

EMU⁺

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PROCLAIMING THE TRIUMPHS OF THE GOSPEL

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THE INCREDIBLE JOURNEY

by Jeff Davis, director of EMU



Jeff & Joanna Davis

For a brief few seconds, there was a moment of silence. **Maxi**, the seventeen-year-old son of **Pedro and Patricia Donzé**, had not stopped talking about his week at the Wilds Christian Camp. I can understand some Spanish, but his explosion of excitement was muy rápido (very fast). He sounded like a Spanish auctioneer. The pause was only for about twenty seconds, and then after a deep breath, he began again. The Uruguayan passengers in our van smiled and laughed as Maxi continued talking about our incredible journey the rest of our way back to my house. This was our fifth Saturday of traveling together, and we needed to get back to do laundry and pack for our final three days and the return trip to Miami, where they would depart for home.

Pedro Donzé is not a new name to anyone familiar with the ministry of EMU International. He currently serves as the Camp Director of **Camp Emmanuel in Guazavirá, Uruguay**. He is also the chief financial officer of our mission in Uruguay and runs our mission office there. He has taught several classes for EMU's Bible Institute in Uruguay. In addition, he serves on the Junta (Uruguayan Board of Directors). Joining him on this trip was his wife Paty, his son Maxi, and **Carlos and Beatriz Silveira**. Beatriz is Pedro's right arm serving as a volunteer assistant in our camp. Before her recent retirement, she worked in an office for the Uruguayan power company and volunteered her services

during the summer camp season, giving up her vacation time. Her husband Carlos, a professional painter, is also a gifted servant, volunteering with the maintenance and grounds at the camp.

Four years ago, we took a similar trip for this same crew, minus Maxi. This time, the Uruguayan crew arrived in Miami on Monday evening, May 15. They took the next day to get organized. Pedro needed to purchase SIM cards for their phones, and they needed to buy some new clothes for Maxi. He had just turned seventeen, but as Pedro says, he is a big boy, as you can tell from the photos. They had traveled with five pieces of luggage. One entire suitcase contained gifts that they would distribute. Another entire suitcase was full of medicine for Paty which they took time to organize on Tuesday. She has an autoimmune disease called Granulomatosis with polyangiitis (GPA), formerly known as Wegener's disease. Twelve years ago, Paty had to have a kidney transplant. She has to take medication for both the disease and to prevent rejection of the kidney. Knowing that her health would probably be an issue for this trip, we took every precaution possible. We were careful not to push too hard with our schedule. We also set aside

specific times for rest and recuperation. We purchased international travel insurance, which fortunately we never had to use. We committed Paty's health to the Great Physician, and He wonderfully took care of her.

I flew to Miami on Wednesday, May 17, and met the crew at the airport where we rented a car. We then traveled about 45 minutes through the Miami traffic to spend the night in Fort Lauderdale with our friends **Tom and Debbie Gibbons**. Tom is the director of Gospel Mission to South America. They graciously fed us and provided lodging for the night. We also toured the impressive headquarters of GMSA.

(1) Our primary goal for this trip was to visit churches and individuals who are partners with us in our ministry in Uruguay, and specifically Camp Emmanuel and the Donzé family, to say thank you. Philippians 4:17 *Not because I desire a gift: but I desire fruit that may abound to your account.* We also hoped to introduce our ministry to several new churches. We presented the ministry in twelve total churches, three that are currently supporting the ministry, and nine new churches.

Sunday, May 21 – AM Service

• **Park Avenue Baptist Church of Wilmington, NC – Pastor David Robinette.** This church welcomed our team to the USA by providing us with goody bags, stuffed with drinks and snacks that lasted for most of our trip. Pastor Robinette has been to Uruguay a couple of times to train our national workers with **Bill Hill** and Equipping Nationals Worldwide, but this was the first time that our Uruguayans have visited his church. The ladies provided a delicious breakfast upon our arrival. Pedro presented his ministry during Sunday School, and I preached for the morning service.

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*(l-r) Maxi, Pedro & Pati Donzé,
Beatriz & Carlos Silveira*

The Incredible Journey

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Pedro presenting his ministry in a church

Following the services, we enjoyed a sweet time of prayer with the pastor, and then we visited Wrightsville Beach and enjoyed a seafood lunch with Pastor David and his wife **Patti**.

Sunday, May 21 – PM Service

• Friendship Baptist Church of Raleigh, NC – **Pastor Bob Vradenburgh**. This church supports **Billy and Saritha Judson** and **Tim and Ruth Bixby**. This is Ruth's mother's home church. It is also the church where my son-in-law **Kris Wilder** serves as youth pastor. I have spoken there several times and always enjoy my time at this missions-minded church. Pedro did an excellent job of sharing his testimony and presenting his ministry through an engaging PowerPoint presentation. One of the slides had an embedded video that described Camp Emmanuel (<https://youtu.be/NQNbbb0ztPY>). Following the service, we enjoyed a sweet time of fellowship with Pastor Vradenburgh and his wife **Rachel**. The church hosted our missionaries at a nice hotel for two nights, and I stayed with my daughter **Bethany's** family and enjoyed some time with my two granddaughters. We also were treated on Monday to a delicious lunch by my good friend **Mike Snell**, who serves on the missions team at the church.

Wednesday, May 24 – Midweek Service

• Agnew Road Baptist Church of Greenville, SC – **Pastor Jeff Miller**. After returning to Greenville, our crew spent a couple of nights with **Ken and Joan Jensen**. They visited with several ministry partners and took some time to tour Bob Jones University. On Wednesday night, we ministered at Agnew Road Baptist Church. This church supports EMU missionaries, **Marco and Gwendolyn Nuñez** in Mexico. Following the service, Pedro and Paty both had opportunities to witness to a Spanish-speaking family who were visiting the church that evening.

Sunday, May 28 – AM Service

• Childs Bible Church of Onondaga, Michigan – **Pastor John Isham**. This church currently supports Pedro and his family. When we arrived at Pastor John and his wife **Veronica's** home, we were treated to a delicious supper. They arranged housing for us at a nearby Christian camp.

On Sunday morning, Pastor John worked the griddle for us and served us a delicious pancake breakfast at their house. Pastor John is a beekeeper, and before we left for church, he gave each of us a jar of honey. At the church, it was wonderful to see some familiar faces as we had visited this church four years earlier. Following the service, they had a delicious potluck lunch. We drove to Detroit, near the airport, to spend the night at a hotel. Early the next morning, we took the hotel shuttle to the Detroit International Airport for our flight to New York City.

Tuesday, May 30 – Subway Evangelism

• Heritage Baptist Church of New York City – **Pastor Matt Recker**. Our crew was insistent that I plan a trip to New York City. They wanted to experience the Big Apple for themselves. I warned them that it would be a lot of walking and that the city is very fast-paced and expensive. I found \$130 roundtrip plane tickets from Detroit, so on Monday morning we flew to LaGuardia International Airport in Queens. We purchased subway passes and immediately got on the wrong bus. By the end of our trip, though, we were subway masters. We stayed with my good friends **Pastor Bill Jones** and his wife **Jill**. They lead New York Gospel Ministries in the heart of Manhattan in the Chelsea District, just a couple of blocks from Madison Square Garden. His ministry includes Manor Community Church and leading Covenant Mercy Ministries. Their church has bunk rooms for groups who visit the church regularly. The timing of our visit was perfect as we were between groups. After dropping our bags off at the church, we immediately hit the ground running. We visited the High Line, the Little Island, the Staten Island Ferry, One World Trade Center, Times Square, and enjoyed our first slices of New York Pizza. On Tuesday, we visited Grand Central Station and Central Park. While the ladies rested in the afternoon, Pedro, Carlos, and I headed back to Grand Central Station where we met missionary Tim Stalcup and his daughter from Heritage Baptist Church. Every Tuesday, they have an organized time of tract distribution in the subways. When I pastored in Anderson, SC, I led a group that participated in this outreach activity, so I contacted the church about our Uruguayans helping them evangelize. I was proud of how Pedro and Carlos jumped at the opportunity. They even witnessed to several Spanish-speaking people. We handed out several hundred tracts in about an hour and a half. Later that evening we visited the Brooklyn Bridge. Following supper, we visited the Edge, the newest and highest outdoor overlook in New York City. When we returned to the church for the night, I checked my steps. I had walked over 30,000 steps that day.

Wednesday, May 31 – Afternoon Service

• Covenant Mercy Ministries of New York

City – **Pastor Bill Jones**. Wednesdays are busy days at the church as they have a food distribution ministry and lead services in Chinese, Spanish, and English. While Pedro prepared to speak, Carlos helped Pastor Bill paint a dormitory room for one of the church interns. At 12:30 PM, our group was out on the street talking to the many Hispanic folks that had gathered for their service. Pedro spoke at the 1:00 PM service in Spanish. During the service, a group of volunteers loaded carts with groceries for those in attendance. Following the service, our crew visited Fifth Avenue, Rockefeller Center, F.A.O. Schwartz toy store, etc. We enjoyed more slices of New York Pizza before heading back to the church to get ready for our evening service.

Wednesday, May 31 – Midweek Service

• Heritage Baptist Church of New York City – **Pastor Matt Recker**. I am grateful to the pastor for allowing us to share Pedro's ministry. Matt has been a good friend for years and worked us into his schedule. He and his wife were out of town, but we were blessed by the service. As Pedro finished his presentation, I concluded with a challenge on prayer. The congregation then divided into small groups and had a wonderful time of prayer. After the service, I was approached by a couple of different people who receive prayer letters from different EMU missionaries. We were only a little over a mile away from the church where we were staying, but we decided to take the subway. We ended up taking the subway to the last station, which put us still a mile away from our church. It was an enjoyable leisurely walk back to the church amidst the glistening lights of New York City at night. We were very tired and had to leave early the next morning to take the subway and a bus back to LaGuardia for our return flight to Detroit.

Sunday, June 4 – Sunday School

• Homewood Community Bible Church of Williamsburg, Kansas – **Pastor John Klassen**. This is the home church of our dear ministry friend **Donna Williams**. She and her late husband, **Doug**, have been partners with our ministry in Uruguay for many years. I had the privilege of visiting this church in August of last year. I am



(l-r) Nancy Williams, Pati, Maxi, Pedro, Carlos, Beatriz, & Donna Williams enjoying Canelones fixed by Beatriz & Pati

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Britt Hopper (lt), who has traveled to Camp Emmanuel several times to help with projects. Maxi (rt) has known Britt for many years.

grateful to Pastor Klassen for giving Pedro the opportunity to share his ministry during the Sunday School time. We enjoyed an extended stay with Donna in the "barn," which is a gorgeous guest house. Our friend **Britt Hopper** joined us for the day on Sunday. During our stay, we all helped with several projects around Donna's house. Britt had his work truck and helped repair the ramp which leads to the guest house. Carlos put his painting skills to work. Pedro helped with some of the gardening. Our ladies made two authentic Uruguayan meals for our group - Canelones and Spaghetti made from scratch. It was good to visit with Donna's son **Darin** and his wife **Nancy**. Maxi got caught up on some of his schoolwork and enjoyed some downtime. He wouldn't let me live it down when the Uruguayan Men's Under 20 team defeated the USA. The next week Uruguay defeated Italy to win the U-20 World Cup. While in Kansas, I received the wonderful news that our daughter **Abby** and her husband, **Caleb Prigge**, had our sixth grandchild. **Judson Caleb Prigge** was born three weeks early on June 2, weighing 7 lbs. 1 oz. and 18 inches long.

Wednesday, June 7 – Midweek Service

• Greenville Bible Church of Greenville, Mississippi – **Pastor Ken Burkett**. We left Kansas early Wednesday morning and traveled around nine hours to make it to the church on time. The Uruguayans commented on how the rolling farmlands of Kansas, Missouri, and Arkansas reminded them of Uruguay. We arrived at the church just in time for the service. This church supports several EMU missionaries, including Uruguayan national pastor **Alberto Diaz** and his wife, **Carolina**. I have spoken for this church several times, and it is always a joy to be with these sweet people. We enjoyed an extended stay – me with **Jimmy and Cathie Parkerson** and the crew staying at their son **Jamie's** guesthouse. Jimmy took us for breakfast on Lake Chicot, just across the border in Arkansas. We then toured Greenville,

Mississippi, and had a picnic lunch at a park on the Mississippi River.

Sunday, June 11 – AM Service

• Grace Baptist Fellowship of Lewisburg, Tennessee – **Pastor Tom Gabbard**. We had to leave Mississippi early Saturday morning for our drive to Lewisburg, Tennessee, just south of Nashville. Four years ago, our crew met Pastor Gabbard for lunch at a Mexican restaurant, but we didn't have time to visit the church. This year we made it a priority to visit the church. For several years they have supported Pedro and Paty, specifically helping with their medical expenses. We met Tom and his wife Donna at the same Mexican restaurant for supper. On Sunday, when Pedro shared his ministry, he got emotional thinking about these sweet people and how they have sacrificed to help his family. We enjoyed a time of fellowship over lunch at the church and then drove back to my home in Greer, South Carolina.

Wednesday, June 14 – Midweek Bible Conference

• Westgate Baptist Church of Spartanburg, South Carolina – **Pastor James Wooten**. After returning to the Upstate of South Carolina, we didn't have much time to rest. We took Maxi to camp at the Wilds on Monday. **Sharon Steel**, the mother of EMU missionary **John Mark Steel** who serves in Uruguay, invited us over for lunch on Tuesday. On Wednesday, the crew had lunch with **Paul and Theresa Bixby**, former missionaries to Spain who have been to Uruguay a couple of times. Wednesday evening, we had supper at Westgate Baptist Church. This church supports the Bixbys and also our family. Pastor Wooten has invited me to speak at their Summer Bible Series for the past three years. I introduced Pedro and his ministry to the church, and I spoke on the summer theme of the fruit of the spirit. My message was called, "Living a Life of Joy." We spent Thursday and Friday at the Wilds Christian Camp where our crew stayed with **Rick and Kathy Jensen**. Rick has helped us so much at the camp in Uruguay that we wanted to do something to help him. We spent time on Friday afternoon painting the back of Rick's new garage.



(l-r) Carlos & Beatriz Silvera, Jeff, Kathy & Rick Jensen, and Pedro & Pati at the Jensens' house in the mountains.

Sunday, June 18 – AM Service

• Open Door Baptist Church of Bamberg,

South Carolina – **Pastor Doug Ludlam**.

This small church supports several of our EMU missionaries, including the Donzès. It was a joy to meet their new pastor, Doug Ludlam, and his wife, **Marla**. We had visited this church four years ago, so we recognized several familiar faces. Following Pedro's presentation and my challenge on the subject of prayer, the church family formed a circle around our Uruguayan crew and prayed for them. We hung around for a while and enjoyed a delicious Southern potluck.

Sunday, June 18 – PM Service

• Foster Creek Baptist Church of Hanahan, South Carolina – **Pastor Miguel Betancourt**. For many years this church supported **George and Marilyn Jensen**, so they are familiar with our work in Uruguay. This was the first time any of our Uruguayans had visited the church. Pastor Mike has been a good friend of mine for years, and he was kind enough to let us share our ministry and to host us for the night. We enjoyed a time of fellowship at the Cracker Barrel, but we missed seeing his wife, **LeeAnn**, who was out of town visiting with her father who is very sick.

I want to send a shoutout to these individuals: Ken and Joan Jensen for hosting our crew for a couple of nights. **Nelson and Debbie Neal**, for their faithful support through the years and especially for their help in our communication material. Marilyn Jensen for all that she has meant to EMU International over the years. **Steve Erkens** for the tour around the campus of Bob Jones University. **Pastor Mike Wilder** and his wife **Tina** for hosting us for a night and helping us purchase discount tickets for the Ark Encounter. **Patricia Camacho** and the workers at the Good News Rescue Mission for hosting us for a night and for the delicious empanadas. **Jim and Cindy Snead** in Muskegon for another wonderful meal and their faithful support of Camp Emmanuel. For Donna Williams and the wonderful relaxing time in Kansas. For Britt Hopper for an enlightening visit at the Bible Museum in Wilsey and the wonderful meal in Council Grove at the Hays House. Jamie Parkerson and his parents, Jimmy and Cathie Parkerson, for their kindness in hosting us for an extended stay and their wise counsel. Sharon Steel for the sweet fellowship over lunch at her house. Paul and Theresa Bixby for lunch and enjoyable conversation in Spanish. Rick and Kathy Jensen for a relaxing couple of days in the heart of the mountains. **David and Sandy Martin** for making time for us at the last minute, and for breakfast that could have lasted all day. **Mike and Debbie Cooper** for their faithful support of our work in Uruguay over the years. I'm sure that I have left somebody out as we encountered so many sweet friends. We cannot do what we do without your faithful support and prayers.

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(2) Another goal was to visit a few Christian camps. Specifically, Maxi attended the Wilds Christian Camp, in Rosman, North Carolina, June 12-17. In addition to a wonderful time with our friends at the Wilds, we spent a couple of nights at the Anchorage Christian Camp in Lake Waccamaw, North Carolina. **David Ulrich**, the director, had invited us to participate in their Camp-in-a-Day Youth Rally on May 20. On our trip from Raleigh, NC, to Greenville, SC, we stopped for lunch with **Pastor Mike Free**, a long-time friend who pastors the Tabernacle Baptist Church in Candor, North Carolina. Their ministry is the home of Living Water Christian Camp. We had a great time visiting the camp and collecting ideas for activities and our facilities in Uruguay. While we were in Michigan, Pastor John Isham of Childs Bible Church arranged for us to stay at Youth Haven Camp in Rives Junction, Michigan. We were able to explore the camp and collect more brochures, photos, and ideas.

(3) We had a third goal to promote upcoming work trips. Since the beginning of the pandemic, we have not sent any work teams from the USA to assist in projects at Camp Emmanuel. We hoped to meet with Rick Jensen and advance plans for one or two teams to return to Uruguay in the next few months. Rick is planning to return to Uruguay in August, and there is a good possibility that he will go again in October. We met with some who have been down with us in the past, and we also introduced the idea to a handful of new people. If you are interested in helping on one of these work teams, please let me know by emailing jeff@emuinternational.org. For more information on what is happening at the camp and some of these projects, visit <https://emuinternational.org/campemmanuel/>.

(4) Our final goal was for our crew to see and experience the USA. For the thirty-seven days that they were in the country, we drove 6,514 miles. They visited sixteen states: Florida, Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina, Tennessee, Kentucky, Ohio, Indiana, Michigan, New York, Illinois, Missouri, Kansas, Arkansas, Mississippi, and Alabama. It was humorous to listen to the Uruguayans talk about the different accents in the USA. They commented on how certain areas of the country were easier to understand and how in some places people talk too fast. I mentioned how I can't understand Maxi's Spanish when he is excited and that the Americans were just excited to meet the Uruguayans as why they talked so fast. After a hectic, high-pressure stay in New York City, where I sounded like Sergeant Carter, "Move it, move it, move it," it was wonderful to have a slower few days in Kansas and Mississippi.

Invitation to Partnership: William Carey, known as "The Father of Modern Missions," saw missions as a miner going into a deep mine — one which had never been explored, with no one to guide him. He said to Andrew Fuller, John Ryland, and his other pastor friends: "I will go down if you will hold the rope." We are looking for churches and people who are willing to hold the rope for the Donzé family.

- **You Can Pray:** After each of Pedro's presentations, he quoted from the end of several of Paul's letters where Paul consistently says, "Brethren, pray for us." Pedro said, "Brothers, there is no ministry, no missionary, or servant of God that cannot go forward when God's people pray for them."
- **You Can Give:** Please make checks payable to EMU International and include Donzé family or Camp Emmanuel on the memo line. Mail checks to **EMU International, 209 Roberts Rd., Taylors, SC 29687**. You can also give online by

visiting <https://emuinternational.org/give-now/other-missionaries/>. Be sure to indicate in the "Designation / Note" box that the gift is for the Donzé family or Camp Emmanuel.

As I sat on the runway waiting for my flight to depart, I reflected on five weeks that all seemed like a hazy blur. I pulled up my Facebook album of photos from the trip (<https://fbshort.com/MzeQ>) as memories flooded my mind—6,514 miles traveled together across sixteen states, visits to twelve churches, and countless connections forged with pastors and ministry partners. We had witnessed so much and spent extensive time together. I was looking forward to getting home, but I got a little emotional knowing how much I was going to miss these precious Uruguayan friends. Undoubtedly, it will take several weeks for both my Uruguayan friends and me to process everything.

Maxi returned with a backpack full of souvenirs for his friends. I'm sure that he is still rattling on about his trip to them. They all speak Spanish, but they may still have a hard time understanding him through all of the excitement as he describes his incredible journey. †



The "crew" headed back to Uruguay

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