

75 Years

EMU

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Evangelical Mission to Uruguay

PROCLAIMING THE TRIUMPHS OF THE GOSPEL

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Ken & Joan Jensen
Assistant Director

ALONG THE WAY . . .

COVID-19 continues to be a common theme in correspondence from our EMU missionaries. As **Pastor Gabriel Gomez** states in a letter that is republished in this May Newsletter, it's been like riding a roller-coaster. And the virus and the government actions around the world continue to impact our coworkers. You will read in the **Crnkovics'** article in this edition that their family was hit by COVID three weeks before the wedding of their second daughter in April. Many folks in their church also came down with the symptoms around the same time.

Other missionaries with EMU likewise suffered through this disease in April. **Tim Chapman** and his kids had COVID in Lima, Peru, with Tim having the worst case. All seem to be doing fine now. And in Uruguay, **Gustavo de Oliveira**, the pastor of Calvary Temple in Montevideo, had a unique encounter with the illness. Gustavo was a nurse before becoming a pastor, and his wife, **Alejandra**, is an administrator at the hospital where she is a nurse. (She's in charge of many nurses.) In April, Alejandra told her husband about how terribly behind the medical community in Montevideo was in dispensing the COVID shots - a two-shot vaccine from China. She asked if he would be willing to don scrubs again and help with administering shots until the crisis was mitigated. He had already received the vaccine, so he felt "safe" in helping. After

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SORROW AND REJOICING

by Matt & Becky Hancock, church planting in Ou Reang Ov, Cambodia



(l-r) Matt holding Hans, Becky holding Ethan, Jedidiah, Jonathan, & Hope Hancock

Greetings to you from Ou Reang Ov, Cambodia. Over the past few months, Cambodia has experienced its first widespread Covid outbreak, and with it has come new government restrictions. Currently we are not allowed to travel outside our province, large gatherings are prohibited, and the capital city is in lockdown. Though evangelism efforts have been more difficult, God is still giving opportunities to share the Word.

Last week a single guy I had not seen in over a year stopped to visit. He shared that he recently recovered from a year-long illness. After seeing his health decline for some months, his family took him to Cambodia's Ancient Angkor Wat temple. There they paid some priests to perform rituals to drive away the demons they believed were causing the illness. At the end of our conversation, I shared with him how trusting Jesus, knowing God as a loving Father, and having the Holy Spirit within us is so much better than living in fear of demon spirits. He listened thoughtfully and looked over the tract I gave him. Please pray for my friend Pia to turn from darkness to light (Acts 26:18).

Thank the Lord for the gospel seed spread through our weekend soccer outreach. Since January, we were able to have 8 weeks of practice before the current gathering

restrictions. We taught through the stories of Genesis 1-3, laying the foundation for understanding the true nature of God, man, and sin. This past week we started meeting again to practice, but in smaller groups. Please pray for these teens to receive our teaching as it really is, the Word of God.



The Bible lesson after soccer practice

Matt has been working with a fellow missionary in Thailand, Chris Seawright, to produce a 15-minute gospel summary video in Khmer called "Creation to Christ." The audio recordings are almost done. Pray that God will use this tool to introduce many to God's story as we advertise it widely on Facebook and YouTube. Pray that by the power of the Spirit the good news will spread rapidly and be honored throughout Cambodia (2 Thess. 3:1).

We thank God for the two village pastors, Chandara and Nan, with whom we work
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Tears of Sorrow and Joy

by Kornel & Tanja Crnković, church planting in Koprivnica, Croatia

The unusual times we live in are not unknown to our Lord. As Christians we know that the difficulties we face daily are a result of sin. Many hope better times will come, but the Bible teaches us the opposite as we can read in 2 Timothy 3 and in the book of Revelation. In Ecclesiastes 3:1, we read that "To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven."

"A time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up"

In Croatia, the year 2021 started with pain, suffering, lockdowns, depression, and deaths. Besides Covid-19, in Croatia we had several earthquakes. At the end of our last letter we informed you of a 5.2 earthquake that occurred December 28th in Croatia in the town of Petrinja (about as far south of Zagreb as Koprivnica is northeast of the capital) and its surrounding areas. The following day, about noon, as people were trying to repair the damage on their homes, an even stronger earthquake (6.4) hit the area. It lasted for 20 seconds. Our whole country unified to help the people in pain and who had suffered loss. Nobody talked about Covid-19 then. Several local churches raised money and support to help the people in need. Men from our churches went to help in rebuilding homes. The hardest part of all is that the earthquakes haven't stopped. To this day, we are still having daily earthquakes.

Please pray for several Baptist churches in that area. Pray that they will be a witness and help to those in need. Nathanael's brother, Timothy, the pastor of the Baptist church in Petrinja, was able to coordinate many projects of rebuilding, and feeding and helping those in need. Many men from our churches spent Saturdays helping rebuild roofs and chimneys. Many residents are living in container homes.



The church group from Koprivnica that ministered to the women in the city of Petrinja

Our church organized a different project together with Pastor Nathanael's mission organization. March 8 is international women's day, so on March 6, some of us travelled to the earthquake affected area and passed out carnations to the women with a special card that had an encouraging note and Proverbs 31:29

on it. The purpose was to try to share with the ladies the love of God. They are precious in His sight and God loved them so much that He died for them on the cross so that they by believing in Him and accepting Him can have a new life and hope in this hopeless and devastated world.

During the month of March, some of our church members tested positive with the Covid-19 virus. One family came to our Sunday services, not knowing that they were infected. In the following days, several other church members experienced Covid-19 symptoms, including our family. For two weeks we had slight fevers, headaches, and weakness. We praise God for His mercy that no one had major health issues. We thank God that we did not have to close down our church, and we were able to hold our regular services. Currently, the number of infected people is high in Croatia. Daily, people are being vaccinated. Yet, many are refusing the vaccination because of their disbelief of its effectiveness. The schools are teaching online, but life continues as usual with the Covid-19 restrictions. We praise God that we were able to celebrate Easter in our church with our church family. It was a lot different from last year when we were in lockdown. Other ministries are being held regularly – children's Sunday school, men's Bible study groups, ladies' Bible study groups, youth meetings, discipleship classes, and new this year – a monthly men's early morning prayer meeting.

In one of our letters, we asked you to pray for David, a 19-year-old young man who started coming to church last summer. Kornel started a one-on-one Bible study course with him in the fall. A couple of weeks ago, he shared with the church family that God had saved him, and he expressed his desire to follow Christ in obedience and be baptized. Please pray with us for several other young people in our church who profess to be saved, but they have not shared their desire to follow Christ in obedience and be baptized.

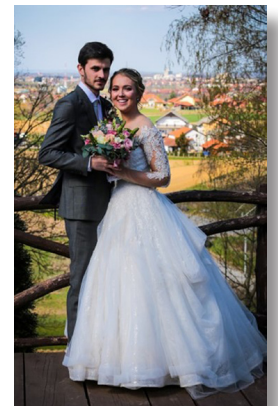
"A time to weep, and a time to laugh"

Our daughter Kristina married Jura, a Christian young man, on April 9. We thank God for answered prayers that in this time of Covid-19 restrictions we were able to organize a dream wedding for this godly young couple. The weather was nice and sunny with a slight wind, but thankfully no rain. We had rainy weather before and after the wedding. Kornel was honored to be the one to do the exchanging of vows with them



Front row (rt-lt): Tanja, Kornel, Andrea, Marko, & Natanael Crnković at Kristina & Jura's wedding

and pray the prayer of blessing for their marriage. Some of you might wonder why a time to weep? At the end of the wedding ceremony, Kristina's cousins sang a song which brought tears to the eyes of everyone who was present. The photographer was able to capture many of us with tears in our eyes. Before Kristina was born, we prayed for her, her salvation, and her future husband. We believe Jura is God's answer to our prayers. He is the son of our co-workers with whom we organize our yearly summer youth camps at the beach. Jura was saved at a young age and was baptized while in his teen years. He is hard working and has a servant's heart. He is willing to help those in need. During the months before their wedding, he didn't spend his weekends with our daughter but went to the earthquake affected area and helped rebuild the roofs of many homes. He is also musically talented – he plays the saxophone and the guitar. We pray that the Lord will use Kristina and Jura in the ministry He chooses for them. They live in the town of Čakovec, which is about an hour away from Koprivnica, and they attend the Baptist church where Jura's uncle is the pastor and his father is an elder. Kristina is in her sophomore year in a college in Čakovec. Please pray for them as they adjust to married life.



Jura & Kristina

Thank you for your faithful prayers and support for us and the Lord's work in Koprivnica. The Lord is working and changing lives. We thank God for you and pray for you and your needs, as well as for your ministry. May our Lord bless you abundantly and keep you safe in His arms in these unusual times we live in. †

Sorrow and Rejoicing

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closely. Nan is a young married man taking seminary courses online. At his request, Matt has started teaching him a New Testament Introduction course. It is a blessing to see his hunger to know the Word and teach it. Our relationship with the believers at New Light Church (where Chandara pastors) has deepened this year, and we now attend services there regularly. Matt leads one of the midweek discipleship Bible studies with two middle-aged ladies. God has used this class to connect a newer believer, Chanta, with a more mature believer, Srey. What a joy it's been to see how Srey's life and testimony of simple faith in God has encouraged Chanta and helped her grow! These sisters live about 20 minutes apart, and both are the only believers in their villages. Please pray for them to be strong in the Lord as they face many temptations and that they would grow strong in their faith. Pray for Chanta in particular that she would be willing to gather with the church to worship on Sundays.

It has been an eventful year at home so far. In January the children and Becky began studying Khmer with two high-school girls who come to tutor at our house in the afternoons. The kids are learning the alphabet

and how to read in Khmer. In February we celebrated Jedidiah's 8th birthday and found out that we were expecting another baby. We were very sad as a family in March when Becky miscarried in the first trimester. We named our little one **Eri Abiel**, meaning "Awakened" and "My Abba Father is Elohim." We are thankful for His gift, even though with us for such a short time. Becky is encouraged that after two months of being very tired, she has had more energy in April. We also thank the Lord that the children finished their school year this month, even after the many challenges of keeping up during Becky's fatigue.

Praise the Lord with us for the help He has sent us—a Khmer house helper who comes three times a week to do laundry and floors, and Lord-willing, He is sending a homeschool helper. A young lady named Savannah McPhail has agreed to come help us for this next year of homeschooling! It's hard to describe how glad we are to see God answering our prayers in this way, and we marvel at how perfectly Savannah is qualified to fit the situation here, already knowing the Khmer language and culture after growing up in Cambodia as the daughter of our fellow-missionaries Forrest and Jennifer McPhail. Please pray for Savannah as she prepares to travel here, hopefully in June, and pray that God would



Savannah McPhail, future teacher at the Hancock homeschool

provide her needed financial support of \$600 a month.

Thank you to all of you who faithfully pray and give to help us in the work God has called us to do here. He is faithful. Sometimes our trials feel like the rush of great waters threatening to overwhelm us, but the Lord has definitely assured us recently that He is a hiding place for us and will preserve us (Psalm 32:6-7). He has assured us that He is standing by strengthening us that we may continue proclaiming His message to all (2 Timothy 4:17). Please keep praying. Harvest day is coming! †

ALONG THE WAY...

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several afternoons of jabbing arms, he was off for the weekend. By Sunday he started feeling badly and had a fever. He tested positive for COVID. His case isn't bad, but he has to quarantine 15 days before he can enter the fray again.

Some updates on non-COVID related illnesses are in order. **Ted Allston** continues to recover from his March 10 knee surgery, though not as quickly as he hoped. Ted is making plans to visit Africa later this year. Board Members **Steve Ridge** and **Rick Miller** had operations in April. Steve had ACL surgery on a bad knee, and Rick, following radiation and chemo therapy, had major surgery on his forearm to remove a large tumor. He seems to be progressing well towards recovery.

The pandemic also continues to wreak havoc with travel plans for some of our missionaries. The **Kanes** had tickets to return to Cambodia on April 26, but several days before that date, the government of Cambodia ratcheted down travel restrictions within the country, which would have stranded the Kane family in Phnom Penh indefinitely as inter-province travel was suspended. They were able to cancel their tickets until the country relaxes its rules. Brian has promised the family at least a two-week window between when he purchases the tickets and when they have to fly out, so everyone can be packed!

Steve and Charity's family was scheduled to fly Stateside from Beijing, China, on June 8, but the airline notified them that their flight was cancelled. No reason given. And they would not re-book the tickets. Thankfully, a full refund was given. Steve was able to find new tickets with a lesser airline arriving in Greenville, SC, on May 26. The connections are terrible, but they will get to come home earlier than they had previously planned.

If you have followed foreign news, you know that India is getting clobbered by COVID cases right now. **Billy Judson** tells us that in his city of Hyderabad, at least two pastors of good sized churches have died from the disease. Billy and a group of Christian leaders have been planning to host a virtual 360 Conference this year. But COVID is slowing down the preparations considerably. Billy asked nine men in the USA to submit 20-30 minute teaching videos for this conference. The lessons are being translated into Hindi and Telugu, and transcripts in each of these languages are being produced. The cost for all the translating, videography, and printing is projected to be around \$6,360. Pray that all the pieces will come together to hold this virtual conference later this summer or fall.

Jeff Davis visited the **Nuñezes** the days before and after Easter. Jeff preached at the Easter services and later taught the

pastors that Marco has trained, all except **Ciro Alvarado** who lives too far afield from Cancún. After returning to the States, Jeff travelled to Appalachian Bible College in West Virginia for a missions conference. At the end of April, Jeff had meetings at two churches in Wisconsin.



*front (l-r) Jose Luis Uc, Pascual Balam, & Vicente Puc
back (l-r) Tomas Noh, Marco Nuñez, Jeff Davis,
Daniel Hernandez, & Toño Alvarado*

The Lord continues to meet the needs of the missionaries and ministries of EMU International through your prayers and financial gifts. We realize that you are experiencing in your families and churches the same inconveniences, stresses, frustrations, and sorrows that we face in the mission. And yet you remain faithfully behind the work of EMU. Our first obligation and joy is to be faithful in our ministries before God. But you are also a part of our motivation to remain faithful to the work to which He has called us. Thank you for your partnership! †

A "COVID Report" from Uruguay

by Gabriel & Rosanna Gomez, pastor of Gethsemani Church in Montevideo, Uruguay

Yesterday I opened the morning Service with this verse: *"This is the day which the LORD has made; let's rejoice and be glad in it."* (Psalm 118:24) It was a Zoom service once again. The Covid-19 situation here is like a roller-coaster. One month our cases are up, the next they are down, and then up again. Today we have the highest number of cases since this started a year ago. February's case numbers looked so good that people went on vacation, travelled all around the country, and those who live near Brazil went to Brazilian beaches... and you can guess what happened after that. March started with some calm.

We had our annual business meeting by Zoom because this meeting lasts too long - we are only allowed to be together for an hour. The spirit was good, and we were able to make decisions and plan a "tentative program" for the year. We also discussed our financial situation and resolved to make some adjustments due to the present reality. We have new expenses that we need to consider, such as Wi-Fi at church, a Zoom account, and new equipment to achieve better quality for streaming, etc.

I was invited to preach in Rivera in Northern Uruguay for their 51st anniversary. Rosanna took a day off from work and went with me. We arrived on Thursday evening and stayed with my brother Hector. The activities started on Friday. We had a service on Friday evening, another



Gabriel (lt) & Pastor
Billafan in Rivera

on Saturday morning in the village of Las Flores, and another at the main Rivera church Saturday evening - with a special time of baptism. On Sunday morning we went to a neighbourhood in Rivera called "Rivera Chico," and we were at the main church again in the evening. Of course, the meetings were held according to Covid restrictions - limits on the number in the building, with protocols, and very little fellowship. Nevertheless, it was a great time for Rosanna and me. We hope that the Word of God blessed our brothers. We didn't see many of the old folks we used to see, but we met new believers and that encouraged our hearts. The Word of God is still working even in this time of isolation. Afterwards we enjoyed a snack at my brother's house, and we saw all our nieces and nephews.

After we returned to Montevideo, we continued our normal schedule of Rosanna going to her office job, while I worked and studied at home. Then a week later Hector called; his daughter Claudia had tested positive for Covid. As we had been with her that previous Sunday, we had to quarantine at home. We didn't get a Covid test because the health system was very backed up. The doctor said that since we were not having symptoms, the results would not be ready until after the quarantine was ended; so, it was not worth doing it. Thank God, no one except Claudia got sick!

As a result of my quarantine, I was not able to assist in the Sunday Easter service. Pedro Donzé preached in my place, and I participated from home by Zoom.

Rosanna is working from home 4 days a week and only needs to go to Montevideo once a week. I'm trying to arrange my schedule to drive her that day so she can avoid the crowded buses. Lucas, our youngest son who still lives at home, is

the only one who goes to work every day in Montevideo. He changes shifts almost every week, but thank the Lord, he was able to adjust his classes, too, so his studies are "quite normal." The three of us got our first vaccine in March, and we hope to be more protected by mid-May. But it's clear to us that there's only One who can change this present situation: the Almighty God!

Before ending this "Covid report" (everything seems to move around this virus), I should say that the Lord is still showing mercy to us and has encouraged our hearts. Every Sunday a young lady attends with a group of children. At first it was just her and her daughter, then she came with 4 children, and now with 7 children! She walks about a half mile to the Church. Unfortunately, last week we decided to cancel the in-person meetings for the rest of the month, or until we see a reduction in the number of ill people.

Before ending this letter, I would like to ask you to pray for:

- Our older brethren who cannot attend church and are a bit discouraged because of the isolation.
- Our overwhelmed health system.
- The Audio Room project that will allow us to improve the quality of the transmissions.
- The new men who are taking more responsibility at Church. We are thankful!
- The children who are coming on their own to church with this young lady, Sharon. †

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