



## Matt and April SYKES

March 2020

### ...serving the Lord in Nicaragua

Dear Friends and Family,

Thank you so much for your prayers and financial support! When we last wrote, we informed you of our decision to transition from the field of Puerto Rico to the field of Nicaragua. Our purpose as a couple is to serve our community by intentionally making disciples, multiplying leaders, and impacting individuals with Christ's love. We are excited because we feel like we will really be able to accomplish this purpose for God in Nicaragua. We want to take this opportunity to report to you about our final months in Puerto Rico, share some blessings from our time on home assignment, and look forward to our move to Nicaragua.

One of the goals we decided was very important to us was to finish our time in Puerto Rico well. God provided many opportunities to accomplish this goal. Matt trained his replacement, Jean Carlos, as the new Mission Adventure Team Director at Camp Caribe. He is a Puerto Rican and we are excited that Camp is now fully turned over to and run by nationals. Despite the closing of Club Maravilla, April sent 33 kids to Camp Caribe from our neighborhood this past summer. They were all able to attend for free, thanks to the scholarship fund and generous donors from the States! We also used the remaining Club Maravilla program funds to buy new backpacks for each child and fill them with

school supplies for our neighborhood kids before we left. Thirty kids received backpacks, which was a great opportunity to invite the parents of our students to our home so we could share with them, say goodbyes, and tell them why God was calling us to Nicaragua. During our last couple of weeks, we spent time packing, cleaning, and making minor repairs to the property to get it ready to sell. We had a neighborhood garage sale that led to April sharing the gospel with people who stopped by and giving things away to families in need. Any leftover supplies and tools from the ministry were divided up and donated to Camp Caribe and a local elementary school. We also sold our vehicles and took care of some last-minute details before leaving Puerto Rico on September 7, 2019.

The week after we got back to the States, we flew to North Carolina so Matt could serve as a groomsman in the wedding of one of his best friends, and Matt was able to spend time with family while he was in the area. We celebrated our two-year wedding anniversary on October 21, 2019. Then we attended a marriage conference in early November that we found beneficial to grow and strengthen our marriage. We were especially blessed to spend the holidays with our families, as it has been several years since we had a family Thanksgiving or Christmas. Throughout our time back home, we have met with the Grace Ministries Interna-



*Some of the Club kids we sent to Camp Caribe for summer camp*



*Neighborhood kids who received new backpacks full of school supplies*

tional home office staff on several occasions, as well as with the GMI board to give updates on ourselves and our ministry. We have also taken several opportunities to meet with individuals and families to share about our plans for Nicaragua.

Starting in January of this year, we began to travel around the country to speak at churches and share about both our time in Puerto Rico and our future in Nicaragua. We first stopped in Georgia to speak at Matt's parents' church before traveling to the Mobile, Alabama, area to speak at four different churches. From there, we traveled to North Carolina to meet with the missions committee at Matt's home church. Once we got back to Michigan, we spoke at one more church before leaving for a weeklong missionary debrief in Joplin, Missouri. We found this to be a valuable experience as we reflected on our time in Puerto Rico, "unpacked" some of our experiences, and processed through the good and the bad. We are now in the West Michigan area until late March because there are many churches we are sharing with here during their missions conferences. Then we will travel to Pennsylvania, Wisconsin, and New York to continue visiting and sharing about our future in Nicaragua. Our goal is to be in Nicaragua by mid-May.

When we first arrive in Nicaragua, we will spend a few months in the capital city of Managua, where April will continue some language study, and Matt will continue some theological training. It is our expectation to be involved in the ministry in Nagarote on a limited basis as we are available (more than likely on the weekends). From Managua, we will travel to Costa Rica for a three-month ministry training in evangelism, discipleship, and church planting that will help us to gain the vision for our new field. This is the same training that our teammates, Emiliano and Raquel Seravalli, did before they began the ministry in Nicaragua.



*Matt and April on the Gulf Coast in Alabama*

Immediately following this training, the plan is to move to the town of Nagarote, Nicaragua, to begin full-time ministry.

We will be coming alongside Milo and Raquel, as well as Lilybeth Ortega, who joined the team in January. Our goal is to disciple believers and equip leaders so they can take over the ministry in Nagarote or start new ministries elsewhere. This could include other areas of Nicaragua or possibly across the border into Honduras. While we do not yet know all the details of what we will do, we expect that in addition to discipling and leadership training, we will help host mission teams and Matt hopes to teach at the Bible training institute. April has a real desire to mentor and disciple young women. She also desires to help develop the kids club that currently meets on Saturdays into an after-school type of ministry that meets during the week. We may also help with the youth group, among other things. Milo and Raquel currently have many, many responsibilities, so we are excited to join them in ministry and help take on some of the workload.

Please pray for:

- Good health and safe travels
- God's financial provision as we fundraise
- Smooth transitions
- For our team to have shared vision and good communication



*Matt on a Q & A panel at the Parkside Bible Church Missions Conference*

*Matt and April  
Sykes*