

# SHIELDS FAMILY

## MISSIONARIES TO ARUBA

Dear Brethren,

Hoping that each of you are well as you read this report and since this is our first letter of 2024 let me say happy New Years and know that our prayer is that the Lord would continue to use each of you in this year as He has up to this point. I'm sure that January has been a long cold month for many of you and because of it, it has had many challenges with it; with all that, I pray that it has been a productive month. Here in Aruba our temps stay at around 84 degrees, and we have no seasons, so we have enjoyed the snow pictures at a distance. ☺

*Since our last update at the end of November we have had many things happen and we have some exciting news to share in several areas:*

- To begin with, our Christmas and end of the year activities were a huge success and blessing. Between the three churches, **we had over 20 church and outreach events**. Everything from caroling in the street till 2 am, Christmas plays, setting up booths at Christmas community fairs, live Christmas scenes, and church end-of-the-year get-togethers. We have seen much fellowship, many visitors, handed out a lot of gospel tracts, and seen our church family unite in labor and spirit! I praise the Lord for the many opportunities and am grateful for willing people to work with from each of our three congregations. We have been trying to make a conscious effort to get our church to impact the society and be involved in public ways. We want to *preach and show* the love of God!
- We praise the Lord above all that in these last 2 months we have seen **3 ladies who have been attending profess their faith in Christ!** Also, in December we had our son **Yosef, a young lady, and 3 adults follow the Lord in obedience of public baptism**. This last year within the direct ministries of the services we saw 21 people come to Christ and 22 people baptized. I praise the Lord for fruit, especially when you see the church family growing and people remaining!
- One of our prayer requests in the last letter was for the Ford Van transmission that needed rebuilt. Thanks to a generous family in Illinois and one of our supporting churches in Texas **we were able to fix the alternator that literally burst in flames, the fuel pump, and a do a full rebuild on the transmission**. The van is a 1996 and has 250,000 + miles on it, but she is ready to keep on going now! A special thank you to those who gave towards this need.
- We were also able to speak at a couple more funerals and the Word was boldly and clearly preached. Much to follow up on...

February, 2024

### Sending Church:

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### Prayer Request:

- Souls to be saved and discipled.
- Curacao ministry outreach.
- **Property Project!!!**

### Praises:

- Three more souls!
- Wonderful Missions Conference!
- People surrendered to serve!
- Van repaired!

- One of our highlights of the past month was our 7<sup>th</sup> Missions Conference. We had a young man from Honduras who is going to Equatorial Guinea as a missionary. Brother Isaac Amaya was a blessing to our congregation, and on top of our faith promise increasing for this year and many decisions made in areas of evangelism and service, the big news was on the last day when we asked people who were willing to stand and say "I want to do more for the Lord, I want to get more involved" to which there were **about 20 people who responded publicly**. But then, since I knew we have had several who the Lord had recently been dealing with I asked if there was anyone who thought that they were being led to serve the Lord in full-time ministry as a pastor or missionary. To this, 9 of our young people and adults stepped forward! We praise the Lord for this step because we have seen the Lord working and leading in several of these brethren over these past few years! It is exciting to live this season of fruit bearing and even more exciting to look to the future and think about what the Lord is going to do with these surrendered brethren. Along with this, I can also add that our Bible Institute classes are all going very well. We now have Monday night classes and classes after the Tuesday mission service and Thursday English service.
- Missions Trip to CURACAO - The week after the Missions Conference, seven of us went over to the neighboring Dutch island of Curacao. There is a small Baptist work there who's pastor has dementia and is needing help. They have reached out to our ministry to help them find a pastor. We know that finding a pastor with all the qualifications and willingness to step into this need is not necessarily going to be easy, but we are committing to help them seek a pastor and until that happens do what we can to keep them going. So, for this year it looks like I and a group of 3 or 4 will be going over one weekend a month to preach and minister to these people and encourage them to keep going. Once there, we found another small congregation whose pastor had a heart attack and is also without a pastor now. These are the only Baptist works that I have found on this island of 200,000 people! If you want to see pictures of this last trip you can see them on our Facebook page (Matt and Naomi Shields). ***The need for laborers everywhere is GREAT!***
- There is much more that I could say about ministry and family, however I am going to take the rest of my space to present you an opportunity that has come up this last week...

**LAND** – we have been in Aruba over 8 years now, and one of the dreams has been of getting a piece of land for the Church to build its own building. This of course gives us more permanence and value in the eyes of the community, and it also saves all that money lost on renting a building. The problem is that there are not very many properties available on an island this small, and what is available is super expensive! Well, out of nowhere we were offered a piece of property that is very central, large, and at a great price per square meter. **Here are the specs:** It is **3,520 sq. meters** (or 37,875.2 sq. ft / 0.86 of an acre). The price is **150 florins per meter** (\$88.71 per sq. meter or \$7.92 per sq. ft), and property here is usually about 300-600 fl. a square meter, so it is a great price! **The total price is right around \$300,000...** an amount that scares us since we have never dealt with anything this large, but in every other way it is an amazing deal! We have been given until this next week to give a written answer and offer a down payment, or then they are going public with the property. Our ministry here does not have more than about 5% of that price in hand although we will do all we can; and sadly, we cannot get a loan since the banks here do not give loans to churches. I sent a message to some of our supporting pastors in the USA, and as of today we have had a pledge of \$30,000 from one church and \$20,000 from another! This is exciting of course, but there is still a long way to go. We are asking for help with this, whether it be as a gift or a loan for Iglesia Bautista Berea. Our church here has a business meeting on Sunday and after that I plan on making a video and presenting the need with pictures and numbers so that we can spread the need and get as many people involved as possible. Once we have property, we can move our shack church to the location and start investing in a building. We have the people and the knowledge to do so, but we have to get the property first. Would each of you as our supporting churches consider helping with this need? I know it is big... but we already have a head start of \$50,000 pledged and I am excited to see what my God is going to do! Any pledges, questions, or doubts, please reach out to me ASAP. We love you all and are so grateful for the Lord allowing us to serve together!