

# EMU<sup>+</sup>

## INTERNATIONAL

*Evangelical Mission to the Unreached*

*Evangelical Mission to Uruguay*

PROCLAIMING THE TRIUMPHS OF THE GOSPEL

Volume LXVI

April 2023

Number 4



*Ken & Joan Jensen  
Assistant Director*

### ALONG THE WAY . . .

As March comes to a close, those of us who garden are breathing a sigh of relief that there has not been a killing frost in our zone since spring began. It occurred to me that gardeners and non-gardeners live in very different worlds-of-concern. "Green thumbs" always have an eye to the sky and thermometer, whereas non-gardeners care about the weather as it affects vacations, outdoor sports, picnics, etc. And rightly so. There also seems to be a parallel analogy with those who are mission minded and those who are not in relation to world events. Both groups can be interested in world events, but the reasons for the concern can be in contrast. The latter is usually more concerned about how events affect their own safety, finances, and wellbeing. The mission minded tend to assess how events affect missionaries and the spread of the Gospel. In which group do I, as in individual, fall?

On March 28, **Kim Crowley** landed in Chicago to spend a week with her daughter's (Anna) family before flying to Greenville, SC, a week later. The Crowleys' eldest daughter is due to give them another grandchild in April, and another daughter-in-law is due to deliver in July. **JD** is remaining in Cambodia until after the Pastors' School, to be held in Ban Lung the week of Easter. The Crowleys' stay will be a bit longer this time as their youngest child, Nate, graduates and marries in May.

*(continued on page 4)*

## SUMMON THE HEROES

*by Jeff Davis, director of EMU*

We gazed in awe at the breathtaking view of the night sky as we stood on the small cliff overlooking the beach in Guazuvirá, Uruguay. We were only a half mile from Campamento Emanuel. One of our missionaries told me that I needed to take Kevin Oberlin down to the shore and just look up. We were amazed at the exhilarating view of the Milky Way, which stretched across the sky like a sparkling river, dotted with countless constellations. While the north pole faces outwards to the universe beyond, the south pole points to the galactic center of the Milky Way. I had been told that because we were in the southern hemisphere, there is no South Star like we have the North Star. Instead, lighting the celestial display is the Southern Cross, a well-known symbol of the region. With minimal light pollution, the stars appear brighter and more vibrant, making it a breathtaking sight. We quoted together a verse that I preached on just a few days earlier at Family Camp, "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament (the skies above) sheweth (proclaims) His handywork." Psalm 19:1

My journey for my annual trip to Uruguay began a little over a week earlier when I left home at 5 a.m. on February 17. I had to sit in Charlotte all day, waiting for my flight to Miami. I worked extensively translating notes for our sessions from English into Spanish. I can understand a little Spanish, but I don't speak well at all. "Mi español es muy malo." (My Spanish is very bad). I am, however, fluent in Google translate. With the help of Google and the little bit of Spanish that I know, I was able to put together the notes for our Workers' Retreat and build an entire deck of PowerPoint slides.

When I arrived in Uruguay the next morning, I breezed through Passport Control and Immigration and was greeted by **Pedro Donzé**, our camp director. The weather was beautiful with temperatures in the low 60s. Pedro told me that the

week before the temperature had risen to 104 degrees, the highest it had been in years. They had had a big storm, and the temperature dropped to 48 degrees. Shortly after arriving at the camp, Pedro showed me around so I could see the many projects that had been accomplished. They have taken down a lot of trees to protect the buildings and to open the campsite. Fortunately, they were able to sell the wood for a small profit. Saturday was a busy day of preparation for my ministry on Sunday and for the upcoming Family Camp.

On Sunday, Pedro and his family took me to **Chicha Rodriguez's** house. She drove me to San Fernando where we met **Alberto and Carolina Diaz** at Emmanuel Church. I preached on the Publican and the Pharisee, a bad man saved, and a good man lost. Chicha did an outstanding job translating for me. Following the preaching, everyone stayed for a time of fellowship with coffee and cakes. We enjoyed a delicious meal at the Diaz's house. This would be the first of my many interviews with our Uruguayan workers over the next two weeks. On the way back to camp, we stopped for a sweet visit with **Ursula Thiessen**. Many of you know her story and have read her small autobiography, which was first printed in 2020. She was one of the first graduates from the Bible Institute. She currently lives

*(continued on page 2)*



*Ursula Thiessen & Jeff Davis*



## Summon the Heroes

(continued from page 1)

with her sister in a small house on property owned by her niece. Though she can't get out like she once did, she is still faithfully serving the Lord from home. She turned 95 the following Friday.

On Monday, campers began to arrive. Pedro wanted to give Chicha a break from translating, so **Rosanna Gomez**, wife of **Pastor Gaby Gomez**, translated for me. She did an excellent job as I spoke on the camp theme of "The Authoritative Word of God." Over the next several days, I would speak to as many as 128 campers on my theme, "Can I Trust My Bible?": (1) "God Has Spoken" – Revelation, (2) "The Authority of the Bible" – Inspiration, (3) "The Implications of Inspiration" – Inerrancy, (4) "Why 66 Books?" – The Canon of Scripture, (5) "The Clarity of the Bible" – Illumination, and (6) "Answering the Critic" – Interpretation. **Pastor Ovidio Acevedo** spoke in four other sessions on the theme of Bible prophecy. Several of our workers were present, which allowed me to hold more interviews with these amazing servants. The temperature gradually climbed all week until we had another storm to cool everything off, just in time for the weekend. The family camp officially ended on Saturday morning.



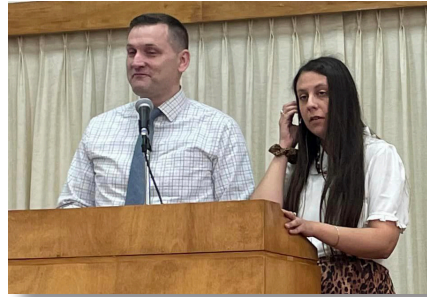
Family Camp - February 2023

**Kevin Oberlin**, the pastor of Beth Haven Baptist Church in Simpsonville, SC, and the Dean of the School of Religion at Bob Jones University, arrived in Uruguay around 1 pm that Saturday. Pedro and I picked him up at the airport and then took him to an area restaurant so we could treat him to Uruguay's national dish, the chivito



(l) Kevin & Pedro  
The famous chivito al plato

al plato. Uruguayans are proud of their football (soccer) and of their beef. As the largest producer of beef per capita in the world, Uruguay is a meat-lovers paradise. Immediately, we had won Kevin's heart (or his stomach) to the culture of this small South American country. Kevin has traveled to over 60 different countries and has served several years in Southeast Asia. This was his first trip to South America. We went back to the camp to unpack and then returned to Montevideo where we ministered in a youth meeting at Emmanuel Church of El Cerro, pastored by Ovidio Acevedo.



Kevin preaching at Calvary Temple of Montevideo with Sarah Rios translating

Sunday was a full day for us. We were with **Pastor Gustavo de Oliveira** for the morning service at Calvary Temple of Montevideo. Kevin preached a challenging message on intercessory prayer, followed by an hour of corporate prayer with the members of the church. We spent the



Uruguay missionaries at the Workers' Conference - 2023



(l-r) Kevin Oberlin; **John Mark**, Elizabeth, Daniel James, & **Deborah Steel**; David, Emma, Megan, **Kristine**, Sofia, & **Matias Espinel**; and Jeff Davis



Baptismal candidates from Siloe Church.  
Matias (r)

afternoon with **John Mark and Deborah Steel** at the home of **Matias and Kristine Espinel**. The Church at Siloe had scheduled a baptism service on Sunday night at Calvary Temple of Montevideo. What a joy to hear the testimonies and witness the baptisms of three precious church members. On the way back to camp that night, we stopped at the beach to look at the stars.

On Monday morning, our Uruguayan national workers began to arrive at camp for our workers' retreat. Though none of them wear a cape or have superpowers, they are my heroes. They are the ones who are in the trenches faithfully serving the Lord, often without any recognition. As I interviewed each of our workers, I was again touched by their love for Christ, His Word, and His church. We meet together each year at the end of February for a special time of edification and encouragement in the work. This year we summoned these heroes with a unique purpose. Though Kevin is a tremendous preacher, I wanted him to coach our group for ten highly interactive sessions on the subject of leadership. We took the word for "lead," which is "lider" in Spanish, and built an acrostic that formed

the framework for our sessions.

**L.i.D.E.R. – Effectively managing Your Life:** L – Lessons | i – Intentionally Eliminate | D – Design | E – Execute | R – Review / Rest / Recreate

These sessions would have been highly unusual for any of us to participate in, but for the Uruguayans, it was way outside of their comfort zone. I jumped in during the first session and started to ask pointed questions to individuals. They were a little slow to respond at first, but they started to warm up, and by the end we could not keep them quiet. It was an exciting week of discussion, role-playing, and prayer. We could not have led these incredible sessions without the help of Matias and John Mark for translation. On Thursday, we had our last session. Everyone seemed to appreciate the discussion and the teaching style. I'm hoping that coaching becomes a big part of our future strategy, particularly with future generations. As the conference ended, it was a joy to get a big hug from each of my heroes.

Before Kevin returned to the USA, we took him to Piriápolis so he could shop for a few

(continued on page 4)



# Introductions and Farewell

by Ken Jensen, assistant director

On February 4 of this year, there was a special meeting of the EMU Board of Directors at our office/home for the purpose of interviewing two missionary applicant couples. Jeff Davis and Joan and I had already met with these couples to determine their compatibility with and suitability as missionaries with EMU. Their testimonies and ministry plans were sent to all of the board members prior to the February 4 meeting. Though several of our board members were unable to attend due to prior commitments, a solid quorum gathered to interview the two families.

## John and Suzie Lehman



The first to meet with us that Saturday morning were John and Suzie Lehman. Joan and I have known the Lehman family for almost 30 years, when they joined Hampton Park Baptist Church and John joined the pastoral staff. (At the end of 2023, he will have been with HPBC for 30 years.) We have watched their four children grow up, get married, and do their part to replenish the earth! Their son is on the staff at HP Christian School, and a son-in-law is on the pastoral staff at HPBC. We do love this faithful family. For those of you who do not know John and Suzie, I'll present a brief biography.

Though John was born in Decatur, IN, his parents took him to Taiwan when he was nine months old, where his parents served as missionaries. He took Jesus as his Lord and Savior when he was six. John lived in Taiwan until he was eighteen, when he began attending Bob Jones University where he majored in Business Education. He later earned a MS degree in Educational Administration from Pensacola Christian College, and a DMin from Calvary Baptist Theological Seminary in 1991 in Counseling. He is a member of the Association of Certified Biblical Counselors.

Suzie grew up in Findlay, OH, in a Christian home, and she trusted in Christ at the age of six, also. She received her college degree in Home Economics from BJU. Besides being a homemaker, she has worked as a substitute teacher and is a snow ski instructor in Cataloochee, NC.

John and Suzie met at BJU and were married in 1981, the year before John earned

his BS degree. This young couple served in several ministries before moving to Greenville, SC, to become a part of the HP pastoral staff.

During their many years of full-time ministry, the Lord has enabled John and Suzie to go on several short-term mission trips. Prior to his two oldest daughters getting married, they asked him to write a book on parenting. In addition to that book, John would go on to write three more books. From those four books, the Lord has opened doors for them to travel and bring seminars on various subjects both stateside and overseas. During the past 7 years, those trips have been taken during his vacation time. As the invitations began to increase, he knew that the Lord was "leading" him into a full-time ministry of helping church leaders both nationally and internationally in counseling, encouraging, shepherding, and teaching. He also has a burden to serve churches in pastoral transition. He is available to fill in with preaching and/or leadership for furloughing missionaries. For more detailed information on his family and ministry, visit [wordsfitlyspken.info](http://wordsfitlyspken.info).

When John presented his idea of leaving HPBC employment and beginning his missionary vision full-time, the pastoral committee worked out a plan which allows the Lehmans to have a salary through 2023 and to travel more extensively to raise support. So, for this calendar year, John is still employed at HPBC, but he is also on the "deputation trail." He will be 100% under EMU beginning in 2024. Please pray for John and Suzie as they continue their current ministries and seek to raise their full support this year so they can soon dedicate their time to helping missionaries and churches around the world.

## J and M

This introduction is a bit trickier. The Lord has called this family to serve Him in the Islamic world, and one specific country, which will remain unnamed. Also, J and M have asked that I not give their names or a family photo since the EMU Newsletter is posted on the web. However, I would like to give you a sense of their backgrounds and a sketch of their proposed ministry.

J was born and raised in Greenville, SC, and attended BJE, BJA, and then earned undergraduate and graduate degrees from BJU. He was raised in a Christian home and made a profession of faith in Christ at age six. He felt called to preach during his senior year of high school. As a freshman at BJU, he heard a guest missionary speaker ministering to Muslims in the Middle East and was challenged to begin considering this long-neglected field.

M's testimony is quite different from most of us as it relates to her location of

upbringing. M's Ohioan mother traveled to the Micronesian island of Pohnpei to work with the Peace Corps. She met and married a Pohnpeian and the couple ended up raising their family there. M grew up in a Christian home and made a profession of faith in Christ at a young age. She attended a Christian school on the island. After graduating from high school, she moved Stateside to attend BJU, where she eventually earned a degree in Special Education.

J and M met on a mission trip to Mexico and married in 2012, shortly after J received his master's degree. Their hearts were continually drawn to Islamic peoples. Eventually, they joined a mission board that has a concentrated focus on the Arab world, raised support, and moved to a moderate Muslim country to learn Arabic, learn the Middle Eastern culture, and minister in an Arab speaking church. After two and a half years, they returned to Greenville due to some changes they needed to make as to their sending church and mission agency. After interviewing with Jeff several times, and then with Joan and me, they were recommended to the Board to become missionaries with EMU.

J's main focus of ministry is to teach Christian leaders in their target country, which is currently closed to Christian missionaries. He has been able to make several contacts. One of the related ministries J has developed is a "prayer group" for this vision to reach Muslims in his target country. There are currently about 1,700 receiving the regular prayer requests. If you are desirous of knowing more about the ministry of J and M, please contact our EMU office with your contact information, and we will forward that to J.

J and M have four children ages 9, 6, 3, and 1. The family will be in the Greenville area for at least the next year as they raise some needed support and determine the next steps for ministering to those in their target country. They would be especially thankful for your prayers for one of their children who is dealing with some significant special needs.

This Board meeting was the first time since 1999 that the Reverend Col. **Brad Lapiska**, Ph.D., was not a member of the EMU Board. When notified about the upcoming February 4 meeting a few weeks before the gathering, Brad responded with a letter to us stating that he felt it was time for him to step aside from his position on the Board due to the health of his wife, Peg. As was presented in this newsletter several months ago, Peg developed Frontotemporal Dementia several years ago. This is a progressive disease requiring greater care and supervision as it progresses. Her condition has worsened in recent months to the point that Brad needs to be with her pretty much all the

(continued on page 4)

Page 4

## ***Summon the Heroes***

*(continued from page 2)*

souvenirs and taste some of the delicious Uruguayan ice cream. I stayed around through the weekend. Calvary Temple celebrated **Chicha's birthday** with a special service on Saturday with over 180 people in attendance. I spoke on Sunday in Pando at Bethel Church for Pastor Carlos Olivera. Later that afternoon Chicha and I saw the Olivera's new house and enjoyed a delicious cookout with one of his church families. I returned to the USA on Tuesday with my heart full of gratitude for how God had blessed this extremely busy trip.

One week earlier, as Kevin, Matias, and I gazed at the night sky, without my stargazing app, I recognized the distinct

pattern of Orion located on the celestial equator, named after the hunter in Greek mythology. We discussed how for thousands of years the heroes of mythology have been immortalized by the names of the various constellations. Orion is mentioned three times in the Bible: Job 9:9; 38:31; and Amos 5:8. While the Greeks and Romans sought to immortalize their heroes, we know that the heavens declare the glory of God (Psalm 19:1), the Hero behind our heroes who are serving in Uruguay.

To view a photo album of Jeff's trip to Uruguay, including a link to Chicha's 80th birthday celebration: <https://emuinternational.org/uruguay2023/> †

## ***ALONG THE WAY...***

*(continued from page 1)*

At the end of February, the Jarai Christian leaders in northeastern Cambodia held their own Bible school to study portions of Matthew, which they now have in their own language. The two-day conference was organized by the Jarai, and they carried out most of the teaching for the 14 sessions.

**Josh Jensen**, who helped translate Matthew into Jarai, was invited to give the closing

lesson. It is such a blessing to see the tribal Christians taking initiative to gather and learn like this.

Thank you so much for your prayers for our missionaries this month. Some of our missionaries live in settled societies and others are experiencing social turmoil. Pray that the Gospel will spread in all situations. †



*Jarai Bible School (Josh at far right)*

## ***Introductions and Farewell***

*(continued from page 3)*

time. Thankfully, they live on the same property as their daughter, Christina, in New Hampshire. As a nurse, and someone with one of the most giving hearts I know, Christina helps her folks as much as she can, though she still works as a nurse, as well as being a wife and mother to two sons.

Brad has been an outstanding friend of EMU and our family, even before 1999. They have ministered in our summer camps several times in Uruguay. Brad's wisdom gained as a pastor and a leader in the Marines has been invaluable to me over the years. But his true friendship is what I most cherish about our relationship. If I praise him any further, he will accuse me of writing his obituary! Pray for Brad and his family as they deal with increasingly difficult situations with Peg. We love and appreciate this dear family. †



*Brad & Peg on the NE coast last July*

Email: [office@emuinternational.org](mailto:office@emuinternational.org)  
Website: [www.emuinternational.org](http://www.emuinternational.org)  
Phone: (864) 268-9267