

For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; And the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Isaiah 9:6

December 28, 2021

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year,

We pray your holiday season is filled with the presence of Christ and that His love abounds in your lives. For most of us, this time of year is filled with memories. Shared memories with family and friends. Memories of Christmases past. Some of our families most cherished memories are of Christmas Eve candlelight services. Poinsettias on the altar. White lights on the Christmas tree. Decorating the house. Christmas music. Special meals. Gifts. All centered around our family, friends and the birth of Christ.

For the children who live with us at the Children's Home, good memories are few. Many have not previously celebrated Christmas. They have little or no knowledge of Christ. They have not decorated their homes, received presents or made tamales with their mothers and grandmothers. They lack such shared experiences. Things that give us roots and bring meaning and definition into our lives. All of these are absent for our precious children at the Home.

During Christmas we make a special effort to address their loss. It is part of their healing. Restoring their childhoods and giving them hope for the future. It is building a solid foundation for them. Giving them stories to tell of their childhood. Making Christmas cookies and tamales. Watching the Christmas specials on TV. Attending candlelight services. Reading the story of Christ's birth. Talking about His love for every child. His saving grace for everyone. These are the gifts we desire to give the children at the Home during this time of year.



2021 was an exceptional year in ministry. Another year with challenges and blessings. Days of watching God's mercy unfold amid so many unknowns. Our first full year having the children attend school at the Home in the new multi-purpose building. Having "school" at home was a tremendous learning experience for the children and our staff. We ended the school year with all of the children passing to the next grade. Alex graduated from the sixth grade and will be attending high school next year. Twenty one of our twenty-four children will attend school at the Home in 2022.



Construction on the multi-purpose building is almost completed, and we would love to invite everyone to our dedication service on March 31, 2022, at 10 am. It has taken 7 years and approximately 140 mission teams to build this building. It has been a true labor of love for so many of you. We pray each of you will be able to attend, if not in person, virtually. We are so grateful to all of you who have helped us financially to continue construction on the building and programing for the school during the pandemic.



**The Methodist Children's
Home of Costa Rica cordially
invites you to the dedication
of our School building on
March 31, 2022 at 10 am.
RSVP: ray.zirkel@gmail.com
or ljzirkel@gmail.com**

We recently hosted a Christmas party for all of the Methodist pastors in the Central Valley of San Jose. The children helped served the pastors lunch and then sang two Christmas carols for them. We also had a Christmas breakfast for our office staff. We are so grateful for the individuals who minister along side us daily. They are a tremendous blessing.



Sarah and Emma were able to come home for Christmas. Sarah finished her first semester in graduate school at Truett Seminary, Baylor. She is in a dual master's program, Master of Divinity and MBA. She is also working as an international recruiter for Truett Seminary. Emma completed the first semester of her junior year at Baylor. She is studying neuroscience and Spanish. Fall semester was challenging with organic chemistry and genetics, yet she did it! Emma participates in her sorority, Bible study group and PA society.



Ray and I will begin our 28th year of ministry with the church in Costa Rica in 2022. I will continue to serve as the director of the children's home. Ray will continue to wear many hats: seminary professor, president of the board at the Methodist School, organizing and leading mission teams for churches and the clinic, general church board member, and PhD student. Covid has altered his schedule several times, yet he plans to submit the first draft of his thesis in the Spring.

Dear friends, we are so grateful for each of you. We miss seeing you and sharing ministry with you. Yet, your support of us has allowed us to continue to share Christ with the lovely people of Costa Rica. Thank you for praying for us. Thank you for supporting us with your financial gifts. We look toward the new year with great expectation and hope. May God richly bless each of you throughout the holidays and the coming new year.

All our love,

Ray, Lidia, Sarah, and Emma