

SERVING THE LORD IN
Latin America & the Caribbean:
missionaryMAC



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News from Volunteer Coordinator Erin Mackenzie | missionaryMAC.blogspot.com | [f erin.mackenzie5](https://www.facebook.com/erin.mackenzie5)

(If you received a hard copy of this and would like to help me be green and save on postage, please email erin.mackenzie@lcms.org.)

I'm down to one container of mango chutney in my freezer (I used my last smoothie-ready baggie-ful earlier this week), but 2023 was a solid season of new mango recipes! I first shared mango recipes in [October 2019](#), but here's five more I've made—and loved—since moving back into my [new/old house](#) May 31.

1. [Chocolate Hazelnut Mango Oatmeal](#)
2. [Mango Sriracha Hummus](#)
3. [Mango Coconut Cake](#)
4. [Creamy Mango Coconut Chicken \(with Mango Salsa!\)](#)
5. [Mango Banana Chia Smoothie](#)



Marina and I outside the CPTLN (Lutheran Hour Ministries) office in Panama City, Panama.

Tzatziki Tales

Over gyros, Marina Gracia gave me the long answer: how she came to be one of 87 women in 9 countries preparing for the office of deaconess. The short answer: God's guiding hand every step of the way.

The story begins in Colombia, where she was born, married, and had her 2 girls. As cartel violence surged and she began to fear for their daily commute to school, Marina & Eduardo applied for Canadian visas in pursuit of a safer place to raise their family. Marina honed her English during the family's time in the Great White North but after three years, couldn't handle the cold. They jumped at an offer from Eduardo's company to be based out of the Panama City branch.

Shortly after the move, Marina found herself alone with her now teenaged daughters, Eduardo away on an extended business trip. It was en route home from a grand adventure to see the country that one of the girls spotted the billboard for "Altos de María." The trio spontaneously pulled off to scope out the housing development in the mountains of Sora...and walked away landowners. At least, they would be the following day when Marina went back with some cash toward a down payment, THEN told Eduardo what she'd done.

For years, Marina looked forward to the fresh air and bubbling brook soundtrack of her rural haven, until her sister urged her to look into a 2nd mortgage for building her dream home. In 2018, Marina and Eduardo ceased to be city dwellers. When a flyer for a fundraising breakfast to support a tutoring program at the nearby Lutheran church caught her eye, the couple went gladly. Marina left with a belly full of pancakes AND a new volunteer position, which led not long after to confirming her newfound faith at Iglesia Luterana Emanuel.

Marina considered and rejected the inaugural deaconess cohort 3 years ago, citing inexperience, but when her husband passed away in December and the next cohort was uncoincidentally delayed until March...the rest was, as they say, history.

Indeed, *His* story. The diaconal motto is "My desire is to serve"; I'm blessed to be among those with whom Marina has already shared her many gifts, and she still has 2 more years!

**Making
Disciples
for Life**

