

# EMU<sup>+</sup>

## INTERNATIONAL

Evangelical Mission to the Unreached

Evangelical Mission to Uruguay

PROCLAIMING THE TRIUMPHS OF THE GOSPEL

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*Ken & Joan Jensen  
Assistant Director*

### ALONG THE WAY . . .

It is fortuitously fortunate that I have a dearth of subjects to convey in "Along the Way" this month. There was actually some doubt as to whether this newsletter would even be published for March. A misstep resulted in a mishap on my part, resulting in a broken left elbow at the end of January. During the saga of a cast, cast removal, elbow operation, recast, and now an elbow brace, typing was out of consideration. Though still healing - stitches still in - I'm able to use the mouse and keyboard on a limited basis.

Following the Krung Bible dedication celebration, **the Kanes** left the following weekend for a "medical vacation" in Bangkok, Thailand. Checkups and procedures were postponed until after the Krung Bible event. At this writing, the family is still making the doctor-rounds in Bangkok.

**Josh and Amy Jensen's** family were in Pennsylvania, Virginia, & North Carolina in February. They will be moving into one of Hampton Park Baptist's missionary houses on Monday, March 4. It will be good to see the family again after five years.

**The Farmers and Brooke Illsley** begin their furlough in April. One of their main hurdles is finding a van to hold ten people and luggage.

Thank you for your continued support of our EMU missionaries through your prayers and financial gifts. May the Lord bless you accordingly! †

## KRUNG NEW TESTAMENT DEDICATION

*by Brian & Lydia Kane, Bible translator in Ban Lung, Cambodia*

### An Early Christmas Present

After a multi-month marathon of final checks, proofing, and typesetting, we transferred the files for the Krung New Testament to the printers in Phnom Penh... and waited. Initially, we had a scare when we were told that the paper for the Bibles wasn't in stock and had to be ordered from outside the country. But I soon got word that the paper was in hand and the printing had started. On Thursday, Dec 21, I received the fantastic news that our 500 Krung New Testaments had arrived here in Ban Lung, well ahead of our February deadline!! God worked it out that they were just in time to be an incredibly beautiful Christmas present.



### Dedication Ceremony

As early as mid-2023, the Krung churches had started planning for the upcoming dedication ceremony for their New Testament. On December 10, several of us got to attend the Tampuan NT dedication ceremony, which got us even more excited...and me more nervous. The Krung churches have run their own Bible schools for years with routinely 70-80 students in attendance. But when the Tampuan dedication had well over 800 people attend, I knew that we were out of our depth. Thankfully, our dedication committee stepped up to the plate. During the last 2 1/2 months, we have held many meetings and practices, and details began to slowly come together. Finding a location where



*(l-r) Julia, Sophia, Jackson, Brianna, Brian, Natalia, Lydia, Hugh Kane (Sophia is wearing a traditional Krung skirt)*

800+ people could gather together was no small task, but we finally settled on the village of Krala. They have a schoolyard, which was perfect, but the problem was that this village is still heavily steeped in Animism. When Saruen, the pastor of the church there, approached the village elders, they refused on the grounds that the spirits there would expect a sacrifice from us if they saw all the singing and dancing. We prayed and God answered. The elders agreed that we shouldn't have to do a sacrifice for their spirits, so they decided to do their own sacrifice the day before and allow us to worship God the next day. They continued to waffle back and forth until the Thursday before the dedication, but God was ultimately victorious.

The 100 or so Krung Christians who were involved in the ceremony were to arrive the day before and sleep that night in the village (so that we could start on time!). Instead, there were almost 300 who were so excited that they came ahead of time! It was to be a harbinger of the next day. We had expected 800-850 people, but there were around 1000 people who joined in. Though we had only ordered enough food for up to 850, everyone ate and was satisfied. If a few loaves can feed five thousand, one thousand is nothing!

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## Write the Next Chapter

by Jeff Davis, director of EMU / David & Maribel Bell, missionaries to Spain

“Take your Bibles and turn to Acts 29.” I spoke these words as an opening to my sermon on Sunday morning in Vergara, a small town in the interior of Uruguay. With the rustling of pages in the background, I quickly gave an overview of the book of Acts using the familiar words of Acts 1:8 as an outline: *But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.* “Have you found Acts 29?” Someone in the congregation softly giggled. I went on to explain how there was a literal Jerusalem, a literal Judea and Samaria, and how by the end of the book of Acts, the gospel was accomplishing its task of advancing to the ends of the earth. This congregation gathered together in Uruguay was evidence of the power of the gospel’s message as it has expanded into the uttermost parts of the earth.

Many of you reading this know that there is no Acts 29. I had accomplished my purpose of getting the congregation to the end of the book of Acts which abruptly concludes with chapter 28 and verse thirty-one. Paul is under house arrest and the gospel is going forth in power. *30 And Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house, and received all that came in unto him, 31 Preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him.* That last phrase describes an adverb in the Greek that if literally translated means “unhinderedly.” And then the story ends. Or does it? I challenged the church that God wants us to write the next chapter, not by way of revelation or inspiration, but that we are to continue the mission given by Jesus before His ascension. We are to be witnesses *unto the uttermost parts of the earth.* That is why I was in Uruguay. That is why we had invited David and Maribel Bell to join us for two-and-a-half weeks of ministry at Campamento Emanuel and in our churches in Montevideo.

David grew up on the campus of Bob Jones University. He is the son of Dr. Robert and Kathy Bell. His father served for 50 years in the Bob Jones University Seminary where he helped lay the foundation for the Seminary and Graduate School of Religion as it is known today. Maribel is from Spain. They met while students at Bob Jones University where they both received bachelor’s and master’s degrees. They were married in 1995. Upon completion of their studies and with a new baby, in 1998 the Lord led them to Alicante, Spain as missionaries. During their first eight years of ministry, David served the church as its pastor, and he also served as director and professor at the Emanuel Bible Institute, in Elche. During that time, David and Maribel both received PhDs at the University of Alicante. David’s work was in



(l-r) Pedro (camp director) & Paty Donzé, and Maribel & David Bell

translation theory applied to Bible translation and Maribel’s is in Applied Linguistics related to the teaching of English to speakers of other languages.

When Ken Jensen recommended that we invite David to speak at our camps in Uruguay this February, even though I did not know him personally, I thought that he would be the perfect choice. I contacted the Bells, and they were thrilled with the opportunity. We began preparations in anticipation of an exciting trip to Uruguay, not knowing how God would have the story unfold.

For my part of the journey, my flight from Greenville, SC to Charlotte, NC, on Wednesday, February 7, was delayed for three hours, causing me to miss my connecting flight to Miami, and miss my flight to Uruguay. It was a frustrating way to begin the trip. My flight into Miami arrived after midnight, and I spent a long, sleepless night walking around the airport and working on my laptop. I had to take another airline through Panama to Uruguay. I finally arrived late on Thursday night, and Matias Espinel picked me up at the airport. I spent the first three nights in Montevideo with his family. I caught up on some rest and enjoyed time with this family and some missionary friends from other agencies. On Saturday evening, I attended the ordination service for Exequiel Parente, the new pastor at Iglesia Siloé. He is one of the first graduates of FEBU, the Bible College in Uruguay, where Matias serves as Director.

On Sunday morning, Chicha Rodriguez joined us for breakfast, and then she and I drove to Templo Bet-el in Pando. We were greeted by Pastor Carlos Olivera as people



Chicha translating for Jeff in Pando

were beginning to fill the meeting room and an additional overflow room. With Chicha as my translator, I preached an appropriately titled message on Jacob called, “Back to Bethel.” After the service, we enjoyed fellowship with Carlos and his wife Mabel at their new house. We then drove to visit with Ursula Thiessen, the oldest member of our mission and one of the first graduates of our Bible Institute in Uruguay. She lives with her sister in a small house on the 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 96 on February 24. Chicha and I then made our way to Campamento Emanuel.

The Bells’ journey began without incident. David had prepared twenty-three teaching sessions, and Maribel had prepared a lesson for the ladies. They were excited and a little bit nervous for the trip. Maribel stated, “We had never been that far away, never thought we would, but God gave us the opportunity and we took it happily. Going to a summer destination in the middle of winter sounds like a good idea, but a 16-hour trip makes one think twice before embarking, especially if you know very little about the place and the people that you will meet at the other end of the journey.”

They arrived in Montevideo early Thursday morning, and Pedro Donzé met them at the airport. He drove them to one of the biggest stores in town to have breakfast and get some needed supplies for the few days before camp started. David commented on his “sticker shock” when he saw a small grill that cost 400 US dollars. Everything in Uruguay is very expensive. Maribel described how that first trip to the store introduced them to new words in Spanish. She said, “People were very kind to work with us as we struggled with jet lag, new money, new meals, and new words, even though we spoke the same language. People forgave our dialect and we tried to adapt to theirs. Uruguayans are very friendly people, and many seem to have a friend or relative who lives in Spain. That first afternoon, we discovered the Rio de la Plata beach and got to rest enjoying the sound of the thousands of parrots at Emmanuel camp. We even spotted the camp owl that same evening.” Over the next couple of days, the Bells enjoyed their time at the camp, and Pedro led them on a fun day trip to the nearby resort town of Piriápolis. Pedro also wanted to introduce them to Uruguay’s national dish, the *chivito al plato*. It is made with a thin beef steak, 2 or 3 slices of bacon, an egg, ham, mozzarella, tomato, onion, and lettuce, on a bed of fries.

Sunday morning, Pedro drove them into Montevideo to Iglesia Getsemani where they were greeted by Pastor Gabriel Gomez and his wife Rosanna. “One of the things  
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## Write the Next Chapter

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that impressed me the most,” Maribel stated, “was that the young people came to greet us on their own. We were told they had not been prompted. That blessed my soul, as did the fellowship we had with the brethren.” Following lunch and exploring some of the sites in downtown Montevideo, they made their way back to camp, arriving around the same time Chicha and I did.

After unloading my luggage, David and I stood in the casita (the little house we shared) talking for the next two hours. We had video chatted and gone back and forth on email, but this was our first-time talking face to face. We would spend a lot of time together over the next two weeks talking about ministry in general and missions in particular. David was a big help as he helped translate for a few of my interviews. They both interacted well with the campers and our workers. Many people commented to me what an excellent choice it was to have them as our featured speakers.

February 12-17, we had a good group attend Family Camp. The first service was extremely hot, but as David began to preach, the skies grew darker, and then the rain began to fall. The temperature dropped a good thirty degrees, which resulted in pleasant temperatures for the rest of the week. On Thursday and Friday, I made a quick trip with the Espinel family to visit another camp in Paysandú, an interior town on the border of Argentina, about four hours away. This is where the Espinels will be relocating in 2025 when FEBU opens a campus at that camp facility. On Saturday, Maribel spoke for a ladies’ meeting at Iglesia Getsemani, while Pedro took David and me on a tour of Montevideo. We were together again at Iglesia Templo Calvario in Montevideo on Sunday morning, February 18, where David preached for Pastor Gustavo de Oliveira. Chicha and I left to meet Evangelist Juan Gonzalez at La Feria de Tristán Narvaja, the largest and most popular street market in Montevideo, which takes place on Sunday mornings. For well over seven decades our mission has had a presence sharing the gospel at tables on one of these street corners. We handed out stacks of gospel tracts, and Juan preached to the bustling crowd. We then gathered back at the church for lunch with the church family.

February 19-22 was our Workers’ Conference at the camp. God blessed us again with beautiful weather. We enjoyed the smaller group and relaxed atmosphere. I was able to hold interviews with each of our workers. One of the special privileges for our group this year was to have Nico Gomez join us in our sessions. He is the new pastor at Iglesia Evangélica Calvario de Tacuarembó. His parents are retired pastor Hector and Graciela Gomez. For many years, he has served as our camp cook. We had a great kitchen crew this year who

picked up the slack and did an amazing job serving our missionaries.

Following the camps, David and I sat down for a debriefing.

I shared earlier about the Bell’s call to missions. I asked David to describe their current ministry.

“In 2006, God placed a call in our hearts to start a new congregation in the city of Petrer, about 30 minutes inside Alicante. Trusting in Christ’s promise to build His Church, we began holding services in the garage of our home in the summer of 2007. Six years later, we rented a public facility for our congregation, and God opened the door to meet many more people and to continue ministering the word publicly. Christ continues to fulfill His promise, and we give glory to Him for how His church in Petrer continues to grow. This year God has provided the funds to purchase a building for our congregation. We hope that this site will be a tool that God will use for others to hear the Gospel message.”

I told David how much I had enjoyed our time together. We had spent hours discussing theology, ministry, family, hobbies, etc. He stated, “It was great to get to know you, Jeff. We were just far enough apart in age that I had never met you, but when we started talking, it seemed that you know everybody that I know, and we enjoyed some great times of fellowship, sharing about the ministries that God has put us in over the years.”

I asked, “So, this was your first trip to South America?” “Yes! Maribel and I had never been to South America; we’d never been anywhere below the equator. In fact, Maribel had never been to another Spanish-speaking country. So, it was a new experience for both of us.”

I asked them to describe the differences in culture between Uruguay and Spain. “Uruguay has a very European population. The majority of the people trace their origins back to Spanish or Italian families. So, I assumed that the culture in Uruguay would be very similar to the culture of Spain, but the truth is, there are several differences. Uruguayans eat lunch earlier than most people in Spain, but otherwise, it is pretty similar to our normal meal schedule in Spain. The food is somewhat different, being a bit heavier on carbs and lighter on vegetables as a norm. We really enjoyed the Uruguayan asado (meat grilled on wood). The Uruguayans are famous for their *máte* drink (a caffeine-rich infused herbal tea), and it was interesting to see so many people walking around with a thermos under their arm and their *máte* cup with the silver drinking straw, sipping the drink during the day. We did try some, but I have to admit it must be a bit of an acquired taste. It can be a bit bitter at first, but as you continue to refill with hot water, the taste mellows out some. We can actually buy *máte* in the grocery store in Spain because so many Uruguayans

and Argentinians have immigrated there; there is a demand for it, but I don’t think we’ll be buying any when we get back.”

I asked what some of the highlights from their trip were. “Obviously, my greatest highlight was being able to open the Scriptures and share those truths with brothers and sisters in Christ from so far away. We enjoyed meeting and getting to know so many believers. There were moments of sweet fellowship. In my case, there were a few believers that I had heard about before through EMU. It was wonderful to connect a face with a name I had heard before. We also enjoyed spending time with some friends that we knew from the USA. We knew the Steels from when we were in college, and they had visited us in Spain years ago while on a mission team, so it was great to catch up with them. And we had met Matias Espinel when he was training for the ministry years ago. What a blessing to see their families and how God is using them in the ministry in Uruguay.”

David also thanked me for including him in some of the interviews. He stated that it was his goal to be like a fly on the wall. In his words, to be there but not really there. He commented, “This is a very healthy situation between the board and workers. This is the way it is supposed to be. You don’t have the American mission board controlling the churches. You are present for advice, prayer, and partnership. I wish that we had more of that philosophy in missions today.”

We talked about his preaching plan. “For family camp, I preached a series of messages from the book of Daniel. The theme verse was Daniel 11:32 about what it means to know God. We saw that behind Daniel’s boldness, confidence, assurance, and testimony was the fact that he knew his God. Then for the workers’ retreat, we looked at the book of Titus. Our focus was on how healthy doctrine produces healthy faith (2:1-2). I came ready to share with these brothers in Christ what the Lord has been teaching me in our ministry in Spain, and I trust it was a challenge and a blessing.”

I asked him to share his impressions of the camp. “We had a wonderful time at the camp. That was our home base for the two and half weeks there in Uruguay. The camp has a beautiful location and wonderful facilities. The first few days we were there before the camps started, we enjoyed leisurely walks down to the beach and getting acclimated to the South American summer in February. But by far, the greatest asset the camp has is its staff. Their goal, although never stated publicly in my hearing, was clearly to serve the believers. Pedro and his entire team tirelessly and selflessly serviced us and every single person who attended one of the camps with love and humility. It was such a blessing to watch them in action. That is one of the wonderful blessings that we are going

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### **Krung New Testament Dedication** (continued from page 1)



*Procession to the dedication*

My great burden was that in all the festivities, 2 goals would be accomplished: first, that Christ would be lifted up; and second, that the Krung church would gain a new excitement about the Word of God. God answered our prayers! It was an incredible day of celebration and worship through music, prayer, Scripture reading, testimonies, and preaching. Not even the obligatory speeches by government officials could put a damper on the five hours of praise and worship to God for His Salvation and His Word. It was an unmitigated success! Thank you all for your prayers and gifts which made this day a reality. †



*Ben Fetterholf, Brian Kane, &  
Andrew Bates*

### **Write the Next Chapter** (continued from page 3)

to take back with us from Uruguay.” He commented to me how much he respected and grew to love our missionaries. On their last full day in Uruguay, they spent the day with the Steel family exploring Colonia. On their way out of Montevideo, John Mark pulled off at a gas station. To their surprise, they were greeted by one of our missionary families, Ovidio and Yusara Acevedo. In addition to one final hug and Uruguayan kiss, they left them with personalized coffee mugs. David’s mug had written on the side, “Dear David, thank you for leaving your teaching in Uruguay. With a good coffee, pray for us.” This mug was a very special gift and a reminder to pray for all of our friends in Uruguay.

I asked him what the differences are between our work in Uruguay and that of Spain as far as churches and church planting. “As far as the churches are concerned, the sizes of the congregations are similar to many churches in Spain. But what was really neat for me to see was the depth of the churches. The gospel ministry in Spain is still fairly young. Back in the 1960’s, missionaries were not able to go to Spain to preach the gospel. In Uruguay, however, I found that God raised up churches through the missionaries who started preaching the gospel there in the middle of the last century. All of the churches had a Uruguayan pastor supported by the local church. They are generations into church planting, far ahead of where the churches are in Spain. At the same time, the churches are facing some of the same issues that our churches face in Spain. There is a lack of younger workers who are interested in training for the ministry. There are lots of people who are serious about their faith and who are studying the Word of God, but many times, we do not see people who feel called to the ministry. This means that

sometimes, as one generation of pastors looks at retirement, they struggle to find men called and trained to continue leading the church. In Spain, as in Uruguay, the solution is to pray for the Lord of the Harvest to send forth laborers into the harvest fields. But it was a tremendous blessing for me to see how God has raised up Uruguayans to serve in the pastorate. It was also a tremendous blessing to share the Word with them and encourage them in their ministries.”

On Friday, February 23, Chicha and I traveled into the interior of Uruguay to serve in three different churches. I plan to share an update on those last few days in next month’s newsletter.

On Saturday, February 24, Pedro dropped the Bells off at the airport early. After they checked their luggage, they noticed a piano near the security checkpoint with a note that read, “Leave your music before you travel.” David sat down and played a couple of hymns, “Amazing Grace” and “In Christ Alone.” Several people gathered and identified with the message. This was a fitting ending to another chapter in God’s story to advance the gospel to all nations.

Please pray with us that God would send forth laborers into His harvest in Uruguay and Spain. If you are interested in how you can help us write the next chapter, I would love to correspond with you at [jeff@emuinternational.org](mailto:jeff@emuinternational.org). Thanks to all of you who prayed for us and followed along through the many photos and updates I shared on my Facebook album: <https://emuinternational.org/uruguay2024/>

To connect with David and Maribel Bell or to subscribe to their updates: [davidnmaribel@gmail.com](mailto:davidnmaribel@gmail.com) †

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