

News from Mark and Jenny in Costa Rica

September 2025

Hey Friends,

Life's been moving fast. Do you ever feel like you are on a runaway train? Looking back over the past three months, I'm a bit blown away by how much has happened as part of our work with the Latin American Biblical University and its Creation Care work.



Figure 1 Participants in Janina's 1st focal group discussion. From left to right: Janina, Gabriel, Alessandra, Flor, Galia, Amanda

Community Garden Momentum

In June, our Swiss student Janina Zbären began in earnest her research on how to grow participation and commitment at Sunflowers Community Garden. Her interviews, surveys, and focal group discussions have in themselves resulted in deeper engagement among members. A short but intense visit by Janina's advisor, Alessandra Giuliani, from Switzerland, helped provide a needed spark.



Figure 2 Family time in Nicaragua. From l to r, Keila, Hypatia (aunt), Mark, Keila, Jessica (cousin), Luna (crazy dog) and Grandma Modestina.

Family Travels & Birthdays

July was full of travel: first to Nicaragua by bus, to spend time with family there. Jenny's mom, Modestina, had just had surgery. She is a remarkable woman and was up and eating meals with us before we left and has continued to improve.



Figure 3 Annika's birthday supper with Grandma Catherine. From l to r, Annika, Catherine, Jenny, and Keila

Then, onto Ohio to celebrate Annika's 14th birthday with my mom, followed by Keila's 16th in Michigan with Jenny's brother's family. We made a flyby visit to Cleveland, spending a few hours with my brother, Bruce and family, and then an evening with some special Cleveland friends.

We wrapped up our time in the States with the New Wilmington Mission Conference in Pennsylvania, joined by 19 family members, including Mom. Jenny and I also spent time with many colleagues from the former World Mission, all of us invited to the conference as part of the “With You Always” initiative (<https://www.nwmcmission.org/with-you-always>). On a special night, when the conference honored the service of all the former mission co-workers, Jenny and I were grateful to have friends from Scioto Valley Presbytery who came from Columbus to support us and spend time with us.



Figure 2 Galia, a member of Sunflowers, exploring one of the medicinal plants in the garden

Back to Work in Costa Rica

By late July we were back in action with the Green UBL Team—planting new crops (lettuce, green onions, bok choy, Japanese mustard, and green beans) and helping the Sunflowers Garden members to host one of their most ambitious workshops yet, featuring birdwatching, gardening techniques, medicinal plants, and a talk on Costa Rica’s National Parks. This marked the garden’s fifth workshop of the year, including

one on bats and another on native bees. We’ve also had two successful craft fair appearances, presenting homemade soaps and sourdough bread, both made with herbs from the garden, as well as herb-infused oils, soluble calcium nutrients for plants, and our own special soil mix.

Gratitude & Grace

Can you see why I feel a bit out of breath reflecting on all of this? It is an incredible feeling to be part of this ministry that the God of freedom is working out through the UBL, through Cedros community members, through us, through Scioto Valley Presbytery, and through you. Thank you so much for your continued support, in prayer and in giving.

Love,

Mark, Jenny, Keila and Annika



Figure 3 Emilia, from a cooking class in Cedros, visited the garden for the first time in early September. Emilia came with three fellow students, all of whom took home some of our fresh vegetables.