Welcome to the BorderLinks context immersion study course—indeed an amazing learning opportunity! Our study trip to the U.S.-Mexico borderlands is now just weeks away. I am certainly looking forward to the experience. I hope you are as well. The following information may be helpful as you begin to plan.

Preparing for your BorderLinks Delegation
Welcome to the Delegation, the term that BorderLinks uses for each group of learners they host. Expect inspiration, increased global awareness, learning, self-discovery, bonding and deepening friendships, and also fun on the BorderLinks immersion study course at the US-Mexico border! Although we can’t answer every question now, this information sheet will help in planning and preparing for a wonderful experience. Your commitment to share this experience and come back better able to lead as global citizens in our intercultural society is an essential part of our program. Thanks for the investment of your time and resources to share this sacred experience.

We will be staying in Tucson, Arizona, in the BorderLinks building for most of the week, with 1-2 nights in Mexico in a place that will be reserved closer to the course. In the past, Phillips delegations have stayed in homes in small groups or in churches or retreat centers as a whole group.

Financial planning for the BorderLinks Delegation:
Students pay normal tuition and fee charges for the three semester-hour credits, less any tuition assistance received from the seminary. PTS offers grants to each registered student to cover most of the airfare and the daily on-site program fee for the BorderLinks program—which includes guides, translators, meals, housing, and local transportation. Note that the seminary will purchase all airline tickets for the group in accord with information students submit on the required “Immersion Course Information” form found on the website under “Registrar Forms and Transcripts.” Students who register for the course are responsible for a $350 immersion course fee which will be added on their Spring 2016 bill. If for any reason students must cancel their participation in the course after airline tickets are purchased, they will be responsible for the actual cost of the airfare and any BorderLinks cancellation fees without subsidy.

Additional costs: On the Delegation, students will want to bring a small amount of cash to support purchases en route to and from Tucson, any optional snacks purchased between meals, and occasionally but not always the group has had opportunities to support local craftspersons and businesses for souvenirs. It has been the habit of PTS BorderLinks Delegations to invite BorderLinks guides and translators for a restaurant meal in Tucson the last evening of the Delegation as a shared pay what you can expense. Rarely, twenty-five dollars is charged for visas in Mexico. Students will need to be prepared to pay this in cash, if required.

Your Passport:
You must have a passport for this trip. Your passport number is required for booking your flight. If you don’t have a passport, apply for one immediately http://travel.state.gov/passport/ If you have a passport, check the expiration date to ensure it is valid during the trip ad will not expire within 6 months of the course. If you’ve not already done so, each student needs to provide PTS a copy of his or her passport as soon as possible to Amy Clark via fax 918-610-8404, email amy.clark@ptstulsa.edu, or US mail.

Arranging your flights:
Because we travel from various locations, booking flights for this group will be complicated. Amy Clark will work with the seminary travel agent to coordinate and arrange the travel. Amy will rely on the information supplied on
the “Immersion Course Information” forms to make each student’s travel itinerary. PTS will make the airline reservations and pay for a portion of each student’s ticket.

Food and Housing:
You can expect to experience simpler living arrangements than most of us are accustomed to in the U.S. Most meals on the BorderLinks immersion trip are vegetarian. Ample safe drinking water will be available everywhere we travel. Bring a water bottle to use daily – we will always have water to replenish our water bottles. We will travel by van or bus. Sleeping accommodations include shared dormitory style housing or room sharing. Showers are available in the BorderLinks building, but we must conserve water.

What to bring:
We will not likely have opportunity to do laundry during the trip. Pack lightweight clothing and layers as the temperature varies from day to night. It will be important to pack as lightly as possible. You will have to help carry your bags, so restrict packing to what you can carry. Do not bring expensive watches, electronics, or jewelry. Comfortable, close-toed shoes are needed for walking. Some brief but strenuous walking may be included in the itinerary. You can read more detail about these and other logistics at www.BorderLinks.org. The course moodle site will also include a FAQ section with questions students have asked in the past, as well as an opportunity to add and discuss additional questions. You will not need to bring bedding, towels, or sleeping bags.

Health and Safety:
Begin learning about BorderLinks and the complexities of immigration through the required texts, the BorderLinks note on preparing for a delegation: http://www.BorderLinks.org/education/delegations?id=76, and the latest BorderLinks statement on safety: http://www.BorderLinks.org/education/delegations?id=106. Also note that Spanish proficiency is not required, but please let me know if you have any proficiency in Spanish. Consult with your personal physician or local health department regarding any health concerns while traveling. Travelers insurance may be purchased at your own expense.

Additional questions/concerns about the Nicaragua trip:
Professor Mindy McGarrah Sharp has participated in BorderLinks delegations over the past five years. Phillips Theological Seminary has offered the BorderLinks class for nearly 20 years. If you have questions about any aspect of this travel, please do not hesitate to email mindy.mcgarrah.sharp@ptstulsa.edu.

Know that this travel opportunity can be a time of profound inspiration and faith renewal for you and many others inspired by your ministry. We appreciate your patience and help in developing all the detailed plans for the group experience. The specific itinerary will only be finalized weeks, even days, before the course, and even then may change on the ground as new opportunities become available to us.

To Do:

The following information is due by November 20 to Amy Clark: (on required form)

- your full name (or whatever matches your documentation)
- the city you prefer to fly from - if you live near more than one airport, please indicate that with your preferences
- date of birth, contact phone number
- frequent flyer info if applicable
- preferred email address and emergency contact phone number
- copy of your valid passport
- the standard liability form PTS uses for immersion seminars
- Pay $350 to PTS via cash, check, or credit card. Payments can be called in (918) 610-8303 or mailed to PTS, 901 North Mingo Road, Tulsa, OK 74116. Please indicate the payment is for 2016 BorderLinks.