

SERVING THE LORD IN

Latin America & the Caribbean: missionaryMAC



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News from Volunteer Coordinator Erin Mackenzie | missionaryMAC.blogspot.com |  [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.)

Last month, the circle of missionaries and Alliance missionaries pictured below convened in Panama to forge ahead on a “Lutheran church template,” in collaboration with Lutheran Church Extension Fund’s [Real Estate Solutions](#) (RES) team. (Coincidentally, the conversation had also *begun* in [Panama in February](#).) With LAC’s laser focus on Planting Lutheran Churches comes the need for economical structures that purposefully point to Christ in both design and function. We’re confident we can arrive at such a standard yet contextually adaptable blueprint, bearing in mind **RES’s Foundational Pillars:**

1. Meeting Human Need
2. Enhancing Communities
3. Pouring Ministry Behind our Work
4. Alternative Sources of Revenue



Fear Not

Growing up, our family room closet’s sliding doors hid your typical early 90s stash of VHSs. There were Disney classics in padded cases, home movies, and one we pulled out of its cardboard sleeve annually around now, the trifecta of recorded holiday TV specials: Frosty the Snowman, A Garfield Christmas Special, and A Charlie Brown Christmas.



I’d probably cringe at the picture and sound quality nowadays, but the most wonderful time of the year wasn’t truly so until I’d settled in for ~90 min. of cartoon nostalgia. As it turns out, hidden near the end of Charles Schultz’s Yuletide masterwork is a frame worth further scrutiny. The only time in the entirety of the Peanuts series that Linus drops his security blanket is when he resorts to Luke 2 to explain the gist of Christmas to Charlie & friends; his ratty companion slips through his fingers following the angel’s injunction in verse 10 to “Fear not.”

Indeed, in the “Prince of Peace” (Isaiah 9:6), we find reason to leave the shabby comforts that fail to still our deepest anxieties. Workaholism. Doomscrolling. Cookie dough (it IS December). Love personified was born, and 1 John 4:18a reassures, “There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear.”

Linus, though, cites just one instance of the invitation to be free from trepidation in the incarnation narrative. In Luke 1:30, Gabriel says to a young virgin who must have been shaken, “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God.” Her response is one of wonder, yet unflinching belief. We, who have likewise found favor with God through what Mary’s child would go on to do on—and off—the cross have every reason to imitate her fearless faith.

A very merry—not scary—Christmas to all and to all a good night!

**Making
Disciples
for Life** 



Yes way, Josué

Iglesia Luterana Pan de Vida rang in the new [Church] year in style, with the installation of the Rev. Josué Ventura as an Alliance missionary pastor. Ventura, the son—and nephew—of Lutheran pastors, graduated from Concordia the Reformer Seminary in May 2023 and was ordained in May 2024. In the months since, he'd been biding his time in the DR whilst awaiting a Peruvian visa so as to help rebuild and reenergize the church planting team in Lima. At long last, God made it clear that door was closed, all the while paving a way for continued Kingdom service of a different sort. IELCHI, the Chilean partner church that underwrote Ventura's studies, issued him a call to stay on in the DR, increasing pastoral presence in the capital city of Santo Domingo by 50%. The benefits are clear; he'll intersect with my work as the contact for evangelistic activities with a January 2025 team while the Rev. Sergio Maita is away at a conference in the US.



Praises and Petitions

1. Thanksgiving for missionary spouse [Kris's](#) graduation from CUC with her Master's in Organizational Leadership.
2. Thanksgiving for the arrival of new missionary Vicar [Josh Wareham](#) to the DR this month.
3. Thanksgiving for John Tape and Katie Ervin (LCMS Business Operations) for their support during LAC's RBM/ARBM transition.
4. For the [Rev. David Mommens](#) and the flock at St. Paul's in Melrose, MN, as they hold their first Spanish service on Christmas Eve.
5. For all who mourn the loss of loved ones this Advent and Christmas season.

Below left: The Christmas market in Lisbon's Rossio Square opened while I was [there last month](#). *Below right:* I wish I had a *pastel de nata*, one of Portugal's iconic custard tarts, that big!



Above: Interpreting for Vicar Josh at Iglesia Luterana Pueblo Nuevo's new Friday night volleyball outreach. Josh will help lead prayer & devotions for the players once he learns Spanish. (We stayed to "play"—er, do calisthenics and drills—and my entire body ached by Sunday!)

Quote of the Month

"The old that is strong does not wither, / Deep roots are not reached by the frost."

—J.R.R. Tolkien

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