

Expanding the

DR VISION.

The newsletter of Wes and Maria Smith

Prayer Needs and Praises

- **The continued development of SEMCA (Seminary) including the establishment of a board of directors**
- **Las Palmas as they are now trying to find teachers for the 2020 school year.**
- **Safety for Maria and I as we finish up our furlough and travel to supporting churches.**



September, 2019

You're Not Going to Believe This, but...

We often use this phrase to introduce some fantastic tale about unbelievable events. Well, this "catch phrase" is certainly appropriate to all that has happened in the DR during these last few months. I have caught myself any number of times looking at all of the incredible happenings of this past summer and thinking, "Wow, look what God is doing. This is unbelievable!!" The hand of God has been clearly at work in the many ministries of the *DR Vision* this past summer.

Church (IBEM)

Last spring the church was able to purchase a large piece of property that stood behind our church. This property contained a number of buildings from an old abandoned school. One of the buildings is a beautiful building with historic architecture.

Throughout the summer different short-term mission teams, along with our pastors, church members, and other missionaries worked on the old buildings to make them usable. By the end of the summer the first floor was completed and converted into church offices while the second floor continues to be developed for use by the MERCY women's ministry.



Renovations in new church property

This will allow for the expansion of the auditorium to meet the growth needs while providing additional space for nursery, children's ministries, and youth.

SEMCA (Seminary)

The seminary classes were back up to full swing. Pastor Gary taught Theology II during the summer semester. We had a number of new students join the seminary program this past summer. In September classes continued with Hermeneutics, Pentateuch, and Discipleship.

While Maria and I are on furlough, Carlos Rijo, one of our graduates and assistant pastor at our church, has been helping me by fulfilling the role of Executive Director. He has done publicity work in the community and on Facebook to get the word out about the seminary and our program. I am so thankful to Carlos. It appears that we will be ready for another set of graduates this coming August.



SEMCA students in group meeting

Las Palmas

Last spring our graduates took the required National Exam. When the results came back, we found that our students scored in the top 10% in the nation outscoring every school in our area. In fact, half of our students scored in the top 5%. This news spread all over our city. Las Palmas is the only internationally accredited, bilingual, Christian School in the country, and now we are known for being one of the top schools in the country.

Las Palmas has been growing and additional building space was needed to meet the academic needs of the school.

In addition, the pool on our campus was in very poor condition and needed major upgrades. Finally, our emerging sports program needed to develop a sports court which will later be converted into a gymnasium. During the spring meeting, the board of directors, on which I serve as President, decided that we needed to step out by faith and complete all three of these projects at the same time. The total cost of these projects was around \$150,000 US. But here is the

amazing thing. Through frugal money management, fundraising endeavors, and international donations we were able to save sufficient money to pay cash for all of these projects!

One major issue that Las Palmas faces every year is finding

American teachers who will come and teach. As we entered summer, the school was still two teachers short of what was needed. The situation looked dangerously desperate. By July this shortage had become critical because there was not sufficient time for an American to complete the visa and

residency issues required to work in the country. At that point, God stepped in. Two English-speaking teachers who were living in the country, teaching in other places, came to Las Palmas inquiring about open positions. The way this all happened was just amazing.

In August the school opened with 478 students. This was 13 more than we anticipated. We anticipate the growth to continue over the next two years leveling out at slightly over 500 students!



HS floor under construction



New outdoor sports court

