



Go with Greta to **Nicaragua**



Commitment
for **Life**



The
United
Reformed
Church **Children**

Contents



page

Session 1	Here we are – all you need to know about Nicaragua – facts and figures	2
Session 2	Childhood in Nicaragua – a day in the life	4
Session 3	Environment in Nicaragua – and its impact	6
Session 4	Celebrating my country – the gifts Nicaragua shares with the world	8
Session 5	Heroes and villains – who or what are these for Nicaragua?	10
Session 6	Let's celebrate Nicaragua – ideas for holding a themed celebration	12

This booklet was produced for URC Children's and Youth Work, URC Commitment for Life and Pilots in 2020–21.

Contributors: We would like to thank Christian Aid for the provision of factual information about our partners in Nicaragua, and the work they do. We also wish to thank Christian Aid for permission to include the majority of the pictures. Particular thanks go to Charlotte Scott for her support with this project.

Go with Greta was written by Lorraine Webb and Suzanne Pearson.

#connect2 was written by Tom Hackett, Stephen Tait, Leo Roberts and Lorraine Webb

Extra material provided by Prayer Spaces in Schools: www.prayerspacesinschools.com, with thanks to Phil Togwell and Ebony Fennell.



With thanks for video material to the Revd Dr Kevin Snyman, proofreading by Sarah Houlton and Heather Wilkinson, design and cover illustration by Sara Foyle.

Edited by Lorraine Webb.

Illustrations

Page 1	2015, Turquoise-browed motmot, Katja Schultz, Creative Commons
Page 2	2013, Flag of Nicaragua, Wikimedia Commons, Creative Commons; 2005, Mombacho Isle, Marquitos Saravia Guillen, Creative Commons; 2013, Map of Nicaragua, CIA, Public Domain; Coat of Arms of Nicaragua, Caleb Moore, Public Domain; Tom Pilston (Christian Aid) – farmers in Nicaragua
Page 3	2016, Scarlet Macaw, Henry Forson, Creative Commons
Page 4	2019, Esme Allen (Christian Aid) – Santa Rosa school vegetable garden and nursery with Ariana and Liliam; 2019, Esme Allen (Christian Aid) – Ariana with cocoa pods; 2008, Street in León, Nicaragua 4 and Street in León, Nicaragua 5, Eric Molina, Creative Commons; 2008, Nicaraguan family, Dr Alexey Yalovlev, Creative Commons; Tom Pilston (Christian Aid) – three school photographs
Page 5	Tom Pilston (Christian Aid) – school photograph; 2021, kite, Lorraine Webb, URC
Page 6	2021, Eta 2020-11-03 0350Z; NASA, Public Domain; 2020, Hurricane Iota damage to buildings, Silvio Perez (Soppexcca); 2020, Hurricane Iota flooding, Manuel Bucardo (Soppexcca); 2020, Hurricane emergency response, Diarmund Mitchell (Christian Aid)
Page 7	2021, Windmill and weather chart, Suzanne Pearson, URC
Page 8	2006, Barcelo Montelimar Beach, in Managua, Mrluigi, Creative Commons; 2019 Chocolate, Bering making chocolate, Isaac with coffee pods, Adam Finch and Esme Allen (Christian Aid); 2020, Beekeeper, Bianca Ackermann – Unsplash, Creative Commons
Page 9	2019, Honey dipper, Arwin Neil Baichoo – Unsplash, Creative Commons 2021, coffee bean coaster, Suzanne Pearson, URC
Page 10	2019, Bering, Adam Finch (Christian aid); 2019, Johaira's family, Liliam in Santa Rosa school Esme Allen (Christian Aid)
Page 11	2021, Parrot wings craft – Lorraine Webb, URC
Page 12	Marimba craft, Lorraine Webb, URC; 2010, Arroz con pina, nico2panama Koch-wiki, Creative Commons; 2009, Quesillo, Luiisylolmaan, Creative Commons

Bible references

Pages 3, 5 and 11 Scripture taken from the Holy Bible, NEW INTERNATIONAL READER'S VERSION®. Copyright © 1996, 1998 Biblica. All rights reserved throughout the world. Used by permission of Biblica.

Pages 7 and 9 Scripture taken from the International Children's Bible®. Copyright © 1986, 1988, 1999 by Thomas Nelson. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Nicaragua

Bienvenido a Nicaragua

Welcome to URC Children's new-style mission magazine from United Reformed Church (URC) Children and Youth, produced in collaboration with our non-uniformed organisation Pilots, and with URC Commitment for Life which, in turn, partners with Christian Aid and Global Justice Now.

It has been customary each year for Pilots companies to have an 'Overseas Voyage' programme to explore a country which the London Missionary Society (LMS), later the Council for World Mission (CWM), served, or with which the URC has a link.

This year, to build stronger links with the international engagement of the URC and to enable more children, young people and adults to become more involved in mission and social justice, Pilots has joined forces with Commitment for Life to create this new resource.

Greta Globe is the mascot of Commitment for Life, and each year will invite children aged between 5 and 10 to 'Go with Greta' to one of the four regions that Commitment for Life supports through Christian Aid. The material in 'Go with Greta' is designed for leaders to use in planning their sessions. For the 11 to 14 age range, we have '#connect 2', which emphasises the increasing focus on our inter-connected world as we aim to build and explore the relationship between each of the four regions, the people who live there, and ourselves as a church and as individuals. Young people may choose to use this material independently, or leaders may use it in their planning. The four regions we will visit over the next four years are Central America (which includes Nicaragua); Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory; Bangladesh; and Zimbabwe.

Our part in that mission involves learning more about the problems facing the poorest people, by listening to the stories told by our partners and learning about the issues. We can pray, asking God to send the Holy Spirit to bring about justice. And we can act by working for justice, using our voices and writing to our MPs, joining in the campaigns hosted by Christian Aid and Global Justice Now, and also speaking up at school, work, in church and online. We can share our gifts and money to support the people in these four regions. Learn more by visiting:

Commitment for Life: www.bit.ly/urclfl

Christian Aid: www.christianaid.org.uk/schools/our-work-young-people and www.christianaid.org.uk

Global Justice Now: www.globaljustice.org.uk/youth

Fairtrade: www.fairtrade.org.uk

This booklet provides material for six sessions including an intergenerational celebration. This might be used by a group meeting weekly to form the basis of a half term's sessions. Alternatively, the material might be used for a holiday club, or an event over one or two days within your church. It can be used in face-to-face gatherings, and could also be adapted for use in online groups. Each half of the magazine follows the same pattern, as this will allow mixed age groups to engage in the same theme but with slightly different activities. And, of course, you may wish to dip into both halves of the magazine for material to use. The booklet is available as a downloadable pdf at www.urc.org.uk/go-with-greta-and-connect, where you will also find additional resources. A video to kick-start your exploration of Nicaragua is also available on this page. This video is most suitable for the under-11 age group.



Session 1

Here we are



Where in the world is Nicaragua? Can you find it on a globe? What do you notice about where it is? Nicaragua is pretty far away from the UK – 8,310 km (5,164 miles) – which means it takes more than 11 hours to get there by plane. It's located in Central America, with a mountainous border with Honduras to the north, and Costa Rica to the south. Roughly triangular in shape, with each side about 310 miles (500 kilometers) long, it is also bordered by the Caribbean Sea and the Pacific Ocean. Its name comes from Nicarao, chief of the American Indian tribe that lived in part of Nicaragua during the late 15th and early 16th centuries. The largest city in the country is the capital city, Managua, and other important cities include León, Masaya, and Granada. Nicaragua is known as 'the land of lakes and volcanoes'. The country has many lakes and lagoons, plus 50 volcanoes, although most of these are not believed to be active. Out of all the 88 star constellations, 86 can be clearly seen the night sky over Nicaragua. Is Nicaragua bigger or smaller than the UK? How many people live in the UK?

This is the Coat of Arms of Nicaragua. This version has been used since 1971. It is made up of a gold-bordered triangle with five volcanoes behind a lake with a rainbow above, and a type of hat called a Phrygian or liberty cap. In a circle around the triangle it says 'Republic of Nicaragua – Central America'. The five volcanoes represent the five states that make up the Republic of Central America, and the sun's rays and rainbow represent a bright future. You can see the coat of arms on the country's flag, together with two blue stripes representing the Caribbean Sea and the Pacific Ocean, and a white stripe symbolising peace. You can listen to the Nicaraguan national anthem at youtu.be/J3C4dwc9vRw.



Nicaragua has a population of six million, and is the second-poorest country in Latin America. Almost 80% of the population live on less than £2 per day. It is one of the countries most affected by climate change in the world and is one of the most diverse countries in Central America. Many people are descended from the indigenous groups of the region – the people who first lived there. There are also people of African, European and Asian origin. Most live in the lowlands to the west, between the Pacific coast and Lake Managua. The local people call themselves Nicas, while people from other countries tend to refer to them as Nicaraguans.

The main exports of the country are crops, especially coffee, tobacco, sugar cane and bananas. Can you find any products of Nicaragua in your local supermarket? The currency is the córdoba.

Nicaraguan weather is hot and tropical, with average temperatures of 27°C year-round. There are two seasons of weather in Nicaragua: from May to November is the rainy season, while the rest of the year is the dry season. How does this compare with the UK? Along the eastern coast, the Mosquito Coast area gets the most rain in Central America, at 254–635 cm a year!

The official language in Nicaragua is Spanish. The majority of people, 97%, are Christian, with Roman Catholics in the majority. Most adults, 86%, can read, and the average lifespan is 69 years.

Many exotic birds and animals are found in Nicaragua: bull sharks, boa constrictors, monkeys, wild boars, toucans, jaguars, sloths, manatees, sea turtles, and a dozen species of poisonous snakes. The national bird is the **guardabarranco**. Can you find some pictures of these animals and birds? There are more than 70 protected areas in the country, which help preserve the habitats of many endangered species. What do you think might threaten wildlife in Nicaragua? Is it the same in the UK?



Prayer

We thank you, God, that you have created a world full of diversity and variety – different countries, different seasons, different people, different animals, birds, plants and crops, different landscapes. Thank you for the opportunity to learn more about our brothers and sisters in other parts of the world such as Nicaragua. Help us to understand that, even though we are far apart, we have much in common and can do things to help each other. Remind us that we are all your children and loved by you. Amen.

Active prayer

Make a paperchain of people, and decorate them to reflect a wide range of clothing, age, ethnicity, appearance etc. Join everyone's paper chains together and form them into a circle, standing up, around a globe or a map of the world in the centre. Say "Thank you that, whoever we are and wherever we come from, we are all one family in you. Amen".

Bible link Acts 17:26-28 (New International Reader's Version)

- *From one man he made all the people of the world. Now they live all over the earth. He decided exactly when they should live. And he decided exactly where they should live. God did this so that people would seek him. And perhaps they would reach out for him and find him. They would find him even though he is not far from any of us. 'In him we live and move and exist.'* As some of your own poets have also said, 'We are his children.'
- I wonder what it means to live and move and exist in God?
- I wonder why God didn't make everybody the same?
- I wonder when and where you feel closest to God?

Game

Use pictures of the wildlife found in Nicaragua. Have two identical pictures of each thing. Cut one of each picture into six pieces and jumble all the pieces together, then spread them round the room. Give each team a complete picture and see which team can find all six pieces for their picture quickest. There are some pictures on the resources page on our website.



Greta wonders... Why is it good to find out about other countries?

What would you ask a child in Nicaragua about their life or their country if you were able to talk to them face to face?

Why do you think Nicaragua is described as a poor country?

What does the Nicaraguan flag tell you about what's important for that country? If you designed a coat of arms for your country, what values would you want to represent?

Action point

Nicaragua is one of the countries most affected by climate change. What we do each day is having an impact on the lives of children and adults who live many miles away. Discuss together some of the things that we can do to help our environment, and set a target to do things in your group that help reduce your impact on the environment. This might be things like not wasting water or electricity, recycling and reusing things, or perhaps walking or riding a bike instead of going by car. Design and make a badge that could spread the message about protecting the environment.

Activity

Learn some words in Spanish.

hola = hello

adios = goodbye

me llamo... = my name is...

amigo/amiga = friend (m/f)

Look at how earthquakes affect buildings. Fill a tray with jelly, and place a piece of greaseproof paper over it to stop things sticking. Then construct your buildings using marshmallows, cocktail sticks or wooden skewers, and squares of cardboard. Be clear about behaviour with pointed sticks, and ensure an adult is on hand to make holes in the cardboard and the marshmallows. Stand your buildings on the waxed paper, and shake the tray gently – see how it affects the building.



Session 2

Childhood in Nicaragua



Children in Nicaragua are just like children in the UK. They like to learn and explore, play and spend time with their friends and their family. Some things about their lives are very similar to yours, but some things are quite different.



‘When I grow up, I want to be a coffee farmer. I would also like to grow cocoa. I really like cocoa. I also like roses. I would also like to grow vegetables like cassavas and also bananas. I like living on a coffee farm, I like walking around it.’ Ariana Blandon, aged 5



Here are some typical streets in León, Nicaragua. What can you see that looks similar and what looks different?

I wonder what your school is like? You can watch a short film about a day in the life of a Nicaraguan child at youtu.be/QSRk1Bl2bf4.



Not every child in Nicaragua gets to go to school – sometimes they are needed at home to work or look after their family. Most children get to go to primary school, but only a few go to secondary school. In some schools, there are not enough teachers, so two classes might share a teacher, and not all schools have enough classrooms, so some children might even sit outside to learn. The children all help to keep their classrooms clean and tidy.



Things are changing, though. With the help of a local charity called Soppexcca and Christian Aid, local communities are forming cooperatives where

they help each other out. This enables them to build schools for their children that have the things they need to be both safe and good places to learn. What differences can you spot between the pictures of school classrooms, which are in Nicaragua?

www.urc.org.uk/go-with-greta-and-connect



Prayer

Thank you God for all the hard work that the people put into working together as a community. Thank you for organisations like Soppexcca and the way that cooperatives are helping children to learn. We pray for those communities who still don't have clean water or a proper school. Thank you for active hope that change can happen. Amen.

Active prayer

Using Lego or building bricks, put a label on each brick for each of the things you might thank God for. Read each label out loud as you build a wall or a tower with the bricks. Thank God for all those things that build up community, that build up life chances, that build children up, and that build us up as individuals.

Bible link 1 Thessalonians 5:11 (New International Reader's Version)

So encourage one another with the hope you have. Build each other up. In fact, that's what you are doing.

- I wonder if you can share a story of when you have been helped by somebody else?
- I wonder what you could say or do to help somebody else learn something new?
- I wonder what you would like to be when you grow up?

Game

Play a game of beetle, but to build a school instead of a beetle. Take it in turns to roll a die. When you roll a 6, you can draw 3 sides of a rectangle with no top as the school building. You can't draw anything else until you have drawn this. When you roll a 5, you can draw a roof on your school. Roll a 4 to draw a room next to the school to house a toilet. Roll a 3 to draw a teacher, and roll a 2 to draw a blackboard or whiteboard. Each time you roll a 1, draw a chair, until you have drawn five chairs. When your picture is complete, shout 'Time for School!'

Children in Nicaragua like playing baseball, and also like playing tag games. Can you make up a game of tag that is linked to our theme?



Greta wonders... Which aspects of a school are essential and which are just nice to have?

Why do you think it is important for children in Nicaragua to go to school?

What would you tell a child in Nicaragua about your life?

Action point

Many of the cooperatives where the community work together are helped to plant and grow coffee. The money they earn helps to build the new schools as well as feeding their families. The cooperatives are part of the Fairtrade organisation which makes sure that people are paid fairly for the things they produce. Visit your local supermarket and find out which types of hot chocolate have the Fairtrade mark. Does your church use fairly traded coffee? What about your school? Can you write a letter to encourage someone to swap to fair trade coffee?



Activity

All children have the right to learn and the right to play. Children in Nicaragua do not always get a lot of time to play, especially if they are girls, but when they do, they play more games outdoors than indoors. They are very creative, and find all sorts of things to play with, including making their own kites.

Can you use recycled materials to make your own kites? One method uses an old plastic bag or scrap paper, two sticks, string, tape, a toilet paper roll and ribbon. Cut out a square or diamond of plastic or paper and lay the sticks on it from corner to corner, crossing at the middle. Tape the sticks firmly in place. Make a small hole in each corner of your kite and tie pieces of string, slightly longer than the sticks, to join the top hole to the bottom and the right-hand hole to the left so that they cross in the middle. Tie the end of a very long piece of string to the point where the two strings cross so that they are all tied together. Roll the other end of your string around a toilet roll centre or a piece of cardboard so that you can control how much string you let out at a time. You could add a ribbon tail. Now let's see how high your kite will fly! Perhaps you could decorate it with a Nicaraguan flag design.

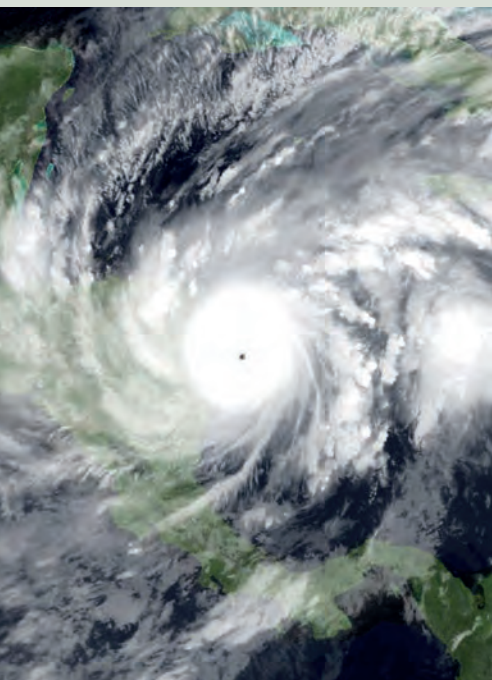


Session 3

Environment in Nicaragua



‘The environment is very important to me because it’s my lifeline.’ Johaira, aged 15



Hurricanes Eta and Iota

Tropical cyclones are common in the country, with an average of one storm happening a year. A cyclone is a circular storm that forms over a warm ocean, bringing heavy rains and strong winds. A hurricane is another name for something that is essentially the same thing, the difference being which ocean they develop in. Coastal areas are particularly affected, and in Nicaragua they are usually seen from July through to October. However, 2020 had more storms than any other year since records began. It is the first year in which two hurricanes formed in the Atlantic in November, which is later than the time when hurricanes usually hit.

The high winds and floods that came with these storms caused a huge amount of damage to property. Within two weeks in November 2020, two hurricanes called Eta and Iota swept through Nicaragua. About 160,000 Nicaraguans had to be evacuated from their homes to keep them safe. Many people were injured or died in the hurricane, including children.



La Prensa, a local newspaper, reported people being swept away by a raging river south of the capital, Managua. Sadly, 13 people were reported missing after a landslide near the city of Matagalpa, including a 12-year-old girl. Many people lost their homes, crops and livelihoods.

Nicaragua’s vice-president, Rosario Murillo was quoted in *The Guardian* as saying that catastrophic physical damage had been caused by what authorities called the most powerful storm ever to hit the country. ‘Thank God more lives have not been lost,’ she said. Experts say that the temperature of the sea is rising, and this contributes to the strength of the hurricanes. The rising temperature of the sea is linked to climate change.



Christian Aid worked with its partners Soppexcca to provide food, medicine and hygiene kits to 5,000 people who were in desperate need. They also supported children and adults to feel less anxious about what had happened to them through recreational activities like drawing, drama, and play.

You can find out more about cyclones and hurricanes on the BBC Newsround webpage www.bbc.co.uk/newsround/24879162. This explains how they are formed, why they are given names, and what damage they can do. Did you know the winds in a cyclone or hurricane can

get faster than 73 miles an hour? That’s faster than a car is allowed to drive on the motorway!

‘With climate change, we have diseases in the coffee and a lot of pollution. I have learnt about climate change at school. They teach us everything about it, what the future will be if we don’t take care of the environment.’

Johaira, aged 15

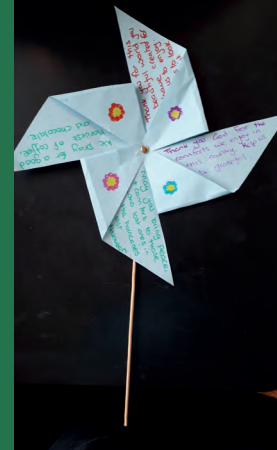


Prayer

Dear Lord, we pray for your protection over the people in Nicaragua who suffer from these huge storms that destroy homes, crops and lives. Help us to be more concerned in helping to care and look after your creation. Amen.

Active prayer

Using the template from the resources page on the website, make a windmill. On each of the sails, write or draw a prayer for communities in Nicaragua that have been affected by Hurricanes Eta and Iota, a prayer thanking God for his amazing creation, a prayer thanking God for your home, and a prayer for people across the world to cut down on the things they do that affect the environment.



Bible link Psalm 24:1-2 (International Children's Bible)

'The earth and everything in it belong to the Lord. The world and all its people belong to him. He built it on the waters. He set it on the rivers'

We are called to look after God's creation and act in ways that will restore and protect the environment. I wonder how can you play your part in looking after God's creation? Can you write a poem or a song about the wonder of God's creation?

Game An adaptation of Fruit Salad

Everyone sits on a chair set in a circle, with one person standing in the middle without a chair.

The leader labels each player one of four types of weather: snow, rain, sun or cloudy. The one in the middle calls out a type of weather, and everyone in the circle with that weather type must swap places, and find another chair to sit on. At the same time, the person in the middle must try to find a chair. The person left standing is the new caller. Calling out 'Hurricane' means everyone must get up and change places.



Greta wonders... Climate change is becoming a more urgent issue as we learn more about the impact of human actions on creation. Think about how climate change is affecting UK weather patterns, and how this has affected local communities. Have you ever been outside on a wet and windy day? What is it like? How would you feel if you had no home to go back to because it has been blown away?

Action point

Find out more about how hurricanes are formed. Did you know your actions, together with those of everyone else, can affect the weather, and that that affects communities like those in Nicaragua? What actions can you take to help climate disruption? You might walk to school, or put on an extra layer of clothes rather than turning up the heating. Carry out a 'How well I look after the environment' survey of people in your church, family or school to see how they are doing in protecting the environment. Can you persuade them to do more? Things to think about include water usage, travel, recycling and reusing, what you eat, how you choose what you buy, how you heat your home, and how you use your garden.

Discuss with the leadership of your church how it might become an eco-church.

<https://ecochurch.arocha.org.uk/>

WEATHER CHART				
<small>Use the chart below to record the weather where you live and then check the weather in Granada, Nicaragua.</small>				
<small>Draw in symbols for the type of weather and record the temperature. Do this for a week, and then compare the weather between the two places. What is the result?</small>				
Day/Date	My Home Town	Town in Nicaragua		
Monday				
Tuesday				
Wednesday				
Thursday				
Friday				
Saturday				
Sunday				

Activity Weather watch

Keep a weather chart monitoring the weather in a town in Nicaragua and in your part of the world each day for a month. You can do this by going to <https://bit.ly/2R0KOHe>. How does it compare?

There is a weather monitoring chart in the resources at www.urc.org.uk/go-with-greta-and-connect or you can make your own.



Session 4

Celebrating my country



‘Cocoa is like having a cow which you milk every day; with coffee it’s a once-a-year harvest.’
Harry Espino, a farmer with two children

Nicaragua is known as the land of lakes and volcanoes because of the number of lagoons and lakes it has, and the chain of volcanoes that runs from the north to the south along the Pacific side of the country. By 2006, tourism had become the second largest industry. The majority of tourists are from the US, Central or South America, and Europe, with the main attractions being the beaches, scenic routes, and the beautiful buildings in cities such as León and Granada. Of the many volcanoes, only around seven are now considered active, and many of the rest offer tourist activities such as hiking, climbing, camping and swimming in the crater lakes.



Coffee, chocolate and honey

Nearly two-thirds of Nicaragua’s coffee crop comes from the northern part of the central highlands, to the north and east of the town of Estelí. Harry Espino is one of many farmers there. He is married with two children, and farms both coffee and cocoa. Harry has noticed that the changing weather affects his coffee crop. He likes the fact that cocoa is harvested more than once a year, so it gives him and his family a year-round income.

Climate change has been a problem, and has allowed many diseases to develop in the coffee crop. Harry started planting cocoa a few years ago with the help of the technicians from Soppexcca, who showed him how to sow, handle disease, and plant the grafted plants. For many farmers, the future with climate disruption may mean that they can’t grow coffee any more, as coffee needs cooler weather to grow. If the temperature rises, they will need to shift into cocoa, the key ingredient in chocolate. Growing and producing different crops and products is called diversifying. It means that if one crop fails, there are other crops and products that still bring in money.



Bering Ramos, a young farmer, says that she didn’t have any idea how chocolate was made until she visited a chocolate factory that was close to her farm. While there, she was able to see the many processes that are needed to transform the cocoa to chocolate. Many cocoa farmers haven’t ever tasted chocolate!

Arlen Joel Lopez Pineda is a young farmer who lives near Jinotega. Climate change was affecting his crops. Soppexcca suggested a bee keeping project, and the following year he had good honey production. His farm also makes honey products like cough medicines, shampoo and honey chocolate – a creamy honey mixed with chocolate and peanuts.

Arlen explains that even farmers who keep bees are seeing the effects of climate change. ‘In the summer, it’s raining, and then it’s too hot and sunny, when it’s dry you have the flowers, and when the flowers are ready to be harvested by the bees, it rains, and the bees don’t come out of the hives. The farmers harvest the honey from February to May,



and there are three harvests. In the dry season, the bees are fed with a liquid mix of sugar and water to keep them strong. After that, a special screen is put in and they get to work producing the honey. Once the honey is extracted, it is put into a sediment tank, and then it is poured into the pots and labelled. Producing honey is something pretty. It is not polluting, and is helping to pollinate the flowers.'



Prayer

Dear God, we thank you for the beauty of Nicaragua. We pray that you will help the farmers find the best crops to grow and the best time to grow them. We thank you for the bees of the air and for the wonderful way that you have designed them to keep every other aspect of your creation going. We pray your protection over the bees and that you will help people understand just how important they are. Amen.

Active prayer

Take your seed bombs (see below) and pray a prayer over the soil or area in which you throw the seeds, asking God to bless the soil for good germination and attraction to bees.

Bible link *(International Children's Bible)*

Proverbs 25:16 *'If you find honey, don't eat too much. Too much of it will make you sick.'*

Proverbs 24:13 *'My child, eat honey because it is good. Honey from the honeycomb tastes sweet.'*

- Have you ever tasted the sweetness of honey? Why not try some on hot, buttered toast?
- Honey is good and pleasant, but too much is not good for you. Think about other things in your life that are good or fun, but too much of which can be bad for you. Too much fast food can make you fat; eating too many sweets rots your teeth; too much cake, biscuits and chocolate can cause health problems such as diabetes; watching your computer or mobile phone screen all day can affect your sleep.

Game **The chocolate game**

You will need: A Fairtrade wrapped bar of chocolate; a plate; a knife and fork; some dressing-up items – at least a hat, scarf, and gloves; two dice.

How to play: Put the Fairtrade chocolate on the plate with the cutlery nearby and sit the children around it in a circle. Take it in turns to roll the dice, passing them around the circle. When someone rolls a double, they leap into the centre of the circle, put on the dressing up clothes, and start to unwrap and eat the Fairtrade chocolate, using only the knife and fork. They keep going until someone else rolls a double, then that person takes over. If there is a large group, make two teams and see which team finishes the chocolate first.



Greta wonders... Why are farmers in Nicaragua having to change what they grow? What do the farmers in your local area specialise in, and have they had to change their methods of farming? In Nicaragua, many children would be helping on the farm as well as doing their school studies. Have you ever visited a working farm? What do you think it would be like working on a farm?

Action point

Make seed bombs. You need wildflower seeds (these are available from Commitment for Life), soil, flour, water and a mixing bowl. Mix 10 parts soil to 1 part flour. Slowly add water, and mix to form a sticky dough. Roll this into a golf ball-sized ball. Put seeds on a tray, and roll the ball over them until it is coated with seeds. Allow to dry for two days. It's then ready to throw in your garden or on a patch of unused ground.

Could you arrange a trip to visit a honey farm, or arrange for a beekeeper to visit the group to talk about why bees are so important for the environment? www.bbka.org.uk/find-beekeeping-near-you Or watch Bee Movie (2007) to see the importance of bees to the environment.

Activity

- Make Chocolate Krispies, and try using honey instead of golden syrup. See the resources page www.urb.org.uk/go-with-greta-and-connect for the recipe. Melt together 150g fairtrade chocolate, 100g butter and 4 tbsp honey or syrup. Gradually stir in 100g cereal. Allow to set.
- Make a coffee bean coaster. You need old CDs or DVDs, coffee beans, PVA glue and varnish. Glue your coffee beans one by one onto the top side of a CD, and allow the glue to dry completely. Once dried, you can varnish with clear varnish and then enjoy your mug of coffee resting on a bed of its own beans and its aroma.



Session 5

Heroes and villains



Nicaragua experiences the effects of two major villains – climate change and deforestation.

Climate change is brought about by humans around the world, especially in countries like the UK and the US, where too much carbon dioxide is produced by factories and in vehicle exhausts. As a result, weather patterns around the world are changing. Nicaragua suffers from earthquakes and hurricanes, but also from too much or too little rain. All of these are being made worse by climate change.



If there's too much rain, coffee beans can suffer from fungal diseases. If there is not enough rain and too much sun, the beans can suffer from diseases like chasparria. This causes half the bean to become ripe too soon and look scorched, while the other half remains under-developed. Nicaraguan farmers are currently seeing a loss of about 30% of their crops; the figure used to be just 5%.

The changing climate also affects people's health.

Deforestation happens when trees and forests are cut down, either for the timber or to use the ground for other purposes, such as building houses and roads, or to grow crops. The forests are the habitat of many plants and creatures, and the trees help to combat climate change as they absorb carbon dioxide and produce oxygen. They also contribute to the water

cycle. Nicaragua has lost a large proportion of its rainforest.

But it is not all bad news. There are heroes in Nicaragua who help to combat the effects of climate change and deforestation, and help the farmers to diversify into growing different crops.

Commitment for Life works with Christian Aid, who in turn work with Soppexcca. This is a cooperative, which means a large group from the community working together and supporting each other. The cooperative works with the environment and helps people learn about climate change and deforestation. People find new and better ways to grow their crops, ways which help them and the environment. Farmers are shown new crops, such as cocoa, which will grow better and earn them more. Soppexcca also promotes human rights and equality, and provides schools, educational materials and uniforms, and medicines for the poorest families. It is a Fairtrade organisation that makes sure all the members of the cooperative get paid fairly for their work.



The Fairtrade Foundation is another hero in this story. When you buy produce with the Fairtrade mark on, you know that the people who produced it get a fair wage, and are able to feed their family and pay their bills with the money they earn. Groups of farmers also get some extra money, the Fairtrade Premium, which they can spend to improve their community or their farming. Sometimes this means we have to pay a little more on the things we buy, but it is worth it to know that we are making a difference to someone's life.

‘With climate change, I worry about my daughters’ and new little grandson’s future. I’m going to advise them, when they need to plant one tree, sow at least two. From him being little, I’m going to teach him to protect the environment. With climate change I think we must teach our families to respect the environment and to do every action to secure and improve it because without it, we don’t have anything.’
Angela Zelaya, mother to Johaira (15) and Ariana (5).



Prayer

Dear God, we are sorry that sometimes the things we do spoil your beautiful creation and make life harder for others. Help us to play our part in making things better. Help us to share what we have with others and help them, like the people in the cooperatives. Help us to take care of our environment, like the farmers are learning to do. Thank you for organisations like the Fairtrade Foundation, Soppexcca and Christian Aid, who do all they can to make the world a fairer place for all. Amen.

Bible link Colossians 3:23 (New International Reader's Version)

Work at everything you do with all your heart. Work as if you were working for the Lord, not for human masters.

- I wonder if you can share a story of something you've done which would make God smile?
- I wonder whether you ever think of God when you're doing chores or homework?
- I wonder what your dreams for the future are – for yourself, for the world, for Nicaragua?

Game:

Play a heroes and villains game. One team are the heroes, and the other team are the villains. One way you could do this is to stand up some empty drinks bottles or cans in the middle of the room like skittles – you may need to stand two cans on top of each other. One team has balls or beanbags and has to throw them to try and knock all the skittles down faster than the other team can stand them up again. Set a timer, and see how many are standing when the time runs out. An alternative might be to have some buckets with a piece of recycling in each. The villains try to tip the recycling out onto the floor while the heroes try to put one piece in each bucket. Remember to recycle all the equipment after the game!



Greta wonders... What are the things you want in life, and what are the things you need?

Why do you think it is important that children know about the environment?

Many people in Nicaragua grow cocoa beans, but have never tasted chocolate. How would you describe chocolate to them?

Action point

Check your own carbon footprint – this webpage from the WWF will calculate the impact you have on climate change and explain how your lifestyle choices can affect other countries as well as the UK. www.footprint.wwf.org.uk

Visit a local supermarket and see how many items you can find with the Fairtrade mark. Find out whether your church and your school buy Fairtrade coffee and tea. Write a letter to your MP to ask whether they use Fairtrade and local produce in their offices and in parliament, and explain why you think this is important.

If you have a piece of garden you can use, why not plant a tree? Or you could use the seeds of fruit or the tops of carrots or pineapples to grow a plant indoors.

Activity

Cut some rough templates out of card to draw around to get a feather shape – a long leaf shape with one end rounded and the other end coming to a point, about 15 to 20cm long. Use these templates to draw onto paper then cut out the shape. Decorate these feathers in any way you choose, as long as they are bright and colourful – you could use paints, collage, pens even real feathers!

Now cut two large wing shapes out of thick cardboard, each the length of the longest-armed child's arms. Get everyone to stick their feathers onto the wings. Place the finished wings onto the floor and each child can lie down with their arms out over the wings while someone takes a photo. You could use these photos to make 'Save the Rainforest' posters.

Alternatively, for younger children, you could make parrots using an upturned paper cup, feathers, wool, paper and wobbly eyes.



Session 6

Let's celebrate Nicaragua



Decorate your hall or your Zoom backgrounds with images of Nicaragua, such as flags, banners, coat of arms, pictures of animals and birds. Can you make a big banner to say 'Welcome' in Spanish, the language of Nicaragua: *Bienvenidos a Nicaragua*? During your celebrations, perhaps you could try saying please and thank you in Spanish too: *por favor* and *gracias* (grah-see-ahs)



Make a marimba

You need seven A4 sheets of firm paper (used paper is good), string, glue, scissors, tape, a pencil and a ruler. Take your first two sheets of paper, and roll each of them around a pencil to make long narrow tubes. Then tape the edge and remove your pencil.

Roll each of the remaining sheets of paper in turn around a large glue stick to make shorter, thicker tubes. Before rolling your second tube, cut 2cm off the side of the sheet of A4, then cut 4cm off the next sheet and so on so that each tube is shorter than the last.

Make a sideways V-shape with your two narrow tubes, then fasten each of the wide tubes to them with string at top and bottom of the tubes (see picture). Put a dab of glue at each point where the string is tied then turn your marimba over and glue it to a firm piece of cardboard as a base. Now play your marimba by gently hitting the bars with pencils, like you would play a xylophone.

Make maracas

You need two paper cups, some tape, rice or lentils, and pens, paints or stickers to decorate. Put a handful of rice or lentils into one paper cup. Turn the other cup over and tape it firmly to the top of the first cup so that the rice or lentils are contained inside. Now decorate your maraca. Use your marimba or your maracas to play along with some typical Nicaraguan music. Why not dance along? youtu.be/hSqbaQJ-kEU

To drink – arroz con piña

What you need: 1 large pineapple, 1.5 cups of rice, 1 cup of evaporated milk, vanilla essence, cinnamon and sugar to taste.

What to do: Cut the top off the pineapple – you could plant this and see what grows! Put the base of the pineapple, the peel and the core in a pan, cover with water, add the rice and a stick of cinnamon, and boil until the rice is soft. Meanwhile, chop the rest of the pineapple into chunks. You can add sugar and vanilla essence to the hot liquid to taste at this point, if needed. Remove the scraps of peel and cinnamon stick from the mix and discard, then add evaporated milk and some of the flesh of the pineapple to the mix and blend in a blender or by pushing it through a sieve. Drink with ice, and eat up any remaining pineapple chunks.



To eat – quesillo snacks

Meaning 'little cheese', these are popular snacks in Nicaragua, and are usually served with a little bag to hold the vinegar.

What you need: A corn tortilla, soft white cheese, finely chopped onions soaked overnight in vinegar, salt and sour cream.

What you do: Cover one side of the tortilla with cheese, and heat in the microwave until the cheese is melted. Add a pinch of salt, some onions and a bit of sour cream. Wrap and serve.



For other recipes, see the resources page www.urc.org.uk/go-with-greta-and-connect.

Share all you've learned about Nicaragua with each other and any visitors. Close with a prayer – what do you think is most important to talk to God about when you think of all you've found out about life in Nicaragua? What can you praise God for and thank God for? What might you want to ask God, and what might God be asking of you?

