

The EMU Newsletter

PROCLAIMING THE TRIUMPHS OF THE GOSPEL

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Ken & Joan Jensen
Director

ALONG THE WAY . . .

Throughout the month of September there was an uneasy feeling that something was very different – not necessarily wrong, but different. Was it the weather causing this impression? Indeed, the first two weeks of the month felt like mid-fall with amazingly comfortable temperatures for the end of summer. Then within a couple of days and leading into “true fall,” we were back in sweltering summer again, with desert-dry conditions. Very unsettling, but the weather here in the southeast is *always* in flux. It was something else. Then as I began to prepare material for this column, my answer came like a macroblast of wind: routine! My calendar for almost a year was filled with comings and goings of our missionaries and special activities taking place on the “fields” and at the home office. And August was one of the most hectic months. But a look at my calendar for September has only two manual entries: a Skype meeting with the EMU Uruguay Board and the first day of fall on the 22nd. Not too exciting! That strange feeling was caused by our long-lost friend “routine.” (I should add here that not everyone here was blessed with routine. Joan’s time was interrupted with the pleasant break of caring for two lovely grandchildren to help their parents in September. Being with grandkids is *always* a welcome break for Joan, regardless of when and how long!) I

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CALLED AWAY UNEXPECTEDLY

by Michael and Liz Cole, church planters in France

How can we discern whether it is God’s will for us to leave our team? What circumstances indicate that God is leading us away from an uncompleted church plant where God has opened the doors for service? In the Lord’s providence, Liz and I wrestled with these (and other) questions following a phone call in April from the lay-pastor of the Baptist church of Pessac asking me to come serve as its pastor.

This was not the first time we had been asked this question. Seven months earlier we had replied “no” to the same question, but that was before the Lord took Bob Bixby to his eternal reward in Heaven. In light of the church’s loss, we decided to reconsider the idea of leaving our present ministry to help this church.

In all honesty, our initial leaning was negative. We were (and are) happy with our situation and ministry. Nothing had changed since we had responded negatively to the proposition the previous Fall—except the loss of Bob. Could his home-going mean that God was leading us away from our team and the church plant? We didn’t know, so we called Ken Casillas, the pastor of our sending church, for counsel. To our surprise, he responded with a firm “yes”: we should reconsider the need in Pessac in light of God’s providential work. Ken’s response instigated several months of uncertainty as we tried to discern the Lord’s leading in our lives. Long story short, we believe that God is leading us away from the church plant and our co-workers in order to help the church in Pessac transition to an autonomous church. Just last week a young man asked us how we know this is the right thing for us to do. Due to the fact that we received no visions and had no urim and thummim, discerning God’s will was neither mysterious nor easy. In the end,



Viviane, Liz, Mathieu, Michael, Thomas, & Adeline Cole

we tried to follow examples of decision-making found in the Bible.

First, our desires played a frustratingly ambiguous role in the process. We love the people of the church plant. We love our teammates—the Bixby family and Kristi Colas. We love our French co-workers. And one must also consider duty. The church plant has started, but it is not yet ready to turn over to indigenous leadership. Added to these factors was the growing sense of ease we felt from the roots we’ve put down in our community. In light of these factors, our desires were decidedly against a ministry transition. But there were two additional desires calling for our attention. We wanted to help the believers in Pessac: brothers and sisters with whom we had spent our first eighteen months in France. We love them, too. And of course we also wanted to follow the Lord. Our desires left us confused.

At this point, we turned to counsel. Some decidedly told us that leaving at this time might be destabilizing for the church plant and ministries begun at the mother church in Saint-Denis. They discouraged the move. Tim and Ruth Bixby told us

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wish this subject of a routine could be accompanied by an announcement of great accomplishments on my part in September, but, alas, my resident physical maladies demanded more time than anticipated.

Jeff and Joanna Davis were able to catch their breath after a hectic August, though not quite to the extent of “routine” that we experienced. They are still in the midst of renovating their basement for Jeff’s office and his mom’s apartment, though the construction is nearing completion. Thankfully, Jeff’s weekly Spanish lessons with **Susana Rodriguez** (Chicha’s sister) have not suffered too much. And according to the *profesora*, his Spanish is progressing well. Jeff is continuing to contact pastors concerning presenting the work of EMU at their churches. Some of these churches already support our missionaries, but I would really like for the pastors to meet the Davises in person. We also pray that the Davises will raise some new support for themselves from these churches and churches that do not currently support the mission.

On October 22 – and maybe even in Miami on the 21st – Jeff will have the opportunity to practice his Spanish more fully. He and a group of men and one woman will be flying out of Charlotte, NC, on Saturday, October 21, to Montevideo, via Miami, to work at **Camp Emmanuel**. **Joshua Woodfin**, **Ben Kashuba**, and **Paul Johnson, Jr.** from The Wilds have volunteered to go with **my brother Rick** to Uruguay this October to make improvements at the camp. Because Jeff has not been to Uruguay on one of these work teams before, I asked him to go this year, so he will have a better understanding of these yearly teams. Amazingly, Rick talked his wife, **Kathy**, into going this year. She has been on these trips before, but not in the past several years because of the progression of her M.S. Please pray that Kathy will have a wonderful trip to, in, and from Uruguay. Also, pray that the Americans and the Uruguayans who meet to work at the camp from October 23-31 will have a safe and exceedingly productive time.

(Concerning the funding for the **camp projects**, I discovered a mistake in the paper copy of the September EMU Newsletter. In the column listing the ten projects, numbers 1 & 4-10 should have had “strike-out” text indicating that these items were already funded. Without going into formatting detail, the “strike-out” did not transfer to the PDF that I sent to the printer. However, it did transfer to the website PDF and was included in the Mail Chimp copy.)

Pedro Donzé, our camp director and

office administrator in Uruguay, is heading up the purchasing and team schedules for each project. He also arranges for airport pick-up and drop-off, any weekend side trips, and the speaking that the Americans do in various churches. He does an amazing job with scheduling every year. Pray that the Lord will give him wisdom and strength. Also, a good number of men from our mission churches will be traveling to Camp Emmanuel from as far away as Rivera – a six-hour drive.

I mentioned above the Skype meeting with our office in Uruguay in September. One of the items on the docket was the hiring of a part-time worker to assist Pedro Donzé in his office administration and work at the camp throughout the year. The individual that was chosen, and who accepted the offer, is **Marcos Gomez**, the eldest son of **Pastor Gabriel Gomez**. Marcos is in college working on a degree in computer maintenance (I think), and he is attending Bible Institute classes. Interestingly, both Marcos’ father and uncle worked part-time for the Uruguay office before coming full-time with EMU. That is not to say that Marcos will do the same.

Michael Cole wrote an article for this month’s newsletter concerning their move from northern Paris south to Pessac (Bordeaux) to help the Baptist Church of Pessac for the next several years. In Uruguay, we have another pastor’s family that will be moving, but we are not sure of the timing. **Pablo Billafán**, who pastors Siloé Church in Colon, not far from Montevideo in the south, has accepted a call from Calvary Temple of Rivera to be their next pastor. The Rivera church is where Pablo and Cristina began ministering many years ago before they even entered EMU as missionaries. The Billafáns also own a house in Rivera Chico. The current pastor in Rivera, **Hector Gomez**, is hoping to retire soon, and the church has been considering a replacement. The Siloé Church does not have a replacement pastor, so Pablo and Hector have placed a hold on the Billafáns’ move. I’ll keep you informed. Be in prayer that a pastor will soon be found for the church in Colon and that the congregation of Siloé will accept this move well.

As we have welcomed the fall season, the folks in Uruguay (and elsewhere below the Equator) are quite excited with the advent of spring. Every October, usually just before Rick’s work team goes to Uruguay, the **Spring Ladies’ Retreat** is held at Camp Emmanuel – this year’s dates are October 18-21. Pray that several unsaved ladies will attend – many have been invited. Pray that there will be salvation decisions and that Christians will be strengthened in their walk with the Lord. And I know for sure that the ladies would appreciate you praying with them for mild, clear weather. (Rick’s work

team would appreciate the same kind of weather as the roof of the dining room will be replaced!)

JD Crowley will be flying to Myanmar (Burma) on October 6 where he will be teaching a group of church leaders. He has taught there before on the Book of Romans, but, I believe, he will be finishing up the study during this trip. Also, the printing for the Burmese translation of JD’s commentary on Romans is almost completed. The Christians there are looking forward to the 1,000 copies of this important resource to be available soon. JD returns to Cambodia on October 14.

A major concern that our Cambodia missionaries have is the issuance of **visas** to remain in Cambodia. The laws in Cambodia are such that it makes it exceedingly difficult to procure visas for the kind of full-time ministry our missionaries are engaged in. It has been decided that, for now, the most convenient and efficient way to secure the visas is through “**secondment**” with a much larger missionary organization that meets all the government requirements to obtain visas. A mission group that EMU missionaries have an excellent relationship with has offered two of our missionaries the opportunity to obtain their visas as though they are missionaries of that organization, but still retaining their individuality as EMU missionaries. The **Crowleys** and **Jensens** have been “seconded” and are now able to begin the process of getting their visas. We are so appreciative of this help from fellow brothers and sisters in the Lord.

An interesting situation has arisen in Sarcelles, France, concerning the **Bixbys’** and **Coles’** church plant. For a couple of years, Tim and Michael have been looking for a suitable place to hold meetings for the new church plant. All possibilities have ended up being closed doors, and the church in Sarcelles is meeting in a restaurant, which is exceedingly inconvenient. Not too long ago, the current situation developed. A car dealership in Sarcelles is desiring to rent or sell part of their building. The space includes the entire second floor over the main dealership showroom. Tim and an elder from the Baptist Church of Saint Denis talked to the owners about possibly renting the space for the Sarcelles church. A number of different options were discussed including renting and rent-to-buy. The owners of the dealership plan to come up with a proposal for the church by November. The space available is about 5,000 square feet and is completely finished, i.e. painted walls, laminate flooring, lighting, etc. Please pray that if this would be the ideal location for the new church, the owners will present a generous, workable plan.

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ALONG THE WAY . . .

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July youth camp in Croatia

In an end-of-the-summer update from the **Crnkovićs** in Croatia, Tanja recorded a number of blessings their ministry received during the vacation months. The annual youth summer camp began on July 14, which includes several Baptist churches from around Croatia. During a couple of days, the wind off the Adriatic Sea threatened to blow their tents and other shelters away. But overall it was a wonderful week. **Tanja** and **Kornel** were told about one unsaved young lady who attended the camp with another church group. She made a profession of faith at camp, and when she returned home she told her staunchly Roman Catholic parents about her salvation. They became incensed and forbade, by threat of legal action, the church people from having any further contact with their daughter. I don't know her name, but please pray for her and her parents.



The 2nd Ireland youth team to Koprivnica

Two teams of young people from Northern Ireland visited the Baptist Church of Koprivnica, Croatia, to help with outdoor children's ministries and literature distribution. These volunteers are always an encouragement to the Crnkovićs' church.

September 17 was a rainy Sunday in Koprivnica, but a baptismal service had been scheduled for two ladies. When asked if they would prefer to postpone the baptism, the candidates replied that they



Tanja, Natalia, Zvezdana, & Kornel

were going to get wet anyway. So, the congregation drove to the Drava River for the baptism. Both ladies are married to unsaved men and have faced opposition. But both husbands attended the service. These men have attended church on occasion, so Kornel already knew them. But after the baptismal service, Kornel talked to both men and challenged them to search their hearts concerning their standing before God. Pray for these two families.

In Cancún, Mexico, there were two other baptismal services in August and September. The first was performed by **Pastor Vicente Puc** of Valladolid, Yucatan. Vicente is one of the men



Vicente (2nd left) with young boy and his mother, who were baptized.

who **Marco Nuñez** trained to be a pastor. (I don't have the names of those baptized. However, the wife and child to the left and right of Vicente were the candidates.) On September 9, the First Fundamental Baptist Church of Cancún had a baptismal service for **Janet**, a Christian lady who came from another



Marco Nuñez and Janet

church but had not yet been baptized. At the beginning of October, Marco and Gwendolyn flew to Mexico City for **Gwendolyn** to advance her application for her permanent residency paper for Mexico. Unfortunately, many government offices were still not open because of the September 22 earthquake.

Mel and Jan Wingrove were supposed to be in Florida having meetings in September, but you probably know why those services were cancelled. (Hurricane Irma – just in case you forgot!) They hope to visit these churches later this year.

Called Away Unexpectedly

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immediately that they would support us no matter what our decision. EMU said the same thing. Their support was very encouraging, but they couldn't really give us direction. Ultimately, the Lord used two bits of counsel to give clarity to our thinking that was clouded by muddled desires. First, a French friend told us that it only made sense for us to go: the church plant had two pastors and the Pessac church had none. Simple. Right? When I responded that pulling up our roots was difficult to consider, he graciously reminded me that I am a missionary and that Paul is my model. (Hmm. We weren't expecting that bit of biblical advice.) The second morsel of counsel came from our sending church's leadership who were very positive about the transition to Pessac due to their concern for the work there (which the church has supported for several years).

Unfortunately muddled desires plus well-intentioned counsel does not equal a decision. Being independent-baptistic types, the decision was up to us! To arrive at a decision, we had to use judgment. In the end, we had to judge what need God wanted us to meet with our particular set of gifts (after all, there are needs everywhere). In His faithfulness, God led us to the conclusion that it is time to leave our present ministry to serve the church in Pessac. We have committed ourselves to five years in Pessac with the knowledge that God could lengthen or shorten our time there. Our goal is to help the church transition from a missionary led church to an autonomous church. To say there are many obstacles would be an understatement, but our confidence is in the Lord who builds His church.

We did not arrive at this decision lightly. A positive response has upended our family's normal routine here in Luzarches and in our present ministries. Nor are we unaware of the cost to our coworkers and the two churches we're presently involved with. But staying put is not always the best option. Though duty and desires initially called us to remain in our present team ministry, we are confident that it is God who is leading us away. †

With the cessation of September, I feel that the possibility of a period of routine is about to pass away as well. As the seasons change, so do the ministry activities of many EMU missionaries – some entering spring and some fall, and some will continue hot but may be drier with the passing of the monsoon. Whichever area of EMU International interests you the most, we trust you will pray especially for that aspect of the mission. Thank you. †

Not One or the Other - Both

by Ken Jensen

I don't recall how many years it has been since my brother, Rick, started going to Uruguay to yield his vast expertise for the improvement of Camp Emmanuel. Nor do I remember how many years the Camp Sponsorship Fund has been presented in the EMU Newsletter to raise funds to aid campers to attend and counselors to serve at Camp Emmanuel. But for both, it has been a LOT of years.

One of the frustrating things about repairs, maintenance, and improvements at camp is that sooner or later they will have to be redone – no fault of Rick, of course. So, as long as Rick is willing and able to fly to Uruguay with a work team, there will always be a job(s) for him. (Though I speak of Rick's team, there are even more Uruguayans – usually – who go to Camp Emmanuel during the same time to help with these projects. This is very much an international group effort!)

But a well-maintained property like we have is no more than a resort without campers. Our



Counselors whose boarding was taken care of through the 2017 summer Sponsorship Fund

goal is to minister to as many children, teens, and families as possible during the year and especially the summer. Over the past 40+ years that Camp Emmanuel has been in service, I have seen the accumulating number of lasting results from that ministry, with some of the fruit currently serving as missionaries with EMU. Granted, like structural maintenance, spiritual maintenance needs to take place, too, through our local churches and annual camps.

The physical projects done by Rick's teams, et al, could not be accomplished without donated funds from friends of Camp Emmanuel outside of Uruguay. To a lesser, but as important, extent, the Sponsorship Fund is requisite to help needy campers with their camp fees and to pay the expenses for summer staff. (Though the staff is not paid for their services, their



Children (above) and adolescents (below) who received help from the Sponsorship Fund for summer 2017



individual weekly expenses at the camp are the same as for a camper – about \$95 per week.)

Though the summer camps do not begin at Camp Emmanuel until January, it is helpful to have an idea of how much money is available in the Sponsorship Fund so that pastors can be notified at least a month in advance of how many children or teens from their area can attend camp through the Fund donations. My one request to each reader is that you ask the Lord if He would have you participate in this endeavor. †



(Above & right)

Jovenes helped by the Sponsorship Fund for summer 2017




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