

The Fritsche Family

Serving the Lord in the Dominican Republic



Eight pastors ordained in Bolivia!

Christ is risen! Alleluia! Easter greetings from the Dominican Republic! As always, it has been a whirlwind of a few months since last Christmas. I would like to share with you some blessings on the seminary and regional fronts, starting with Bolivia. For nearly ten years LCMS OIM has been supporting pastoral formation for the Iglesia Cristiana Evangélica Luterana de Bolivia (ICEL), that is the Christian Evangelical Lutheran Church of Bolivia, a church body with which LCMS does not yet have altar and pulpit fellowship. It is a pleasure to walk with them toward that goal.

In our newsletter last summer, I mentioned traveling to Bolivia for the ordination of two pastors. These were graduates of our DR seminary. So far we have graduated four men from Bolivia and currently have two more to graduate in 2023 and 2024 respectively. Several of us travelled to Bolivia last month for the ordination of eight pastors, held alongside their first FORO (Spanish for forum) and their national church assembly. The eight newly ordained are men who have been serving as pastors for a number of



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

Please pray for...
The Lutheran Church of Bolivia (ICEL) as it raises up new pastors and seeks fellowship with the LCMS

Our need for two new seminary professors

Praise God for...
The confirmations of Victor and Altagracia

Our upcoming seminary symposium and graduation

The long-awaited arrival of our new Spanish hymnal



years, but were either not formally ordained or had been ordained without a full subscription to the *Book of Concord*. For the last two years we have worked hard with the Bolivian pastors, teaching them especially about the theology of ministry, ordination and church order. Our DR seminary faculty played a foundational role in this, never telling them what to believe, rather what we believe, teach and confess according to the Scriptures and Lutheran Confessions. God be praised, the Bolivian pastors penned a document that is their confession on the Office of the Holy Ministry. The two men ordained back in 2020 were ordained with a full subscription to the *Book of Concord*. Back then in 2020, the pastors made the decision to pursue ordination with a full subscription to the *Book of Concord* for the remaining pastors. At our most recent visit, their document on the ministry was



Luther's Small Catechism in the Quechua language is formally presented to the Bolivian church

formally presented to the church assembly, adopted, and the eight men were subsequently ordained. Since we are not in full fellowship with the church, we did not participate formally in the ordination, but certainly shared in their joy!

While in Bolivia I had opportunity to learn more of the culture there. A large part of the Bolivian church is made up of Quechua-speaking people, an indigenous people of South America (Peru, Bolivia and Ecuador primarily), who are descendants of the Incas. Another highlight of the trip was presenting the Bolivian church with copies of Luther's Small Catechism in Quechua,

done in partnership with Lutheran Heritage Foundation. During the assembly, church body president Limberth Fernandez taught several sessions from the Catechism in Quechua and also in Spanish. Rev. Dr. Jonathan Shaw (LCMS Church Relations) was there with us, representing President Harrison's office. We rejoice that our brothers and sisters of ICEL are advancing in the process of attaining altar and pulpit fellowship with the LCMS. We rejoice in their faithful confession of the Gospel of Jesus.



Sem. Jeancarlos Ramirez (Peru) with his new hymnal

Now, over ten years in the making, copies of *Himnario Luterano*, our new Spanish hymnal, are arriving around the region. In our next newsletter I will say more about this and its importance. Our DR seminary will have a big role in the implementation of and training for the new hymnal. Our upcoming theological symposium (our first in-person symposium since May 2019) is focused on the theme of the new hymnal. As always, the symposium will culminate in our annual graduation service. Here in the DR we will graduate 12 new deaconesses and 3 new pastors. However, another 80+ women will graduate from Mexico, Guatemala, Panama and Venezuela. In the months ahead I will be traveling to some of these countries for their respective graduations. More to come!

Deaconess Happenings

Time flies when you are having fun!



Studying mercy and the role of the deaconess with these deaconess students.

The fun continues with the women in Pueblo Nuevo! We are meeting once a month for Bible study, crafts, and food. We even made some banners to go with our Lenten theme this year from Isaiah 53. We also had a WhatsApp group to share daily devotions for Lent. We have been gathering a food offering on the first Sunday of every month and the smiles of those who receive the food fill my heart with joy. The joy increases with the Saturday Bible school which continues to do very well. We celebrated Easter with 35 kids. We reviewed the events of Holy Week, sang, and colored Easter



Mercedes and Olga guiding the kids in their crafts for Easter.

Cristo ha resucitado! He is risen, indeed! How can we be celebrating the resurrection already? It seems like we just finished Christmas. Well, time truly does fly when you are having fun, and I have been having all kinds of fun here in Santiago. As Joel reported above, there will be almost 100 deaconess students graduating from Concordia Seminary El Reformador in May. It has been my privilege to help write curriculum and teach courses to these women, both in person and by zoom. This has been so much fun and the ladies are a true blessing to the church.

We have visited the mothers of two of our regular students and are looking forward to meeting more of their parents. This can be a challenge, but is very important.

The joy of having Bible study and praying with the wives of the seminarians is not to be overlooked. I continue to enjoy the laughter and fellowship of these ladies as we study once a month and share prayer and devotions through WhatsApp. Joel and I were blessed to have several of them, along with their husbands, celebrate Easter at our home. It will not be so joyful to say goodbye to two of them as their husbands soon graduate and begin their ministries in their home countries, but we are grateful for the time we do have and the technology that keeps us close.



Making Lenten banners for the church; by His wounds, we are healed! .

Dominican Republic Local Mission Updates



Confirmation of Victor and Altagracia, Easter 2022

On Easter Sunday we celebrated two new confirmations at our congregation in Pueblo Nuevo. First, Victor is the father of one of our Venezuelan members, also named Victor, whom I wrote about in our last newsletter. We praise God for this faithful family who has become very active and supportive in our church. Also confirmed was Altagracia. She is part of the community of El Congo, near Pueblo Nuevo (PN). We continue to visit this area regularly and the Lord is providing a steady stream of new catechumens from there, especially thanks to the evangelistic efforts of

Mercedes, one of our dear church members from that community. Thanks again to third-year Seminarian Carlos Ventura (Venezuela) for his steadfast work in that community!

In March we had our biannual FORO here in the DR. For the first time in five years, the FORO was held in Santo Domingo, to highlight our two missions there. Personally, it was wonderful to be at Amigos de Cristo in Las Américas where I served during our first three years on the field. Their new pastor, Lucas Elberhardt (Brazilian alliance missionary) and his wife, Agatha, are doing tremendous work there, especially with the huge amount of youth in the community. At our Ozama mission, Pan de Vida, Pastor Sergio Maita (Venezuelan alliance missionary) continues to have a host of new catechumens, with even a couple of potential new Dominican seminary students on the horizon.

Persistent visitation and pastoral care pay off! Pueblo Nuevo is a challenging, very urban community. Just before I was reassigned to the PN mission in 2018, Pastor Maita baptized four young boys from a local family. Since then, I am privileged to have confirmed Dayana, the mother, on Easter 2019. Miguel, the father, always kindly receives us, but has never committed to attending church or confirmation. We still include this family in our regular visits in the community. A couple of months ago while visiting them, Miguel broke down sobbing, confessing the need for Jesus in His family. Since then they have barely missed a Sunday. Miguel now wants catechesis to grow in faith and to be able to receive the Lord's Supper with his wife and church family. Praise God! The church has also helped the family with food and other necessities. Please keep this family in your prayers!



Deaconess Clarion with Miguel, Dayana and three of their four boys.

Fritsche Family Updates

Feliz Pascua! The Fritsche family prays that this newsletter finds you well and full of Easter joy. Things certainly have been happening in our family and Joel and I are just trying to keep up! The boys are doing well and God continues to shower us with blessings. A lot has happened for Viktor since December. He was able to travel with Joel in January and get his Texas driver's license, meet with an Army recruiter and take the ASVAB. He was officially sworn in to the US Army on March 16. He graduates from Wittenberg Academy in May and will report for basic training on August 1. We are so excited and proud of him! Sergei continues to study and do well at St. Paul Lutheran High School in Concordia, MO. He works in the cafeteria, sings in the chorus, and runs cross country. He is even thinking about where he might like to go to college and what he wants to do after high school. We are excited for him to join us for the summer on May 14. It will be great to have the whole family together for one last summer. Andrei is doing well and is so proud that he is finally a teenager. He had a great visit with the pediatric endocrinologist who continues to be impressed with his response to the growth hormone injections. He has grown 12 1/2 inches since beginning treatment 3 years ago and has gained over 30 pounds. He is full of life and energy and can't wait to see what will happen next. He is really looking forward to a fun summer with his brothers. Until next time, we pray God's blessings for all of you and thank you for your support and prayers. Abrazos!



Viktor sworn in to the US Army



Easter 2022 family pic

Pastor Joel and Deaconess Clarion Fritsche

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