



MINUTE FOR MISSION

Seeking safety from violence, Pan American alum found the challenge of God's call

Monika Ruiz's vocational aspirations paint a portrait of holistic Christian commitment. This college sophomore wants to serve as a nurse in international mission, but her dreams for the future don't stop with taking care of physical needs. Monika would like to tend spiritual needs through pastoral ministry in a developing country. She is concerned about justice for neglected people and communities around the world, and she envisions starting an advocacy organization that works on their behalf.

Her call to service was nurtured as a high school student at the Presbyterian Pan American School in Kingsville, Texas, an institution you help support with your gifts to the Christmas Joy Offering. "Throughout my three years at Pan Am, I learned to trust God more, and through my peers and the staff there, I saw the gifts of love and service put to work," Monika says.

Monika came to Pan American from a community in Mexico where drug cartels hold tremendous sway, where some days she was unable even to attend school due to drug trafficking and violence. At Pan American, she not only found a safe and caring environment, but also hit her stride academically and learned lessons beyond the classroom. "Pan American gave me an opportunity that I would not have had in my country," Monika says. "I not only learned English and how to excel in academics, but my experience prepared me for college and for life."

Monika graduated as salutatorian of her 2015 class. She received a scholarship to another Presbyterian-related school, Schreiner University in Kerrville, Texas, where she is a nursing student. She anticipates enrolling at Austin Theological Seminary after she completes her bachelor's degree.

Pan American's diverse student body gave Monika a glimpse of the world she hopes to serve. "One of the things I will always be thankful for are the friendships I made there. Being around people from other countries and cultures made my high school education unique and very rich," Monika says.

Gifts to the Christmas Joy Offering help Presbyterian racial ethnic schools provide life-changing experiences for students like Monika. Half of the receipts go to Presbyterian-related racial ethnic schools and the other half provides assistance for current and retired church workers and their families who are in need.

Presbyterian racial ethnic schools afford opportunities that students like Monika might not otherwise be able to experience. "Without a doubt, attending the Presbyterian Pan American School has been one of the greatest blessings in my life," Monika says. "Without that opportunity, I would not be who I am or where I am now."

Your gifts to the Christmas Joy Offering will help more students like Monika develop their gifts for effective service to the church and the world.

LET US PRAY:

Encouraging God, we give thanks for Presbyterian racial ethnic schools and the dreams they inspire in students who otherwise might never have dared to dream. Help them claim their giftedness and sustain faculty and staff members as they point students toward higher plateaus of learning, devotion, and service. Amen.