

# #connect2: Nicaragua



Commitment  
for **Life**



The  
United  
Reformed  
Church Youth

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Edited by Lorraine Webb.

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# Nicaragua

## Bienvenido a Nicaragua

Welcome to URC Youth's new-style mission magazine from United Reformed Church (URC) Children and Youth, produced in collaboration with our non-uniformed organisation Pilots, and with URC Commitment for Life which, in turn, partners with Christian Aid and Global Justice Now.

It has been customary each year for Pilots companies to have an 'Overseas Voyage' programme to explore a country which the London Missionary Society (LMS), later the Council for World Mission (CWM), served, or with which the URC has a link.

This year, to build stronger links with the international engagement of the URC and to enable more children, young people and adults to become more involved in mission and social justice, Pilots has joined forces with Commitment for Life to create this new resource.

Greta Globe is the mascot of Commitment for Life, and each year will invite children aged between 5 and 10 to 'Go with Greta' to one of the four regions that Commitment for Life supports through Christian Aid. The material in 'Go with Greta' is designed for leaders to use in planning their sessions. For the 11 to 14 age range, we have '#connect 2', which emphasises the increasing focus on our inter-connected world as we aim to build and explore the relationship between each of the four regions, the people who live there, and ourselves as a church and as individuals. Young people may choose to use this material independently, or leaders may use it in their planning. The four regions we will visit over the next four years are Central America (which includes Nicaragua); Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory; Bangladesh; and Zimbabwe.

Our part in that mission involves learning more about the problems facing the poorest people, by listening to the stories told by our partners and learning about the issues. We can pray, asking God to send the Holy Spirit to bring about justice. And we can act by working for justice, using our voices and writing to our MPs, joining in the campaigns hosted by Christian Aid and Global Justice Now, and also speaking up at school, work, in church and online. We can share our gifts and money to support the people in these four regions. Learn more by visiting:

Commitment for Life: [www.bit.ly/urclfl](http://www.bit.ly/urclfl)

Christian Aid: [www.christianaid.org.uk/schools/our-work-young-people](http://www.christianaid.org.uk/schools/our-work-young-people) and [www.christianaid.org.uk](http://www.christianaid.org.uk)

Global Justice Now: [www.globaljustice.org.uk/youth](http://www.globaljustice.org.uk/youth)

Fairtrade: [www.fairtrade.org.uk](http://www.fairtrade.org.uk)

This booklet provides material for six sessions, including an intergenerational celebration. This might be used by a group meeting weekly to form the basis of a half term's sessions. Alternatively, the material might be used for a holiday club, or an event over one or two days within your church. It can be used in face-to-face gatherings, and could also be adapted for use in online groups. Each half of the magazine follows the same pattern, as this will allow mixed age groups to engage in the same theme but with slightly different activities. And, of course, you may wish to dip into both halves of the magazine for material to use. The booklet is available as a downloadable pdf at [www.urc.org.uk/go-with-greta-and-connect](http://www.urc.org.uk/go-with-greta-and-connect), where you will also find additional resources. A video to kick-start your exploration of Nicaragua is also available on this page. This video is most suitable for the under-11 age group.





# Session 1

## Nicaragua – Here we are



Nicaragua is in Central America, with Honduras to the north and Costa Rica to the south, the Pacific Ocean to the west, and the Caribbean Sea to the east.

Nicaragua is home to six million people, and is the second poorest country in Latin America – one of the countries most affected by climate change in the world.

About 80% of the population depends on agriculture for survival.

It is a republic with a socialist government, where education and healthcare are free, unlike the countries like the US, for example.

About 97% of the population identifies as Christian, with the majority being Roman Catholic.

The population of Nicaragua is particularly diverse. The Caribbean coast is home to six different ethnic groups speaking four different languages. Can you find out how Nicaragua's history has led to so many different ethnic groups?

### National Anthem

Listen to the Nicaraguan National Anthem [youtu.be/J3C4dwc9vRw](https://youtu.be/J3C4dwc9vRw)

#### Hail to thee, Nicaragua (English translation)

Hail to thee, Nicaragua! On thy land  
roars the voice of the cannon no more,  
nor does the blood of brothers now stain  
thy glorious bicolor banner.  
Let peace shine beautifully in thy sky,  
and nothing dims your immortal glory,  
for work is thy well earned laurel  
and honor is thy triumphal emblem!

This current version of the national anthem was written in 1918 by Saloman Ibarra Mayorga, who won a public competition to produce new lyrics for the national anthem. One requirement of the competition was that the lyrics could only mention peace and work, as the country had just come to the end of a period of conflict and civil war. The lyrics were approved in 1939, and were officially adopted in 1971.

### Nicaragua quiz

Print out the questions below on separate sheets of paper. Print out all of the answers on separate pieces of paper and hide them around the room. Ask participants to find the answers, and match them to the correct questions.

1. What is the capital city of Nicaragua? **Managua**
2. Which two countries border Nicaragua? **Costa Rica, Honduras**
3. Where is Nicaragua located? **Central America**
4. Which five symbols are on the Nicaraguan flag? **Volcanoes, Rainbow, Triangle, Phrygian cap, Sun rays**
5. What is Nicaragua's currency? **Cordoba**
6. What colours are the two stripes on the Nicaraguan flag? **Blue, White**
7. What is the official language in Nicaragua? **Spanish**
8. How many million people live in Nicaragua? **Six**
9. How many volcanoes are on the Nicaraguan flag? **Five**
10. Which two oceans or seas border Nicaragua? **Caribbean, Pacific**



## Getting to know Nicaragua

Take some time to look up towns and cities in Nicaragua on Google Street View. What do the places look like? What things stand out to you? What are the similarities and differences between Nicaragua and the UK? Try looking up the following places: Managua, Granada, Jinotega, the San Cristobal volcano, San Juan del Sur.



### Bible link Acts 17:26-28 (NIRV)

From one man he made all the people of the world. Now they live all over the earth. He decided exactly when they should live. And he decided exactly where they should live. God did this so that people would seek him. And perhaps they would reach out for him and find him. They would find him even though he is not far from any of us. 'In him we live and move and exist.' As some of your own poets have also said, 'We are his children.'

**Diversity:** Reflect on the diversity of people and communities across the world. What similarities and differences can you see? God made each of us unique, with our own gifts and talents – what skills and talents do you think God has given to you, and to other group members?

**Thriving:** The passage talks about how God had made us to thrive. What are some of the challenges that might stop people and communities from thriving? Are there any challenges for communities in Nicaragua? What actions can we take to help others to thrive?

**Finding God:** Where do you see God in your day-to-day life? How do you find God in the difficult times?

## Make a difference

Identify three social justice issues that are important to you: one local/personal, one national, and one global. Share your thoughts with the group. Are there any common issues raised? Think about the practical steps that you can take to help solve these problems. Commit to taking one small action before you next meet together.



### Popcorn prayer

Corn is a staple food in the Nicaraguan diet. Use some popcorn to reflect and pray.

**Hard kernels:** Hold an unpopped kernel in your hand. Reflect on how, before it pops, the kernel is hard and inedible. For a long time, the hard kernels are not doing anything, yet inside them they contain something special, and the potential to transform into something very different. Give thanks to God for the people in our lives who support and help us to grow and reach our potential.

**Popping kernels:** When we heat the kernels, suddenly they explode and transform into something very different. Make some popcorn. Listen to the popping noises, and think about the different people, places and situations that suddenly pop into your thoughts. Shout out these thoughts, and pray for them.

**Tasting Kernels:** Taste the cooked popcorn and think about the transformation that has taken place. Pray for situations in which you would like to see transformation; for yourself and for others.





# Session 2

## A day in the life



### Game Malteser rally

You will need a bag of Maltesers, paper straws, and a dish for each team/person.

Instructions: Divide your group into two teams (or you can do it individually). Draw a start and finish line, and at the finish line place a bowl or saucer for each team. The players must use the straw to 'suck' a Malteser, carry it to the finish line, and place it in the bowl. When they have done this, they return to the start line, and the next player can go. At the end of an agreed length of time, the team/person with the most Maltesers in the dish wins. If they drop the Malteser, or it bounces out of the dish, they must go back to the start and try again.

### Activity

Create a timetable for your day. What time do you get up? What time do you leave for school? How do you get there (car, bus, walk)? When do you get home? What chores do you have to do in the house? Is it the same as your friends?

### Challenge

Find out which of your friends lives furthest away from your school.

### What is it like to be a young person in Nicaragua?

Fifteen-year-old Johaira Herrera tells us a little:

My parents split when I was seven years old, so my mum decided to buy this property here and work in farming. The following months and years were very difficult after she decided to become a coffee farmer, because my mum didn't know anything about coffee. She started with very little, but she had the training and workshops from Soppexcca. We grow what we eat and that makes me feel satisfied, because in El Cua town we had to buy everything we ate and my mum used to work a lot, but now we can spend more time together.

I studied for one year in the main town, but it was very difficult for me to get there because of the transport, and I was always late. So now I study on Saturdays, 7am-3pm. Now I help my mum with all the work in the house and on the farm. This way, I can learn how to work on the farm so when it's time for me to work and to be independent, I will not suffer like my mum who didn't know what to do with the coffee and the other crops.

Now that my mum is in the cocoa project, I need to know about growing chocolate. On my own, I have looked at other ways to learn. I've found some projects from the government related to cocoa, so I hurry and try to get the opportunity to learn more, because once our cocoa is in full production, I need to do something about it. This way, I could become an entrepreneur. I'm really looking forward to it, to have a business and increase our income.

Soppexcca and Christian Aid have helped us with the cocoa by training us with the help of technicians who have visited us, tools, plants, tree saplings and the workshops. All of us in the family were involved with the project. We all know it's very important for the family income.

I have a baby now, too. I am still at school, and my mum looks after the baby. My favourite subject is maths.

As a young person who cares about the environment, I find it a big struggle getting my voice heard as many people only think about money and less about the environment, and I worry about my baby's future.



Marlon Lopez, a Soppexcca technician, says:

In the communities, boys used to leave school at 12 to work on the coffee plantations but, because of Fairtrade and a change in the law, they usually go and work on the coffee plantations at 16, but still leave school at 12 or 13. It really depends if the school is close to their house. Around 12 to 13, girls and boys start looking around to get married, and the average number of children is five or six.

**Discussion** Does anything surprise you about what you have read? Do you think your life is easier, or harder, than Johaira's? Why do you think that?

Johaira says that she is worried about the impact of climate change on her baby's future. It may not seem that we can do anything about the climate in Nicaragua, but is that right? What changes can we make to our own routine that might make a difference?



### Activity

**Chocolate Taste Test.** Buy some chocolate bars and do a 'blind taste test'. Make sure you include one sample that uses cocoa from Nicaragua (such as Nicaragua Juno 70% from Duffy's Chocolate). Which is your favourite? Make sure the chocolate you buy is all fairly traded, as this makes a big difference to the people who grow it, people like Johaira.

### Bible link Matthew 20:1-16 (NRSV)

For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard. After agreeing with the labourers for the usual daily wage, he sent them into his vineyard.

When he went out about nine o'clock, he saw others standing idle in the marketplace; and he said to them, 'You also go into the vineyard, and I will pay you whatever is right.' So they went.

When he went out again about noon and about three o'clock, he did the same. And about five o'clock he went out and found others standing around; and he said to them, 'Why are you standing here idle all day?' They said to him, 'Because no one has hired us.' He said to them, 'You also go into the vineyard.'

When evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his manager, 'Call the laborers and give them their pay, beginning with the last and then going to the first.' When those hired about five o'clock came, each of them received the usual daily wage. Now when the first came, they thought they would receive more; but each of them also received the usual daily wage. And when they received it, they grumbled against the landowner, saying, 'These last worked only one hour, and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the day and the scorching heat.'

But he replied to one of them, 'Friend, I am doing you no wrong; did you not agree with me for the usual daily wage? Take what belongs to you and go; I choose to give to this last the same as I give to you. Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or are you envious because I am generous?'

So the last will be first, and the first will be last.

**Discussion** Do you think it is fair that some people have to work so much harder than others? Why do you think Jesus told this parable?

### Make a difference

Visit your local supermarket and see which, if any, coffee and chocolate products they sell are Fairtrade registered. If there aren't any, write a letter or email to the manager and ask why there aren't any available. Look at the ingredients listed, and see where they come from. And whenever you eat chocolate or coffee products, remember the work that the farmers and their families put into growing their crop.

I wonder if the next bar of chocolate you eat might have been made from cocoa beans grown on Johaira and her mother's farm?

### Prayer

Loving God  
There are people all over your world who are struggling.  
Our challenges are different, but we know you love us all.  
Help us to be safe and to look after the world in which we live.



# Session 3

## Environment



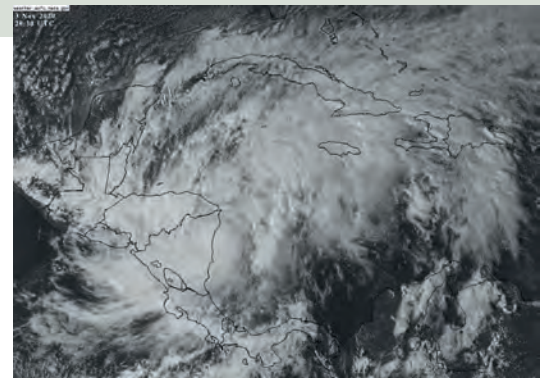
**‘In Nicaragua, Christian Aid responded to Hurricane Eta with our partner Soppexcca. We provided food and hygiene kits to 5,000 people in desperate need, as well as psychosocial support to children and adults through recreational activities like drawing, drama and play.’**

[caid.org.uk/climate](https://caid.org.uk/climate)

The people of Nicaragua live in constant threat of natural disasters and the chances of them happening is growing greater every day. So, what are the big four natural threats that the people face?

### 1. Hurricanes and cyclones

A hurricane or cyclone is a large rotating storm with high-speed winds that forms over warm waters in tropical areas. Hurricanes have sustained winds of at least 73 miles per hour, and an area of low air pressure in the centre called the eye. As Nicaragua sits in between two oceans, the Atlantic and the Pacific, these storms can start on either side of the country. In 1998, Hurricane Mitch killed about 3,800 people. Within the space of two weeks in November 2020, two hurricanes named Eta and Iota swept through Nicaragua. About 160,000 Nicaraguans were evacuated from their homes, and it was reported that many people, including at least six children, were killed in the storm.



Check out news footage on the effect of the hurricane at [youtu.be/YQ5odfezDA0](https://youtu.be/YQ5odfezDA0)

**Discussion** In what ways does the weather impact our lives in the UK? Talk about the worst weather you’ve experienced in this country. Have you ever seen news reports of weather causing serious damage or endangering lives? Scientists report changes in the weather patterns over the last few decades. What do you think might be causing that? Do you think hurricanes are possible in the UK?

### Activity Construct a building able to withstand a hurricane

You will need junk (for example milk cartons, lolly sticks, sellotape, paper, blue tac), a tray as a base to attach the building to, an electric fan or hairdryer to create a strong wind, and a water bottle with a sports cap top to squirt water at the finished model. Obviously, ensure that no water comes into contact with electrical equipment. The challenge is to build a shelter that will survive high winds and being hit by forceful water.

### 2. Earthquakes

Nicaragua lies where two tectonic plates meet, and so is prone to having many earthquakes all year round. In April 2021 alone there were more than 100 quakes of different sizes. Of these, 12 were over 4 on the Richter scale, where 4 describes a light earthquake with buildings and objects shaking, but no major damage caused. In 1992, a major earthquake hit the country, killing more than 100 people and causing an 8m high tsunami. The most recent significant quake was in 2014, when more than 100 buildings collapsed and over 12,000 people needed assistance.

As Nicaragua is a relatively poor country, many buildings are not built to withstand earthquakes of this magnitude. While fewer people have died in recent years, the after-effect of an earthquake on the country and on individuals can last for years. Can you think why this might be?

### Game Earthquake Jenga

You will need a cushion and a Jenga game. Try playing a game of Jenga but start with the tower placed on a cushion instead of a solid surface. In Nicaragua many buildings are built on poor foundations which means they do not stand a chance when an earthquake strikes.





### 3. Mudslides and erosion

**‘My daughter and son’s farms .... are seriously affected by the weather and my daughter’s coffee (farm) is really small. When the rain came in August, we had a mudslide because of the very heavy rain. It was a new coffee plantation, wiped out.’** Yolanda Amador Morales

Mudslides occur when a period of intense rainfall happens, and the great volume of water mixes with soil, causing it to turn to mud and move downhill. During Hurricane Mitch, more than 60cm of rain fell over the Castitas volcano, causing one side of it to collapse. The resulting mudslide was ten miles long and five miles wide. Nearly 1,000 people lost their lives, and many more homes and towns were lost.

#### Game **Cherry landslide**

You will need a pudding basin, a plate, a knife, a bag of flour and a cherry. Completely fill the bowl with flour, and place the plate over the top. Quickly and carefully turn the bowl over on to the plate, creating a mound of flour. Place the cherry on the top of the mound. The aim is for each player in turn to cut away a section of the flour without the cherry falling off the top. The person who is responsible for the drop has to pick up the cherry with their teeth.

### 4. Volcanoes

Volcanoes are an opening of the earth’s crust through which molten rock, gases and ash can escape. Nicaragua has a large number of volcanoes, of which between seven and ten are believed to be active. In March 2021 the San Cristobal volcano erupted, covering the city of Chinandega in thick ash. While these eruptions don’t always cause deaths, the disruption and damage they caused often increase the pressure on an already poor nation like Nicaragua.

**Activity** Why not create your own volcano by following the instructions and video at <https://bit.ly/3tVVaXv>

**Discussion** Why do you think that people live in areas that are so prone to natural disasters? Why don’t they relocate to areas that are less dangerous?



#### Make a difference

Find out more about the work of international and national charities that work to support people in areas that are prone to natural disaster. What kind of support do you think is best? What is the best way to choose which charity to support? Perhaps you could set aside a small amount from your pocket money or allowance each week which you save ready for any emergency appeals from your chosen charity.

#### Bible link:

**Isaiah 54:10 (NRSV)** For the mountains may depart and the hills be removed, but my steadfast love shall not depart from you, and my covenant of peace shall not be removed, says the Lord, who has compassion on you.

**Psalms 46:1-11 (NRSV)** God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth should change, though the mountains shake in the heart of the sea; though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble with its tumult.

**Discussion** The writers of these two passages had clearly experienced natural disaster, but also trusted in God to see them through dark times. They talk about steadfast love, a covenant of peace, a refuge and strength, a very present (and very much in evidence) help. These are very strong descriptions – how do they make you feel, and how do you visualise God when you hear them? How would you describe your experiences of God?

#### Prayer

Write the words describing God onto stones or bricks, adding words of your own. Make a pile of the stones or bricks, thinking about how God is unmovable and strong enough to withstand the mightiest earthquake and hurricane. Thank God for the promise that God’s steadfast love and covenant (promise) of peace will never leave us. Pray for the people of Nicaragua, asking God to give them strength and help in times of need.



# Session 4

## Celebrating my Country



Are you proud of where you live? If you were hosting a visitor from another country who had never been here before, what would you want to show them? What would you recommend they do, or eat, or experience to give them a taste of the UK? What's iconic about the UK, and what are the stereotypes that really are not true?

Nicaragua is a tourist destination. People come to see the architecture in the cities, the beautiful lakes, the beaches, the nature reserves and wildlife, the volcanoes and to take part in activities such as hiking, climbing, camping, and swimming in the crater lakes.

### Activity

Do some research into holidays in Nicaragua. If you were planning a trip there, what would you want to see or do?



Nicaragua is a very diverse country, with people from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds, and the culture is very varied. People tend to have a strong sense of community, and there is a strong culture of hospitality, especially in the smaller towns and villages. Most people speak Spanish, although many indigenous languages and dialects are also spoken. The most popular sport in the country is baseball, but football and boxing are also popular.

### Activity

What you can find out about these famous Nicaraguans: José 'Chepito' Areas, Roman 'Chocolatito' González, Barbara Carrera, Bianca Pérez-Mora Macías, Rene Francisco Sotomayor?

However, celebrating a country is not just about what makes it popular for tourists, or about celebrity and fame. It is also about the lives of ordinary people, the way they live and the work they do. Let's hear from some of them.

### Fatima Ismael, CEO of Soppexcca, based in Jinotega

Despite the fact that we are in a depression of the economy, the young people still have the energy, and this is what you are seeing, and it's the response of our work. When we started, we tried to wake up the hope in the rural population. At the beginning, we had to do some psychological work as they were depressed. Despite the problems and the price of the coffee being so low, I can see the brightness in their eyes for the hope they have to work.



### Arlen Joel Lopez Pineda is a young honey farmer, aged 25, who lives near Jinotega

We started with four young farmers in 2014, with Soppexcca support, for a project specifically for young people, who are family members of farmers. I had seen beekeeping before, so when Soppexcca contacted us with the idea of the beekeeping project, I said yes. The next year, we had good honey production. The next year, more farmers joined us, and we helped train them. From 20 hives in the community, it went to 50. We add extra value by having different size jars. We also make honey products that helps coughs, shampoo, and honey chocolate, creamy honey mixed with chocolate and peanuts. In the future, we want to grow and have our own trademark, and a certificate of hygiene from the government. We can then start selling in supermarkets.





## Juan Alberto Zelaya Castillo is diversifying his farm from just growing coffee to growing cocoa

I've tasted the chocolate, they gave a bar and said, it's from your cocoa plantation. It was nice, very good, tasty and have a good aroma. I thought, I'm tasting the flavours of my land!

### Heydi Espino is a 26 year old chocolatier

I never expected to work in chocolate. This is a unique experience and there are only two little manufacturers in Nicaragua, so I feel pleased. One unique thing about this factory, it is owned by young farmers, not foreigners. The one thing we're working on is that Nicaraguans are only used to chocolate that's sweet with lots of milk, so we are working to tell our customers to eat a good, good quality chocolate. Normally, Nicaraguans think that foreign chocolate is better than the chocolate made here. We are enhancing the cultivation of cocoa and for the customer to have a healthier product. I know it's hard to convince a person, but in the long term we'll achieve it.



### Try some torrijas with honey

Whisk together 4 large eggs, 1 tsp ground cinnamon, 65g icing sugar, 1 tsp vanilla extract, 1 tsp rum flavouring, ¼ tsp salt then add 60ml milk, 240ml double cream and whisk again. Set aside at room temperature. Cut slices of slightly stale bread (a more solid bread is good) into 2cm by 10cm strips, and heat 2 tbsp unsalted butter in a pan for a couple of minutes. Quickly dip the bread in the batter for a few seconds, then brown it in the pan for about 1-2 minutes per side until golden brown. Sprinkle with a little icing sugar, and top with Nicaraguan honey.

### Game Scrub Baseball

While you may not have enough space or players for a proper game of baseball, scrub baseball is a simplified version without teams. Players take it in turns to bat, the order being decided by who calls out 'scrub 1' then 'scrub 2' and so on the fastest. The other players are the fielders. The hitter tries to run to as many of four bases as possible and, hopefully, make a home run before the fielders catch the ball and touch the hitter or the base they are running to with it, or the hit ball goes straight into a fielder's hands. They are also out if they miss three bowled balls in a row.

### Make a difference

Many Nicaraguan farmers are diversifying their farms, and one way they do this is by keeping bees, and harvesting the honey. However, we know that bees are endangered in many countries, as insecticides that kill them are used, and much of their habitat is being destroyed. Find out more about what you can do to help bees, from building a bee hotel or planting bee-friendly flowers <https://bit.ly/2QyyspG>, to campaigning for insecticides to be banned. Buy organic honey whenever you buy it, and maybe try not to buy it too often – just as a treat.



### Bible link Ecclesiastes 3:9-14 (NIRV)

What do workers get for their hard work? I've seen the heavy load God has put on human beings. He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also given people a sense of who he is. But they can't completely understand what God has done from beginning to end. People should be happy and do good while they live. I know there's nothing better for them to do than that. Each of them should eat and drink. People should be satisfied with all their hard work. That is God's gift to them. I know that everything God does will last forever. Nothing can be added to it. And nothing can be taken from it. God does that so people will have respect for him.

**Discussion** Yolanda Gonzalez said, 'I am a Christian. God came here to help us, and the mission of a true Christian is to serve. If someone comes here, I will support them and if you have faith in God, everything is going to be alright. I live along with God.' If we believe that God wants us to be happy and do good and be satisfied with all our hard work, how should this make a difference in the way we live our lives?

### Prayer

Write a short prayer praising God for creation, and making a promise about one positive change you will make in your life to be happy, do good and be satisfied with your hard work.



# Session 5

## Heroes and villains



### Game Greed

Split the playing area into two halves (countries) and scatter an equal number of items in each. These might be balls, buckets or beanbags, for example. Split into two teams. Each team's aim is to run into the other country, grab one item, and put it down in their own country. If touched by a member of the opposite team, they have to drop the item and return to the furthest point of their own country. Which team can get all the items?

While climate change is a villain worldwide, Nicaragua is one of the countries most affected by it, especially in the coffee growing industry.

**Discussion** What do you know already about climate change, its causes and its effects? <https://bbc.in/3gJzcTx> may be helpful. Have you been aware of any changes in the weather in the UK? Have older people you know noticed any changes over the years?

For every ten people in Nicaragua, six make a living from farming and agriculture. Changes in the climate mean that temperatures and weather patterns are changing, the availability of fresh water is decreasing, and health is being affected.

If there's too much rain, coffee beans can suffer from fungal diseases. If there is not enough rain and too much sun, the beans can suffer from diseases like chasparria, which causes half the bean to ripen too soon (they look scorched) while the other half remains underdeveloped.

Rising temperatures result in more hurricanes. There is less rainfall overall, but when it does rain it is heavier, bringing more risk of mudslides and land erosion. This is made worse by deforestation – areas of forest are cut down to make way for crops, decreasing the available shade, making the soil less stable, and meaning that there are fewer trees to absorb the dangerous CO2 and release oxygen into the environment.



Bernardina described the impact of climate change on their lives: 'With climate change, we have less water to wash our coffee and we need lots of water. With the diseases that we've seen in our coffee, that's how nature works when we don't think about the consequence of our behaviour. We as farmers have been doing deforestation and stubble burnings and destroying protected lands in our communities, and now the rains are getting away from us. We have to understand it, as it's our fault. We now regret it.'

Bering explained: 'My father is 82. For his age group, it's been a dramatic change of the weather. Before he used to see that the surrounding area was full of trees. Before, the soil was more fertile because we didn't see this excess of chemical fertilisers. He says how much hotter it is now. Climate change is brought about by humans around the world, and especially in countries like Britain and the US, producing too much carbon dioxide through manufacturing and in vehicle fumes.'

### Make a Difference

Try the WWF carbon footprint calculator [www.footprint.wwf.org.uk](http://www.footprint.wwf.org.uk). This will give you an opportunity to think about some of the ways in which people in the UK contribute to climate change. Is there a way in which you can become a climate change hero, by making a change in your own lifestyle to reduce your impact on the environment and/or by campaigning?

Why not try upcycling and repairing some old clothes or organising a clothes swap instead of buying new? Can you do a litter-pick to clear up a local area, and identify materials which can be put in recycling? Can you explore encouraging your church or your school to become an eco-church or eco-school?

Find out more about this at <https://ecochurch.arocha.org.uk/> and <https://www.eco-schools.org.uk/>





Christian Aid and Soppexcca are some of the heroes in combating the effects of climate change. They encourage organic farming, the planting of trees, and diversification to ensure farmers grow a variety of crops more resistant to climate change. Young promoters like 22-year-old Bering Ramos are chosen by Soppexcca to give technical support to farms. She said: 'I talk to farmers about climate change. It's one of the main things that we're talking to farmers about, the right agricultural practices to improve and manage the crops according to the climate. Soppexcca and Christian Aid considered us as part of the cocoa project, so we've been working along and looking forward, we are increasing our incomes for the future and making my family's lives better.'



Soppexcca is also using young people to help tackle another historical villain in Nicaragua – gender inequality. They empower women to develop their own farmland, and run gender workshops to educate whole families. Fatima Ismael, the CEO of Soppexcca who is based in Jinotega, explained: 'The gender issue crosses everything we do. We live in a macho country with historic oppression of women, and it's easy to see in the countryside. Through the gender programme, we aim to enhance women's rights and now, because they manage their own lands, we have had good results. We want to change them from housekeepers to be landowners and farmers, empowered with knowledge and economic resources.'

'When men hear that there's a gender workshop, some like to be involved, but others don't agree as much and don't participate. The older men sometimes aren't as interested. They ask them to be part of the workshop, but they say, "I don't have time". And they ask can you send your wife, son or daughter and they say, "No, it's a waste of time".' **Miriam Rizo, 23, Promoter for Soppexcca**

**Discussion** Do you think you get treated any differently from others because of your gender? Do people have different expectations of you? Do you have different chances? Do you ever treat someone in a particular way because their gender identity is different to yours? Has gender equality changed in this country? What can you do to make your own contribution to change?

Yolanda Gonzalez, is a woman who has benefited from Soppexcca's work on gender equality. She said: 'They give space for us women, and they empower us. We have men here that think women can't have success, and across the country we can see that thinking. In my case, my husband gives me support in all that I do, we work together, we get along. We work in mutual agreement and I support him, and he supports me. This farm, though, is in my name.'

'I am a Christian. God came here to help us, and the mission of a true Christian is to serve. If someone comes here, I will support them and if you have faith in God, everything is going to be alright. I live along with God.'

### **Bible link 2 Chronicles 7:14 (NRSV)**

If my people who are called by my name humble themselves, pray, seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land.

**Discussion** When the world went into lockdown during the Covid-19 pandemic, there were fewer factories working and fewer vehicles on the road and in the air. Levels of pollution dropped, more birdsong was heard, wildlife seemed to thrive and the world seemed to start to heal itself. What 'wicked ways' do you think damage God's world? Will the lifting of restrictions also mean a return to damaging our environment? What have we learned, if anything? What do you think the church should be doing about climate change?

### **Prayer**

Creator God, we are sorry that the things we do can sometimes spoil the beauty of nature and make the land unhealthy. Sometimes our actions stop others from thriving. We can't put everything right, but help us to be heroes and not villains. Give us the courage to speak out, to take action, to change, and to be advocates, doing what we can to make a difference. Amen.

Commitment for Life is the United Reformed Church's global justice programme. It partners with Christian Aid and Global Justice Now, and congregations often pledge to support the work of one region with prayer, learning, advocacy, and action for justice. Find out more about Commitment for Life at <https://bit.ly/3tYZhSm> and <https://bit.ly/3xv5RCk>

Commitment  
for **Life**

### **Make a difference**

Perhaps your group could find a way to raise some money to donate to Commitment for Life to promote its work with Christian Aid in Nicaragua. Also remember to pray, to learn, to speak out and to act to combat injustice wherever it occurs.



# Session 6

## Intergenerational Celebration



The intergenerational celebration is for all ages together. You may wish to invite families to join you. Or perhaps you could use these celebration idea to host an event for your church, and invite members of the congregation and the leadership to think about whether they could become a Commitment for Life congregation.

### Games

Play a runaround quiz game. Label the four corners of the room A, B, C and D, and ask some multi-choice questions about Nicaragua of varying degrees of difficulty, but all covering things we've learned together. Participants go and stand in the corner they think is the right one for the answer. They are given a chance to change their mind (the leader shouts 'runaround'). Anyone who gets the wrong answer is then out.

Alternatively, put the group into mixed-age teams. The leader has a list of words about Nicaragua. A runner from each team is given the first word, and has to run back to the group and act out the word for the team to guess. Then the next team member runs to get the next word. Every member of the team must take a turn being the runner.

See the Nicaragua resources page [www.urc.org.uk/go-with-greta-and-connect](http://www.urc.org.uk/go-with-greta-and-connect) for some sample questions. No cheating!

### More recipes

See the Nicaragua resources page [www.urc.org.uk/go-with-greta-and-connect](http://www.urc.org.uk/go-with-greta-and-connect) for the recipe for a savoury and a sweet recipe from Nicaragua. Gallopinto is a meal eaten daily in Nicaragua, especially for breakfast. Tres Leches cake is a popular festival cake, but this recipe is for cupcakes. Both recipes take a little longer to prepare, so will need to be made in advance.

### Weaving prayer

Weaving is one of the artisan crafts that you will find in Nicaragua. Patterns are often colourful, especially when they weave hammocks. Tie each end of nine equal-lengthed pieces of string to a piece of dowel or a broom handle or the back of a chair. Give each person a ribbon or a long strip of coloured paper. Each person should write on their ribbon/paper their own prayer for Nicaragua, thinking of something that has really resonated with them during the sessions. It could be a thank you prayer, a sorry prayer, a please prayer, or a combination of these. Then, in turn, each person can weave their prayer in and out of the strings to make a colourful prayer hammock that can then be hung on the wall.

### Watch

The Hillsong song 'So will I' being sung, with a background video of a visit to Nicaragua. [youtu.be/N4XEQmSWlqY](https://youtu.be/N4XEQmSWlqY)

### Fruit salad

A lot of different fruits grow in Nicaragua. Why not use some of them to make a fruit salad, or blend them together to make a fruit smoothie? You could try banana, mango, plantain, pineapple, papaya, orange, lemon, mandarin orange, passion fruit, cantaloupe, or even coconut. If you can find them, you could also try pitaya (dragon fruit) or sapodilla.

### Drama

Group members may like to create a drama – or maybe a documentary as though for CBBC or Netflix – about Nicaragua, featuring some of the things they have found out during the course of the topic.

