

# MACKENSEN MEMO

Hello, Family and Friends,

It has been awhile since we last updated you with news from Panama. Last time we wrote it was July, and we were just arriving from Brazil (Jaque's home country) starting our Panamanian permanent residency process and getting back into the ministries here in David, Panama. Let's fill in the gap!

We spent nearly three months in Brazil obtaining the proper official documents needed to take to Panama in order to apply for Panamanian permanent residency. Upon arrival in Panama at the end of July, we successfully applied for our permanent residency, giving us a six-month temporary visa in Panama, as the government reviewed and decided on our residency application. We can happily report that after five months of awaiting a decision from the Panamanian government, we were finally granted permanent residency in Panama! This is a huge blessing because it allows us to stay and live in Panama permanently and it also allows us to more effectively and consistently serve the Lord in the advancement of His Word.

After arriving and applying for our residency, we returned to the city of David where we rejoined our missionary partners, Alvaro and Mauren Barrantes and continued our ministries there. Our main ministries have been our Sunday services and our kids' club (AWANA program). Our church (or the original Greek, ekklesia...called-out group)

has been meeting in the Barrantes' home. We are now looking for a place to rent that will allow us to more comfortably meet and also give us more exposure to the city of David. We named our church "Comunidad Bíblica de la Gracia" (which would roughly be "Grace Bible Fellowship or Community.") We also named the kids' club group, "Equipados," which means "Equipped" because the group desires and strives to be fully approved or equipped before the Lord, knowing and rightly dividing the Word of Truth as it says in 2 Timothy 2:15.

We are adding more ministries to the Sunday services and Equipados ministry. Jaque and Mauren started "Grupo de chicas" or "young girl's group" with a few of the girls in the local neighborhood who've been attending the Saturday Equipado club. Jaque and Mauren spend time doing crafts or sometimes cooking or baking with the girls and later they have a small Bible lesson. Each girl has a craft book where they can add and collect each one of the crafts that they make and add it to a page in the craft book. This ministry has allowed relationships between the girls and also between the girls and Mauren and Jaque to grow and become much closer and stronger. It also has allowed the girls to really open up and become more comfortable and learn together about God's Word.

Ronnie started to disciple a young man named Dilan (Dylan). Dilan is one of the kids who has been attending the kids' club

since the very beginning. Dilan is 12 years old and he and his family are originally from Colombia but he has lived most of his life here in Panama. Ronnie and Dilan have been studying some of the basic teachings of the Bible. As we come into the new year, Ronnie is hoping to continue this discipleship with him. Ronnie's hope is that God continues to work on Dilan's heart and continues transforming his life. We are praying that one day Dilan might be one of the leaders in our church, Comunidad Bíblica de la Gracia.

In October our team had the amazing opportunity to be part of a large evangelism event, sharing the gospel of grace with refugees! As many of you know, many people around the world have been trying to travel to the United States through central America and Mexico. Many of these refugees were from countries such as Haiti, Venezuela, Columbia, Cuba, and many more countries. Almost all of these refugees had to start their trip in Panama. On October 16, our team participated in a huge evangelism event where we went out on the streets of David (our city) and spoke with many of these refugees. The reality is many of these refugees have the hope and dream of obtaining success and happiness by going to the US. We shared the true Hope with them, sharing that we will only have true happiness and completeness when we have a relationship with our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. We hope and pray that those who heard the gospel message



Kids' Sunday School skit about Joshua



Ronnie discipling Dilan



Young girls' group



Panama team evangelizing Haitian refugees

chose to believe and have a relationship with our Lord and Savior Christ Jesus.

Another ministry we started was a WhatsApp weekly audio devotional. WhatsApp is a popular messaging application in Latin America, similar to "iMessage" on iPhones but not requiring cellular plans or iPhones to use. Jaque started a weekly audio (recorded) devotional message which was sent out to our contacts which then could be sent out to further contacts. These devotionals had a short 2-3 minute biblical reflection, and at the end Jaque always left her contact number and an invitation to attend a service at our church, Comunidad Bíblica de la Gracia.

In November, Equipados, the kids' club had its first anniversary after completing its first year. We pray that the kids continue to grow and more and more come to join the group. Ronnie preached for his first time in Spanish at Comunidad Bíblica de la Gracia. Pray that his preaching continues to become smoother and that more people can hear God's Word. Finally, in December we had a Christmas program in the local park of our neighborhood. There was a worship service, a Kids' Christmas play, and short reflection and celebration of the true meaning of Christmas which is the celebration of the birth of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Around 30 adults attended the Christmas program, many of whom were the parents of the kids who are a part of our kids' club program, Equipados! We hope that the hearts of the people who attended were touched and that they may come to our church services to learn more about God's Word.

As we look ahead, we are excited to plan and dream and see what God has in store for us. We are hoping to rent a place where our Sunday church services can meet. Find a place to rent will also allow us to begin



Ronnie preaching for the first time

other ministries such as Taekwondo martial arts classes, English classes, Portuguese classes, and so many more ministries. As the Panamanian team, we are hoping to form and plant a church where the gospel of grace is proclaimed and where people can come to hear and learn from God's Word. Our hope is that Panamanian nationals will become part of the Body of Christ. We also hope that they will come to understand, know, and rightly divide God's Word, as it says in 2 Timothy 2:15.

#### Praises:

- We praise God that we were approved for our Panamanian permanent residency.
  - We praise God that the ministries are going well and are continuing to grow.
  - We praise God for the donation that was given to the Panama field which will allow us to rent a building for the next year!
  - We praise God for His provision in this year's Christmas catalog projects. This year, the Panama team had three Christmas projects and all three projects were completely funded! Thank you all for your prayers and support! One of these projects was a "Panama Martial arts project." The amount needed for this project was completely raised but if others would still like to donate you can do so at <https://gracem.denarionline.com/Projects/Detail/?givingOption=57A4D9BF27>. Our goal is to raise \$100,000 and we are currently at \$45,591.
  - Please pray for Jaque's health as she experiences her first pregnancy...she is still trying to get used to the different stages of the pregnancy.
  - And finally, please pray for our baby that things continue to go well and that the baby one day grows up to be a child of God.
- As we look ahead, we are excited to plan and dream and see what God has in store for us. We are hoping to rent a place where our Sunday church services can meet. Find a place to rent will also allow us to begin
- We give thanks to God for the amazing gift of life and we thank him for the little life that is on the way...Jaque is pregnant! There's going to be a little Bra-pan-american!



Ronnie and Jaque excited about becoming parents

- We also thank God for allowing Ronnie's parents to visit this past Christmas and New Year. Ronnie hadn't seen them since 2019.

#### Prayers:

- Please pray that we can find a good place to rent which has sufficient space for Sunday services and the ministries we'd like to do.
- Please pray for the martial arts ministry that Ronnie is going to start. This will be the first time Ronnie has started a school. Please pray for guidance and wisdom. Please pray that he can pass down a unique art while more importantly discipling his students to be followers of Christ.
- Pray that we can eventually purchase our own land here in Panama so that we can build our church, Comunidad Bíblica de la Gracia. If you would like to donate to the Panama land project you can at, <https://gracem.denarionline.com/Projects/Detail/?givingOption=57A4D9BF27>. Our goal is to raise \$100,000 and we are currently at \$45,591.
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- And finally, please pray for our baby that things continue to go well and that the baby one day grows up to be a child of God.

Thank you all so much!

In Christ,

Ronnie and Jaque Mackensen