

# Matt & April SYKES

*Serving the Lord in Nicaragua*



March 2021

Dear Friends and Family,

We hope this letter finds you well. We have been living in Nicaragua for the last four months and we are still getting settled in. Our purpose as a couple is to intentionally make disciples, multiply leaders, and impact individuals with Christ's love to serve our community. We have already begun to do this in our new field. We would like to take this opportunity to update you on all that has happened since we last wrote in September!

After months of waiting, we praise the Lord that we finally arrived in Nicaragua on November 14, 2020! There was some uneasiness in the days leading up to our departure, as we had already purchased tickets for a flight leaving in October, only to have that flight



*Plane ride*

cancelled shortly afterwards. We were also unsure about the timing of our Covid-19 tests, as there was only a small window to get the results back in time for the flight. Nevertheless, everything went as planned and we arrived safely.

We originally planned on living in the capital city of Managua for a few months for language training before attending an intensive ministry training in Costa Rica for three months. The training in Costa Rica was cancelled and April felt like she had made good enough progress improving her Spanish during our time in the United States, so we decided to move directly to

Nagarote, the town where we are currently serving. Our teammates, Milo and Raquel Seravalli, were kind enough to host us in their home for about two weeks while we looked at houses and began to settle in. We are very thankful that we found a nice home to rent and we were able to furnish it. We also found a reliable, used car. Those are two huge answers to prayer!

About a week and a half before we left Michigan, we found out that April was pregnant. She is currently nearing the end of her second trimester, and our baby girl is due in early July! Unfortunately, April has had a very rough time with the pregnancy so far. Especially in the early stages, she had severe nausea and vomiting, no energy, was having trouble eating or even staying hydrated. She was hospitalized once in December for a few days, and then again in January for a full week. During the January hospital stay, she underwent an unexpected surgery to remove her gallbladder. Although she is not completely well, April is currently doing better than she was. The baby is also healthy and doing well! We are thankful for the progress she has made, but continue to pray for



*Baby girl on the way*



*Matt preaching*

strength and relief from her symptoms. Due to April's health challenges, Matt has made taking care of her his priority, but has still been involved in various ministries.

Back in November, Arraigados (our church) held its first ever youth retreat. It was a great time of fun and relationship building, but most importantly, biblical teaching. The name of the camp was "Cerca," which means "Close," and the youth heard about how our God wants to have a relationship with us and to be close to us. This was the first way Matt was able to step into a leadership role in our new field.

Matt has been consistently involved in the different ministries of the church, such as youth group, college group, kids' club, and the Sunday service. He has even preached twice. This is a huge step, as Matt had only ever preached one time before moving to Nicaragua, and never in Spanish. Matt has also begun meeting on a weekly basis with one of the young

leaders at the church to do discipleship together. He is currently praying for discernment about who else God would have him begin a disciple-making relationship with.

This last year has certainly been one where things did not go according to plan—first with our delays, the training in Costa Rica getting canceled, and then with April getting so sick during the pregnancy. We had hoped that we would both be able to dive right into ministry as soon as we got to Nicaragua, but that is not how it worked out. We are reminded of Proverbs 3:5-6, which says, "Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths." During such times of transition and changing plans, we are having to constantly look to God for guidance, as we trust that He is directing our paths. All-in-all, we

have both much to be thankful for and much that we would ask you to continue to join us in prayer for. We thank you so much for all the ways you support us!

Please pray for:

- April's health and the health of the baby
- Our transition into parenthood later this year
- Continued adaptation to Nicaragua and its culture
- Continued relationship building with locals
- Discernment in determining which individuals to invest in
- Good communication and unity among our missionary team

In Christ,  
Matt and April Sykes



*Campamento "Cerca"*