

SERVING THE LORD IN

THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

NEWS FROM MISSIONARY COURTNEY ZALMANOFF



December 2019



Dominican pastor, Iban Navarro, taught the youth bible study at his church in Licey, Cordero de Dios (Lamb of God). The study centered on the parable of the sower.



Members of the Venezuelan Lutheran Church (ILV) and partners presented on various topics relating to the progress and status of the church and its projects throughout the country during the FORO.

A season of thanksgiving

Happy December! It's hard to believe we are in the final month of 2019. In February I received my solemn appointment to serve as a GEO Missionary in Latin America; in March I accepted said appointment; in May I graduated college and began my missionary orientation. This summer I traveled the Midwest giving presentations and establishing relationships to expand my network of supporters; in August I received a green light for deployment to the field. In September I arrived in the Dominican Republic; and for the past two months, I have been learning what it means to be a missionary!

The month of November brought about many new opportunities. I am still in the midst of on-field orientation, but this looks a bit different now. My Spanish culture classes have continued when possible, but many more activities have been added to my schedule. As I am able, I have been attending bible studies, church events, and field visits at each of the three congregations in Santiago and the two congregations in Santo Domingo. For example, I attended a youth group meeting with young people from all three Santiago churches who united for bible study, games and a shared meal. I also accompanied Vicar Mario on an evangelistic school visit this month. Each week he goes to a local public school who welcomes him with open arms and encourages his teaching of bible stories to the students. Many of the students know him by name and look forward to his visits each week. What a blessing it is to share Jesus with the local children! I also spent a weekend in the capital, Santo Domingo, learning about the involvement of our two congregations there, and the outreach they are doing in their communities.

The largest event in November for me was the preparation and execution of the Venezuela FORO. "Foro" is the Spanish word for forum. FOROs take place among each of the countries where the LCMS is working and signifies a partnership circle between the Lutheran church there and its supporters.



These partners can be individuals, congregations, LCMS districts, or other organizations who commit to supporting the Lutheran church in a foreign country. Twice a year, pastors, church leaders, and partners gather together to discuss strategies, logistics, and realities of the church in said country. This month, I was put on the lead team for organizing the Venezuela FORO that took place here in Santiago, DR. I was tasked with coordinating the lodging, meals, transportation, and budget for the event. I am so grateful for the team on the field who assisted me in each of these areas, since this was my first true hosting event in my role here.

After a full day of meetings and presentations, the visiting pastors participated in a two-day pastoral conference taught by missionary pastor David Preus. Finally, the week ended with a day of fellowship while relaxing at the beach on the north coast. Although the week was tiring, everything went smoothly, and I was able to learn more about the work of the Church around the world. I can now say I have hosted my first group in the Dominican Republic, and successfully interacted with pastors and businesses from different cultures, all in Spanish! I am learning how important it is to build relationships with those in your community, to have meaningful conversations, and, per the Latino custom, to always greet everyone in the room when you walk in!

As November wrapped up with a beautiful Thanksgiving service, I was reminded to focus on the many blessings God has given me here. Although missionary life isn't always a walk in the park, I am continuously encouraged by the work God is doing in this place and the people He has set before us to build up his Kingdom. As we begin the season of Advent this week, we are also reminded that Jesus came to us in a lowly manger all those years ago, he comes to us today through His word and sacraments, and will come again on the last day. What more could we ask of a such a loving and merciful God! Together let us "praise God's name in song and glorify him with thanksgiving" (Psalm 69:30). Blessings during this hopeful season!



Seminarian Carlos and I presented a puppet show to the kids at Pan de Vida (Bread of Life) in Santo Domingo. After hearing the story of how Moses received The 10 Commandments, the youth colored a picture while telling me about the story and trying to learn all ten commandments.

Verse of the month!

“Éste es el día que el Señor ha hecho;
y en él nos alegraremos y regocijaremos.”
Salmos (Psalm) 118:24

Prayer Requests

- Thanksgiving for the acquisition of a new church building in Ponce, Puerto Rico.
- Thanksgiving for attendance in church of potential members at Pan de Vida in Santo Domingo.
- Thanksgiving for a successful Venezuela FORO.
- For Venezuela and other countries with political unrest, unstable economies, and the strengthening of our churches there.
- For seminarians, deaconess students, pastors and other church workers as they prepare and serve in the church and in the building up the Kingdom.

To support the LCMS through me, you may give a tax-deductible gift:

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