

The EMU Newsletter

PROCLAIMING THE TRIUMPHS OF THE GOSPEL

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Ken & Joan Jensen
Director

ALONG THE WAY . . .

The "Along the Way" author is along the way again, this time writing from a brand new location. Yes, I am still in Uruguay, but usually Camp Emmanuel or the Mission House are my residences for writing. Today I am occupying the office chair and desk in **Pedro Donz s**' house, halfway between the camp and Montevideo. During last weekend's travels to the interior with **Jeff Davis, Chicha Rodriguez, and Pedro**, he convinced me that his house would offer the greatest environment for productivity – that is, of course, barring my own laziness! Except for the cacophonous chorus of dogs that occasionally howl their vicious anthem of warning against any non-fenced dog strolling the neighborhood, the area is fairly quiet day and night. Almost 10-year-old **Maxi** didn't seem to mind giving up his room at all. I'm just another potential playmate for this high-energy, precocious, only-child. Today and tomorrow, the Donz s are away on a two-day vacation to Colonia, one of the original settlements in Uruguay along the Rio de la Plata. And they left me enough food for a week or more! This has also been the perfect place to wash my two weeks of dirty duds in a machine I can actually operate. So, if I can keep from enjoying the amenities, this newsletter might actually be completed before I leave on Monday, the last day of February.

Jeff Davis was my traveling companion to Uruguay this year, though our departures
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MEETING THE MEU FAMILY

by Jeff Davis, assistant to the director of EMU

The date was Tuesday, February 9. Ken and I were staying at Campamento Emanuel, located in Guazuvir  Viejo, Uruguay, about an hour east of Montevideo. I began the day in prayer asking God to bless our efforts during those three weeks with my precious new friends. I woke early and opened my Bible and read in Acts, chapters 14-16. One of my favorite chapters in the book of Acts is chapter 16, where we read of Paul's Macedonian call and the birth of the church at Philippi. One of the key statements about Paul's ministry was his desire to be an encouragement to the churches. That was my desire, to be an encouragement to my new friends. My main link to my family and friends who were praying for me back home was my Facebook account. My post that morning read, *"I awoke early to the sound of rain falling on the metal roof of the casita. Yesterday was hot and humid. Last night the rain finally arrived. I was encouraged to read this morning in Acts of the growth of the New Testament church. It is evident that God wants His gospel to spread to all nations. It is thrilling to visit the 'utmost parts of the earth' and see that the gospel, the good news of Jesus Christ, is still at work. Listening to the parrots chirping and the doves cooing as the sun rises, smelling the freshness of a night of rain, and sipping a cup of coffee, I cannot help but praise God for His mercies that are new every day."*

Ken and I began our trip to Uruguay on Wednesday, February 3. I had officially taken my new position with EMU just one month earlier. January was a busy month of trying to learn everything I could about the history, the personnel, and the policies and procedures of the mission. Much of our focus in our meetings that month had centered around the mission in Uruguay. EMU began in 1946 as Evangelical Mission to Uruguay. For seventy years this small South American country has been a major focus of our mission. EMU currently has forty-two, mostly national, missionaries in Uruguay. I have had the privilege of visiting Europe, Asia, and Central America, but this would be my first time in South America. On a dreary,

rainy day, my wife Joanna and daughter Hannah dropped me off at the Greenville-Spartanburg airport where I met up with Ken for the beginning of our journey to the Southern-hemisphere. We weren't sure what to expect when our first flight was cancelled, and we had to take a later flight. We had to rush a little more than we would have liked as we transferred flights, but eventually after final, nine-hour flight through the night we arrived in Montevideo, Uruguay. We had left Greenville in the middle of winter. Now, we were greeted with a nice summer breeze as we met up with Pedro Donze and Gaby Gomez. Both of these men serve as leaders of the mission. It was evident how much they love Ken as they each hugged him and then placed their right cheek on his cheek and kissed the air. Then an unusual thing happened. They hugged and kissed me also. I wasn't used to that, but it didn't take long for this to become a part of my regular greeting, even with strangers.

I immediately began to regret not taking Spanish. For the past month I had tried to cram in as much language learning as I could. I had visited websites, downloaded apps for my iPad and phone, watched YouTube videos, and checked out a couple of books on learning Spanish. I even had downloaded several books for my Kindle, but
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Chicha translating for Jeff at Calvary Temple of Rivera

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for home originated on separate dates. For those who may have missed the January announcement, Jeff Davis is the gentleman now being trained for my current position as director of EMU International. Though he had only been with EMU for one month (January), this was a perfect time for Jeff to attend the **Family Camp and Workers' Conference** in Uruguay. He was not the scheduled guest speaker, so he had time to sit in on all of my interviews with our missionaries and attend the Junta meetings. Usually during the interviews, I have to type the answers given by the missionaries, which is a bit cumbersome as I would try to write while Chicha Rodriguez was asking the next question in Spanish. For Jeff's "benefit," I asked him to take down the missionaries' responses. I have not yet read his notes, but he is an amazingly fast typist – and multitasker.



The MEU missionaries at the Workers' Conference. I'd like to name everyone, but I don't see a sensible system for doing so.

I asked Jeff to write an article on his impressions of Uruguay and the work of MEU (the Spanish acronym). I just read his report, and I should have had him take the whole newsletter!

The Family Camp was within a few people of being full. **Pastor Elias**, the Peruvian Bible Seminary director from Trujillo, who was the preacher at all of our summer camps, became quite sick during the Family Camp – probably the flu, but he pressed on that week and the next (the Workers' Conference). He has a strong desire to see South American nationals, especially Peruvians, become missionaries to other countries. At the workers' conference, many of our missionaries got a renewed vision for foreign missions. It will be exciting to see the long-term results of these weeks of teaching.

By far the largest issue that the **Junta** dealt with during those two weeks had to do with a new plan (**The Plan**). When implemented the Uruguayan churches take their pastors as their employees, and the mission (MEU) and the churches begin a well-planned schedule for the churches to increase and MEU to decrease the amount of money that is given towards their pastors' salary and

other expenses. This has been one of my elusive goals for 28 years. Every former plan was flawed in some way, and the goal of self-supporting churches has not been realized – *except* Calvary Temple of Montevideo, which has been fully supporting **Gustavo de Oliveira**, their pastor, for a few years now.

An enormous number of hours went into designing The Plan, and it was even revised the day before it was presented to all the pastors at the Conference. One of the greatest obstacles has been the Uruguayan wage and employment laws. But Pedro Donzé finally found a solution. After the Workers' Conference, Pedro, Chicha (translator and Junta member), Jeff, and I drove to the city of **Treinta y Tres** to present The Plan to the church leaders first and then to the congregation that Saturday evening. There was great discussion, and Pedro was ready with all the answers. The church will be implementing The Plan in July 2016, the same month that all the churches are to accept their pastors as

employees. The following morning we drove to Rivera, which would have been a pleasant Sunday morning drive had the road between Melo and Tacuarembó not been reminiscent of a heavily bombed war zone!

At Calvary Temple of Rivera, Jeff preached at the 6:30pm service, which was followed by the business meeting to present The Plan.

Jeff did a good job with his message. Again there were a lot of questions, but in the end the people seemed satisfied with The Plan. Two encouraging aspects of the discussion time in each church were that members expressed their thankfulness to MEU for helping to support their pastors for so many years, and they wanted to make sure that The Plan did not sever the relationship that their churches have with the MEU fellowship.

Also, at each of the churches, we were able to have our interview with the pastor and his wife. In Treinta y Tres, **Rubito and Marita Rodriguez** told about the church's extreme need for a larger building. For Sunday evening services the auditorium is full with people in two overflow rooms. At their annual anniversary service, there were so many visitors that about twenty church members were asked to stand outside the church and listen through the open windows. In Rivera, there is not the same problem since the sanctuary is much bigger. We did learn that **Pastor Hector Gomez** plans to retire within two years. However, he has two men that have been trained to take his place. The church will have to choose which one. Hector wants to continue to serve the Lord as long as he lives, but he

does believe he should give the full-time pastoring to a younger man.

(One of the realities that was brought to the forefront when having the interviews was our aging mission family in Uruguay. My interviews often included discussion about new and increased medications for new and continuing physical problems like high-blood pressure, diabetes, operations of various kinds associated with age, and a host of other maladies. We have only taken on the full-time support of one new pastor in Uruguay in the past 20 years – I think. We all see the problem, and we are praying that The Plan will allow us to begin planting new churches, with new missionaries, in the near future.)

The next day, Monday, Jeff was scheduled to leave for home in Anderson, SC, but we were in northern Uruguay, and one of our missionary families in **Tacuarembó**, **Carlos and Graciela Pereira**, had talked us into having an early lunch with them. Tacuarembó is about a two hour drive south of Rivera. As always, Graciela had prepared her legendary lasagna. I'm glad I wasn't doing the driving after a meal like that! I do thank Chicha for volunteering her vehicle for the trip, which is somewhat more spacious than Pedro's car. But also thanks to Pedro for driving the entire time. If he didn't love driving so much, I would have been concerned about his staying awake.

We made it back to Pedro's house, where Jeff's large suitcase had been stored, in time for him to get a shower before heading to the airport. Jeff was able to get a seating change out of Montevideo, which gave him three center seats to lie down on. He slept for almost the entire flight. Pray for **Jeff and Joanna** as they work to sell their Anderson house and purchase one closer to Greenville, and as they begin raising support. In Jeff's "free-time" he and I will be meeting to discuss EMU.

On the first day of the Workers' Conference, it was announced that **Marianne Rauter** would not be at camp. The previous night (Sunday), while returning home from another Christian camp, Marianne's grandson, **Dani**, was critically injured in a car accident. While stopped at a red light just ten miles from Camp Emmanuel, a speeding car slammed into the back of the car Dani was in, and Dani was in the back seat with another boy. (Dani was 26 years old, and Marianne's only grandchild that lived in Uruguay – one other grandson resides with his parents in Buenos Aires.) On Monday evening we received word that Dani had succumbed to his injuries. In Uruguay, the funeral and burial are supposed to take place the next day. On Tuesday about half of the MEU workers from camp drove to the funeral home in Montevideo to be with Marianne and her daughter, **Puppi**. Marianne's younger daughter and grandson from B.A. were

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already there. It was amazing how many people were there to comfort Marianne and Pupp: MEU missionaries, Calvary Temple members (Marianne's home church), Dani's church family, work and school colleagues, and neighbors. The testimonies at the service later that evening, according to Marianne, were amazing to her. Though Dani was probably Marianne's best friend (she helped raise him, and he was a tremendous help and blessing to her), she did not know the extent of his kindness and Christian testimony to others. Two days after the funeral, Marianne was back at her ministries of visiting nursing homes and translating MEU missionary letters from Spanish to English for our USA office. Marianne's philosophy is that the best thing for grief is to serve others. Not that she isn't grieving, but she is not consumed with sorrow. Pray for Marianne and Poppi.

As usual, the country from which I am writing gets the most coverage in the newsletter. But trust me when I say, there is much more I would like to tell you about goings-on down here. One problem with outside-of-Uruguay communication was the slow Wi-Fi at camp, made worse by a large number of staff who were downloading and uploading photos and videos to Facebook, etc. I have been able to catch up somewhat on EMU happenings since being at the Donzés' house.

The Farmers finally found a place to call home in the city of **Krong Stung Treng**, the provincial capital of Stung Treng. I'll let Jeremy's words give a partial account: "Not all who wander are lost, though they may feel like it at times. After 37 nights in a hotel (and 57 nights



The Farmer clan in front of the Stung Treng city sign

living out of a suitcase!), we have found rest! We are thrilled with the house God has given us – it's size, arrangement, landlord, location, etc. – it's exactly what we and you have prayed for. The house was built in 1960, and our landlord lived here all of his childhood,

so I'm sure the wood has some stories to tell! It is situated right on the Sekong River, less than 1 KM from where it joins the mighty Mekong, and is literally surrounded by houses of neighboring Khmer and Lao. We slept here for the first time Sunday (Feb 14) and there's still a lot of unpacking, cleaning, and fixing to do. But every day, the house feels more like home. Please praise God with us for this wonderful gift." You can

find more photos and details at their blog site "<http://solidjoys.org/news/>"

Matt and Becky Hancock have been praying and searching for a missionary family who is involved with church planting among the Khmer people of Cambodia in order to intern with them and gain experience before striking out on their own. They believe they have found such a family ministering in **Kampong Cham**, on the Mekong River northeast of Phnom Penh. I'll withhold further details until another newsletter as the Hancocks' move will not take place until probably September of this year. Until then, Matt will be enrolled in a language school that teaches Khmer, though he will enter at a much higher level than a beginner. He and Becky will also continue their studies with their current tutors a few times per week.

Josh and Amy Jensen have temporarily moved their family to Bangkok, Thailand, for the birth of their 4th child – our 9th grandchild! More details will be forthcoming after the baby's birth, due in early March.

The Erkens have been asked by the teachers and leadership at **Kuanjai Church** in Beijing to resume their teaching. Steve and Charity will each teach a Sunday school class, and Steve will again be teaching the Tuesday evening English Bible study.

Early in February **Ted Allston** flew to **Kenya** where he taught 17 pastors Beginning Hermeneutics. After the class, one of the pastors said that they had been teaching their people "watered-down" food from God's Word. Ted continued his email with these words: "I leave next Wednesday, March 2, for South Sudan via Uganda. We expect to have at least 20 church leaders and pastors who have had very little training. Again, I'll be teaching Beginning Hermeneutics for the first week to the whole group, then a second week of intensive work on the same material with 4 or 5 better-qualified (academically) men from the class with a view to helping them reach a good level of mastery of using the method we teach. Our hope is that they will then be able to, over a longer period of time, teach their brethren how to use the information that we gave them in that first week. Thanks for your prayers for us, that God would use us to accomplish these goals."

We received another encouraging email from **Billy Judson** in **India**. As with Jeremy, I want to use Billy's description: "We just returned from the Jagadapur, Odissa district (Feb 18-22). It was a 26-hour train ride from my home in Secunderabad, Telangana State. Praise God that we were able to establish a Bible College in that area in 2005 among the tribal people groups. On Saturday morning we graduated 27 students, mature men and women. Most of our students in these regions are daily laborers and earn \$2 - \$3 a day. They are pastors, elders, housewives, social workers, and evangelists from various church



Twenty-seven graduates at the Jagadapur, Odissa, Good News Bible College & Seminary

denominations. We are privileged to be able to teach them systematic theology (at a cost of \$3 per month for tuition fees) for one year and help them to reach their own neighborhoods with more confidence. Nationals reaching nationals. Last year, Bro. Ted Allston taught a one-week class in this region.

The Indian Government, in-order to protect the tribal culture and customs, does not even allow the locals to share the Gospel. This area is known for its Christian persecution."

Marco Nuñez in Cancún, Mexico, had to make another difficult decision in February. You may remember that last year Marco had to let Nacho Sarao go because of Nacho's changed attitude towards Marco. Nacho was pastoring in Limbano, Tabasco, Mexico, at the time. He is now living in Cancún. Nacho's son, Christian, has been one of Marco's Bible school students and helpers in the Cancún church for a couple of years. It seems that Nacho's attitude spilled over to his son, and Marco had to let Christian go, too. This was not an easy action to take, but Marco and the church folks in Cancún believe it is for the best.

On Saturday, February 27, in the evening, and on Sunday, the 28th, **Chicha, Pedro, and I** will be visiting four more of the MEU churches to present The Plan. Two of our other churches, whose pastors are Junta members, will have their business meetings without me, which allows me to get home a little earlier. Those services will be long-over before you receive this newsletter; however, decision making in the churches will continue, no doubt. Pray that all of these churches will accept and implement The Plan. Each church will be on a different time schedule depending upon their current pastoral support, but the roads lead to the same destination: full support of their own pastors. If this takes place, the idea of multiple churches doing this will be revolutionary among conservative Christians in Uruguay. But more importantly, the end results will be a benefit to the congregations and be in accordance with New Testament teaching.

Thank you for your interest in and prayers for EMU (and MEU). We count on you as co-laborers with us. ☩

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Meeting the MEU Family

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I discovered quickly that one month wasn't long enough for me to learn the language. I'm thankful, though, that God helped me to communicate with these new friends. I did pick up some of the language along the way, but more importantly, we spoke the same language of love which is found in Jesus Christ.

When Ken asked me to write a little bit about my impressions from the trip, I immediately looked back over my journal. I realized that it would be impossible to share everything that God taught me on this trip in the space allowed. In the days ahead I will be sharing some of these thoughts on my personal blog. For this newsletter let me just say that upon returning home, I realized I had left a piece of my heart in that country I knew very little about until just a couple of months ago.

There are three main focuses of EMU. Our purpose statement reads, "*The Purpose of EMU International is to bring glory to God by assisting churches and individuals in carrying out the Great Commission given to the Church Universal by our Lord Jesus Christ through ministries of evangelism, establishing indigenous churches, and training nationals to do the same.*" I was fortunate to see all three of these purposes being carried out in Uruguay.

Upon arriving in Uruguay, we were taken to Campamento Emanuel. This served as our headquarters for our time in Uruguay. I was impressed by the amazing facilities of the camp. As Ken took me on a tour, I realized that we have very capable leadership in place. The buildings were well-maintained, and that requires a lot of work. Having worked for several years at the Wilds Christian Camp and having used the Camps Abroad material to assist in running camps overseas, I recognized the familiar philosophy that governed the camp.

Each meal began by reciting 1 Corinthians 10:31 (in Spanish, of course). They even had reports for cabin clean-up, such as the one when one hair on a bed caused the cabin to receive a lower score. They had invited a pastor from Peru, Elías Huamán, to preach on the theme "Christians with a Missionary Vision in the 21st Century." It was exciting to see and hear of many of the campers making decisions to commit to obeying the Great Commission.

We were able to participate in a week of Family Camp and the 4-day Workers' Conference. One of the main focuses of our time in Uruguay was to interview our different missionaries. I thoroughly enjoyed my time getting to know these precious believers. To many Ken has been not only a director, but also a friend, even a brother. They have shared many life experiences together. I was privileged to learn about the ups and downs of their ministries and for a brief time share in their lives. I hope that in the days ahead I will be able to grow closer to my new friends. I was also privileged to spend a good bit of time with the Junta. (Junta is the Spanish word for Board and signifies the leadership of our mission in Uruguay.) These men are well educated and take their responsibilities seriously. One lady, Maria Teresa (Chicha) Rodriguez also serves on the Junta. She taught herself English and has for many years served as the main interpreter for guest speakers visiting Uruguay. She is a single missionary who has served the Lord's church in Uruguay by assisting in the different churches. She is also a pioneer in producing children's radio programs to reach little ones for Christ. She was a wonderful help to me during my time in Uruguay.

I was also privileged to preach in several of our churches. Journeying across the Uruguayan countryside and visiting the different towns was indeed a treat. I look forward to future opportunities to explore Uruguay. I was challenged to see the

passion these believers have for learning and applying Bible truth. I look forward to their updates in the months ahead and of hearing of God's good work in their churches and in their families.

Now that I am back in the USA, I look forward to continuing to learn and grow in my new position. With a little moist spot in the corner of my eye, I am grateful to God for allowing me to be a part of the EMU family. But I did have to apologize to a former church member I saw at the mall yesterday. I greeted her with a hug and kissed the air. ✝



*Rubito
Rodriguez
with
Jeff Davis*

Jeff not only won over the adult missionaries, but he was a big hit with the children as well.



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