

September 2004

Dominican Mission Report

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Dear Mission Partners:

No more puppies. No more chickens. No more papayas or key limes from the backyard. No more kids stopping by to type on the computer or read books. No more nightly visits from church members who are just checking up on us or looking for a glass of passion fruit juice. No more meals brought to us by our dear neighbor lady. No more long walks through the farm fields.

Last month we made the move from our campo home in Tabara Abajo (population 4,000) to our new location in Santo Domingo (population 2.5 million). This move brings us much closer to the clinic where Peggy will give birth in November, Lord willing. At present we are blessed to be staying in a house used by faculty and students of Goshen College for their study abroad program in the Dominican Republic. Fortunately for us, the house was to be sitting empty until November and this has worked out well for the college and for us.



Jeff and Peggy Boshart

Living in the capital means we are much closer to a cluster of nine Church of the Brethren congregations that are within 90 minutes from our home. While living in Tabara these communities were four to five hours from our home. Just in our short time in the capital we are already beginning to build stronger ties with these churches. Jeff continues to travel to the churches in our old stomping grounds, but Peggy now will concentrate more on the churches closer to home.

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1451 Dundee Avenue, Elgin, Illinois 60120



Our work with the Community Development Committee of the Iglesias de Los Hermanos continues to be extremely rewarding. Participants are receiving second, third and in some cases their fourth loans. There are now 19 communities participating in the loans program. More than \$70,000US has been loaned to the 400 people currently participating. Some folks have had to rethink their businesses and others have seen their businesses and farms grow and prosper. A lady who bakes bread in the Haitian *batey* (a collection of homes where Haitian immigrant sugar cane workers live) of San Jose shared how the high price of plantains has meant that more people are eating bread! She is eagerly awaiting the final payments of the rest of the members in her group so she can receive a second loan to expand her business.

A new government has taken over the running of the country and already our blackouts are diminishing, the Dominican peso is strengthening against the U.S. dollar, and optimism is everywhere. Of course the mountains of trash piling up all over the city, due to a problem in collection, are a reminder that many challenges still remain. Newspapers cover the daily saga of Dominicans fleeing their country in rickety boats trying to reach Puerto Rico. Back in Tabara our church just lost another sharp young member to Spain, where he has gone to join family and search for a better life.

On a brighter note, now that Elena, our pastor's wife, has finished university, Pastor Ariel will now begin taking classes. And he has motivated three or four other young people to join him. This is an answer to prayer as we have been prodding these youth to get motivated for the past two and a half years. The Church of the Brethren offers interest free college loans, which means these young folks should have had no excuse, but the dream of "the good life" in some other country kept them from taking advantage of opportunities right in their backyard.

There is so much more to do as we finish out the year and with it our time in the Dominican Republic. Beth Gunzel, from York Center (Ill.) Church of the Brethren, has been selected to replace us and continue the work. We are excited to see the fresh ideas and new energy she will bring to the job. Our energies are about to be taken up in the raising of our first child. Although we've raised puppies, chicks, vegetable seedlings, lambs, and kids (goats, that is) over the last six years, we expect this experience to top all others. We covet your prayers and want you to know that we are grateful to all of those who have made this time in the Dominican Republic possible.

At this year's youth camp here in the Dominican Republic we received a plaque of recognition for our service to the church over the last three years. It was a touching moment full of love and sorrow all at once. Although we are still living here with our Dominican brothers and sisters, we all sense that saying good bye is going to be a long and difficult process, indeed it has already begun. We know not what comes next for us, but we believe that the bonds we have made in the body of Christ, as represented in this simple plaque, have changed us all in ways we do not as yet understand. And even for that we are grateful.

Dios les Bendiga,

Jeff and Peggy Boshart