

*“Then Jesus told his disciples, ‘If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.’”*

MATTHEW 16:24

## The Year of the Cross

I arrived in El Salvador nearly a year ago, not knowing what to expect. Just after I arrived, the Salvadoran Lutheran Church, for whom I work, chose their ministry theme for the coming year. They chose, “Take your cross and follow me!” (Matthew 16:24) I had come to El Salvador expecting to learn how God works in a new culture, but I learned about the cross and what it means in El Salvador.



NICHOLAS  
GREEN

Many recall the floods caused by Hurricane Ida last November, and how they caused so much destruction throughout the country. A rush of aid came right after news of the flooding broke, but as its memory faded, things slowed down. Meanwhile the subsequent long dry summer left many Salvadorans searching for ways to sustain their families. The Salvadorans were carrying the “cross” of the floods and which heat had ruined all the crops intended to feed families for the year. But ecumenical organizations took up the cross and supplied food to several communities, following up with each one. Givers to Week of Compassion and One Great Hour of Sharing took up the cross and helped greatly. But the struggle still continues. The long-awaited rains came this year not as a blessing, but as another round of floods.

The Lutheran Church took up the cross with many agricultural projects in El Salvador which provided much needed food. I realized they hadn’t waited until the crisis occurred to start growing. They had already begun these projects long before the floods came. In this way I saw Christians in El Salvador take up their cross. I have seen a church that takes care of the whole person; sowing seeds of hope from tragedy.

Let us pray that we may all aspire to better the lives of those around us by taking up our cross and following Christ.

*Nicholas Green serves in El Salvador as a long-term volunteer with the Evangelical Lutheran Church of El Salvador. He supports the National Youth with the Family and Gender Program of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod of El Salvador.*

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