

NEWS FROM Mission Partners Mark Hare and Jenny Bent in Costa Rica

Monday, 18 May, 2026

Hello friends,

It was a joyful Palm Sunday service in March at the Mount of Hope Moravian Church in San José Province, here in Costa Rica. The pews were decorated with real palm fronds, including the bits of frond that we were given as we entered the sanctuary, which we waved high as we sang. At Mount of Hope, most songs are from the Reformed tradition—hymns with tunes that resonate with Sunday services from growing up, even as the Spanish lyrics center me in Costa Rica. Palm Sunday is one of the special days of the year when we sing a version of “Hosanna” in a call and response between men and women.¹ The sermons here do not always meet me where I am at, but the vibrations of songs like that reach deep and lift me up.



The pastor of the Moravian church (red jacket, behind) after a service in February 2022, when Jenny's mother, Modestina (front, white sweater) and her sister, Hypatia (front, far right) were visiting us from Nicaragua.

Yesterday at Mount of Hope, May 17th, we celebrated Ascension Day. The pastor's take was interesting, perhaps common? Her focus was on Christ's return—in particular on whether we were preparing ourselves correctly. The pastor's main criteria, that I caught, was related to attending the church every Sunday, which, the Rev. Escorcía may or may not have been thinking, means Jenny, Keila, Annika, and I are not well-prepared at all. But the question of preparing ourselves for God's new heaven and new Earth did grab me and make me think. As we watch the politics of arrogance and greed play out across the world, what does it mean to be faithful to the hope of Christ's return?

In Sunflowers Community garden, at the Latin American Biblical University (UBL), every Wednesday is our special weekly workday. We used to have every day, Monday to Friday, open for folks to come and work in the garden. Participation felt random and unpredictable. Now that we made one day special, we suddenly have consistent attendance and Wednesdays have become my favorite day of the week. This past Wednesday there were something like seven folks, including two brand new ones, and we accomplished an amazing amount of work: watering, cleaning, weeding, hauling, chopping grass, and laying out wood chips. Together the crew made the garden shine, preparing for a visit by the local mayor and his entourage on Friday, May 15th.



Guiselle Solano (standing) describing to the guests the experience of the women from Cedros as they have helped create the Sunflowers community garden. The mayor, Domingo Argüello, is seated at Guiselle's right.

The mayor came in part to honor and celebrate National Farmers' Day, but also to sign a covenant agreement with the UBL. The exact terms are not laid out, but as I conversed over coffee and cookies with various representatives from our municipality, collecting phone numbers and a critical e-mail address (the secretary's), it felt clear that there is an openness to new ideas and mutual support. As one participant observed several times during the celebration,

¹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R4KP65CbaUI>

the closing of the Strait of Hormuz is creating a global shortage of artificial fertilizers², and everyone needs to think about sustainable, regenerative agriculture.³

Today, much more quietly, Jenny and I, together with our colleague, Karen Mamani, celebrated Global Recycling Day—May 18th. Our celebration focused on putting up brand new signs that we have been working on for over a year—looking for the right combination of wording, colors, and icons that would grab people’s attention and, hopefully, pull them into the discipline of turning “waste” into resources. Yesterday Karen published Jenny’s blog on recycling.⁴ Among other information, Jenny found out that in Ancient Greece there were laws requiring that everyone take their trash at least one mile outside the city. I hope that helps folk put into a new perspective the time it takes to rinse their cans and bottles and put them in the correct bins.



Jenny (left) and Karen Mamani, with one of the new signs. This one says, "Recycling Area: do not deposit trash in this space"

Also today, early this morning, I was part of a zoom meeting to help support and guide this year’s Swiss student, Flor Geiser. Flor is here for six months, with a professional internship program provided by Mission Twenty-one, a Swiss, faith-based ecumenical organization that has partnered with the UBL for several decades. Flor studies International Agriculture at a university outside of Bern, Switzerland. In addition to supporting the work of the garden, Flor is putting together a bachelor-level thesis project to research how medicinal plants play a part in the health and well-being of women from Cedros, the community that Sunflowers garden serves. She is also working to contact at least one indigenous community, with the goal of creating space for the women of the respective communities to network and share knowledge and experiences. It is exciting stuff! Jenny and I will work with Flor with her first participatory workshop on Saturday, June 6th, when we will be joined by Dr. Ingrid, one of Flor’s professors from Switzerland.



Flor Geiser (slightly to the left) working in Rocoto Medicinal Garden, which is also on the UBL campus.

What are we doing to faithfully prepare for Christ’s return, making space for Creator God’s new heaven and new earth? We’re drawing on UBL’s international contacts to support research about local and indigenous knowledge; we’re promoting recycling; we’re celebrating farmers and collaborating with the local government; we’re developing as a community of people who believe in good food, sharing knowledge and jokes with each other, and producing abundance. And we are singing Hosanna on Palm Sunday, lifting our voices together in joy. As a pastor in Columbus that we know says during every Sunday benediction, “It is all that easy. It is all that hard.” And it is all that fun. Won’t you join us?

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² <https://news.un.org/en/interview/2026/04/1167351>

³ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bUtcpYde_MA&t=86s 1

⁴ <https://blog.ubl.ac.cr/2026/05/196/dia-internacional-del-reciclaje>