

EMU⁺ 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 . . .

The party's over – at least it feels that way to **Joan and me**. In May, and then again in July, all of our kids and their kids were here for a few days to celebrate things like our 50th wedding anniversary, Mother's Day, and finally, from July 20-23, we had birthday gatherings for Amy and **Maria** (youngest grandchild) Jensen, and me (oldest in the group). On July 23, **Josh and Amy's family** left early Tuesday morning for PA, NY, and NJ, where they will spend the remainder of their time in the USA with Amy's parents and relatives, and visiting 3 churches, before returning to Cambodia on August 15. Their 6-month furlough has been filled with visiting family, friends, churches, driving thousands of miles, sleeping in many different beds, and trying to maintain some semblance of a family routine. If the prevailing prognostication is correct, we will not do this again as a family for five more years. By then Maria will be starting the 1st grade and the 3 **Erkens boys** will be out of college – at least undergrad degrees. And Joan will probably be pushing me around in my wheelchair! Please pray for Josh and Amy and their 7 kids as they travel to their home in Oyadao, Cambodia, and settle in.

Jeremy and Bonnie Ruth Farmer are still traveling on furlough, and they, too, were able to attend a family reunion at his folks' house in Pennsylvania. Several family members posted the well-done pictures on

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THE BENEFITS OF SHORT-TERM MISSION TRIPS

by Tim Chapman, church planter in Lima, Peru

Some people have questioned whether or not a short-term mission trip for teenagers is a good idea. They argue that the money could be better spent on other missions projects, that a mission trip often becomes mostly a sightseeing adventure, or that a mission team's ability to actually minister effectively is limited, at best.

I've served for over 17 years as a missionary in Peru, and we've hosted numbers of short-term mission teams. It is true that Christians have a responsibility to use the resources that God has given them in wise and thoughtful ways, and it would be foolish to spend thousands of dollars on a trip that was either ineffective or just a glorified international vacation. However, despite these concerns, the potential for long-term spiritual and ministry benefit is great enough to warrant a church's willingness to invest in a mission trip, especially for their teenagers.

Last fall, 2023, the youth pastor at our home church in Michigan talked to me about the possibility of taking a group of teens to Peru. Our home church has taken teen mission trips to work with us in Peru on several occasions in the past. However, because of the Covid pandemic, several years have gone by since our church has organized a trip to Peru.

After talking with the youth pastor, we settled on June of 2024 as the best time to schedule the trip. I knew that we would be in the States leading up to the trip and that gave me the opportunity to participate in the team's preparation for the trip.

As the youth pastor and I worked together planning the trip, we put together a schedule that would allow the teenagers to experience a variety of ministry opportunities in Peru. Then we looked at each unique ministry segment, and we brainstormed ways to allow the teenagers to participate in meaningful ways. Peru is a Spanish-speaking country, and we knew that the language barrier would be difficult

to overcome. However, we were sure that with a little creativity we could minimize that barrier to a great extent.

There were 18 people on the team, 12 of them teenagers. On our first day (Sunday) in Peru, we took them to the place where our church gathers on Sundays, and they got to meet the other two pastors and their families. Then we headed out to the streets to hand out tracts and invite people to our church. It wasn't feasible to think that any of the teenagers would be able to clearly share the gospel with people they met, but we taught them a couple of phrases in Spanish that allowed them to courteously hand a tract to a person.



Calvary of Midland, MI, youth group at the Sacred Valley outside Cusco, Peru

Our first full weekend in Peru was spent participating in several church activities. Those included a men's breakfast, a teen meeting, a singles meeting, and then Sunday School and church on Sunday. Before coming to Peru, each teen wrote out their salvation testimony in English, and we helped translate them. Then we made audio recordings of those testimonies so that they could listen to them repeatedly to help with their pronunciation. They also learned two Spanish songs before the trip, and I was pleasantly surprised at how well they learned to pronounce the Spanish (there were a couple of humorous exceptions, but nothing too egregious). Many of the teens shared their testimonies in one of the

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July Winter Retreat in Guazuvirá

by Pedro & Paty Donzé, director of Camp Emmanuel & the MEU office in Uruguay



Winter Camp 2024 at Camp Emmanuel

We had a good time despite the cold weather during our winter retreat in Guazuvirá. Pablo Billafan, the pastor of Calvary Temple in Rivera, was the guest speaker. We enjoyed spending time with the teenagers, sharing the Word of God with them, and encouraging their spiritual growth. We also had opportunities to present the Gospel. As always, there were those who received it and those who rejected it.

One young woman has been coming to camp for several years. She participates enthusiastically in the camp activities, the singing, and attending the meetings. However, she continues to reject the gospel, claiming not to believe in Christ and God. It's puzzling why she keeps coming if she



Class in the chapel

doesn't believe and deliberately rejects the message. Nevertheless, we trust that the Holy Spirit will work in her life through the Word of God. Her counselor sheds tears over her indifference toward God, and we all pray for her heart to be softened.

We have one more activity in July, followed by the "Rick 2024 projects" weeks. We are planning and looking forward to working together. Please pray for more people to be able to help us work in August. These weeks are crucial for maintaining and improving the camp. From the end of August until December, we will have activities every week.

Thank you for continuing to pray for our family. Paty's physical therapy is



Evening fireside service

significantly improving her mobility. It was a joy to my heart to have Paty at the camp on my birthday (July 4), even if only for the day. It was challenging for her, but it marked a positive step in her recovery process. Please keep praying for pain management; the doctors are still addressing this issue. There are moments when the pain medication isn't sufficient, and she experiences intense pain in her spine, radiating down her leg. Only God's grace sustains her and helps her persevere. Additionally, please pray for God's provision to cover the extra costs of Paty's treatments. We still have a long road ahead this year." (editor's note: Pedro is praising the Lord for a special gift this week that will help with their extra medical expenses at this time.) †

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Facebook. There are a lot more of them than there are of us! We are so happy they were able to get together during this furlough. We have known, appreciated, and loved Jeremy's parents and siblings for a very long time. They are a wonderful family!

Besides the furlough travels of these two families, and **Brooke Illsley**, please be in prayer for our missionary families who will be bringing their college-age kids to Bob Jones University in August. (It's amazing how short the summer breaks are compared to when I was in school!) The **Farmers** will have three at BJU this semester: **Abi** and **Isa** as juniors, and **Gloria** as a freshman. The **Chapmans** will bring **Lauren** (a senior) down from Midland, MI. And **Mia Kane** will be flying in from Cambodia, where she spent the summer, to begin her junior year.

Kornel and Tanja Crnković and their two sons, **Marko** and **Natanael**, are halfway through their July/August visit to the States. I am sure there will be a Newsletter report on their travels in a coming issue. Their August services will be at **Hampton Park Baptist in Greenville, SC**, on the 4th; **Westgate Baptist of Spartanburg, SC**, on the 7th; **Oak Ridge Baptist in Oak Ridge, TN**, on the 11th; **Anchor Baptist in Little River, SC**, on the 14th; **Faith Bible Church in Easley, SC**, on the morning of the 18th; and **Grace Baptist of East Flat Rock, NC**, in the evening of the 18th. They begin their



(l-r) Natanael, Marko, Tanja, & Kornel

flights home to Croatia on the next day. Though in the USA much of the summer, their ministry in Koprivnica, Croatia, and thereabouts has continued. A number of Baptist churches held their annual summer youth camp July 19-27 by the Adriatic Sea. The Crnkovićs' two daughters, **Andrea** and **Kristina**, worked in the kitchen that week. When Kornel and Tanja return home there will be a baptism on August 25 at their church. Their goal for this trip is to update supporters of their ministry and to present their work in new churches. Increased financial support is a very real need for them. Continue to pray for them throughout this month.

Rick Jensen will be traveling to Uruguay to work at **Camp Emmanuel** August 10-18. **Britt Hopper** from Kansas and **Jeff Hilla**, the chair of Organizational Leadership at Faith Baptist Bible College and Seminary in Ankeny, Iowa, will be flying down with Rick. Britt has been to Uruguay several

times for the "Rick's Projects" teams, but it is Jeff's first visit to Uruguay. Currently 13 Uruguayans are planning to be at the camp to help with the projects. Pray that the Lord will bring in all the funds needed to complete the many projects on the schedule. Also, pray for good weather and good health. August is the coldest month of the year in Uruguay, and very few of the buildings are heated. Temperatures can reach freezing at night.

John Mark Steel will be flying to the mid-western US in September for a 20-day furlough. He will visit several supporting churches in that region before winging east to be in a couple of churches in Greenville, SC. He will be traveling alone as **Deborah** and the kids will be busy with school at that time.

Several times in recent years, **Ovidio Acevedo**, the pastor of Emmanuel Church in El Cerro, Uruguay, has asked prayer that the Lord would lead someone to take the pastorate at his church as he is seeking to retire this year. His most recent prayer letter stated that there are three men in his church who have committed to assuming the leadership of the church when he steps down in October. This is a great blessing for all involved!

Along the same line, **Pastor Alberto Diaz** of Emmanuel Church in San Fernando let us know that two young men in his church have been helping with the preaching at this

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The Benefits of Short-term Mission Trips

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different meetings that first weekend. The teens also wrote, translated, and prepared two short dramas for children, which they used to minister to the kids in our church. The youth pastor chose a couple of fun games that worked really well across the language barrier, and he used them in both the teen and singles meetings. We finished up Sunday night after three full days of ministry - very grateful for the connections made and ministry done.

In 2016, the year that we planted the church in Lima, the Lord connected us with a children's refuge on the north side of Lima in a very poor area of the city. The refuge is led by a pastor and his wife who ministered for many years to a group of children with very little help at home. Five years ago, about a dozen of those children went to live full-time with the pastor and his wife. Our church in Lima began to look for ways to come alongside them in ministering to these children. As we made plans for this mission trip, I decided to have the teens spend two full days with the children at the refuge.



Above: The youth group at Belen Refuge for children in Lima.

Below: Midland teens connecting with the Belen girls



Our first day there, Monday, was really special. The teen girls had brought stuff with them to be able to braid the girls' hair and do their nails (and whatever else girls do). Within a few minutes of arriving, the teen girls were fully underway with that project. The boys found themselves on another part of the outdoor patio kicking a soccer ball around a circle playing keep-away from whoever happened to be in the middle. Neither of those activities seemed to be hindered in the least by either cultural or language differences.

By the middle of the morning, we shifted gears and began working on preparing the boys' large bedroom to be painted. By lunch time, we had made a sizable dent in that project. After lunch, the teens and the refuge kids headed to a nearby soccer field, and I caught up to them an hour and a half later. They were still going hard at soccer. It was a huge blessing to see the teens from Michigan get out of themselves to pursue friendship with these kids and to minister to them with open hearts.

On Tuesday, we took the refuge kids on an all-day outing to explore a castle on the coast a little way outside of the city. The outing concluded with a rowdy, wild time all together in a huge ball pit.

The general sense among the team members was that they wished they could have had more time to spend with the kids from the refuge. It was there that the teens saw what real poverty is like for people in developing countries. They also saw that love and care go a long way in breaking down barriers and opening people's hearts to be ministered to. They walked away from the experience of those two days with a sense of gratitude for what God has given them and with joy for having been able to connect with young people from a different country in ways that are real.

On Wednesday, we flew to Cusco. At over 11,000 feet above sea level, the ancient capital of the Incas is a place to be reckoned with. I required all of us to rest soon as we got to our hotel, and then I told them to eat lightly that evening. In the end, I was the one who struggled the most with the altitude (something about being 48 years old, I guess). That night, I tossed and turned with weird feelings in my body and an oppressive headache. For the second time in my life, I came close to making a vow never to return to that altitude. However, I knew there was a chance I'd be feeling pretty good by noon the next day, and thankfully, it played out that way.

On Wednesday (a few hours before almost making that vow about the altitude), we had dinner with a friend of mine, Ruben Quispe. I asked him to share his testimony with the group, and what we received became one of the most impacting experiences during the whole trip. Ruben has been directly involved in planting six churches, two of them before he turned 21 years of age. Besides his endeavors in church planting, he has pastored an established church and



In the small church of Ruben Quispe

taught in a Bible college. When economic resources were scarce, he fell back on teaching English, selling tanks of propane, and making pizzas (which he made for us that night, and they were wonderful). We got to hear the testimony of a missionary/pastor who, now around 60 years of age, has a zeal for the gospel, a love for people, and great confidence in God.

On Thursday, we toured the Sacred Valley of the Incas, ending the night at the town of Ollantaytambo. The next morning, we took the 8am train to Machu Picchu. It is fully deserving of its place as one of the New Seven Wonders. It's hard to really comprehend how the Incas were able to move all that stone into place. At different points I paused to try to imagine what the city would have looked like 700 years ago with people walking the streets, buying and selling, and doing all the things that mankind has done for thousands of years. There is abundant evidence that the people who lived there were very religious. I felt sad as I considered that generations most likely came and went in that city without ever hearing of Jesus or the salvation that we have in Him.

Tim & Abby at Machu Picchu



On Saturday, we flew back to Lima and took the group to the Inca Markets, a place where hundreds of vendors try to get you to buy their souvenirs. Later that night, my daughter Abby and I went to visit some friends from church (and watch Peru's national soccer team get crushed by Argentina). They wanted to make a special meal for us, and the choice was Arroz con Pato (Rice with Duck). It's normally a favorite of mine. However, it didn't seem to set right that evening, and by midnight my suspicions were confirmed. My stomach was so bad that I wasn't able to attend the Sunday morning service at our church. One of the pastors from Midland, Mark Dickerson, preached in my place, and was a great blessing to our folks there.

We began our trip back to Michigan early Monday morning, arriving at Midland by early evening of the same day.

It's true that we may never know all the ways that God used this trip in the lives of people. **However, let me make two final observations about the trip.** First of all, when it comes to the kids at the refuge,

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Anderson & Tahyza Billafan

church over the last few months. One of the men is Alberto's son-in-law, **Jefferson Billafan**. Jefferson's father is **Pablo**, the pastor of Calvary Temple in Rivera, mentioned elsewhere in this newsletter. On a further family note, the youngest Billafan son got married in Rivera last month. It seems impossible that **Anderson** is really old enough to be married!

The Father's Day program at the First Fundamental Baptist Church of Cancún, Mexico, was a great blessing. **Marco and**



Father's Day in Cancun
Marco is hidden in the
first photo, so I'm including this one, too.

Gwendolyn Nuñez sent us some photos of the festivities.

As we begin the last full month of summer, we want to send you a warm "thank you" for your continued interest in and support of EMU International. We all rely on your prayers and, when possible, financial support. May the Lord bless you for your faithfulness. †

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EMU International
P.O. Box 790
Taylors, SC 29687

A Labor of Love

by Ken Jensen

The following will probably be the oddest request you have ever read in the EMU Newsletter – but here goes!

Many of you knew George Jensen either in person or by reputation. If you ever heard him preach/teach, you know he was an excellent Bible teacher. For many years before my father died in 2019, when he and mom were both capable of doing so, I asked – begged – them to type dad's notes into Word documents so they could be preserved and used by others. Sadly, this never happened. My own hubris convinced me that I would perform the task. However, I now see that I won't live long enough to type up Dad's copious notes *and* complete some other mission projects I believe are even more important in the long-run.

I am taking a "shot-in-the-dark" here by asking if there is anyone in our newsletter audience who would be able and willing to consider this project of recording his notes. Scanning is not really practicable as most of the notes are handwritten, and I doubt if there is a computer program capable of transcribing his script. If you would like more information about this "opportunity," please send me an email at ken@emuinternational.org. Thanks so much. †

The Benefits of Short-term Mission Trips

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what the pastor and his wife desire and work towards in the lives of these children is that they will flourish in every way: socially, spiritually, physically and, one day, vocationally. For them to spend two days with a group of American teenagers who communicated real joy at spending time with them is a much more important part of that process than you might think at first. The kids at the refuge have such a low starting point in life that every input in their lives makes a difference. They need pictures of real Christian joy and friendship; otherwise, they may never know what it could look like in their own lives. Two days isn't much, but God is always using a variety of circumstances and experiences (along with His Word) to shape and form His will in the lives of people. The kids at the refuge had a chance to see other Christian teenagers demonstrate real friendship. That makes a difference!

Secondly, the teens from Michigan had the opportunity to experience things that they had never experienced before. They saw what real poverty looks like. They met Christians from another culture and language who demonstrated that they love Jesus with all their hearts. They met a Peruvian missionary whose testimony will linger long in their minds. They got to see that the faith they hold is not something merely private or personal; it's a faith that unifies the hearts of people all over the world because it's true and real. †

Email: office@emuinternational.org
Website: www.emuinternational.org
Phone: (864) 268-9267