



One of the many beautiful *flamboyán* trees in my neighborhood, poised against a brilliant blue sky. I deliberately walk by this one all the time, just to see its striking blooms!



In contrast to the above photo on a typical sunny day, this is what the sky looked like during the Sahara dust storm. Taken in the middle of the day, the sun is barely visible through the haze.

## God has a funny sense of humor

I think we can all agree that we never expected 2020 to look quite like this, yet God has his own plans. One of my most used phrases the past month has been “God has a funny sense of humor,” which indeed speaks to all the strange pieces of life He keeps throwing at us. I keep reminding myself that yes, God has a plan and a purpose, even if this year seems to be a mysterious journey to us. Good thing we can laugh and humble ourselves considering how little we really know about life!

After 9 months of living in the DR, I can still say I am learning new cultural tidbits all the time and continuing to explore the complexity of the culture here. For instance, I have been looking forward to the blooming of the *flamboyán* trees since I arrived. This occurs in the summer months here, so I have patiently been waiting to see the beautiful blooms in person. I have heard so much about them and seen many native paintings of them, including one in my living room. When the red and yellow trees began blooming last month, I was not disappointed; it was definitely worth the wait! Although it feels like summer here year-round, there still are seasons per se: currently it’s mango season (again), avocado season, hurricane season and *flamboyán* season!

This month I also witnessed the great migration of the Sahara Desert. Who knew desert dust could travel in cloud form over the ocean and make its way to this little island in the Caribbean I call home! We experienced brown, dusty skies for a few days and a thick air with little breeze, but other than that life was normal as I experienced my first dust storm in the midst of a global pandemic. (I never thought I would say that sentence!)



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](https://lcms.org/service).

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Late June caused for celebration as we celebrated 100 days of sheltering in place in Santiago, complete with a party among a few missionary families. Hundreds of things were brought to share: peanuts, goldfish, apple slices, carrot sticks, and cookies! I am reminded of how many hundreds of things I don't understand and how many hundreds of questions I have for God. I'm grateful for even the small celebrations with my missionary family in the Dominican Republic.

The *other* storm of 2020, COVID-19, has also reared its ugly head in the strangest of ways. However, I have good news to share: this month we were able to return to in person worship! After nearly three months away (85 days to be exact), I was finally able to worship again alongside my brothers and sisters in Christ. What a month of celebration it has been as each Sunday I returned to God's house to receive His gifts in person. There is nothing like praising God in song and worship and being *physically* near my loved ones in church.

I have been plugging away on the myriad of projects that have come my way as the absence of traveling volunteers has shifted my focus. Some professional development has been in order as I continue to learn more about how to do ministry in various contexts. Focused work sessions, fruitful discussions, FORO meetings, additional reading and personal study, and training sessions have all been incorporated into my work the past month. One of my favorite things about mission life is the continuous acquisition of knowledge and skills. God has taught me so much about ministry, professional life, and life in general, thanks to the great team I have standing behind me. There are some promising projects, partnerships and a conference coming up that I am looking forward to next month, so stay tuned!



The glorious return to worship! Many pastors included studies on communion before or after the service. The above photo was taken during bible study at church.

### Verse of the month!

“¡Cuán grande es tu bondad, la cual reservas para los que en ti confían! ¡Delante de todos la manifiestas a los que en ti buscan refugio!”  
Salmos (Psalm) 31:19

### Prayer Requests

- For governments and leaders as they guide us.
- For those who suffer from illnesses, physical and mental.
- Thanksgiving for a safe return to worship.
- Thanksgiving for continued learning and for those who teach and support.
- For our missionaries and church members in difficult situations around the world.
- For those who are traveling.
- Thanksgiving for the safe arrival of a new deaconess intern in Canada as part of our team.

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