



Coat of Arms from the flag of the Dominican Republic

THANK YOU, OUR SAVIOR, HOUSTON!

Here in this space we like to highlight special project needs for the field as well as publicly thank partner congregations. My home congregation from my youth, Our Savior Lutheran in Houston, Texas has gone above and beyond in their support for us here in the DR. Not only do they support our family as missionaries at an amazing level, they recently gave a portion of their 2017 surplus to support our seminary here in the Dominican. The church office staff continues to print this newsletter for us as well. Thank you so much, Our Savior! You are a great blessing to us and to many!



To be added to or removed from this mailing list, send an email message to joel.fritsche@lcmsintl.org with the word ADD or REMOVE in the subject line.

joel.fritsche@lcmsintl.org

Celebrating Heidelberg in the DR!



SIMPOSIO DE TEOLOGÍA LUTERANA CONFESIONAL 2018

Greetings to you all from the Dominican Republic! March and April were exciting months packed with lots of activity on both sides of my work as a church planter and seminary director/professor. At the seminary we have been planning our First Annual Theological Symposium to serve the pastors, church presidents and theological educators of the mission fields and national churches from our region. We collaborated with Luther Academy and LCMS Disaster Response to host this three-day conference, which took place April 24-27. I am pleased to report that it went very well. In attendance were representatives from 13 countries, including 6 church body presidents, 3 seminary directors, and 5 directors of bible institutes. We came together to celebrate the 500th anniversary of Luther's Heidelberg Disputation.

The 95 Theses Luther had written in October 1517 were an invitation to debate indulgences, a debate that never actually took place. In April of 1518 in Heidelberg at the meeting of the general

chapter of the Augustinians, Luther got his debate. He presented another set of theses that set forth the distinction between the theology of glory and the theology of the cross.

Five hundred years later Lutherans from around Latin America had the opportunity to discuss the theology of the cross as it relates to Mission, Pastoral Practice and Mercy. It also gave us a wonderful opportunity to promote our seminary and have face to face conversations with partner church presidents about sending their men to study with us here. Overall, it was a very fruitful conference as together we studied and discussed theology and enjoyed the fellowship that we have as brothers in Christ. All missionary hands were on deck throughout the symposium. We plan to do it again next year. I pray that the Lord of the Church will continue to bless us as we go about the Gospel work here in the Dominican and in places like Mexico, Guatemala, Panama, Venezuela, Chile, Peru, Bolivia and beyond! To God be the glory!

The Lord grows His Church...

Here is what has been happening on the church planting side of our work. In our last newsletter issue I wrote to you about our emphasis on visitation and what a visit looks like. Today I am so very happy to report on the fruits of our visits. Easter Sunday was an exciting day for us at Amigos de Cristo in Las Americas (Santo Domingo). Six people were baptized and three were confirmed in their faith. Praise the Lord!

Our regular visits to two families I wrote about last time were instrumental in these baptisms and confirmations.



Pastor Fritsche baptizing baby Anthony Junior Martinez

We constantly brought God's Word and Christian encouragement to these people. Also, Vicar Paul Flo spent over a year with the youth who were confirmed in their faith. One of those youth was baptized along with her three younger siblings. Now one of those siblings is in a new confirmation class.

Semana Santa, that is Holy Week, I was at the supermarket getting stocked up for our Easter meal and I ran into a man from the community around our church. He has been in church a number of times over the years, but not a regular attender. He told me that one of the families had asked him to be padrino for one of the children being baptized. I explained that he could be a witness, as he is not a member of the



Vicar Paul Flo with new confirmands Mariluz, Madelyn and Abnel.

church. He was happy to stand up as a witness, and more importantly, it's given us an opportunity for further visitation and conversation with him. He's no stranger to our church. He's even done a lot of painting for us in the past. That's his local trade. He showed up Easter morning dressed up like I had never seen before, along with his family. The following Saturday I put him on our visits list. We spent over an hour at his house with him and his family and, by God's grace they've been in church the two Sundays since. We're praying that the Lord will continue to work on him and his family, that they come to catechism class and become regular partakers of the Gospel in Word and Sacrament.

In other news, we are preparing ourselves for Vicar Paul's departure in June. We'll be receiving a new vicar from our Dominican Seminary to succeed him. Also, I am very happy to report that Pastor Willy Gaspar's health has drastically improved and we are on the cusp of finalizing a plan for his reintegration into the work of pastoral ministry. Thanks be to God, things are looking very well for the months ahead! Thank you for your continued prayers and support! God bless you all!

Pastor Joel Fritsche

GETTING TO KNOW OUR MEMBERS...

Don Antonio Tineo, member of our congregation in Las Americas, celebrated his 99th birthday on Sunday, April 29th. We had a wonderful celebration that Sunday with two of his eleven children in attendance. Don is a title of respect commonly used in Latino cultures.

He is the oldest member of our congregation. Remarkably, even at age 99, Don Tineo is still the first member to arrive at the church on Sunday mornings. He lives close, just a block or so from the church. Every Sunday morning he makes

the walk up the hill and is often waiting for us as we drive up and park in front of the church.

Other days that I am working in Las Americas, I see Don Tineo socializing at a colmado, a small corner store in the neighborhood which is a social hangout place for many. Sometimes I see him sitting outside in the shade at Jacqueline's house, a member we introduced in our Nov/Dec newsletter. So great to have Don Tineo at age 99 active in the Lord's house, hearing His Word and receiving His Sacrament!



Updates from the Missionary Wife

PLEASE PRAY FOR:

- The family of our friend Freddy in Las Americas as we encourage them toward catechesis and confirmation.
- Our brothers and sisters of the Lutheran Church of Venezuela and Pastor Miguelángel Perez, their President, as they face economic and many other challenges.
- The newly baptized and confirmed members at Las Americas, that they remain active in church so that their faith may be nourished in Word and Sacrament.

GIVE THANKS FOR:

- The recovery of church member Doña Maritza Bautista, who returned to church on Easter Sunday after several months of recuperation from a broken leg.
- 99 years of life that we celebrate with church member Don Antonio Tineo.
- Pastor Willy Gaspar's improved health.

PRAISE GOD FOR:

- A fruitful first theological symposium at Seminario Concordia El Reformador for the pastors and churches of our Latin America region.

WITNESS ALWAYS



Family picture from Easter 2018

Cristo ha resucitado! Easter greetings from the rest of the Fritsche family. We continue to celebrate Christ's resurrection and rejoice in all He has done for us.

It has been a busy time keeping up with Pop during Holy Week, Easter, and the Symposium. However, we are happy to be part of the incredible work going on here in the Dominican Republic. Last week we hosted two seminary professors from Brazil in our home. Our evening conversations were a mix of Portuguese, Spanish and English. It was quite humorous at times and we were amazed at how much Portuguese we could actually understand just based on our experience with Spanish.

We are pleased to report that things continue like clockwork. We are

drawing close to the end of our curriculum. The boys will continue with their studies until mid-June. We will then get to travel to the US for a much-needed vacation for the month of July. We are really excited to see family!

With the help of our team, we continue to work to find a way to get Andrei the growth hormone he needs. We are still researching options but hope to have him begin receiving the medicine this summer. The process has been long and involved. We are grateful that we are supported by such wonderful people who truly work hard to see that we are cared for.

So, we continue in our routine with gratefulness and joy. May the Lord bless you all with that same joy! Abrazos!

Clarion



Clarion with Doña Maritza, who returned to church on Easter after a few months of healing at home

We are blessed to be serving our Lord in the Dominican Republic. The Lord is blessing the preaching of His Word and the administration of His sacraments. We are grateful for your partnership in this work. God bless you all!

In Christ,

**Rev. Joel & Clarion Fritsche
Viktor, Sergei and Andrei**



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."

To support the LCMS through the work of Joel & Clarion Fritsche, you may send a tax-deductible gift to:

The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod
P.O. Box 66861
St. Louis, MO 63166-6861 or

Mission Central
40718 Highway E16
Mapleton, IA 51034

Make checks payable to The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. Mark checks "Support of Rev. Joel Fritsche." Gifts can also be given securely online through the LCMS website, on my online giving page at lcms.org/fritsche.