

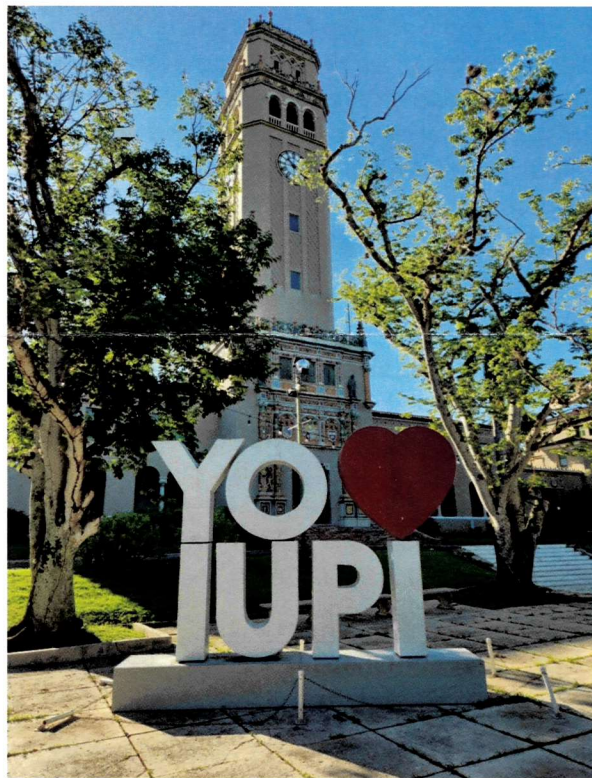


## Reaching the Next Generation(s)

**“Pray and do evangelism until God does something.”** This is a friend’s description of his experience pioneering discipling ministries on US campuses. There’s a little more to our plan than this, but it’s the essence of how we’ll launch—sharing the gospel broadly and personally with students to see in whose hearts God is at work. However, our goal isn’t just to make *disciples* of students not yet walking with Jesus. We want to equip *laborers* for the plentiful harvest (Mt 9:37-38)—individuals (disciples too!) who will pursue Jesus personally *and* help others do the same for decades to come—in their neighborhoods, workplaces, families, and churches, long after they’ve left campus behind. Therefore we also ask God for *Timothy’s*—students already walking with God and ready learn how to reach their friends and families with the gospel. We want to see *multiple* generations of Puerto Rican disciples and laborers (2 Tim 2:2)!

This first year has been full of learning. From intentional coffee and lunch meetings with locals, pastors, and ministry leaders, to spontaneous conversations in the checkout line, with car salesmen, repairmen, or neighbors; from planned visits to different parts of the island to unplanned interruptions of water, electricity, or traffic; observing how people drive, shop, and celebrate; tasting many new-to-us foods; relating with teachers and parents, attending school events and birthday parties, to even learning with our kids from their Spanish and Social Studies textbooks—all this is an intentional part of laying a foundation of cultural understanding and family stability for the long haul of life and ministry in Puerto Rico.

UPR-RP (see right) is where we will start, a place I (Luke) have frequently walked, prayed, and observed. One tension we feel acutely is having more to offer a university student than ever before, yet with less in common with our current target audience than ever before. It’s been eight years since ministering directly to students in Kearney, Nebraska. Now, at 40+ yrs old, our kids are closer in age to college students than we are. And throw in that we’re foreigners operating in a foreign language. Gospel ministry is always a work of God, but for us it’s more evident than ever that to see any fruit, God has to give the growth (1 Cor 3:7)! So we step forward into 2024, very limited but in faith, begging Him to work through us, in spite of us.



### The University of Puerto Rico—Rio Piedras

- Nicknamed “La IUPI” (ee-YOO-pee)
- Established in 1903 as a public, land-grant research university
- Approximately 12,000 students this year
- The largest of the 30+ San Juan area campuses and 80+ 4-yr universities in PR
- Known for its “progressive” and “liberal” ideology among students and faculty (e.g., all-inclusive/gender-neutral bathrooms)
- Very politically-charged; consistently the first campus to strike and the last to resume classes during student unrest
- Only one dorm; most students commute, meaning few are looking for friends

### Prayer Needs:

- Our current house has served us well, but we would like more space both for ourselves and for future hosting. Our rental contract ends Feb 15th. We’re exploring the possibility of buying a home. Pray for our current landlord to grant us a flexible contract after Feb 15th, and for a house that can be home as long as we are in Puerto Rico.
- For the two Nav groups (FL & USAFA) coming for missions trips in March to be effective in helping us meet students
- For strong personal, spiritual, and family foundations to live sustainably in Puerto Rico for the long-term.
- For God’s direction in how to begin on campus, and to provide faithful individuals (2 Chron 16:9) in whom to invest.



## Family Update

We were blessed to have the last two weeks of November to be in Iowa to celebrate Thanksgiving with our families. It was the first time to return together since moving to Puerto Rico last January, and we had a tremendous time! We wore warm clothes, enjoyed large open spaces, raked and jumped in leaves, cooked and ate very American food, played games together, went pheasant hunting, and God even answered our kids' prayers for just enough snow to sled! Returning, we're learning that December is FULL of Christmas events. We've had two different school events (both with extra preparation for our kids), our local church's Christmas party, our small group's Christmas party, our ministry team Christmas party, our kids' classes Christmas parties, and lots of extra ballet rehearsals for the upcoming performance. It's been a firehose of activity. We're learning all that a Puerto Rico December holds!

At the same time, we are incredibly thankful in light of how our family is doing. The first year has held lots of ups and downs for each of us (and many still to come), yet we praise God that our kids are doing well. They've all made friends. They are doing well at school, and (usually) look forward to going. They handle Spanish very well (already correcting mom and dad!). The family routines we've stuck to through the past 2 1/2 years of change seem to be bearing fruit in their lives. Of the many things that are stressful about living in a foreign language and culture, we are deeply grateful that, at least for now, our kids are doing well. God is answering your and our prayers for this!

### Individual Highlights from 2023:

**Luke:** A week vacation in Cabo Rojo, PR; that our kids are doing well; two weeks of doing "Iowa things" in November; God's provision of a car, house, and school; receiving lots of cards from friends for my 40+1 birthday; birding.

**Sarah:** our family vacation in Cabo Rojo; getting to explore Puerto Rico; time with our families for Thanksgiving; a visit from my aunt and uncle; trying new foods; the San Patricio forest near our home; our kids' school.

**Zoe:** going to friends' birthday parties; making friends; school; funny teachers; ballet; going to the Sosa's house.

**John:** school; finding two friends who love Star Wars and Legos; everything.

**Eleanora:** making friends with Alexa; a visit from (great) Uncle Cal and Aunt Kris; visiting Cataño; volleyball practice at school; going to Viking Arena.

**Kate:** making friends with Valentina; going to grandmas' and grandpas' houses and playing with the dollhouse; going to the Children's Museum; going to Viking Arena; seeing fireworks.

We are *deeply* grateful for you, your prayers, and your partnership in this gospel endeavor, and we pray that you enjoy celebrating JESUS this Christmas!!!

Love,  
Luke & Sarah



Each grade performed a song or dance for the "Puerto Rico Evening" event at Academia Bautista, their school, in December.

### 😊 Cultural Moments 😊

**Driving.** At 5:45am, driving in the dark to the Des Moines airport to return to Puerto Rico, I (Luke) glanced behind us in the rearview mirror at the cars on the freeway on their morning commute. "Hmm," I thought to myself. "Every single one of those is driving in the right-hand lane. I'm not used to seeing that anymore."

**Parent chat groups.** Each of our kids' class groups has a self-organized, parents-only Whatsapp texting group for sharing questions, doubts, ideas, pictures, complaints, etc. Sometimes pictures of completed homework assignments get shared for others to see. (!!!) It's not uncommon for me (Sarah) to have 30-40 unread messages from one group. After Kate's Christmas party, there were 170+ messages just from that morning! It gets overwhelming.