AUGUST 10, 2019

Attendees: Nancy, Rick, Carrie, Alba, Miriam, Cathy, Karen O, Luis, Mary A, Leslie, Judy, Carol, Rita, Meghan, Julie, Jason

Opened with introductions and prayer.

Challenges of Pursuing Visas
Discussed the challenges of this degrading, de-humanizing process:

- Alba told her story of applying for a visa. It was a painful process, people are treated very rudely. No one else was getting visas when she was there.
- Miriam shared feelings of the denied applicants — people feel it is their fault, they feel guilty, that they should have done something differently.
- During brainstorming in TNII, some people said they don’t want to try any more under the current situation.

Some thoughts/ideas:

- Important to raise the issue with elected representatives. It is not too much to demand respect. We discussed what Archdiocese is doing in this regard — Cathy and Nancy will follow up with them. Could we arrange a meeting with Archdiocese and elected reps who HAVE been helping us?
- If invitation came from Archdiocese, would there be more pull? Some feeling that an invitation from a university, NGO, government entity or other institution might carry more weight — could we coordinate an event with another org?
- We welcome them regardless of the size of the delegation. On the plus side, small delegations still have impact — even with two people, they can receive the love and bring it back.
- This will be an on-going conversation. We will re-visit in two years. We support them either way.

Communication
Miriam is impressed at how communication has improved over time.,

- **Prayer partners:** Both Miriam and Alba feel prayer partner letters really touch people and we should continue to encourage that. We have over 60 prayer partner pairings.
- **Skype calls:** Luis pointed out that starting Skype calls on time is important; otherwise we lose people who want to go to mass. He recognizes and understands the technical challenges in TNII. Once the call starts, it is wonderful. We agreed that every other month is fine.
- **Craft WhatsApp group:** Good so far.
- **Pen pals:** Feedback is that it is hard to write a letter if there has been no response or exchange from the pen pal. Skype calls would help to connect pen pals (small groups, specific topics.) What about sharing social media, would that mean faster communication? Might be challenging though, since the young might not have a social media presence.
- **Peregrinos/Bible study:** Communication has been challenging, is there a way to improve that? TNII will discuss.
Delegation Check Approvals
Committee voted to approve $450 in honorarium checks:
$150 to Gichitwaa Kateri Church
$150 to Casa de Esperanza
$150 to Bolder Options
…to thank them for their hospitality.

Christmas Party Project Update
• Report has been delayed. Toys are being collected for the coming party.
• SJA is very impressed with the youth who are handling this project so well, and how they are taking it to a larger community.

Scholarship Committee Project Update
• 23 youth in program overall (we support 14 of them).
• Scholarship group meets on topics periodically.
• Rosario is still the coordinator.
• Best wishes to young people on their final exams in the coming months!! New school year starts in January 2020.

Women's Group Project Update
• Keeps improving, adding new things. Serving 60 women.
• Currently learning how to make covers for kitchen appliances. Every time there is a workshop, it is accompanied by spiritual education or other topics such as women's health; women's rights (many women don't know them); importance of going to doctor for check-ups; how to prevent the breeding of mosquitoes to lessen diseases.
• Exercise group has up to 60 people sign up at times; it can get very crowded!
• Later they will add workshops about baking, cooking — will be very popular. These will be led by one of the group members who is very skilled in this area.
• There is a church exhibit of the women's craft work once a year; some of it is for sale. And some of the women have an option to sell items outside of the church.
• There are photos of all activities on Facebook!

Crafts Project Update
• We were expecting to receive all the 2019 craft items with the August delegation. We did receive 20 advent candle sets, 15 small candles and 120 Christmas tree ornaments. The fabric items were not finished and did not get delivered.
• We know how hard people are working, both in TNII and in SJA. We are impressed with the candles and ornaments. However, there has been a challenge over last few years to get fabric items here. That has been hard for us since we set Craft fair dates on the calendar early in the year and we have limited options to get the crafts here. We are frustrated and disappointed by these challenges.
• Miriam apologized for not having the fabric items; they are so frustrated and sad. There were complications that caused the delay. They are willing to move forward and find solutions.
• We all agreed that the two Craft sub-committees should communicate about whether TNII will fulfill the rest of the order in time for the November 'open' delegation to carry crafts back on Nov. 23. We also need to determine the future of the Craft project in coming years.
• In the meantime, the SJA Craft sub-committee may need to re-evaluate the date of the November Craft fair, which is currently scheduled for Sat/Sun November 23 & 24, with back-up fair on December 1.
• Finally, we asked about the use of extra craft funds from past years. Miriam said the committee has been discussing a couple of options. We hope to hear an update when they have reached a decision.
Update on Extra Outreach Funds Recently Sent

- Final decision on use of funds has not yet been finalized by TNII committee. They have lots of ideas but boiling down to 2 things: Helping church to finish rooms (used by Peregrinos) and supporting local government clinic (falling apart, water leaks, etc.). Government has not been taking care of this clinic and it is very needed by the community.

2020 Delegation
SJA looks forward to sending a delegation to TNII in 2020!

Necessary Follow-Up

**SJA:**
- SJA Craft sub-committee needs to decide what should be done about the remaining 2019 craft order — should we ask TNII to move forward to finish it?
- Also evaluate whether we could change 2019 Craft fair date.
- Set Skype call to discuss how to best move forward with Craft project in future.

**TNII:**
- Discuss ways to facilitate Bible Study (Peregrinos) communication.
- TNII Craft sub-committee needs to confirm that they could fulfill the remaining 2019 craft order if SJA decides that is the best option.
- Set Skype call to discuss how to best move forward with Craft project in future.
- Provide Craft financial reports from 2017, 2018 and 2019 when wrapped up.

We closed in prayer.

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**AUGUST 3, 2019 — NEWS FROM COMMUNITY**

**Attendees:** Nancy, Rick, Cathy B, Karen, Rita, Meghan, Louisa, Luis, Zamara, Jay, Margaret, Susan Sh., Anna, Fred, Jason, Carrie, Alba, Miriam, Mary A, Mary B, Sarah, Mindy, Julie, Leslie, Tami, Pat, Phil

Alba opened and closed with a reflection/prayer.

Photos of four delegates who were denied visas were placed in solidarity on the walls of our room.

Introductions all around.

**Family Announcements:**
Yoli just had second baby (girl).

**Elections:**
Chinautla is like a county seat — it covers 38,000 in TNII and TNI, and about the same in town of Chinautla, so about 80,000 total. Recently people of Chinautla re-elected a lady mayor — not the best candidate but could have been worse. (Previous mayor ended in jail. Current mayor is related to him.) The experience of nearby communities has been total lack of public works; the money disappears. In Chinautla, there IS some public works (streets, etc.). Mayor personally delivered gifts to kids before Christmas.

**Parish news:**
Parish elections happen at the church every 2 years: Brings new energy. They have a new priest from Haiti and vicar from Philippines who are very good, involved, support social justice issues. Strong lay leadership because the priests are spread thin — they cover 5 churches in the parish.

The parish has 13 base communities. There is a component of liberation theology in the base communities. Membership is based on where you live. Alba’s is Santo Tomás. They get together weekly and study the same bible verses as the other communities. Hers is mostly women. She likes the work of base community because it is a sharing experience with meals at someone’s home; becomes a good way to share common problems. (Women open up more, share laughter.) In order to share joy, she has to get joy. She goes to Daughters of the King, a liturgy-based group, 100 women attend — she gets her energy from this group and passes it on to her base community.

Twice a year, there are groups (5 people from each community) - and they all go visit one of the other towns and visit homes to invite them to go to church and tell them about services that can be had in church (marriages, first communion, etc.)

Charismatic movement within Catholic church is still strong — more in TNII than TN1. (Why? Because many immigrants come from other towns — some already part of charismatic movement.)

Church construction (Our Lady of Guadalupe):
It is in the last phase. They continue to do fundraisers to do the last parts. The Peregrinos will have a meeting room in the new part of the construction. In past, they’ve been meeting in people’s houses, sometimes in risky neighborhoods. Good to have a room in a safe place for people to meet.

Gangs in communities:
Community is still affected. Gang organization is changing. Big gangs get broken up by arrests, so now more of a micro-approach — smaller gangs, smaller turfs. When gang members get out of jail, they re-incorporate into gangs and turfs. They are young, some are kids. The young (11, 12) get recruited to do the dirty work.

Complicity of police…Alba’s brother saw gang members watching for a target, walking out with guns in hands in middle of day. Everyone, including police, know them. But they don’t get captured. Her brother got caught in middle of shooting between two groups of gangs. By a miracle, he hid himself and stayed alive. The police don’t act on crime, they harass the people around it.

Still a lot of extortion.

They see a trend that fewer kids, young people are interested in going to church. (Similar to here.)

Youth education:
There are opportunities for youth to get technical/trade education - but 70% unemployment, so people are not thinking about education, just trying to get through the day in an informal economy. (Patching together odd jobs on day-by-day basis.)

The ones that get some sort of education, can’t get jobs anyway. They are so limited. And if you are from TNII, it is harder to get employed just because you come from a high-crime area. (It is perceived that they could be extortionists or gang members.)

Ended our meeting with hugs.