

September 2023

Parramos, Guatemala

Lauren & Kevin Sanchez

Update from Our Family

Every year I think our lives can't get crazier and yet, here we are. In **2017**, I moved to another country knowing very few people and started my life over in Guatemala. In **2018**, I decided I wanted to be a missionary long-term and went through a six-month process of classes, fundraising and cross-cultural training. In **2019**, Kevin and I got married and the four Simaj girls started living with us off and on (and have ever since). We also started our Saturday mentorship group. In **2020**, a global pandemic ravaged the country and not only did we struggle personally,



but we endured watching so many people we care about go hungry and greatly suffer mentally and physically. In **2021**, we opted for a job and location change and took a class on business as mission. This resulted in our starting Academy of Future Leaders (an English and soccer school in Parramos, Kevin's hometown). In **2022**, we had our beautiful son, started participating in Champions in Action and Kevin began participating in events helping local people improve their community. In **2023**, so far, we had our precious Hazel, and we have added a Bible study on Monday nights. Kevin, Keke and Hazel all were baptized in Tulsa in August; thank you for those who joined us!



As of last week, we started a home church. For whatever reason, Keke has decided he **will not** go into the children's service at our church here in Guatemala, though he did totally fine in the States. Hazel also has cried during the last times we went to church, resulting in us missing most of the sermon. In my household, church was a priority and we went every

Sunday we could. That is something Kevin and I decided we also want for our children. So, we found a Spanish service online, bought some snacks and invited the kids from our Saturday group to come. Including us, there were nine people. I don't feel that pastoring is our calling, but we have heard many of the youth we work with comment about not feeling welcome at "normal" churches. Please be praying about how we can (hopefully) turn a problem into something beautiful that inspires growth and community.

A few months ago, I bought a few things from a church acquaintance. We met at her coffee shop, which is home base for their mission called Serve Hope. We talked about all they do, as I had seen her post things on social media about building homes, delivering water filters and having interns at their coffee shop. They have a new program called "Emprende" which is short for emprendimiento,



meaning entrepreneurship. It is an eight-week course, helping people either start a business or grow their current business. At the end of the eight weeks, the attendees have the option to present their businesses (Shark Tank style) to successful local business owners for investment as well as advice. We have five people, including Kevin, who are attending the course. The picture is of Dulce giving my Papa a message (yes, Nana and Papa visited us in Guatemala after ten years of not getting on a plane). Dulce is in the beginning stages of her small business. Cathy (in the purple) had been a masseuse for many years and was giving Dulce tips and tricks. We are excited to start this partnership with Serve Hope and we have talked with the owner about Fernanda Simaj doing an internship there. We will be sure to keep you updated.

Prayers

Please be praying for us. As our family and ministry has grown, we feel stretched thin. We have been praying for a long time for a passionate, devoted person or people to join us here in Parramos, Guatemala in order to help organize and run some of our programs as well as our school. We have many new things we hope to tackle one day, but with our ministry being managed by just Kevin and me, that won't be possible without putting what we're currently doing at risk. If you or someone



you know is passionate about helping and it would excite them to be part of an awesome organization that is slowly helping change a community, please reach out to me.

With love,

Lauren & Kevin

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