

In summer 2023, we began conversations with the Office of International Missions about some pretty specific roles that it seems God had been preparing us for. We were not convinced, but God continued to work on our hearts and opened the path for a call for Stan to be the Regional Business Manager for the Latin America and the Caribbean Region (LAC) and for Dana to be a Volunteer Coordinator. We signed our paperwork in October 2023 but delayed joining the mission field until Stan finishes out his 5th year as principal at St. Paul Lutheran School in Catonsville, MD. We plan to move to Santiago, Dominican Republic, in the summer of 2024

THE LUTHERAN CHURCH—MISSOURI SYNOD
SOLEMN APPOINTMENT
IN THE NAME OF GOD THE FATHER, THE SON AND THE HOLY SPIRIT

Mrs. Dana Stigdon
Catonsville, Maryland

Dear Friend in Christ,

Having called on the Lord, our God, for guidance, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, in the exercise of the authority which He has vested His Church on earth, and in accordance with its Constitution and Bylaws, calls you to the position of

Missionary

and herewith extends to you this formal notification of your solemn appointment.

In the name of the Triune God and by His authority we ask you to assume the duties of your office according to the confessional standards of the Evangelical Lutheran Church as drawn from the Sacramental Book of Concord. We ask you to do this according to the needs as specified in the agreement on when new needs arise. To the end that you may be enabled to do this, we continuing cooperation and support in word and deed and in our prayers to God for you.

We pray God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has moved us to extend our call to you, to convince you by His Holy Spirit that it comes from Him; to induce you to accept it; to conduct you in your ministrations to the glory of His holy name, the building of His church, the temporal and eternal welfare of many people, and your own great joy and blessing.

Signed this _____ day of _____, A.D. 2023
on behalf of the LCMS Board for International Mission, by

Mr. John W. Edson

Rev. Dr. John W. Edson

THE LUTHERAN CHURCH—MISSOURI SYNOD
DIPLOMA OF VOCATION
IN THE NAME OF GOD THE FATHER, THE SON AND THE HOLY SPIRIT

Mr. Stanley Stigdon
Catonsville, Maryland

Dear Friend in Christ,

Having called on the Lord, our God, for guidance, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, in the exercise of the authority which He has vested His Church on earth, and in accordance with its Constitution and Bylaws, calls you to the position of

Missionary

and herewith extends to you this formal notification of your solemn call.

In the name of the Triune God and by His authority we ask you to assume the responsibilities of the office to which we have called you and faithfully to perform all the duties of your office according to the Word of God and the confessional standards of the Evangelical Lutheran Church as drawn from the Sacred Scriptures and contained in the Book of Concord. We ask you to do this according to the needs as specified in the accompanying document or as agreed on when new needs arise. To the end that you may be enabled to do this, we pledge you our wholehearted and continuing cooperation and support in word and deed and in our prayers to God in your behalf.

We pray God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has moved us to extend our call to you, to convince you by His Holy Spirit that it comes from Him; to induce you to accept it; to conduct you safely in your field of labor; and to bless your ministrations to the glory of His holy name, the building of His church, the temporal and eternal welfare of many people, and your own great joy and blessing.

Signed this 14th day of September, A.D. 2023

on behalf of the LCMS Board for International Mission, by

Mr. John W. Edson, Chairman, BIM

Rev. Dr. John Wollersburg Sae, Secretary, LCMS

A New
Chapter

Iglesia Luterana Pueblo Nuevo




What a joy to worship on Sunday morning with this vibrant congregation, one of four LCMS congregations in Santiago. Bonus that it happened to be the Sunday where all gathered for a Christmas congregational meal after the service (delicious!!) We also got in on the congregation picture.

After 14 years of work, a blessing that the Lutheran Hymnal has been published in Spanish. It was a little heavy to hold as this was printed during the pandemic when they couldn't get hymnal paper. So fun to follow the familiar elements of our church service with very different music and rhythms.



It is clear from our first short visit that the people will be the highlight of our life in the Dominican Republic. The Seminary in Santiago serves students from all over Latin America and the Caribbean and in our short visit we met people from Mexico, Panama, Argentina, Bolivia, Cuba, Ecuador, Argentina, Paraguay, and more that I probably forgot. We look forward to living in this joyous community. It's not good to drink the water from the faucet but the delivery of these big jugs of water is easy. It will be nice to have battery back-up for a few things (like fans and internet) if the electricity occasionally goes out.



We got to check out some of the living accommodations in the neighborhood. All of the missionary families live in the same neighborhood where the Regional Office is also located. This helps build community. The plantains on this tree were so heavy it made it topple over which meant it was time to cut them off. Stan helped out. Later in the day we would learn an important lesson about banana and plantain trees - spiders love to live in them! Make sure you bang the fruit on the ground to get the spiders off before you throw them in the back of your car, or you may have an unwelcome car visitor that has eight legs and is VERY large and furry. Definitely don't want to make that mistake again.

We also had a chance to visit a botanical garden that was very near by. It has wide paved walking/biking paths and will be a good option for daily walking. In the middle of the garden we were surprised to come upon this crucifix with a beautiful interpretation of Jesus giving us his hand from the cross.

We also spent some time just checking out some local grocery stores, a hardware store, a shopping mall, and a bank just to get a feel for the area and have a little picture of what to expect.



Botanical Garden

Living Christ
of infinite mercy
in the midst of pain
you raise from the cross
to reach out your hand
to any who need you



CRISTO VIVO,

Cristo vivo, de
misericordia infinita, que
en medio del dolor te
levantas de la cruz para
tender tu mano a quien
te necesita




Photo Credit: Erik Lunsford

We traveled to St. Louis in January 2024 and began our Missionary Orientation at the International Center (the LCMS headquarters.) Beginning and ending our day in the Word with chapel in the middle helped to keep us grounded. The other families in our class beginning mission work are each an inspiration and new life long friends. Two families will also be serving in Santiago so we will see them often, the other two far away, but will not be far from our prayers.




Missionary Orientation




 Domenichelli Family
Germany




 Weber Family
Dominican Republic



 Andreasen Family
Romania



 Shaver Family
Dominican Republic



Stan returned to principal duties and Dana visited Mapleton, Iowa in western Iowa where the rolling hills are beautiful. My first visit to Mission Central. A day spent with Missionary Gary and Missionary Steve, men with big hearts for Jesus and valuable training to share with us. We were reminded of God's perfect creation and traveled around the world recognizing the need for Jesus everywhere.



Mission Central

a special day



Let's go into the world and share Jesus!



APOSTILLE

(Convention de La Haye du 5 octobre 1961)



In preparation for travel, we quickly began compiling documents necessary to apply for a Missionary Visa to the Dominican Republic. We learned about an Apostille - a specialized certificate, issued by the Secretary of State (at either federal or state level, depending on who issued the original document.) The Apostille is attached to original documents to verify it is legitimate and authentic. This is recognized by all member countries who joined together in 1961, referred to as the Hague Convention. All seals look very official and are attached in different ways. The US Secretary of State office attached the Apostille to the original document via a brad in the corner. Missouri used a fancy sticker. Others just stapled the papers together at an offset and then stamped a seal across the two pages. Much official paperwork is being gathered!

Apostille

International Center

Back to St. Louis for our final week of Missionary Orientation. Beautiful spring days, it was great to connect with the other missionary families in our class. Seems like we have always known them and it is nice to share ideas with others going through the same major life change.



Co-workers for Christ

We had the joy of workers from the Dominican Republic in town as we finished up our missionary orientation. Deaconess Tirzah Krey (right) was in town all week and answered many questions for us. Volunteer Coordinator Erin Mackenzie (left of Dana) happened to be back for home service. I look forward to learning my new job from Erin.

The Dominican Republic Crew: The Weber family,
Erin Mackenzie, us, the Shaver family, &
Deaconess Tirzah Krey



Photo Credit: Deaconess Tirzah Krey

We completed our Missionary Orientation on March 22, 2024. Four phases of training held over nine weeks helped us prepare to transition. So many different things to think about and do! The Office of International Mission has methodically and deliberately introduced topics that need to be addressed as we make this transition. Everything from basic Human Resources onboarding tasks to classes on Resilience and a multitude of topics in between. We are sad to leave two families who will head to the Eurasia Region and happy to know we will see all these friends again soon!



Photo Credit: Deaconess Tirzah Krey

Sharing



What a joy to spend time sharing how God is working around the world through LCMS missionaries. We have visited and are stilling visiting churches to share. A bonus for us to run into old friends that we have worshiped with in the past, and particularly with many who have been an encouragement or inspiration to us.

Sorting

Much of our time has been figuring out what to do with our belongings. What are the most important items that will fill the 5 suitcases we can each bring with us to Santiago? What is so special we should store it until we return? Who can be blessed by the things we need to part with? Donate, garage sale, trash... So many decisions. Decision fatigue set in and our brains were a little mushy by the end of every day.



YARD SALE

SATURDAY 8AM

CORNER OF LEE DR & ALTAVUE

Grateful for the many
suitcase donations.

So many emotions during the month of May. Stan finished out 5 years as principal with the graduation of a lovely class of students. They were in First Grade when he began and attended through the Covid years. We also enjoyed a beautiful send-off from our St. Paul Catonsville Church family. So many tears, so much encouragement.



Graduation

Photo Credit: James Lister Photography





Installation



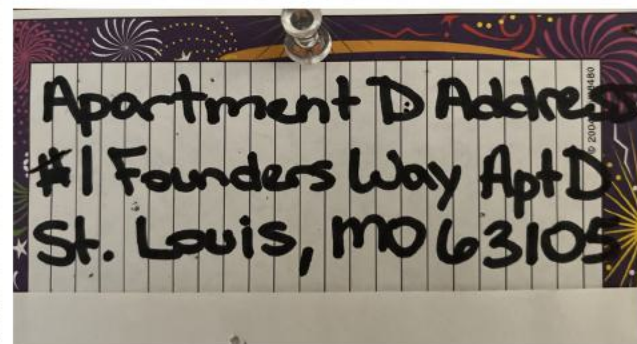
Photos Credit: James Lister Photography



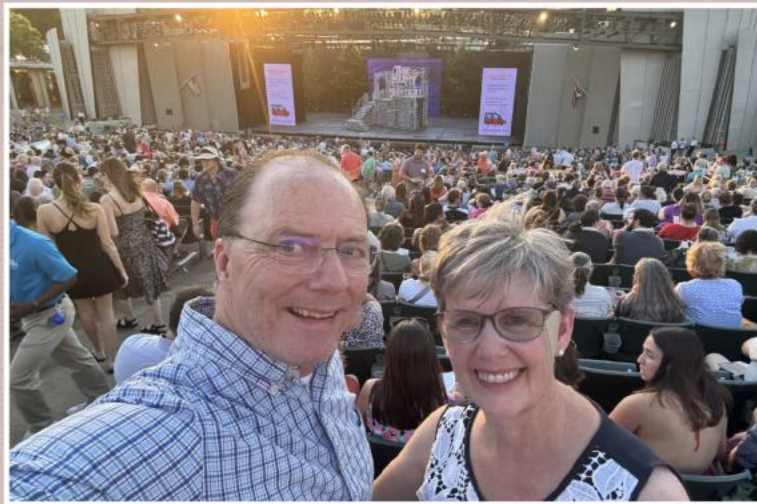
St. Louis



Our home for the summer- missionary housing on the campus of Concordia Seminary.



Happy 39th Anniversary!



Never in our wildest dreams could we have imagined 39 years ago that we would be preparing to be Missionaries serving Missionaries in the Dominican Republic. It has been a wonderful wild ride so far and we are blessed. God is great!





The Coffee Hour



How fun to sit in a radio studio and have a conversation with Andy Bates and Sarah Gulseth about how we were called and how we are preparing to serve on the missions field. The episode aired on June 24, 2024. Check it out on [KFUO.org](https://kfuo.org).

KFUO AM

Sharing
the Gospel of
Jesus Christ
since 1924.

kfuoam.org

Mission Central



Mapleton, Iowa



We had the privilege to travel to Mapleton, Iowa to visit Mission Central, the largest network of special people providing support to the LCMS Office of International Mission. Mission Central facilitates millions of dollars every year to send and keep missionaries in the mission field.





THE LORD'S CREATION THE

Pastor Steve Shulz taught us that
when God speaks, things happen!

And we know that God made
every one of us very special,
including all of his creation.

Did you know that the horns of a
kudu can grow 75" long?!

Mission Central has been blessed by God to be a mission center focusing on telling others about Jesus. The work of Mission Central started in the basement of a farmhouse with much prayer by Mr. Gary Thies. This little chapel is part of the campus and open for prayer to any who drive by.





Classic photo.

Artist Warner Sallman

Head of Jesus

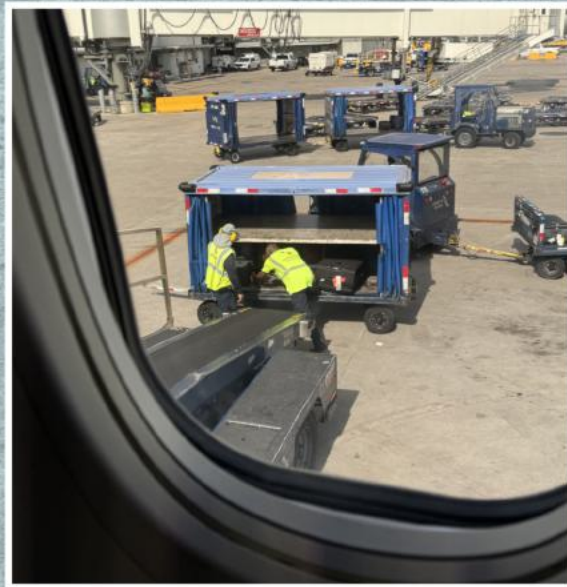
Photo with The Boss

4:00 AM



On the Way

So what made it into our 10 suitcases in addition to clothes? We brought our computer monitors and other electronics that would be difficult or expensive to find. A starter set of sheets and towels so we didn't have to buy everything the moment we arrived. Just a couple of kitchen tools. A little Christmas decor. Craft supplies. Bathroom necessities. What didn't make it in the checked luggage? My computer and my Bible! The years of journaling in my Bible are irreplaceable and for sure it was in my carry-on with me all the way. We were happy to see the suitcases transfer to our connecting flight and all made it through customs with no issues. Only one broken screen that we should be able to replace. Thankful for a member of a short term mission team who landed with us and was able to help us with the luggage. We landed in a furnished apartment where we will stay for 1 month until our house is ready.





On our first Sunday in country, we visited the mission in Licey, Lamb of God Lutheran Church. Joining us were Pastor Littig and his wife Sandra from Brazil. They arrived two days after us and will be here for 2 months of language learning and culture before they deploy to Mexico.

Cordero de Dios





There is also a Lutheran elementary school here that is full to the brim. Notice the rebar coming out of the top of the church. They hope to build a second level in order to expand the school.

Guagua Travel





A guagua is a name for a small bus. Four new missionary families, three in the guagua and one in a car traveled across the country to attend the Latin America and Caribbean Region Retreat. Fascinating to see new and old side by side and to see the lay of the land, from the mountains to the sea. We were also quickly immersed in language for 6 hours together! Primary languages together included Spanish, English, and Portuguese, and yet we had enough overlap of language that we could communicate for the whole trip.



For the Lord is good;
his steadfast love endures forever,
and his faithfulness to all generations.
Psalm 100:5



Rev. Dr. Geoff Boyle



Photo Credit: Jana Inglehart



Photo Credit: Jana Inglehart

A time of study, rest,
worship and fellowship.
The sessions were held
in the "Under the Sea"
restaurant and the theme
seemed to fit well - the
fish decor having many
applications to our
callings and well fit when
the women studied
Jonah in the afternoon!





Photo Credit: Jana Inglehart



Photo Credit: Jana Inglehart



Photo Credit: Jana Inglehart





2024 LAC MISSIONARIES

Photo Credit: Jana Inglehart

What a true blessing to be able to meet the missionaries from the entire region. Stan will be interacting with most of them at some time during the year. We did our best to learn as many names as we could in four short days!

Back in Santiago, we visited the church in Pueblo Nuevo where we had come on our December visit. We were happy to see some familiar faces and to celebrate a baptism.



El Jardín Botánico De Santiago

A lovely place for a walk.



Our appointment with immigration was set and we began the process of obtaining legal residency. First stop: this office in the capitol, Santo Domingo, where we waited for much less time than anticipated based on the full waiting room. They sent us to a medical office where we had to have some tests done. Then

we drove the 2.5 hours back to Santiago and now we wait to be called back again.



Immigration

Baptism



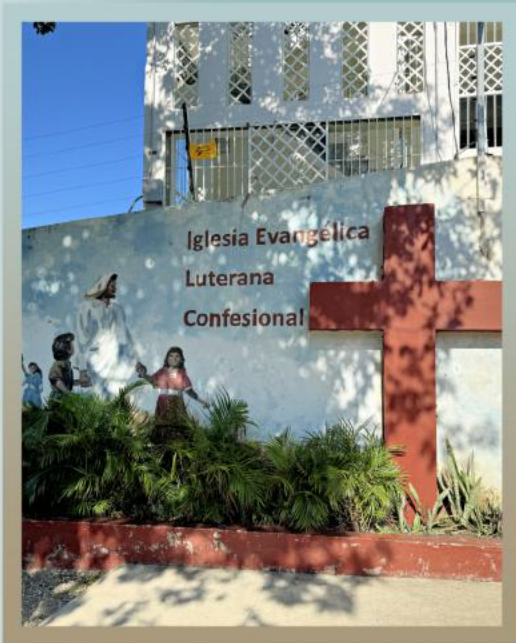
What an honor to attend a service where 10 people were baptized on the same day. It was the last Sunday for Pastor Idjon Fritz and his family. He both baptized his baby daughter (and more) and said farewell to his congregation that day. An emotional day.

First Aid

Pastors, seminary students, school teachers, and staff joined together for a day of first aid training. It put my Spanish to the test but days like

this are helping my brain to get back into thinking in Spanish mode!





We got our first formal tour of Concordia the Reformer Seminary. The three story building houses a Lutheran Elementary School on the first floor. The second floor contains a Lutheran Church which holds services on Wednesdays and Sundays, a conference room, some offices, and a theological library.

Next to the Seminary is the Casa Hogar, a group home for 6 young adults with disabilities.

The third floor of the seminary houses classrooms and offices, a kitchen and bathrooms, and two bunk rooms. These bunk rooms are used to house short-term teams. Have you thought about coming and serving?

On this day we celebrated the beginning of the school year for the elementary school and the seminary.



Short-term Team

Super excited to be joining Erin Mackenzie for my first look at leading a short-term team. Her car loaded down with Bibles to deliver to the pastors for handing out, we headed to Santo Domingo to meet up with a team assembled by MOST ministries to hand out eye glasses. Extra bonus surprise to find Susan on the team, we had served together on a short term mission just the prior year!





The short-term team
was assembled by MOST
Ministries, an LCMS
Recognized Service
Organization, from 4 states and
Canada. We served together at the
two Lutheran churches in Santo
Domingo to provide an eye glass clinic.
First up, Amigos de Cristo (Friends of Christ).

Amigos de Cristo

Eyeglass Clinic

1 - Share the gospel



Registration



2 - Education



3 - Health Screening

Each year, MOST Ministries provides recycled eyeglasses to people living in the developing nations around the world. Generous individuals, churches and organizations across the US collect and send used eyeglasses to MOST Ministries, where they are then sorted, tested and repackaged by volunteers for distribution on the mission field. (MOST Ministries. www.mostministries.org/eyeglass_ministry) This was the first time we partnered with MOST and it was a joy to work with this organization so experienced and prepared for this ministry.



4 - Vision test



Eyeglass options selections



5 - Eyeglass dispensing



6 - Cleaning & adjusting



After two days of eyeglass clinic, Sunday was a day for worship at Amigos de Cristo. Even the friendly dog from the neighborhood seemed to pay attention to the sermon. We were treated by the congregation to a hot dog lunch.

After three days of clinic at Amigos de Cristo, we moved to the Colonial Zone in Santo Domingo and had a day to visit the culture before we began the new clinic at Pan de Vida Lutheran Church. We enjoyed a chocolate factory tour and a visit to Colon's "Lighthouse."





Pan de Vida

Next stop for the clinic - Bread of Life Lutheran Church. The word got out and people were lined up in the park across the street waiting. Same routine, different place, always starting with sharing the Good News. Over the five days of eyeglass clinics, 570 people were served and 783 pairs of eyeglasses were handed out!





Installation

In October, new pastors were installed at two of the churches in Santiago. If they look familiar, that's because we went through Missionary Orientation with both families. A joy to be serving with the Weber and Shaver families.



Enjoyed spending an evening with other missionaries and introducing them to Visual Faith® Ministry. We each made a ThanksLiving project ready for scripture scribing over the next month. I started my first scripture scribing project with both Spanish and English.



Spanish Class



These four lovely ladies are tasked with teaching Spanish to all who enter the mission field in the Latin America Caribbean region. Stan has Spanish classes five days a week. When he isn't in class, he is most likely studying Spanish. After three full time months of language learning, he is making great progress and when recently tested, he proved he has jumped two levels on the Spanish scale. Dana is getting quickly more comfortable with her Spanish.



Lucia and Dana

Dana has been in Spanish class three days/week while Stan has been meeting five days/week. In addition to Spanish classes, during our time in orientation, we have also been meeting once or twice a week for Culture Class.

challenge

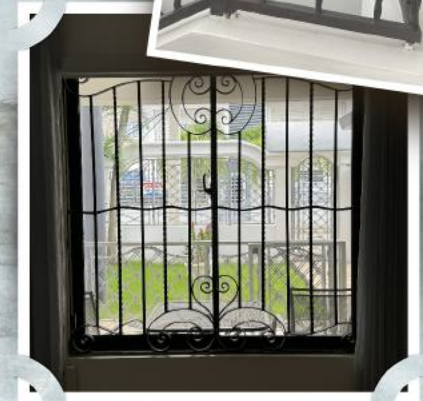
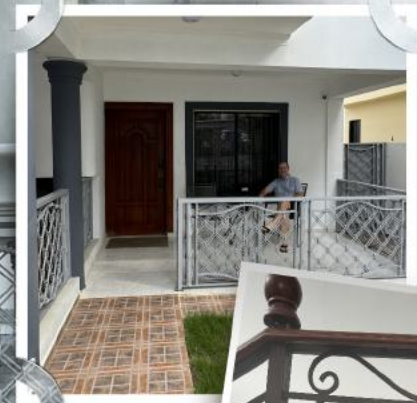


Ilse and Stan



This is what all parts of our house looked like as vocabulary grows day by day. We were able to move from this temporary housing into our permanent home in October. This painter tape decor did not come with us... But we have a pretty good handle on all of these Spanish words now!

Home Sweet Home



We moved into our house the beginning of October and it is feeling like home. Iron gates are a normal fixture here and it would be odd to have a house without an iron fence or iron in the windows. The iron work within the house is lovely. And the apartment building across the street is named "Jesus Primero" - Jesus First!



A surprise to find Christmas decorations everywhere we go beginning in October, including mugs of hot chocolate served in a roadside cafe.



Expanding the Spanish Footprint

October also brought Pastor David Mommens for 5 weeks of intensive language learning. He will use those skills for Spanish language services at his home church in Minnesota.



Reformation



Photo Credit for all pictures on this page:
Jana Inglehart



Pastor
Ybán
from our
home
congregation.



Photo Credit for all pictures on this page:
Jana Inglehart

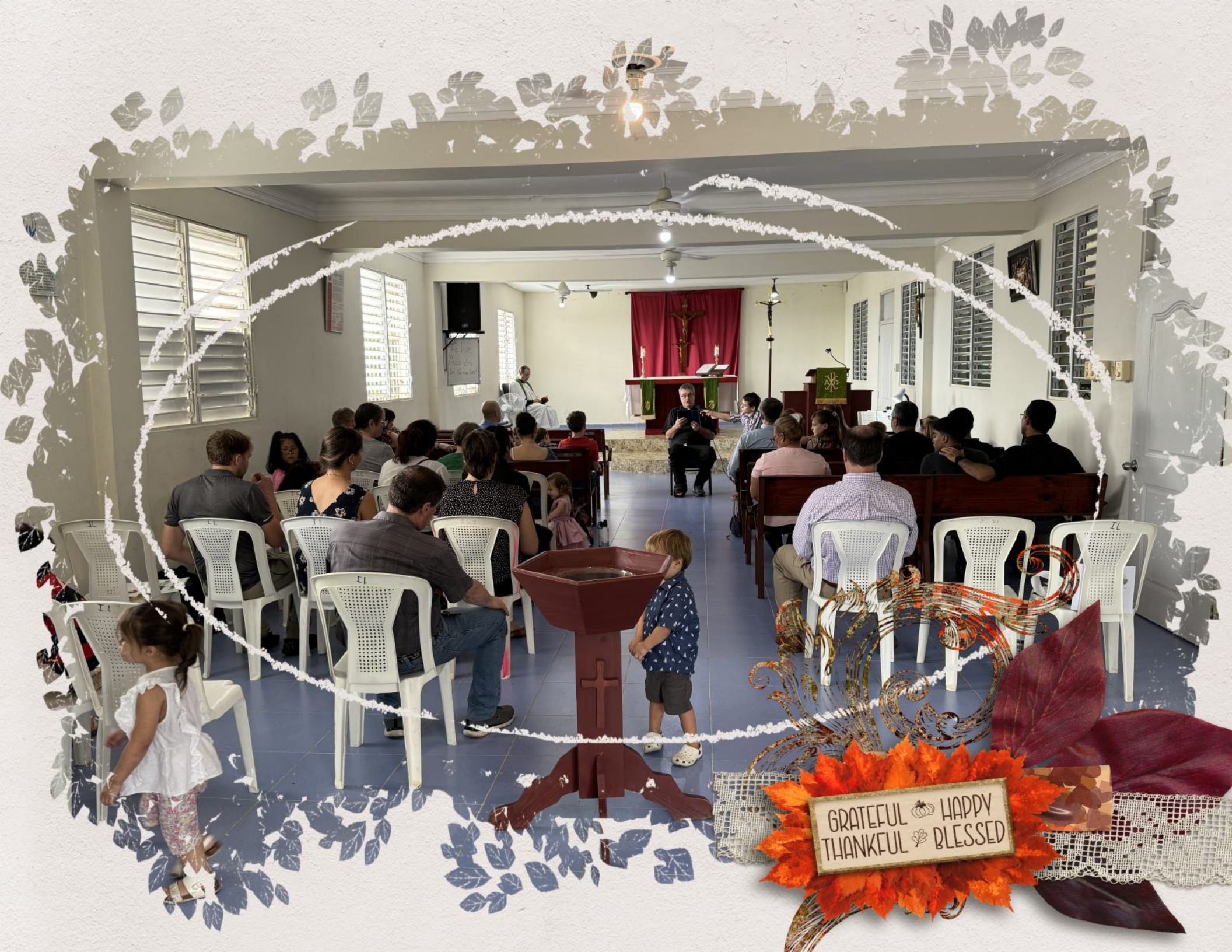
Reformation was celebrated by all 5 congregations together - 3 from Santiago and 2 who traveled by bus from Santo Domingo, about a 2.5 hour ride. We worshipped under tents on the basketball courts and were shaded and protected from the light rain that fell. Musicians from every church plus the seminary students added to the festive occasion. The service was followed by lunch.



Thankful



The only US specific holiday we celebrate as a team here is Thanksgiving. Stan and I started the day with our own personal Turkey Trot walking at the Santiago Botanical Garden. No dressed up turkeys or crowds of people but we enjoyed it just the same. Then we worshipped with all of the missionaries and seminary students and families. The students prepared some special music and the service was a mix of both English and Spanish so everyone understood some parts of it!



GRATEFUL & HAPPY
THANKFUL & BLESSED



After dinner, we shared our multicultural talents. Stan and I shared the pilgrim story in a simplified children's book way (which I think still was a confusion to the Latin American children!) We also heard a German song, a lovely hymn, an American Folk song, a song from Venezuela, and sang along with music from the Argentine pastors on keyboard, guitar, and accordion. A beautiful sharing of our many blessings.



blessings



Thankful for family, friends both old and new, delicious food of so many varieties, old traditions, new traditions, talents shared, encouragement from others, happy attitudes, FaceTime, healthy bodies, community both in person and virtual, grace, a Savior who came to earth and knows all our needs, water, a home with room for visitors, marriage, technology, visiting family, laughter, colorful markers, music, commitments,...



{thank}ful

Community Concerts

A free Christmas concert was given in both Santiago and Santo Domingo. It included music and Bible readings and every part of the Christmas story. In Santo Domingo it was held outside in a large gazebo in a public park across the street from the church. A popular park, many enjoyed both from inside and outside the gazebo. The seminary students had spent two days talking to neighborhood residents and inviting them to the concert.



Merry
Christmas
from
Santiago, DR

