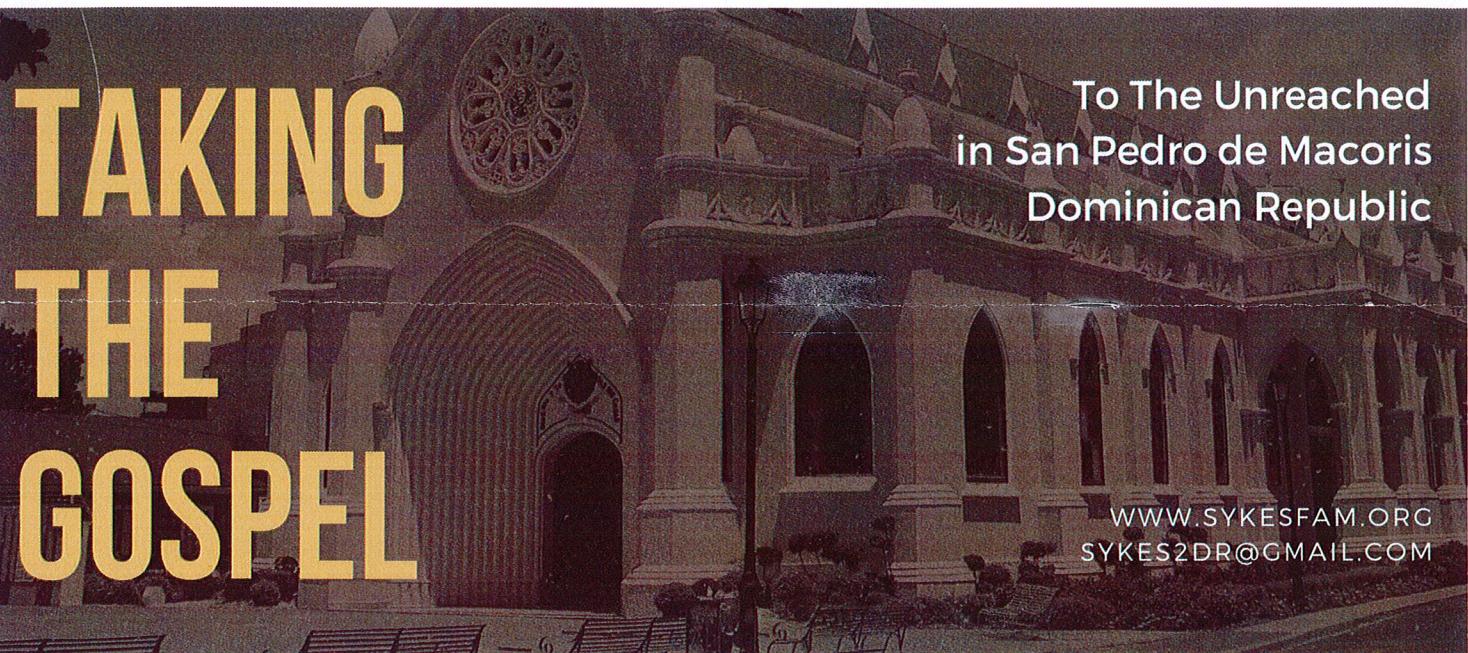


# THE SYKES MISSIONARY TIMES

Missionaries to the Dominican Republic



## FINISHING 2023

Greetings from the Dominican Republic. The last few months, from October to December, have been a whirlwind of activity!

Back in late November, we had this awesome chance to spend Thanksgiving with our mission team. It was a blast, and honestly, we're super pumped to be part of such an incredible mission team. We're all working in different roles, but it's incredible how we sync up and work towards one big goal: making a difference in God's kingdom.

On the personal front, Sarah and I are all in with our ministry outreach. We're keeping our days packed with discipleship. I've been discipling four amazing young men and Sarah and I just wrapped up some pre-marital counseling with a lovely couple in early December. It's so rewarding to see God working in their lives and to be a part of encouraging them on in their spiritual journey.

December kept us super busy too! We spent countless hours prepping for our big annual Christmas program. We invited the parents of some the kids we disciple - none of them are believers, so it was a great chance to bridge the gap with the gospel in a friendly, welcoming way.

We've been praying intently for these families and even invited them over for dinner to build a deeper relationship with them. We are praying that they will surrender their lives to Christ. Join us in praying as well, will you?

*"Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it."*

1 THESSALONIANS 5:24

We count it a privilege to be able to serve the people of the Dominican Republic.

We are amazed by God's transforming power and love being a part of expanding His Kingdom!



## SOLEMN GOODBYE'S

The end of December and beginning of January had a bit of a more solemn tone to them. My mom purchased tickets for us to return to the United States for Christmas.

My dad has a severe case of Alzheimers and he continues to decline in his health. We returned to the US for 2 and a half weeks in December. I had the opportunity to see my dad a couple of times. Just a couple of weeks before our arrival he was still at home, he was mobile, and he was still preparing his beloved peanut butter sandwiches.

He fell several times in a row, and mom took him to the emergency room. After that they sent him to a rehabilitation facility and in just a few short weeks his health has deteriorated even more. He is <sup>now</sup> nearly completely incontinent and now requires 24 hour care. He went from being <sup>now</sup> completely mobile at home to spending nearly all of his time in a wheel chair or in bed. On many days he is close to non-verbal and on the days that he does speak, he makes no sense.

It is hard to see what is happening physically to my dad. It breaks my heart to see my mom struggle emotionally every day as she goes to visit him and watch his continued decline. It tore my heart out to see my children with tears streaming down their cheeks knowing that this might be the last time they get to say goodbye to their grandpa.

Dementia is a tricky disease. It takes some quickly while others struggle for years. We don't know how long dad has left. We are not 100% sure that he is a believer. Dad was never much for church, but there were times we saw him laying in bed reading the Bible. Unfortunately, his childhood was difficult and he had a life-long struggle with insecurity and bitterness.

I don't know how much dad really understands what is going on around him. Sometimes he talks about Jesus. Sometimes he folds his hands like he is praying and just speaks gibberish. Only God truly knows what is going on inside his mind. Please pray with us for dad as well as the others we are spiritually investing in here in the Dominican. We just keep pointing people to Jesus!

Thank you for your love, prayers, and sacrificial financial support!

San Pedro is nicknamed "the city of the Holy Spirit." There is a strong Pentecostal and charismatic influence, along with 7th Day Adventists and cults such as Jehovah's Witnesses and Mormonism.

All of these religions, coupled with traditional Catholicism, have left people confused and still spiritually lost. Many have been part of multiple religions and churches with this in common — either trying to "earn" salvation or trying to "maintain" salvation by their works. It's in this darkness that there is a great opportunity to shine the light of the gospel - the message of salvation by grace through faith in Jesus Christ

- Missionary Gary Hale

## PRAYER REQUESTS...

- Please pray that we can raise additional support as soon as possible
- Pray for a new believers we are discipling...it is wonderful to see them growing!
- Pray for the new chapel ministry as we have a chance to minister there