



The EMU Newsletter

PROCLAIMING THE TRIUMPHS OF THE GOSPEL

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*Ken & Joan Jensen
Director & Office Administrator
(evening stroll on beach in Uruguay)*

ALONG THE WAY . . .

This is Joan's and my last day "along the way" in Uruguay for our February/March visit. The distant, throaty thunder announced a coming storm. Then a whipping wind harvested loose branches and pine cones from their moorings, spilling a significant amount on the tin roof of the *casita* where we are living. Now, dense curtains of rain are falling, but the drama has not concluded. The claps of thunder shout for an encore, and the sky obliges. We hope that the final act is over before we have to load our luggage into the old compact Fiat utility truck. It would be romantically humbling to assume that Uruguay was weeping at our departure. Actually, we should be the ones teary-eyed as we leave the place where we have had so many blessings over the past three weeks.

Joan and I picked up Brad and Peg ("Patricia" in Uruguay, after a Uruguayan once asked Brad why he called his wife "Pig"!) Lapiska at the airport in Carrasco, Uruguay, the day after camp director Pedro Donzé retrieved us from the same location and ferried us and our pile of luggage to the *casita* ("little house") at Camp Emmanuel, in the coastal village of Guazuvirá. The Lapiskas left snowy, frigid Lorton, VA, for Brad to be our guest speaker at family camp (Feb. 16-21) and the workers' conference (Feb. 23-26). Arriving in Uruguay on the Friday before camps gave the Lapiskas time to recover well from their flights.

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BETTER THAN FINISHING WELL

by Brad Lapiska, pastor of Engleside Baptist Church of Alexandria, VA

I am just completing my third ministry visit to Uruguay in a decade. This time was both delightful and memorable because Peg (Patricia in Uruguay) and I got to accompany long-time best friends Ken and Joan Jensen. Ken is the current Director of EMU International, which had its origins in Uruguay almost seventy years ago, and under Ken's leadership it has expanded internationally during the last twenty-seven years (Joan is the real brains behind the million details that have to be managed for this complex ministry, but she does it behind the scenes, so I am not going to let the cat out of the bag by bragging on her too much). We enjoyed renewing our old friendship, taking daily walks for exercise, walking on the beach at sunset, and eating the wonderful Uruguayan food.

For health reasons, this will probably be my last trip, so I prayed this trip would go well in terms of the opportunities I would have to preach and counsel at Family Camp and then to encourage at Workers' Conference. Praise God it did - not that I was so great, but that my ministry was so well received. Family Camp was a gathering of about 120 campers from every age group - from newborn to those closing in on their ninth decade (how many 87-year-olds in America do you know still braving the bunk beds of camp just to get a blessing and be a blessing?). The young enjoy the old; the old enjoy the young; the families enjoy each other. All come to refresh themselves in Christ. You should hear them sing.



Brad & Peg (rt) giving their testimonies at Family Camp with Chicha translating

Gathered in the lovely chapel here, they shake the walls in praising Christ in song. The men sing well (even the young men); the ladies are great; together they are awesome. Every night requests were taken from the floor, and the poor song leader had to pick from a sea of excited hands pumping up and down and begging for their choice of the next song. Peg and I found this part of the worship here exhilarating.

I have always enjoyed the Apostle Paul's Gospel analogies for the Christian life. As Paul said, life is a battle to be won, a fight to be fought, a race to be run (I preached from Paul's letter to the Ephesians for Family Camp and Paul's letter to the Philippians for Worker's Conference - I like Paul's

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Brad teaching the morning Bible class at Family Camp (Chicha translating)

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One of the first scheduled events the four of us had planned was to watch a Livestream of the 75th anniversary celebration of **Hampton Park Baptist Church (HP)** on Feb. 15. The Lapiska and Jensen families met 27 years ago when the Lapiskas joined HP. Brad became the youth pastor for our daughters, and Brad and I began weightlifting and jogging together. Brad was asked to record a short greeting to the HP congregation for the anniversary service, as were a few other assistant pastors of yesteryear. By Saturday the 14th, we learned that none of the internet carriers used at the camp had a bandwidth sufficient to handle live streaming. After several options were thrown around, we decided to take **Carlos and Mabel Olivera's** offer to use their home as our staging ground. The 3-hour time difference between Uruguay and Greenville, SC, placed the beginning of the service at 1:30 PM Uruguay time. Carlos pastors Bethel Church in Pando, about a 45-minute drive from Camp Emmanuel. (Carlos and Mabel are also in charge of the kitchen at most of the summer camps, and in spite of a bad back [Mabel] and injured hamstring [Carlos], they are both hard workers and just plain fun to be around.) The Oliveras were waiting for us at 1:00 so we could get my computer set up with their flat screen TV. However, my ignorance entered the picture at the same time the Livestream began. We had a great video feed, but the sound echoed horribly. My short-circuited brain sprang to action, complicating the situation. Meanwhile, Joan had picked up the Livestream on her Samsung phone, and she and the Lapiskas were enjoying the interview segments. Suddenly, in a flash of uncharacteristic clarity, I understood my computer problem and easily corrected it, just in time for the preaching. So we all watched the rest of the service on "the big screen." It was nice to be able to participate in the viewing of this special service. And we enjoyed a time of fellowship with the Oliveras after the end of the internet service.

Because we mainly fended for ourselves for weekend meals, one evening we decided that for supper we would visit a small restaurant in San Luis, about a 5-minute drive from Camp Emmanuel. Arriving at 7:30 PM, we were informed that the charcoal grill would not be ready for cooking until 9:00! We opted to walk a kilometer to the beach and then walk the seaside sand to a small fishing village a few kilometers to the east of San Luis. The weather and the timing of the sunset were all perfect, and the grilled chicken dinners we ordered tasted even better than they would have an hour and a half earlier. The outing was so pleasant that Brad "ordered" it be repeated the next Sunday night. And it was – repeated and pleasurable.



Family Camp at Camp Emmanuel February 2015

All of our January camps were down in number this year, and the February **family camp** was no exception. The overnight attendees numbered about seventy-five. But during the day several other families showed up for the services and fellowship times, making the campground feel fuller. **Brad** brought appropriate and interesting Bible messages each morning, and the "God & I Times" and "God & I & Others Times" (private and small group studies) were based on his text. The evening services were preached by **Gustavo de Oliveira**, the pastor



Pastor Gustavo de Oliveira

of Calvary Temple of Montevideo. He did a very good job teaching as well, but I didn't understand very much as his Spanish is on a much higher plane than mine. The summer weather for the week of camp was made to order: mild, breezy, and clear skies. It was the best mimic of a week in fall that I have ever experienced! Though Brad and Peg do not speak Spanish, they once again won all of the kitchen personnel over by supplying ice cream for them after every lunch! Besides the services, the largest gatherings of campers were for the competition times during the afternoons. Favorite games for all ages are bocce ball (*bochas*), played on our specially made court; *teja*, a disc tossing game famous in Uruguay; and a game our campers call Cricket, but it is actually Croquet, the game area having been mislabeled years ago and now everyone refuses to accept my corrective designation! And, of course, there are soccer competitions for the young men – and old men who haven't yet accepted they are not young men. (This, incidentally, is why Pastor Carlos Olivera walks with a heavy limp!) Many of these families and individuals have been attending the family camp for years, so it sometimes feels more like a family reunion. (With one family, I have watched their children grow up over the years as the parents took their vacations at family camp, and now there are three generations attending!) It was truly a blessed week of fellowship in the Lord.

Though Brad was given an opportunity to

preach on the weekends, he decided that it would be best if he took those two days to rest at camp. Though his leukemia has not progressed, he does get tired easier. It was a wise decision as the next Monday saw a dramatic increase in Brad's teaching schedule - three times per day. These 3-day annual conferences with the **missionaries of Misión Evangélica del Uruguay**, the Uruguay branch of **EMU Internacional**, are always good. Once again, Brad's teaching was what we all needed as he spoke on regaining and maintaining joy in the ministry. At the family camp, missionary **Chicha Rodriguez** did all of Brad's translating, but for the workers' conference, **John Mark Steel** and **Matias Espinel** took some of the load off of Chicha.

But Chicha's translating duties went far beyond the preaching sessions. During the two camps I attempted to meet with each of our Uruguay missionary families and conduct our annual interviews. The reviews usually take anywhere from 45-minutes to over an hour. This is my chance to go beyond the missionary's bi-monthly prayer letters and learn more about how their ministry progressed over the past year, as well as getting updates on their families. Although all the missionaries have common praises and problems, each also has unique difficulties and blessings. Chicha and I conducted these interviews every day during family and workers' camps. Chicha is on our Board of Directors in Uruguay, so it is good that she is privy to information discussed. These two camps are generally restful for most of our missionaries, but for Chicha they are rather exhausting. Joan sat in on many of the interviews and took notes – actually, more like transcriptions - on my notebook computer. She very much enjoys these times, too, as they help her get to know our national missionaries better. I was very encouraged by the reports from these dear workers.

During the workers' conference there were two business meetings with all of the missionaries, as well as several pastoral meetings, and two Board meetings. So there was less time for R&R. Some important decisions were made concerning EMU's ministries in Uruguay. The only one I was against, but voted in favor of, was selling our 1996 Fiat compact cargo van. The budget was a major subject of discussion at the Board meetings, but we were unable

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to finalize the fiscal year budget (April 2015 to March 2016) because we did not have the Candy Land royalty total from Hasbro. However, two days after the workers returned home, we received the total and were quite astonished. As I have been reporting to you since 2008, the royalties have declined every year, often by very significant amounts. We were expecting another decline, but hoping for at least the amount to stay close to last year's. But the Lord had a wonderful surprise for us, allowing us to cover the budget that **Pedro Donzé** (he is also our office administrator in Uruguay - he's too talented for his own good!) drew up as a "this-is-what-the-budget-should-be" proposal.



Pedro Donzé, who makes all the camps work so smoothly

The Lapiskas flew back to Virginia the night that the workers' conference ended. Joan and I really missed their company at Camp Emmanuel, where she and I finished out our time in Uruguay. (This was the longest time Brad and I had spent together since they moved from Greenville, SC.) **Luis Rios'** (the camp caretaker) eldest daughter had just had a baby in Argentina, where she and her husband are missionaries, and Luis and his wife Adriana were scheduled to leave the camp right after the conference, too, to make the 20-hour bus ride to see their 2nd grandchild. Joan and I volunteered to stay at the camp rather than move to the mission house in Montevideo and share the upstairs living quarters with the Steel family. Joan's and my grandiose plans of accomplishing piles of work - including this newsletter - seemed to evaporate as we had to travel to Montevideo on three different days.

The first of those trips was for Joan to attend the baby shower for **Kristine Espinel**, given by Siloé Church in Colon. Matias Espinel, John Mark Steel, and I were the "babysitters" for the Espinel and Steel children at the church's playground. Since the kids played well together, we three men had a good time discussing various mission issues. The setting sun and a southerly wind brought unexpectedly cool weather, making out-of-doors standing rather uncomfortable. The children got invited into the church for the food time, while, like homeless beggars, we huddled on the front steps of the church. Eventually, we, too, were welcomed inside for leftovers. There was a good turnout of ladies for the shower, and it was an encouragement to Kristine and the church ladies. Kristine's due date is March

10, and she seems to be doing fine.

The following day (Saturday) we returned to the capital for the opening service for **FEBU** (the Bible college). It was very encouraging to see Calvary Temple of Montevideo filled. Most of the crowd consisted not of students, but folks interested in or connected with the college. Classes started on March 2, and I do not yet have any stats on the number of students. I do know that almost all of the 1st year students signed up for the 2nd year of classes. Once again, the night classes are being held at Calvary Temple. The Board of FEBU continues to search for a more permanent location that will accommodate all the classes of a four-year college.

One week later, the **Bible Institute** began another year of classes. Again, I don't have any numbers to share with you. But during my interviews with the pastors I learned that several of the video institutes in the interior have good attendance. Pray that more and more young people and adults will avail themselves of these two Bible schools.

The windshield wipers of the Fiat were swishing almost continuously as I drove to the airport, picking up **Gabriel Gomez** (pastor of Gethsemani Church) on the way. After unloading at "Departures" on the second level of the airport, Gaby took over the Fiat. Late Monday afternoon while driving back to camp from another engagement in Montevideo, I remarked to Joan that I was emotionally drained, to which she expressed the same sentiment. We had had a wonderful time during our visit, but we were ready to get home again. And we thank the Lord for His "traveling mercies."

I thank the Lord that my *Trigeminal Neuralgia* did not flare up to the extent it did during my last two trips to Uruguay. However, I am taking more medication to keep it at bay. As a side effect, I have been quite a bit more tired, resulting in more "down time," and sadly I find that even my "up times" are less productive. My EMU family seems to be understanding to an extent, but it is disconcerting to know that I am not serving them as they deserve. At the business meeting during the workers' conference, I let it be known that there was a very good chance that **Steve Erkens** would be the new director of EMU before the 2016 workers' conference. It's a mixed blessing for them as they presume greater productivity from a younger director, but also realize that they do not know Steve very well. I am planning to be in Uruguay next February with Steve to help with this transition of leadership. All that to say this: I would appreciate your prayers for my health. And pray for Steve as he continues to learn more about the workings of EMU and our missionary families.

Steve has scheduled a 12-day trip to Cancún, Mexico, leaving on March 26, to see the ministry of **the Nuñezes**. Steve will be preaching four times, but I do not yet know his schedule for visiting the various churches

that "Marco's men" have started outside of Cancún. Pray also for the wife of one of these pastors who has been suffering with chronic depression.

Ted Allston taught in the capital of Mongolia again. His sojourn lasted from February 12-28. He said the classes went well, but we have not had time to discuss his trip yet.

The Crowleys arrived in Greenville, SC, on February 10, after having to rebook their flights because of Nathaniel's illness - dengue fever. We left for Uruguay the next day, so did not see the Crowleys when they arrived. They are doing fine and enjoying being together with almost their whole family for the first time since their middle daughter Anna got married a few years ago.

The Kanes flew in to Atlanta from Cambodia on March 2, and we have only talked to Brian and Lydia briefly. They are living at the missionary house of Hampton Park Baptist Church. We hope to get together with both of these Cambodia missionaries soon.

The Hancocks were able to purchase a 2002 Tacoma to replace their ailing 1997 CRV in time to make the 10-hour drive north to visit the **Forrest McPhail family**, who are leading a new church plant. Matt and Becky have also chosen a Khmer church in Phnom Penh with whom to worship on Sundays. The services are completely in Khmer, which has helped to broaden the Hancocks' understanding of Khmer customs and language.

In February, the **Josh Jensen family** drove to Ban Lung in northeastern Cambodia to meet with a missionary couple who would like the Jensens to housesit for them beginning in August. The house is next door to the Crowleys' house, so the neighborhood is not too bad! Josh and Amy will continue their Khmer language studies in Ban Lung and attend a Khmer church, while also building relationships with Jarai tribal folks.

The efforts to start a new church in Sarcelles, France, continue. **Tim Bixby** reports that about twenty members of the church in Saint Denis are meeting to pray for this endeavor. Thousands of The Gospel of John have been distributed in the target area. Tim, with the help of some others, has been trying to find a suitable meeting place, a difficult task given the French regulations for regular gatherings of more than twenty people. Tim indicates that the laws are reasonable, but they make the search more problematic. Missionary **Kristi Colas** is living in the **Coles'** house while they are on furlough, and she continues to be a real help in the church plant.

While in Uruguay, we learned that the **Crnkovics** plan to come to the States on July 20 and stay for about a month to visit supporters and hopefully raise more support.

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Tom and Connie Chapman held their summer VBS February 17-22. (It's still summer in Antofagasta, Chile.) On March 29 there will be a very special service: Daniel and Angelo Salvatierra will be ordained to the Gospel ministry. Matt and Susan Bixby (Tom and Connie's oldest daughter and her husband) will be there for the occasion as Matt had a very important part in the mentoring and education of these two young men when they attended UCLA, the Bible university in Monterrey, Mexico. Daniel and Angelo will be the pastors of the church in Antofagasta.

Mel and Jan Wingrove will be in churches in Ohio and Pennsylvania in March. But on March 26 they will be in Greenville, SC, to attend Mel's 50-year college reunion.

March is a month of change, with winter becoming spring (for 88% of the population) and summer fading into fall for those in the Southern Hemisphere. But most changes cannot be so easily affixed a predictable calendar. Many of the changes in our lives and ministries can be planned in advance with a fair degree of certainty, but, even then, the Lord has His overriding schedule. We are anticipating some beneficial changes to EMU and for our missionaries throughout the remainder of this year, but cannot say for certain that they will come to pass. So, we rely on your prayers for EMU that the Lord will guide us in His perfect, wise path as we seek to spread the Gospel in the spheres that God has allotted to us. Thank you for your prayers and gifts. ✚

Better Than Finishing Well

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hard-hitting, yet compassionate method of preaching truth). I see life much the same way as Paul saw it. So, as impending health conditions force me to begin giving serious thought to finishing my race well (1 Cor. 9:24), I learned a valuable lesson from this trip to Uruguay. The only thing better than finishing well is to keep running.

Let me highlight some of the runners I encountered on the ministry racetrack here. There is a young lady named Priscilla who was a camper when I was here in 2008, and now she is a volunteer camp staff worker and a leader in the children's ministry at camp. There is my translator, Chicha, who is ten years older than I, but who tirelessly moves from translating sermons for me to translating worker interviews for Ken to squeezing in much ministry to other ladies here at camp in between everything else. And then there are two ladies that Ken wrote about in the EMU newsletter a few months ago, Ursula and Marianne, who came to Uruguay from Germany as teenagers, barely escaping the occupying Russian army. While their ministry has slowed down some in their 80's, they are still running. At the same lunch table one day, they spoke English to Peg and me, German to a lady and two children who haven't learned Spanish yet, and Spanish to an old gentleman here just for the company of others. These ladies counsel some, but they encourage a lot. By their testimony of perseverance in their faith and by their talk of praise for their Savior, they leave you feeling refreshed for having been in their company.

The men here are just as inspiring. I was in the homes of Pastor "Gaby" Gomez and Pastor Carlos Olivera. Both men are doing great works leading their churches using their different personalities and

different gifts (but one thing they share in common is their wives know how to welcome you and feed you well in homes where hospitality overflows). Pastor Carlos and his wife work tirelessly in the camp kitchen to make sure all are well fed (4 times per day). Pastor Gaby devotes himself to students training to enter the ministry. Two young men here, John Mark Steel and Matias Espinel, have just completed the inaugural year of FEBU, a new college they were instrumental in starting, that provides college level ministry training for the entire country (and already expanding with a student from Argentina).

Come to Uruguay and you will see a lot of runners on the track - men and women, all ages, running. I don't know how much time I have left to run in life's race, but who does? I always come to Uruguay to minister, but I always leave ministered to and newly inspired just for having been in the company of the great servants of the Lord here. So how was I inspired by my trip here this time? One thing I learned. Don't spend too much time worrying about crossing the finish line. Run the race. Keep running. Finishing well is good, running the race is better.

1 Corinthians 15:57-58 (KJV)

57 But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

58 Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord. ✚

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