

The EMU Newsletter

PROCLAIMING THE TRIUMPHS OF THE GOSPEL

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Ken & Joan Jensen
Director

ALONG THE WAY . . .

The year 2015 turned out to be a year of surprises for me, ending in a place I did not think I would be when the year started: "Man plans his way; but God directs his path." And the major unexpected event of 2015 - two events actually - have dictated much of my schedule for 2016. Those two events were **Steve and Charity Erkens** letting us know that Steve did not believe he should become the next director of EMU. Shortly thereafter, they decided to return to China. I have already written in past Newsletters about that subject, and you know that I am fine with that decision, believing it is the Lord's leading. The second unexpected event was coming in contact with **Jeff and Joanna Davis**. After many months of thinking about who could replace Steve, I had no viable leads. Then came a phone call from **Pastor Steve Russell** in Dothan, AL. Joan and I have known Steve and his wife since our college days at Bob Jones University. Steve's church has supported two of our EMU missionaries for many years and seems to have a love for this ministry. Pastor Russell has a friend who had resigned his church in the spring of 2015 and was praying for God's leading into another ministry - preferably not in the pastorate, in which he had labored for over 20 years. The upshot of Steve's call was that Jeff contacted us, resulting in several face-to-face meetings, Jeff's application to enter

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JESUS LED ME (US) ALL THE WAY

by Jeff & Joanna Davis, assistant-director-in-training, USA

(KJ - I would recommend that you read the first few paragraphs of "Along the Way" to learn some background as to why these testimonies are being presented in this EMU Newsletter.)

Jeff: I was born in Greenville, South Carolina, on July 31, 1967. When I was six years-old, we moved to Seneca, South Carolina, where my dad took a job working for my grandfather at Ward Smith Chevrolet Buick. I attended public school in Seneca.

I was saved at the age of nine. My family had gone to hear my grandfather's first-cousin preach. (Dr. J. Harold Smith, from the Radio Bible Hour). I can remember not even paying attention to the preaching but looking forward to getting to meet this "big name" radio preacher who was a relative. I went up to the front following the close of the service and Brother Smith met me. He didn't know I was a relative, only a nine-year-old boy who was coming to shake his hand. He asked me if I was sure I was going to heaven. I had to admit I was sure that I wasn't going to heaven, because I had been talking to my parents about this. Later that afternoon I sat down with my father, and he led me to Christ. I can still remember wanting to tell the whole world how easy it is to be saved.

When I was ten years of age, my dad said he was "tired of playing church." Through a series of providential events, we attended the first Sunday services of University Baptist Church in Clemson, SC, an independent Baptist church. We were one of three families, plus the pastor's family, that made up the charter members of that church.

I graduated from a public high school in Seneca, South Carolina. During my senior year I worked occasionally with the athletic department at Clemson University. They had offered me a scholarship, and I had planned on attending Clemson. My senior class trip was a cruise to the Bahamas. My parents weren't very happy about it, but allowed me to go. It was there that my eyes

were opened to what the world was really like. After returning from this cruise, I decided to go to Bob Jones University instead. I wasn't sure about the finances, because I didn't have a scholarship, but the Lord provided, and it didn't cost my parents a penny.

While attending BJU, I changed my major three different times. At Clemson I was going to study graphic arts design. At BJU I started in computer science and then changed to Business. I worked at The Wilds Christian Camp each summer while in college. My first summer at The Wilds I did a personal study on "the will of God." Through this study, the Lord began to work in my heart about yielding my life to the ministry. I never heard an audible voice, but as I went through the doors that were opening in front of me, my call to preach became very clear to me. I changed my major to Church Administration. Shortly after making that decision, Dr. Will Senn, my pastor in Clemson, had me preach. I was scared to death, but the Lord worked and many people made decisions. I took

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(l-r back) Joanna, Jeff, Caleb, & Jamie
(l-r front) Hannah, Bethany, & Abigail

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EMU as assistant-director in-training, a number of background and reference checks, and the Board of Directors meeting Jeff and Joanna and subsequently voting unanimously to accept the Davises into EMU International.

On January 4, 2016, **Jeff and I** began meeting on a regular basis for his “indoctrination into all things EMU.” My son-in-law and I discovered just how much information there is to learn. We (Jeff, I, and the Board) have agreed to the same time schedule that we had for the Erkens – two years of training before becoming the next director of EMU, if we (same as above) all agree to take that step. Any of us will be able to end the process before that two years is over. So, nothing is a “done deal,” except that Jeff and I are committed to begin the training. Joanna and Joan will join us for appropriate sessions.

Because EMU is somewhat different in the way we “do” missions, there seems to be more facets to learn about our policies and procedures than in other mission organizations. Pray that I will be clear in my transmission of information and that Jeff will be receptive and understanding. I already know that Jeff has a sharp mind, an inquisitive mind, and a love for learning. As with Steve, Jeff will have the unrestrained right to ask about any aspect of the mission and our missionaries, as well as to give any suggestions on how to improve EMU.

Two other prayer requests in connection with the Davises: first, that they will be able to sell their house in Anderson, SC, quickly and for an excellent price; and second that they will find just the right house to purchase in the Greenville, SC, area.

Also, I have decided that it would be a good thing for Jeff to meet our missionaries in Uruguay sooner rather than later. So, I am planning to have him accompany me to Uruguay at the beginning of February. I will be conducting ministry interviews with all of our Uruguay missionaries during the **Family Camp** and the **Workers’ Conference**. We already have a guest speaker from Perú for those camps, so Jeff will be able to concentrate on getting to know the people and the culture.

Let me add one more prayer request – at least I intend it to be the last request for the Davises. Raising support for “office missionaries” has become a near impossibility in the minds of most mission directors. Yet it is the director, assistant director, and secretaries who touch the lives of every missionary in the organization. As I have said before, EMU can function with the loss of any of our field missionaries, but EMU and

her missionaries cannot function without the home office personnel. (That is in no way a putdown of field missionaries, but rather a statement of reality in the current culture of missions.) EMU’s Board of Directors has decided to supplement the Davises’ salary from the General Account of the mission. Yes, we do charge each missionary a percentage of their donations for support of the office. However, that amount scarcely covers the office personnel – **Joan and Kami** – and the non-personnel expenses in the office (i.e. phone, internet, rent, paper, toner, machine repairs, and several other costs). We are taking on the Davises’ salary by faith that Jeff and Joanna will be able to raise at least some of their support from friends and churches. The Davises are not a “luxury” item for EMU; they are absolutely necessary. If we had not hired them, we would have to hire another family. PLEASE pray that the Davises will be able to raise all or at least a large portion of their salary from designated donations.

In the first full week of January we have three EMU families engaged in overseas travel, all of them returning “home.” **Chicha Rodriguez**, who has been in the USA since the end of October, returns to the land of her birth. I would also say the land of her ministry, but Chicha ministers in which ever land she is in. While in the States, she spoke at women’s retreats on the East and West coasts, taught Sunday school, and ministered in any way she was asked. I asked her to give her testimony to my adult Sunday school class, and even though I have known Chicha since 1973, it was still a blessing to hear the testimony of the Rodriguez family. Chicha is returning to Uruguay just in time for the January summer camps at **Camp Emmanuel**, though I do not know if she is a teacher or a counselor at any of the youth camps: children’s camp – Jan. 11-16; Jovenes camp – Jan. 18-23; and adolescent camp – Jan. 25-30. The family camp (Feb. 8-13) and the **Workers’ Conference** (Feb. 15-18) at Camp Emmanuel will be earlier than in years past. Pray that the Holy Spirit will open the hearts and understanding of the attendees of these camps, and that the camp’s staff will have strength and wisdom to minister to the campers. A number of folks in the USA and in Uruguay have given towards the **Camp Sponsorship Fund** to help needy youth attend camp, for which we are very grateful.

Besides the in-church Christmas programs that all of our congregations in Uruguay had, some of the churches were able to present the Gospel in other venues. **Emmanuel Church of El Cerro** rented a local theater and put on a Christmas play. Also, several of our churches formed a joint choir which performed at the theater in El Cerro and some other churches. One use of the choir was by **Gethsemani Church of Montevideo**, which held a



Pastor Gabriel Gomez in front of the combined church choirs before Christmas

plaza meeting of Christmas music and preaching.

The Farmer family leaves South Carolina for Cambodia on the 6th. Upon arriving in Ban Lung, where their family lived before this recent furlough, Jeremy will begin visiting the capital of a neighboring province in search of a house to rent. There is a very high population of Laotians in that area, and Jeremy wants to begin a more time-intensive study of that language with the goal of establishing a ministry among the Laotian people. The move and language study are daunting tasks. Thankfully, **Brooke Illsley** is returning to Cambodia with the Farmers to continue helping with the children. Brooke was a tremendous blessing to this family the last 9 months before furlough. We (I) am hoping that the Lord will lead Brooke to become a permanent expat in Cambodia.

On December 10, **JD Crowley** flew back to Cambodia, following what was to be a briefer visit to the States to speak at a missionary conference in Illinois. JD was scheduled to fly to Cambodia on the last day of November. However, his mother, who was in a nursing home in Greensboro, NC, took a drastic turn for the worse during his time in the States. JD was able to extend his ticket to the 10th. **Mary Crowley** passed into the presence of her Lord on December 3. Though a sad occasion, JD was grateful to be stateside and be able to spend a few of his mother’s last days with her. It was a privilege for both Joan and me to know Mary Crowley. Besides being a godly lady, she was just plain fun to be with.

Even though **the Steve Erkens family** has been living in Taylors, SC, for the past 2½ years, our 3 oldest grandsons still referred to Beijing, China, as home. They are all five going “home” on January 8. Some friends in Beijing have offered the Erkens family their apartment upon arrival so Steve and Charity can begin looking for an apartment to rent without the expense of a hotel. After choosing an apartment, depending on the extent to which it is furnished, they will have to purchase everything needed for setting up house. Thankfully, there is an Ikea in Beijing where almost everything can be bought and cheaply delivered. Steve’s original

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plan to begin teaching English at a college “hit some roadblocks” which could not be hurdled before their departure date. So, the Erkens clan will be taking Chinese language classes for the next eight months. During that time, Steve will work on procuring a teaching position for the Fall semester. They also intend to begin attending the Chinese church they were involved with when they were last in Beijing. If you follow geopolitics around the world at all, you probably know that China has been tightening up on religious groups and expat employment. The building boom of the last decade has slowed considerably, and the politicians of the Communist Party are under some pretty serious pressure to stabilize the economy and prevent any social unrest. So, it will be interesting to see how much the openness of China has changed in the last three years. Pray for the Erkens as they get reestablished in Beijing or wherever else in China the Lord leads them. And pray for Joan and me. The Erkens have made our upstairs their home since they sold their apartment in Taylors in September. Our house is going to be too quiet. We have really loved having them living here.

Tim and Cheryl Chapman begin their church plant in downtown Lima, Perú, this month. The church that Tim was the interim pastor for in another part of Lima has called a Peruvian family from the northern part of the country to be their new pastor – salary and all! There is a sharp group of young adults who want to help the Chapmans start this new church. Pray, too, that the Lord would give Tim and Cheryl wisdom concerning moving to downtown Lima to be closer to their target area. Life in the downtown area would be very different than where they now live on the outskirts of Lima.

The Cole and Bixby families will be ramping up their efforts to start a church in Sarcelles, north of Paris, as 2016 begins. They have already had a good start this past fall with the help of some families from the Saint Denis church and with the assistance of **Krista Colas**, a young missionary lady with another mission organization.

The latter part of 2015 was more difficult for **Marco and Gwendolyn Nuñez** in Cancún, Mexico, than any of us expected. Marco mentioned in their prayer letter about Nacho Sarao leaving the ministry. Nacho was pastoring a church plant in his hometown of Limbano, Tabasco, Mexico. The cause of Nacho’s decision to separate from Marco seems to have been a severe authority problem on Nacho’s part that he was not willing to resolve. Nacho’s son, Christian, is still serving the Lord with Marco in Cancún and seems to understand the correctness of Marco’s position. A lot of time, teaching, and expense was put into training Nacho, and he and his wife were

friends with the missionary fellowship there in southern Mexico.

The Crnkovics’ recent prayer letter shared that their family has been very busy in their ministry in Koprivnica, Croatia, since their return from their short summer furlough in the States. Yet with the blessings listed, there are a couple of difficult situations church folks are facing right now. A young man found out that he has cancer. He has professed that “to live is Christ and to die is gain.” He and his fiancée have moved up their wedding to February of this year, knowing that there is a good chance that his illness could be terminal. Neither of their parents are Christians, so there is little support other than from the church families. Also, a young lady recently accepted Christ as Lord and Savior; however, she is newly married and her husband is adamant against her “new religion.” She has a difficult life ahead. Again, her support group is the church in Koprivnica.

At the beginning of December, **Ted Allston** returned safely from his two-week ministry in Tunisia and Morocco. Ted has several good contacts in these two Muslim countries, and he has been able to have limited opportunity to teach there.

The Wingroves have used the Thanksgiving/Christmas holidays as a time for R&R from their travels around the USA representing EMU in churches. Their goal for 2016 has been pared back from the 2015 schedule. Jan continues to battle some health problems

that are a consequence of some medication that had some grave side-effects.

January 2016 is somewhat of a milestone for **Joan and me**. Forty years ago this month, she and I joined EMU International (Evangelical Mission to Uruguay at that time). Twenty-eight of those years I have been the director of the mission – for better or for worse. If I ever get the time, I would like to reflect on those 40 years. There have been some rough times in the mission over those four decades, but for the most part we have seen God’s hand of protection and blessing on EMU. (His blessing was always with us; we just didn’t “see” it all the time.) It is sobering to think that I will not have another 40 years serving with EMU; and I hate to speculate how few years I might still have. But, dear friends, I can honestly say that this has been the most blessed 40 years that I could ever have imagined. What a blessing to serve God with such a family of missionaries!!

I want to close this column on a lighter note. But first I want to thank all of you who pray for and/or financially support the ministries of EMU International. You are our extended family. Finally, though New Year’s Day has already passed, it is worth viewing the Facebook post for New Year’s Day by **Josh and Amy Jensen**. (Maybe I should have more concern about the mental health of our missionaries than I do.) Remember that life is too short to take yourself too seriously, and too short not to serve our Lord in whatever place He has called you to be. ☩

The Marginalized

by *Billy Judson, missionary in Hyderabad, India*

Brother Patrick McClanahan, a church member of Colonial Baptist Church in Cary, NC, visited our ministry from December 3-15. Brother Pat has been using the basic disability information model that he received from his studies with Joni and Friends Ministry to spark an understanding of what God commands us to do as the church of Christ to reach those who are marginalized by this world. He serves at Colonial Baptist Church with the special needs ministry. Several students of Good News Bible College and Seminary and I have had the opportunity to visit two schools for abandoned street children and orphans in the inner city slum areas. We have also visited a hospital where elderly people are brought in off the streets and given food, shelter, and

medical care. We have been to six churches and orphanages where children are taken in from off the street and given care, and the Gospel of Jesus Christ is taught to them.

Brother Don Hudson, of Turners Chapel Church, dedicated proceeds from the Third Annual Pottery Christmas Sale which could be up to \$3,000 for my family, household furniture, and ministry expenses. I am praying that other groups will participate to help with this financial support.

On the 14th of December, thirty-three students graduated in Secunderabad, and on the 28th of December, seventy-eight students will graduate in Kavali Town. ☩



Graduating class in Secunderabad. Billy & Saritha Judson are seated at the far right.

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opportunities to preach at the Boys Club in Greenville, SC. I also had a few opportunities to preach at The Wilds. My last summer at camp, I directed the youth program for the family camps and was privileged to preach twice a day.

It was at The Wilds where I met my wife Joanna. She graduated from Tennessee Temple University and also was a lead counselor at The Wilds. We were married in 1989. We came very close to becoming full-time staff at The Wilds, but the Lord directed us back to my home church in Clemson.

After finishing graduate school, I worked at UBC for a year and then went to Rock Hill, South Carolina, where I started Harvest Baptist Church. We were there for four years until the Lord led us to Muncie, Indiana, where I served as an assistant pastor at Grace Baptist Church, a larger church. We were there for four years, and then the Lord led me to become the senior pastor at Tabernacle Baptist Church in Wilson, North Carolina. This is a historic church that was started by Dr. Otis Holmes. It is also the church where Dr. Bob Jones, Jr., held his church membership. I served at TBC for ten years. In 2009, my father who was living in Clemson, SC, unexpectedly passed away. Shortly after that, Oakwood Baptist Church in Anderson, SC, called me to be their pastor. The timing was an amazing display of God's providence as I was able to be close to my mom. I have enjoyed the past five years but feel that the Lord is leading our family to make a ministry change. Every step of my ministerial journey I've seen God clearly leading through His Word, through Godly counsel, and through providential circumstances.

Joanna: I had the wonderful privilege of growing up in a pastor's home. My father currently pastors the Forest Park Baptist Church of Terre Haute, Indiana. My mother recently retired from teaching Kindergarten at Terre Haute Christian School. While many pastors' kids regret growing up in a pastor's home, I never once felt singled out. My parents have always encouraged us in the Lord.

I was saved at church camp as a young girl, and as a junior in high school I surrendered my life to whatever God would have me do. I attended public school until my junior year when my sisters and I transferred to Terre Haute Baptist School. I graduated as salutatorian and attended Tennessee Temple University. I majored in Secondary Education with an English proficiency and a minor in Bible. My college years were a tremendous opportunity to grow in the Lord. I worked with the youth group at Highland Park Baptist Church in Chattanooga, TN. During the summers I worked as a church secretary in Terre Haute and then as a counselor at The Wilds Christian Camp for three summers. My last summer I was a lead counselor. The Wilds is where Jeff and I met. He became my best friend and still is today.

The Davis Children:

Caleb and his wife, Jamie, both graduated from Bob Jones University in May of 2014. For the past few years they have spent their summers at The Wilds Christian Camp. Caleb has served as a counselor, lead counselor, and also on Program Staff. Jamie has worked on operational staff, served as a counselor, and as an associate in the general store. Jamie teaches biology at Berea High School. Caleb teaches Spanish part-time at Greer Middle College

Charter High School and is in his second year of seminary classes. Caleb has served on several short-term mission trips, having traveled to China twice and Peru twice.

Bethany is currently a Junior at Bob Jones University majoring in Journalism and Mass Communications. She is currently the President of her society at BJU. Before sustaining an injury, she was a member of the BJU Lady Bruins Soccer Team. For several years she served as our main church pianist. She works on campus playing the piano for lessons for music students. She has spent the past three summers working at The Wilds Christian Camp. She has had the privilege of serving on a short-term mission trip to El Salvador, and this past summer she ministered with the BJU Antigua Mission Team at the Caribbean Light House.

Abby graduated from Oakwood Christian School in May of 2015. She is currently a Freshman at Bob Jones University. She is majoring in Christian Ministries. She has a busy schedule this year as she is playing soccer and basketball for the Lady Bruins at Bob Jones University. She has served on short-term mission trips to New York City and to Romania.

Hannah is for the first-time being home schooled this year. Although she misses her friends very much, she absolutely loves working at her own pace (extremely fast) and is doing exceptionally well. She misses the inter-scholastic sports, but she plays on a club soccer team in Greenville on Saturdays. She served on a short-term mission trip to New York City last spring. †

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