



My colored pencil drawing from the online Beautiful Inheritance group for missionary girls.

WHAT IS A FORO?

The DRLM (Dominican Republic Lutheran Mission) hosted a FORO the first weekend in March. Mission partners from the US and Canada spent the weekend with us in Santiago to learn more about the mission work over the past 6 months. This group gathers for this purpose twice a year.

During the weekend, the partners had a cultural outing with the mission team to a chocolate factory and the cable car in Puerto Plata. They also saw some of the mission sites. Each pastor and organization leader presented to the partners about what has happened over the past six months and what we hope to see in the next six months. It was encouraging to get to know some of our mission partners!



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“For at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord, Walk as children of light.” Ephesians 5:8



FORO partners, missionaries based in the Dominican Republic, local pastors and church leaders, and seminarians gathered together for the bi-annual FORO.

The above verse is taken from a selection I used for a devotion in the Beautiful Inheritance Group on March 31. (More about the group on the next page). As the world has more or less shut down, we may feel that we are in darkness. Not being able to leave our homes, see friends or family, and even gather with our brothers and sisters in Christ to worship the risen Lord leaves us feeling alone and in darkness. But we are not alone and we are not in darkness. As His baptized children, we are now “light in the Lord”. Jesus is “the light of the world” (John 8:12) and darkness cannot overcome this light of Christ (John 1:5).

The first half of March, I was on the go with four trips to Santo Domingo in 11 days. Two trips were for normal weekend and Sunday activities. The other two trips I visited the government psychiatric hospital and nursing home for adults with disabilities where Dr. Marisol (Director of our group home in Santiago) works as well. And the time in between these trips, I was busy in Santiago with meetings, attending Lent services, visiting the group home, and the FORO.

The highlight of March was by far teaching youth Bible Study for the first time in Spanish! We have been working hard over the past few months to find a time we are all available to meet as I am only in the Capital on the weekends and many of our youth have classes on Saturdays. Five excited youth attended, and we hope more will join us as we get into this routine. Unfortunately, the momentum of the group is slowed with the pandemic. I look forward to meeting with these kids again in person once we are able to do so. They are the future of the church and are already turning into leaders, leading music on Sunday mornings and helping with Sunday School.

COVID-19 Update

LEFT: Social distancing walk through the neighborhood with missionaries Courtney Zalmanoff and Erin Mackenzie

RIGHT: Youth group at Amigos de Cristo Lutheran Church on March 8.



PLEASE PRAY FOR:

- Medical personnel who are exposed daily to COVID-19 and women preparing to give birth during the pandemic
- Our congregations in the Dominican Republic and throughout the world as they cannot meet in person at this time

GIVE THANKS FOR:

- A successful FORO with the ability to gather together and discuss the work of the Lord throughout the Dominican Republic
- Our government leaders making decisions for the health and safety of the people
- Peaceful local elections in the Dominican Republic

PRAISE GOD FOR:

- The many congregations and individuals who pray for me, encourage and support me
- 6 months in the Dominican Republic!

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."

COVID-19 Changes- As of April 15th, the Dominican Republic has just over 3600 COVID-19 cases. I have been sheltering-in-place since Thursday, March 19, but had already limited my community interactions starting March 15 due to local elections. I am safe and healthy, and have everything that I need. The Dominican Republic has a curfew between 5pm and 6am every day, meaning you cannot be on the street during these hours. Every afternoon, I walk in the neighborhood. These walks allow me to exercise, receive vitamin D, and spend time with other people (all while maintaining a distance of 6 feet).

Even though a pandemic and shelter-in-place was not in anyone's plan, I am thankful to be given the gift of time. I can slow down, reflect, and prepare for more mission activities once we are able to meet together again. I am taking advantage of the extra time to connect with friends and other missionaries for encouragement and study of God's Word. There are extra meetings via video conference these days, but they are all edifying. One of my new meetings is called "Beautiful Inheritance". Missionary Deaconess Christel Neuendorf in Puerto Rico, her sister-in-law Katie in Michigan, and I are leading a group for the Latin America missionary girls between the ages of 9 and 15. We meet once a week via video conference for a game, devotion/Bible Study (led by me), and art time (led by Katie). Our plan is to meet as long as we are in the shelter-in-place situation.

I am now also helping Pastor Charles St-Onge, missionary to Quebec and the Caribbean with email outreach. We receive email messages from people who are going through difficult times. I respond through prayer and sharing God's Word. Most of these people are not Christians. I am thankful for this opportunity to spread the Gospel from far away, helping people connect to a congregation, and being a listening ear. This is definitely a growth area for me in my internship.

My roommate and fellow missionary, Courtney Zalmanoff, and I celebrated 6 months in the Dominican Republic on Sunday, March 29. The time is going by very quickly and it is amazing to see God's hand through it all. We have learned a lot and settled into our roles on the mission field amidst many changes. Of course, it would not be possible for us to be sharing the Gospel with the people in the DR without the prayers and financial support of people like you. Thank you!

*Joyfully Serving in Christ, Kate Phillips
Deaconess Intern*



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