



## Seeing the Face of Christ in El Zapote - A delegation led by Father Curtis Berube

A new home, latrines and school supplies for the El Zapote community

On a Saturday evening, after a long trip and overnight stay in Managua, Nicaragua, twenty plus people from diverse Albertan towns and cities, unknown to each other, except by Catholic roots and faith, took a four-hour bus ride from Managua to the northern hills of El Zapote, Nicaragua. I was among this excellent company of boisterous, life-loving, humble youth, adults, elders, and fearless leaders Fr. Curtis, Pat Spiller, Chantal, Harol, bus driver Mario, and many more who made this journey possible.



Father Curtis Berube (left) and the delegation. Photo taken in front of the Moreno family home to be demolished and rebuilt by members of the group with help from community members

On arriving we were met by the community gathered near a house, that served as their local store for basic amenities and community gathering area. We were warmly welcomed, introduced to our host families, and taken with our backpacks, luggage and arms laden with watermelons and fans to their homes.



Not unlike our apostolic ancestors, we were sent out in twos, threes or fours to our host homes, and found our way to communicate with them through broken Spanish, helpful translators or through human hearts full of warmth and good will. The face and heart of Christ was easily perceived by hearts so open to see.

I was grateful to be partnered with Naomi Wiper, whose Spanish was a gift for us to communicate together with the Castillo family once we arrived in their home! Cont'd on Page 2

Roots of Change Foundation invites you to our gala fundraiser:

## Celebrating 20 Years of Giving

Saturday June 14, 2025

Mass - 5:00 PM Cocktails & Dinner - 6:00 PM

Location: Holy Family Parish - 75 Poirier Ave. St. Albert

**Tickets \$100**

(\$70 tax receipt with each ticket purchased)

Tickets will be available April 15th on our website

[www.rootsofchange.ca](http://www.rootsofchange.ca)

or by phone at 780.405.8084

## Backpacks of Hope

Three Years of Changing Lives Through Education



For the third year in a row, the Roots of Change Foundation is making a tangible difference in the lives of children in Nicaragua through the School Backpack Project. Thanks to the generosity and dedication of our supporters, we continue to expand our reach, ensuring that more students have the tools they need to succeed in school.

This year, 300 children and 17 teachers from three different communities have received essential school supplies. In the municipality of Villa Nueva, 75 children from the La Fragua community, who attend the Fe y Alegría School, are now equipped with the materials they need for learning. In Somotillo, two schools have been supported: Pablo Antonio Cuadra School, with 125 students and six teachers, and Cofradía Community School, with 100 students and six teachers. Cont'd on Page 2



Additionally, 17 preschool students in the Municipality of Cinco Pinos have also received supplies, made possible by a generous contribution from the Innisfall delegation working in the El Zapote Community.

During the last week of March, our dedicated team, FUNDACCO, traveled to Somotillo to personally deliver the school supplies, ensuring they reached the hands of eager students ready to learn.

The smiles on their faces and the excitement in their eyes remind us that these backpacks aren't just filled with pencils and notebooks—they're filled with hope, opportunity, and the promise of a brighter future.

When we started this initiative, we knew the power that something as simple as a school backpack could hold. A child with the right supplies has the confidence to learn, grow, and dream bigger. Seeing the impact firsthand over the past two years has reinforced our belief that education is a key pillar of change, and we are so proud to be part of this journey.

To everyone who has contributed—whether through donations, fundraising, or spreading the word—thank you. Your support is directly shaping the future of these children and their communities.

Together, we are making education accessible, one backpack at a time.

## Nicaragua Benefit Concert



An evening of performances by

**Les Chantamis Choir**  
and the

**Claudette and Denis Tardif School Choir**

to benefit communities in Nicaragua.

Wednesday, April 30 · 7:30 - 9pm

**Mount Olivet Lutheran Church**

**205 Fir Street Sherwood Park, AB T8A 2G6**

Adults: \$20.00

Youth (16 & under): \$5.00

For tickets search:

**<Eventbrite Roots of Change Foundation>**



The dusty path leading to our host home on a "ranchita", overlooked hills not unlike the Judean hills and countryside I had seen as a girl of fourteen on a visit to Israel.



This was a moving and humbling reminder of Mary, Joseph and Jesus living in a village not unlike this geography and landscape, and similar in social and economic conditions, where a locally sourced economy is shared by all as need determines.



We were served food and hospitality, and so much more by our host families, and daily we set out to serve in our small way with them on projects intended to benefit those in need in the village.



Each was doing their part to mutually share in the benefits of building latrines and to tear down and to build a new house for one family very much in need.

The joy we shared together, in prayer, in Christ and in service to building community will ripple through our days as we journey on to see and serve the face of Christ wherever we go.

Lucie Leduc



Lucie Leduc (right) and Naomi (left) with members of the Castillo family



Phil hard at work mixing concrete by hand



School supply packages funded by Father Curtis' delegation were distributed to approximately 100 children in the community.





## Education Scholarship Fund



Thanks to generous donors we currently have \$7,325 in the fund for 15 students for the 2026 academic year so we are over half way to reaching our goal of

\$12,800. I am confident that together we can reach our goal of supporting all these students. Because of our committed donors we have assisted 49 students to graduate from their programs in the last 20 years, most of whom are employed.

To make a donation to the fund just go to the Roots of Change Foundation website click on 'Donate Now' and then in 'Program' select 'Scholarships Program'. If you don't have email you can mail a check to:

**Roots of Change Foundation Scholarships**  
P.O. Box 92 St. Albert, AB T8N1N8

Please make your donation before Sept 15, 2025

## El Zapote Mission Reflection by Phil Schmidt



Phil, Marie (left) and Lucie (centre) hard at work on a meter deep hole for a new latrine, one of 10 for the community.

Our first mission trip team consisted of just Marie and I. This year, there were 20 members on our team, ranging in age from 13 to 66 years, coming from varied education, careers, ethnicity, marital status and geographical backgrounds. The first week we had the opportunity to work together, share reflections and attend Mass together. As well, we observed our team interacting and building new relationships with our host families and the El Zapote community. At the end of the first week, fifteen members of the team returned home.

With only five of us left, the second week was much quieter, as one might expect. It was special as well, giving us a chance to get to know each other better, and creating deeper and more intimate reflections with each other.

The highlights for us were watching the young members of our mission team play and interact with the children from our community, seeing how members of the team reached out to help others that were in need, daily sharing reflections, working together with the team and community members, spending time with our host family, having Father Curtis to lead us in daily Mass, and to share in Eucharistic celebration with our El Zapote family.

## Message from the President

As I write this message to all our dear donors, it's the beginning of Lent. Lent a time of introspection to see what truly motivates us, so we can repent if we have strayed from serving God and give alms to thank Him for His mercy. Basically, I see Lent as a time when the Church reminds us that the path to holiness is always paved with almsgiving. Regardless of our sinfulness, when we allow God to work in our heart to answer the cry of the poor we are not only saved from our own waywardness, we are blessed with fellowship with God through the poor and destitute.

I am more and more convinced that the poor, the handicapped, the destitute, the refugees etc. are the very presence of Jesus in our world. A 20-person delegation to Nicaragua just returned from a mission trip where I am convinced, they met the living Christ amongst the poor. I thank God for these 20 people who have answered the call to be one with our brethren the poor, the living Christ. I also thank God for the organizers Father Curtis Berube, Angy Spiller, and Fundacco in Nicaragua.

As you will see in this newsletter, we are celebrating 20 years since our incorporation in 2005. Please save the date for our gala fundraiser June 14th and our benefit concert April 30th. Both events promise to be spectacular. Please come out in great numbers to support us.

Talking about support, this time of year is always slow for donations received. We are halfway between our successful Christmas appeal and our June fundraiser. Please consider sending us a donation to tide us over until our Gala fundraiser. The Canadian dollar to US dollar exchange rate has worsened and therefore it is making it more expensive to meet our budget which is set in US dollars. Thank You in advance for your great generosity.

I want to inform you that after our June 18th AGM, I will step down as president and will not be part of the board of directors. Suzanne and I are moving on to a new calling in eastern Canada that will take up 100% of our time. It has been a real blessing to serve Roots of Change and to make so many new friends that share the same passion for the poor. I leave the organization in the hands of a great and passionate Board of Directors dedicated to the success of this noble cause. I pray that the person who will be called to serve as president will say yes as Mary said yes and thus be blessed abundantly as I have. I pledge my support to this person and promise that even if I am far away I will only be a phone call away to help and support.

God Bless, it has been a pleasure to serve you.

À tous mes amis francophone, je suis honoré de vous servir comme président de Source de Développement. C'est avec regret mais le coeur rempli d'espoir que je soumet ma démission comme président et membre du bureau des directeurs. Suzanne et moi entreprenons une nouvelle aventure dans l'autre belle province au Québec dès cette été. Nous serons partie pour plusieurs mois à Cacouna pour oeuvrer à la Maison de Prière Le Cénacle. SVP priez pour nous que la volonté de Dieu soit fait en nos vie. Ce fut une source de fierté pour moi de constater votre grande générosité et votre loyauté à appuyer la cause. Je vous remercie et surtout le Père Denis Hébert vous remercie. Que Dieu vous bénisse.

David Fréchette - President

### 2025 Annual General Meeting

**All are welcome to this online event**

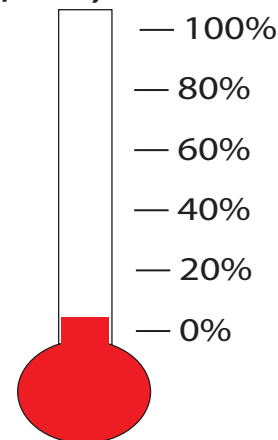
Wednesday June 18th at 7:00 pm

For those wishing to attend please send an email by June 6th to  
info@rootsofchange.ca



### Fundraising Goal

**2025**  
**\$140,000**



Donations to Feb. 28

**\$2,601**

1.8% of Goal

A sincere thank you to all who continue to support our **Mission of Hope**



## A Legacy of Compassion: How FUNDACCO Keeps Father Denis' Mission Alive



In the heart of Nicaragua, a quiet but powerful act of love continues—one that was never part of any formal program, yet has profoundly shaped the lives of some of the country's most vulnerable people. The **Señor de la Divina Misericordia de Boaco** project was never funded by Roots of Change; rather, it began as a personal initiative of our founder, Father Denis Hébert.

Today, it lives on through the unwavering dedication of FUNDACCO staff, who have taken it upon themselves to continue his mission.

Since Father Denis' passing in 2015, members of FUNDACCO have carried on this project in his honor, recognizing—just as he did—the deep importance of caring for the elderly.

FUNDACCO staff set aside a portion of their salaries, organize small fundraising efforts, and gather support from friends and colleagues to fund this initiative.

Once a year, their commitment comes to life in a day of care and dignity for the elderly residents of a nursing home in Boaco.

On this day, more than just supplies are

delivered. A doctor and a dentist visit to provide essential medical check-ups. A barber offers haircuts, ensuring residents feel cared for and respected. Food and other necessities, gathered with the guidance of Sister Reyna Almanza, the home's director, are provided to help meet the residents' needs.

These efforts are not about obligation—they are about love, respect, and the belief that every person deserves to be treated with dignity, no matter their circumstances.

Though this project was never part of Roots of Change's official work, we deeply admire FUNDACCO's commitment. Their dedication is a testament to the lasting impact of Father Denis' vision and the power of individuals to make a difference.

Let this story serve as a reminder: meaningful change isn't always about grand, organized efforts. Sometimes, it is simply about showing up—year after year—for those who need it most. We invite you to share this story, to be inspired, and to recognize that the smallest acts of kindness can leave the deepest impact.



For more information [www.rootsofchange.ca](http://www.rootsofchange.ca)

Please help by supporting this ministry of hope

### 2024-25 Board of Directors

#### Officers:

President - David Fréchette  
Vice President - Rod Valdes  
Secretary - Lucille Damer  
Treasurer - Mel Kammerer  
Project Administrator - Ken Handford  
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John Schile - Scholarships  
Angy Spiller - Delegations  
Danielle Nobert-Halvorsen  
Phil Schmidt  
Lloyd Arcand  
Charla LeBlanc

Would you like to get involved or have a talent to share?

We are always looking for people who would like to help us in our **Mission of Hope** for the Nicaraguan people.

If interested, contact us at [info@rootsofchange.ca](mailto:info@rootsofchange.ca) to learn more about how to get involved.

The goal for our 2025 campaign is \$140,000.

The estimated cost of printing and mailing 3 publications per year is \$2,400.

For information contact Jocelyne Durocher at 780.405.8084

### PayPal Giving Fund

PayPal Giving Fund Canada provides a method to make a credit card donation that eliminates the fees the Foundation would normally be charged which is between 2– 3% of the donation - and every penny counts!

Search for "PayPal Giving Fund" in your browser, click on 'Donate Here' then search for Roots of Change Foundation.

PayPal Giving Fund Canada will provide a Charitable Donation Receipt for your donation and we will be notified once it is processed.

Donations are now accepted by eTransfer to [donations@rootsofchange.ca](mailto:donations@rootsofchange.ca)

Registered Charity Number 81320 5077 RR0001 ~ Canada Revenue Agency: <http://www.canada.ca/charities-giving>

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