



### THE CALM AFTER THE STORM

Greetings from the now somewhat tranquil country of Venezuela. One short letter does not suffice to describe what we have experienced since the month of April. From the week following Semana Santa until the 30th of July the country was literally at war. We had plenty of scares during that time from walls of fire in front of our car, to gunfire aimed directly at our neighborhood. Then, on July 30th, it all stopped. The fight was against the installment of a new "national assembly". The Venezuelan national assembly is the close equivalent of our congress or senate. It was the only "opposition" entity of the government left and it was taken over by a fraudulent vote on the 30th of July. This has been the sad history of Venezuela for years and the decline continues. Thankfully in the four months of heavy fighting we were never in a situation we could not get out of. We had plenty of scary moments, but God truly was our protector. We had many family talks with our children about what faith was and how living by faith in spite of circumstances is not always easy but it is what God has called us to do. Everyone in our family still jumps a little when we hear fireworks because the amount of explosions and gunfire during the four months of protest was overwhelming. We have had many inquiries from pastors and individuals concerning our safety. I will make an audio available to our board, Baptist International Outreach, which will more conclusively outline things. I will be available by request. In a nutshell, although things were very bad very close to our home, we were much safer at home than we were out on the roads. An unfortunate byproduct of the protests was a tremendous increase in the overall insecurity of the country. Venezuela is already one of the most dangerous countries of the world and the protest situation only provided more opportunity for thieves to have open season on people. Again, we stayed close to home. We made our necessary purchases in the morning, and we kept the kids behind closed doors. Because of protests our children missed a tremendous amount of school. The school year here is different than in the states and our kids actually missed about 60 days of school. Thankfully, with directed homework and intense studying they were able to complete the year with very good grades.

### COMMUNICATION ISSUES

We ask you to continue to remain patient with us regarding our communication via prayer letters. Since the start of the protests the internet (which is government controlled) has slowed to an all-time low. There often parts of days that we don't have internet or a very limited connection which is on many occasions worse than dial up. If you have any questions, you can feel free to contact our board. I am in constant contact with my mission director via text message. Thankfully, technology allows us to stay fairly current on a "texting" basis with our director in the states. Obviously, this would be nearly impossible to do with every church and individual that supports us. John Yingling, our director, will be glad to update you on our current status at any time and we will continue to send out prayer letters as internet allows. I also had a computer problem that took some time to fix. I had to reformat my hard drive many times and after much research found out it was a faulty hard drive cable. I was able to purchase parts from the states but they took some time to arrive due to the unrest in the country. Thankfully, we seem to be up and running again and running smooth.

### THE CHURCH PLANT

Things are going great with the new church plant. We have about 40-50 consistent people attending and our schedules are full with discipleship. There is a genuine hunger for truth and reality and God's work in individual hearts is very evident around us. Our presence here during such a difficult time for the country has been an encouragement to those to whom we minister. It has shown the reality of faith over feelings. Please keep praying. We are still in visa progress and need to update our passports. There are lots of hurdles but we have decided to live with childlike faith. We are asking God to clearly show us the when and what of every step and we simply will obey as He leads. Your prayers are vital. We appreciate your prayerful investment in our lives!

#### **Please Prayerfully Remember:**

- Resident Visas - We Are **STILL** in the waiting process
- We need to renew our kid's passports please pray for safety
- Pray for our kids during this time of instability of the country
- Daily Protection! **VERY VERY DANGEROUS SITUATION!!!!**

*The Sykes*