

The Fritsche Family

Serving the Lord in the Dominican Republic



Thank you for your steadfast support

Warm summer greetings from Houston, Texas. Normally, we would be on home service right now. However, nearly two months ago, we announced our impending departure from the mission field in the Dominican Republic. After almost nine years on the field in the DR, the Fritsche family is moving to St. Louis. I have accepted a call to serve as Director of Vicarage and Deaconess Internships and Assistant Professor of Exegetical Theology at Concordia Seminary in St. Louis, which will begin in July. A copy of our conclusion of service letter is attached to the end of this newsletter.

The past two months have been jam-packed with activities and tasks related to wrapping up life and ministry in the Dominican Republic. For most of early 2023, I was focused primarily on planning our seminary's 6th annual theological symposium and the graduation of ten men for pastoral ministry in Latin America. Every year we invite about 40 leaders from our Latin American partner churches, as well as a few guests from the USA. This year we focused on the theme "Pastoral Formation in Latin America Today." Our



**The DR
Coat of Arms**
God, Country
and Freedom

Please pray for...
Our ten new 2023
seminary graduates

Pastor Rafael Flores,
new pastor at Iglesia
Luterana de Pueblo
Nuevo, and the
continued faithful
ministry and growth
of the congregation

Rev. Sergio Fritzler,
new director of
Seminario Concordia
el Reformador,
especially for financial
support

The transition off the
field for missionary
families: Burakowski,
Tape, Fritsche

Recruitment of new
LCMS missionaries for
Latin America



CMSCR Symposium 2023 in the DR

speakers were professors from our two LCMS seminaries and the three seminaries in Latin America (Argentina, Brazil, and the DR).

At the end of May, we spent three days reflecting on pastoral formation: the theology, history, and challenges that impact our work. It was a fruitful opportunity for dialogue and discussion among those engaged in the work of theological education and pastoral formation in the Americas, as well as presidents of partner

Lutheran churches. We are committed to offering residential pastoral formation in Latin America while also using the best of the technological resources available to supplement it for those who are unable to leave their home countries, life, and work to study. All in all, we want faithful confessional Lutheran pastors who can work with the biblical languages, the Lutheran Confessions, and deliver the good gifts of salvation in Word and Sacrament.

As always, our symposium week concluded with our graduation service. This year we celebrated the graduation of six residential students and four distance (FPH/SMP) students from seven different countries. Some of them are already ordained and serving Lutheran congregations. The rest of them will be ordained in the months ahead as they return to their home countries and settle in after four years away. Our seminary has graduated a total of 30 men since it opened in 2017! For me, it was bittersweet to conclude my missionary service by preaching at and presiding over the graduation. I preached on John 17, our Lord's high priestly prayer. I encouraged our graduates with Jesus' words to the Father, "Keep them in your name," reminding them that Jesus prays for them and is present with them as they serve in His stead.



*Ordination of Rafael Flores
in Pueblo Nuevo*

Even as I depart from the field, leaving behind work at the seminary and the Pueblo Nuevo congregation, the Lord has provided men for continued work. My dear colleague and friend, Rev. Sergio Fritzler, has accepted a call to serve as Director of the seminary. He brings more than 20 years of experience in theological education to the table. Thanks be to God! Also, Rafael Flores, one of our 2022 graduates, was ordained as a Pastor in the Confessional Lutheran Church of Chile and called to serve in Pueblo Nuevo for the next 12 months while he and his wife, missionary Jamielynn, wait for the birth of their first child, and the processing of their visas to serve in Chile. Thanks be to God, who does all things well.

The past several weeks have been a flurry of activity: selling our two cars and other possessions, preparing our DR house to turn back to the owner, and lots of tearful goodbyes. I was thankful that,



Last visit with the people of El Congo

just days before we left, we made one last visit to the community of El Congo, near Pueblo Nuevo. Over the past 2-3 years, we have made consistent visits here and catechized around ten people who are very active in the church. At our last visit, I shared a devotion on Acts 2:42, encouraging the faithful saints of that community of the blessing of apostolic doctrine, the Lord's Supper, worship, and fellowship. I know that the Lord will continue to bless the good evangelistic work of Word and Sacrament there in the years ahead.

The past nine years of service as a missionary in Latin America have been challenging but a truly amazing experience of growth and blessing for me. I believe that they have prepared me for the work I go on to do at the seminary in St. Louis. It was hard to leave a ministry, colleagues, and congregants that have touched our lives for so long. The Lord provides. He has provided much through all of you: much for us as missionaries, but much for the people we have served. Through your love, support, and prayers, the Lord has done His good work. We give special thanks for Mission Central and Old Missionary Gary! Please continue to support missionaries. Rev. Sergio Fritzler especially needs your support as he builds a support network for his work as seminary director. God bless and keep you all!

Deaconess Happenings

Parting is such sweet sorrow...



Fun flower crafts with the Pueblo Nuevo ladies

As they say in the Dominican Republic, *nos vemos*. This means, "We will see you." After 8 years of service in the Dominican Republic, our family is returning to the USA. These past few months have been busy, exhausting, and full of every emotion you can possibly imagine. I think the most accurate word I can use is "bittersweet." There is a lovely anticipation and excitement in looking forward to new challenges and service. However, this is accompanied by the bitterness of saying goodbye to so many incredible people that have brightened and enriched our lives over the past eight years. We will miss them terribly.

As we prepared for the move, the work in the field continued. I continued serving as a deaconess at Pueblo Nuevo, mentoring the deaconess students in the DR, and gathering the seminary wives for bible study and fellowship.

Things continue to be busy at Iglesia Luterana de Pueblo Nuevo. It was my joy to continue working with *escuelita* (children's bible school), monthly women's bible studies, church fellowship nights, and



Celebrating with deaconess students

community visits. Some of the highlights of the past few months were our Valentine's dinner, making fun spring crowns, pizza and movie night, and an incredible Lenten and Easter season. There was a lot of discussion and preparation as well as the deaconesses of Pueblo Nuevo taking on more responsibility in my absence. It has been great to see their enthusiasm and how they are definitely up to the challenge. Even though I will dearly miss not being a part of all the church activities, Christ is the head of the Church and provides workers for the harvest!

Along with preparing to move, I taught an eight-week course on the Catechism to our DR deaconess students via Zoom. Every Tuesday night at 7:00, we met to delve into a unit of the Catechism course. We would discuss the part of the Catechism that the unit covered and then examine how it applied to deaconess work in Christian education, works of mercy, and spiritual care. We would finish by connecting the Catechism to a bible story and investigating how we could teach that bible story to a Sunday school class.

Shortly after the Catechism course ended, the deaconess students and I moved on to an intensive course entitled "Theology of the Word: Law and Gospel in Deaconess Service." We were able to do this course at the church over a couple of afternoons and end it on a Saturday at Tirzah Krey's beach house. It was such a pleasure to meet with these ladies in person and discuss Law and Gospel. We had a fantastic time celebrating their hard work at the beach! I will miss these ladies very much and ask for prayers for them as they continue their studies and prepare to serve as deaconesses.

In addition to working at Iglesia Luterana de Pueblo Nuevo and with deaconess students, I also gathered the seminary wives for fellowship and bible study. We continued to study the Psalms, with the latest study being on Psalm 100 and what it means for the daily Christian life. We have enjoyed painting crosses, making candles, and dinner and fellowship with our husbands. These ladies are amazing, and I pray for strength and peace for them as some of them get ready to head back to their home countries and take on the role of Pastor's Wife.



Seminary wives Bible study

What's next for the Fritsches?



Mother's Day FaceTime

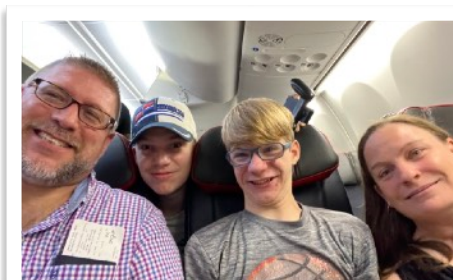
Fritsche family, what is next for you all now that you have left the DR? We have a lot of changes and adventures coming up that we will be happy to share with you.

Joel will serve at Concordia Seminary in St. Louis as Director of Vicarage and Diaconess Internships and Assistant Professor of Exegetical Theology. Clarion will teach kindergarten at Our Savior Lutheran School in Fenton, MO. Viktor continues serving in the Army and hopes to hear about placement with a unit soon, possible placements include North Carolina, Alaska, and Italy. Max is excited to begin his senior year of high school at St. Pauls Lutheran High School in Concordia, MO. Andrei is ready to begin eighth grade at Our Savior Lutheran School in Fenton, where Clarion will teach.

We are thrilled that we will be living on the seminary campus in St. Louis again! This is an incredible blessing. We look forward to rejoining that wonderful community after 15 years of serving in other places and being close to colleagues and students.

We ask for your prayers during this time of transition. Our family has grown so much, especially during these nine years of service abroad. To God be the glory!

Pastor Joel and Diaconess Clarion Fritsche



Leaving the DR after 8+ years

SUPPORT THE MISSION WORK OF THE LCMS IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

Please continue your steadfast support of missionaries and their work in the Latin America and Caribbean region. At the link below you can stay updated on stories from the field and donate to support missionaries and projects throughout the region.

<https://international.lcms.org/latin-america-caribbean/>

lcms INTERNATIONAL
MISSION
SPREAD THE GOSPEL. PLANT LUTHERAN CHURCHES. SHOW MERCY.

Dear beloved partners in mission,

The words of Psalm 139:9–10 say, “If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there your hand shall lead me, and your right hand shall hold me.” These words ring true as we think about our service in the Dominican Republic (DR) these past nine years. Truly God has led us and held us while we have been so far from home. From time to time, we have shared stories about life and relationships here in the DR and beyond. You have rejoiced with us as God blessed our work, and you have prayed to Him on our behalf in times of difficulty. You have supported us steadfastly throughout this journey, so please allow us to thank you for your sincere love in Christ Jesus, our Lord.

Since you have been with us all along the way, we wanted to write to you and let you know that we will soon be concluding our missionary service in the Dominican Republic. We love the people in the DR and you, our supporters. Because of that love in Christ, it is very hard to move on to new places of service in His Church.

Good work has been done these past nine years. We opened a seminary in 2017 to serve churches and missions across Latin America by preparing evangelistic pastors and deaconesses who bring the mercy of Christ to those in need. We helped to train 20 new pastors and over a hundred new deaconesses who have graduated from Concordia the Reformer Seminary. We have faithfully served two dear congregations in different parts of the DR. We have visited congregations far and wide across Latin America, where we have shared the Gospel of Jesus and confessed the faith with Lutheran brothers and sisters. We have enjoyed countless cups of coffee as we regularly visited members of the congregation and the community around our missions and prayed with them. We treasure the friendships that have grown strong under the blessing of Christ, our Lord.

A strong foundation has been laid for ongoing LCMS work in the Dominican Republic and Latin America. The seminary’s programs for pastoral and deaconess formation are on solid ground. Our congregations are strong and evangelistic. Faithful colleagues and new missionaries will continue our work. We are grateful for the ongoing service of these excellent missionaries because the dear people in Latin America and the DR truly need the continued blessing of Jesus.

Please continue to support these missionaries and those serving in other parts of the world. If you have been supporting us as your missionaries and would like to continue supporting the spread of the Gospel around the world, please contact Julie Loehring, Together in Mission (TIM) coordinator, or Michelle Beckmann, Mission Senders coordinator, at 1-888-930-4438 to discuss options for transferring your support. If you support our work through Mission Central, you can contact Gary Thies at 712-882-1029. Also, please join us in continuing to pray for the mission efforts in the Dominican Republic and pastoral and deaconess formation for Latin America.

We are looking forward to a new adventure in St. Louis, Missouri. Joel has accepted a call to serve as assistant professor of Exegetical Theology and director of Vicarage and Internships at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis. Clarion has accepted a teaching position at Our Savior Lutheran Church and School in Fenton, Missouri. The LCMS is taking very good care of us as we make this transition. The support that you have given is crucial as we return to the USA and transition into these new roles. We thank God and you and the whole Church for that support.

Please continue to keep us in your prayers during this time of transition. Your ongoing friendship in Christ will be a true blessing.

In Christ,

Rev. Joel & Deaconess Clarion Fritsche
LCMS Missionaries to the Dominican Republic