



*See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are. The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him.
1 John 3:1*

Every time I come across this verse I think, “What a great verse!”. There is so much packed into these two sentences. This love given to us is God’s only Son, Jesus Christ, who suffered and died on the cross in our place so that our sins could be forgiven. He rose from the dead and lives forever so that we can also have eternal life. We are baptized into Christ and through Him, we are children of God. As His children, we are part of the same family of believers. This family includes our brothers and sisters with disabilities. It is such a joy to serve the people at Hogares Luteranos el Buen Pastor (Good Shepherd Lutheran Homes). This is one place I get to tell and teach the world about God.



Many Wednesdays, I go out to Palmar Arriba for the evening Divine Service. The kids from HLBP (Hogares Luteranos el Buen Pastor) attend the service because this is their home congregation. Their house sits on the adjacent property. I enjoy sitting with them during the service. Ramona is always eager to welcome everyone into the sanctuary, handing out Bibles, hymnbooks, and the liturgy folders. Once she sits down in the pew, she gets excited as she finds Jesus throughout the room on various crucifixes and paintings (particularly one of the Last Supper). After pointing to all these images and using her sign for Jesus, she points up to heaven. I remind her how Jesus died on the cross for our sins and that he rose on the third day. A simple message that she enthusiastically nods in agreement.

I continue to work with Randy when I spend Tuesdays at HLBP. I’m learning to be patient to wait for him to respond to a question or a task I give him. We go to the colmado together almost every week. The colmado is the center of the Dominican town. This is where most Dominicans do their grocery shopping. Whatever is available at the colmado is what is available as far as food and other household necessities. It is similar to the corner convenience store in the US. Learning to go to the colmado on his own is a big step in socialization for Randy. We will get there little by little with consistent practice. Randy likes to sit outside in front of the church when we read a Bible Story together. There is a lot of foot traffic here because the seminary and elementary school are housed in the same building. Randy has come a long way even in just the past month in greeting people as they come and go from the building.



ABOVE: Reading a Bible story with Randy in front of the church.
LEFT: Deaconess Mella leading devotions in the group home beside Ramona

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LAS AMÉRICAS UPDATE



A few weeks ago, I visited one of our members, Hilda, with deaconess students Kikie and Yaque. We brought her non-perishable food to have for her future meals. Hilda has not been to church in over a year. Her husband is almost blind and cannot be left alone in the house. Her family does not live in the area, and there is no one right now who can stay with him in order for her to come to church. A certificate of completion from a particular study at church a few years ago proudly hangs in her living room with her Bible sitting on a shelf beneath it, ready to read at any given moment.

Hilda welcomed us in and of course offered us food and drink. We visited together. We then read Scripture together and prayed. We hope to be able to continue offering spiritual care and a solution to her situation so she can come together with the Body of Christ to study God's Word. Please keep Hilda in your prayers.

ABOVE: Deaconess student (far right) and me visiting our member Hilda.
BELOW: A young male whale playing in the waters of Samaná Bay.

A WHALE OF A TIME!

North Atlantic Humpback Whales come to the warm waters of Samaná Bay on the north side of the Dominican Republic every winter for reproduction. This past month, I was able to go and see some whales in person!

- *Whale in Spanish is La Ballena*
- *Females are 50 feet long with 15-foot flippers. They weigh 40 tons!*
- *The black and white pattern on the bottom of the whale's tail is unique to every whale, like a fingerprint.*
- *These whales do not eat while they are in the Caribbean (they are generally here from January-March).*
- *The gestation is about 12 months. The whales breed and have their calves in Samaná Bay.*
 - *Only the males (machos) sing. I was able to hear one sing with an underwater microphone. All the machos sing the same song and the song changes every year.*



We pray for: Peace throughout the Dominican Republic during local elections later this month and national elections in May • Estefani, Randy, Ramona, Francis, Junior, and Moises (the children in the group home) as they continue to hear God's Word and grow in faith
We give thanks for: The deaconesses throughout Latin America who mentor and teach me in my internship, specifically Danelle, Christel, and Caitlin • The many congregations and individuals who pray for me, encourage and support me.

I could not serving here in the Dominican Republic without your prayers and financial support. Thank you for being part of my support network. I appreciate all of the encouragement I receive through messages and support notifications. Thank you! I enjoy updating you about what is happening here, and I also enjoy hearing from you too!

*Joyfully Serving in Christ, Kate Phillips
Deaconess Intern*



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