December 29, 2025

Dear ones,

Merry Christmas! Christ is born!

We write to you from Puerto Rico, where the weather is so cool we need sweatshirts and socks in the morning. Ruth misses the white Christmases of Canada, but she is also content with the warmer weather here. Mikhaela (6) and Isaiah (4) make do with snowballs made out of the sand, and they dream of playing in the snow one day.

But, some things are the same. Christmas lights and Christmas trees. You can buy a real evergreen tree (shipped from somewhere up north) for $60. Christmas meals. Except here the meal is pork, rice with beans combined, potato salad, pasta salad and a "pastel". Thankfully, the most important thing is the same. "For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord." *Luke 2:11* We gather with our church family on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day to celebrate. Ruth plays the trumpet to Joy to the World (in Spanish it's Al mundo gozo).

For the first time in eight years, we celebrated with the Maita family in Puerto Rico. This has been the biggest change. We received Gustavo's brother, as a fellow missionary pastor on the field, and his family arrived this summer. Gustavo's parents also received visas to immigrate and arrived this fall. It has been such a blessing to have time together. We do not know what the future holds but are very thankful for each day we have near them. We were also blessed to be with Ruth's parents to celebrate their 60th anniversary, and her father's 60th year in the ministry – he's currently serving a vacancy in his 89th year on Earth!

This summer we traveled through parts of the States, visiting churches and thanking all for the support given to continue serving here. We are ever so grateful for this. Thank YOU for your support and prayers.

This Christmas season we held a "Pastel"- making workshop at church. We invited families to come and learn how to make part of a Puerto Rican Christmas meal. Sonia, our church member, prepared the meat mixture and green banana "dough". She taught how to put the "dough" on a banana leaf, fold meat into the middle, wrap up the leaf and tie with string. We met three new mom and their children – one mom will lead our next workshop in January. These opportunities draw more families into the church to hear the Gospel and become connected, God-willing, as members of the His family here.

By the time this arrives at your home or church it will be Epiphany! God's blessing on your new year. May His Word by your light and lamp as we continue into 2026.

With love, Pastor Gustavo, Ruth, Mikhaela, Isaiah, Ivanna and Zachariah Maita

P. S. I almost forgot the biggest change and blessing of our 2025! On April Fool's Day we discovered that we were expecting a baby and on October 25th, a baby boy was born to us! This Christmas we hold him close as we think about Mary giving birth in a stable and holding Jesus close. Jesus who was born to die for you and me.

P.S.S. If you'd like to receive our monthly email of prayer requests and updates, please email me ruth.maita@lcms.org . These are the outreach activities which we have been leading this past year. Please pray for our members who are helping us hold some of these activities and pray for all who come and hear God's Word.

- English classes and Music classes to the community
- Monthly craft workshop
- Moms and Tots playgroup
- Youth Adult outreach (New this fall 2025)
- Special gatherings: Thanksgiving "Turkey run" family activity, Advent Hymn-fest,
- Outreach connection with Baseball League thanks to donation of baseball equipment from Grace, Durham, NC
- Mailing – Lutheran Heritage Foundation sent us "Jesus Never Fails" brochures which we have mailed out and passed out in the community,
- Future outreach planned – Kite-making Family Day, Valentine's Day cookie decorating, a Saturday VBS
- Please pray also for our new crop of cocoa trees, planted to maintain the property and raise funds for the church -that the trees will continue to grow
- Wednesday Bible study and fellowship
- Sunday Divine Service and bible Study – please pray for Gustavo as he faithfully preaches and leads the congregation.

