

Dear Praying Friends,

Amanda, the kids and I would like to wish each of you a Merry Christmas. It's hard to believe this year has passed so quickly!

As we celebrate the birth of our Savior and remember why He came, we want to thank you for being a part of our family's ministry in sharing the gospel with the people of Colombia. We are undeserving of your prayers and support and so grateful for each of you and your sacrifice for us. It truly is a privilege to serve the Lord in Colombia!

We also wanted to give a quick update about our visas and share news of how we are preparing to more effectively serve Christ upon our return to Colombia. Please know that we are wanting and working to be back in Colombia as soon as we can.

We recently had the visa application denied and were told we needed to reapply through a different consulate. Although frustrating momentarily, we are grateful that we are still allowed to reapply.

We have prayed that God would show us what we need to do, learn, and accomplish while we are getting the visas. To us, humanly, it makes no sense why we would have to leave so much ministry in the various church plants when Amanda and I had so quickly been granted our visas. Surely, God has a greater purpose in mind and we want to make sure we accomplish that purpose.

We have decided, after counsel with our sending pastor and mission agency, that returning to language school for Amanda to finish her final semester would be a tremendous help in our ministry in Colombia.

One of my regrets as I look back, is that we went to Colombia after I had finished language school without staying for Amanda to officially finish. We believed at the time that she would learn just as quickly and effectively in country with a tutor. However, as a mom of 6 children and taking care of our family, having a baby in Colombia, and living in a different culture, we have learned the hard way that it is much more difficult to learn at home than in a structured language school. In Colombia, she has worked tirelessly, late into the nights and with a tutor—yet to be very good at a language is difficult—and I know finishing language school will take her far ahead and save years of personal study.

So, to make everything concise:

1. We are going back to Colombia. But need the visas.
2. We are trying to make good use of the time God has directed our steps here.
3. We will be in language school for Amanda until the first week of May for her to finish her training. Lord willing, that will allow us to fly back to Colombia by the end of May.
4. We desire that as a result, the negative of having to not be in Colombia will be a huge positive of returning with Amanda years ahead in her knowledge and capability in Spanish. This will help for the rest of our lives in ministry.

Please know that the work in Colombia continues and God is using this even in the lives of the Colombian people and to strengthen the church. God has brought two men, Carlos and Johnny, who are leading the two church plants in Colombia. People are still being saved, the ministry is still growing. We look forward to going back.

We love each of you and pray God blesses you all this Christmas. May the New Year hold many opportunities in store to see folks come to know our Savior!

In Christ,
Matt and Amanda, Timothy, Bethany, Hannah, Abigail, and Samuel Smith

Missionary to Colombia