



Packing relief bags for hurricane victims in Puerto Rico at our new C.A.R.D. mercy house.

Photo courtesy of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod/Erik M. Lunsford

News from Natalie: Serving the Lord in Latin America

Dearest Partners in Mission,

During the month of April, I surpassed 100 days of service as a missionary living in the Dominican Republic and serving Latin America and the Caribbean. This experience has opened my eyes in ways expected and unexpected. It has not been without its fair share of challenges. I'm learning new things every single day-- from payroll and taxes, to how to navigate public hospitals which is much more complicated than one might think, and still figuring out ways to maintain relationships with family and friends from far away. Christ is refining me through the challenges and providing for me with His blessings, in order to be a servant who points back to Him and is a loving neighbor here in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Please join me in celebrating a milestone in learning the Spanish language. After four months of living in the Dominican Republic, I feel confident using conversational Spanish to accomplish things. Thanks be to God for this gift, and for the language program we have in place for missionaries in our region. I still have a ways to go, but I have learned that part

of being a missionary is recognizing progress and victories no matter how big or small, since much of what we do does not result in instant gratification and requires patience and continuous prayer.

Thank you for serving alongside me in giving and for keeping me in prayer. Please let me know if I can be of service to you or your congregation in any way. I hope you enjoy reading recent highlights of my service in the mission field.

Blessings,
Natalie Howard



Playing guitar at our church-school
in Licey, D.R. on Easter Sunday.

He is Risen. Alleluia!

I celebrated our Risen Lord on Easter Sunday at our new church-school facility in Licey, D.R. My Mom and her boyfriend Ron came to visit me (--my first visitors!) and were able to attend service alongside me. What a tremendous blessing it was being able to share this special day with my family, fellow missionaries, and new friends.

"He is not here, for he has risen, as he said." Matthew 28:6



Puerto Rico Foro at Iglesia Luterana Principe de Paz in Mayagüez, Puerto Rico.

Photo courtesy of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod/Erik M. Lunsford

Puerto Rico Foro in Mayaguez

I work closely with our team in Puerto Rico, and have been traveling there once-a-month to provide administrative and accounting support for Disaster Response efforts. I have established and manage payroll for our coordinators on-the-ground, reconcile the bank account twice per month, and forecast and steward budget items.

In April, I attended my second Puerto Rico Foro. This time in Puerto Rico, whereas the previous was held in Des Moines, Iowa during my support-raising in The States. Partners from Minnesota North District and St. John's Aitkin Pastor David and Tracie Becker were in attendance and are faithful supporters of mine. LCMS Disaster Response and Communications also made the trip down, as well as stakeholders from the congregation attended.

During the Foro, Disaster Response Coordinator Gustavo Maita, was installed as pastor of Principe de Paz after having traveled to Venezuela for his ordination. Thanks be to God for this new pastor in Puerto Rico. One of his first acts as pastor was confirming Sylvia in the faith and as a member of Principe de Paz. She has been instrumental in connecting us with the community to provide relief to hurricane victims. Praise and glory be His for this new Sister in Christ.



Sylvia receiving the Lord's Supper for the first time as a confirmed member of
Principe de Paz, administered by Pastor Gustavo Maita.

Photo courtesy of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod/Erik M. Lunsford

Foro members helped assemble relief bags for distribution to hurricane victims in Puerto Rico. We were able to help distribute the bags at a community gathering of a local *barrio*. A *barrio* is a district of a town, usually with a high level of poverty. These gatherings happen every so often to help community leaders account for persons living in that community and provide an opportunity to distribute relief goods.

Our C.A.R.D. mercy house located next to the church in Mayaguez is where relief bags are assembled and in the near future English and music classes, and short-term teams will be held. Principe de Paz Church President and Evangelist William Torres shared a message of the gospel with about 200 people gathered that day to receive supplies. Our team then handed out bags and shared words of encouragement and blessings to the people receiving them.



Giving a local Puerto Rican woman an LCMS Disaster Response relief bag and sharing a short message about Jesus' love and where this provision came from.

Photo courtesy of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod/Erik M. Lunsford



Each bag says, "Dios es nuestro Amparo y Fortaleza. Nuestro pronto auxilio en todas los problemas. Salmo 46:1" or "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Psalm 46:1".

Become a Mission Partner

First LCMS Theological Symposium Held in Santiago, Dominican Republic

Leaders of Lutheran churches from across Latin America and the Caribbean, three seminaries and five Bible institutes gathered with over 40 theologians and church workers who traveled to the Concordia The Reformer Mercy Center and Seminary for the first-ever confessional Lutheran theological symposium there. The symposium was hosted by the seminary, Luther Academy and LCMS Disaster Response.

Aligning with the 500th anniversary of the Heidelberg Disputation, the symposium focused on the theology of the cross, each day of the event covered Theology of the Cross as the center of the Mission, the center of the Pastorate, and as the center of Mercy.

The symposium was a grand success in showcasing the new seminary, making VDMA theological materials accessible to pastors, sharing Adopt-a-Student in support of seminary students, togetherness in worship and fellowship for Lutheran church leaders who serve in different Latin American countries, and a theological education piece for pastors, church workers, and missionaries.



Symposium attendees on the roof of Concordia The Reformer seminary in Palmar Arriba posing for a group shot with seminary housing in the background.

Please Pray For:

- Praise God for the safe delivery of the newest member of the Warren Family, Joanna Grace of Regional Business Manager missionary Blake Warren.

Prayers for Lizz Warren in her recovery, and many blessings to their family.

- The people of Puerto Rico affected by the hurricanes. May we reach many with the gospel and relief supplies.
 - Continued acquisition of the Spanish language for myself
 - All missionaries serving in Latin America and the Caribbean. May we hold fast to God's call to serve Him in this way and be encouraged in our work to advance His Kingdom in various countries.
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Follow my journey on Facebook at Natalie Howard Missionary
Read more about my ministry in the DR by clicking the link icon below.



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