



The EMU Newsletter

PROCLAIMING THE TRIUMPHS OF THE GOSPEL

Volume LVIII

December 2015

Number 11



Ken & Joan Jensen
Director

ALONG THE WAY . . .

On Thanksgiving Day, Joan and I hosted the Martin (Joan's family) Thanksgiving meal, which included the Steve Erkens family. The next day our daughter Caroline Floyd arrived with her two children, and Friday evening we had a birthday party for Carson's second year. That brought in some more of the Floyd family. On Saturday we drove to The Wilds of North Carolina for the Jensen Christmas. (Yes, that was rather early, but it was the best date that most of the invited families could gather. Rick and Kathy Jensen hosted the clan at the Blue Room, which has plenty of seating, tables, and games. The crowd grew to include three generations of Jensens, Erkens, Floyds, Micklers, McDaniels, and some other last names. My desk calendar is inked with reminders of other Christmas "happenings" including Sunday school, church choir special, and smaller gatherings of Christmas revelers. And before the extra helpings of nourishing foods and the extra helpings of non-nourishing foods even begin to be worked off of our frames, it will be 2016 - a new year with the same old bodies! I suppose this is why they call this "the holiday season."

At Thanksgiving we give thanks to God for His abundant blessings on our lives and loved ones. (It is interesting that the first two Thanksgivings - the first unofficial and the second official - were held in times of plenty and sorrow. The surviving

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BACK TO BIKES, BUSES, AND SUBWAYS

by Steve and Charity Erkens, missionaries to China

The holiday season is upon us, and added to the busyness of the holidays, we are also preparing for our return to China next month. We have packed 9 ½ of the plastic containers that we'll be taking back as our "suitcases." We are limited to 50 pounds per suitcase per person (although we will each take 2), so space isn't the issue so much as weight! This is a far cry from the 2-70 pound bags we used to get when we travelled!

We have been able to pack most of the clothes, coats, shoes, and school books that we'll need for the next couple years along with one "bag" allotted for the boys' "fun" things (mostly Legos!). While it can be difficult to whittle down everything to such a small amount, there is also something freeing about sorting through things and getting rid of so much. What a great reminder that this world is not our home!

We have plane tickets to return to Beijing on January 8. The same university that I worked at in 2013 has hired me back as an English teacher. After contracts are signed (we are still waiting for that), the school will get visas for the family.

Our housing is still up in the air. We are hoping to live in university housing when we first get there, if our contract has gone through. From there, we will use real estate agencies to find an apartment to rent in the area close to the school (and not too far from the church we'll attend).

Our transport will be a bit simpler. We will use buses and subways much of the time when we first get back since temperatures will be below freezing. Once we buy bicycles, those will also become one of our main means of transport. The boys are looking forward to these transport changes (although they might miss our minivan when they're standing outside at a bus stop in temperatures in the teens!).

We are so thankful that we currently have our full support committed to begin in January. This support level is based on

acquiring the teaching job, but we don't foresee any problems with this going through. Our main expenses when we return to Beijing will be re-settling costs. We didn't store anything when we left because we didn't anticipate returning, so we're basically starting all over. We're grateful for the special gifts that have already come in to help cover these costs!

It's been such a blessing to see how the Lord has brought all the different details together in preparation for our return. Some of our main prayers requests are that the contract from the university would come soon. In China, there's not a huge rush for them to send it, but on our side, our patience is often stretched thin as we'd like to have everything in order ASAP! Please also pray that we'll be able to get our visas before our departure date. It would be much cheaper and simpler to enter the country on teaching visas instead of having to change them after we return. Also, please pray for grace during this time of transition - that we will use our remaining time here to be a blessing to those we're with and also parent well amidst the busyness of this time in our lives. ✚



(l-r) Luke, Jacob, and Caleb Erkens ready to leave for China - almost!

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Pilgrims had just weathered a horrendous winter in Plymouth with the deaths of many family members and friends. The warmer months were productive in the abundance of produce; enough to even feed a large delegation of native Americans who showed up for the feast. Though various presidents of the USA signed declarations of a day of thanksgiving and prayer, the first nationwide official Thanksgiving Day was proclaimed by Abraham Lincoln in 1863 in the midst of some of the bloodiest battles of the American Civil War. It seems that adversity turns many hearts towards God and His loving-kindness. Thankfully, none of our families were experiencing tragedy this Thanksgiving. Following Thanksgiving, the next holiday brings us to thanksgiving for the incarnation of Jesus the Messiah. Once again it is a historical event that took place in adversity. For many years now, the celebration of Christmas has been under attack by the enemies of the Gospel story. And for several years now we have begun to hear and see acts of violence against the followers of Jesus the Christ. But, most of us can give thanks to our Lord for the unspeakable gift of His Son to redeem mankind in an environment of safety and material blessing. And a week after Christmas we will be giving God thanks for having brought us through another year, and asking His blessing on the New Year.

The origin of the word "holiday" is "holy-day" and was used only for religious days of celebration or commemoration. (It eventually became secularized to also include any day, secular or religious, that is a special day set aside for celebration.) Our current world has done a masterful job of secularizing Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year. And even those of us who are followers of Christ get caught up in the movement of the world's mob. May our gaze remain on our Savior and what He has done, is doing, and will do for His people and each of us as individuals. May you have a blessed holy-day season.

Though this holiday season is generally a time of joy with friends and family, some of our missionaries are dealing with some difficult situations. As we announced in last month's newsletter, **JD Crowley** came to the USA on November 11 to speak at a week-long missions conference in Illinois, visit his stateside children in Illinois and South Carolina, and to spend some time with his aging parents in North Carolina. His mother has been in an assisted living home for some time due to Alzheimer's, or dementia. But her health was relatively good. During JD's visit stateside, she stopped eating. The doctors told JD that she would probably not live long, and she was placed on hospice care. The airline company granted JD an extension on

his return ticket from November 30 to December 10. JD has been in Greensboro, NC, to be with his mom and dad, who lives in a retirement home in that city. At this writing, that is about all we know. However, we do know that the Crowley family needs our prayers for comfort and wisdom. **Kim and Nate Crowley** are still in Ban Lung, Cambodia, where they spent Thanksgiving with the **Kanes and Jensens**.

(We just received word that Mrs. Mary Henderson Crowley passed into the presence of her Savior on December 3 at the age of 83.)

Marco Nuñez is going through a similar situation with his mother. She lives in a nursing home in San Antonio, TX, close to her daughter. Marco was able to visit his mom in October for a few days. The last we heard she was refusing food, too. We do not know much about her condition, but Marco remains quite concerned about her.

The Crnkovics, in Koprivnica, Croatia, are rejoicing this holiday season for the Lord's sparing their oldest daughter, **Andrea**, from serious injury or even death. Koprivnica has bike lanes throughout the city which many young people use for riding to and from school. In November (I don't have a date), while Andrea was riding on one of these bike paths, a car for some reason veered into the path and struck Andrea. She was badly bruised and her glasses did not survive the collision, but she was not seriously injured. No doubt Christmas will be just a little more special this year. One family burden that the Crnkovics have concerns a niece whose parents are also in missionary work. Through an internet contact, this young woman has become enamored with a man who is a part of ISIS. She desires to travel to the Middle East to marry this man and join his "cause."

The Allstons are rejoicing on two family fronts. Marla's father, **Pastor David Yearick**, has recovered enough that he can be out-and-about again. He even passed a 3-hour long driving test. Mrs. Yearick is still having pain from her stress fracture, but she is not homebound. (David Yearick is one of our Board of Directors, and we will be needing his wisdom and insight in December as we have a Board meeting concerning a new missionary family joining EMU.) On a second front, Ted and Marla are rejoicing in the births of their first two grandsons.

I'm mainly rejoicing with the Allstons because of **Ted's** safe and profitable trips to several 10/40 Window countries recently. From November 4-16, Ted taught in a Bible college in northern Egypt. After a short repose at home, he left on November 27 for visits to Tunis and Morocco. We hope to have a report on that adventure when he returns home in mid-December.

Billy Judson sent us this message from his home in Secunderabad, India:

Pastor Vincent Sawyer from Macedonian Call

Ministries, Florida, visited our ministry from November 3-14. We traveled by car to 11 cities where we have Bible Colleges. In Vadarevu Village he preached in a church of over 1000 attendees that was started by one of our students. He also met with our senior students and heard their testimonies of how Pastor Sawyer's systematic theological study materials have helped their spiritual growth and ministry. His books have been our curriculum for over 14 years, and all of our students were excited to meet Vincent in person.



Vince Sawyer preaching in Vadarevu Village with a translator

Tomorrow there will be another person visiting us from Cary, NC, for two weeks. I am on a crazy schedule right now because the designer of our magazine -- Wisdom For The Heart -- was not available until yesterday to begin the layout. Thank you for your support for our ministry of One Fair Chance with the goal of reaching many more of our countrymen for Christ.

Shortly after the bombings in France in November, France's anti-terrorist unit had a shootout with more terrorists that were located north of Paris. The shootout took place in **Saint Denis**, the city where the church is located that the **Bixbys** and **Coles** attend. Both of our EMU families in France have kept us informed as to their safety. And thankfully, neither has been in danger. However, **Krista Colas**, who is a co-worker with them from another mission board, was very close to two of the bombing sights the day before while on visitation. We are so grateful for the Lord's protection. The Bixbys, Coles, and Krista are still looking for a place where they can hold services in Sarcelles, as they continue to endeavor to start a church there.

There has been progress "on the road" to the new church plant to be started by **the Tim Chapmans** and a small group of Peruvian Christians in Lima. Tim has been pastoring Emmanuel Baptist Church in Lima for a few years as the church looked for a long term pastor. One of the major steps in being able to concentrate their efforts on the downtown area of Lima, where the Chapmans plan to start a church, was finding a permanent pastor for Emmanuel. The church just voted to call Julio Jaramillo as their pastor. He and his family live in northern Perú and will be moving their family to Lima in March to begin his new duties at Emmanuel. Tim

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and Cheryl are very thankful that this need has been met.

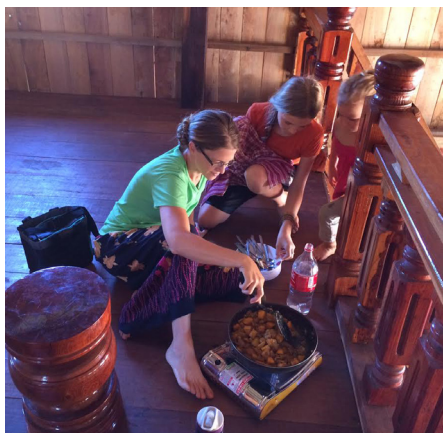


Jeremy & Bonnie Ruth Farmer with their covey

The Farmers are nearing the end of their furlough. Five of their children finished their first-ever-schooling in a “traditional” school in Nashville, TN. The school has a formidable name: Jonathan Edwards Classical Academy. The Farmers will be spending the second half of December in Greenville, SC, for Christmas and New Year’s Day before flying back to Cambodia on January 6. **Brooke Illsley** will be returning to Cambodia with them to assist with the children. Jeremy and Bonnie Ruth’s prayer letter stated the following prayer requests:

- A house that’s well-built and won’t drain lots of time and money for repairs
- A good relationship with a good landlord
- A good location where neighbors are free to come and go
- A good mix of Khmer and Laotian neighbors
- A good yard where kids, both Farmers and neighbors, can play
- A good room for our kids’ schooling
- A good private room for Brooke, our dear friend and resident “educational assistant”

The Kanes have been working on a “rental” house for Brian and his family to use when Brian is doing translation work in Somroh village. Nigh is the Krung church leader that Brian has been working with for several



The Kane girls stirring up lunch in the unfinished house. (This is the kitchen!)



The Kane boys enjoying climbing around in the unfinished house.

years on various Krung language projects. Nigh’s daughter and son-in-law own this partially finished house, but they ran out of money before the house was completed, so the Kanes are renting it “part-time” and the rent money will go to help finish the structure. Right now it is barely roughed-in: no doors, no kitchen, no bathroom, no electricity, and no water. Sounds cozy, doesn’t it! It is a great adventure for the Kane boys, though. Pray for Brian and Nigh as they work on the Krung scriptures.

During the first week in November, the **Espinels** moved from their house in Colon to their new house in Montevideo. This move has been a long time in the planning as buying and selling property in Uruguay is an arduous process requiring more time and money (fees and taxes) than anyone can imagine. Matias mentioned in their prayer letter that this is the tenth house they have lived in over their eleven and a half years of marriage. Both Matias and Kristine are counting on this new residence being more permanent. The house is about four blocks from where the FEBU classes are held and close to almost any type of store imaginable.

While rapidly scrolling through Facebook a couple of days ago, I came across a host of pictures posted by folks connected to **Calvary Temple of Treinta y Tres** where Rubito Rodriguez is the pastor. They just celebrated their 60th church anniversary with a special evangelistic campaign and a baptism in the river. The posts are in Spanish, and I have not yet received a report from Rubito about this occasion. I am hoping to have a letter from him in January and will then present the celebration in the EMU newsletter along with the photos. One thing I am sure of is that Rubito and Marita’s daughter, Victoria, was baptized then. What a blessing.

Another of our MKs in Uruguay, along with her family, are greatly rejoicing in December. **Vanessa Rios**, the second daughter of the caretaker at Camp Emmanuel, will be married on the 11th to a fine Christian young man, **Alexis**. Alexis is from one of our churches in the northern part of Uruguay, so I don’t know him real well, but I have known Vanessa for most of her life. She is a sweet, talented, beautiful Christian young

lady. It is always a thrill for me to see our MKs marrying godly men and women.

Christmas came sort of early for **Joan and me**, and I think **my parents** would agree it did for them, too. **Chicha Rodriguez**, one of our missionary ladies from Uruguay, is in the States for a few months – returning home on January 5 – visiting family and some supporting churches. While stateside she always asks to go to Greenville, MS, to visit the Parkerson family. **Dr. Parkerson** is a dentist who has been a friend of our family and EMU for decades, and he has worked on Chicha’s teeth in the past. I agreed to take her to Mississippi in November, along with Joan and my parents, all of whom were in need of his services. As it turned out, Chicha’s teeth were fine, only requiring some advice about her gums. On the other hand, my dad had four cavities drilled and filled, Mom had one cavity, and Joan and I each had crowns replaced, and I also had repair on a cavitated tooth. If you know the going prices for crowns and filled cavities, you realize what a Christmas present this was from Dr. Parkerson. This gentleman has helped many of our furloughed missionaries and folks on the mission field. (He and his wife **Cathy** also provided room and board for us.)

Related to the Erkens’ decision to return to China is the **Board meeting** we will have on December 7. The Board will be voting on a possible replacement of the position of assistant director of EMU. I will hold off on names and details until after the fact. However, if you receive this newsletter before that date, please pray that we will have wisdom in our decision.

For many families, even Christian ones, the holiday season can be a sad time for several reasons – the death of a loved one, or the estrangement of a family member. Joan’s father passed away 28 years ago, but other than that we have been spared the separation that death brings. And though one of our children and his family are half a world away in Cambodia, and another of our children will be moving to the same time zone soon, at least the separation is not due to estrangement. But even in the environment of loss by death or distance, thanksgiving to God should be on our lips and hearts for all He has done for us and will do for us. We are, as Christians, in a victorious army and a family that surpasses the bond of blood. And we are grateful for each of you who have joined us in the ministry of EMU. ☩



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There is simply not room in this Newsletter to finish my report on the work accomplished at Camp Emmanuel in Oct-Nov during our 10 days in Uruguay with "Rick's Work Team." All the projects were completed, and Doug Gorsline is recovering fine from his eye accident. It was a privilege to be even a small part of this team of Uruguayans and Americans. †

Please consider giving to

The Christmas Fund



The Camp Sponsorship Fund



(l-r) Carlos A., Joe, Gaby, & Luis Rios installing the dining room ceiling



Titus (left) & Ray did most of the work on the dining room sidewalks



Hector Gomez & the gas man from Hector's church in Rivera splicing gas lines



Front Row: Rick Jensen, Carlos Alberti, Matias Rios, Marcos Gomez, Carlos Olivera, Juan Gonzalez, gas man from Rivera
Back Row: Gaby Gomez, Joe Beachell, Nico Gomez, Ray St. Clair, 2 men from the church in Rivera, Britt Hopper, Pat DalPorto, Titus Hopper
(Pedro Donze, Doug Gorsline, & I were at the hospital at this time)



(l-r) Britt & Doug lowering a cut tree. (I believe this is where Doug was injured.)

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