

The Shields Family

Serving the Lord in Aruba

Dear Brethern in Christ,

Winter - 2020

As I sit down to write this end-of-the-year letter I am over-whelmed and amazed as I look back over 2020 and start connecting all the crazy dots and seemingly never-ending changes that we have lived through! God has truly shown Himself faithful and strong to us all on so many levels and in so many ways. I pray that as you have wrapped up your 2020 and started this new year that the Lord's grace and mercy are also clearly present in your life. Of the many blessings that I count from this last year are your friendship and faithfulness as you help sustain this ministry with your prayers and love offerings for the cause of the lost.

This year 2020 has been a difficult year for so many of us... but it has also been a year of much blessing and many open doors to serve the Lord! Here in Aruba we have had visitors almost every Sunday, and although there are still some who have not returned to church in regular attendance, there is a faithful group who have remained faithful and active throughout this whole ordeal. The Lord has touched hearts and there has been growth in specific areas of ministry. We have seen individuals come to Christ in these months and although we have not been allowed to baptize people due to the restrictions on the beach (which is where we baptize), there are several candidates awaiting the opportunity to do so. Some of the highlights of the last few months are:

- **BEAMS Bibles** – We have been needing more Bibles for a while now and it is not as easy, nor cheap, to get them here in Aruba as it was in Mexico. But, praise the Lord for the ministry of the dear people at BEAMs ministry that helped us get a whole pallet of English, Spanish, French, Portuguese, Italian, and Mandarin Bibles here in Aruba! It was a tremendous blessing to unload all those hard-back Bibles here at the church after praying for them for so long! By the way, *if any of you ever want to support a solid and truly effective ministry please consider looking into the ministry of BEAMs.*
- **Radio** – If you had asked me a year ago if I had any intention of doing anything with Radio I would have quickly said no... but, as the Lord has a way of doing things, He opened up some doors and literally dropped an invitation from a local radio station for us to start a program with them. So, long story short, we are now on Radio and Internet 5 days a week from 12:00 to 1:00 pm (basically, lunch time) for a monthly fee of \$400. It is a really good hour and we now have people from Aruba, USA, Mexico, Colombia, Venezuela, Ecuador, Chile, Dominican Rep, Panama, and Honduras listening (that we know of)! It is exciting to see how far-reaching this ministry can be! It does add a daily load and commitment of about 2 to 3 hours for me (Matt), but it seems to be time well-invested. Your prayers are definitely appreciated in this aspect.
- **Missions Conference** – We had our yearly missions conference in December with Missionary Matt Smith and his family of 7 who are going to Colombia. We loved having them here and were challenged as a church to continue supporting worldwide missions. We hope to start supporting the Smiths beginning in 2021; with them, that would put us at 7 missionaries that we support as a church.
- **Visas** – It is a LONG STORY... but, praise the Lord all three of our visas came in for Naomi, Belen, and me. For the rest of the kid's, it is still up in the air and it looks like we will not be able to get their visas until the end of

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2021. I never thought it would take this long but the reality is still that we cannot travel as a family until the paperwork is all in order. So, for all of our supporting churches it is looking like we will not be stateside until very late 2021 or early 2022. I know, we are really over-due to visit many of you but I cannot take my family out and risk them not being able to not get back in to our field of service. All I can say is that if any of you want me to travel to your church from Aruba (by myself) then I am willing to do that. The honest truth is that I could not leave the church for any extended amount of time anyway, not until we have more of an established internal leadership. Thank you for your patience and consistent support of this ministry, we know that we could not be here serving if it were not for your generosity and love for church planting. Your prayers are our life-line! Also, we have heard from several of our pastors and churches that are interested in coming down to visit us in this 2021 – we are super excited as always to have visitors!

As to all the regular aspects of ministry we are trying to surf the COVID regulations and changes and try to get back to a normal schedule of evangelism, discipleship classes, Sunday School, youth activities, children’s Bible Club, and such. And, we are in the continual process of learning the different aspects of online ministry. I know that many of you are surfing the same issues and it is not easy. The positive side is that many ears and eyes are turned to the Gospel throughout all of this. May the Lord bring glory to Himself throughout this whole situation and through our lives and ministries.

At this moment Naomi and Belen are back in Missouri. Naomi’s papers came in late November so I surprised her with tickets to go back for a Deatrick family Christmas. She left on the 23rd and comes home on the 8th of Jan. We have really missed her but know that this has been a special time for her and her family. There is also a family of 7 coming to visit us from Arkansas on the 7th of Jan; they are from one of our supporting churches. As mentioned above, we love having visitors!

Hope and pray each of you are well and please know that we wish you a very Happy New Years! May the Lord be glorified and the Gospel preached in this 2021. Don’t forget that the enemy wants us to stay on the defensive while we should remain on the offensive! Let’s attack the gates of Hell with the good news of the Gospel – they cannot prevail! (Mt. 16:18)

Yours for the Cause of Christ,

Matt for the Shields Family

I Cor. 16:23

