

RONNIE AND JAQUE MACKENSEN • JANUARY 2021 • CHIRIQUI, PANAMA



*Being greeted by Alvaro Barrantes upon our arrival in Panama*

country, and we became great friends with the missionaries there as well. We are definitely missing them—Milo and Raquel Seravalli, Lily Ortega, and Aaron Cordero. We thank God for their friendship and all that they taught and did for us while we were there. We also thank God that we were able to become friends with many Nicaraguan brothers and sisters in Christ. God truly blessed us and our time in Nicaragua.

We arrived in Panama City on October 25 and were met by our team partner Alvaro Barrantes. We made our way to the west part of Panama to the city of David. We stayed in the Barrantes family's home for a few weeks as we looked for a house to rent. Thanks be to

## We finally made it to Panama!

God has been moving quickly and greatly in our lives during these past six months. We completed language school and moved to Nagarote, Nicaragua, for a short time which gave us the opportunity to participate and work more with the Arraigados church. A few months later we unexpectedly had the opportunity to fly to Panama where we are now finally settled and working with the Barrantes family in our new field where we plan to serve—Panama.

After finishing 647 hours of language school, we made the decision to move from the capital city of Nicaragua, Managua, where we were studying Spanish, to Nagarote, Nicaragua, where the GMI church is located, Arraigados. We decided to move to Nagarote because the coronavirus pandemic had the world on lockdown and we were unable to move to Panama at the time. Rather than be inactive and waiting for borders to open and travel restrictions to cease, we decided to be proactive and move to Nagarote where we could actively participate in the Arraigados church and continue using and practicing our Spanish.

We moved to Nagarote in August and continued in the ministries there. Ronnie did outreach ministries teaching English and Taekwondo while Jaque started a Portuguese class that allowed her to build connections with people in the community. Living in Nagarote allowed us to attend and help with more weekly ministries at the church. Later in October, we received news that flights to Panama had become available which opened the door for us to go to our field. So we took the opportunity and went to Panama! We really value the time we had in Nicaragua. We learned our Spanish there, we learned a lot about doing ministry in a foreign



*Nicaraguan team having a goodbye meal with Ronnie and Jaque*



*The Panama team*

God, we were able to find a great home in a good neighborhood that is less than five minutes away from the Alvaro and Mauren's home. Having found a home so close to our team members was a huge blessing for us because we are new to this country but also more importantly because almost all of the connections and relationships that the Barrantes family has made so far are with people from their neighborhood. These neighborhoods are going to be a great starting point for our team as we expand our ministry and eventually plant our church. The Panama team's goal is to evangelize and disciple others, teaching them the Word of God by sharing the gospel of grace with them. Our team also hopes that we will plant the first grace church in Panama. Having this desire, we are trying to purchase land in Panama so that we can build a grace church where the Body of Christ in Panama can meet and worship the Lord. Our Panama land project is currently at \$27,621 and our goal is to raise \$30,000. We are now less than \$3,000 away from our goal! If you would like to donate towards the land project you can donate here: <https://gracem.org/project/panama-land/>.

As we have said before, Alvaro and Mauren Barrantes over the past year have made many good relationships within their neighborhood. After meeting many of their friends and contacts, we hit the ground running and decided to start a Saturday kids' club similar to Awana in the neighborhood park. The kid's club started small with only 5 kids but as time went on, each Saturday more and more kids were beginning to come. The last kids' club we had there were about 12 kids! We ask that you please pray for this ministry as it continues to grow and also pray that God guides us and continually gives us wisdom in this ministry. We also as a team decided to start church services in the Barrantes family home. Although right now there aren't many people who are attending, we are opening our doors and inviting the community to come and join us to worship God and study His Word. Pray for these services that



*Kids' club meeting in the neighborhood park*

God brings people to them and that the Body of Christ continues to grow.

As we look to the future, we are hoping and dreaming that God continues to open doors for our ministry. We are hoping to start English, Portuguese, and Taekwondo classes soon and use these classes as forms of outreach to the community. These ministries were used in Nicaragua and were great ways that we made connections with people. Our desire is to use these same ministries to form new relationships that will ultimately give us opportunities to share the gospel, disciple and teach, and even invite people to our church services. The Panama field is growing and moving forward, and we are excited to see what doors God will open for us.

Other prayer requests we have are for our health that we may stay healthy during this time of the coronavirus. We ask that you pray for the people here that their hearts may be softened to hearing and accepting the gospel. Please pray that in God's timing we raise the necessary funds to buy land to plant and build a church here. We are also still raising funds to buy a Panama vehicle. Many people have already donated towards this project and we thank you all for your prayers and your support. We have currently raised \$13,750 out of \$16,000! Please pray

that the remainder will be raised soon. If you would like to donate towards this Panama vehicle project you can donate at: <https://gracem.org/project/mackensen-vehicle/>.

Our final prayer request is in regards to an upcoming trip. We will have to travel to Brazil in April for three months. Jaque has to update some of her legal documents in Brazil before we can apply for our permanent residency in Panama. Many of these legal processes can be very slow, meticulous, and...bureaucratic. Please pray that during this time we are able to complete all legal documents and processes before we return to Panama. This way when we arrive back in Panama we can successfully apply and obtain residency. Also pray that the time in Brazil is rejuvenating and a time of encouragement with family.

We thank you all for your love, support, and prayers for our ministry. We are praying for you, your health, and that God is always drawing you closer to Him.

Blessings,

Ronnie and Jaque Mackensen