

Puerto Rico Work Report (June-July 2023)

Caleb Westbrook – HC 2 Box 47421, Sabana Hoyos, PR 00688
713-304-9770/ westbrookcaleb@gmail.com

Greetings dearest brethren in Christ our Lord,

I am so thankful for the countless prayers, thoughts, calls, and messages on our behalf over the past month. Last month, as I noted in the brief update, I was suffering from terrible abdominal pain, diarrhea, loss of appetite, and stomach cramping. The sickness was so bad that we had to delay our return trip back to Puerto Rico from our visit to the states. It was very discouraging because none of the doctors in the Kansas City area could figure out what was going on with me. Thankfully with the help of Dr. Jeff Jones, a brother in Christ



from Birmingham, AL, I was able to get some help and he advised me to get back to Puerto Rico where I could find gastrologists who were more knowledgeable with the disease I was facing. After getting back to Puerto Rico in mid-July I was able to meet with my gastrologist, who confirmed I have a disease called “Tropical Sprue.” Tropical Sprue (TS) apparently affects some people who move to or from the tropics. Even though doctors have known about the disease for a few hundred years, there is not much they know about the disease. Thankfully, I have started a vitamin regimen that has really helped improve my management of the disease. While I am not back to 100% of my previous health, I am functioning quite well. The doctor told me that my full recovery could be anywhere from 3 months to a full year. He also warned me that each time I travel back to the U.S. I will be at risk of aggravating the disease and could fall back into having severe symptoms which would just reset the time of recovery. While that news is a bit challenging, I give thanks to God for the recovery that I have had so far and for the ability to manage this disease.

Unfortunately, after getting back to PR and getting back into the groove of work, my family and I recently contracted Covid. We had gone 3.5 years through the pandemic without having Covid, but it finally caught up to us. The disease has hit us really hard, and we are still struggling to get back to normalcy. Kaitlin and I were sick for a long time with Covid, but thankfully it did not hit our boys very hard. It has been a challenging month with so much illness and at times it has been very depressing and lonely. Kaitlin and I both were both in very low spirits throughout the Covid problem. It is hard enough to face continued sickness, but being far away from family and a strong support network makes it even more difficult. Nevertheless, God is gracious and has faithfully brought us through these challenges. We are extremely thankful to Joel and Anna Holt from San Juan, PR for coming out to deliver food to us and helping us while we were incapacitated with Covid. In situations like this, we truly depend on our brethren in Christ to help get us through the challenges. On top of these more significant health issues, we have also faced a bevy of other inconveniences since returning to PR: we found our refrigerators broken with all our food stores lost, our vehicle has had multiple problems and is currently out of commission, we have had water pipes break, and we are way behind in our hurricane season preparations. Sometimes when it rains, it seems to pour. Yet, glory be to God for keeping us safe throughout all of this and praise be to Him for

giving us the strength to continue on! The prayers, calls, and messages from so many faithful brethren have been a source of great comfort and strength during this time. Thank you, brethren, for all your support during this time!

Puerto Rico Work

Even though the past month has brought challenges, the past two months have been filled with opportunities and blessings for the Lord's work here in PR. At the beginning of June, we were blessed to have brother Eric Huggins visit us. Eric came to PR with his oldest daughter, Ellie, and they stayed in PR for about a week and a half. Eric has a good rapport among the brethren, and he went to visit brethren in Arecibo, San Sebastian, Ponce, and San Juan during his time here. Eric and Ellie had the opportunity to stay with us in Arecibo and I was thankful for the time to catch up with Eric and to have his help with visits and teaching around the island. Eric brought bible studies and a sermon for us in San Sebastian during his visit. Since Eric is a schoolteacher, he has more flexibility during the summers, and if God wills, he is hoping to come back in future summers to help encourage the brethren here. We are thankful for Eric's continued interest in and support of the work in Puerto Rico.

Over the past two months, there has been a lot of progress on the bible class front, especially in Arecibo. In June I finished up my short series in Arecibo on "How we got the Bible." The study received a lot of positive reception and feedback. After that study, the brethren asked me if I had any other series that I would be interested in teaching. I was thrilled. It can be difficult to remember how far we have come in such a short time at Arecibo, thanks be to God. The brethren here are not used to using any type of bible study workbook or curriculum, so there will be challenges moving forward. Nevertheless, the openness of the brethren in Arecibo to use my material is a tremendous opportunity. After several discussions with the brethren, they agreed to have me translate my bible class material that I have already written in English on the Holy Spirit. They also agreed to allow me to teach a class on the book of Daniel if I can write and translate it for them. Translating and writing bible classes is a huge undertaking, but I am excited about the opportunity and challenge. Sadly, there are very few, if any, options in Spanish for bible class material. The abundance of material in English is something that I definitely took for granted prior to my work in the Spanish ministry. In addition to those two classes, I am also working on material on marriage, divorce, and remarriage, although this project is a bit on the back burner now. Currently, I am starting a class on "The Christian & Money," which I hope will be helpful for some challenges that we have seen among some brethren here. I hope to make all the bible classes available online when I am finished with them.

I have continued with many of my regular bible studies. I've had different studies with Edwin, Yadimar, Alvaro Andress, Alejandro, Felix & Merri Cruz, and many others. These studies have been encouraging and I am constantly encouraging the Christians here to reach out and contact more people. Sister Yadimar has done an excellent job of that and in the past month, she has been very diligent to bring many young people to services and bible studies. Several times she has brought around 7 to 9 kids and young people to the bible classes. One young man, named Chinito, has paid attention and we have tried to encourage him to participate in the classes. There is a lot of potential and opportunity with these visitors, we just pray that God will help us heal so that sickness will not be an obstacle for us. Alvaro Andres has also been encouraging this past month because he has been trying to set up a consistent community bible study in the community of Dorado where he lives. Unfortunately, for the last few weeks, I have been unable to go due to illness, but we are excited about getting that opportunity going soon.

Each Friday I have been continuing to deliver bible classes over the platform, Zoom, covering an overview of the Old Testament. It was my goal to be able to study the entire Old Testament in a year, and even with setbacks, it still looks to be on track to achieve that goal. The study has been very received and I have gotten many compliments about the study from brethren around Puerto Rico. Very few Puerto Ricans have ever studied the

Old Testament, so this series is aimed at that major deficiency. Even though it is a lot of work, I believe that the study is helping a lot of brethren here. All of the studies are recorded and are available on my Facebook page (facebook.com/SoloUnCristiano) or on the Arecibo congregation's page (facebook.com/IglesiaDeCristoEnArecibo).

I have continued with preaching and teaching both in Arecibo and in San Sebastian. I have also continued to publish the bulletins which many of the members use as an evangelistic tool in the community. This past month we were able to print many evangelistic brochures which were written by brother Rene Rosado from the congregation in Arecibo. Brother Rene did an excellent job writing the tracts and we hope to use them more as we plan more evangelistic efforts this fall, if God wills.



Visiting the Capps Rd. church of Christ in Harrison, AR in July

The past two months have been very turbulent, but I am thankful for the consistent faithfulness of the Puerto Rican brethren even in my absence. At San Sebastian, brother Carlos and brother Felix have really stepped up and have been extremely helpful with coordinating things for the services in San Sebastian when I could not be there. The brethren here in PR have been very

supportive and helpful as we have battled these illnesses. It can be very discouraging to face trial after trial, but with God's faithfulness, the help of many brethren, and the prayers of the saints, we find new strength to continue onward.

Thank you so much for your continued support and fellowship in the gospel here. If you have any questions about our work in the kingdom here in Puerto Rico, please do not hesitate to contact me anytime. May our wonderful Father and God of healing always protect and guide you in His loving care!

Grace be with you always,

Caleb B. Westbrook