

# EMU

## INTERNATIONAL

*Evangelical Mission to the Unreached*

*Evangelical Mission to Uruguay*

PROCLAIMING THE TRIUMPHS OF THE GOSPEL

Volume LXIII

April 2020

Number 4



*Ken & Joan Jensen  
Assistant Director*

### ALONG THE WAY . . .

Since writing the last “Along the Way,” it seems like a lifetime has passed rather than one month. Not only has our own country changed, but the entire world has changed to something we have not experienced in our age. And it has all happened in a time of relative world peace. The affects have touched almost every aspect of society: all schools closed for the foreseeable future – though online education continues, “non-essential” businesses shuttered, jobs lost by the millions, financial markets in freefall, and trillions of dollars in relief packages (3 so far, and another on the way). And most jaw-dropping, churches around the world have closed their doors to corporate worship. And thus far, all of this without riots, protests, or bloodshed. I don’t think the most astute fiction writer could have come up with such a story line. Nor the most insightful Bible scholar of Apocalyptic prophecy. (No, I’m not saying this is The End, just an interesting new twist along the way to the end.)

For EMU, there has never been such a worldwide impact felt by all our missionaries as from the COVID-19 pandemic, even in countries where the disease has yet to become widespread. Nor have I ever seen such a plethora of imaginative outreaches by our missionaries in so short a time!

When the last “Along the Way” was written, Joan and I were just getting ready to travel  
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### “A PROMISE KEPT” AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY

*by Ken Jensen*

We are thrilled to present and make available to you the new autobiography by our senior EMU missionary, Ursula Thiessen of Uruguay. Her testimony of God’s grace, leading, and protection throughout her life has been a blessing, comfort, and inspiration for countless Uruguayans who have heard her story over the years in churches, camps, and Bible classes. Ursula’s modesty has been the primary barrier to her putting her life-story into print. Thankfully, at almost the age of 90, she acquiesced to years of requests by those of us who know her to begin fleshing out her testimony in written form to the Glory of God.

Born and raised on a farm in the short-lived country of The Free City of Danzig on the Baltic Sea, she became a follower of Jesus Christ at an early age in her Mennonite community. The ravages of World War II ripped the family apart and drove Ursula, her sisters, and mother from their homeland. Eventually emigrating to Uruguay, Ursula continued to pursue God’s leading by entering the newly started Bible Institute of EMU. In 1953, she became a full-time missionary with EMU serving in a pioneer setting in northern Uruguay, not far from the Brazilian border. In the early 1970s, she was called by the EMU director to move to Montevideo to become his primary interpreter and serve at Calvary Temple of Montevideo.

“A Promise Kept” primarily recounts her life in Germany and her first 20 years of ministry in the Uruguayan campo (interior). Though far too brief for most of us who know Ursula, this 58-page book is an amazing account of God’s guiding, protecting, and abundant blessing in the life of a woman who dedicated her life to serve Christ alone. No doubt untold numbers of people have made promises to God during difficult circumstances. “A Promise Kept” shows how God can work through one who keeps that promise, regardless of her humble beginning.

In creating this book, Ursula first gave her testimony to her niece, Lilo, who keyed it into Word. Lilo, also, owns the house where Dora (Ursula’s youngest sister) and Ursula live.



*(l-r) Dora, Joan, Ken, Ursula, & Chicha*

The Spanish text was eventually translated into English by Marcy Wolsieffer. Joan did the lion’s share of proofing, reading the English copy countless times, as I entered corrections, arranged the story line, entered historical notes, and prepared the book’s layout in InDesign. Lilo, who is quite savvy with InDesign and fluent in English, is translating the book into Spanish, and it will soon be available. (Many changes took place from the original Spanish text to the finished English version.)

In early March, Joan and I traveled to Uruguay to present Ursula with copies of her autobiography. Two weeks earlier, she



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# The Answer to Our Anxieties - Be Still

*by Jeff Davis, director of EMU*

Kornel Crnković and I walked into the kitchen of Pastor John Goldfuss's house on Thursday, March 12, to find David Smith, Director of Open Door Baptist Missions, watching the chapel broadcast from Bob Jones University on his laptop. We were in Lodi, Indiana, for a mission conference with the Waterman Baptist Church. Steve Pettit, the BJU President, announced, "Classes will end this Friday, March 13, and will resume online on March 30, following Spring Break. On-campus events are canceled from March 14-May 1." The night before the NBA had announced that they were canceling the rest of their season. There was talk at the time about canceling the NCAA basketball tournament. We looked at each other, stunned, not knowing what to say. Everything was changing so quickly.

Kornel arrived in Greenville, South Carolina, at 11:30 p.m. on Saturday, March 7. We hit the ground running. We had services on Sunday morning at Palmetto Baptist Church in Powdersville, my home church, and at Faith Baptist Church in Easley on Sunday evening. That church supports the Crnkoviés. Pastor Tom Fuller's wife, Karen, was Tanja's roommate at BJU.

On Monday we had lunch with Tim Keese, director of Frontline Missions International. Tim has been with Kornel in Croatia, and they have been friends for around twenty years. If you see Tim, ask him about the grenade that Kornel gave him. Later that afternoon we left for Kentucky and spent the night in Richmond.

Tuesday, thanks to a friend getting us half-price tickets, we visited the Ark Encounter in Williamstown. We spent the night in Indianapolis, Indiana, at Good News Ministries thanks to an invitation from Patricia Camacho, a sweet Uruguayan friend who serves as director of the Health Clinic. If you have followed the newsletters, you know that Kornel's church is renovating a building that was purchased last year. I wanted him to see the potential for using a church building, not just on Sundays, but all throughout the week.

On Wednesday, we stopped by Colonial Hills Baptist Church in Indianapolis to meet with Pastor Chuck Phelps. His church doesn't support Kornel, but it does support Julia Alvarez (Uruguay), and Marco and Gwendolyn Nuñez (Mexico). We met with him in his office and discussed the Indiana governor's decision to limit the size of public gatherings, which was going to affect their church and require live streaming their services. We enjoyed a good time with him at lunch. We then traveled to Waterman Baptist to begin their mission conference, "Go and Make Disciples." The pastor had invited David Smith and me to speak. God's providence was at work as Kornel was going to be in the States at the same time and that



*(l-r) Jeff Davis, John Goldfuss, Kornel Crnković, & David Smith at Waterman Baptist Church*

church has supported them for many years. David stayed with the pastor and his family, and Kornel and I stayed with Bob and Ann Russell. We also were able to have a lunch at Cracker Barrel with Pastor Jeff Augustus of West Terre Haute Baptist. Kornel had said he wanted to visit a Cracker Barrel, a first for him, and it did not disappoint.

We had a busy schedule planned for the next few weeks. We were scheduled to be in Oak Ridge, Tennessee, on Sunday. The following Wednesday, we were scheduled to be at Morningside Baptist Church in Greenville. Our annual EMU board meeting was going to be that Saturday. On Sunday, we would be at Kornel's sending church, Hampton Park Baptist in Greenville. We also were making final arrangements for his plans to be in Westminster, Maryland, at Calvary Baptist Church. We left for Tennessee on Saturday morning following a Ladies Brunch at the church in Indiana. It was snowing for about an hour-and-a-half of our drive. We made it into Kentucky and stopped at a Bob Evans, another first for Kornel. Every time we would stop for a meal, Kornel would log onto the free Wi-Fi. He then would video chat with Tanja back in Croatia. Every time that they talked, we were eating. I know she was afraid that he was going to go back to Croatia as big as a house.



*Kornel with his church display*

On Sunday, we visited with another supporting church, Oak Ridge Baptist Church, pastored by Bobby McCoy. This church faithfully supports the Crnkoviés and Tim and Cheryl Chapman (Peru). Due to the Coronavirus, attendance was down a little. It was a joy to also see several familiar faces as students from the Appalachian Bible College Chorale ministered to us in song during the morning service. We enjoyed a great time

of fellowship with the pastors and students, several who are missions majors. Word then reached the young people that their college had just decided to send all of the students home and move to online classes for the rest of the year. It was a very sobering time as tears flowed while they were packing the van to head out of town. Kornel and I hung out at the church for the afternoon and then shared the ministry of EMU International during the evening service. After supper with the pastor's family and a couple of other personal supporters, we traveled to Sevierville to spend the night.



*Kornel Crnković & Jeff Davis with Bobby McCoy & his son at Oak Ridge Baptist*

We were hearing rumors that flights were about to be canceled and borders of countries were about to be closed. I was up until 2:00 a.m. trying to see about arrangements to get Kornel back to Croatia. I was up at 6:00 a.m. to continue the search for opportunities. At 7:15 a.m., I called Joan Jensen for help. She and Ken had been in Uruguay and were supposed to be on their way home. I figured she would be at the Miami airport. Actually, they had come home early, and she was still in bed. I know how tiring that trip home is and how little sleep you get on the plane, so I felt terrible, but I needed her to work her magic and help us get a ticket for Kornel to fly out later that afternoon. After several hours on the computer and on hold on the phone, she was able to get him a flight that afternoon. We hustled back to Greenville to pack his things. He arrived at the airport about an hour before his departure. His flight to Washington D.C. left a little early. The same thing happened for his flights to Germany and then to Croatia. It appeared that they were trying to make sure the flights all got through before they began closing airports and canceling flights. It was an answer to prayer that he was able to get home as shortly thereafter airline travel became much more difficult, and the borders were closed. I shared on Facebook, "He is glad to be back in his country. I know Tanja and the rest of his family are glad to have him home. He will be under a government-mandated self-quarantine for the next two weeks. It will

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## *The Answer to Our Anxieties* (continued from page 2)



*Kornel & Tanja at the Zagreb airport*

be a good opportunity to read all of those books he took back with him. Also, he can exercise and work off some of those kilos he added with all of the good meals we ate with our ministry partners.” View photos from Kornel’s trip by following this link: <https://emuinternational.org/kornelusa/>

How quickly things change. Now our government is recommending and, in some cases, mandating the closing of non-essential businesses. Group sizes are being limited and people are encouraged to quarantine themselves even if they are not sick. As the death toll continues to rise and nearly every corner of the globe is affected, we are facing an official global pandemic. God is doing something. There is no question about that. But, what? He is exalting Himself among the nations.

“Be still, and know that I am God.  
I will be exalted among the nations,  
I will be exalted in the earth!”  
Psalm 46:10

It was the words to Psalm 46 which were the inspiration for Martin Luther to write “Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott.” Today we sing Frederick Hedge’s translation, known as the familiar hymn, “A Mighty Fortress is Our God.”

“God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. 2 Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea”  
Psalm 46:1-3

On Wednesday, March 18, my son and daughter-in-law awakened in their bed in Salt Lake City, shaking from a 5.7 magnitude

earthquake, the strongest since 1992. Just four days later, Kornel and Tanja felt their bedroom shaking in Croatia as Zagreb, the capital city, was hit by a 5.4 magnitude earthquake, the strongest in 140 years. When the ground beneath you literally begins to shake, you find yourself completely vulnerable, but because we recognize God’s sovereignty, we need not fear. God is present with us in the middle of our trouble (vv.1, 7, 11).

The Psalm is composed of three, three-verse-long stanzas and two refrains (vv.7, 11): The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah.

Verse 10 commands us to “Be still.” Set against the context, this isn’t a command to just pause, but to stop striving. In times of distress, we want to do something. We want to fix everything. Like the hamster on the wheel, we want to run faster. God wants us to stop and trust. If you are like me, this doesn’t make sense. Doesn’t God know the earth is quaking right now? Doesn’t He know that “the nations rage, the kingdoms totter?” Yes, He does. And despite everything that is happening around us, He will be exalted in all of the earth. The answer to our anxieties is not to be quarantined and know that He is God, but to be still, stop striving. “The body they may kill; His truth abideth still, His kingdom is forever.” †

## *ALONG THE WAY...*

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to Uruguay for an “unofficial” visit to deliver 100 copies of “A Promise Kept” to Ursula. (We left 75 books with her, but also asked her to sign about 25 for us to bring home as gifts for her special friends and supporters of the ministries in Uruguay.) We only told a few of our Uruguay missionaries about this trip a few days before we left on March 4, since our schedule was to be rather fluid, mainly because of my tenuous health. Chicha Rodriguez, Ursula’s closest friend in Uruguay, took us to visit Ursula the day after our arrival. Ursula was still bed and recliner bound from her fractured pelvis from a fall two weeks earlier at Camp Emmanuel. Ursula’s sister Dora and niece Lilo were at the house, also. And like typical Germans, they provided a delicious afternoon snack of sandwiches, cake, and apple tart. The author was in good spirits and seemed to very much appreciate and enjoy receiving the finished book. On the Saturday of the next week, Joan and Chicha again visited Ursula. Since our return home, we have heard that Ursula has actually been walking alone for a few steps and doing other exercises. She seems to be making good progress towards recovery.

On our first Friday and Saturday in Uruguay, we attended two weddings - for the same couple! A Friday morning ceremony took place at a courthouse in Montevideo for

the civil wedding. A fun group of family and friends crowded into a second-floor chamber where a judge had a stack of papers to be signed by the couple and designated witnesses. The groom was Marcos Gomez, our second newest missionary in Uruguay who works with Pedro Donzè in the office and at Camp Emmanuel. Marcos’ parents are Gabriel and Rosanna Gomez who have been with EMU since their marriage decades ago. The bride, Tali, became our newest missionary. The next evening just under 200 people gathered at the chapel at Camp Emmanuel for the “church wedding.” Family and friends gave of their time during the 24 hours before the wedding to transform the camp into a beautiful venue for the nuptials and dinner that followed. The service was sweet and Christ-honoring. It was truly a privilege to be able to attend. (Incidentally, Marcos and Tali had invited us to the wedding. And we did RSVP with Gabriel and Rosanna before finalizing our plans!)

One week after arriving in Uruguay, I contracted a virus. Yes, we thought about that, too! It started as fatigue and a dry cough. But no fever. I basically slept for the next two-and-a-half days. At the time, there were no reports of COVID-19 in Uruguay, but there were 4 confirmed cases there by the time we left. We read many reports of

airlines beginning to cancel flights, so we decided to fly back a day early, Saturday the 14th. Joan was able to visit with several of our Uruguay missionaries in the days before we left, but I was basically out of commission. On Sunday, when we arrived home, we learned that schools and churches in Uruguay had been closed and air travel was being greatly curtailed. My illness never produced a fever, and our GP doctor treated me as a homebound patient. Two weeks later, an office visit was necessary as improvement was not in sight. The doc diagnosed a bronchial infection, but no coronavirus. So, while the rest of you were in forced “shelter-in-place,” I was very happy to hunker down. Joan’s only dis-ease is listening to my cough and playing nurse to a 66-year-old baby!

Overall, our missionaries have exhibited good health during March. One stark exception is Liz Cole, who has had a fever for over three weeks. Her doctor in Bordeaux, France, finally suggested she get a COVID-19 test. It came back negative, so they are doing other tests to determine the cause of the fever. Since Liz has not been having respiratory problems, she was told to quarantine herself to a room at home and keep the doctor informed. In this last week

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of March, she was finally told she could leave the room. It's a good thing Michael is a wonderful chef and that the Coles have perfect children!

North of Paris, two of the national pastors of the Baptist Church of Saint Denis, the mother church of the one started by the Bixbys, have been seriously ill with COVID-19 for several weeks. The latest word is that they are improving.

Although none of the churches our missionaries are involved with are holding services, like here in the USA, the pastors and missionaries are keeping up with their congregations via the Internet. Some are holding live online services while others are recording messages of encouragement and sermons for their people. Josh Jensen found an innovative ministry in the Province of Ratanakiri in Cambodia. He downloaded a health bulletin concerning COVID-19 and printed a stack for the local district health clinic. He also gave them Christian booklets about health practices. He took the same material to Jarai villages, too. The people have appreciated this outreach and show of concern for not just the spiritual lives of their people but also their physical well-being. The Bible Institute and FEBU in Uruguay are continuing classes through the Internet. All of the fall (March-May) camps in Uruguay have been cancelled, which will hurt the budget for Camp Emmanuel as these camp rentals are a big help for paying expenses at this facility. Kornel Crnkovic was placed under home-quarantine for two weeks after he arrived home to Croatia. That time expired at the end of March, for which he and his family are grateful.

Many of our missionary families already homeschool their children, but those who had their kids in public or private local

schools are now homeschooling, too. The Coles, Bixbys, Tim Chapmans, Crnkovićs, Espinels, Steels, and our Uruguayan missionaries use public or private schools. So their lives have been especially changed by the school closings.

We are one month into this new world crisis caused by the coronavirus, and it is too soon to know how the shutdowns, lay-offs, and economic down-turn will affect the ministries of EMU. So far, we have not seen a falling off of donations to any of our missionaries or ministries. But we would be blind not to realize that many of you are being adversely affected. We do thank you and the Lord for providing our needs thus far, and we trust that He will continue to do so through you in the months ahead. The COVID-19 crisis will change many things in the world during the coming days, and some of those things need to be changed. But one thing should never change: our focus on the building of Christ's church around the world and at home. May the Lord abundantly supply your financial, physical, and spiritual needs and bring us all out of this trying time as more effective tools for His service. †



*Steve, Jacob, Caleb, & Luke on a Beijing subway. Before COVID-19 these cars would have been full-to-overflowing.*

## "A Promise Kept"

*(continued from page 1)*

had fallen while at the Workers' Conference, fracturing her pelvis. She was still bedridden when we visited her, with her best friend and roommate for over 40 years, Chicha Rodriguez.

Ursula's and EMU's desire is that her story will be a blessing and encouragement to all who read it. We are not in the business of selling books, and this autobiography is more of a booklet; however, there are costs to having it printed, and if possible we would like to recoup at least some of the cost of production and mailing. Rather than place a price on this book, we have decided to make it available for a donation of any amount to EMU. If you would like more than one, please contact the EMU home office and let us know how many copies you would like, and we will work out a total for you.

You can contact the EMU home office through the various means printed below this article.

At one time, anyone who knew anything about EMU knew who Ursula Thiessen was as her ministries were woven throughout the tapestry of the mission in Uruguay. And everyone who has visited EMU in Uruguay knows Ursula. And the overriding description of everyone who has met her includes the statement that she is one of, if not the most godly woman they have ever met. She is also one of the humblest people I have ever known. And I believe if you read this autobiography, you will come to the same conclusion. †

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