

SERVING THE LORD IN

THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

NEWS FROM THE FRITSCHE FAMILY



Jan/Feb/March 2020

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Coat of Arms from the flag of the
Dominican Republic

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY!!! AV SPECIALIST DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

As we balance the demands of social distancing with those of being Christ's hands and feet of mercy in the coming days, weeks, and months, assist the churches, schools, and seminary of the Dominican Republic Lutheran Mission to fine-tune and strengthen their digital footprints, both on the web and social media.

NOTE: This volunteer opportunity is unique in that it will all take place remotely, without travel to any international fields.

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The Lentiest Lent Ever

Greetings from Santiago, DR in this most holiest of weeks, Semana Santa, as it is referred to here. Lent is coming to a close now as we complete our pilgrimage to Calvary. We leave Lent behind for another year to resume the shouts of Easter joy. It will be different this year, won't it? This has been the "lentiest" Lent ever. Did you give something up for Lent? Turns out we



Visit of group from Lord of Life
LCMS, Plano, TX

pretty much all have whether we chose to or not. Here we are rounding out Lent, staying at home, maintaining social distancing, doing our best to keep COVID-19 contained. Like you, we have given up a lot here in the DR, but we haven't given up mission and ministry. In a way, it's ramped up more than ever.

I am getting ahead of myself though. This is the Jan/Feb/March newsletter. January was full of travel. Our regional team met in Belize in early January. While there, we learned of the earthquakes in Puerto Rico, which set off a number of trips of missionaries heading there to support the team in their tremendous efforts of showing the Lord's mercy. Shortly after, I travelled to the states, visiting Pacific Hills LCMS in Omaha, NE, followed by a few days at the CTSFW symposia in Ft. Wayne. On my way back to Santiago, Clarion and I

crossed paths in the air as she made her way to Ft. Wayne for two weeks of intensive courses with the deaconess program. I met my mom in Miami and she returned to Santiago with me to lend a hand during Clarion's absence. A few days later, my brother-in-law arrived with a group of eight from his congregation in Plano, TX. They have been steadfast supporters of our work and wanted to get a firsthand look at mission and ministry in the DR.

February included hosting a youth event at our Pueblo Nuevo mission. Youth from our three Santiago missions got together with missionary kids, pastors, sem students and other missionaries for Bible Study, games, food and fellowship. We had a great turnout. On February 15 municipal elections were to be held in the DR. Elections are always on Sunday here, which prevents many from coming to church as voting is mandatory. So we had planned for our church service on Saturday evenings. It's a good thing we did because the Sunday elections did not go well. There was a problem with voting machines and the election was postponed for a month. There was some protesting over a period of a couple weeks, but elections were made up in mid-March just before the quarantine. In February we also had a wonderful evening in the home of church members Carlos and Giselle. Once a year they invite our mission team over for sancocho, a popular Latin American stew, with pork, chicken, potatoes, plantains and more. Sometimes it even has chicken feet.

We kicked off March with our Spring 2020 DRLM FORO. There were already concerns about COVID-19, but thankfully our foro guests arrived and returned home safely.

The Lentiest Lent Ever (continued)



Spring 2020 DRLM FORO

That takes us into Lent. I was ahead of the game this year with Lenten planning. Little did I know it would all change. Here on the field we've adapted on both fronts at church and at seminary.

Let me share first about the seminary. We have gone completely online since March 18. We have five residential students sheltering in place in their dorm in Palmar Arriba. We set up a classroom in their study area where they meet for our classes. Professors and married students Zoom in for each class. Our three married students and Mario, our Pueblo nuevo vicar, live in Cerro Alto where we missionaries live. Everyone is doing well, despite sheltering in place.

Our students are being formed as evangelists, that is church planting pastors. Normally they spend 10-15 hours a week outside of classes in the communities around our missions. Since we can't do local on site ministry, students are assisting in the change to digital ministry. They are each writing

four devotions per week. Each works with an individual pastor to revise and prepare the devotions for distribution. This helps us have a multitude of devotional resources to share with all of our pastors around Latin America.

We recently had a meeting with our sister church body presidents and leaders to update them on the students. They are comfortable with their students staying in the DR until classes end. If we were to send students back to their home countries early, we would not likely be able to finish our semester of classes due to numerous challenges in individual countries, one of the biggest being lack of reliable internet.



Sancocho at Carlos and Giselle's house in Cien Fuegos

Another seminary adjustment we have had to make is with planned events. Every year we invite partner church leaders here to the DR for our theological symposium. This year we had planned a symposium on a theme of pastoral care and the public voice of the church with respect to issues of life and sexuality. Lutherans for Life was going to offer a one day workshop on abortion and euthanasia. The event would conclude with our graduation of ten men. We have postponed the planned symposium and are going to offer a virtual one this May that relates to ministry in times of pandemic. We also hope to have our graduation in September.

On the church front, we have also gone completely digital. Thankfully, we have a membership who very actively communicates in our church text group. This has been invaluable as we share devotions and announcements each day.



Seminarian Josué from Chile giving a Catechism lesson



Members receiving food during the pandemic

We have offered Facebook Live devotions on Sunday mornings and now throughout Holy Week, with good participation of members. While we cannot be together before the Lord's altar to receive the sacrament, the Lord is working a longing for that among our people. I know that they long not only to be together again sometime in Easter, but they long for the great Easter to come in the Resurrection on the Last Day.

We are keeping up with our members with regular "virtual" visits like phone calls and text messages. We have done one round of food and medicine deliveries in the community. Deaconess Caitlin has done wonders with keeping up with the needs of our members.

Like I said, this has been the Lentiest Lent ever with all of the sacrifices and changes. But the Lord is caring for His people. Even though Easter too will be different, perhaps as we rejoice in our risen Lord, it will be the "Easteriest" Easter, pointing us also to the great Easter to come. God bless and keep you all!

Pastor Joel Fritzsche



Vicar Mario waiting in line for groceries at one of our very crowded supermarkets

PLEASE PRAY FOR:

- Missionaries and seminary students of Latin America during the pandemic.
- Family of Pueblo Nuevo member, Doña Ana, who passed away in January.
- The family of Rev. James Sharp, whose father passed away recently.
- Jose Luis, husband of Pueblo Nuevo member Nini. He has diabetes and other serious health issues.
- New catechumens in Pueblo Nuevo who were to be confirmed on Easter Sunday, but postponed until May.
- Missionary colleagues who have weddings planned in the midst of this pandemic—Danelle Putnam and Jamielynn Tinkey.
- Our son, Andrei, who has to wait for more growth hormone until travel resumes between the DR and the USA.

GIVE THANKS FOR:

- Our God who has kept us safe and healthy during this pandemic.
- The spread of the Gospel of Jesus Christ here in the DR and other places, despite the limitations of the pandemic.

PRAISE GOD FOR:

- You, our wonderful supporters! We are praying for all of you during this time of crisis.

Updates from the Missionary Wife



The birthday boy happily trying out his new legos.

We pray this newsletter finds you all well amidst the COVID-19 craziness.

We are all fine here in Santiago but things are certainly different. Things have gotten progressively strict here as more cases of the virus are reported. What first began as warnings and advisories has turned into sheltering in place and curfews. Everyone must be inside from 5 P.M. to 6 A.M. We only leave to get groceries and essential items. This is usually a very intense event as they are very careful about how many people they allow in the store. It usually involves waiting in line awhile. Holy Week, Semana Santa, is usually a time for gatherings, visits, and family here in the D.R. This year, the government is prohibiting travel within country and closing off access to certain cities. This effects the mood on the island as many Dominicans really look forward to this vacation time and going to the beach.

Family life has continued pretty much as normal here despite the virus. Because the boys already are taking classes online, they can continue their schedule without much interruption. They have been very helpful providing music online for our church members. It has been nice to have Joel around a little more and spend time outside in the backyard in the afternoons.

One disappointment is that my trip with Andrei to the US to get his growth hormone was postponed. Not only did we not get to visit family but he only has a few days of hormone left and we don't know when we will be able to get more. Viktor and Joel will also probably have to cancel their trip in May in which Joel was going to attend CSL graduation and Viktor was going to spend time with grandparents. Life goes on and we praise God for keeping us safe and healthy!

Clarion



Continuing to provide hymns for church....from home!

We are blessed to be serving our Lord in the Dominican Republic. The Lord is blessing the preaching of His Word and the administration of His sacraments. We are grateful for your partnership in this work. God bless you all!

In Christ,

**Rev. Joel & Clarion Fritzsche
Viktor, Sergei and Andrei**



Make checks payable to The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. Mark checks "Support of Rev. Joel Fritzsche." Gifts can also be given securely online through the LCMS website, on my online giving page at lcms.org/fritzsche.

To support the LCMS through the work of Joel & Clarion Fritzsche, you may send a tax-deductible gift to:

The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod
P.O. Box 66861
St. Louis, MO 63166-6861 or

Mission Central
40718 Highway E16
Mapleton, IA 51034



There are many opportunities to serve as short-term or GEO missionaries. Check out the current list and download an application at lcms.org/service. Click on "Service Opportunities."

JAN/FEB/MARCH 2020 IN PICTURES

