

September 2, 2019

Dear Supporting Pastors and Friends,

Hope you are each well and that the Lord's purpose and glory were advanced yesterday in each of your ministries. Yesterday we had our average crowds for all four of our services plus an extra blessing of having the Bekker family with us in the 8:30 am English service. The Bekker's have lived in the neighboring island of Curacao for 33 years and have moved back to their home island of Aruba and are looking for a good church. Please pray for this family of 3 as they seek God's will for their life. In our 10:00 am Spanish service we had a lady visit us for the first time and then we had another 4 or 5 who were back for their third or fourth visit. The Lord has been slowly adding to the congregation as He sees fit. Not every visitor stays, and we are fine with that, we only want those that the Lord wants in Berea.

I just finished up a series on parenting in the Spanish morning service and I have been teaching a men's class in our bilingual Sunday School with a series out of I Cor. 16:13, 14, "Behaving like a true man". The Lord has been working in homes and marriages and we have been privileged to see fruit in these last few months that only the Lord can give! The longer I serve the Lord in ministry, the more I am shocked about how many distorted and wrecked marriages and homes there are today! Like in most ministries I'm sure, we are losing many of our teens... I am burdened for our young people, so many of them come from broken homes and there is only so much we can do for them. Please pray for us and with us as we try to train and lift up a new generation that will turn their hearts to God and rebuild the foundation of their lives and future homes!

I have been wanting to write you all this note since last week and for one reason or another I did not, but today I believe that it is the right moment. More than anything, I simply wanted to put a few prayer requests out there for you and to let you know some of the details of how things are for us here in Aruba at this moment.

Housing – We started going through plumbing problems with the house we rent at the beginning of this year and it came to a head about 6 weeks ago. The situation was bad enough for us to break contract with the owner, but the long story short, is that the owner was willing to take it to court in order to make us stay here. As I write this the plumbers are outside filling in the ditches and finishing up the job. We had to move out of the home for a week because of the situation and now that it is over there is a danger that we are going to be sued for damages and repairs. The problem happened because the old Asbestos lines broke and caved in, but they have changed all this over the weekend and in some areas, they just cleaned out the lines and did not even dig them up. So, now they say that it was the use of our family that caused the damages, not the lines... I really think that we have a strong case in our favor, but Naomi and I have decided that we will not fight this any longer unless there is no other path left open to us. We will ride this out no matter how uncomfortable, but we do not wish to get into a legal and public battle. Would you please pray with us that the Lord would touch the heart of Mr. Hese and that he would be willing to just let things go? We have been in this home for 43 months and have another 8 months of contract left; we truly desire to be able to leave with our head held high and with a clean and warm relationship with the landlord.

Church Property – In this area we have two request... the first is that we are in the process of making a petition to the government for a piece of land and although it would never be "truly" ours, we could finally have a place to build what we need and stop paying rent (which

by far is our highest expense here in Aruba). Please pray for the officials to be led to an affirmative answer on the petition and for the correct leading as to the location of the plot of ground, as this could seriously affect the visibility and function of our local church. Another aspect of this land request is that according to law, once you have the property in hand you have 6 months to begin building! Our church has very little saved up and we cannot get a loan as a church at this time, so building would be a very difficult step for us at this moment; although, if we don't stop renting it will be very difficult to ever have the cash flow to build! So, one thing goes with the other... please pray about this long-term goal with us.

Church Rent – one of the good things that came out of our difficulty with our rent house as a family is that we started searching for a new house to rent and in the process found a new building that has high potential for our church to rent! We are currently paying \$1,860 dollars a month for our current church building and this new house would be \$1,150, so although it is smaller and not as public and visible as the place that we are now in we are strongly considering a changeover to this new location. An added benefit is that the house itself would work for my family (once we leave this house in 8 months) and since the yard is huge and all covered in concrete we could build a shack temple in the yard and have the pastoral home and the church building in the same place! This would save us around \$1,800 a month!!! Please pray for the owners as they consider these options and for us as we try to discern the Lord's will. It is never easy to down-size, nor is it a good step to go back in to the back roads and lose the visibility, but at this time it seems to be the right step so that we can move forward towards our own land and the funds to build a building.

Thank you so much for your time in reading this and in praying for us and with about these details, it means a lot to us to know that we have churches that back us not only in finances, but specifically in prayer and counsel! We have some exciting weeks coming up! Not only because of the above-mentioned issues, but also because we have visitors coming! Bro. Kevin Carr and his wife are arriving tomorrow and will be here a week and then next week Pastor Dan Fox from our sending church will be here with his family for 10 days. We are excited to have both these families minister with us and look forward to what the Lord is going to do amongst us in the coming days.

Please greet your families and congregations on our behalf and thank you so much for your faithful service and ministry. We hope to visit you sometime soon although our family visas for the kids are still a point that seems to be in the far future, and until that is cleared up they cannot leave the island. Having said that, if you need me to come visit and represent my family then I would love to do so, simply let me know and we can try to set up a date and trip at some future time.

Your Fellow Servant in Christ,
Matt Shields

P.S. I welcome any counsel and suggestions, or any kind of feed-back.

“Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee.” Isaiah 26:3