



The Preus Family in the Dominican Republic Summer 2020 Newsletter

Link

Mission work updates

Our churches appear to have suffered significant losses (as much as 50%) over the past six months due to the pandemic and governmental response measures for controlling the spread of the Covid-19 virus. The entire country is currently in a state of emergency, and will continue to be so for the next couple of months. After initially receiving approval to resume services by the president and congress, the mayor later required the village's churches to again suspend services for a period of time. As a result, a number of our members are afraid to be in the church building for as long as the state of emergency continues. Other factors contributing to a decline in church attendance have been the change of worship time (more on that below), alterations in work schedules, and the general disruption of people's hour-to-hour routine.

Such challenges, which churches all over the world are facing as well, naturally lead us to ask: How many members have left the church for good? How many will return in due time? Although we may not speak with any certainty concerning these things, we continue to pray that God would bring His lambs back home as soon as possible. In the mean time, as we make the best of the situation, we cast our nets and trust that God's Word will grow.

What follows is a list of specific changes that have taken place in Palmar.

In mid-March, we suspended our Wednesday night service, and offered abbreviated services online until the end of May when we resumed services.

Changes in service hours. By resuming services in person, we took advantage of the opportunity to change the hour of divine service from Wednesday at 7:30pm to Sunday at 8:00am. On the one hand, this has long been the desire of the pastors as well as the members who attend most frequently. Sunday is way better than Wednesday for many reasons. On the other hand, this change is altogether necessary due to the curfew that requires all people to be in their houses by 7:00pm. This is a major reason for the temporarily decline in church attendance.

Positive changes as a result of the crisis We started a Facebook page. You can visit us at <https://www.facebook.com/luteranapalmararriba/>. By extending the reach of our ministry to the world, we are

now able to minister to a member currently living in Spain. This has been a tremendous blessing for her and the rest of the congregation as well, as it gives all members the opportunity to attend services and Bible studies virtually from their homes. They may either tune in live or watch the recording later, since it is linked to our page. Even after we have resumed services in person, we continue to broadcast them every Sunday.

Visitations: We have continued to visit members and make evangelism calls over the past six months, as much as possible, both in Palmar and in La Piedra. Besides the fear that many folks have towards receiving non-family members into their homes, a significant obstacle to visits has been the curfew, which makes for rigid work schedules and long trips in and out of the city. But we are gradually learning to overcome this hurdle.

We know that all the past, present, and future changes that have taken place in our mission churches do nothing to annul the promise of Christ who has built His Church indestructible against the gates of hell (Matthew 16:18). Confident of this, we continue to be enlivened by the holy seed of God's Word that remains, though the tree be reduced to a stump (Isaiah 6:13). We are thankful that God has preserved to us a good number of faithful Christians who desire the pure Word of God. We are eager to continue our mission work, seeking and finding those who have gone astray, bringing them back home, and nursing them back to health. Through all of this, we ask for your prayers. God will bring it to pass. Amen.

Reflections from home, by Jenny

"The more things change, the more they stay the same." This refrain has been running through my mind as we near the end of September. It's hard to believe that almost half a year has gone by since our last formal newsletter, and coincidentally since the start of the pandemic shutdown. As I'm sure many can relate, daily life has become a whirlwind of survival, adaptation, and celebrating the little things. We have been under some degree of "toque de queda" (curfew) order since March, and currently it runs from 7pm-6am weekdays, and 5pm-6am weekends. Many businesses are still closed. There is growing concern in local papers about the tourism industry, which saw an 87% collapse in August. We are seeing more people in need coming to our door, hungry, thirsty, or in need of a few pesos for food. Recently a poor family has been coming to our front gate, with 3 children and the mother expecting again. One week, one of the children had an open wound that she needed fresh bandaging for as they did not want to go to the public hospital. The family returned the following week for more food, and fortunately the wound was looking much better. We continue to pray for the country and its people in the months ahead and remain thankful and encouraged by the resilient and optimistic spirit of the Dominican people which shines through brightly even during hardship.

After a couple of months living with her family, our housekeeper felt safe to return and has resumed helping me around the house and with the children during the weekdays. I've shared a picture below of one of our noon meals, which we always enjoy during the week.

Our children's school has resumed for the 2021/2022 academic year using the distance learning format, so the kids have virtual classes every morning from 8am-12pm. Our church has re-opened under the required regulatory guidelines from the government. Being able to return to church has provided us a great degree of "normalcy" again in life. Two highlights at church recently were seeing Rolf confirmed in the faith in May, and witnessing the baptism of our new god-daughter Inés Teresa in September. (The picture at the top of the newsletter is from after the service with her family.) For any members who are unable to make it to the physical service, the service is also livestreamed on our church's Facebook page.

As you may recall from our last newsletter, we were planning to travel home for support-raising this summer, however had to cancel on account of the pandemic-related travel complications. We had a fairly quiet summer, but did enjoy a family vacation on the island for about 10 days in August, and some of those pictures are shared in the collection below. We hope to reschedule homeservice to the states for sometime in the coming spring.

Many mission activities have continued as scheduled using the Zoom format. David has held and attended many meetings, classes, and Bible classes. On account of work/school-at-home, we have rearranged our home to create a more conducive office space for him. Admittedly there have been a few baby photo-bombs during meetings, as well as the occasional racket breaking out from the four little boys. :) He looks forward to

returning to normal work environment as soon as it is possible.

We have recently signed up for a private mail account so we are able to receive mail more reliably here. This also give us access to buying certain items online which we can't get here. Below, I included a picture of me and a couple kids following a mail pickup, whereby a friend had sent birthday cards to our family for the year ahead. Needless to say, "mail day" is always an exciting time at our house.

Local fruit and other produce is still very plentiful, and pictured below is a typical vendor stand we see around town. This one is just down the street from our neighborhood. Seminary classes have also just begun at Seminario Concordia El Reformador and David started off his classes there last week.

Thank you for your continued prayers and support. We appreciate it, and we keep you in our daily prayers, as well. It is because of your continuous and generous support that we are able to live and raise our family here, while bringing the good news of eternal salvation through Jesus Christ to the Dominican people.



David and Rolf on his confirmation day in May.



David with two of the seminarians, prior to Divine Service in Pueblo Nuevo - another mission church in Santiago.



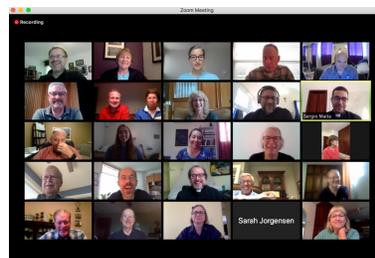
Baptism of our new god-daughter! This is the daughter of our good friends here-Pastor Maita is a Venezuelan pastor on our team here.



Professors and students following the opening service for the seminary academic year.



David recording Pastor Idjon's sermon for the FB page.



A missionary Zoom meeting - this was for a FORO which is a meeting with many of the partners and supporters of the mission.



We've found longer lines and more traffic to be the norm during open hours, with having the curfew in place.



Picking up mail downtown.



Having older kids (babysitters) means we can have date night once in a while!



Andreas made a new friend on vacation.



This was a beach we found near Los Galeros, which is on the Samana peninsula.



David with two of the kids in the ocean. This beach is on the north side of the peninsula.



Dear friends,

As always we thank you for your interest in reading about our updates. We continue through these uneasy and frustrating times. May we continue to fear God, repent, believe the gospel, and pray continuously for mercy. May God keep us safe and calm our anxiety, and may he spread the light of his gospel over all the dark places on earth. We thank you for all your Christian support of us as we serve these churches in the Dominican Republic. The work continues, and you remain an important part of it. God's richest blessings to you in Christ!

Contact Mailing address:



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