year, and then my goal is to attend medical school.

**Memorable or Funny Experience:** Taking the buses in Managua can be quite the tactical challenge. It was really fun to watch a theatrical play put on by some of the local university students splaying out all the funny and ridiculous challenges of the bus system; it was so good I actually saw it twice.

**Faith Journey:** My faith has grown deeper, more resilient, and calmer throughout my year that saw its fair share of tempestuous challenges, which brought me from Haiti to Nicaragua. From a simple blessing or a handshake, I was so encouraged to feel the Holy Spirit at work in so many individuals, communities and with Accion Medica Cristiana. I felt honored to have taken this journey, walked with these individuals and to have known the worldwide church in a greater capacity.

**Career/Professional Development:** As a Project Monitoring and Evaluation volunteer I’ve gained some insight into the complex realities of audit completion. I’ve also learned to love the balance between making data accessible by analyzing indicators and making on the ground site visits to see the real-world impact. This year has considerably raised my interest in pursuing a career in PME after my master’s.

**Future Plans:** I’m currently a master’s candidate for the International Relations program at the Universite Libre de Bruxelles. I will also continue to apply for entry level PME positions in the U.S. and abroad.
Alison Quiring getting a lesson on how to “bhabhula” (carrying a baby on the back) with Gogo Mande in Zimbabwe

Andrew Bauman, in blue tee shirt, in the back of a pickup (public transport in Santiago!) with members of his Guatemala host family Ronalth Vasquez, Juan Coquix, Jaime Reanda, Dolores Vasquez and Jose Vasquez

Anna Selles at the Pyramids of Giza, Cairo, Egypt

Philip Yoder, Exchange Coordinator; Moudy Rahardijo, YAMEN; Anneliese Hardman, SALT; Jonathan Ngarama, YAMEN; Morgan Smith, SALT; Michael Victor Odinda, YAMEN; in Battambang, Cambodia

Clair Smeltzer, left, on a beach outing in Kampala, Uganda, with, left to right, host sisters Damalie Nangobi, Stella Namwase, Angella Mukasa, and SALTers Helena Hiebert and Andre Buller

Clare Maier in class at Talita Cumi orphanage, with Yamil, John, Brayan and Jennifer
Jocelyn Martin (Jordan SALTer), Dylan Forbes (Lebanon SALTer), Evangeline Hammond (Lebanon SALTer), and their Arabic teachers, Mays Owaynat, middle, and Montaser Qawadri, right, at the Deewan Institute for Languages and Cultural Studies in Amman, Jordan

Evangeline Hammond, volunteering at Dbaye, poses with three young girls (names withheld for security reasons) at a Christmas party held for children in this Palestinian refugee community

Elsa Lantz, right, with Elisabeth Kvernen, Connecting People’s Coordinator, outside Elsa’s placement, The Gioi Publishing, in Hanoi, Vietnam

Hanna Larson celebrating Holi as her colleague Mrs. Choudhury puts color on her face

Jordan and Palestine SALTers in Amman

YAMEN and SALT Bolivia team. From left, Mauricio Rosario, YAMEN; Madeleine Cameron and Clare Maier, SALT; Yosmel Delgado, YAMEN; Hannah Kurtz, SALT; Karen Diaz, YAMEN; with Megan and Jon Heinly, Connecting People’s Coordinators
Jose Ortiz with visitors from U.S. and Canada on a learning tour to Southern Lalitpur, Nepal, stopped by to swing on the “ping” with the kids.

Randall Schmidt cutting meat with Joseph Naimodu for the Christmas party at church.

A caponera ride (motorcycle/taxi) with friends in Nicaragua! Keyla Cortez Vanega, Jenna Denlinger, Kailey Schroeder, Ninoska Espinoza, Katherine Margarita Hernandez Martinez, Angelica Natareno.

EswaLeSA YALTers: Sunny Kumwenda, Nandita Kumar, Naphta Ramille, Loren Freisen and Lauren Payne at Cumberland Nature Reserve.

Christmas Eve in Nativity Square, Nadia Garcia, left, and Lydia Musselman.

Madeleine Cameron learning how to make tamales!
Megan Baumgartner at Olepolos Community Mennonite Church with community leader, Joseph Naimodu, conducting a community meeting to dream about the future for Olepolos.

Micaylee Pucilowski at Killarney camp just outside of Bulawayo with the kids trying to see how many faces could fit into one photo!

Kara Jackson, Honduras, with Emeli Elizabeth Cruz Hernandez, left, and Katia Melisa Ochoa Maradiaga, right, at their graduation.

Loren Friesen and his friend Akshay happy to arrive at Kloof Falls, KwaZulu-Natal, after an enjoyable hike off the beaten track.

Nadia Garcia and the olive harvest.

YAMEN and SALT women of Colombia during a team retreat in Cali. Left to right, Percy Ndlovu, Victoria Callow, Minear Mak, and Genesis Reyna Jaimes.
YAMEN! participants

YAMEN orientation Asia

YAMEN orientation Africa
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YAMEN!

Angelica Natareno Gonzales
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YAMEN!

Jessica Rychen
Maria Sok
Jeu Song
Seorin Wi
Chanmonika Yoeurn
Ratna Windhi Arsari (Indonesia)
English Teacher & Youth Engagement Worker
Maestro de Inglés y Trabajador para la Participación Juvenil
Savannakhet, Laos

First Impression or Differences: Seeing mosques in almost every corner of my hometown in Indonesia is a common thing, but I have not seen any since I came to Laos. Only temples decorating each corner of the town, both in Vientiane and my assignment site, Savannakhet. People here have high respect toward elders and scholars like teachers. That is what I like about Laos. Also, the food is another delicacy of its own dominated by sour and spicy flavors, which is different from Indonesia which tends to be sweet and spicy.

Primera impresión o diferencias: El ver de mezquitas en casi cada esquina de mi pueblo en Indonesia es algo común, pero no he visto ni una desde que llegue a Laos. Sólo templos adornando cada rincón del pueblo, tanto en Vientiane como en mi sitio de asignación, Savannakhet. La gente aquí tiene mucho respeto para los mayores y los sabios como maestros. A eso sí me gusta de Laos. También la comida es un manjar en sí que se marca por la gastronomía ácida y picante, en contraste con la Indonesia, la de cuy señores se tiende ser dulce y picante.

Memorable or Funny Experience: I will dearly miss the sunset at the other end of Mekong river in Vientiane, the capital of Laos, on either a hot or breezy day. I will miss strolling around the riverside just to ease my thoughts after a long day.

Experiencia memorable o divertida: Me extrañará mucho el atardecer del sol al otro lado del Río Mekong en Vientiane, la capital de Laos, en un día caluroso o ventoso. Me extrañará pasear por la ribera para esparcir la mente después de un día largo.

Faith Journey: For me, living in a foreign country and being away from all that is familiar indeed has added contribution to the growth of my faith. I can feel deeply how God has been working in my life. It’s not like what I wanted it to be sometimes because I have expectations, but having expectations means I must dare enough to let go of those as well when they don’t go the same.

Viaje de fe: Para mí, el vivir en un país ajeno y el estar lejos de todo lo conocido sí ha contribuido al crecimiento de mi fe. Puedo sentirlo profundamente cómo Dios ha estado obrando en mi vida. No es cómo quizá quisiera que fuera, pero el tener expectativas también implica tener que atreverme soltándolas cuando no se realicen.

Career/Professional Development: One thing I learned is that there is no fixed way of making the students learn better. This means, as a teacher I need to be progressive.

I must be willing to find other ways to help students learn better according to their competency level. Getting feedback from them would be useful to make sure they enjoy the learning.

Desarrollo profesional: Una cosa que aprendí es que no hay una sola manera de hacer que los alumnos aprendan. O sea, como un maestro, tengo que ser progresivo. Tengo que estar listo para buscar nuevas maneras de ayudar a estudiantes aprender según su nivel de competencia. El recibir de retroalimentación de ellos sería útil para asegurarme que disfruten de aprender.

New Perspectives: Joining the program has made me realize how I still take things for granted – easy access to school, freedom in religious practice, food, clean water and air. I am forever grateful for this opportunity because I can see that I have many things in my life to be thankful for in my highs and lows.

Nuevas perspectivas: El unirme con el programa me ha causado a darme cuenta que aún toma unos dados por hecho – el acceso fácil a una escuela, la libertad de práctica religiosa, la comida, el agua y el aire limpio. Siempre estaré agradecido por esta oportunidad porque puedo ver que tengo muchas cosas para que estar agradecido, a lo largo de los altilabajos.

Future Plans: I can see myself being involved even more in a church context. I have been involved quite frequent in terms of organizing events and trainings in my placement. I would like to share my experience with that with the youth at church so they can adapt (depending on the situation) when organizing trainings or events.

Planes futuros: Podría verme involucrado aún más en un contexto eclesial. En mi plazo actual, he estado involucrado a menudo en las tareas de organizar eventos y talleres. Me gustaría compartir mi experiencia con eso con los jóvenes de la iglesia para que adapten (dependiendo en la situación) al organizar talleres o eventos.

Marian Avila Molina (Honduras)
Asistente de Programa, Voces Mesoamericanas
Acción con Pueblos Migrantes
San Cristóbal de las Casas, Chiapas, México

First Impression or Differences: I remember the day I arrived in Mexico. From the moment I came in on the plane I was impressed by how huge the city was. I enjoyed the best tacos I have ever had in my life, and later traveled to my assignment in San Cristóbal de las Casas, Chiapas – a beautiful place, full of pre-Hispanic culture and indigenous communities, with so much spiritual richness. Since its so close to Central America, it seemed pretty similar to my country, with the exception of some of the words they use and the foods.
YOUNG ANABAPTIST MENNONITE EXCHANGE NETWORK

Primera impresión o diferencias: Recuerdo el día que llegue a México, desde que venía en el avión estaba impresionada por lo enorme que era la ciudad, saboreé los mejores tacos que he degustado hasta el día de hoy; posterior a eso viaje a mi lugar de estancia en San Cristóbal de las Casas, Chiapas, un lugar, hermoso lleno de cultura prehispánica y comunidades indígenas, con mucha riqueza espiritual, por ser un lugar cercano a Centroamérica, todo me pareció muy similar a mi país, a excepción de alguna forma de llamarle a las cosas, y las comidas.

Memorable or Funny Experience: My host family lives in a part of the city on a hill where cars cannot go.

Every day I had to walk countless stairs to take public transportation to work. I remember that the first days I would rest every five steps to catch my breath as I watched the women carrying their children and their purchases and climbing the stairs without any problem. I remember seeing their looks of feeling sorry for me. By the end of my term of service I was almost able to keep up with the people who live there, but not quite.

Experiencia Memorable o Divertida: Mi familia de acogida vive en un sector donde no entra auto y es una colina, tenía todos los días que caminar un sin número de gradas para poder tomar el transporte para el trabajo, recuerdo que los primeros días tomaba un descanso cada 5 escalones para poder tomar aire, mientras miraba pasar a las señoritas cargando sus bebes y sus mandados, y subían los escalones sin ningún problema, recuerdo ver sus miradas con pesar hacia mi; al final de mi servicio pude alcanzar casi un nivel similar a las personas que viven ahí, pero nunca igual.

Faith Journey: I was very blessed to find a faith community where I felt at home, comfortable, and beloved by the church. I had the opportunity to share the Word of God during their Bible studies on Thursdays.

This year has served me to enliven my faith in God and to have a better relationship with Him and to see new ways of worshiping Him.

Viaje de fe: Fui muy bendecida al encontrar una comunidad de fe, donde me sentí en casa, a gusto y muy querida por la comunidad de fe, tuve la oportunidad de compartir la palabra de Dios en sus días de estudio los días jueves. Este año me sirvió para reavivar mi fe en Dios y tener mejor relación con El y conocer diferentes formas de adorarlo.

Career/Professional Development: One of the first things I learned was to administer my own finances. I learned to take initiative and to be able to communicate my opinions with greater confidence, to think critically, to value the simple things, and that humility is the most precious thing I can have. I am sure that this life experience will help me to be a better professional, to share more love and to be a better person.

Desarrollo profesional: Una de las primeras cosas que aprendí fue a administrar mis finanzas; aprendí a tener iniciativa propia y a poder comunicar mis opiniones con más confianza, tener un pensamiento crítico y aprender a valorar más las cosas sencillas, y que la humildad es lo más bonito que puedo tener; estoy segura de que esta experiencia de vida me ayudara a ser una mejor profesional, a repartir más amor y a ser mejor ser humano.

New Perspectives: My time of service gave me the opportunity to discover new skills, abilities, and qualities that I didn’t know I had. I learned to love every little thing about my country, to know that there’s no other country like it, and that I was blessed to have been born in Honduras. My worldview grew, I learned to be tolerant and to respect different opinions. I learned new ways to love and that wherever we go, we are one church.

Nuevas perspectivas: Mi tiempo de servicio me enseñó a descubrir nuevas habilidades y cualidades que no sabía que tenía; aprendí a amar cada detalle de mi país, a saber que no hay dos como él y que fui bendecida al nacer en Honduras. Mi visión del mundo aumento, aprendí a ser tolerante y respetar las diferentes opiniones, aprendí la diferentes formas que hay para amar y que a donde quiera que vayamos somos una misma iglesia.

Future Plans: I think this experience will have an impact on my future. It will help me be more organized, to appreciate the little things and that there is always time to do something extra for others. When I return to Honduras, I want to continue my postgraduate studies to be better prepared to serve. I would like to continue accompanying community processes with vulnerable people and sharing with my church what I have learned through service.

Planes futuros: Considero que esta experiencia impactara mi vida futura, me ayudara a ser más organizada, amar las pequeñas cosas y que siempre hay tiempo para hacer algo más por los demás. Cuando regrese a Honduras quiero seguir estudiando mi postgrado para estar mejor prepara y servir mejor; me gustaría seguir acompañando procesos con personas vulnerables y compartir con mi iglesia lo aprendido a través del servicio.

Hosnay Bernard (Haiti)
Agente de apoyo y promoción de horticultura, Oficina para el Desarrollo de la Iglesia Evangélica (ODE)
Horticulture Support & Promotion Agent, Development Office of the Evangelical Church (ODE)
Agent d’appui et de promotion des activités maraichères, Office de Développement des Eglises Evangélique (ODE)
Koti, Burkina Faso
First Impression or Differences: The differences between my country of origin and host country are that the cultures and customs are not the same. For example, in Haiti we eat with the left hand, in Burkina Faso they do not.

Primera impresión o diferencias: Las diferencias entre mi país de origen y el país de acogida son que las culturas y las costumbres no son las mismas. Por ejemplo, en Haití comemos con la mano izquierda, en Burkina Faso no.

Première impression ou différences: La différence entre le pays d'origine et le pays d'accueil c'est: les cultures ne sont pas même et les coutumes aussi par exemple chez on mange avec la main gauche ici on mange pas.

Memorable or Funny Experience: The experience with MCC has changed me a lot because I have grown in lots of memorable ways.

Experiencia memorable o divertida: La experiencia con CCM me ha cambiado mucho porque he crecido de muchas formas memorables.

Expérience mémorable ou drôle: Expérience avec MCC c'est un changement total par ce que je grandi dans plusieurs façons donc mémorables.

Faith Journey: In faith one is to grow, to gain new extension with effort and to become stronger. Faith offers me what one does not hope for.

Viaje de fe: Tener fe implica crecer, tener una mejor extensión con esfuerzo y hacerse más fuerte. La fe me ofrece lo que no espero.

Voyage de foi: Dans la foi on est grandir prendre nouvelle extension avec effort on devenir plus fort. La foi m’offre ce qu’on n’espère pas.

Career/Professional Development: For personal career through service with MCC I have become a leader and responsible. I have developed a lot personally and professionally.

Desarrollo profesional: A través de mi tiempo de servicio con CCM me he convertido en un líder y más responsable. Me he desarrollado mucho personal y profesionalmente.

Développement de carrière ou professionnel: Pour carrier personnel avec engagement de MCC je suis devenir un leader et responsable très développer personnellement et professionnellement.

New Perspectives: In the host country’s church, there is a lot of sharing as an offering and every Sunday the groups sing.

Nuevas perspectivas: En mi iglesia anfitriona hay mucho acerca de compartir como ofrenda y cada domingo hay grupos que cantan.

Nouvelles perspectives: Dans l’église du pays d’accueil il y a beaucoup de partage comme offrande et dim chaque dimanche les groupe chantent.

Future Plans: When I return to my country of origin, specifically to my church, I have prior experience as a monitor and it’s easy to share in the community with the trainings for young people. It’s easy to share what one learns in the host country.

Planes futuros: Cuando regrese a mi país de origen, específicamente a mi iglesia, tendré experiencia previa como monitor y será más fácil compartir con mi comunidad sobre los entrenamientos para jóvenes. Es fácil compartir lo que he aprendido en mi país anfitrión.

Plans futurs: À mon retour dans mon pays d’origine surtout dans mon église j’ai déjà un expérience comme moniteur c’est facile de partager et dans la communauté avec les formations pour les jeunes c’est facile de partager ce qu’on appris le pays d’accueil.

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Ela Jael Castro Licona (Honduras)
Asistente de Albergue en Casa de Migrantes Guatemala Assistant, Guatemala City Migrant Shelter Guatemala City, Guatemala

First Impression or Differences: Excessive traffic. Cultural diversity (multiple languages and ways of dressing). Friendliness and softness of speech.

Primera impresión o diferencias: Tráfico excesivo. Diversidad cultural (múltiples idiomas y formas de vestir). Amabilidad y tono suave para hablar.

Memorable or Funny Experience: I traveled with the host family to Cobán, in an inter-city bus. We stayed in the park in Cobán because we had been told that the bus left at 9 pm, but that day it didn’t leave until 2 am, so it was my first experience being in a park at midnight.

Experiencia Memorable o Divertida: Viaje con la familia anfitriona a Cobán, en bus extraurbano, nos quedamos en el parque de Cobán porque nos habían dicho que el bus salía a las 9:00 PM, pero ese día salió hasta las 2:00 am, así que fue mi primera experiencia en un parque a medianoche.

Faith Journey: Day by day my trust is placed in God’s guidance and protection. I know that everything is under his control, so my communication with God is constant; I cannot conceive of my life without God and knowing him has been the best thing in my life. My dreams,
purposes and goals in life revolve around what God wants from me.

**Viaje de fe:** Día a día mi confianza está puesta en la guía y protección de Dios, sé que todo está bajo Su control, así que mi comunicación con él es constante; no concibo mi vida sin Dios, conocerle ha sido lo mejor en mi vida, mis sueños, propósitos y metas en la vida giran alrededor de lo que Dios quiere de mí.

**Career/Professional Development:** Providing medical care to people on the move has greatly enriched my life by giving me a variety of diverse perspectives. Seeing the impact of vulnerable conditions on their health status is something that has made me very sensitive. The medical conditions they have when they come in are common to most migrants due to changes in climate, food and poor hygiene, as well as alterations in their emotional state due to the violence they suffer before leaving their countries and when crossing borders. Being a good listener is something that I have had to apply in most cases, to see beyond a simple symptom, to see what each person carries in their journey. It is my desire to continue preparing myself professionally to give my best service to the people with the most need.

**Desarrollo profesional:** El dar atención médica a personas en movilidad ha enriquecido en gran manera mi experiencia, dándome diversas perspectivas. Ver el impacto de las condiciones de vulnerabilidad en su estado de salud es algo que me ha sensibilizado en gran manera. Las condiciones médicas en las que viven son comunes en la mayoría de los migrantes por los cambios en clima, la alimentación y la mala higiene, también las alteraciones en su estado emotivo por la violencia que sufren antes de salir de sus países y al cruzar las fronteras. Ser un buen escucha es algo que me ha tocado aplicar en la mayoría de los casos, ver más allá de un simple síntoma, lo que carga cada persona en su transitar. Es mi anhelo seguir preparándome profesionalmente para dar mi mejor servicio a los más necesitados.

**New Perspectives:** This experience has immersed me in a totally different world, my outlook has changed, I no longer see so much of my own needs and requirements, but I can see and meet those needs of others who are at risk, poor and hopeless. My goals in life have changed in priority, because I prefer to continue giving more of myself, rather than achieving benefits for myself. Empathy is another thing that I have cultivated a lot, to think more like the other. I have valued so much my country, culture, and all that my roots mean, by being with very different people, circumstances and customs. I missed the church I belong to so much by being in such a different place, with very different ways of worshiping than what I am used to, that was something surprising for me. I never imagined that I would feel like that, since I have been very adaptable. But I know that God teaches me in each and every situation. I believe that it is worthwhile to leave the comfortable and the known and go into new horizons, expanding your worldview, however, it was not easy to make that decision. Now that I am in the final stretch of this time of service, I recognize that it has been an experience that has helped me grow in an holistic way.

**Nuevas Perspectivas:** Esta experiencia me ha sumergido en un mundo totalmente diferente, mi óptica ha cambiado, dejar de ver tanto mis propias necesidades y requerimientos para ver y suplir las de otros que se encuentran en situación de riesgo, pobreza y desesperanza. Mis objetivos en la vida cambiaron de prioridad, porque prefiero seguir dando más de mí, que alcanzando beneficios para mí. La empatía es otra cosa que he cultivado mucho, pensar más como el otro. He valorado tanto a mi país, la cultura, y todo lo que significan mis raíces, al estar con personas, circunstancias y costumbres muy diferentes. Extrañé tanto a la iglesia a la que pertenezco al encontrarme en un lugar tan diferente, con formas muy particulares de adorar a las que he estado acostumbrado, eso fue algo sorprendente para mí, jamás me imaginé sentirme así, ya que he sido muy adaptable. Pero sé que Dios me enseña en cada situación vivida. Creo que vale la pena salir de la comodidad y lo conocido y adentrarse en nuevos horizontes, ampliando la cosmovisión; no fue fácil tomar esa decisión, sin embargo, ahora que estoy en la recta final de éste tiempo de servicio reconozco que ha sido una experiencia que me ha ayudado a crecer de forma integral.

**Future Plans:** Since I started this journey, I began to see people who migrate differently, and I began to share with others to create awareness and sensitivity toward migrants. I also participated in the Born Among Us Campaign, thinking about the population I currently serve. And in the same way I will continue to be a voice for those who leave everything for a better future, and whenever I will be available to serve them. I feel that it is necessary to support more people at risk in my country, to avoid them having to make that decision to emigrate without safe conditions, so I want to continue to be involved in social action projects in the church and other settings.

**Planes Futuros:** Desde que comencé ésta travesía, comencé a ver de forma diferente a las personas que migran, y comencé a compartir con otros para crear conciencia y sensibilidad hacia ellos. También participé en la Campana cómo Nacido entre Nosotros, pensando en la población a la que sirvo actualmente. Y de la misma forma seguiré siendo una voz a favor de quienes dejan todo por un mejor futuro, y siempre que pueda estaré a la disposición de prestar mis servicios a favor de ellos. Siento que es necesario apoyar más a las personas en riesgo en mi país, para evitar que tengan que tomar esa decisión de emigrar sin condiciones seguras, por lo que deseo seguir involucrada en proyectos de acción social en la iglesia y otros entornos.
Yosmel Delgado Henríquez (Cuba)
Violencia Prevention, Bolivia Peace and Hope Foundation
Prevenção contra la violencia, Fundação Paz y Esperanza Bolivia
Santa Cruz, Bolivia

First Impression or Differences: There are innumerable differences between my country of Cuba and my assignment in Bolivia. Both the culture and the ways of life were really striking to me at first, since the systems are very different – in how liberal it is and in economic and social aspects – but little by little I began to adapt, recognizing that this is one of the purposes of the program: personal growth and learning about other cultures.

Primer impresión o diferencias: Existe un innúmero de diferencias entre mi país Cuba y acá mi asignación, Bolivia. Tanto en lo cultural como en la manera de vida, fue un gran impacto al principio, ya que los sistemas son muy diferentes, tanto en lo liberal, económico y social, pero poco a poco me fui adaptando, teniendo en cuenta que es uno de los propósitos del programa, el aprendizaje, y conocer sobre otras culturas.

Memorable or Funny Experience: It was difficult for me at first to get people to understand me, since being more Caribbean, as we say in my country, my manner of speaking is very fast. Here in Bolivia they speak slower, and it was very hard to get them to understand me. It made me laugh a lot because they did not understand me, and I had to repeat myself. Plus, they are very laid back and I am very active.

Experiencia Memorable o Divertida: Me resultaba difícil al principio que me entendieran, ya que al ser más caribeño como decimos en mi país, mi hablar es muy rápido y acá en Bolivia hablan más despacio, y me costó arto que me entendieran, me causaba mucha risa a veces, porque no me entendían y tenía que repetir, además de que son más pasivos, y o demasiado activo.

Faith Journey: My relationship with God grew stronger. I found a new all-around system that I wasn’t accustomed to, new practices that were very different from those in my country, even in the faith and practice of the Good News. My only strength and help was to grow even closer to God while I was far from my family, who have been a constant pillar of strength. I only had Him, even in these difficult times.

Viaje de fe: Mi relación con Dios se fortaleció, me encontraba en un nuevo panorámico sistema al que no estaba adaptado, a nuevas tendencias muy diferentes a las de mi país, aun en el credo y practica del evangelio, mi única fortaleza y ayuda era estar mas apegado a Dios, lejos de mi familia, que son un pilar que siempre tenemos de apoyo, solo lo tenía a El, mas en estos tiempos difíciles.

Career/Professional Development: My experience in the months that I have been working at Peace and Hope, have focused on the work of the prevention of violence against women, children, and youth. The holistic focus of prevention is based on the principles that MCC promotes: the dignity of women and girls doesn’t merely come from Law 348 that intends to protect these persons from all kinds of violence, but rather from the fundamental principle of dignity that emanates from the fundamental pillar of human life: knowing that we are human beings created in the image of God. The workshops with female heads of household, with students, with psychological and legal staff for women who face violence tries to incorporate this principle. In my prevention work I had the opportunity to bring hope to these populations – the face of a young student, the concern of a female head of household, the existential pain in the face of a woman who suffers because of an aggressor – have made me put all of my knowledge to use for those in need of the love of God, from the professional formation I received, my active Christian faith in the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and the opportunity that MCC has given to serve with this institution that is on the front lines of missions. Being able to work with children, youth, and adults who have also in some cases been victims of violence, whether psychological, physical, or sexual, has given me the opportunity to contribute no only based on my training as a clinical psychologist through strategies and methods that are based in my education, but also based on my principles and values as a Christian, including the principle of peace rooted in justice, helping everyone in the community who comes to the organization not only with professional support but also with words of reassurance, praying for them, and building awareness about a peace based in justice rather than violence.

Desarrollo profesional: Mi experiencia, en los meses que he estado trabajando en Paz y Esperanza, se ha enfocado en el trabajo de prevención de la violencia en contra de la mujer, niña, niño adolescente. El enfoque integral de prevención, se basa en estos principios que promueve CCM, la dignidad de las mujeres y las niñas no solo vienen de una Ley 348 que pretende proteger a estas personas de todo tipo de violencia, sino de apropiarnos de este principio de dignidad que procede de una columna fundamental en la vida humana, saber que somos seres humanos creados a imagen de Dios. Los talleres con las madres de familia, las y los estudiantes, la atención psicológica y legal de mujeres que sufren la violencia, trata de incorporar este principio. En mis tareas de prevención, tuve la oportunidad de llevar esperanza a estas poblaciones, el rostro de una joven estudiante, la preocupación de una madre de familia, el dolor existencial en el rostro de una mujer que sufre por causa de un agresor, han hecho que integre todo mi conocimiento puesto al servicio del necesario del amor de Dios desde la formación profesional que recibí, mi fe cristiana militante del Evangelio de Jesucristo, y la oportunidad que me ha dado CCM para servir en esta
In Bolivia, everything was exciting. Although Bolivia is very similar to Colombia to me, I always thought that everything would be the same and it turns out that is not the case.

\textbf{New Perspectives:} I have learned more about myself, about the gifts and talents that God has given me, the knowledge of which has grown in terms of cultures and ways of understanding the world, learning from every little detail or glimmer that has been able to teach me in the many situations I've experienced in Bolivia.

\textbf{Nuevas Perspectivas:} He aprendido mas sobre mí mismo, sobre los dones y talentos que Dios a puesto en mi, conocimiento el cual se ha ampliado mas en cuanto a cultura y maneras de ver la vida, aprendiendo de cada detalle y destello que me ha enseñado las diferentes situaciones por las que he pasado en Bolivia.

\textbf{Future Plans:} Returning home I will continue to put into practice what I have learned and how I have developed during my time in Bolivia, with regards to carrying this vision of peacebuilding and the work of violence prevention, using my life as a testimony of everything that I have experienced in my service and encouraging others to take on the challenge as well as the work of being able to serve in the paths of God together with MCC.

\textbf{Planes Futuros:} Regresando a casa seguiré poniendo en práctica lo aprendido y desarrollado en mi tiempo en Bolivia, en cuanto a seguir con esta visión de la construcción de Paz, y el trabajo preventivo contra la violencia, llevando mi vida como testimonio, de todo lo vivido en mi servicio, y exhortando a otros a que se animen a este desafío, y a la tarea de poder servir en los caminos de Dios junto a CCM.

\textbf{Memorable or Funny Experience:} In my first days in Bolivia I went to the market and something very funny happened to me. In my country, when we go to the market and want to buy something, we say “Good afternoon neighbor, would you give me this jam?” We use the word give me to mean sell me. It’s strange when you explain it but that’s what we mean and how we understand each other in Colombia. So that day I went to the market, I wanted some jam and I went with a friend from work. When we entered the market, we looked for strawberry jam. First of all, here in Bolivia the word for strawberry is \textit{fresa}, but we managed to find it anyway, in this one woman’s stand. As I went to buy it, I said to her, “Good afternoon neighbor,” and she didn’t respond. My friend then told me that here you say good \textit{afternoon ma’am} or good \textit{afternoon shopkeeper}, so I say, ok, and repeat myself, “Good afternoon ma’am,” and this time I ask, “would you give me this strawberry jam?” Thing is when I said \textit{give me}, she was very alarmed because she thought I was going to take it without paying. The expression on her face was very funny but later my friend told her, excuse me, she is
from another country, but she will pay you for the jam. We got a good laugh out of that. It was a nice, funny experience to tell when I get home and that I will always carry in my memories – and such an important difference to remember, in case I every return.

**Experiencia Memorable o Divertida:** Los primeros días que llegue a Bolivia, salí al mercado y algo muy gracioso me paso, en mi país para cuando vamos al mercado y queremos comprar algo decimos “buenas vecina me regala esa mermelada” y no me respondió, pero me amiga me dijo aquí si les dice buenas señora o casera y yo bueno, vuelvo a repetir “buenas señora” y ahora le digo “me regala esa mermelada de fresa” cosa que al decirle me regala ella se asustó mucho porque pensó que yo me la iba llevar sin pagar y su expresión en su cara fue muy graciosa pero luego mi amiga le dijo disculpe ella es de otro país pero ella le va a pagar y luego de eso reimos mucho, una lindo y buena experiencia para contar cuando llegue a casa y siempre llevarme en mis recuerdos algo tan importante que siempre tendré en cuenta si vuelvo.

**Faith Journey:** Being far from home, family, and friends is a good thing – kind of hard, but not impossible. I always asked God to give me the strength I needed to not feel alone and sad, and that’s how it’s turned out, from the moment I took off from the airport in Colombia with a feeling of calm. I knew that God would always be with me. So many things have happened here since September 2019. Bolivia went through a 21-day civil strike, which was rather exasperating for me, but God was there, giving me the presence of mind I needed to be able to have some good days. And now the quarantine. How could I not have a good relationship with God if I’m still here waiting on God’s good will, giving myself to please Him, helping, serving. I only have words of thanks for what He shows me each day through His great love and care that He shows me and the people around me who I love.

**Viaje de fe:** El estar aquí lego de casa, familia, amigos, es algo bueno, un poco dificil pero no imposible, siempre le pedí a Dios que me diera fuerza necesaria para no sentirme sola i triste y así fue desde el momento en que salí del aeropuerto de Colombia y me sentí en calma supe que Dios siempre estaría con migo, han pasado muchas cosas aquí como el tiempo de septiembre de 2019, Bolivia vivió 21 días de paro civil, fue algo un poco desesperante para mí pero si Dios también estaba hay dándome la calma necesaria para poder pasar unos buenos días, y ahora la cuarentena como no tener una buena relación con Dios si aún sigo aquí esperando su buena voluntad dando lo que soy para agradarlo, ayudando, sirviendo, solo con el tongo palabras de agradecimiento por lo me demuestra a diario por su gran amor y cariño que tiene para con migo y las personas que me rodean y amo.

**Career/Professional Development:** Before coming to Bolivia, I thought it might be just another experience and that I would return to my country and continue working in the area I studied, which is quite different from the work I do here. But it’s incredible how God can show you where you fit. Now I know that I will not return to study to be a bank manager or to sit in an office; to the contrary, I will return to study in a field that has to do with helping children. Whether that’s child psychology, child development or education, it’s something that I’ve developed a passion for. In order to receive the necessary formation and to be able to offer my help, I might take two to five years to study to be a professional, but it’s what I want to do. The best things take time and God has put it in my heart – perhaps not just working with children but with youth as well – to do this work as service to and with Him.

**Desarrollo profesional:** Antes de venir a Bolivia pensaba en que quizás sería una experiencia más y llegaría de nuevo a mi país a seguir trabajando en lo que estudie que es algo muy distinto a lo que hago aquí, pero es increíble como Dios puede mostrarte en qué lugar encajas y ahora sé que no llegar a estudiar para ser una gerente de un banco o estar sentada en una oficina; al contrario llegar a estudiar una carrera que tenga que ver con la ayuda a los niños ya sea, psicología infantil, licenciatura o pedagogía infantil, es algo que ahora me apasiona, para formarse profesionalmente y poder brindarles mi apoyo, quizás me tome 2 o 5 años estudiar para ser profesional pero es lo que me gusta hacer y las mejores cosas toman tiempo, y Dios lo ha puesto en mi corazón quizás no solo con niños con adolescentes también es algo que brindarle como servicio para con él.

**New Perspectives:** I feel that I am growing in various ways. Being able to be here alone and to take on responsibilities with maturity is something that makes me proud of myself. I think that I’m a better person now. I’m glad of that, and it makes me think that coming here hasn’t been in vain. I have learned to value everything – to value people more, my friends more, my family more – this experience has taught me to love myself and respect myself. Speaking of my country of origin, it has been lovely to be able to get to know Bolivia – it has made me look beyond my old horizons and discover the great love that God has for us and everything He did so that we could live comfortably. I know that I will return to tell all that I learned here and to continue making myself available to serve in the Lord’s work as I have seen it being done. I just hope that God will someday give me the opportunity to return to serve in another country or even right here, now that this place has a big part of my heart.

YOUNG ANABAPTIST MENNONITE EXCHANGE NETWORK
Nuevas Perspectivas: Siento que estoy creciendo de varias maneras el poder estar aquí sola pero poder llevar las cosas con responsabilidad y madurez es algo que me hace admirarme por eso pienso que ahora soy mejor persona y eso me alegra y me hace pensar que venir aquí no ha sido en vano, he aprendido a valorar las cosas más las personas, mis amigos, mis familia, me ha enseñado esta experiencia a amarme y respetarme a mí misma, hablando de mi país de origen si es muy lindo pero poder conocer Bolivia me hace ver las allá de mis horizontes descubrir más el inmenso amor que Dios nos tiene y además todo lo que el hizo para que podamos vivir cómodamente, sé que llegare a contar todo lo que aprendí aquí y a seguir disponiendo de mi servicio para obra del señor como lo he visto haciendo, solo espero que Dios algún día me dé la oportunidad de volver a servir en otro país o incluso aquí mismo, ya que aquí ahora hay una gran parte de mi corazón.

Future Plans: As I wrote, I want to gain training as a teacher or a volunteer working with children, or in child psychology, something that contributes to kids’ wellbeing. Also, something I want to do when I arrive in Colombia is share with people in my community about everything that I have learned here. To show them that being here was a significant life experience and something that shapes you as a person and develops your character in powerful ways. Many people are afraid to serve as volunteers because the first thing that they think is that volunteers have to do without or live poorly. But that’s not how it is. This experience teaches you to value who you are, what you have, and what God has given you.

Planes Futuros: Como ya lo escribí quiero desempeñarme como maestra o voluntaria al cuidado de los niños, psicología infantil algo que contribuya al bienestar de los niños, también el buscar a Colombia y compartir con las personas dela comunidad todo lo que he aprendido aquí es algo que quiero hacer, el demostrarles que estar aquí es una experiencia de vida y además una experiencia que te forma como persona y forma tu carácter de una manera impresionante, a muchas personas les da miedo servir como voluntarios porque lo primero que piensan es que los voluntarios pasan necesidades o viven mal, pero no es así, esto te enseña a valorar lo que eres, lo que tienes y lo que Dios te ha regalado.

Kathy Figueroa (Nicaragua)
Asistente de educadora ANADES
Education Assistant, ANADESA
San Salvador, El Salvador

First Impression or Differences: It is a very small country; you can reach several places in a short time. Not everything is different, in fact it is very similar to Nicaragua. The first stereotype I had of El Salvador was that it was very dangerous and maybe the people would not be so nice, but to my surprise it was the opposite. All of the people are very nice and smiling and they did not hesitate to help me with the bus routes, or to let me know about the places I should visit and others that maybe I shouldn’t visit. We have some dishes that are the same, but different at the same time, the “pupusas” are the one food that you definitely won’t get bored of eating.

Primer impresión o diferencias: Es un país muy pequeño, se puede llegar a varios lugares en poco tiempo. No todo es diferente, en realidad es muy parecido a Nicaragua. La primera impresión que traía de El Salvador es que era muy peligroso y quizás las personas no serian tan amables, para mi sorpresa fue todo lo contrario, todas las personas son muy amables y sonrientes, no dudaron en ayudarme a ubicarme con las rutas de los buses, lugares que debia visitar y otros en los que mejor no debia visitar. Tenemos algunos platillos iguales, pero diferentes a la vez, pupusas es la comida de la que definitivamente no te aburris de comer.

Memorable or Funny Experience: I remember one day Saturday when my whole host family was at home, and we were having coffee together. It was raining a lot so there wasn’t a lot to do, so I taught them a Mennonite game, the one that is played with paper and dice. They got the idea of the game very quickly we played and laughed for many hours. It was the first time I felt like we were a family, and from that moment on the relationship between us began to improve. It is a time that I will definitely never forget. The first week that Jose was with us I took him to my church. It was the first time that I used the bus to get there and as soon as we got off the bus we got lost, but I constantly told him not to worry because we were going to arrive. In the end we got to the church just in time to start the service by asking people we met on the way. It was very funny because I was supposed to be leading Jose and we ended up getting lost. Hahaha

Experiencia Memorable o Divertida: Recuerdo un día sábado, toda mi familia anfitriona estaba en casa, tomamos una tasa de café juntos, ese día estaba lloviendo mucho así que no había muchas opciones, les enseñé un juego menonita, el que se juega con papel y dados, captaron la idea del juego muy rápido jugamos y reímos por muchas horas, fue la primera vez que me sentí en familia, desde ese momento la relación entre nosotros fue mejorando, es un tiempo que definitivamente nunca olvidaré. La primera semana que estuve José con nosotros yo lo lleve a mi iglesia, era la primera vez que yo usaba el bus para llegar hasta allí, recuerdo que después de bajarnos del bus nos perdimos, yo constantemente le decía a mi compañero que no se preocupara que íbamos a llegar. Al final llegamos a la iglesia justo a tiempo para empezar el culto preguntando a personas que encontrábamos en el camino. Fue muy chistoso porque supuestamente yo no estaba guiando a José y terminamos perdidos jajaja.
Faith Journey: In this time of service I have had a lot of alone time where I have felt aimless, like nothing makes sense. It is in those times when I turn my eyes to the heavens and remember that God is there supporting my ways. I have learned to see or feel the presence of God in what many people may call small or insignificant ways. In the smile of children, in nature, in the singing of birds, in seeing a sunset from the terrace of my house, even in the moments of silence when everyone has left, and when the lights have been turned off I have been able to feel that God is with me. This period of service has helped me and taught me the total dependence on God, as everything I do depends on Him. And if it is in His plans to do something, or not to, I need to allow myself to be guided by Him.

Viage de fe: En este tiempo de servicio he tenido mucho tiempo a solas en los que me he sentido sin rumbo, como que nada tiene sentido, es ahí cuando voltee mi vista a los cielos y recuerdo que Dios está ahí respaldando mis caminos. He aprendido a ver o sentir la presencia de Dios en lo que muchos llaman pequeño o insignificante como en la sonrisa de los niños, en la naturaleza, en el canto de las aves, en ver un atardecer desde la terraza de mi casa, aun en los momentos de silencio cuando todos se han ido, cuando las luces se han apagado he podido sentir que Dios esta conmigo. Este periodo de servicio me ha ayudado y enseñado la dependencia total ha Dios, como todo lo que hago depende de El y si en sus planes esta el hacer o no las cosas, es una fe a ciegas, es solo dejarse llevar y guiar por El.

Career/Professional Development: This experience has helped me to develop skills with children. I didn’t realize that education at an early age (1 to 6 years old) was so relevant to the overall development of children. I have learned techniques and methodologies for young children. I have learned to have initiative, confidence in myself and the skills I have.

Desarrollo profesional: Esta experiencia ha ayudado a desarrollar habilidades con los niños, no pensé que la educación a temprana edad (1 año hasta los 6 años) fuese de tanta relevancia para el desarrollo integral de la niñez. He aprendido técnicas y metodologías para la enseñanza con niños pequeños. He aprendido a tener iniciativa, confianza en mi misma y las habilidades con las que cuento.

New Perspectives: I am definitely very eager to return to Nicaragua and tell the people around me all about my experience, which was a transforming experience. I have learned to see other people with empathy, to give love without expecting anything in return, to depend on God completely and to make decisions wisely. I believe that everything that has happened so far in my year of service, no matter how good or bad, has left a mark on me. My way of seeing the Salvadorans has definitely changed. Before this experience I was very afraid of everything that is said about them and their history around the armed conflict and the “maras” (gangs). Now, I can say when I return home that not all people are bad and that the Salvadoran people are nice, kind and helpful; and that they should visit El Salvador because it is a small country in territory but very big and rich in culture, food, history and values.

Nuevas Perspectivas: Definitivamente estoy muy ansiosa de poder regresar a Nicaragua y contar a las personas a mi alrededor toda mi experiencia, una experiencia transformadora, he aprendido a ver con empatía a las demás personas, a dar amor sin esperar nada a cambio, depender de Dios por completo, tomar decisiones sabiamente. Creo que todo lo que ha pasado en lo que va del año de servicio por muy bueno o malo que sea ha dejado una huella en mí. Mi manera de ver a los salvadoreños definitivamente ha cambiado, antes de esta experiencia tenía mucho miedo por todo lo que se dice de ellos y su historia alrededor del conflicto armado y las maras, hoy puedo decir cuando regrese a casa que no toda las personas son malas y que las gente de salvadoreña es agradable, amable y servicial; que visiten El Salvador es un país pequeño en territorio pero muy grande y rico en cultura, gastronomía, historia y valores.

Future Plans: I am thinking about studying psychology and possibly specializing in the psychology of trauma to women and children who have suffered some form of abuse.

Planes Futuros: Pienso estudiar psicología y especializarme en psicología del trauma a mujeres y niños que han sufrido algún tipo de abuso.

Nandita Kumar (India)
Advocacy Administrative Assistant,
Transformation Resource Center
Asistente Administrativo de Incidencia,
Centro de Recursos de Transformación
Maseru, Lesotho

First Impression or Differences: The first impression of Lesotho was not good with me because everywhere is mountain – no big buildings, no good roads – but when I met with my host family, they are so nice, and I felt happy to see my place. In Lesotho, people are so different from my country, here in Lesotho they are so calm and peaceful. Lesotho people are very friendly and caring for everyone.

Primera impresión o diferencias: La primera impresión de Lesotho no fue buena porque en todas partes hay montañas, no hay grandes edificios ni buenas carreteras, pero cuando me reuní con mi familia anfitriona, ellos son muy agradables y me sentí feliz de ver mi casa. En Lesotho la gente es tan diferente de mi país, aquí...
en Lesotho son tan tranquilos y pacíficos. La gente de Lesotho es muy amable y se preocupan por todos.

Memorable or Funny Experience: One day I went to a village (Mokhotlong) for my field work. In that village the people wanted to talk with me, but they don’t know English. And that time I had not any translator and we had to talk with each other. We started conversations with gestures; we were laughing a lot, and it was very funny experience for me.

Experiencia memorable o divertida: Un día fui a una aldea (Mokhotlong) para mi trabajo de campo. En esa aldea la gente quería hablar conmigo, y no saben inglés. Y esa vez no tenía ningún traductor y tuvimos que hablar entre nosotros. Entonces empezamos la conversación con el gesto, nos reímos mucho, fue una experiencia muy divertida para mi.

Faith Journey: I have a strong faith in God. I have a good relationship with God. God speaks with me through his words. I always work by knowing God’s plan. My faith in God grows stronger with difficult situation. But in Lesotho all the churches I visited had a very different worship style, so I struggled to make myself spiritually strong. I believe on God that he gives me strength and peace. I have to spend more time in prayer.

Viaje de fe: Tengo una fuerte fe en Dios. Tengo una buena relación con Dios. Dios habla conmigo a través de sus palabras. Siempre trabajo para conocer el plan de Dios. Mi fe en Dios se fortalece con las situaciones difíciles. Pero en Lesotho siempre visité todas las iglesias y su estilo de adoración es muy diferente, así que luché por hacerme fuerte espiritualmente. Creo que Dios es el que me da fuerza y paz. Tengo que pasar más tiempo en la oración.

Career/Professional Development: I was working for the dam-affected community. I visited some communities for data collection. I was teaching them how to live, how to earn money, how to do business in the village, how to solve their problems. So, I have learned how to work for social justice, how to make activity reports, how to deal with the ministers, how to organize meetings and workshops. This is valuable and important experience for me, and I have learned in my assignment place that I should work with patience and peace. I am a social worker so it will be very helpful for my career. This experience has increased my skill for social work.

Desarrollo profesional: Trabajaba para la comunidad afectada por la presa. Visité algunas comunidades para la recolección de datos. Les enseñé cómo vivir, cómo ganar dinero, cómo hacer negocios en la aldea, cómo resolver sus problemas. Así que he aprendido a trabajar por la justicia social, a hacer informes de actividades, a tratar con los ministros, a organizar reuniones y talleres. Esta es una experiencia valiosa e importante para mí, y he aprendido en mi lugar de asignación que debo trabajar con paciencia y paz. Soy una trabajadora social, así que será muy útil para mi carrera. Esta experiencia ha aumentado mis habilidades para el trabajo social.

New Perspectives: I have changed myself in a positive way. I am exploring myself here in my assignment place; now I can handle any situation. I feel peace. I can take care of myself in a new country. I can make relationship with community. Since I came here, the honor of this culture exchange program has increased in the family and church in my home country. Their faith in the Lord has increased.

Nuevas perspectivas: He cambiado de una manera positiva. Me he estado estudiado a mí mismo aquí en mi lugar de asignación y ahora que puedo manejar cualquier situación, siento paz. Puedo cuidar de mí mismo en un nuevo país. Puedo hacer relaciones con la comunidad. Desde que llegué aquí, la fama de este programa de intercambio cultural ha aumentado en la familia y la iglesia de mi país. Su fe en el Señor ha aumentado más.

Future Plans: When I will return home, I will open an NGO and I will work for woman empowerment and social justice. Whatever I have learned from my assignment place I will use that skill in my NGO. In my home country most of the people don’t know about MCC programs. I want to tell them about this program, and I will encourage my Mennonite youth to participate in this program and God will help them.

Planes de futuro: Cuando regrese a casa, abriré una ONG y trabajaráé por el empoderamiento de la mujeres y la justicia social. Todo lo que he aprendido en mi lugar de asignación lo utilizaré en mi ONG. En mi país natal, la mayoría de la gente no conoce el programa de CCM. Quiero hablarles de este programa, y animaré a mis jóvenes menonitas a participar en él programa y que Dios les ayudará.

Rahil Kumari (India)
Staff nurse at Faith Alive Foundation
Jos, Plateau, Nigeria

First Impression or Differences: Food, greetings, language. Here they are greeting with hugs. In India, we bow with hands together.

Primera impresión o diferencias: La comida, las maneras de saludar, el idioma. Aquí se saluda con abrazos. En la India nos inclinamos con las manos juntas.

Memorable or Funny Experience: Graduation ceremony in faith alive. I danced a lot with friends.

Experiencia memorable o divertida: He bailado con bastantes amigos.
Faith Journey: My faith in God has increased.

Viaje de fe: Mi fe en Dios se ha aumentado.

Career/Professional Development: I have learned how to take delivery birth.

Desarrollo profesional: He aprendido cómo asistir un parto.

New Perspectives: I have learned many new things. Now I have started to eat many new things like swallow, yam and grasshopper.

Nuevas perspectivas: He aprendido bastantes cosas nuevas. Ahora como muchas cosas nuevas como la golondrina, el ñame, y el saltamontes.

Future Plans: I want to establish an English school and teach students.

Planes futuros: Quiero fundar una escuela de inglés y enseñar a alumnos.

Sunny Kumwenda (Zambia)
Peace Club Facilitator & Assistant, Morija Museum & Archives
Facilitador de Clubes de Paz y Asistente en el Museo y Archivos Morija
Morija, Lesotho

Memorable or Funny Experience: When I visited the historical site in Lesotho, I was amazed to see how people used lived in the caves and how creative they were in decorating their homes with paintings. These caves are on top of the mountains. (“Maluti” is what they are called in the local language). My other memorable moment is when I went to the beach in Durban, South Africa. It was my first time to be at the beach and I have always wanted to be in the ocean so it was my dream come true I will forever cherish my first experience.

Experiencia memorable o divertida: Cuando visité el sitio histórico en Lesoto, me asombraba ver cómo la gente solía vivir en las cuevas y qué creativa era en decorar sus casas con pinturas. Estas cuevas quedan en las cimas de las montañas. (“Maluti” es lo que se llama en el idioma local). Mi otro recuerdo destacado es cuando fui a la playa en Durban, Sudáfrica. Era mi primera vez de ir a la playa y siempre he querido meterme al mar, así fue un sueño realizado. Siempre apreciaré aquella primera experiencia en el mar.

Faith Journey: Staying alone on my assignment has given me time to reflect on many things, one of which is my faith, my faith with God. Now I have plenty of time to read the Bible and look for answers, which I have always wanted to seek.

Viaje de fe: El quedarme solo durante mi asignación me ha dado el tiempo de reflexionarme en muchas cosas, incluso en mi fe, mi fe con Dios. Ahora tengo bastante tiempo para leer la biblia y buscar las respuestas que siempre he querido buscar.

Career/Professional Development: Despite me being a Peace club facilitator – introducing peace clubs in schools, community – I have learnt a lot from the community and the students themselves. Working with different people makes you approach things differently than you are used. It has also taught me to be more patient with people and other things. I have learnt a lot in my Peace club career through the different societies and cultures I was exposed to. At the museum I have also learnt how to give a tour to tourist and visitors. My field of work is digitizing the archives. I have learnt new skills on how to handle fragile materials like old books, pictures, among other aged materials. Professionally, as an electrician, I was exposed to high tech, state of the art digitizing equipment.

Desarrollo profesional: A pesar de ser el facilitador de los Clubes de Paz y de orientar las escuelas y las comunidades a los clubes, he aprendido bastante de la comunidad misma y de los alumnos. El trabajar con gente diversa te hace abordar las cosas de nuevas maneras de que estás acostumbrado. También he enseñado ser más paciente con personas y otras lecciones. He aprendido mucho en mi carrera con Clubes de Paz, a través de la sociedad distinta y la cultura a cuáles se me expuso. En el museo también he aprendido cómo dar un tur a turistas y visitantes. Mi trabajo del campo ahí es digitalizar el archivos. He ganado la nueva habilidad de manejar materiales frágiles como libros y fotos antiguos, entre otros materiales antiguos. Profesionalmente, como electricista manejé lo último de máquinas de digitalización.

New Perspectives: For me, I am saying I was on the road to self-discovery because I have done so many things I thought I wouldn’t do. I have also learnt that not that all that works for you is right or the only way. Some things that seem not to be important to other cultures are even forbidden. Not everything you see as normal is normal to everyone.

Nuevas perspectivas: Para mí, digo que estaba en un proceso de autodescubrimiento porque he hecho tantas cosas que pensaba que no hiciera. También he aprendido que no todos procesos que te funcionen son correctos ni las únicas maneras de hacerlo. A veces lo que no parezca importante a otras culturas de hecho es algo prohibido. No todo lo que veas es normal a todos.

Future Plans: Having been exposed to a different culture and society got me looking at things in a different
First Impression or Differences: I am impressed with how big the city is, the mountains and how people greet one another. The food is very different. I am surprised to see Colombians cooking rice with salt and oil whereas Cambodians cook only with water. I used to ride my scooter to work and it takes less than 10 minutes. Here, it takes me one hour each way. I used to have a heavy breakfast and Colombians eat a very light breakfast. It takes me one hour each way. I used to have a heavy breakfast and Colombians eat a very light breakfast. Here, it takes me one hour each way. I used to have a heavy breakfast and Colombians eat a very light breakfast.

Memorable or Funny Experience: I love all the trips with my host family and the church. I remember my first time passing through tunnels when I went to Buenaventura. It was FUN!

Faith Journey: I find it easy to encourage others, but I face a hard time believing that God has given me from my potential. Mark 9:24 tells us to ask God to help our unbelief. Then I believe from all my heart in what God tells me in Romans 8:28, that God works all things together for good for those who have been called according to his purpose. Also, there is another promise in 1 Corinthians 15:58 that our labor in the Lord is not in vain. I also would like to congratulate myself on my 2nd year in Bible study and journaling. It has helped me a lot during my ups and downs.

Career/Professional Development: My experience as an English assistant has inspired me to continue my teaching career and also helps me to see what an international mission looks like. It has broadened my understanding of a missionary, which I sense is what God’s calling me to. By the way, learning from the projects that MCC works on in Colombia, how it responds to conflict, the process of restoration has added to my experience in a Christian relief and development organization.
Desarrollo profesional: Mi experiencia como asistente de inglés me ha inspirado para continuar mi carrera de enseñanza y también me ayuda a ver cómo es una misión internacional. Ha ampliado mi comprensión de ser un misionero que siento que es un llamado de Dios para mí. Por cierto, al aprender de los proyectos que la CCM trabaja en Colombia, cómo responde al conflicto, el proceso de restauración ha sumado más a mi experiencia con Ayuda Cristiana, y organizaciones de desarrollo.

New Perspectives: It is a game-changer when we put ourselves in another’s shoes before making any judgment. It helps us to understand better why people do what they do. Sometimes the best thing that one can do is just to be there and to learn from the surroundings as much we can. Service and mission are not only about my contribution but also about receiving blessings because God is working on mutual transformation. The differences between two countries and two people groups do not tell us which one is better or more intelligent. It teaches us about God who manifests His creativity through each one of us. It shows the limitation of man and the incomprehensible knowledge of God.

Nuevas perspectivas: Es un cambio de juego cuando nos ponemos en otros zapatos antes de hacer cualquier juicio. Nos ayuda a entender mejor por qué la gente hace lo que hace. A veces lo mejor que uno puede hacer es estar allí y aprender de los alrededores tanto como podamos. El servicio y la misión no sólo se trata de mi contribución, sino también de recibir bendiciones porque Dios está trabajando en una transformación mutua. Las diferencias entre dos países/tres grupos de personas no nos dicen cuál es mejor o más inteligente. Nos enseña sobre Dios que manifiesta su creatividad a través de cada uno de nosotros. Muestra la limitación del hombre y el incomprehensible conocimiento de Dios.

Future Plans: Despite the difficulty in teaching class here, I am still planning to volunteer to teach English since my church hosts a free English class in the evening. I’ve learned a lot about hospitality and what it is like to live in a new community; therefore, I hope I can better help people who are just moving in and help them feel at ease living in a new community.

Planes de futuros: A pesar de la dificultad de dar clases aquí, sigo planeando de ofrecerme como voluntario para enseñar inglés ya que mi iglesia abre una clase de inglés gratuita por la noche. Estoy deseando volver a mi iglesia y participar en un programa de alcance o en la clase de los Domingos como lo estoy haciendo aquí. He aprendido mucho sobre la hospitalidad y cómo es vivir en una nueva comunidad; por lo tanto, espero poder ayudar mejor a las personas que se acaban de mudar y ayudarles a sentirse a gusto viviendo en una nueva comunidad.

Jose Massada (Mozambique)
Agroecology worker, ANADES
San Salvador, El Salvador

First Impression or Differences: My first impression when I arrived in El Salvador was that it was better than I had imagined. I thought that people would discriminate against me because of my skin color, and because of that I would be afraid to go for a walk alone. On the contrary, I was treated well. The culture, the food, the people are very different from my country.

Primera impresión o diferencias: Primera impresión cuando llegué a El salvador fue mejor de lo que imaginaba, pensaba que las personas me discriminarían por mi color de piel ‘Negro’ tenía miedo de salir a caminar solo. Al contrario, fui bien tratado. La cultura, la comida, las personas son muy diferentes de mi país.

Memorable or Funny Experience: Memorable experience: Eating beans every day for breakfast, lunch and dinner. Being in a place where people look at you like you’re a strange person. Funny experience: One day I went to a dining room with a friend and we each ordered our own food. When he finished first, he went to the checkout to pay, and the lady who was in the store asked him if he would pay for my food because we had arrived together. I was still enjoying the food and did not listen to their conversation and when I finished, I went to the checkout to pay and the lady told me that she had already paid for my food. She told me that when she had asked my friend if he was going to pay for my food he answered no, because “El Negrito” can pay for it herself and she felt be that he called me that, and had thought that I heard his conversation, which is why she paid for my food. But I told her to relax because I am black, and I don’t see any problem with that because that is how God created me. The funny thing for me was that, because of my color, I didn’t spend my money on food that day!

Experiencia memorable o divertida: Comer frijoles todos los días, desayuno, almuerzo y cena. Estar en un lugar donde las personas te miran como una persona rara. Experiencia divertida: Un día fui a un comedor con un compañero y cada uno ordenó su comida según su gusto, él fue el primero en terminar de comer y fue a la caja para pagar, la señora que estaba en la tienda le preguntó si pagaría con mi comida porque habíamos llegado juntos, yo todavía estaba disfrutando de la comida y no escuché su conversación, cuando termine fui a la caja a pagar, la señora me dijo que ya había pagado, el compañero después me explicó la razón que le llevó a pagar mi comida, Cuando le preguntó si podría pagar mi comida el respondió que no, porque el Negrito paga solo y lamento haberme llamado así, pensaba que había escuchado su conversación por eso pago mi comida, le dije que se relajara yo soy negro y no veo ningún problema con eso, así que lo soy porque Dios me creo de
Faith Journey: During my time of service in the name of Jesus Christ outside of my country, my relationship with God has improved a lot because there have been many things that require trusting in God and not giving up faith. One of those moments was the process of applying for residency. We had difficulties getting my criminal record apostilled, and after many attempts with the Mozambican embassy in the U.S., they said that I had to travel to Mozambique. That wasn’t going to be possible because of all the expenses, and at that time God acted in a miraculous way! When we returned to the migration offices to see if we would have another alternative, we were told yes, and with God's help we had found the alternative option that we had been looking for and finally had obtained my residency. Now I feel closer and reconciled with God.

Career/Professional Development: Working on a farm where there is a variety of activities, I have had the opportunity to experience and learn many things. One of those things is how to work professionally. Being a farmer is not just about growing and planting, you must also know everything else required to have a good production, and on this farm, I have learned techniques of organically growing and caring for plants.

New Perspectives: Because of my intercultural service, many things have changed in me. I have learned to smile every day even when I have problems and also to make my neighbor smile. I have managed to overcome my shyness. YAMEN made me understand other people’s beliefs and culture without judging them.

First Impression or Differences: In Indonesia we kind of have this view that Africa is a tropical, hot continent. I am pretty lucky to have a friend who used to live in Zimbabwe, who tipped me that winter in Zimbabwe could be quite cold, so I was prepared and borrowed a winter jacket and pullovers from family and friends. Of course, when we arrived it was the end of winter and yet it was still freezing cold for a tropical citizen like me!

Memorable or Funny Experience: My host family is of the Shona tribe and they have something called peanut butter rice, which made me roll my eyes when I first heard it, because in Indonesia peanut butter is only eaten with sweet things as desert. But now I have to be honest that
I am hooked on peanut butter rice, and to add peanut butter in stir fries!

**Experiencia memorable o divertida:** Mi familia anfitriona es de la tribu Shona y tienen algo llamado arroz con mantequilla de maní, que me hizo retocar mis ojos, cuando lo escuché por primera vez, porque en Indonesia la mantequilla de maní sólo se come con cosas dulces como el postre. Pero ahora tengo que ser honesto que estoy enganchado con el arroz con mantequilla de maní, e incluso añadir mantequilla de maní en las papas fritas!

**Faith Journey:** It’s a new experience for me to attend Sunday services fully conducted in English with songs that I know in Indonesian, but with people around me singing in English. I do feel that this year is less of me trying to comprehend things logically on my own, and more of just trusting in God and His plans for me.

**Viaje de fe:** Es una nueva experiencia para mí asistir a los servicios dominicales totalmente en inglés, con canciones que conozco en indonesio pero que la gente a mi alrededor cantaba en inglés. Siento que este año fue menos de tratar de comprender las cosas con mi lógica y más de sólo confiar en Dios y sus planes para mí.

**Career/Professional Development:** I studied communication back home, but all we learnt was how to communicate to the local audience and market. Here I have to try to analyze the market behavior of local people, which is not easy as someone who’s only been here for seven months, but my teammates and I work together, and we are slowly getting there. I think I will come back with a more international mindset!

**Desarrollo profesional:** Estudié comunicación en mi país, pero todo lo que aprendimos fue cómo comunicarnos con el público y el mercado local. Aquí tengo que tratar de analizar el comportamiento de mercado de la gente local, lo cual no es fácil para alguien que sólo ha estado aquí durante 7 meses, pero mis compañeros y yo trabajamos juntos, y poco a poco estamos llegando allí. ¡Creo que volvería con una mentalidad más internacional!

**New Perspectives:** Before, due to having friends from other countries and families abroad and the fact that I’ve traveled quite a bit, I thought that I was “global” enough. But now I know that I still have quite a long way to go! Also, I realized how much I love the earth and people, and how amazing God is.

**Nuevas perspectivas:** Antes, debido a que tengo amigos de otros países y familias en el extranjero y he viajado bastante, pensé que era lo suficientemente “global”. Pero ahora sé que todavía tengo un largo camino por recorrer. Además, me di cuenta de cuánto amo la tierra y la gente, y lo asombroso que es Dios.

**Future Plans:** I’m planning to pursue a master’s degree in communication and want to encourage more young adults in my church to take the plunge and join the exchange program to broaden their view of the world.

**Planes futuros:** Estoy planeando hacer una maestría en comunicación y animaría a más jóvenes adultos de mi iglesia a dar el salto y unirse al programa de intercambio para ampliar su visión del mundo.

**Memorable or Funny Experience:** I have become a superstar. When I reached my placement in Pati, and even now, almost every time I go outside, even within my village, people ask for a photo with me and actually I learnt that people from Africa rarely come here and hence am treated like a tourist. Apart from this funny experience, one memorable event is when I had the privilege to attend a Christian/Muslim society where Christians and Muslims meet and share experiences as they help each other in one way or the other and also helping the community at large.

**Experiencia memorable o divertida:** Me he convertido en una super estrella, cuando llegué a Pati, mi lugar de asignación, e incluso ahora, cada vez que salgo fuera incluso dentro de mi pueblo la gente me pedía una foto conmigo y en realidad aprendí que la gente de Africa rara vez viene aquí y por lo tanto son tratados como un turista. Aparte de esta divertida experiencia, un evento memorable es cuando tuve el privilegio de asistir a una sociedad cristiana/musulmana donde cristianos y musulmanes se reúnen y comparten experiencias mientras se ayudan mutuamente de una manera y otra y también ayudan a la comunidad en general.
Faith Journey: My faith journey has been interesting – filled with a lot of good moments and lessons despite a few challenges. People here are so nice and social and through them I have seen God’s love. My host mom and the entire family are so loving and caring and I am blessed to have them as my hosting family. The church pastor (Pastor Nofika) and church friends have been so caring, and I am so grateful for the care and love they showed to someone who was once a stranger. I really enjoyed the praise and worship service done by the youth especially and other spiritual programs that helped me deepen my faith in Christ Jesus. My faith was challenged when I would see something that we (Christians from my country) do not do, but here it’s not a big deal. Also where language is concerned, I took class for bahasa Indonesia but instead here in Pati pastors use bahasa jawa, which is very different from the language I was becoming conversant with, so mostly I would spend much time reading and trying to get the gist of what is been talked about.

Career/Professional Development: My life time career involves working with people from different backgrounds and beliefs hence being here in a different continent, country, people, religion and culture has sharpened the way I perceive things, especially those that have to do with culture and religious, and I definitely will put to use my experience in my career and life.

New Perspectives: Living in a society that has more than three different religions and cultures served a very important lesson for me. Perspective may never be the same as others, hence we are called to respect others’ view on subjects that has to do much with cultural or religious, and it is important to try to see the same message from a different angle, different culture and religious belief. The other thing is about race segregation, I learnt that actually it is more in the heart than the skin itself. People of the same race can hate each other but love the other race, which shows that we choose to be racist. For example, here I rarely felt different from the people around me because they opened their hearts and welcomed me not only in their homes but also in their hearts. And lastly this is a slogan I learned here: “my culture, your culture and our culture.”

Nuevas perspectivas: Vivir en una sociedad que tiene más de tres religiones y culturas diferentes me dió una lección muy importante. Mi perspectiva puede que nunca sea la misma que la de los demás, por lo que estamos llamados a respetar la opinión de los demás sobre temas que tienen mucho que ver con la cultura o la religión, y es importante tratar de ver el mismo mensaje desde un ángulo diferente, una cultura y una creencia religiosa diferente. La otra cosa es sobre la segregación racial, aprendí que en realidad está más en el corazón que en la propia piel. Las personas de la misma raza pueden odiarse entre sí, pero aman a la otra raza, lo que demuestra que elegimos ser más racistas, y así, por ejemplo, aquí rara vez me sentí diferente de las personas que me rodean, porque han abierto sus corazones y me han dado la bienvenida no sólo en sus casas, sino también en sus corazones. Y por último este es el lema que aprendí aquí “mi cultura, tu cultura y nuestra cultura”.

Future Plans: I really want to share this experience with anyone who is willing to learn. When I go back home, I am planning to set up some kind of a society or group whose aim is to share, learn and build our community in any way possible. This will be a group open to anyone despite of different religion, culture or social background.

Planes de futuros: Realmente quiero compartir esta experiencia con cualquiera que esté dispuesto a aprender, cuando regrese a casa estoy planeando crear algún tipo de sociedad o grupo cuyo objetivo sea compartir, aprender y construir nuestra comunidad de cualquier manera posible. Este será un grupo abierto a cualquier persona a pesar de su diferente religión, cultura o antecedentes sociales.
Angelica Natareno Gonzales  
Steps of Peace Community Program Assistant  
Asistente del programa comunitario Huellas de Paz  
Managua, Nicaragua

First Impression or Differences: My first impression when I arrived in the country was the heat and the steam that was rising from the pavement because it had been raining. Later after we had left the airport, I could also see that the city was made up of very few tall buildings, rather mostly very small houses built with sheet metal. When we got to the place where the orientation was going to be, the weather was much better than it had been in the city. At dinner, they gave me food that I mostly recognized. But I didn’t expect that they would fill a plantain with cheese and that the cheese would be so salty and with such intense flavor. The plantain came with a cabbage, onion, and tomato salad, rice and beans, and some sour cream – for me it was a very heavy dinner, compared with what I was used to. Time passed and then it was time to go to my assignment.

There I was struck by the place where the Center is located, in a community where before there was a landfill and now there are homes, even though the dump is still active to one side of the community. The people who live there don’t have many economic resources to support themselves, so they sell cardboard or bottles to a recycling plant there. Others sell drugs or use drugs: one the children who comes to the Center is a drug user and when he would arrive it often became difficult to control the group. Despite all of that I have learned to gain their respect and cooperation when their participation is necessary in some activity that we’re doing. After living a few weeks alone there in the office, it was time to go live with my host family and time for new first impressions.

My host family lived an hour and a half from my place, and it was a challenge because at that hour they were all full. But despite all those kinds of difficult things, I liked it better because the weather was better than in the city and I could get away from the noise of the city a bit. I’m still working to get used to the heat here – and the food, since it’s different in my country.

Memorable or Funny Experience: There was one time it was raining, and a lot of water was running down the street, so much that it looked like a river. One of the girls that was going to drop me off at the bus stop told me that she was going to carry me across, so I didn’t get my shoes wet. But she was wearing flipflops, and as we were crossing, one of her sandals slipped off. She tried to catch it, but she was still carrying me, and she couldn’t run to catch it. When she saw that she wasn’t going to be able to reach it, she put me down, but there was a deep spot right there and I ended up getting wetter than I would have if I had just walked across myself. That was one of my funniest experiences. Another memorable time was when one of the girls I teach gave me a popsicle and thanked me for what I had taught her and for being there with them. “I don’t want you to go. I want you to stay,” she said and gave me a kind hug. It was all so touching to me. It’s hard now to leave the place that opened its doors to me and the community that accepted me as one of its own.

Experiencia memorable o divertida: Fue una vez que estaba lluviendo y en una calle estaba corriendo demasiada agua que parecía un río, y una de las chicas que me iba a dejar a la parada de buses, me dijo que ella me iba a cargar para no mojarme los zapatos; pero ella andaba con chanclitas entonces en lo que íbamos caminando a ella de la zapata la chanclita, y ella está intentando alcanzarla pero aun seguí cargándome y no podía correr para alcanzarla, entonces cuando vió que no la podía alcanzar me bajo pero en donde me bajo había una poza de agua entonces termine más mojada de lo que
Informal los cursos que se están dando. Esa ha sido uno de mis sucesos más divertidos. Otro de los sucesos más recordados fue cuando una de las niñas a las que les doy clases llegar con una paleta y me dijera gracias por lo que me a ensenado y por estar aquí con nosotros, me gustaría que no se fuese y siguiera aquí; y me abrazo con tanta ternura eso me lleno tanto que para mí es un poco difícil dejar ese espacio que abrió puertas para mí y que la comunidad me aceptara como parte de ella.

Faith Journey: Mi relación con Dios ahora es mucho más sólida que antes, ya que e aprendido a sostenerme mucho más de su mano, como leyendo mas su palabra, aprendiendo, y sobre todo el comunicarme con el por medio de la oración, ya que antes no lo hacía tanto como ahora. Creo que en los momentos más difíciles como la soledad donde me e quedado solo por mucho tiempo es donde puede darme cuenta de que él está abi para mí y para quien quiera hablar con él está abi siempre para escuchar. Si creemos y confiamos en el nada va a faltarnos porque el fie gentil y maravilloso. He given us health and sustenance and loves each one of us.

Viaje de fe: Mi relación con Dios ahora es mucho más sólida que antes, ya que e aprendido a sostenerme mucho más de su mano, como leyendo mas su palabra, aprendiendo, y sobre todo el comunicarme con el por medio de la oración, ya que antes no lo hacía tanto como ahora. Creo que en los momentos más difíciles como la soledad donde me e quedado solo por mucho tiempo es donde puede darme cuenta de que él está abi para mí y para quien quiera hablar con él está abi siempre para escuchar. Si creemos y confiamos en el nada va a faltarnos porque el fie gentil y maravilloso, que el es el proveedor de salud, alimento y amor para todos nosotros.

Career/Professional Development: My development has grown a lot. I have taken up the habit of reading. I have had the opportunity to start new projects in my assignment. I have gotten over my fear of speaking in front of lots of people. Sharing my abilities with my coworkers has helped me strengthen them because it has forced me to look for new areas so that they can be of professional use to the community center and so that the courses offered aren’t as informal.

Desarrollo profesional: (qué habilidades has aprendido o cómo ha influido esta experiencia en tus aspiraciones profesionales). Mi desarrollo a crecido de gran manera, he tomado un poco más del hábito de la lectura, y tenido la oportunidad de implementar nuevos proyectos en mi lugar de asignación, me he quitado un poco más el miedo de hablar frente de muchas personas, compartiendo mi habilidades con mis compañeros de trabajo eso me ayudado a desarrollarlas mas porque eso me he buscado temas nuevos para que el desarrollo en de ellos dentro del centro comunitario sea más profesional, y no sea tan informal los cursos que se están dando.

New Perspectives: I’m a more positive, laid-back, and relaxed person now. I’ve learned to take more time to learn from other people and give them more time to get to know me. I can come across as serious, but I’m only actually serious when the situation requires it. With my country of origin, I have been able to see that we need to change many things like the racism that is still very visible among the indigenous population. A person does learn a lot by leaving your country. You can see the differences between people and how they speak – for example, because we Guatemalans don’t have much of an accent, while here the accent is very clear, and people yell a lot. The church I had the opportunity to join here was completely different from mine. In mine we are very laid-back in our worship, we sing from a hymnal with only one instrument, the guitar. Our church is maybe half the size of the church here. The church here uses lots of instruments, has many more members, and they sing new songs I had never heard before. They are on fire to sing songs of exaltation. They also have a time for special songs for people who prepare a song during the week and on Sunday go forward to sing a song that might be a little less well-known. It’s something we don’t have in my church. Despite the differences, it was a good experience to be able to learn a few new praise songs and to get to know other brothers and sisters in the faith who believe in the same God.

Nuevas perspectivas: Que ahora soy una persona mas positiva, pasiva, y mas tranquila. Con las demás personas me he aprendido a dedicarles mas tiempo para poder aprender de ellas y que ellas pueden conocer mas de mi que puedo parecer seria, pero solo lo soy cuando la situación lo amerita. Con mi país de origen he podido observar que debemos de cambiara muchas cosas como el racismo que aun se nota en gran parte en la población indígena, pero si uno aprende mucho mas de su país saliendo a otros y puede notar la diferencia con las personas de como hablan por ejemplo porque nosotros los guatemaltecos no tenemos tanto acento para hablar, y aqui la mayoría se les nota el acento y son muy gritones. La iglesia, en la iglesia que tuve la oportunidad de reunirme fue totalmente diferente a la mía, ya que la mía somos muy pasivos en cuestión alabar al señor, cantamos cantos de himnario utilizando solo un instrumento que es la guitarra y tal vez somos menos de la mitad de la congregación de la de aquí. La iglesia de aquí tiene muchos instrumentos muchos más hermanos y cantan cantos nuevos que yo ni conocía son fuego a la hora de cantar cantos de exaltación, también tienen un tiempo de cantos especiales, personas de que se preparan durante la semana y el domingo pasan a cantar un canto tal vez un poco desconocido. Algo que en mi iglesia no tenemos. A pesar de la diferencia fue una buena experiencia de poder aprender unos himnos de conocer a unas personas hermanos en la fe creyentes y un mismo Dios.

Future Plans: When I return, the first thing I am going to do is find a job so that I can pay for university and
Perseverance Ndlovu (Zimbabwe)
Youth & Children Social Worker, Capacitation Centre For Children (CCN)
Soacha, El Progreso, Colombia

First Impression or Differences: Arriving in Colombia I had mixed feelings. I was happy that I was going to Latin America to serve as a YAMENer. It was my first time traveling alone such a long distance, let alone to another continent. I was also filled with fear that people wouldn’t like me, that we wouldn’t get along. But I am glad to say I was welcomed like one of their own. Colombians are naturally friendly and welcoming, at work, at church, with MCC staff and MCC reps, with my MCC supervisors, with my host family, everyone was welcoming and nice. I am glad I met them; I can gladly say I found a family in a foreign land. Bogota is cold and it is big, while I come from a very small and hot city. At first it was too noisy and too cold for me, but I got used to it as time went by.

Memorable or Funny Experience: Learning Spanish was one of the funniest and memorable experiences, and I will forever be grateful. I was warmly welcomed when I arrived in Colombia, but I felt out of place when they were speaking Spanish and I didn’t even understand a single word. I was excited and happy when I started learning Spanish.

Faith Journey: I am grateful that, just like back home in Colombia, I am surrounded by faith-oriented Christians. I attend a Mennonite church, which though with a different service conduction, are much the same as my church back home. It was difficult at church for the first days because I did not understand anything so I would compensate by praying, reading the Bible and listening to other pastors online. I now attend even the youth and children services at church since I can understand Spanish.

Primera impresión o diferencias: Al llegar a Colombia tenía sentimientos encontrados. Estaba feliz de que iba a Latinoamérica a servir como participante de YAMEN. Fue mi primera vez de viajar sola una distancia tan larga, a decir nada de viajar a otro continente. Pero también tenía miedo de cómo sería si a la gente no le gustara yo, si no nos lleváramos bien. Pero me alegra decir que la gente me acogió como una de ella. El pueblo colombiano es de natura amigable y caluroso – en trabajo, en la iglesia, con el equipo CCM y los representantes, con mis supervisores de CCM, con mi familia anfitriona, todos estaban muy cordial y amable. Estoy muy feliz de haberles conocido. Con alegría digo que encontré una familia en una tierra ajena. Hace frío en la ciudad de Bogotá y es una ciudad grande, mientras de donde vengo es un pueblo pequeño donde hace calor. Al principio hacia demasiado ruido y bastante frio a mi gusto, pero me acostumbré con el tiempo.

Experiencia memorable o divertida: El aprender el español fue una de las experiencias mas divertidas y memorables de que nunca estaría agradecida. Se me acogía con cariño al llegar a Colombia, pero me sentía fuera de lugar cuando hablaban español y ni entendiera una sola palabra. Me emocionaba y me hacía feliz empezar de aprender el español.

Viaje de fe: Estoy agradecida de que, justo como en casa, en Colombia se me rodea con cristianos orientados a su fe. Pertenezco a una iglesia menonita que, aunque tenga otra manera de dirigir el culto, todos los cultos en sí son los mismos que se hacen por mi iglesia de casa. Al principio era difícil en la iglesia porque no entendía nada del idioma así compensaría por los cultos al orar, leer de la biblia, y escuchar a otros pastores en línea. Ahora asisto aún los servicios de los jóvenes y niños ya que entiendo el español.
Career/professional Development: I have learnt the importance of teamwork and consistency at work. Working with children with different personalities, from different homes and backgrounds, especially from marginalized and non-Christian backgrounds, has taught me to be attentive and patient. It made me understand children better. I never thought children can be depressed, stressed and hurt; I just thought it's their nature for some to be naughty and some to be quiet. I am glad I was able to share the Gospel and life views with them and make them feel loved, confident and wanted.

Desarrollo profesional: He aprendido la importancia del trabajo en equipo y la consistencia en el desempeño de la labor. Al trabajar con niños con caracteres propios, de casas y trasfondos distintos, especialmente de entornos marginalizados y no cristianos me ha enseñado ser más atenta y paciente. Me ha ayudado entender mejor a los niños. Nunca pensé que niños pueden sentirse deprimidos, estresados, y heridos. Sólo pensaba que fuera la naturaleza de unos de estar malcriados y otros de ser tímidos. Me alegra que podría compartir las buenas nuevas y una visión para el futuro con ellos y ayudarles sentirse amados, seguros de sí mismo, y queridos.

New Perspectives: I used to limit myself in doing things. I never believed in myself. I never thought that I am capable and strong to do anything on my own, just like most people from my country. I am so grateful that this experience has made me realize my strength of changing people's lives. I now am strong and confident, no longer afraid to step out of my comfort zone.

Nuevas perspectivas: Solía limitarme en hacer cosas. Nunca creía en mí misma. Nunca pensaba que soy capaz y fuerte para hacer nada sola, justo como la mayoría de la gente de mi país. Estoy tan agradecida de que esta experiencia me haya causado reconocer el poder que tengo para cambiar las vidas de otros. Ahora soy fuerte y segura en mí misma, aún no me temo sacarme de mi zona de confort.

Future Plans: My dream was to become a marriage counselor, but from now on I am adding owning a capacitation for children and youth (offering psychological and emotional support to them). Starting with children from my church I will work more with children and youth to help depressed, hurt and lonely children. I wish to continue working with MCC in promoting psychological, emotional and physical wellbeing of children and youth in the community and any other social and community work.

Planes futuros: Mi sueño era de ser una consejera de matrimonios, pero desde ahora agrego ser dueña de un consultorio para la capacitación de niños y jóvenes (para ofrecerles apoyo psicológico y emocional). Empezando con niños de mi iglesia, trabajaré más con niños y jóvenes para ayudar niños deprimidos, heridos, y aislados. Quisiera seguir trabajando con el CCM a promover el bienestar psicológico, emocional, y físico de niños y jóvenes de la comunidad, junto con cualquier clase de trabajo social y comunitario.

Jonathan Ngarama (Kenya)
Product Design Support Worker, Rajana
Trabajador de apoyo al diseño de productos, Rajana
Phnom Penh, Cambodia

First Impression or Differences: Oh, everything was new as you can imagine. I remember when I first stepped out of the plane at Phnom Penh Airport, the heat felt like stepping into an oven. This was symbolic since I have felt myself being baked by different experiences in the Kingdom of Wonder. My first breakfast was also quite something, and I say this smiling. I was really excited to try new food only to find out that new meant a different food texture, timing, and obviously preparation and taste, which I think I was not prepared as well as I thought. Most Khmer food are soup based and so in most cases I would get a flooded bowl almost to the brim with different ingredients thrown inside. Both from my Kenyan and Tanzanian side, we eat more solid food with a drink on the side, so it was a good place to start adjusting. The beauty of Khmer food though, as much as it is flooded it remains tasty; and that was my attitude going forward. The housing structure felt also a bit compacted and squeezed but I learnt to enjoy the sense of community that comes with that Khmer style of housing.

Primera impresión o diferencias: Todo fue diferente como pueden imaginarse. Recuerdo cuando me baje por primera vez del avión en el Aeropuerto de Nom Pen, el clima se sentía como entrar a un horno. Esto es simbólico desde que me he sentido cocinado por diferentes experiencias en el Reino de Wonder. Mi primer desayuno fue también algo y dije esto sonriendo. Estaba muy emocionado de probar nueva comida, para darme cuenta de que nuevo significa una textura de comida diferente, tiempo de cocción, y por supuesto preparación y sabor de lo cual creo que no estaba tan preparado como pensé estarlo. La mayoría de comida Khmer tienen una base de sopa, así que en la mayoría de casos me darian un tazón lleno hasta el borde y con diferentes ingredientes en el interior. En ambas de mis culturas (Kenia y Tanzania) comemos más comida sólida y con una bebida como acompañante, así que fue un buen lugar para comenzar a adaptarme. La belleza de la comida Khmer de todos modos, por más que sea repleta, siempre se mantiene con mucho sabor, y esa era mi actitud estando. La estructura de la casa se sentía un poco compactado y apretado pero aprendí a disfrutar el sentido de comunidad que viene con el sentido de casa Khmer.
Memorable or Funny Experience: My language studies came with a lot of fun and humbling experiences. My language tutor was very keen on pronunciation and it was really humbling to learn pronunciation repeatedly like a child until it is retained in the mind. I realized it paid off when I started getting compliments about my Khmer and people wondering how long I have lived in Cambodia to speak the language.

Experiencia memorable o divertida: Mis aprendizajes del idioma vinieron con mucha diversión y experiencias humildes. Mi tutor del idioma estaba siente muy entusiasmado con la pronunciación y fue siempre muy humilde el hecho de aprender la pronunciación repetitivamente como un niño hasta que podría retenerlo en la mente. Me di cuenta que valió la pena hasta que comencé a recibir cumplidos por mi Khmer y las personas se preguntaban por cuando tiempo había estado viviendo en Camboya para hablar tan bien el idioma.

Faith Journey: Coming from a country said to be 80 percent Christian, I felt a certain kind of void being in a predominantly Buddhist country. I felt exposed. I appreciated the Christian community back at home and at the same time it also dawned on me that I should be intentional with my spiritual steadfastness. The Phnom Penh Mennonite Church has been a great and safe place to connect with other believers in the most culturally sensitive. I have also invested a lot into personal devotion time when I could plug in and soak myself in worship music and Scripture.

Viaje de fe: Viniendo de un país que dice ser un 80% cristiano, sentí un cierto tipo de vacío al estar en un país predominantemente budista. Me sentí expuesto. Apreciaba la comunidad cristiana en casa y al mismo tiempo también me di cuenta de que debía ser intencional con mi firmeza espiritual. La Iglesia Menonita de Phnom Penh ha sido un gran y seguro lugar para conectarse con otros creyentes en el estado más sensible culturalmente. También he invertido mucho en tiempos de devocional personal donde puedo conectarme y empatarme de música de adoración y de las Escrituras.

Career/Professional Development: Most definitely I am being stretched in the right way in terms of cross-cultural competence. I have really embraced the value of adventure which has expanded my responsibilities to different roles in my partner organization. The nature of the operations and the transitions have left me attending to a diversity of needs in the organization that would use my skills, moreover, doing tasks that require me to learn new skills which has led to a lot of growth. Who knew I would be involved in high level policy discussion or risk and feasibility analysis of trade fair events? I like the way I am thriving and developing as an all-round leader and professional.

Desarrollo profesional: Definitivamente estoy siendo estirado de la manera correcta en términos de competencia intercultural. Realmente he abrazado el valor de la aventura que ha ampliado mis responsabilidades a diferentes roles en mi organización asociada. La naturaleza de las operaciones y las transiciones me han dejado atendiendo una diversidad de necesidades en la organización que utilizarían mis habilidades, además, haciendo tareas que requieren que aprenda nuevas habilidades lo que ha llevado a un gran crecimiento. ¿Quién sabía que yo participaría en el debate de políticas de alto nivel o en el análisis de riesgos y viabilidad de los eventos de ferias comerciales? Me gusta la forma en que estoy prosperando y desarrollándome como líder y profesional integral.

New Perspectives: Serving in Cambodia has led me to a very profound truth; it is not about what I know, it is about what I know plus what the other person knows and how we relate to solve a problem in a prevailing context. One thing that stood out for me was how offices would factor in nap time during the day which is different from lunch break. But, looking at it more carefully I learnt that it is only practical to take a nap and recharge in Cambodia because it gets extremely hot in the middle of the day and therefore not the best time to work. As much as I appreciated the weather back at home, this was a light bulb moment on how some things are practiced in different places and not others because of underlying reasons that as a foreigner I may be oblivious to.

Nuevas perspectivas: Servir en Camboya me ha llevado a una verdad muy profunda; no se trata de lo que yo sé, sino de lo que yo sé más lo que la otra persona sabe y cómo nos relacionamos para resolver un problema en un contexto predominante. Una cosa que me llamó la atención fue la forma en que las oficinas tenían en cuenta la hora de la siesta durante el día, que es diferente de la hora del almuerzo. Pero, mirándolo más detenidamente, aprendí que sólo es práctico dormir la siesta y recargarse en Camboya porque hace mucho calor en el medio del día y por lo tanto no es el mejor momento para trabajar. Por mucho que apreciara el tiempo en casa, este fue un momento de luz sobre cómo se practican algunas cosas en diferentes lugares y no otras por razones subyacentes que, como extranjero, puedo ignorar.

Future Plans: I am trusting God’s directions about the next steps after serving in Cambodia. One thing I am really excited about is seeing my family after a while when I get back home. I would also say, I have found purpose and growth in international work, both personally and professionally and I would like to keep exploring international opportunities.

Planes futuros: Confío en las instrucciones de Dios sobre los próximos pasos después de servir en Camboya. Una cosa que me emociona mucho es ver a mi familia después de un tiempo cuando vuelva a casa. También diría que he encontrado un propósito y un crecimiento en el trabajo internacional, tanto personal como profesionalmente, y me gustaría seguir explorando oportunidades internacionales.
Sairoze Nherezerane Ndaruza
(Mozambique)
Church & Training Center Assistant,
Matthew Training Center/Mennonite Brethren Church
Guadalajara, Mexico

First Impression or Differences: When I arrived in Mexico I was impressed by the food. Mexican culture is very different from that of my country. Mexican food is tacos, tortillas, gorditas, and more, but it’s all very different from my country. I remember one day we went to a restaurant where I ordered mineral water. Mineral water in my country is fresh water, but in Mexico mineral water has gas (carbonated). So, I didn’t know that little detail and I ordered mineral water and drank it. As I was drinking it, I felt the gas and felt betrayed. I asked and they told me the difference between mineral water and fresh water. Spicy food is another story. I also learned the ways of greeting with a hug and the friendliness of Mexicans. I visited several states in Mexico, including Guadalajara, Michoacán, Hermosillo, and Mexico City. In Guadalajara I visited the municipality of Jalisco. Zampopa, Tlaquepaque is a magical place, too. I visited another state that’s called San Francisco. The people when they saw me wanted to touch me and take pictures with me. That was unbelievable.

Memorable or Funny Experience: The trip from Mozambique to Guadalajara, Jalisco, in Mexico was a memorable experience because it was my first time leaving my country and traveling by air. This was a very memorable experience. When I arrived in South Africa, it was during their cold season, when they have temperatures of -5 degrees. That was something new. Spending time with my host family in the church where I went to speak with people, learning Spanish, my time of service in Guadalajara, Jalisco, Mexico was a memorable experience in my life. God prepared it so that I could have this memorable, transformative experience. And I give thanks to God for this experience in missions that has had such an impact on all areas of my life. This experience of service in Guadalajara, Jalisco, Mexico, in the Centro Mateo, was a time of rest, refreshment, training, and discovery of my missionary call. The trip and all of my time of service was both memorable and transformative.

Experiencia memorable o divertida: El viaje de mozambique hasta México Guadalajara Jalisco es una experiencia memorable porque fue mi primera vez salir de mi país y viajar de vuelo está fue una experiencia memorable. Cuando de llegué en África de sul era tiempo de frío vivir una temperatura de -5 grado fue algo nuevo. Pasar tiempo con mi familia anfitrion a las iglesias dónde iba platicar con la gente, aprender español, mi tiempo servicio en México Guadalajara Jalisco fue una experiencia memorable en mi vida y Dios había preparado para que tuviera está experiencia memorable transformadora. Y doy gracias a Dios por esta experiencia misionera que impactó bastante mi vida en todas las áreas. Por experiencia de servicio en México Guadalajara Jalisco en especial centro Mateo fue un tiempo de refriegero, recreate, entremanent descubrimiento de mi llamado misionero. El viaje y todo el tiempo de servicio fue memorable transformadora.

Faith Journey: Well, it went great. Since I was in the Mateo Training Center where they train people for transcultural discipleship, they put me in classes as a boarding student. The truth is I feel very happy and blessed and well-trained for the call of God. I had more and deeper connection with Jesus, I discovered my call and my gifts and more clarity about my walk with God. I experienced healing in my heart; I have a deeper relationship with God. I was involved in the church where I went, which was Mennonite Brethren, in their worship team. They have a children’s ministry with a meal program, which was something new I learned about. We did social work helping the sick and I had a good faith journey coming to know Jesus more personally.

Viaje de fe: Bueno fue espectacular. Cómo yo estaba en un centro de entrenamiento Mateo es un centro que entrena discípulo transcultural y ello me metieron en las clases como alumno interno. La verdad me siento muy feliz y bendecido y bien entrenado para el llamado de Dios. Tuve más relacionamiento profundo con Jesús, descubrí mi llamado y mis dones y más claridad de los caminos con Dios. Tuve sanación de mi corazón, tengo un relación con Dios más profundo y la iglesia donde iba que era de hermanos menonitas, yo estaba involucrado en las alabanzas, tenía ministerio con los niños en comedor fue algo nuevo que aprendí, haciamos trabajo social ayudar a los enfermos y tuve bueno viaje de fe conociendo más a Jesús personalmente.
Career/Professional Development: Well, in my country I was a pastor. This time that I’ve had to serve with churches and in missionary training has been very important to continue my pastoral training and to look for other ministries like working with street children or starting a missionary discipleship training center in my country. Another thing I learned was to make juice out of any fruit that caught my attention, because in my country there is lots of fruit. Now I can make working juice out of any kind of fruit. This year was a time of ministerial development and discovery of another profession of working with fruit and making juice. It’s something that can generate an income for me and create jobs for others.

Desarrollo profesional: Bueno en mi país yo era pastor. Con en tiet que tuve de servicio con las iglesias y entrenamiento misionero esto fue muy importante para me recapacitar en pastorado y buscar hacer otros ministerio como trabajar con los niños de calle, criar también un centro de entrenamiento de discipulado misionero en mi país, otra cosa aprendí hacer jugo de cualquier fruto eso me despertó la atención porque en mi país hay muchos frutos. Ahora transformar cualquier fruta en jugo eso puede ser mi profesional entonces. Fue un tiempo de desarrollo ministerial y descubrimiento de otra profesión de trabajar con las frutas y hacer jugos eso me puede generar empleo y criar empleo para otros.

New Perspectives: Sharing the Great Commission of Jesus Christ to make disciples of all nations, to be a pastor with purpose, leading the church of Jesus Christ to make disciples of all nations, founding a training center, creating a ministry to work with street children, refreshing my refrigeration course and making juice and if possible a restaurant of pure fruit juices with the purpose of feeding my missionary call and the dream that God has put in my heart. Studying psychology of education so as to better teach the word of God.

Nuevas perspectivas: Comprir con la grande comisión de Jesús Cristo hacer discípulo de todas las naciones, ser pastor con propósito dirigiendo la iglesia de Jesús Cristo como el quiere. Inovor en mercado con algo nuevo que aprendí. Ser emprendedor trabajando con fruto haciendo yugo.

Future Plans: Being a missionary, making disciples of all nations, founding a training center, creating a ministry to work with street children, refreshing my refrigeration course and making juice and if possible a restaurant of pure fruit juices with the purpose of feeding my missionary call and the dream that God has put in my heart. Studying psychology of education so as to better teach the word of God.

Planes futuros: Ser misionero, haciendo discípulo entre a las naciones, fundar un centro de entrenamiento, crear ministerio para trabajar con los niños de la calle, tener reciclaje de mi curso de refrigeración y producir jugos si posible hacer restaurante de puro yugos con propósito de alimentar mi llamado misionero y sueno que Dios ha puesto en mi corazón. Estudiar psicología de educación para mejor enseñar la palabra de Dios.

Victor Michael Odinda (Kenya)
Advocacy Program Assistant,
Building Community Voices
Asistente al Programa de Incidencia,
Fortaleciendo Voces Comunitarias
Phnom Penh, Cambodia

First Impression or Differences: My first impression of Cambodia coupled with the first difference was right at the airport with the heat. My home country is relatively cold and hence I arrived with jackets that frankly I have never used to this day. The next is the traffic. I had never biked before to get around and this was a totally new thing in my life. At home I use public bus and Uber. The roads are narrow, so space is limited meaning vehicles, “tuktuks” (3-legged hand carts), motorcycles and bicycles use the same road. Navigating is a new experience every single day. I had an accident the second week, and I guess that was a welcome lesson because it taught me to be extra careful and do calculations when on the road. I guess the joke there is that if you can navigate a Cambodian road then you can navigate any road on earth. The food is almost like ours, but the cooking is very different which made me struggle at first especially with sugar in food. I must point out though that Cambodia has more food options and fruits than Kenya. The only constant is rice which I had to be accustomed to eating for breakfast, lunch, dinner and snacks. On the flipside, I have never seen a people as warm, welcoming and concern as Cambodians. Frankly at some point I used to feel like my personal space had really shrunk because in Nairobi, Kenya, people tend to mind their own business and concern for a neighbor is not a priority. Cambodia reminds me of village life when I was young where community was key. I also like how Cambodians are very much in touch with their culture. It is very evident in the lifestyles of the most people. I have had an interesting time learning the language in depth because what is taught in class is formal Khmer while out in the streets its very informal with twisted words and lots of slang words.

Primera impresión o diferencias: Mi primera impresión de Camboya, junto con la primera diferencia, fue justo en el aeropuerto con el calor. Hace un frio relativo en mi país natal y así llegué con chaquetas que, a ser franco, ni he usado durante todo el año hasta la fecha. La próxima fue el tráfico. Nunca había usado la bicicleta para trasladarme y era algo totalmente nuevo en mi vida. En mi ciudad, usaba el bus público y Uber. Las calles son estrechas y el espacio limitado, así se implica que los vehículos, los tuktuks (carretas de mano con tres ruedas), las motocicletas y bicicletas todos usan los mismos carriles. El navegar es cada día una nueva experiencia. Un día, en mi segunda semana en el país, tuve un accidente y supongo que fuera una lección propicia que me enseñó estar más cauteloso y...
Memorable or Funny Experience: The Khmer language is not as broad grammatically so many English words don’t have a Khmer language translation, or some words get lost in translation. One time at work, I needed three computer applications to complete a task, so I requested the IT assistant to install them for me. I guess because of the language, he only got ‘three’ and ‘computer’ but missed out on the applications bit. Next thing I was seeing was three computers on my desk plus the one I was using, which was a very helpful and honest gesture just not what I needed. It soon became the subject of a big hearty laugh.

Experiencia memorable o divertida: El idioma khmer no cuenta con una gramática muy amplia, así bastantes palabras en inglés no tienen traducción al khmer o se pierden en traducción. Una vez, se requirió tres aplicaciones informáticas para hacer una tarea y pedí que el asistente de informática me las instalará. Resultó que, por el idioma, sólo me explique el ‘3’ y la ‘computadora’ y no entendía el parte de ‘aplicaciones.’ De pronto veía tres computadoras en mi escritorio, más ella que usaba, todo de cual era un gesto muy servicial y honesto, sólo no era ello que necesitaba. Pronto se convirtió en un tema de una gran carcajada.

Career/Professional Development: My assignment has really grown my career in many spheres. First, it has given me cross-cultural experience. I have been able to utilize my skills in an entirely different setting with different people, different economic and legal setting. This has really boosted my adaptability skills because it has been like learning to think like a Cambodian in order to bring context to my functionality. My role mainly entailed project designs and logical frameworks for proposals for funding. I had prior knowledge but in the Cambodian context it seemed more like I had a template and hence I had to maneuver applying it to
of my life and it has given new purpose for faith- and service-driven professional growth. I have also gained the attribute of understanding and tolerance to different people. I have lived in a cultural setting where some of the acceptable things in my home country are considered taboo and that has helped me see people not as wrong if they do things that are not within my acceptable norms. I have also learnt how to appreciate the longstanding peace that is easily taken advantage of and forgotten in Kenya especially after seeing and hearing first-hand accounts of the effects of war (Khmer Rouge and civil war) that defined a dark part of Cambodian history. Building Community Voices, my partner organization, does a lot of peacebuilding and this has given me a lot of perspective.

**Future Plans:** Once I return to Kenya, I intend to continue my career growth for an NGO and get integrated back into the Kenyan system, I intend to continue in program work and apply some of the skills I have picked up here. I will also do soft-skills integration. I come from a city where it is every man for himself. Once I am back, the aspect of community and warmth that is not driven by faith will be something I will definitely keep practicing. I will also reach out more as opposed to just evangelizing within my community. I will also take home some of the Khmer recipes and biking. Biking is quite special for me as it took me out of a sedentary lifestyle, and it has had very good health effect. It also became one leisure activity I enjoyed doing so I will definitely carry that with me and join one or start a small biking club like the one I joined for leisure biking within Cambodia. Spiritually, I take back a stronger but tolerant faith to both Christians of other denominations and non-Christians.

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**Desarrollo profesional:** Mi asignación sí me ha capacitado en varios ámbitos. Primero, me ha dado una experiencia intercultural. He podido utilizar mis habilidades en un entorno completamente distinto con gente distinta, en un nuevo contexto económico y legal. Este realmente me ha aumentado mi adaptabilidad porque me ha forzado a pensar como un cambodiano para que contextualice mis capacidades. En gran parte mi rol suponía el diseño de proyectos y los marcos lógicos de propuestas para subvenciones. Tenía experiencia de antemano, pero en el contexto cambodiano me parecía que sólo tuviera una plantilla que me tocara aplicar al contexto cambodiano. Esto, a su vez, fortaleció mis habilidades de la investigación. El hacer informes también era un gran parte de mi trabajo, lo cual suponía juntar información de siete proyectos distintos que se realizaron durante varios años en seis provincias distintas y reconstruirlo todo. Este me permitía captacitarme en hacer indagaciones y en mis habilidades interpersonales, ya que tenía que hacer muchas consultas para conseguir la información adecuada. También aprendí nuevas técnicas como la asesoría de impacto al usar el impacto visual, y otras herramientas de monitoreo. Todas estas y más experiencias me han influenciado las ambiciones de carrera así que me he desarrollado un gran interés en el PME (la Evaluación y Monitoreo de Proyectos) y pretendo hacerlo una carrera. Resultó que también nos tocó un periodo de transición durante mi tiempo con la organización, durante lo cual proyectos de tres a cuatro años se estaban clausurándose y podía aprender mucho de la transición y adaptación a realidades actuales en cuanto a la subvención, el personal, y la reestructuración organizacional.

**New Perspectives:** My view of myself has changed a lot. I came predominantly from the corporate sector where it was more task-oriented and moves that are geared at bottom lines of profit and growth. Most of the service, relationship building, and tolerance aspect was in my Christian life outside of work. Through this year of service, I have been able to marry the two aspects of transition and adaptation to prevailing conditions in terms of funding, personnel and organization restructure.

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**Nuevas perspectivas:** Mi concepto de mi mismo se me ha cambiado bastante. Llegué mayormente del sector privado donde se enfocaba más en el cumplir de tareas y ajustes para optimizar los resultados de la ganancia y la expansión. La mayoría de mi identidad servicial, de cultivar relaciones y la tolerancia, era en mi vida cristiana aparte del trabajo. Durante este año de servicio, he podido unir los dos aspectos de mi vida y me ha dado nuevo propósito a la fe y a el crecimiento profesional para el servicio. También he cogido el atributo del entendimiento y la tolerancia de personas ajenas. He vivido en un ámbito cultura donde unas de las cosas aceptadas en mi país natal se consideren tabú, lo cual me ha ayudado mirar a personas no como equivocadas si hacen cosas que no sean dentro de mis normas aceptadas. También he aprendido cómo apreciar la paz duradera de que fácilmente se aprovecha y se olvida en Kenia, especialmente después de ver y escuchar los relatos de primera mano de los efectos de la guerra (los Jeneres Rojos y la guerra civil) que marcó una trama oscura de la historia camboyana. Fortaleciendo Voces Comunitarias, mi organización de asignación, hace mucho trabajo de construcción de paz y ello me ha dado mucha perspectiva.
citación de mis habilidades blandas. Provengo de una ciudad donde es cada hombre por sí mismo. Al llegar, el aspecto de la comunidad y la calidez que no se dirige sólo por la fe será algo que si quisiera mantener en vista. También me extenderé más en lugar de sólo evangelizar dentro de mi comunidad. También llevaré a casa unas de las recetas jemeres y el andar en bicicleta. El andar en bicicleta es bien especial para mí ya que me sacó de una vida sedentaria y ha tenido muy buenos efectos para la salud. También es una actividad de ocio que disfrutaba de hacer así definitivamente la llevaré a casa y me uniré o fundaré un pequeño club de ciclismo como ello con cuál salía en ciclismo de paseo en Camboya. Espiritualmente, llevaré una fe más fuerte pero tolerante tanto a cristianos de otras denominaciones y a no cristianos.

Vichhay Phan (Cambodia)
Matopo Book Centre & MCC Zimbabwe
Centro de libros Matopo y el CCM Zimbabwe
Bulawayo, Zimbabwe

First Impression or Difference: Traffic and new foods were problems for me. The cars almost crash into me when I walk to cross the street; they drive so fast even in green robot (traffic light). “Sadza” is made from corn powder and it is cooked until sticky. I can’t eat it because it feels like I am eating soil in my mouth. About church, they take a long time to worship, around three hours, and the worship music is so random, they play hard rock music to worship. That is what surprised me in the first month, but I survived. About the local language, I had a problem with the first month of language class. It is hard to learn because my English is not good enough and then I can’t learn more about the local language.

Primera impresión o diferencias: El tráfico y las nuevas comidas eran problemas para mí. Los carros casi me atropellaban al cruzar la calle, manejaban tan rápido aún por los semáforos. Sadza es el nombre de una comida que se hace de harina de maíz, tanto se cocina hasta que sea pegajoso. No la podía comer porque me sentía como si comiera tierra. En la iglesia, las alabanzas duraban tanto – hasta 3 horas – y la música de alabanza era tan aleatoria: tocaba música roquera hasta coros. Éste es lo que me sorprendía en el primer mes, pero aún así sobrevivi. En cuanto al idioma local, tenía problemas desde el primer mes de clases. Fue difícil de aprender debido de que mi inglés no era suficiente para seguir aprendiendo el idioma local.

Memorable or Funny Experience: When I walked around town, people who thought I am Chinese would call me something like, “Hey Jacky Chan!!! Please teach me Kungfu!!” “Hey boss, please give me a job! I need a job to make money support my family!” And during the corona virus outbreak in Africa, people around me speaking in Ndebele or Shona (local languages) would chant “Corona Corona…” when they saw me and my friends. Yes...in this case, I am feeling accused of bring corona by the people around me even though I came before the coronavirus outbreak started.

Experiencia memorable o divertida: Al caminar por el pueblo, la gente en las esquinas me inventaba nombres porque pensaban que fuera chino. ‘¡¡¡Oye Jackie Chan!!! ¡¡¡Enséñame Kungfu porfa!!!’ Oye jeje, dame un trabajo, necesito un trabajo para ganar la vida para mi familia.’ Y durante la pandemia del coronavirus en Africa, la gente que hablara Ndebele o Shona (los idiomas locales) decían ‘Corona Corona…’ al verme a mi y a mis amigos. Sí, en este caso, sentía la llegada del coronavirus antes de que se brotara.

Faith Journey: Spiritually my relationship with God is perfected; I am growing a lot in my faith. When I am far away from home or feeling home sick, I always pray to God. My host family has family prayer every Sunday evening.

Viaje de fe: Espiritualmente y en mi relación con Dios se perfeccionaba. Crezco mucho en mi fe. Al estar lejos de casa o echar de menos lo de mi casa camboyana, siempre oraba a Dios. Mi familia siempre tenía un tiempo de oración familiar cada domingo por la noche.

Career/ Professional Development: The most important thing about myself is that I am improving my English. My expectations before coming to the exchange programs was to learn more English and to be good at it. Especially, I am learning and know more about the new culture, new experience, self-flexibility, and self-confidence.

Desarrollo profesional: Entre las cosas más importantes a mí, mejoré mi inglés. Mi expectativa antes de llegar era de aprender más inglés para al fin poder hablarlo bien. Especialmente aprendí y conoci más de una cultura nueva, una experiencia nueva, la flexibilidad, y la confianza en mí mismo.

New Perspectives: Spending a whole year of my life’s journey in Zimbabwe, I have a lot of time to think about what I want to do in the future. What I learned cross culturally, is the best thing of my new perspective.

*MCC grieves all acts of racism, including racial profiling stemming from fears related to the COVID-19 pandemic. MCC is committed to ending racism in all its forms because we believe that God, through Jesus Christ, has already defeated the powers of sin and death and that a new creation of true mutuality and equality can break into our lives and our communities.
Nuevas perspectivas: Durante un año entero del camino de mi vida en Zimbabue, he tenido bastante tiempo para pensar en qué quisiera hacer en el futuro. De lo que aprendí y que se puede trasladar a otra cultura, es que es importante acordarme de mi perspectiva.

Future Plans: I am still an undergraduate of a second major, so I will go finish it and then start my own project work.

Planes futuros: Aún estudio en la universidad, así regresaré a graduarme y prender mi trabajo en un proyecto propio.

Khaykeo Phouthavong (Laos)
Visibility & Communication Assistant, Centre for Peace and Nationhood (CPN)
Asistente de Comunicación y Visibilización en el Centro de Paz y Patria (CPN)
Nairobi, Kenya

First Impression or Differences: I hadn’t known that Kenya would have such nice weather; the temperature never goes above 30 degree compared to my home country Laos. No way! Laos is very hot! I love the weather here so much.

Primera impresión o diferencias: El tiempo: No sabía que la Kenia tendría tiempo tan lindo. La temperatura nunca sube a más de 30 grados, en comparación con mi país de Laos. ¡Jamás! ¡Hace pero mucho calor en Laos! Me encanta el tiempo acá.

Memorable or Funny Experience: Eating “ugali” with fried “skuma wiki” alone or with other combinations. It was a bit hard to accept eating “ugali” almost every day and with fried “skuma wiki” or fried cabbage sometimes (most boring meal ever 😞).

Experiencia memorable o divertida: El comer ugali con skuma frita o solas o en combinación con otras comidas. Fue un poco difícil aceptar comer ugali casi cada día, a veces con skuma wiki frita o repollo frito (la comida más aburrida de nunca 😞).

Faith Journey: This has been quite challenging. However, I believe that God wanted me to learn something from it and experience the diversity of the way people worship God and how they react to their faith. I’m thankful that God is with me all the way with my journey. I could feel his presence many times.

Viaje de fe: Es un reto de verdad. Pero creo que Dios quería que aprendiera algo de la experiencia y que conociera las maneras diversas en que la gente alabe a Dios y cómo reacciona su fe. Estoy agradecido que Dios está conmigo durante todo el camino. Sentía su presencia a menudo.

Career/Professional Development: This opportunity might help me to consider what I want to do in my future career. It was fun to learn new things, experience local needs, taste the work of a local community and I feel like I want to do more mission work and live in other countries.

Desarrollo profesional: Esta oportunidad quizá me ayude a considerar qué quisiera hacer con mi carrera. Fue genial aprender nuevas cosas, conocer las necesidades locales, saborear la labor de la comunidad local, y me siento como si quisiera hacer más trabajo de misiones y vivir en otros países.

New Perspectives: I believe in different cultural actions and the ways people respond to what they believe is not wrong, such as the way people worship God, used old songs and new songs. It’s okay to keep using old songs and use new songs. It depends on your style, as long as we worship the same God.

Nuevas perspectivas: Creo que haya distintas maneras culturales de hacer las cosas y las maneras en que responden la gente a su fe. No hay nada mal de la variedad de maneras en que la gente alabe a Dios, si usen canciones antiguas o nuevas. Está bien seguir usando los canticos antiguos o usar los nuevos. Depende en su estilo, siempre y cuando alabemos al mismo Dios.

Future Plans: Well, I love worshipping, so actually I think I will get involved in a worship team.

Planes futuros: Pues, me encanta alabar de hecho. Creo que me hiciere parte del equipo de alabanza.

Nephtaline Ramille (Haiti)
Teacher’s Assistant, Children Care Centre (CCC)
Asistente del Profesor, Centro de Cuidado de Niños (CCC)
Durban, South Africa

First Impression or Differences: First of all, I would like to take this opportunity to thank MCC for bringing me to South Africa. I must admit that I was very skeptical and apprehensive, not knowing what to expect. The first thing that caught my attention on landing at the airport in Johannesburg was the mix of people. South Africa is truly a rainbow nation. They have people of many races, religions, customs, traditions and cultures. South Africa is six hours ahead of Haiti. A gas station is called a “garage” and people commonly refer to the traffic lights as “robots.”

Primera impresión o diferencias: En primer lugar, quisiera aprovechar esta oportunidad para agradecer al CCM por traerme a Sudáfrica. Debo admitir que me sentía muy escéptico y aprensivo, sin saber qué esperar.
Lo primero que me llamó la atención al aterrizar en el aeropuerto de Johannesburgo, fue la mezcla de personas. Sudáfrica es realmente una nación arco iris. Tienen gente de muchas razas, religiones, costumbres, tradiciones y culturas. Sudáfrica está 6 horas por delante de Haití, una gasolinera se llama “garage” y la gente se refiere comúnmente a los semáforos como “robots.”

Memorable or Funny Experience: I thoroughly enjoyed worshipping at the Durban Christian Centre (DCC). Worshippers are jovial and ecstatic as they dance to the gospel music, feeling the presence of God. I also had many funny moments with the children at the creche where I worked. An incident that instantly comes to mind is when one of the kids name Aboud, stared at me continuously as I ate a banana. When I inquired if he wanted to have my other banana he sternly replied, “No teacher, I am not a monkey.” I was privileged to have worked and shared my life with some truly wonderful people. My manager Petronella, and the two teachers, Beatrice and Ntokozo, were always encouraging and motivating me. Ntokozo always shared a long walk with me to show me Durban and Joyce invited me to an African wedding. I blended in with the Africans. Durban is a huge metropolis, with so much to explore. My compliments go to MCC S.A and their absolutely amazing staff and coordinators. Sarah and Geoff were like doting parents always looking out for my wellbeing. I have learned from Pros, who is such an extrovert, never a dull moment with this livewire personality. She was always open to criticism and suggestions and had this ability to resolve conflict amicably. My encounters with Mercy were less, but it was obvious that she was a good caring soul. Overall, the YAMENers and SALTers in S.A were quiet but always exuded happiness and love at our meetings. South African weather is weird, especially in Durban, where they basically experience the rain, sun, wind and sometimes thunderstorms all in a single day. I ate various meals that were prepared by people of different races and cultures. I was hosted by three different families; the first one was too far from work, the second one misunderstood me and my prayer was answered when I moved in with the third family, My host mom and two sons and the granddaughter made me feel like a member of the family immediately. Indian meals were divine, but spicy. My host brothers, who often challenged me to devour more chilies than them, sometimes ate 10 at a single meal, but I couldn’t even bite into them. I was smothered with love from them all. My host mom often did my hair and facials and spoiled me with detectable lunches. We always spent the evenings chatting about my days at work and she was always ready to give advice and motivate me. My host brothers always played pranks on me, but they always cared about me. I love the granddaughter so much; she enjoyed watching me dress and do make-up. I am certainly going to miss them. In fact, it was a huge relief to my family back home that I was finally placed in a family that was like my own. I can honestly say that a piece of my heart will be left behind when I depart; I love this family too much.

Experiencia memorable o divertida: Disfruté mucho de la adoración en el Centro Cristiano de Durban (DCC). Los adoradores son joviales y eufóricos mientras bailan con la música cristiana, sintiendo la presencia de Dios. También tuve muchos momentos divertidos con los niños en la guardería donde trabajé. Un incidente que me viene inmediatamente a la mente es cuando uno de los niños llamado Aboud, me miraba continuamente mientras comía un plátano, cuando le pregunté si quería comerme mi otro plátano me respondió severamente “No profesor, no soy un mono”. Tuve el privilegio de haber trabajado y compartido mi vida con gente verdaderamente maravillosa. Mi directora Petronella, y los dos profesores, Beatrice y Ntokozo siempre me animaron y motivaron. Ntokozo siempre compartió un largo paseo conmigo para mostrarme Durban y Joyce me invitó a una boda africana en la que me mezclé con los africanos. Durban es una gran ciudad, con mucho que explorar. Mis felicitaciones a MCC S.A. y a su increíble personal y coordinadores. Sarah y Geoff eran como padres cariñosos que siempre se preocupaban por mi bienestar. He aprendido de Pros, quien es un extrovertido, nunca hubo un momento aburrido con esta personaje lleno de energía. Siempre estaba abierto a la crítica y a las sugerencias y tenía esa capacidad de resolver conflictos amigablemente. Mis encuentros con Mercy fueron menos, pero era obvio que era un alma bondadosa. En general, los Yameners y los Salters en S.A. eran tranquilos pero siempre exudaban felicidad y amor en nuestros encuentros. El clima sudafrocanico es extraño, especialmente en Durban, básicamente experimentan la lluvia, el sol, el viento y a veces las tormentas eléctricas, todo en un solo día. Comí varias comidas que fueron preparadas por gente de diferentes razas y culturas. Fui hospedada por 3 familias diferentes, la primera estaba demasiado lejos del trabajo, la segunda me malinterpretó y mi oración fue respondida cuando me mudé con la tercera familia, Mi madre anfitriona y 2 hijos y la nieta, me hicieron sentir como un miembro de la familia inmediatamente, las comidas indias eran divinas pero picantes mis hermanos anfitriones, que a menudo me desafiaban a devorar más chiles que ellos, a veces comían 10 en una sola comida, pero yo ni siquiera podía morderlos. Me sobrecogía el amor de todos ellos. Mi madre anfitriona a menudo me peinaba y me hacía tratamientos faciales, me mimaba con almuerzos detectables. Siempre pasábamos las tardes charlando sobre mis días de trabajo y ella siempre estaba dispuesta a darme consejos y a motivarme, mis hermanos de acogida siempre me hacían bromas, pero siempre se preocupaban por mí, amo tanto a la nieta, que disfrutaba viéndome vestirme y maquillarme. Ciertamente los voy a extrañar. De hecho, fue un gran alivio para mi familia en casa que finalmente me colocaron en una familia que era como la mía. Puedo decir honestamente que un pedazo de mi corazón quedará atrás cuando me vaya, amo demasiado a esta familia.
Faith Journey: My relationship with God was undeterred. In fact, I cannot be more thankful to God for granting me that ultimate strength and courage to persevere in a foreign country that faces many challenges. I am grateful that I was given the ability to overcome them. I ultimately emerged as a stronger person. My God never failed me throughout this incredible journey. I would like to quote Jeremiah 29:11, “For I know the plan I have for you,” declares the Lord, ”to prosper you, not to harm you. Plans to give you hope and a future.”

Viaje de fe: Mi relación con Dios no se ha visto afectada. De hecho, no puedo estar más agradecido a Dios por concederme esa fuerza y coraje máximos para perseverar en un país extranjero que se enfrenta a muchos desafíos. Estoy agradecido de que se me haya dado la capacidad de superarlos. Al final salí como una persona más fuerte. Mi Dios nunca me falló en este increíble viaje. Me gustaría citar Jeremías 29:11, “Porque conozco el plan que tengo para ti”, declara el Señor, “para prosperarte, no para dañarte. Planes para darte esperanza y un futuro.”

Career/Professional Development: Working with children under the age of six opened up a whole new and exciting adventure for me. My days were filled with laughter. I mostly enjoyed their witty sense of humor. No two days were alike. Each day was a learning curve. And this helped me to broaden my horizons considerably. Aside from benefitting from their ideas and thoughts, it also contributed to growing me physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually.

Desarrollo profesional: Trabajar con niños menores de 6 años me abrió una nueva y emocionante aventura. Mis días estaban llenos de risas. Disfruté sobre todo de su ingenioso sentido del humor. No había días iguales. Cada día era una curva de aprendizaje. Y esto me ayudó a ampliar mis perspectivas considerablemente. Además de beneficiarme de sus ideas y pensamientos, también contribuyó a hacerme crecer física, mental, emocional y espiritualmente.

New Perspectives: I have certainly grown as a person after this experience. Initially, I had many reservations and doubted my decision about my visit to an African country. But now I have no regrets whatsoever. Patience and perseverance certainly paid off. I would not hesitate to grab another such opportunity in the near future.

Nuevas perspectivas: Ciertamente he crecido como persona después de esta experiencia. Al principio, tenía muchas reservas y Dudaba de mi decisión sobre mi visita a un país africano. Pero ahora no me arrepiento de nada. La paciencia y la perseverancia ciertamente valieron la pena. No dudaría en aprovechar otra oportunidad de este tipo en un futuro próximo.

Future Plans: I will share my experience and I am more determined to study further, in the field of tourism. Travel excites me and thus the need to pursue my career and achieve the highest goals possible. After working with kids and living with such a vast array of people, I may even consider studying psychology someday.

Planes futuros: Compartiré mi experiencia y estoy más decidido a seguir estudiando, en el campo del turismo, los viajes me emocionan y por lo tanto la necesidad de seguir mi carrera y alcanzar las metas más altas posibles, Después de trabajar con niños y vivir con tan amplia gama de personas, puedo que incluso considere estudiar psicología algún día.

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Genesis Katherine Reyna Jaimes (Bolivia)
The Growing Together Foundation
La Corporación Creciendo Juntos
Soacha, Colombia

First Impression or Differences: My first impression was the size of the city. Bogota is very big in comparison to my city of Cochabamba in Bolivia.

Primera impresión o diferencias: Mi primera impresión fue el tamaño de la ciudad, Bogotá es muy grande con relación a mi ciudad Cochabamba en Bolivia.

Memorable or Funny Experience: About a month ago I had the opportunity to create a Bible school at Creciendo Juntos. This experience not only made the kids happy; it also filled my heart with so much emotion. It was one of the best experiences that I have had during this time, since besides sharing teachings from the Bible with the children, I could enjoy the whole process as well as the outcome. It wasn’t just a moving and joyful experience for me, I could also see my childhood reflected in those children.

Experiencia memorable o divertida: Hace aproximadamente un mes tuve la oportunidad de elaborar una escuela bíblica en Creciendo Juntos, esta experiencia no solo hizo felices a los niños, sino que lleno mi corazón de tantas emociones, fue una de las mejores experiencias que tuve durante este tiempo, ya que además de transmitir enseñanzas bíblicas a los niños, pude disfrutar de todo el proceso y el resultado final no solo me conmovió y alegró, sino que pude ver reflejada mi niñez en todos esos niños.

Faith Journey: My relationship with God is so different from what it was before setting out on this journey. I feel that I am facing personal challenges, challenges that I knew would come and even though it can seem that situations are too complicated, I know that God has control over my life and over everything that has surrounded me since I left Bolivia. I feel very blessed and grateful to God.
**Viage de fe:** Mi relación con Dios es tan diferente a como era antes de iniciar este viaje, siento que estoy teniendo retos personales, retos que sabía que vendrían y aunque en muchas ocasiones parece que las situaciones se complicarán, sé que Dios tiene el control de mi vida y de todo lo que me rodea desde que salí de Bolivia. Me siento muy bendecida y agradecida por ello.

**Career/Professional Development:** A little bit of everything, I learned a lot at the Growing Together Foundation. Patience became my daily companion. My professional aspirations have change and I have many new ideas in mind that, God willing, I will be able to carry out.

**Desarrollo profesional:** De todo un poco, aprendí mucho en la Fundación Creciendo Juntos, la paciencia se convirtió en una compañera diaria, mis aspiraciones profesionales han cambiado y tengo en mente muchas ideas que Dios me di ante podré cumplirlas.

**New Perspectives:** I feel that my perspectives about many things have changed and continue changing during this time. It has been a year of a lot of learning, both spiritually and professionally. I don't know what will happen when the moment comes to return to Bolivia, but I know that my life as I knew it before ended the day I got on that airplane. Thanks to God and to this experience, I have a new vision.

**Nuevas perspectivas:** Siento que mi perspectiva sobre muchas cosas han cambiado y siguen cambiando en este tiempo. Ha sido un año de mucho aprendizaje tanto espiritual como laboral, no sé qué suceda cuando llegue el momento de estar nuevamente en Bolivia, pero sé que mi vida como la conocía antes, terminó el día que me subí a ese avión y que gracias a Dios y a esta experiencia, tengo una visión diferente.

**Future Plans:** I have many plans in mind, in my church, my family, and professional life. For now, I’m putting it all in God’s hands.

**Planes futuros:** Tengo muchos planes en mente tanto para mi iglesia y familia, como para el área profesional, por ahora estoy poniendo todo en las manos de Dios.

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**Keyla Rocío Ricardo Parra** *(Colombia)*
Accountant Intern, ASJ,
Association for a More Just Society
Pasante de Contabilidad, ASJ,
Asociación para una Sociedad más Justa
Tegucigalpa, Honduras

**First Impression or Differences:** I felt like Honduras was a very disorganized country. There is little road control, and there’s just too much street harassment. The food was unquestionably also a big blow; it was difficult to adapt my stomach without feeling some stomach issues.

**Primera impresión o diferencias:** Senti que Honduras era un país muy desordenado. No hay mucho control vial, y el tema del acoso callejero me parece que es demasiado. La comida también indiscutiblemente también fue una gran golpe, costó adaptarme a los alimentos sin que me causaran algún tipo de malestar estomacal.

**Memorable or Funny Experience:** The first weekend with my host family, they took me on a trip to Güinope, a town near Tegucigalpa. My host dad, Hector, gets corn-on-the-cob there to sell in his “neighborhood store.” That Sunday, September 8th, I wore shorts because it was very hot, and I went with the kids in the bed of the pickup. I slept without covering my legs for an hour and a half. I have sensitive skin, and I didn’t consider the intensity of the sun and the consequences. As soon as I arrived, I went to take a shower. When I touched my legs, they stung, and I realized that they were very red. The sun had burned me too much, and now it looked like I had legs the color of shrimp! My legs were red for a week and a half and it was painful to put pants on, so I wore skirts and shorts until my dead skin began to fall off. The good news was I had a nice suntan after that.

**Experiencia memorable o divertida:** El primer fin de semana con mi familia anfitriona, ellos me llevaron de viaje a Güinope, un pueblo aledaño, de dónde don Héctor, el papá anfitrión trae elotes (maíz) para vender en su pulpería, ese domingo 8 de septiembre, me coloqué un short porque hacía mucho calor, y me fui en la parte de atrás con los niños. Me quedé dormida sin cubrirme las piernas por una hora y media, y yo soy muy delicada de la piel, pero creo que no medi la intensidad del sol y las consecuencias. En cuanto llegué, fui a tomar una ducha, cuando toqué mis piernas me ardieron y me di cuenta que estaban muy rojas, el sol me había quemado demasiado, y ahora yo parecía que tenía piernas de camarón. Ese domingo, me comí piernas y piernas de roja, mi host father told me to sell them in his “neighborhood store.”

**Faith Journey:** Although I grew up in a Christian family, I always felt that my relationship with God was not good, in fact I thought it was very mediocre. I embarked on this process in order to “meet God,” and I’m convinced I can say that I have seen his hand in each of the tasks and situations that I have gone through. It was not easy to understand God’s purposes at the beginning, especially because I have been very attached to people and things. Being here has allowed me to let go of a lot and place it in the arms of God. Without understanding his will I have been able to accept it and have peace. I have returned to my first love, and that has been the best thing about this process.
Viaje de fe: Aunque yo crecí en una familia cristiana, siempre sentí que mi relación con Dios no era buena, de hecho pensé que era muy mediocre. Me embarqué en este proceso con el fin de “encontrarme con Dios”, y convencida puedo decir que he visto su mano en cada una de las tareas y situaciones que he pasado. No era fácil entender los propósitos de Dios al principio, especialmente porque he sido muy apegada a las personas y cosas. El estar aquí me ha permitido soltarme mucho en los brazos de Dios, sin comprender su voluntad he podido aceptarla y tener paz. He vuelto a mi primer amor, y eso ha sido lo mejor de este proceso.

Career/Professional Development: Being here has been a good influence on me. Although in my country my family expected me to be the typical enterprising woman with economic stability, I have decided to take a slightly different approach. God knows that I don’t have enough financial resources to continue studying and that the pay in Colombia is minimal compared to the cost of living, but trusting that his will is to educate me to help others, I hope to standardize the subjects I have studied in accounting and administration, to graduate in a few years as a Business Administration Professional. After that I hope to do a specialization in Project Management. I hope, after this, to have acquired the wisdom necessary also to undertake the search to focus my profession on project management/control to help others without setting aside the beautiful love of God, because before relieving the physical I consider that the soul that bears all emotions must release them in God. For me, I would like to study some psychology (however, spending increases). I like working for people more; it is not an easy job and sometimes it involves going through deserts, but I think the challenge is precisely to reach places where others do not even want to give the opportunity to listen.

Desarrollo profesional: Ha influido bastante bien a mi parecer el estar aquí, aunque en mi país mi familia esperaba que fuera la típica mujer emprendedora y con estabilidad económica, yo he decidido darle un enfoque un poco más diferente. Dios sabe que yo no cuento con los recursos económicos suficientes para continuar estudiando y que los pagos en Colombia son mínimos en comparación con los gastos de supervivencia mínima. Pero confiando en que su voluntad es educarme para ayudar a otros y otras, espero homologar las materias que he estudiado en contabilidad y administración, para graduarme en unos años como Profesional de Administración de Empresas y posterior a ello espero realizar una especialización en Gestión de Proyectos. Espero poder después de esto, haber adquirido la sabiduría necesaria también para emprender la búsqueda de enfocar mi profesión en gestión/control de proyectos para ayudar a otros y otras sin dejar de un lado el hermoso amor de Dios, pues antes que aliviar lo físico considero que el alma que carga con todas las emociones debe soltar éstas en Dios. Por mí, estudiaría algo de psicología (sin embargo, el gasto incremental), me gusta más el trabajarse a las personas, no es un trabajo fácil y en algunas ocasiones implica pasar por desiertos, pero yo creo que el reto está precisamente en llegar a lugares donde otros no quieren ni siquiera dar la oportunidad de escuchar.

New Perspectives: I have thought that I need to fill myself more and more every day with the word and presence of God. While it is not easy, I want God to be my all in all. And with that I hope to start reaching the members of my family and my community. I realized that for a long time I have been very selfish and instead of thinking about and looking at others with love, I have instead been an unbreakable wall that does not allow me to give a pass to others’ mistakes toward me. I hadn’t given myself the opportunity to look at others as being as human and as corruptible as I am. God had to get me out of my country, break down my walls, and build a new place where only that unconditional love will live, a love that has gradually been cultivated in the difficulties of this nation and renewed my thoughts to accept his will.

Nuevas perspectivas: He pensado que necesito llenarme cada día más de la palabra y presencia de Dios. Si bien no es fácil, pero quiero que Dios sea mi todo en todo. Y con ello espero para comenzar alcanzar a los integrantes de mi familia y mi comunidad. Me di cuenta que durante mucho tiempo he sido muy egoísta y en vez de pensar y mirar a otros con amor, he sido más bien un muro inquebrantable que no permite dar paso a los errores de otros hacia mi incluso, no me había dado la oportunidad de mirar a los demás como que son igual de humanos y de corruptibles que yo. Dios tuvo que sacarme de mi país, romper mis murallas, y edificar un nuevo lugar donde solo habitaría ese amor sin condiciones que ha ido poco a poco cultivando en lo difícil de ésta nación y renovando mis pensamientos para aceptar su voluntad.

Future Plans: I have many ideas. Unquestionably the first thing will be to share the beautiful change that God has made in my life – as even some members of my family have already seen, even in my way of speaking. They have been able to say, “You are not the same.” I have served in my community for around seven years in various functions (praise, Sunday school classes, secretary, direction in teaching, etc., all at the same time). But now I want to do it from this experience: always focusing on the greater commandment that I have “discovered” in the word of God in my stay in this country, love. As for my work and personal life, I am still not clear about when I will get a job, because I want to spend at least a month with my family first.

Planes futuros: Tengo creo que muchas ideas, indiscutiblemente lo primero será compartir del hermoso cambio que Dios ha hecho en mi vida, y que incluso algunos integrantes de mi familia ya han visto, hasta en mi forma de hablar y que han podido decir “usted no es la misma”. Yo he servido en mi comunidad alrededor de
7 años en varias funciones (alabanza, clases de escuela dominical, secretaría, dirección en la enseñanza, etc. todo al mismo tiempo). Pero ahora quiero hacerlo desde esta experiencia enfocándome siempre en el mandamiento mayor que he “descubierto” en la palabra de Dios en mi estadía en este país, el amor. En cuanto a mi vida laboral y personal, aún no tengo claro desde cuando conseguiré trabajo, porque quiero primero pasar por lo menos un mes con mi familia.

**Mauricio Rosario Melendez**
(Dominican Republic)
Técnico, Centro Parroquial San José (CSPSJ) Montero, Bolivia

**First Impression or Differences:** The notable difference between the Dominican Republic and Bolivia is that my home country is an island in the Caribbean Sea and Bolivia is in South America without access to the sea. The Dominican Republic is a happy country with a variety of customs. Also, in the Dominican Republic, it is not as cold as here in the winter season.

**Memorable or Funny Experience:** One day on vacation I went to a place called Espejillo with a family from the Mennonite Church in Bolivia. There we were able to be under a waterfall of cold water and then we climbed a mountain.

**Faith Journey:** For me, my spiritual relationship has been a unique experience because it has grown. Since I have been involved in the worship ministry, I also support the Mennonite Church in Santa Cruz and maintain a good relationship with my community in Montero. I feel that I have had a great encounter with God during this time of service. And it has increased my faith a lot, with the help of the MCC Bolivia team where we always have reflections and they teach us to see things differently, in the image of God.

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**Enosh Rupamajhi**
(India)
Assistant English Teacher, GITJ Ketanggan
Pati, Central Java, Indonesia

**First Impression or Differences:** I was so impressed with the warm welcome from the people of Indonesia; they are so caring and loving. And the difference that I first saw was how the people of Indonesia are so obedient to the road safety rules; specifically, they wear helmets, which is so different from my home county as people rarely obey such rules. Later on, I learnt that Indonesia has two seasons, which is different from India.
Primera impresión o diferencias: Me impresionaba tanto la bienvenida cariñosa que recibí de la gente indonesia. Es tan amable y afectuosa. La diferencia de que me enteré al principio era cuánta gente indonesia obedece los reglamentos viales, aún usando casco. Es tan distinto de mi país de origen donde la gente no se rige por tales leyes. Más después aprendí que la Indonesia también tiene dos temporadas, algo que es distinto de la India.

Memorable or Funny Experience: My funny experience was when I learnt or heard the word “Hati Hati,” which means “Be careful” in the Indonesian language while in my Indian language it means Elephant. So, first time I saw a sign post with these words I was so scared and said to myself, “Indonesia has a lot of elephant it seems.” Later I check my google translate and learnt that the word means be careful.

Experiencia memorable o divertida: Mi experiencia divertida era al aprender o escuchar la palabra “Hati Hati,” que significa ten cuidado en el idioma Indonesia mientras en mi idioma de la India, significa elefante. Entonces las primeras veces que veía una señal con aquellas palabras me asustaba y me decía “Se parece que haya bastantes elefantes en la Indonesia.” Más después me fijé en el Traductor de Google y aprendí que la palabra significa cuidado.

Faith Journey: My faith was so filed with good and learning activities. I find the music here to be so lively with advanced instruments compared to my village in India. I really enjoyed praise and worship with my fellow youths and the church at large. I am proud to say I was blessed with a God-fearing host father and grandmother; they really helped me in learning and studying God’s word and attending prayer meetings.

Viaje de fe: El camino de fe se llena con buenas actividades de aprendizaje. La música acá a mí me parece mucha más viva con el acompañamiento de instrumentos en comparación con la de mi aldea en la India. A mí me alegraba la alabanza y los coros con otros jóvenes y con la iglesia entera. Tengo orgullo decir que se me bendecía con un padre quien temaba a Dios y que mi abuelita anfitriona me estuvo de mucho apoyo en aprender y estudiar la palabra de Dios y asistir las reuniones de oración.

Career/Professional Development: Though I’m still learning, I can make known that while staying in Indonesia I had a privileged of learning keyboard and I’m doing quite well; it is not something I thought I would do. And hence, as my passion for music is so great, I will pursue or dedicate part of my time to perfect this new skill.

Desarrollo profesional: Aunque siga aprendiendo, puedo declarar que a lo largo de vivir en Indonesia tenía el privilegio de aprender las teclas y me estimo que avance bien porque no era algo que pensara que hiciera. Así mi pasión por la música es tan grande que la seguiré o apartaré un poco de mi tiempo para desarrollar esta nueva habilidad.

New Perspectives: Having stayed in Indonesia for a while now I have to come to learn that despite so many cultural differences, there are some similarities like manner of greetings, lifestyle and behaviors of oneself. So, learning to respect one’s culture is important as you will be at a good pace to communicate well with others.

Nuevas perspectivas: Al quedarme en Indonesia durante un rato ya, he venido aprendiendo que a pesar de las tantas diferencias culturales que haya, también hay unas similitudes como la habla de saludos, el estilo de vida, y la conducta personal. Entonces el aprender respetar que la cultura de la ajena es igual de importancia que la cultura tuya te pondrá en buen camino para comunicarte bien con los demás.

Future Plans: When I go back I will serve in my Sunday school and share this experience with my community too. And having had a glance of how to serve others I would later on want to study theology.

Planes futuros: Al regresar, serviré en la escuela dominical y además en compartir esta experiencia con mi comunidad. Al tener un vistazo de cómo servir a los demás, en el futuro me gustaría estudiar la teología.

Jessica Rychen (France)
Occupational Therapist Mentor,
Step by Step Learning Center
Mentor de Terapeuta Ocupacional
Arusha, Tanzania

First Impression or Differences: The way to live was completely new: no real shower, washing clothes by hands, frequently using boots to go out because of the very muddy road, having meals very late, not anticipating and planning things too much, local transportation, way to work, … and a lot of other things! I needed time to adjust myself. I really appreciated the good welcome that I received; the people are very warm and friendly. But I saw also people struggling in a poverty context where there is a huge gap and contrast between rich and poor people.

Primera impresión o diferencias: La forma de vivir era completamente nueva: no tener una ducha verdadera, lavar la ropa a mano, usar frecuentemente botas para salir porque la calle es muy embarrada, comer muy tarde, no anticipar ni planificar las cosas mucho, el transporte local, mi camino al trabajo,… y muchas otras cosas! Necesitaba tiempo para adaptarme. Aprecié mucho la buena bienvenida que recibí y ver a la gente muy cariñosa y amable. Pero también vi a gente luchando en
Memorable or Funny Experience: One day, I was invited by one of my Tanzanian colleagues to her home for lunch. She really wanted to offer to me a local meal. When she opened the door, I immediately smelled an animal smell and heard sounds like in a henhouse. Entering in the darkness of this small house without many windows, I discovered that she and her family essentially live with around 15 skinny chickens sealed in a cage! I even got the pleasure to eat one of them during the meal ... but I understood why it was not a very tender chicken!

Experiencia memorable o divertida: Un día, fui invitada por uno de mis colegas de Tanzania a su casa para almorzar. Ella realmente quería ofrecerme una comida local. Cuando abrió la puerta, inmediatamente olí un olor a animal y escuché sonidos como en un gallinero. Entrando en la oscuridad de esta pequeña casa sin muchas ventanas, descubrí efectivamente que ella y su familia viven con unos 15 pollos flacos encerrados en una jaula! Incluso tuve el placer de comer uno de ellos durante la comida... ¡pero pronto entendí por qué no era un pollo muy suave...

Faith Journey: When I applied for the YAMEN program, Africa was my last destination wish. But after these months, I think I understood why God sent me to Tanzania. Through this experience in this cultural context, my faith has been put to the test several times. But each time when I struggled, God encouraged me through people who helped me to not forget that He is in control. I learned to put my confidence in God for all things of the daily living and to dare to express to Him all my needs in my prayers. I appreciated and was encouraged by the strong faith of people around me.

Viaje de fe: Cuando apliqué para el programa de YAMEN, África fue mi último deseo de destino. Pero después de estos meses, creo que entiendo por qué Dios me envió a Tanzania. A través de esta experiencia en este contexto cultural, mi fe ha sido puesta a prueba varias veces. Cada vez que luché, Dios me animó a través de personas y situaciones que me ayudaron a no olvidar de que Él está en control. Aprendí a confiar en Dios para todas las cosas de la vida cotidiana y a atreverme a expresarle todas mis necesidades en mis oraciones. Aprecié y me animó la fuerte fe de las personas que me rodeaban.

New Perspectives: During this experience, I learned a lot about my personality, my limits. I discovered what it means to be a “foreigner” and what that feels like. I think that I will be more attentive to foreigners in my country and consider them otherwise. In a country where everybody greets each other every time in the street, I learned to be more open to others and have less of an individual attitude. Also, I discovered another way to consider and use time (flexibility), in an opposite way of how it is in my country! I met a lot of Christian people from different denominations. These encounters allowed me to extend and enrich my vision of the Church.

Nuevas perspectivas: Durante esta experiencia, aprendí mucho sobre mi personalidad, y mis límites. Descubrí lo que significa ser “extranjero” y cuáles son mis sentimientos sobre este estatus. Creo que estaré más atenta a los extranjeros en mi país y los consideraré de otra manera. En un país donde todo el mundo se saluda cada vez que se ven en la calle, aprendí a ser más abierto con los demás y a tener una actitud menos individualista. Además, descubrí otra forma de considerar y utilizar el tiempo (flexibilidad), en oposición a la forma de considerarlo en mi país! Conoci a una mucha gente cristiana de diferentes denominaciones. Estos encuentros me han permitido ampliar y enriquecer mi visión de la iglesia.

Future Plans: Initially, I will go back to my workplace where I worked before joining the YAMEN program, and find again my family, my friends, my church, my life as before. But I know that this experience gave me new perspectives and made me aware of new things. For now, I don’t have a specific idea, but I want to listen to what God wants for my life. Anyway, I want to continue to share God’s love and compassion around me, in my daily living where God sends me.
Planes futuros: Cuando regrese, volveré a mi lugar de trabajo donde trabajé antes de unirme al programa YAMEN, y encontraré de nuevo a mi familia, mis amigos, mi iglesia, y mi vida como antes. Pero sé que esta experiencia me dio nuevas perspectivas y me hizo sensible a nuevas cosas. Por ahora, no tengo una idea específica, pero quiero escuchar lo que Dios quiere para mi vida. De todos modos, quiero seguir compartiendo el amor y la compasión de Dios a mi alrededor donde Dios me envíe.

Maria Sok (Cambodia)
Communication & Documentation Assistant. EPRT
Asistente de comunicación y documentación, EPRT
Jos Plateau State, Nigeria

First Impression or Differences: The differences are foods, culture, and clothing. For foods, here people like to eat swallow (“twol”), rice with stew, many potatoes and beans. While in my country we eat rice, noodles, soup and fried dishes. The culture here is totally different from mine; people here greet each other many times in a day, while in my culture we greet only once or twice a day. For clothing, here people tend to wear dresses more than trousers, while mine we more often wear trousers than dresses.

Memorable or Funny Experience: Memorable experience would be a time that I joined my colleague’s wedding. Other colleagues and I wore traditional Nigerian clothing, participated in the event, meeting other people and enjoyed a beautiful wedding from the beginning till the end. It was a really fun day for me.

Faith Journey: Since I laid my foot on this land, I have started my Bible reading habit every day. It does strengthen my faith and my daily strength for living in this foreign country.

Viage de fe: Desde que toque el piso de esta tierra (Nigeria), he comenzado mi hábito de lectura bíblica todos los días. Ha fortalecido mi fe y mi fuerza diaria por vivir en este país extranjero.

Career/Professional Development: I have learned how to design flyers, and a newsletter for my EPRT teamwork, manage a data bank of AVP and Peace club, and field work that I never did before.

Desarrollo profesional: He aprendido como hacer folletos, periódicos para mi equipo de trabajo EPRT, manejo AVP data y del club de paz, y áreas de campo en las que nunca había trabajado.

New Perspectives: Living in a new country is like an eye opening for me to see another perspective of life. Experiencing new people, foods and culture makes me have a better view of life and appreciate every culture that I have experienced.

Nuevas perspectivas: Vivir en un nuevo país me abrió los ojos para ver otra perspectiva de la vida. Experimentar nuevas personas, comida y cultura me hace tener una mejor visión de la vida y apreciar cada cultura que he experimentado.

Future Plans: When I go back, I will look for a job that suits me. I will share my experiences of living here with people around me.

Planes futuros: Cuando regrese, buscaré un trabajo que me conviene. Compartiré mis experiencias de vivir aquí con personas a mi alrededor.

Jeu Song (Laos)
English and Multimedia Assistant, Indomenno/ JKI Kasih Allah, Jepara
Semarang, Central Java, Indonesia

First Impression or Differences: When I arrived in Indonesia my first impression was about the Indonesian culture for greeting people. Indonesians are friendly, always smiling and saying ‘Hi” to you, even if they do not know you but you are just walking past them. They will say hi and bow to you, so I love the way of Indonesian greeting It was so nice. It is very different from my home country because in my home country if we do not know you, we do not say hi or talk to you because we think that we should not greet strangers.

Primera impresión o diferencias: Al llegar a Indonesia, mi primera impresión fue la cultura de saludar en Indonesia. La gente indonesa es muy amigable y siempre tiene una sonrisa y te dice hola, aún si no te conociera y sólo se encontrarían por el andén te diría hola y doblarse a ti. Me encanta esta manera indonesa de saludar; es tan lindo.
Es muy distinta de cómo se hace en mi país, porque en mi país si no conocemos a alguien no le hablamos ni saludamos con una hola porque lo consideramos un desconocido y que no se debería saludar a personas desconocidas.

**Memorable or Funny Experience:** I have two funny experiences from when I studied the Indonesian language with my two friends – a male YAMENer from India and a female SALTer from Canada. At the time we were confused about the Indonesian language, so I accidentally asked my Indian friend to put a lady in a plastic box because the word for candy is “permem” and the word for lady is “perempuan.” They are similar so I confused them; he was holding candy in his hand, but I told him to take a girl and put her inside the box. There was another day we were having class in the public park and nearby was a restaurant so at lunch time we were so hungry, and our teacher told us to order alone, one by one, to practice the Indonesian language. So, my friend and I go to tell a waitress that we want to order food. He said I need to order “saya mau pesan” but he made a mistake and it came out like “Saya mau pacar”, which means “I need a girl.” The waitress told him that this is a restaurant and there is no girl for him, but he then asked why a restaurant would have no girl for him (he thinks he is saying why doesn’t a restaurant let me order). He came back and told me that there is no food, but I went there and asked a waitress if I could order and there was a lot of food. I asked him, “What did you say to the waitress?” and he told me that he said, “Saya mau pacar” then we were all laughing at him. A girl is “pacar” and order is “pesan.”

**Experiencia memorable o divertida:** Tenía dos experiencias divertidas al estudiar el idioma indonesio con mis dos amigos, el muchacho YAMENero de la India y la muchacha SALTera de Canadá. En aquel tiempo, todos nos confundíamos con el idioma indonesio, así que le pedí a mi amigo indio que guardara todos los confites en un recipiente plástico, resultó que le había pedido que metiera una dama canadiense en la caja plástica porque en el idioma indonesio confites se dice permem y dama se dice perempuan. Son palabras parecidas y me las confundía así que le dije que pusiera los confites, pero me equivocaba y le dije que pusiera la dama en una caja plástica. Les confundí tanto, porque él tenía los dulces en la mano y yo le decía que pusiera la muchacha en la caja. Había un relato más. Un día teníamos clase en un parque público cerca de un restaurante. Entonces a la hora del almuerzo teníamos mucha hambre y nuestro maestro nos decía que entráramos una persona a la vez para pedir el almuerzo y practicar el idioma indonesio. Así mi amigo y yo pedimos a la mesera que nos deje ordenar. Él dijo “necesito ordenar” (saya mau pesan) pero él se equivocaba y se le salió “necesito una muchacha” (saya mau pacar). La mesera le contestó que era un restaurante y no había ninguna muchacha para él. Entonces él dijo preguntó ¿cómo es un restaurante si no hay una muchacha para mí? (Quería decir si es un restaurante, ¿porqué no hay comida para mí?) Él salió y me contó que no había comida, pero después entré para pedir un plato y la mesera me contó que había bastante comida. Le pregunté a mi amigo, ¿qué decía para pedir comida de la mesera? Me dijo “nécesito una muchacha (saya mau pacar) y nos reíamos de él. Una muchacha = pacar Ordenar = pesan

**Faith Journey:** I had faith that my journey, while it may not be easy, would let me learn new things and get a lot of experience. So, at first, I did not know about Indonesian people or their culture, but after I arrived here, I have learnt a lot and I understand more about it. So, there was no problem about my faith because in fact, in Indonesia there are a lot of Christian people and they have the same faith as me.

**Viaje de fe:** Tengo fe que, en mi camino, aunque no sea fácil, pueda aprender cosas nuevas y obtener mucha experiencia a lo largo de ello. Al principio no sabía del pueblo indonesio y su cultura, pero al estar acá en Indonesia, he aprendido bastante y entiendo más de ellos. No había ningún problema con mi fe porque de hecho en Indonesia hay bastante gente cristiana y tiene la misma fe de que tengo yo.

**Career/Professional Development:** I help the pastor in the church with social media on multimedia so I have learnt a lot about how to control the music and how to make slide shows, and PowerPoints and how to make short videos to post on social media. I also have helped with English class for kids every Tuesday and Thursday. This could help me a lot in the future.

**Desarrollo profesional:** Apoyo al pastor de la iglesia con las redes sociales y los medios digitales así he aprendido bastante de cómo controlar la música y cómo hacer diapositivas de PowerPoint y videos cortos para compartir en las redes sociales. También apoyo en una clase de inglés para niños cada martes y jueves. Podría ayudarme bastante en el futuro.

**New Perspectives:** I have a goal that in the future I will be a pastor to work for people and I also want to own a company. It could help me to get to know more people and I will have time to share about God with them because in our country it is so difficult to share God with people. If we share about God with others, it will be illegal. It is so hard.

**Nuevas perspectivas:** Tengo la visión que en el futuro seré un pastor quien trabaja con personas. También quisiera emprender un negocio. Me pudiera ayudar a conocer a más gente y permitirme espacios para compartir de Dios. En nuestro país es muy difícil compartir de Dios con la gente. Si lo hacemos, se considera un acto ilegal. Es tan difícil.

**Future Plans:** My future plan when I go back home is to continue to help my pastor to run a missionary
organization for young people to have an opportunity to serve God in the Missionary Organization. I also will go to India to continue my education with theology courses for three years, but at this time it is difficult to get there because of COVID-19. If I cannot go there to continue my education, I will run a small business in my village and just work as a missionary to help the pastor in my church.

**Planes futuros:** Mi plan al llegar a mi país es seguir a ayudar a mi pastor a dirigir una organización misionaria para jóvenes para que tengan la oportunidad de servir a Dios a través de la Organización Misionaria. También iré a la India para seguir con mi formación en teología durante tres años. Pero al presente es difícil llegar ahí debido al coronavirus. Si no logro ir ahí para continuar con mi educación, emprenderé un negocio en mi aldea y trabajare como misionario para ayudar al pastor de mi iglesia.

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**Seorin Wi** (South Korea)

Peacebuilding Assistant, Society for Nature, Education and Health

Asistente de construcción de paz, con la Sociedad para la Naturaleza, la Educación, y la Salud

**First Impression or Differences:** I spent the first month in Kolkata with MCC India. The first impression of Kolkata was a jam of cars, people, rickshaws, autos, bikes and noise of horns on the road. People stared at me wherever I went. It was like I was in Bollywood.

**Primera impresión o diferencias:** Yo me quedé el primer mes en Kolkata donde queda la oficina del CCM en la India. Mi primera impresión de Kolkata era el atasco de carros, gente, rickshaws, automóviles, bicicletas, y la bulla de cláxones por la calle. La gente me miraba dondequiera que fuera. Era como si estuviera en Bollywood.

**Memorable or Funny Experience:** Probably, nowadays will be one of my memorable experiences. Sadly, I am not in India but in Thailand as I write this answer. I was pulled off of the flight heading to India after the MCC retreat and my trekking vacation in Nepal. Due to a weird corona virus regulation all types of visas for Koreans have been suspended. Having to move to Thailand without saying good-bye to my host family, my organization staff and friends in my assignment city, not only makes me so sad but also makes me realize how I have been loved. Here are my precious people. Hannah, who is a lovely and crazy SALTer, who took got off the flight with me. Sushant, who is such a perfect coordinator and is helping me with visa stuff. My Indian family, who has accepted me as a real member of their family and keeps praying for me. SNEH staff, who keep asking me to stay in India forever, saying “Please come back soon.” All of MCC India staff, who became my first Indian friends, who keep sending messages to encourage me. Asian YAMENers, who are my international best friends, who keep calling me to make me laugh. Lastly, MCC staff in Thailand and Hather, who are working so hard for me, making me happy every single moment. To meet all of you guys is my most memorable experience. I carved your amazing love in my heart.

**Experiencia memorable o divertida:** Probablemente estos días serán entre los más memorables. Tristemente, no estoy en la India sino en Tailandia ya al escribir el presente. Se me detuvo en un vuelo de regreso a la India del retiro CCM y mi vacación de senderismo en Nepal debido a un tipo de regulación contra el coronavirus que suspendía toda visa india portada por personas coreanas. Toda esta experiencia de mudarme a Tailandia sin despedirme de mi familia anfitriona, el equipo de mi organización, ni de mis amigos de mi pueblo de asignación no solo me entristecía sino también me causó reconocer cuánto se me ha amado. Esta es mi gente querida. Hannah, una SALTera loca y preciosa, salió en el mismo vuelo conmigo. Sushant, quien es una coordinadora tan perfecta, me ayuda con trámites de visas. Mi familia de la India, quien me ha aceptado como un miembro real de su familia, sigue orando para mí. El equipo de SNEH (la organización asociada), quien siempre me piden quedarme en la India para siempre, dicen, ‘Regresa pronto por favor.’ Todo el personal del CCM India, quien se tornó mis primeros amigos indios, siguen mandándome mensajes para animarme. Participantes de YAMEN en Asia, quien son mis mejores amigos internacionales, siguen llamándome para hacernme reír. Últimamente, el equipo CCM en Tailandia y Hather, quien trabajan tanto para mí, me hacen feliz en todos momentos. Al conocer a todxs ustedes es mi experiencia más memorable. He grabado su amor asombroso en mi corazón.

**Faith Journey:** I was inspired strongly by my host father who is a pastor. He is always concerned about the poor even though he isn’t paid by his church. He is the person who loves his neighbors as much as himself. The way he lives resembles the way Jesus lived. Staying with him made my faith more stable.

**Viaje de fe:** Me inspiró mucho mi padre anfitrión, quien es un pastor. Siempre se preocupa con la gente más pobre, aunque su iglesia no le pague. Él es justo la persona quien ama a sus vecinos como a sí mismo. La manera en que vive se parece a la manera en que vivió Jesús. El vivir con él estableció mi fe aún más.

**Career/Professional Development:** My job is about peace. Of course, I learned to define what peace is for me; learned how to solve some conflicts in non-violent ways; and I had a lot of time to reflect on myself. I would say experiences at my assignment have strengthen and
enriched the basic elements of my life like being by myself and relationships. It obviously takes a long time and a ton of training to get to peace and non-violence fully. I will try to put myself on the spot to reach there. :-) 

**Desarrollo profesional:** Mi trabajo se trata con la paz. Por supuesto, pude definir qué significaba la paz para mí, aprendí cómo resolver algunos conflictos en maneras no violentas, y tenía mucho tiempo para reflexionar. Yo diría que mis experiencias en mi asignación hubieran fortalecido y enriquecido los elementos básicos de la vida como ser mi misma y mis relaciones. Obvio se requiere más tiempo y formación para conocer la paz y la no violencia en plena. Intentaré esforzarme para alcanzarlo. :-) 

**New Perspectives:** I don’t think that I got the whole new perspective. It might be better to answer that my perspective got wider by meeting various people with different cultures, backgrounds, and religions. I learned to love myself and others in diversity with my warmer heart.

**Nuevas perspectivas:** No pensaría que recibiera una gran perspectiva nueva. Quizá sería mejor decir que mi perspectiva se ampliaría por conocer a personas de culturas, trasfondos, y religiones distintos. Llegue a amarme más a mi misma y a otras personas diversas con un corazón más cálido.

**Future Plans:** I anticipate altering my major and study in the university. And it is not easy to answer how I will integrate what I learned into my church and home community, but I want to keep answering this question in my daily life.

**Planes futuros:** Pretendo cambiar mi especialización y carrera en la universidad. No es fácil decir cómo integraré lo que aprendí a mi iglesia y comunidad, pero quiero seguir respondiendo a esta pregunta en la vida diaria.

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**Chanmonika Yoeurn** (Cambodia)
Project Intern, New Hope Center
Pasante de proyectos, Centro Nueva Esperanza
Zaporizhzhia, Ukraine

**First Impression or Differences:** Being out of my comfort zone, more or less, was not easy to deal at the first, but God helped me to make it. I was scared and frustrated at some points when I first arrived, thinking the people here are not really friendly, it’s so crowed on public transportation, and also foods are so different from my home country. Anyway, now I do enjoy this new place, new culture, new foods, new friends, and new position here. It is a season of learning and seeing new things for the first time, like seeing snow in winter.

**Primera impresión o diferencias:** Estar fuera de mi zona de confort no fue fácil al principio, pero Dios me ayudó a superarlo. Estaba asustado y estaba frustrado cuando recién llegué porque la gente no era muy amable, el transporte público siempre estaba muy lleno con personas y la comida es tan diferente que la comida de mi país. De todos modos, disfruto mucho este nuevo lugar, la nueva cultura, nueva comida, nuevos amigos y el nuevo rol que tengo aquí. Es una temporada de aprendizajes, de experimentar nuevas cosas por primera vez, como el ver nieve en el invierno.

**Memorable or Funny Experience:** On 9th March was a Ukrainian holiday and my host parents and their friends took me horseback riding. It was my first time. I climbed up to the horse’s back okay but when he started running, he didn’t make it slower and the coach said he likes to be the first one in the row then he can’t stop running. I decided to use my broken Russian plus English, but he still wouldn’t stop running. At last I used my native language. There are three languages for my first experience of horseback riding. Everyone couldn’t stop laughing because I was using my three broken languages.

**Experiencia memorable o divertida:** El 9 de marzo fue un día de vacación en Ucrania y mis padres anfitriones y sus amigos me llevaron para montar a caballo, era mi primera vez. Subir a caballo estuvo bien, pero cuando el caballo empezó a correr, no quiso ir más despacio y el entrenador nos dijo que le gustaba ser el primero en la fila y por eso no podía dejar de correr, así que decidí usar mi ruso roto y luego el inglés, pero aún así no dejó de correr y al fin terminé usando mi lengua materna. Así es como me encontré usando tres idiomas en mi primera experiencia montando a caballo, y que todos mis compañeros no podían dejar de reírse cuando reaccioné usando mis otros idiomas rotos.

**Faith Journey:** Since I arrived here, I have improved and become stronger with God more than before. When I feel down or can’t go to anyone, God is the one who I always talk to and ask for direction on the next step of my journey. During this time I call a “season of learning.” I am an unfinished product and I need God to fix me and create any abilities in me by his plans. I am not perfect but by his perfection he makes me precious. No matter what people see in me if God chose me, it means I am enough. God may not give me what I want but he will give me what I need. Because of this I am made stronger and faithful.

**Viaje de fe:** Desde que llegué, he mejorado y he fortalecido mi relación con Dios más que antes. Cuando me siento deprimido o solo, Dios es el que siempre está ahí para hablar y preguntarle cual es el siguiente paso de mi caminar. Este tiempo lo llamo “temporada de aprendizaje” Soy un producto no terminado, y necesito que Dios me ayude y cree y todo lo que hago sea según sus planes. No soy perfecta, pero su perfección me hace preciosa. No importa lo que la gente vea en mí, porque
si Dios me eligió, es decir que soy suficiente. Puede que Dios no me de lo que quiero, pero me dará lo que necesito. Por esas razones me hace más fuerte y fiel.

**Career/Professional Development:** I have developed myself with soft skills. I can adapt myself to work with kids more and I can go to them much better. I’m working on media; I learned how to take good photos and video. And I also learned how to make videos that I never knew before.

**Desarrollo profesional:** He desarrollado nuevas habilidades, puedo adaptarme más a trabajar con niños y puedo relacionarme con ellos mucho mejor. Estoy trabajando en medios de comunicación, aprendí a tomar buenas fotos y videos; también aprendí cómo hacer videos, algo que nunca había aprendido.

**New Perspectives:** Peace on yourself. Be who you are, appreciate what God created you to be. Don’t feel you are not enough because God is the one who decides what suits you.

**Nuevas perspectivas:** Paz contigo mismo. Sé quién eres, aprecia lo que Dios te creó para ser. No te sientas insuficiente porque Dios es el que decide lo que te conviene.

**Future Plans:** I plan to get back home and share what I have learned here to youth and everyone around me.

**Planos futuros:** Mis planes son regresar a mi país y compartir lo que he aprendido a los jóvenes y con todos los que me rodean.
Cambodia GSL participants attending a coworker’s wedding; (From left to right) Victor Odinda (Kenya), Morgan Smith (U.S.), Moudy Rahardjo (Indonesia), Annelise Hardman (U.S.), Jonathan Ngarama (Kenya)

Chanmonika Yoeurn (Cambodia) enjoying horse riding with her Ukrainian host parents Alexender and Tatiana Gusev on a vacation to Khortytsia Island

Hosnay Bernard (second from right) posing for a photo with his host family (from left to right): Valerie, Emmanuel, Jacqueline, Coicou Dieudone, (front row) Felixe, and Beatrice Ayoro

Jose Massada (Mozambique) (second from left) with his host family, celebrating New Year’s Day in 2020

For Christmas, Maria Sok (Cambodia) (left) went to Jos wildlife park with her host siblings Albert, Ayisa and Adar Izang
Eswatini, Lesotho and South Africa team standing on a bridge during a retreat in Durban, South Africa.

Victor Odinda (Kenya) (right) and Penh Arth (left) in Kampot, Cambodia, during the mangrove forest re-afforestation exercise by our community YAMEN and SALTers exploring Matobo National Park in Zimbabwe. Mia Michaela (Indonesia), Vichhay Phan (Cambodia), Alison Quiring (Canada) and Micaylee Pucilowski (Canada).

MCC Bolivia team lunch with fellow SALT and YAMENers.

The Ospina family, who hosted Minear (in dark green top), pose for a photo at the family Christmas dinner. (From left to right) Jairo Ospina, Maritza Rubiano, Katherine Ospina, Minear, Brayan Ospina, Sara Ospina.

From the left: Enosh Rupamajhi (India), Cindy Redfern, Les Redfern, Katelyn Quiring (Canada), Olicky Muchindu (Zambia) and JeuSong (Laos) at Sanur Beach going for a bike riding during the Indomenno retreat.

YAMEN and SALTers exploring Matobo National Park in Zimbabwe. Mia Michaela (Indonesia), Vichhay Phan (Cambodia), Alison Quiring (Canada) and Micaylee Pucilowski (Canada).

Victor Odinda (Kenya) (right) and Penh Arth (left) in Kampot, Cambodia, during the mangrove forest re-afforestation exercise by our community.