



JOSHUA & AMANDA ALLRED MÉRIDA, MEXICO



July/August 2021:

Dear church and friends,

July and August did not go exactly as we had planned. However, we take comfort in knowing that they went exactly as the Lord had planned!

In our last letter, we asked you to pray for Abigail Mares. She was planning to fly to Argentina on July 26th. Thankfully, her trip *did* go as planned. She is now settled in and ministering to the children and churches of Argentina. We appreciate your prayers for her and would appreciate your continued prayers as she serves on the mission field.

We were excited to kick off a new school year in the seminary in August. We had been working in preparation all summer long. The classroom was ready. The teachers were ready. The books had been ordered and were ready. Then, the week we were supposed to start, thirteen church families came down with Covid. The following week, seven more families got sick. Several of our students, a few of our teachers, and most of our staff were down for two weeks or more with the virus. We scrambled to reorganize all of our plans. The enrollment was done online rather than in person. The orientation was postponed a few weeks and done in two shifts. Several classes had to meet via Zoom for the first couple of weeks. Some students had to start classes without their textbooks. In spite of the hasty changes in plans, we still had our highest enrollment ever this year! All the students who had planned to enroll are taking classes. Thankfully, we didn't lose anyone in the chaos. I was probably the most frustrated by the situation, but no one is discouraged. After stumbling out of the gate, we are back at a good pace for this semester. Everyone has recovered well and we are all meeting in person now for classes. We are thrilled to be back in the classroom and maybe even more appreciative for that now than we would have been otherwise!

Amongst the families who got sick was our family. Amanda, Gabriel, Michael, Bella, and Selah all came down with Covid at the end of August. Malachi and I (Joshua) escaped unscathed, but were locked in quarantine with the rest of the family for two weeks as we cared for the sick. Thankfully, the symptoms were not severe, but were still enough to put Amanda and the kids on bed rest for several days. Amanda had headaches, body aches, intermittent fever, and extreme fatigue for about ten days. The kids had a fever for a couple of days and were fine after that. After two weeks, we were all going stir-crazy! I got to be Mr. Mom for a little while taking care of Amanda and the kids. That experience confirmed something that I already knew: My wife is a hard worker! Our family would be in big trouble without her!

In spite of the minor setbacks we deal with from time to time, we recognize that we are blessed beyond measure and are thankful for the opportunity to meet for such things as seminary classes, church services, etc. As the spotlight has been placed on the persecuted Christians in Afghanistan recently, we feel almost guilty for having such privileges. We know that the Lord requires much from those to whom He gives much. Please pray that we will be faithful with all the Lord has given us. Together, let's take full advantage of every opportunity we're given to serve Him as we wait for His return!

Yours in Christ,
Joshua, Amanda, & the kids