

# Matt & April SYKES

*Serving the Lord in Nicaragua*



September 2020

Dear Friends and Family,

Greetings from the Sykes! Back in February, we shared our plans about finishing up our fundraising in the United States and then moving to Nicaragua by May. Like many of you, our plans have changed this year due to the Covid-19 situation. While it has not yet been possible to leave, we have been looking for ways to serve right where we are in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Our goal is to intentionally make disciples, multiply leaders, and impact individuals with Christ's love to serve our community, whether we are in Michigan or Nicaragua. We want to give you a brief update on what our new plans look like, as well as share a few highlights from our time in the States.

We are a little hesitant to share our plans, as it is possible that they will change again by the time you read this. The airport in Managua, Nicaragua, is officially open, but there has not been a commercial flight there since April. While one airline is scheduled to resume flights in late September, several others are scheduled for early October. Since the dates have already been pushed back several times, we are waiting to confirm that flights have resumed before we purchase our tickets. We could be leaving as soon as October or it could be several months before we leave. We are trusting in the Lord's timing with regard to our departure for Nicaragua. We will send out an email update once we have our firm departure date. If you are not receiving our updates and would like to, please contact us through our email addresses on the back with your name and preferred email address.

Since the shutdown in March, many of the missions conferences we were planning to attend this past spring were cancelled, postponed, or switched to an online format. We were excited to be a part of the first ever virtual missions conference at Eastport Bible Church in Eastport, New York. What a blessing



*Matt and April speaking at Grace Community Church in Belmont, MI*



*Matt and April on a Zoom call*

it was for us to have online fellowship with brothers and sisters in Christ and share about Nicaragua! We also had the privilege of speaking in person at Grace Community Church in Belmont, Michigan, in July! We are still hoping to speak at a couple of local churches before we leave.

While in the States, we have been looking for ways to use our time wisely. God has provided opportunities for us to disciple and mentor a couple of students from Grace Christian University who are both interested in missions. April was supposed to start language study once we arrived in Nicaragua but instead began studying Spanish online through a Bolivian language school four times a week. She has been progressing well and feels much more comfortable with Spanish. Matt has been continuing his theology training through distance studies at the Berean Bible Institute. His most recent class examined the life and ministry of the Apostle Paul, including the epistles he wrote. It has really helped the New Testament come alive for him.

Many blessings have come from our extended time at home. One blessing was that Matt had surgery in June to correct a minor knee issue that had been giving him trouble and causing pain. We are grateful that his surgery was successful. He has been focusing on rehabbing his knee and has already noticed a tremendous improvement.

Another benefit of our extended stay in the States has been the extra time we spent with family. April's mother has been graciously hosting us this past year, and we were able to go on a short family vacation to Michigan's Upper Peninsula together. Also, Matt has visited his family in North Carolina and Georgia twice this summer. We are so thankful for these unexpected opportunities!

This year we've been constantly reminded of Proverbs 16:9, which says: "The heart of a man plans his way, but the Lord establishes his steps." Even though we have been frustrated by the delays, we know that the Lord is sovereign. For instance, our last financial



*Matt and April on vacation*

update has us averaging 95% of our total monthly support need. This is huge! To God be the glory. We are so thankful and encouraged by everyone on our support team. We will keep trusting God through the waiting, and hopefully sometime soon, we will be leaving for Nicaragua.

Please pray for:

- God's timing regarding our departure date
- That we would be able to make the most of our remaining time in the States
- Continued healing for Matt's knee
- Smooth transitions as we leave Michigan and arrive in Nicaragua
- Good communication and shared vision in our multicultural team

In Christ,  
Matt and April Sykes