



## Faithfulness, Miracles and Victory

Each year we try to give you a summary, a small taste of what God has done through His ministry in Costa Rica. As we prepared this year's report, three themes emerged that emphasize an aspect of God's character or the way He is working to carry out his perfect plan through Love At Work Ministries:

- God's Faithfulness through answered prayers;
- God is working Miracles;
- Victory -- those who didn't give up received a blessing.

We admit the report is long. But if you read it, we can promise you won't regret it. We know you will be uplifted and inspired.

See the latest photos of the "New" Renovated School, read about our plans for the coming year, hear our kids' stories and much more!!

## Poverty Is Ugly Wherever It Is

It was past midnight, when we landed in the Philippines in 1999. On the ride from the airport to downtown Manilla, we passed thousands of Filipinos living in sub-human conditions, cobbling together a "shelter" with scraps, anywhere there was space . . . under bridges, along the highway, in alleys, perched in the tops of trees, even among the dead in graveyards. Jimmy Carter said he saw a family of six living in a septic tank.

In the years since then, we have learned that poverty is ugly wherever it is.



## The Mora Family

Some of you remember the Mora family. How could you forget? The Mora family was unknown to us, but God clearly knew them. They were living in a "hole in the ground, a cave" with no light . . . small, in very bad condition. The walls were crumbling. The sanitary conditions were terrible. It smelled awful.

Alexis was with us. He designed and built many of Love At Work's houses. For many years, he lived on the street in a cardboard box. He apologized and excused himself as he went outside to vomit.



The people living there were Aria Chacon Mora, 84. She had dementia. Xinia, 58, her daughter. Ronald, 41, her son. He had Down Syndrome, and we believe he hadn't been outside in years. God had heard their cry and laid the situation on our hearts. If somebody needs a house, you build one. Ronald now has a house with windows, light, and he goes outside.

Outside our comfortable homes, over there in Alajuelita, lies the poorest of the poor in Costa Rica, suffering, hungry and sick. And one of our greatest challenges is to do something about these situations and others.



In Arturo's words, *There are homes that need to be torn down and rebuilt; others need repairs. They are occupied by women stuck in poverty and the injustice of the system. There is no way they will rise from where they are unless the Lord provides a way. By grace, sometimes we are the channel God uses.*

## Priscilla's House

Early in 2021, we showed you Priscilla's house in Tejarcillos, which needed to be completely redone. The house was literally falling apart. It is on a very steep hill where the rain and mud run beneath it.





We're pleased to report the house was completed. It has been totally reconstructed, with a solid foundation made of concrete metal framing. Labor cost, plumbing issues and some windows resulted in some cost overruns. But Priscilla is thrilled . . . there are so many ways to put Christ's love into action!



*We have so much to do in the education portion of ministry, and in our LifeCenter, our clinic, and the church. But housing is deep in Love At Work's DNA. We can change these situations, one person at a time. By working together with Love At Work Ministries, Love At Work Church and YOU, we can make a difference. Arturo*

## **Better Homes, Better Outcomes: Education**

Better homes are associated with better outcomes for children.

*Millard Fuller, co-founder of Habitat for Humanity used to say, A house is to a family what soil is to a plant. You can pull a plant out of the ground and put water on it and give it all the sunlight in the world, but eventually it will die because it is not rooted.*

*It is the same with a family. A well-built house with solid walls, a good roof and a dry floor will positively affect a family. A home means sufficient space and a healthier environment where children can focus on their studies. One begets another.*

We have seen so many kids move out of disgraceful conditions into simple, decent houses we've built. And through God's grace, we've seen them graduate from HS instead of dropping out, or go back to school and get their GEDs, and enter college. They do all kinds of things they never believed they could do before. And they inspire their younger brothers and sisters to do the same.

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## Here Are Just a Few Examples

### Dasha

Dasha is one of our sixth-grade graduates, and we have known her almost since she was born. Her smile is that type of thing that gives you life. Her smile is that type of thing God uses. Her hugs remind me why we do this. This is a picture of her some years ago.



She lived in one of the ugliest conditions we have seen. In 2021, she graduated from her elementary studies, which is sixth grade for us in Costa Rica. She is a High School student this year.

It is for our students that we believe in the purpose of what we have been called to do. This is why! She is getting the best education she could get, and her family would have never been able to provide it for her. And God has used YOU to make this happen.

She told me today: "Teacher Arturo, I am so excited for our new school. I want to have a place to use computers and do music. Have you planned our music room already?" This child is amazing!

I am sharing a picture of her, waiting with all her family for her diploma pictures and graduation package that includes framed pictures and other beautiful gifts.





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## James

Having spent his childhood in the slums of Alajuelita, James might have expected his life to follow the familiar path of other boys in the neighborhood -- a path with limited opportunities and a bleak future. But James is not one to put any limits on what he thinks he can achieve. And he's proving he can do it!



James has been a student of Love at Work from day one. We built his family a house over 10 years ago. I don't forget that build because, as we were doing his family's house, his mother requested, even begged, if we could possibly build her sister one also. James was six years old at this point. They were also living in very unhealthy conditions, so we quickly changed a little garden into a second home.

James graduated from High School in 2021! He graduated with honors, having achieved the best average grade average in his senior class!



He also participated in a special program in English run by the modern languages faculty at the University of Costa Rica. This program is done to measure real knowledge in speaking and understanding English as a second language. Well, James overachieved . . . getting a perfect score. For a senior, he got the best grades that he could possibly get.

What's next? He's headed to University!!!

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### Michele



James is an example of what God does when someone wants to fight! Love at Work gave James and **his sister Michelle** an opportunity, and they took it. Now they are growing in great ways.

Michelle graduated from our school a couple of years ago. She is majoring in political sciences and just got into law school as well. In a couple of years, she will have two

college degrees completed!

God has been amazing, and we continue to see how students that live in very tough neighborhoods, in slum contexts, are believing that God wants something greater for them. Our ministry is just providing a chance. These kids are building an amazing future. And we can all be certain that our Lord has been, and continues to be, with each one of them.

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## Gadiel

This is a letter we recently received from James' and Michele's younger brother.

*My name is Gadiel. I am 12 years old. I am in sixth grade and going to seventh (High School) this following year. I am sending you this letter because I would like to be in Love At Work International Christian School.*

*I want to study in your school because my brother and sister have learned and grown there. They have gotten better in so many areas, and doors are opening for them.*

*I want to learn more, have better English and also learn other things. I want to play musical instruments, speak better and have more possibilities to learn.*

*Please consider me as a possible candidate.*  
*Gadiel Hurtecho Catón.*

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## Vanessa

In 2006, we developed an education program to assist in the learning needs of children living in the precarious neighborhoods surrounding Alajuelita. From the beginning, we knew the education program would be a huge investment, and it would take a long time. What we didn't know at that time was that God would eventually evolve that program into a school.

Vanessa was one of the first chosen for a scholarship and tutoring. Thirteen years old in this photo, Vanessa is standing with her father Gerardo (a drug addict at the time).



For years, Vanessa carried a heavy load. Her father Gerardo left her family many years



ago to live in the streets to do drugs.

One day she saw him in the park, and we agreed to go with her to convince him to go to a rehab center. We found him! It was a holy moment. He hadn't seen his daughter in 6 years. What a courageous girl! God honored her prayers and faith. He checked in! And he was freed from the chains that kept him in bondage for years.

Like so many teenagers and children living in the slums, Vanessa has faced a mountain of challenges. But she graduated. And, today, she works full time for Love At Work International Christian School (LAWICS). She loves her work and is flourishing there. And she no longer lives in the slum.

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### **Francini**



Vanessa is very close to her little sister Francini, five years old in this photo and attending her first day at LAWICS.

Vanessa felt a strong responsibility and desire that Francini not grow up with the same “reality” she had. “I don’t want my sister to experience the same pain I went through. I want her to have a better life.”

Well, Francini became an excellent student, and, In 2021, graduated from primary level or sixth grade! This year, she is in seventh grade, which is secondary level. She will be able to graduate from HS in just 5 years.

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**Khloe**

2022 marks another milestone for Vanessa. Here is a photo she recently posted on Facebook. This is her daughter, Khloe . . . starting HER first day at LAWICS.

In Vanessa's words, "A new stage begins . . . full of many opportunities and teaching (she is delighted to learn to speak English). I could not be happier." This is a new chapter in their lives . . . THIS IS SUCCESS!

The measure of a church or a ministry – is not it's size or building or Sunday program – but it's Christlikeness. It's the Good News of God's love and grace . . . meaning GOD giving Himself to redeem others. And simply stated, that is the mission of Love At Work International Christian School!

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## **New School Building: The Place for Hope Not A Building . . . A Home for God's Children**

*"Let the favor of the Lord our God be upon us, and establish the work of our hands upon us; yes, establish the work of our hands!" Psalm 90:17*

We could build one million houses, and that would help greatly. But focusing on the kids so they can be educated to high standards is even more impactful. Education was the only thing, the only sure bet to change and break cycles of violence, sex abuse, drug consumption and poverty in our towns.

In 2006, we started a scholarship and tutoring program for kids who would otherwise never be able to attend a private Christian school and who would most likely drop out of public school before the sixth grade. The candidates for sponsorship were identified through the work that we do in the marginal areas of the community.

However, after six years of experience, we were able to identify many areas that needed to be strengthened in order to create the kind of educational experience we envisioned. God called us to make a complex move -- He wanted us to start a school.



## The School's Mission

From the beginning, the school was to be a Christ-centered community, a family, that would educate the hearts and minds and send graduates into the world to make a difference for Jesus Christ.

It would be balanced, with up to 50% of the students from low income families who would be unable to attend the school without the scholarships you provide, and the rest would be from families who could pay.

An old "potato chip factory" . . . became our first school building. Long before the remodeling of that facility, parents were already enrolling their children, and prayers of faith were being offered up that God might complete His miracle. Within a three month period of time, the Lord supplied the staff, students, and we completed the original building. As one of our student's exclaimed, **"It's a miracle! Only God could have done this!"**

Our school has been very successful. It became fully accredited with the Ministry of Education (MEP) in record time and with amazing results. In 2018, our school was the fastest growing private school in our capital of San José, and we have had 100% approval of kids receiving baccalaureate degrees. Our students have the best scores of all schools in our county. God has been amazing and so faithful. We have waiting lists to families who want their kids to attend our school.





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### **"New" Building Prior to Renovation**

God has continued to show Himself strong on our behalf as He has blessed us with a new building in the Fall of 2020 -- we were given the opportunity to buy a school building. The school was forced to close in April due to the COVID and the economic crisis. The facility had not been used in two years and was in terrible disrepair. However, the asking price was right.





### **After Renovation -- It's Amazing**

The scope of the renovation was tremendous, but as you know, Arturo was trained as an architect and has had lots of experience designing and constructing buildings.

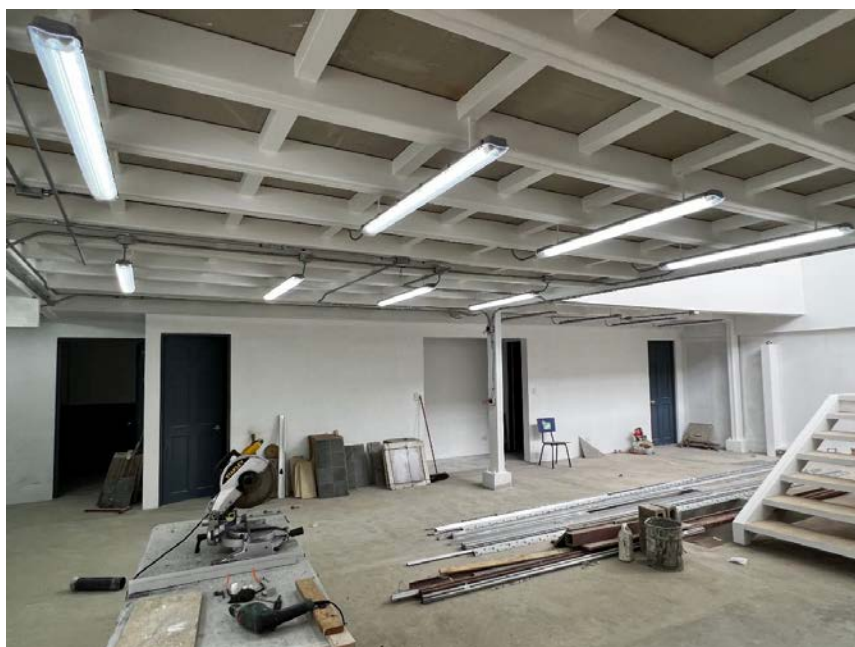
It has been totally redone to new Costa Rican building safety standards, where they experience small and large-scale earthquakes frequently – about 12 each day. They are expanding the facility with second floor classrooms, a computer lab, garage parking for 4 cars, a new soccer court.

Throughout 2021, major improvements have been underway and are now nearing completion. It will be an amazing school!











From these photos, it's difficult to get a sense of its size of the school, because it is really an L-shaped facility consisting of four buildings: Administration, Elementary, High School, Kindergarten and Technology. There is a soccer court in the middle.

### **The Education Program, The School -- God's Miracles**

*Arturo emphasizes: God has been faithful, and we are getting close to finishing our building. But I thought it was important to remind all of our friends that there is no importance on buildings.*

*What is life-changing are the people that will give life to this facility. So many students growing every day in knowledge and wisdom is a key in our ministry. Our students come from different backgrounds and realities. All of them are fighting to become the best they can be, and with help of our Lord we are teaching each one of them to believe that God's plan is great.*

### **Life Center**

Our LifeCenter has been the center for vaccinations in Tejarcillos. Thousands have been vaccinated for Covid by the Dept. of Health, and they have also received the other regular vaccines for children. We have done this all through the pandemic. This is so awesome that the LifeCenter is being used this way during the pandemic! God is so faithful!







However, we cannot operate cooking at the LifeCenter due to the department's regulations on the site where we're located. In the meantime, we are still supporting students with food bags every month. God gave us grace with the Costa Rica Food Bank. We purchase all food with them at very good prices.

Please pray that we can continue serving children and youth so they can build their own futures knowing that Jesus loves them and has an indescribable plan for their lives.





The members of Love At Work Church have been an integral part of Love At Work Ministries. Many have students at the School and are involved in its activities.

Like the early church in the book of Acts, they are caring for the poor and planting churches. They actively work to eradicate poverty in their midst by serving in the LifeCenter and delivering food to families in Jazmín and Tejarcillos. They are regularly going into the slum neighborhoods, visiting with the families and praying with them. They're currently taking a census of their needs so we can develop appropriate plans for the LifeCenter and housing ministry.

Even though they are a relatively young church, they have already planted two churches, which is an amazing accomplishment!

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## **What's Ahead?**

Because of God's faithfulness and the support of so many, as we begin to emerge more fully from this health, economic and moral crisis, we will be pushing hard to:

- To build homes for families needing a decent place to lay their heads at night
- To fill the empty stomachs of hungry children
- To feed young minds with a quality Christian education
- To protect vulnerable kids who, without our help, will turn to drugs, alcohol and prostitution
- To lead them and their families to know and experience the love of Jesus Christ

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## **God Is Our Fundraiser!**

There is still a shortfall with the school construction, and the housing, feeding, scholarships and other initiatives will take substantial funding.

God is our fundraiser, and we know of only one way to raise the money: PRAY. We've often been tempted to write appeal letters, but each time God has said, "Leave it to me." Jesus said, "Ask and it will be given to you." Matthew 7:7 The Lord has always been faithful to answer when we have laid our needs before Him.

"Blessed are those who have regard for the weak." Psalm 41:1

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## **Thousands of Reasons!**

Together, in 2020 - 2021, we estimate that we helped over 3500 people in Alajuelita, Costa Rica, gain the potential to improve their lives through our programs in education, training, housing, nutrition and health care, social and spiritual nurture . . . that's even with the limitations posed by the pandemic and economic crisis.

Collectively, since we first started working in Costa Rica in 2004, we have served more than 27,000 thousand people. So we have thousands of reasons to celebrate, and thousands more to keep serving.

We're pleased to report that, once again, Love At Work Ministries earned the highest level of recognition by GuideStar, the world's largest source of information on nonprofits. Our organization has earned their Platinum Seal of Transparency every year since this level

was introduced in 2016. GuideStar has four different levels of recognition — Bronze, Silver, Gold, Platinum.

## God's Grace

We are so grateful for and impressed by our resilient leaders, their team and Love At Work Church who are doing whatever it takes, each and every day, to give these children a healthy start in life – a good education, food, health care, decent housing, protection, safety and, most importantly, the love of Jesus Christ and desire to follow Him..

We are also thankful for the partnership and faithfulness of our donors. Despite the extraordinary circumstances of the last two years, you have continued to give selflessly . . . you are a true example of Philippians 2:3-4, "Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others."

We know that it is God who is doing this, it's not us. But in His grace, He's given us the opportunity to be a part of it.

God is **Faithful**! As He has done so many times before, He will complete this **Miracle**. And thanks be to God! He has given us the **Victory** through our Lord Jesus Christ. 1 Corinthians 15:57.

God be gracious to you!

Larry and Carole Prible, Co-Founders and Directors

Jay Prible, President

Arturo Piedra, Pastor and Executive Director, Costa Rica

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