



Joel, Samuel, Gabriel & Noel

The *Smothers* family

Church planting in Teresina, Brasil

June 8, 2023

Dear Prayer Partners,

Thank you for your faithful prayers for us. We have had some ups and downs these past couple of months and have had to scrap and rewrite this update a couple of times as things have changed multiple times in the process of writing. As mentioned in our last prayer we had a couple of important prayer requests. We had hoped to have good news on both but, unfortunately, only one is completely answered.

The request for the car has been answered for which we praise the Lord immensely! After coming to the conclusion that Joel did not have the right testing equipment or information to accurately diagnose the problem with the car, he decided it would be best to take it to the dealership as we did not know of any other mechanics to which we could take the car. On the day he decided to take it in, it would not even start up at all. In the process of finding a towing service he was able to find one who is also a reputable mechanic. After a week with the car, the mechanic was only able to conclude that it was an electrical problem but was not able to determine the exact issue on his own. Good news is that a friend of his that specializes in vehicle electronics was able to diagnose and repair it in just two days. What a blessing it has been to have our own vehicle again! Thank you to those who gave special gifts to help with this need.

The second request regarding the house has been answered but with some complications we have been dealing with since then. We were able to renew the contract on the house in February seemingly without issue and thankfully with only a small increase in rent. Yet, after Joel reported to the realtor a couple of structural issues that needed attention for repair, as is our responsibility per the contract, the next day they contacted us about coming to look at the house with a prospective buyer. We accepted the rental with the knowledge that the owner is wanting to sell the house. Unfortunately, this was a lie and they brought a paper for us to sign acknowledging that we could buy the house for 650,000 reais (\$130,000) with 30 days to decide or it would be up for immediate sale, so they said. Their claim was that the owner did not want to agree to the contract renewal and that they went against his desires. We don't really know for sure if this was true or not based on their actions since then. With that in mind and knowing that we would not want to permanently live in this house for various reasons plus we don't have that kind of capital on hand, we began to look at other rental options. After finding another house through a different realtor, we had them put it on hold for us and began negotiations about vacating this house. Our realtor then informed us that we would be responsible for breaking the contract which would result in a costly amount of fees, stating that we signed the contract for another year rental. So, after much discussion with them, we have come to the conclusion that they have lied to us on many different occasions. In talking with the other realty offices, we did come to find out that what they were trying to do and tell us was against

the law and we could take legal action against them if they persisted with forcing a sale while we occupy the house in rent. That is not something we wish to have to do but, at least, we have a better understanding of what grounds we have to stay in the house until the end of contract in February 2024. This actually simplifies matters for us in a way, knowing exactly when we need to have another place and be out of here to hand over the keys. Sorry to have left anyone in confusion or doubt as to what our situation has been. It has really been a trying experience as they continually changed their directives and tried to deceive us. We thank you all who have kept us in your prayers through all of this and will do our best to keep you informed as things progress. We are praying that they just let us be until the end of the contract.

One of the difficulties that all of this confusion with the house has caused is an inability to solidify plans for Joel to return to the states this fall to take care of both some personal needs and ministry needs. We began making plans in February and were prepared to let everyone know sooner but halted those plans with the uncertainty of the housing situation. With it seemingly to be resolved for now, we have decided to stick with our plans and Joel will be flying out on July 29 with plans to return to Brazil in November. It is not exactly what we would desire but we are currently unable to leave things here for an extended amount of time for us all to return together. His plans are to make as many visits as possible but not to drive too far distant from our stateside home in Florida. We covet your prayers especially for Noel and the boys while Joel is away for these three months.

We would also ask prayers for Noel for her health. Recently, we unexpectedly found out that we she was pregnant with our fifth child. Unfortunately, just a few weeks later we spent a day at the hospital as she miscarried again. Her doctor is concerned that she may have a condition that causing these pregnancies to abruptly end. She is wanting us to do a series of blood tests and other exams to find a possible cause. Early in her pregnancy with Sam she experienced some complications and was able to save him with bedrest and medication, but those same methods did not seem to help this time. We know God is in control as always and are relying on His guidance throughout all of this.

Prayer Praises:

Car repaired and working
Housing situation resolution
God's healing in trials

Prayer Requests:

Joel's short term furlough
Noel and boys in Joel's absence
Noel's health and diagnosis

Thank you for your faithful prayers and support for the Lord's work here in Teresina.

Yours for the souls of Teresina,
The Smothers Family.

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