

# The Shields Family

Serving on the Island of Aruba

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Last week Naomi and I went to Georgetown, SC for the 5<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Iglesia Bautista Ebenezer with Pastor Ezequiel Ramirez. It was a needed break in the ordinary for Naomi (*especially right before the baby arrives*) and we were greatly blessed, and I would say, even spoiled by the people at Ebenezer! We got back to Aruba on Monday, got a green light with Naomi's mid-wife on Tuesday, and on Thursday we applied for Naomi's 3<sup>rd</sup> work permit. Please help us pray that the permit would go all the way through the process with no complications. Also, we were told that we could apply for the kids permits now, without waiting for my 4<sup>th</sup> permit as we were previously told... if this is true it is really good news! Again, please add this detail to your prayer list!

Dear Brethren in Christ,

March, 2019

Greetings to each of you from the warm, sunny island of Aruba! I know that many of you have been through a very heavy and tedious winter and although I miss playing in the snow, I must say that I am thankful for the consistent 80-85 degree weather of our little island!

There has been so much going on, and there is so much that we want to let you know about, but in respect of your time and space I am going to try to condense it all in as few lines as possible. Of course, we are always open to "deeper" communication through any of the digital means, so if there is ever any questions or comments please let us know!

We had a great closing to 2018 with many evangelistic activities and opportunities. We did **evangelistic caroling**, **Christmas visits to the nursing home**, special services and activities in homes and the church, but my personal favorite was at the **hospital**... about 15 of us got permission to go floor by floor and sing to the patients and care-givers. As we went we also gave out packages of home-made goodies and thanked the nurses and doctors for their work. We were very well received and we have had very good feed-back from patients and staff at the hospital. The doors are wide open to do something like that again and an extra special blessing is that Sister Natalia and her kids have started coming to regular services since the outreach!

2019 started with many new challenges, but to face them our ministry has decided to put an even greater focus on prayer before the Lord. The Lord said that His house would be called "a house of prayer" although the average service in a Baptist church has less than 5 minutes of prayer! So, we have always made our Sunday night service to be focused on prayer, but now we started this year with an added weekly service focused only on prayer. We go to a different home each week and pray for as long as it takes to get through the group present on that night. This time has been well received by our people, and is showing fruit in us and in the Lord's answers to our prayers!

In January, we made contact with an Aruban lady through a mutual friend in Colombia. We talked with **Diana** over the phone for several weeks and then Naomi and I had a meeting with her and her husband, and two friends at her house. We talked late into the night and counseled much on family matters as well as witnessing to all 4 of them. They have not made a decision as of yet, but they are coming to church on Sundays, and I am having Bible studies with them on Monday nights (9-12 PM)!

One of the highlights of the last two months has been our visitors from the USA; first we had **Laura Deatricks** come down from Paxton, IL for a month, and then we had **Les and April Heywood**, from Colombia, MO together with **Mrs. Brenda** (April's mom) come for another month. We thoroughly enjoyed the fellowship and time with these dear people as we served together and got to know each other better. Laura is our relative so the kids got in a lot of extra fun cousin time, plus Laura got to serve in several different areas while here. The Heywood's were a special blessing to us in many ways, but one of the biggest items that they helped with was our **Love Banquet in February**. We had 40+ people for the banquet and it was a beautiful time of fellowship, food, thought provoking lessons, and just plain fun! *You can see a lot of pictures of this activity and many more if you go to our Facebook page at **Iglesia Bautista Berea de Aruba**.* As it usually happens with this type of activities we had several first-time visitors and some of them have come back to church in the last few weeks! Of those please help us pray for **Rosalba and Carlos**, their adult daughter **Ariani, Janet, Cristina, Pitt** (a 90-year-old Jewish man), and lastly another man, **Jose Xanicio**; they are regular contacts and as far as we know, they are **unsaved and need the Lord!**

We ask you to pray for several of our churches as they are still in need of a Pastor. We have just this past month had letters from two of our supporting churches letting us know that our support will be suspended or reduced due to the financial situation in which they find themselves. We love and appreciate each of our supporting churches and their Pastors! We pray for you all often and know that you face many needs and challenges just as we do on the field... we would love to help lift up those needs here in Aruba at our church and our home, just reach out and let us know about your request. We would love to be better informed and involved!

**Berea Baptist is doing well**; we rarely have a week without a visitor and almost every time we go door knocking there is some kind of encouraging result. Naomi and I are both actively giving discipleship studies throughout each week, the Saturday Bible Institute is close to finishing another set of classes, and our English service is still our smallest service, but is going well also. These past two months we taught and preached on the theme "**I love my Church**" with lessons on everything from the doctrine of the Church, to the rules of etiquette to be followed within the church. It seems to have been well received and a blessing to many. As we look into the future there are so many unknowns and doubts as to what will happen, but I must say that it is

exciting to know that Berea is not "my" church or ministry... IT IS THE LORD'S! He will control it, He will sustain it, He will guide it, He will protect it, and He will perfect it! I am just honored to be a small part of it! And I thank you for being a part of this too! **We don't know how much time we have left; may we work for the Lord as if this was our last day... because it just might be!**

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On the family side things are about the same as they usually are in a big family – BUSY! **Caleb** is still working morning as a grocery bagger and he just turned 16 on the 3<sup>rd</sup>, **Tirsa** turned 14 on the 7<sup>th</sup> and is becoming more and more a young lady with a sweet demeanor outside and inside, **Selah** turned 12 on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of February and is just a great big ball of fun! The rest of the kids are doing well also, growing and learning every day. **Naomi is 37 weeks pregnant today with Shields baby #8; we could have her with us any time now!** The pregnancy has been a good one but Naomi is worn down and tired, we are ready for this part of the process to be past. **Please keep her and our little baby girl in your prayers over the next few weeks.** As soon as we have her in our arms we will announce the arrival and post some pictures. As to myself, well, I am trying to learn how to balance working my part time job with church and family, especially since I need to be around the house more with the baby coming soon. I do ask you to pray for my health – I have had some Crohn's attacks recently and although it had been years since I have had a flare up, my fear would be for it to get bad again and become an issue that needs immediate attention. This December I turned 38 and I thank the Lord for each day and year that I have been able to serve Him, and Lord-willing I look forward to many more years in His service. Our life is His... we seek His glory, His purpose, and His will. Thank you for being an active part of helping us accomplish the Lord's will and purpose in our lives and ministry, we are honored to be partners with you in this amazing endeavor and journey.

Your Partners for the Cause of Christ,

Matthew Shields and Family

II Cor. 5:11-21