

EMU⁺

INTERNATIONAL

Evangelical Mission to the Unreached

Evangelical Mission to Uruguay

PROCLAIMING THE TRIUMPHS OF THE GOSPEL

Volume LXI

April 2018

Number 4



*Ken & Joan Jensen
Assistant Director*

ALONG THE WAY . . .

With Easter falling on April Fools Day (an occurrence that has not happened for 52 years), I Corinthians 1:18 & 21 seem especially appropriate. Verse 18a states, *For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness*. To the world, Christians have accepted the ultimate April Fools deception. The Athenians began scoffing at Paul as soon as he mentioned the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. But the way we make disciples of Jesus is equally as foolish to the world: verse 21, *For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe*. Yet this is our message and our method to the world. If you haven't read what the Apostle Paul wrote in his 1st letter to the Corinthians concerning fools and foolishness, chapters 1 & 2 make a good-read!

The **Steels** arrived in the States from Uruguay on March 7 to begin a furlough that ends on July 5. Joan and I had the Steels for lunch shortly after they reached Greenville, SC, after they had visited Deborah's father and step-mother in Florida. On April 15, the Steel family begins an extended tour of the western states and Alaska visiting supporters - churches and individuals.

The **Hancock family** left Cambodia on March 12 for their journey to Mt. Bethel, PA, to begin their furlough with Becky's parents. They will return to a new ministry location in Cambodia in January of next year.

(continued on page 3)

"TO MAKE GOD BIG"

by Jeremy & Bonnie Ruth Farmer, missionaries in Stung Treng, Cambodia

We just returned from Phnom Penh with ten 1-year visas in hand, as well as an agreement with a sister organization that will continue helping us obtain these for the next few years. Praise the Lord for this answer to your prayers.

Several months ago, you also began praying for additional teaching opportunities for me here in Stung Treng. For about a month now, I've been meeting weekly with two small groups to teach an introductory overview of the Bible. The first group is an elderly lady and her daughter, the only Christians in their village (about 20 minutes from our town). We meet every Tuesday evening. The second group is four young adults, three of whom are new believers and one who is an interested non-Christian. Praise the Lord for these opportunities, and pray for fruit in the lives of these dear people.



Jeremy Farmer's young students in Stung Treng

I continue to spend most of my work hours preparing the curriculum for this year's Pastors School sessions in Ratanakiri. Please pray for me that I would understand the text of Scripture and be able to communicate its message to our students. My teammate JD, who is working with me in this project, expressed our goal like this: "to make God big, and the Bible small." While that first part is transparent enough, perhaps you're not so sure about making the Bible small. What we mean is that due to its size, age, and cultural distance from us, the Bible can be an overwhelming and

intimidating book, particularly the Old Testament. And if we, in the highly literate, highly educated West, feel this way, how much more our brothers and sisters with limited literacy and formal education. Our prayer is that this material will be a tool by which our students can increasingly access the whole Bible and thereby know the God who reveals Himself there.

I am thoroughly enjoying the work of preparing this material - when I can get to it. In recent months, I've spent inordinate amounts of time dealing with other necessities, such as passports, visas, driver's licenses, etc. This, combined with unexpected visits, constant noise, and an earlier-than-last-year hot season, makes progress painfully slow. Pray that I will make the best use of the time I have and that I will receive every "interruption" joyfully, as from God's hand.

Pray for peace in Cambodia. As this summer's national election approaches, the ruling party continues to muscle its way forward by any means necessary. Additionally, US-Cambodian relations are strained at present. Pray for both the population generally, and for us as foreigners residing here, particularly American foreigners. We believe

there is yet much work to do before the Cambodian church, as a whole, can thrive without the assistance of missionaries.

And now a few anecdotes to inform, amuse, and burden . . .

The whole neighborhood turned out earlier this month to watch the Super Blue Blood Moon. The neighbors refer to an eclipse as "Rahu [a legendary monster] catches/ swallows the moon." Traditionally, when the eclipse begins, Cambodians bang on

(continued on page 4)

Showers of Blessing

by Jeff Davis, director of EMU

The windshield wipers on Chicha's car were in the high position as we traveled the hour and a half drive from Campamento Emanuel in Guazuvirá, Uruguay, to Iglesia Cristiano Emanuel in San Fernando, Uruguay. It was Sunday, February 11. One day earlier I had arrived in Uruguay with Paul and Theresa Bixby. They were there to preach and teach in the Family Camp and Workers' Conference over the next couple of weeks, and to minister in churches around the Montevideo area on the weekends.

Because Uruguay is in the Southern hemisphere, it was summertime, with weather comparable to what we normally experience in August. A shower, like the one we were experiencing, normally means relief from the heat. Though it made for more difficult driving conditions, it was a welcome blessing as we began our nearly three-week ministry with very temperate conditions.

This was my fourth trip to Uruguay, and each time I have visited, I have been blessed with opportunities to preach in the different MEU churches. In Uruguay, EMU is known as Misión Evangélica del Uruguay (MEU). Currently, the mission has ten different churches. Over the past couple of years, I have had the privilege of preaching in six of those churches. On this trip, I visited the other four churches and returned to one I preached in on my first visit.

On each of these trips, I have been blessed by the ministry of Maria Teresa Rodriguez, affectionately known as Chicha. She grew up in eastern Uruguay on a ranch outside the city of Treinta y Tres. Chicha, of her own initiative, learned English and has for many years served as one of the main translators for the Junta meetings, as well as translating for preachers and teachers who visit Uruguay. As my main translator, she also is my driver to the different churches. On this trip, we spent a lot of time together traveling and ministering in different churches each of the three Sundays I was in Uruguay.

As we arrived at the church, the rain began to subside. Pastor Alberto Diaz and his wife Carolina arrived shortly and showed us around the church. I was also blessed by a sweet lady who offered me a much-needed cup of coffee, as I had crept out of



(l-r) Carolina, Jeff, & Alberto in San Fernando

the "casita" early and skipped my coffee so I wouldn't make too much noise and wake the Bixbys. As people began to arrive, I recognized several familiar faces from Family Camp the year before. The church was nicely decorated as the Diazes' daughter had been married there a few months earlier. The Lord led me to preach on Psalm 131, a message that I entitled "Pictures of Tranquility." As I talked with the pastor before the service, I learned of some of the needs of his people and wanted to be an encouragement to them to trust God through the trials.

After the service, the people wanted to hang around and fellowship. We stood outside for a long time and finally took a group photo of about half the group before everyone left for their respective houses. Chicha and I enjoyed a delicious lunch with the Diazes and two of their children. The conversation was also very uplifting. Alberto has pastored two other MEU churches. He has been in San Fernando since 2014. I am very impressed with his knowledge of the Bible and genuine love for his people. He has a big vision for his small congregation.

Chicha and I then drove to Pando, a little over an hour away. As we arrived at Templo Betel, we were greeted by Pastor Carlos Olivera. He showed us around the church and his house, which is up the stairs over the church building. We were welcomed by his wife, Mabel. Like all Uruguayans, they offered us food, but we were not hungry, just very tired from all the travel. I had slept very little during our flight through the night the day before, so I was elated when they offered one of their bedrooms so I could rest for about an hour. After a much-needed power nap, I was ready for some of their refreshments and sat at the table with Carlos. It was a fun opportunity to practice my Spanish as Chicha was still resting. Carlos and I were able to communicate, and we compared our Logos (Bible software) libraries on our tablets. He is a graduate of the Bible Institute and also very impressive with his theological knowledge. He actually has a few more digital books than me, and that really is saying something.

It wasn't long before the prayer service, preceding the main service, began. Though I couldn't understand all of the prayers, I could hear the passion of the people as they interceded for their church family and prayed for God's blessings upon their ministry. Many others began to arrive, and I again recognized many familiar faces from the Family Camps. We enjoyed another spirited song service, and then I preached. I really struggled with wanting to preach another text, but God led me to preach the same message that I preached earlier on Psalm 131. Following the service, we were blessed with a time of more refreshments and fellowship. Chicha and I

then left and drove an hour back to camp. As we pulled in, the Bixbys were right behind us as they had been at Iglesia Gethsemani in Montevideo. We ate supper that evening at 10:20 p.m.

The next weekend Pedro took me to Templo Calvario in Montevideo where we were greeted by Pastor Gustavo de Oliveira. Paul Bixby preached a tremendous message. Following the service, I had a delicious lunch at Chicha's house with a couple of missionaries from another board and with Ursula Thiessen, her house-mate for many years. Ursula celebrated her 90th birthday in February. She is one of the first graduates of MEU's Bible Institute.

We didn't have much time to rest as we had to travel two-and-a-half hours to Durazno, the central-most city in Uruguay. As we arrived at Templo Calvario, we were greeted by Pastor Jose Kowalczyk. He is officially retired, as far as the government is concerned, but he is still working full-time as a pastor. His wife, Maria, passed away in 2010. Jose is a bundle of energy for a 75-year-old man. He had attended the Family Camp the week before and made the same drive we had made earlier that day. Before the service, he showed me his house and the church. I was amazed at the size of the grape vines on his back porch. We sat down for a small snack of pretzels, and then he brought us a mixed drink - Coke with grape juice.



The congregation in Durazno
Jose Kowalczyk 2nd from left on front row

As people arrived for the service, again, I recognized many familiar faces from Family Camp the week before. As we began the service, Pastor Jose was recognized for winning the "bochas" tournament and for finishing first in the 1K race for his age group at Family Camp. As I took the pulpit, Jose insisted that I take out my camera and snap a photo of the congregation. I then preached on "A Plentiful Harvest," from Matthew 9:35-38. There was a wonderful response to the message and a renewed vision for the church to reach its neighbors for Christ. We then had a light snack with Jose before we departed for our three-hour drive back to camp.

The following Saturday, Chicha and I left early for a six-hour drive north to Tacuarembó. We traveled through Canelones and Durazno, stopping in Paso
(continued on page 3)

Showers of Blessing (continued from page 2)

de los Toros for lunch. There are no fast-food places to stop at, so we had to settle for a “chivito,” the Uruguayan national dish. It consists of a ¼ inch steak (such as a filet), 2 or 3 slices of bacon, an egg, ham, mozzarella cheese, tomato, onion, and lettuce. All of this sits on a bed of fried potatoes. Chicha insisted.

When we arrived in Tacuarembó, we were greeted by several of the leaders from the church. MEU missionaries Carlos and Graciela Pereira help lead the congregation, but they were out of town with their daughter, who is expecting her first child. It was again encouraging to see some familiar faces from the camps. The Lord led me to encourage these folks with the message from Matthew 9:35-38. Pastor Hector Gomez had taken the bus down from Rivera and met us for the service. After the service, he rode with us as we drove north to Rivera, a city that sits on the Brazilian border. He took us to his new house where we were greeted by his wife, Graciela, his son Nicolas, daughter-in-law Valeria, and Hector’s parents. We enjoyed a late supper before heading to our hotel for a much-needed night of rest.

Sunday would be another busy day as we began with Sunday School at Calvary



The congregation at Calvary Temple of Rivera

Temple, followed by another lunch that was way too big. I then preached in a small church that Hector oversees in Rivera Chico. For the evening service, the Lord led me to preach on 2 Timothy 1, a message I call, “A Hope for the Future.” This Sunday was Hector’s last Sunday as pastor of the church. He is a graduate of the Bible Institute and has been with MEU since 1987. It has been a pleasure to get to know Hector and witness first-hand his tireless evangelistic heart. He has something on his ministry calendar every day of the week. In addition to pastoring the church, he has overseen ministries in several other churches and also has outreach ministries in the neighboring department of Salto. Though he is retiring, he will remain active in ministry.

Replacing Hector is one of our missionaries, Pablo Billafan. He and his wife, Cristina,

began their move to Rivera the following day. Because of the critical moment in this ministry’s transition, my message focused on the passing of the baton of ministry. This was another message that was well-received. We enjoyed another wonderful time of fellowship with the church people following the service. The next day would find Chicha and I making the long drive back to Montevideo, from where I would fly out on Monday evening.

Reflecting on my experience in Uruguay a month ago, I am reminded of the words of the old hymn, “Showers of Blessings.” “Mercy drops round us are falling, but for the showers we plead.” Through the years we have seen God bless our ministry in Uruguay with the showers of blessings. It seems lately that we have been experiencing the mercy drops. I am encouraged by my time in Uruguay with our missionaries. It has been great to learn the history of each of these families. But, as I told the congregation in Rivera, I believe the best days of our ministry can truly lie in front of us as we pray for the Lord of the harvest to thrust out laborers into His harvest. Pray with us that God will send Uruguay “Showers of Blessings.” †

ALONG THE WAY... (continued from page 1)

Ted Allston heads to Kenya again this month to teach for two weeks.

Bill Hill was in Uruguay for a week to teach in a conference at Camp Emmanuel, March 12-16. On the weekend before the conference, he spoke at the youth meeting at Calvary Temple of Montevideo, and then at the church on Sunday. We appreciate his willingness to teach and preach in Uruguay.



Bill (at left) with attendees of the conference at Camp Emmanuel in Uruguay

Billy Judson of Hyderabad, India, was able to travel to Sri Lanka with his uncle in March. Billy was able to meet with many pastors in that island nation concerning the Good News Bible Colleges and Seminaries. Since returning home to India, a Sri Lankan group has requested application to begin a Bible college through GNBCS in Watawala village, Sri Lanka.

There were two deaths in March that touched some of our missionaries. On March 11, Joanna Davis’s father passed away in Terre Haute, IN, where he had served as a pastor for fifty years. Terre Haute was, also, his hometown. Pastor Gene Alan Jeffers was 78 years old. As I write, Joanna’s mother is staying with the Davises in Greer, SC.

Six days later, Margaret “Bobbie” Yearick passed away. She is the mother of Marla Allston, who is married to our 10/40 Window missionary. Bobbie Yearick’s husband, who died a year ago last October, was an EMU Board Member for several decades, and this couple ministered to our folks in Uruguay on two occasions. Also, the Yearicks visited Marco and Gwendolyn Nuñez in Cancún, Mexico, for the commissioning service of one of Marco’s Bible school graduates. I have known the Yearicks for 65 years, having grown up with Marla and her brother Bob. Bobbie was an extraordinary lady whose life and ministry touched thousands of people.

In the space of about 8 weeks (touching Jan-Mar), I have been through 3 surgeries - all out-patient. Nothing too serious, but all were rather inconvenient. Poor Joan has had to put up with my moaning and groaning - but we’re still married! Lord willing my maladies will not require more hospital visits.

There is some good news from the Jensen family. Our daughter-in-law Amy in Oyadao, Cambodia, is expecting their fifth child! He/she is due in August. Josh and Amy made the announcement in a rather imaginative way that I want to share with you via this photo.



Though difficult to see, these mangos each represent a family member. There is a tiny yellow mango on Amy’s tummy!

Thank you for your continued interest in the various ministries of EMU International. Your prayers and financial support (when possible) are a great encouragement to all of us. There are many Christian organizations out there vying for attention from a limited audience, so we do not take your friendship for granted. May the Lord grant you a blessed Spring. †

Page 4

“To Make God Big”

(continued from page 1)

their fruit trees and shout, “Help the moon! Help the moon!” The subsequent harvest depends on whether Rahu swallows the moon completely, spits it back out, or perhaps expels the moon sideways! One neighbor said that a pregnant woman must not look at the eclipse or her child will have defects. Another neighbor assured me that these are mere superstitions that Cambodians perpetuate in good fun.

A few months ago, two of our children, Judson and Salem, were the junior attendants (Khmer “angel children”) in our neighbor’s (not a believer) wedding. Then last month, Judson and Eden participated in the wedding of our friends, Pi-set and Srey Non, both committed Christians. I had

several opportunities to talk with Pi-set and his mother about differences and similarities between his wedding (as a Christian) and a traditional Buddhist wedding in Cambodia (like our neighbor’s). For the uninitiated westerner, both weddings would appear equally strange. But there were important differences. Most fundamentally, Pi-set and Srey Non had no priests chanting blessings, nor did they make any offerings to ancestors and other spirits, both a staple at any Khmer wedding. While I would consider this the most important difference, it is certainly not what caught the attention of nearly any Cambodian attending the wedding, including the bride and groom. From the guests’ perspective, a wedding in Cambodia is first and foremost an opportunity to get

drunk. It’s no secret that Cambodians love cheap beer and lots of it. A “Khmer-english” proverb here says, “Why to drink if not to drunk?!” In other words, the typical Cambodian simply does not have a category for “social drinking.” So, when a Christian decides that his wedding will not include idolatrous offerings or the blessings of pagan

priests, no one seems to care. I asked Pi-set and his mom about this multiple times—their many non-Christian relatives didn’t mind at all. But to have a wedding with no beer? That was indeed scandalous and a cause for real persecution toward Pi-set and his mother.

I recently read an article describing the sad lives of waitresses in Cambodia’s

thousands of Karaoke clubs. One of the girls interviewed in this piece (named Thyda) first described the rampant sexual abuse the waitresses endure. Then she said, “I had to drink every day to keep my clients happy, because my duty was to make my clients happy, even though on some days I was sick. I still had to smile and drink.... I was always drunk, and I sometimes woke up still drunk, then I’d go to work and have to continue drinking....”

Thyda reported having to drink 6-12 cans of beer per day just to keep her customers happy.

The sexual abuse is indeed tragic and horrifying. But it’s not surprising. Nor is it surprising that customers drink to get drunk. But what I’m still trying to comprehend is the urgency that “you join me in my drunkenness; otherwise, I won’t be happy, and it’s your fault! And you must join me in my drunkenness - a beer or two for you is not enough!” After 6½ years in Cambodia and having attended many different celebrations (from weddings, to birthday parties, to holiday events), I assure you that I’m not misrepresenting the common mindset. “When we drink we must get drunk, and when we get drunk, you must join us—only then are we all happy!” Perhaps this impulse stems in part from the strong sense of community for which Asian cultures are well known. Regardless, it does make me appreciative toward the total abstinence of most Cambodian Christians that I know. †

Email: office@emuinternational.org
Website: www.emuinternational.org
Phone: (864) 268-9267

*Right: Pi-set & Srey Non
meeting before the wedding
ceremony.*

*Below: Bonnie Ruth &
Jeremy in the dark blue
attire, and
Judson & Eden leading
groom’s procession to the
wedding place.*

