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## Celebrating our First Year of Sem!



Summer greetings from the Dominican Republic. For the students of Seminario Concordia el Reformador, it's summer vacation time. Our first year of classes is now in the books. It's been a year of challenges, but also one of incredible blessings! As I look back on the year, and actually a little further back in the planning stages of opening our seminary, I stand in awe and give thanks to the Lord for what HE has accomplished among us.

For almost ten years, a seminary has been in the strategic plan of the Dominican Republic Lutheran Mission (DRLM). It started with missionary pastors teaching new Christians. In 2010 a partnership was formed with Concordia Seminary in Argentina to assist in carrying out theological education in the DR. The agreement between the DRLM and Argentina stated that by 2017 a Lutheran seminary would be opened in the Dominican Republic. By God's grace in August of 2017, that became a reality as we welcomed our first incoming students.

Our first year of classes began on September 11, 2017 and ended on June 15, 2018. Just before the end of our third trimester, I invited faculty and students over to our house for a celebratory meal to bring the year to a close (see pic above). As Director, I had the opportunity to speak and thank the students for their patience, dedication and hard work throughout the year. All of the students then expressed their humble gratitude for the opportunity to study theology and walk alongside church-planting pastors inside and outside the classroom as they are formed for pastoral ministry.

Our next academic year begins September 3. For now, guys are headed home. They'll rest a bit, work, and preach in their home congregations, most of the things our American sem students do during break. We faculty members have time to rest as well. But as soon as the summer flies by, it's back in the saddle. I can't wait! Thank you for your prayers and gifts that support this wonderful dream made reality!



Coat of Arms from the flag of the Dominican Republic

### SEMINARY LIBRARY PROJECT UPDATE

A big thank you to the many congregations and individuals who have donated funds and/or books for our seminary library! Our goal has been to fill an entire shipping container. It is nearing capacity and we hope and pray will be shipped by our friends at the Theological Book Network (TBN) sometime in July. Below you can see the TBN warehouse in Grand Rapids where our books are being stored until shipment. Our plan is for the library to be up and running during our second year of classes! We still need your help as we continue to build our library and gather resources for our students. Contact me if you would like to support this project!



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# Getting organized in Las Americas...

I've written a lot about visits lately in our newsletters. It's a major part of what we do as missionaries. Every so often I like to bring along my family along with our deaconess and pastoral students. One Saturday afternoon last month as we were visiting a new church family, Andrei was invited to swim in their makeshift pool off the front of the house. He had a blast. Our friend Freddy from church had just as much fun fixing it all up for him.

Our congregation in Las Americas is doing very well, despite the absence of her main pastor, Willy Gaspar, for the



Andrei Fritsche taking a dip during a visit in the community around our Las Americas mission.

past several months due to medical leave. Since May, Pastor Willy has been gradually stepping back into service, thanks be to God. He is also stepping up work in his dental clinic across the street from the church. Please continue to pray for him and his family as he shepherds the flock in Las Americas.

Moving forward in the months ahead at Las Americas (and in all of our missions) we are working with congregational leaders on budgets and monthly reports for finances within each congregation. This is a big step. A little over a year ago we helped our church leaders get organized into three groups to work with: 1) Finances, 2) Maintenance and Cleaning and 3)



Pastor Willy Gaspar is back after several months of medical leave.

Fellowship and Care. We don't have elders. We don't have boards. We don't have church council. But organization is important as we help our members serve and support the Gospel ministry using the talents God has given them.

On the first Sunday of June we said farewell to Vicar Paul Flo, who finished his 2-year vicarage with us. We already miss him. We are happy to be installing one of our own seminary students as our next vicar on July 1. Isaac Machado from Venezuela will serve one year of vicarage in Santo Domingo. We also have plans for Seminarian Marcelo Rivas and family from Chile to spend the summer in Santo Domingo to lend a hand. This will be a huge help as our family heads to the states for the month of July for some down time with family.

Visiting short-term teams are a lot of fun for us. We had a team of deaconess students from Concordia Theological Seminary with us in May. In July a team from Faith Community Lutheran in Las Vegas will lead marriage workshops in all of our missions. St. John's Lutheran in Plymouth, WI will also visit Santiago and work in our Lacey mission for a week. Let us know if your congregation is interested in a short-term visit. We'd love to see you here! Thanks again for your support!

*Pastor Joel Fritsche*

## GETTING TO KNOW OUR SEM STUDENTS...

Isaac Neftalí García Guevara is one of our two residential students from Mexico. We know him as "Nefta." He was baptized into the Lutheran church as an infant. His father, Isaac is a pastor and also President of the Lutheran Synod of Mexico. His mother is studying to be a deaconess.

Nefta will be in his final year of studies next year, then a year of vicarage. We got to know him well this past year as he spent his weekends with us in Las Americas for field work. He is diligent in his studies, has a caring heart and almost always has a smile on his face.

Mexico is in great need of new Lutheran pastors. The Synod had no new pastors for almost 15 years. Now, by God's grace three new pastors have recently been ordained. In two years, Nefta and our other student from Mexico will join the newest generation of Lutheran pastors to preach the Gospel and plant new churches.

In April, Nefta's father preached in Las Americas during a visit here (see photo). We need your support for Nefta! Please contact me if you would like to support Nefta or another student through our adopt-a-student program.



# Updates from the Missionary Wife

## PLEASE PRAY FOR:

- Pastor Willy Gaspar and his family as he resumes his pastoral duties at Las Americas.
- Paul Flo as he prepares for his final year of seminary studies in St. Louis.
- Isaac Machado as he begins his vicarage year July 1.
- Our seminary students as they travel home for the summer to be with family.
- New seminary students preparing to come to the Dominican in August—Rafael, Jeancarlos and Mario.

## GIVE THANKS FOR:

- New Missionaries headed to the field this summer, especially Erin Mackenzie, who will join our team here in the DR.
- A wonderful financial gift received through Mission Central to support our Alliance Missionaries Sergio Maita and Sergio Fritzler.
- Our two partner districts of the DRLM Foro, the South Wisconsin District and English District LCMS for their amazing support.

## PRAISE GOD FOR:

- A wonderful first year of classes at Seminario Concordia el Reformador.



Missionary moms and kids having fun at a birthday party

Hooray! Summer is here! This is the general feeling in the Fritsche house these days. We have been counting down the days for the past month and now it seems those longed-for days are here.

We rejoice that we have made it through this strenuous year of living in two places. It is amazing how quickly the time has gone. It is amazing to see the things the Lord has accomplished this year. It is amazing we made it through alive! ;-). We continue to be grateful to be part of the work here in the DR.

It has been such a blessing to get to know the seminary students and to see a seminary community form in Santiago. It is a particular joy for me as a mother to see my boys form friendships with these young men and be able to

communicate in Spanish. I praise God for the smiles and laughter shared between the seminarians and my sons. There is a true feeling of loss as they all travel back home, but we will be excited to welcome them back next school year.

For now, we look forward to more pool time, airplane rides, fun with family, time on the lake, more sleep, and seeing wonderful friends.

We will be in the US from July 1 to August 1 for vacation. One of our goals for this time is to finalize the process of getting Andrei growth hormone treatment. It seems our little guy may finally start his injections this summer and GROW!!! Thanks for your prayers!

Our prayers are with you all until we meet again. Bendiciones!

## Clarion



Clarion and Santa (Pastor Willy's wife) posed for a pic on Mother's Day, the last Sunday in May.

*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**



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