

Happy New Year, Beloved Brethren,

What a blessing to greet all of you in this new year. Another year has gone with the beautiful blessing of serving our Lord and Savior together in 2023. What a tremendous blessing to be part of your faithfulness in ministry. I know I give these updates in ministry, but everything I do is the fruit of your support, prayers, and perseverance in ministry. It is always on my mind that we are doing ministry together. Considering this, let me open this first newsletter of the year with the new path God has put before me in ministry and the need for prayer as we continue to serve in Costa Rica.



Ministry Anniversary

In February we will celebrate our first full year in Costa Rica. It is fantastic because we came not knowing our immediate future or how things would work out. With that in mind, we served with all our hearts, trusting the Lord that we would continue to serve here without any visa problems. There were no setbacks. It was a learning process on the immigration status we sought here in Costa Rica. And here we are over here, a later serving the Lord with permission to be in the country. In 2023 we applied for a religious visa. It may be 6-12 months before we receive a response from the immigration office. Personally, we have become confident that we can stay in the country but ask for continuous prayer. Men draw up borders, and in cases within nations, they go to war over the borders. But it is a blessing to remember that God made this planet, and he decided this matter. We are here for a purpose; that purpose is to glorify God. Unless he says otherwise, we are here for his glory. So, we are serving without worrying.



Responsibility Changes

In December, the Academy's Board decided on several excellent changes. The one that affects me the most is that I was appointed to be the first Dean of Students. This will allow me to put my full, undivided attention and effort into organizing and promoting the Academy and nurturing and supporting the students and professors.

This new role allows me to make direct and full use of my degree in Christian Education. I am very excited about this.



As the Dean, I will be engaged in a wide range of tasks and duties. These responsibilities include developing and facilitating learning plans in the context of tutoring, ensuring compliance with the educational student outlines, maintaining the student learning platform, allocating resources effectively, collaborating with the school

administrator, and promoting a culture of continuous improvement. I will be promoting the academy by engaging with various churches and their leaders and representing the school in multiple events and meetings. For the students I will be hands-on in every student's learning experience, fostering a positive learning environment with the goal of student success and retention. I will also assist and maintain partnerships with the professors to this same end.

The Board and I desire that the Academy does more than provide needed biblical and theological training. We want to challenge and assist every student to keep striving forward in Christ.



New Role, New Location

The new responsibilities I was given made it necessary for us to relocate to a more central location. In doing so, I will have access to a broader network of churches for visiting and promoting the academy. I will be able to serve the students better by living closer to more of them. To do all of this we must choose a place wisely.

Finding a church is also a priority. We have visited good churches and plan to visit more before making our decision.

Travel

As the Dean, it is important that we visit the churches that Pastor Sanelli assisted to form the Academy. We have and it has been a blessing to start working alongside each of them more directly than before to further the Academy.

We travel by bus every week to visit churches and places for two reasons. The first is to promote the academy and see where we will be assembling. This helps me learn the

routes and locations of the various towns surrounding San Jose, the nation's capital. I like moving around on foot and by bus, but meetings between cities by bus will be time-consuming in the future. The second reason is that we do not have a car here in Costa Rica. It is still sitting in Tijuana, Mexico. We need our own vehicle. I am confident that in his timing, God will provide for this need.

Future Mission Trips



I am excited to share this part of my newsletter. As the planning for 2024 developed, the desire to plan for opportunities to serve on future mission trips with us developed. To see you and minister alongside all of you has always been part of how I have done ministry and how I learned to serve in missions. These mission trips meaningfully

impact the local church and its communities while also helping you grow in your service. You will gain the opportunity to immerse yourself in a different culture, learn from residents, and develop lifelong friendships with fellow Christians. Furthermore, mission trips help everyone involved to see firsthand the transformative power of faith in action.

We envision various possibilities such as construction projects, providing different services based on matching your skills to local needs, teaching, and sharing the love of Christ through evangelism. We will provide more details as we progress from general ideas to specific opportunities. If you have specific ideas about how you could engage in mission here, please let me know.

New Ministry Partners

All these increases in my responsibilities will turn into increases in ministry expenses. Each of you have been so generous in your giving and praying. Now I ask for a different kind of assistance. I'm sure each of you reading this know other missions-minded brothers and sisters in other churches. Please forward this newsletter to them. Encourage them to develop an interest in developing a ministerial academy here in Costa Rica. Ask them to forward the newsletter to their pastors and mission leaders. By this effort, may God grant a growth in financial and prayer support.



Specific Prayer Requests

Please pray for me, Sylvia, and the current and future students and professors of the Academy in these ways:

- I have a lot to learn and do as the Dean. Please pray that God will grow and use me effectively here in Costa Rica
- Approval of my religious visa
- That we will find a new house to live in that best serves the needs of the ministry
- Selection of our future church home
- The provision of a car and all that entails
- Development of specific missions opportunities
- New ministry partners who can contribute time, talent, treasure, and prayer

This is a new year with new opportunities to serve and to be involved in the great commission that our Lord Jesus Christ has charged us to do. May we always be taking steps forward, actively involved in the plan of salvation that our Sovereign God has shared with us. Together, we share eternally the salvation that we already have. It is an honor to call you my brother and sister, and it is a great joy knowing that we are serving together. May God use us for His glory in 2024. Receive a tremendous fraternal hug from Silvia and me for now. God bless all of you and thank you for your service to us.

With love in Christ, your brother,

Pastor Fernando Rocha

