



Frontera de Cristo

A Presbyterian Binational Border Ministry

Home

by Miriam Maldonado Escobar and Mark Adams

When our son Nathan was 7 or 8, he had accompanied us to the border with a delegation. As the delegation was answering the question: “What do borders mean to you?” in the shadow of an 18-foot steel barrier draped in four layers of concertina wire with surveillance towers rising above the border and Border Patrol vehicles sitting less than 50 yards away, Nathan was sitting in the dirt drawing with a stick. One of the delegation members decided to draw Nathan into the conversation and asked him: “Nathan, what does the border mean to you?”

He responded with one word: “Home.”

This summer FDC led a delegation to facilitate a bilingual music and arts camp with our partners at First Presbyterian Church in Hastings, Nebraska. A couple of weeks before going, the leadership of the church called us to discuss whether it was safe for a group of mainly persons of Mexican descent to travel to visit their home in Nebraska because of a series of new actions in their community led by changing federal priorities that were terrorizing much of the non-white community in Hastings.

Raul, the foreman of the construction company remodeling their facilities, had lived in Nebraska since he was 11 years old and had no criminal background. He had been surrounded by heavily armed, masked men and was deported within three days. His US-born children worried about how their father would manage in a country he had not been to

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On August 16, we joined with 44 other border communities to celebrate that we are FRIENDS ACROSS BORDERS.

Friends Across Borders

“In the midst of the struggle, you have to celebrate.”

During tough times, Father Bob Carney, founder of the “Healing Our Borders” Prayer Vigil, always reminded us of this phrase that he learned from a Nicaraguan priest. During the struggles created by our increasingly polarized world, we are grateful that we were able to be one of the lead organizers, together with Arizona Border Alliance, for a week-long celebration of community.

Faith-based communities, humanitarian organizations, spirited running, yoga and chess clubs, music academies, rehab centers, and local businesses all came together, forming a broad coalition that transcended boundaries. United in purpose, we demonstrated that even as federal policies increasingly militarize the border, these shared spaces remain foundations of encounter, opportunity, and hope—reminding us all of the deep and enduring interconnectedness at the heart of our community. □

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Take Action—Sign the Friendship Pledge and find ways in your local community to make your community a safer and more welcoming place for the most vulnerable among you.

Take Action—Watch the [Friends Across Borders video](#) and share with your family, friends, and church networks.



A Spark of Hope: How a 9-Year Old Inspired the Ministry of Frontera de Cristo

by Joca Gallegos, FDC Co-Coordinator

She was only nine years old when, one afternoon, Anyra walked out of the Nueva Esperanza Community Center.

The neighborhood was changing. Drug sales were happening out in the open, and although adults talked about what to do, the problems kept growing. The safe place Anyra loved so much was being threatened. She often saw young men selling drugs on the corner—*her* corner—part of her home.

That day, something changed in her.

Anyra had been connected to the Community Center even before she was born. Her mother, Monchis, took baking classes there while pregnant and later became the Center's administrator.



As a little girl, Anyra attended Saturday Bible School and spent hours with Sister Rosario (my mom)—first listening to stories, later helping prepare materials and clean tables. Under Sister Rosario's care, she felt loved and safe; the Community Center was her second home.

But that afternoon, she couldn't stay silent.

With courage far beyond her years, she walked up to the group of men on her corner and said firmly:

"We don't want you here. You're hurting us. This is a place where we help people move forward, and you're harming us. We don't want you here! Please leave!"

Then she came back inside, looked at us calmly, and said:

"It wasn't hard."

A nine-year-old girl showed us what love and courage truly look like. She defended the place that gave her security, identity, and belonging.

From her brave act, the Children's Enrichment Ministry was born—a space where children feel safe, loved, and respected; a place where they receive tutoring, help with homework, lessons in values, and a daily meal.

But the ministry is not only about academics. Many of these children come from homes marked by pain, neglect, or poverty. Love and care are not easy for them to accept. Sometimes they push back. Sometimes it's hard for our team, too.

But we keep showing up—because God's love is patient and transforming.

Our Pastor for Children and Families, Lorena, once shared the story of a boy named Marco. Marco was tough—disrespectful, angry, and hard to handle. Lorena often wondered, "*Is it really worth spending so much time on a child like this?*"

Marco and his siblings live with their grandmother. She brings them to the Children's Enrichment Ministry—not only to receive support, but also so they can have something to eat.

One day, the pastor went to visit their home and found out that Marco had spent most of the morning in the bathroom, vomiting and even fainting.

Immediately, she stepped in to help: she took the family to the general hospital and then to a lab for tests. She spent the afternoon and part of the night with them, and later called me to come and accompany her.

Before returning to the lab with the boy's grandmother, she bought some food for both of them. Finally, Marco was seen by the doctors—he had appendicitis.

As they were heading back to the hospital, the pastor offered dinner to the grandmother. Then Marco, with tears in his eyes, looked at her and said:

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At the Children's Enrichment Ministry, Pastor Lorena instills a love for learning.

A Spark of Hope

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“Pastor, why are you so kind to me? I yell at you, I’m rude to you, I insult you... and yet you still help us. I’m a bad kid.”

Hearing those words, my heart stopped. Something was changing on that trip to the hospital. With great tenderness, she looked at him and said:

“You’re not bad. You just need to change your attitude. What you’re seeing isn’t just my love—it’s God’s love for your life. Let’s trust Him, and everything will be okay.”

After his surgery, Marco returned to the program with a new spirit. He began listening, paying attention, doing his homework, and speaking kindly—but more than that, he realized that the Children’s Enrichment Ministry was his safe place. He was loved. He was respected.

Today, the Children’s Enrichment Ministry continues to grow. What began in a single space at the Nueva Esperanza Community Center in Agua Prieta now reaches four different locations, working alongside Frontera de Cristo’s partners and communities—with plans to open a new site in 2026.

Isn’t that wonderful?

That dream is still alive—growing within the community, transforming lives, and keeping hope alight.

For me, this is why we keep going. Because one small act of courage—the voice of a 9-year-old girl—reminded us that God can use anyone, of any age, to bring light into the darkness.

At Frontera de Cristo, Anyra’s story continues to shine—a spark of hope that keeps transforming lives, one childhood at a time. □

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in more than 33 years. Maria, another friend of the church who had lived in the community for over 20 years, had her car hit by another driver and was afraid to go to court to testify because she was afraid that she would get deported. The Ballet Folklórico that the church hosted in their PEACE community center saw a 70% drop in participation because parents were afraid to take their children out of their houses.

Even as our federal government continues to militarize our home here on the border as well as in communities throughout the interior of the US, and put obstacles in the way of our cross-border connections, we remain committed to living into the reality that, in Jesus, God tears down dividing walls of hostility and forms us as one community that works to make our border/home reflect gospel values of welcome, justice, peace, and love.

Thank you for being part of a community that celebrates that God calls us to be Friends Across Borders and resists dehumanizing language and policies—your prayers, encouragement, and action help make all of our homes a healthier place. □

Take Action—You can help the children’s educational, social, and spiritual journeys by providing material goods to the Children’s Enrichment Ministry. Just scan the QR code to access their Wish List on Amazon.



Take Action—Scan the QR code to watch the newest video of our Children’s Enrichment Ministry.



Coro Infantil Nueva Esperanza singing at the annual Community Advent Service at Cafe Justo y Más

Christmas on the Border

by Mark Adams, FDC Co-Coordinator

¡María PRESENTE!

¡José PRESENTE!

¡Jesús PRESENTE!



“Is there going to be a vigil on Christmas Eve?” Andres, a Young Adult Volunteer serving with Frontera de Cristo asked, wondering if we would take a break for the holiday.

Every Tuesday since December 12, 2000, there has been a “Healing Our Borders” prayer vigil. On these Tuesdays, a small group gathers on the corner of 5th Street and Pan American Avenue (and since COVID via Zoom as well) to remember those who have died crossing the border in Cochise County, to pray for their families, to pray for our governments that we might find a better way, and to commit ourselves to working for an end to death of those seeking opportunity, safety, and/or reunification for their families. Since the year 2000, 400 men, women, and children are known to have died in Cochise County while migrating, less than 5% of those known to have died all across our southern border. In 2024, we added 14 crosses with the names of people who died in Cochise County that year.

On Tuesday, December 9, 2025, we will hold our thirteen-hundredth vigil. Over the last 25 years, the vigil has occurred eight times on Christmas Eve or Christmas day. While it is far from a “typical” Christmas Eve tradition, I have found that I treasure participating in the vigil on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day not only because it takes me out of my typical comfortable Christmas traditions, but also because it reminds me of the true **scandal** of Christmas.

The experiential lens through which I understood Christmas for the first half of my life was that of the beautiful and peace-filled candlelight service singing Silent Night, Holy Night followed by a morning of opening presents and being surrounded by family. Christmas on the border has given me a different lens through which to understand Christmas, a less comfortable one that has substituted the momentary experience of personal peace, for the deep longing of a shalom that infuses all of humanity and the whole of creation.

Christmas on the border reminds me that Jesus crossed the divine/human border where he was welcomed into a manger and by shepherds far from the center of economic, political, or cultural power.

Christmas on the border reminds me that Jesus was hunted by Herod who wanted to deport him from the land of the living and enlisted his security forces to do so, leading to the deaths of many.

Christmas on the border reminds me that Herod wanted to recruit the Wise Men into his plan to deport Jesus and the Wise Men resisted Herod’s evil intentions.

Christmas on the border reminds me that Mary and Joseph had to flee with Jesus from their homeland to seek refuge in Egypt, a land from which their ancestors had both found refuge and oppression.

Christmas on the border reminds me that the manger without the cross can lead to superficial and romanticized celebration and a coopting of the Holy day for commercial purposes.

Christmas on the border reminds me of the reality that Emmanuel, “God with us,” means God has entered fully into the world’s joys and suffering.

As we gathered for the vigil’s final prayers and reflections just north of the US/Mexico border where we could see the 18-foot steel bollard fence draped with four strands of concertina wire and with signs stating Danger Do Not Enter/Peligro No Entre, the line of cars crossing into Mexico grew—people returning home from work or last minute shopping or to be with family to celebrate the holiday.

Ximena prayed for the families who had empty chairs at their tables this Christmas season and who were grieving for their loved ones. She prayed that in the midst of their grief that they could also

remember the joy that they shared with their loved ones. Andres prayed not only that we might have laws that facilitate migration so that people don't risk their lives, but prayed that the countries of origin might have economic and safety conditions that allow for people to be able to thrive in their own communities. As Adrian of Café Justo often says, "we want to work for the day where people can migrate if they want to, not because they have to."

Before we finished, a woman shouted a curious question across the drainage ditch to us: "Están vendiendo las cruces? /Are you selling the crosses?"

"No señora, cada cruz tiene el nombre de alguien quien se murió cruzando la frontera. Estamos recordándoles como hijos y hijas, creados en la imagen de Dios, amados por Dios y orando por sus familias./No ma'am, each cross has the name of someone who has died crossing the border. We remember them as persons created in the image of God and beloved by God and we pray for their families."

"Hacen esto cada semana?/Do y'all do this every week?"

"Cada martes a las 5:15 pm./Every Tuesday at 5:15 pm."

"Voy a estar con Uds. la semana que viene./I'll be with you next week."



Closing Prayer at the Vigil

Wherever you are, can you be with us next week? Can you celebrate the scandal of Christmas with us by recognizing the Divine image in each person fleeing violence or poverty, by joining the Wise Men in resisting being coopted into the deportation plans of modern day Herods, by working for the day when people can migrate if they want to but not because they have to?

At the end of each vigil, we remember an unidentified man or woman, unknown to us but known to God. We raise up the cross and we remember all the men, women, youth, and children who have died and then we name Jesus and call out his name to the east, north, west and south—proclaiming the reality of God's presence with those who have died crossing borders.

¡Mujer no identificada, PRESENTE!

¡Las mujeres, PRESENTES!

¡Los hombres, PRESENTES!

¡Los muchachos, PRESENTES!

¡Las muchachas, PRESENTES!

¡Las niñas, PRESENTES!

¡Los niños, PRESENTES!

¡Jesucristo, PRESENTE! ☐

Take Action—Join us for the Healing Our Borders Prayer Vigil via Zoom. Email office@fronteradecristo.org and Angie will send you the link.



Creating the Community Advent Wreath at Café Justo y Más

A Ceremony of Healing

by Rev. Sam Pendergrast

Sam and Cynthia Pendergrast served as volunteers with FDC from January 2023 to January 2024 and have returned to volunteer for a month. Cynthia is serving with the Children's Enrichment team and Sam is doing visitation with our partners at CATPSIC, teaching English classes, and writing about their experiences in his blog. In this, a recent blog post, Sam reflects on a Cross Planting led by Gabriel Saspe, a Yaqui elder and Deacon of St. Luke's Catholic Church in Douglas.

CLAUDIO BRUNO CASTRO died in the Sonoran Desert, only a few miles north of the US/Mexico border, near Bisbee, Arizona. I don't know if his family knows he died, or if his remains have been repatriated to where he came from. I only know that he was a person made in God's image and loved by God, someone like you and me.

In our ceremony we spoke of the violence involved in the smuggling of people across the border, in border enforcement and the militarization of the border, and in dying alone and abandoned in the desert.

These deaths are unnecessary. They are the result of violent policies restricting the movement of people who have been displaced from their homes by forces completely beyond their control. Instead of seeking to address those forces of violence and exploitation, our government forces desperate people into dangerous desert places where they risk their lives in search of safety, loved ones, or simply a dream of a better life.

The crisis at our southern border is a crisis of the displacement of people by economic exploitation, climate change, wars, and criminal activity. These people are our neighbors asking for help. We should not treat them as a threat. We have plenty to share. ☐

**Claudio Bruno Castro
Created in the Divine Image
Beloved by God
¡PRESENTE!**



Café Justo: Toward a Successful 2026 Addressing the Challenges of 2025

As Café Justo looks forward to 2026, they recognize that the year ahead will be shaped by the challenges and lessons of 2025. The past year has been marked by significant hurdles—chief among them are supply shortages, cash flow difficulties spurred by rising costs, and a landscape of uncertainty around import/export requirements and tariffs.

The leadership of Café Justo reached out to Frontera de Cristo (FDC) seeking support in several areas, to position itself to avoid the challenges faced in 2025 that caused inconsistent coffee delivery to the churches, farmers market vendors, organizations, and individuals who have been faithful partners of Café Justo in creating relationships across borders and addressing root causes of migration.

Supply Shortages: Acquiring a Sufficient Supply for 2026

This year, there have been weeks in which the Café Justo roaster in Agua Prieta had no coffee to roast. The FDC board voted to use its revolving fund and reserves to extend a loan to Café Justo so that they can buy sufficient coffee at the beginning of this year's harvest, which is coming in now, in order to avoid any disruption of coffee shipments due to lack of coffee. Historically, Café Justo has shipped coffee up to the border in small batches throughout the year. With this loan from FDC, Café Justo will ensure that the coffee needed to supply its customers will be shipped and stored in Agua Prieta as soon as it can be processed following harvest. The coffee supply will be stabilized as the harvest of the current crop is completed in February.

Cash Flow Challenges: Managing Rising Costs

2025 saw record-high prices in the coffee market, driven both by supply-side disruptions and by increased demand. The cost for green coffee beans, shipping, packaging, and even utilities have surged. For Café Justo, these rising expenses were exacerbated by not having coffee to roast and export for weeks at a time. This has directly impacted cash flow, making it more difficult to invest in growth initiatives, maintain staffing levels, and fund community projects.

In addition, Café Justo has not consistently raised prices to meet the realities of inflation. We have worked with Café Justo to analyze the cost of cultivating, processing, marketing, and shipping their coffee, as well as doing a market study of coffee prices of comparable coffee. There will be a need to raise prices more significantly than if they had done so years ago, to take inflation into account.

Through our monthly e-letters, we have engaged with a substantial cross-section of their loyal customer base through transparency of price adjustments, ensuring that customers understand the reasons behind the changes. Folks who promote Café Justo in their congregations overwhelmingly shared that they wanted to keep the one-pound packaging and increase the price per unit rather than shrinking the packaging to 3/4 pound in order to keep the price closer to what it is currently. Café Justo plans to finalize and announce the new price structure by the end of the year.

To minimize the price increase, Café Justo is also implementing tighter financial controls and focusing on improving operational efficiency, seeking to ensure Café Justo remains resilient, competitive, and committed to our mission.

Café Justo's response to this year's challenges will be multifaceted, with the goal of minimizing disruptions and delivering high-quality coffee to their customers in a timely way. Café Justo's mission remains unchanged: to cultivate relationships across borders by providing high-quality coffee while supporting our communities. With the lessons of 2025 guiding us, Café Justo is well-positioned to thrive in 2026 and beyond.

We are grateful for their invitation to work with them and we cherish your prayers and suggestions. ☐



Frontera de Cristo
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The Community Advent Wreath at Café Justo y Más with the communities' prayers for Peace, Hope, Love and Joy.



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Sharing the Good News in
Word and Deed by

- Cultivating Relationships and Understanding Across Borders
- Responding in Faith to the Realities of Migration
- Responding in Faith to the Realities of the Drug Culture

www.fronteradecristo.org

Frontera de Cristo is one of four binational border ministries of the PC(USA)'s Presbyterian Borderlands Ministries. Frontera de Cristo works with churches, presbyteries, and organizations on both sides of the border to do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with God.

Connect With Us

- Sign up for our monthly e-letters at <http://fronteradecristo.org/>
- Volunteer with us on the border. For details, email mark@fronteradecristo.org
- Organize a delegation from your church, university, or other organization to experience the border firsthand.