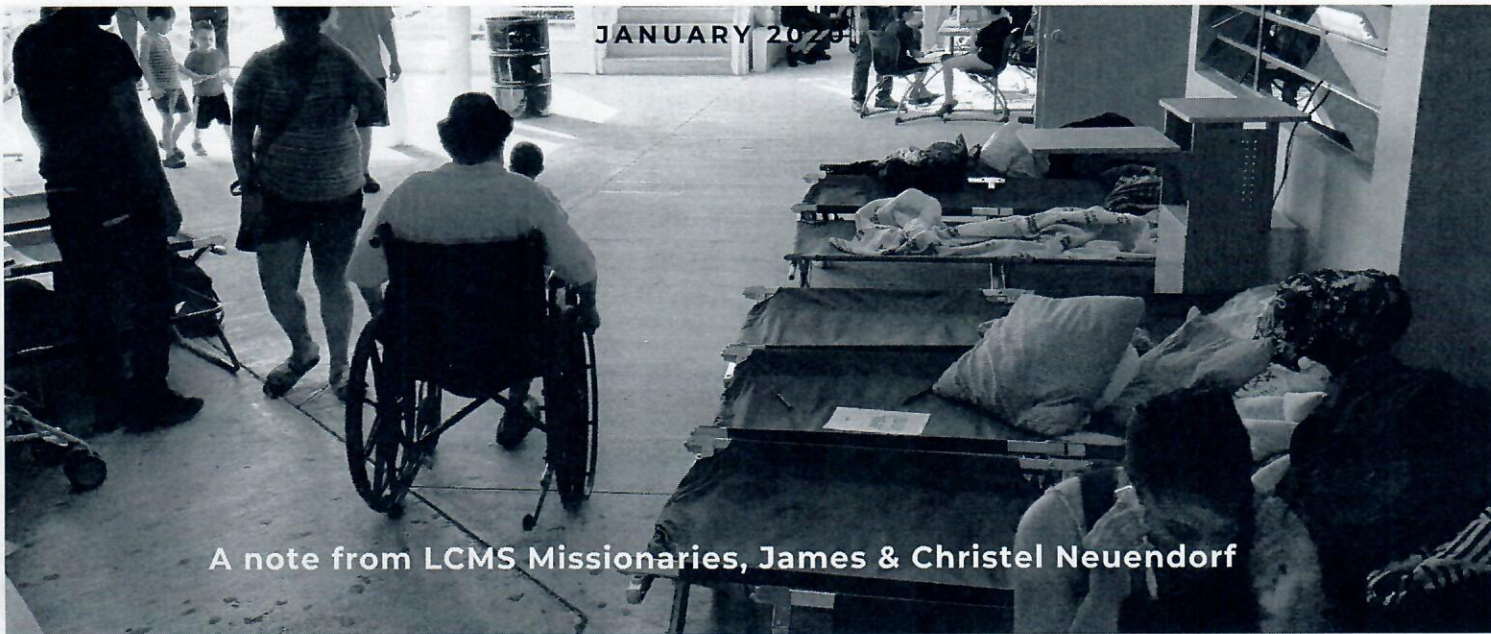


JANUARY 2018



A note from LCMS Missionaries, James & Christel Neuendorf

A Kingdom Not Shaken

26 At that time his voice shook the earth, but now he has promised, "Yet once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heavens." 27 This phrase, "Yet once more," indicates the removal of things that are shaken—that is, things that have been made—in order that the things that cannot be shaken may remain. 28 Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe, 29 for our God is a consuming fire. (Hebrews 12:26-29)

The last month has been a journey of faith and a trial of perseverance. Shepherding the flock across 5 different locations and moves since December has been nerve-racking and stressful. Seeing our brand-new property split from top to bottom by cracks through which the light of day can be seen has been disheartening. Canceling renovation teams and instead ordering demolition (for the dividing walls which were crumbling) has been demoralizing. The ground still shaking every day has been wearying and unnerving. Sharing in the grief and panic of those who have lost everything, whose children must sleep outside in a tent for weeks without answers, who have nowhere left to turn to and no hope for a future, has become our daily labor and burden. Every day the rules change, the situation remains unclear, and we stand on ever shifting ground both literally and figuratively.

So why are we so overwhelmingly excited, eager, and amazed? Why is the best description of our reaction to these earthquakes; worship, reverence and awe!?

Because we have a kingdom which cannot be shaken! The Lord has allowed our buildings to be damaged so that He could build His church which is not built by human hands. He has stripped away all but the essentials from everyone, so that hearts would be called to the essence of the Gospel. Because, those things are only means by which He delivers His Son to His people.

Prayers:

- Those displaced because of the earthquake
- Ongoing visitation
- Thanksgiving for arrival of Stephanie Wilde
- Thanksgiving for baptism of Angela

In the past month, your missionaries and your brothers and sisters in Ponce have been given the chance to publicly share the clear and unfiltered hope of the Gospel of Jesus to more than a thousand people. We have been privileged to be Jesus' hands of mercy to those who needed a better and lasting peace, His feet to those who felt alone and abandoned, His voice to those who did not know Him, His ears to those who needed someone to listen. He is working in and through His people by the power of the Holy Spirit to work miraculous change and faith like the blossoming of spring from the cold ground after a hard winter. In the devastation that surrounds us there is new life bursting forth everywhere!

The outpouring of support from the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod has allowed us to take a central role in the immediate disaster response with supplies and support, allowing us to work closely with the city leadership each day. Our tiny church of fewer than 20 played a central role in the first spiritual response for the entire city on the day of the biggest quake. (It strikes me that our congregation is probably about the size of those who could gather in the upper-room, who were also called forth to witness after a weekend of earthquakes). We have been able to provide pastoral counseling and care for leaders from the mayor to the justice department to becoming the de-facto chaplain of the Ponce police force. The ground has been prepared and we are sowing the seeds of the Gospel as broadly as we can. Some seedlings are already showing above the ground!

In God's infinite wisdom, our lack of a safe location to gather during the week has meant the opening of 5 separate devotional gatherings each week in different places with between 10-30 people in each one. Several families have asked for confirmation instruction and others are seeking baptism, one of which we did immediately, and most have begun instruction. Those shaken are giving way to the unshakeable kingdom!

Dear friends and partners in the Gospel, we have far too many exciting things to share in the space available in this newsletter, and in the time available to us for writing it down, know that we are well, though exhausted from the size of the labors provided to us, grateful for the support of our regional and global missionary team, and reflecting the words of St. Paul, *16 holding fast to the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I may be proud that I did not run in vain or labor in vain. 17 Even if I am to be poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrificial offering of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all. 18 Likewise you also should be glad and rejoice with me.*



Baptism of Angela



Rev. Anthony DiLiberto @ Refugee Camp



Stephanie's first Sunday!



Rev. Malta & Chrystal @ Refugee Camp with Salmos y Cafe group

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