

EMU *Newsletter* INTERNATIONAL

Plaza Independencia, Montevideo Uruguay

Volume LXIX

August 2026

Issue 8

ACROSS the LANDS

Jeff & Joanna Davis, Director



Heatwaves and Highways

July began with a step out my front door, and I immediately asked myself if I had just opened the oven. The blast of heat was enough to stop me in my tracks and make me wonder if the thermometer had finally given up trying to keep count. Across much of the country, a stubborn heat dome settled in, with temperatures skyrocketing from coast to coast. Here in the Carolinas, heat indexes pushed well beyond 100 degrees. Even the nights offered little relief.

Yet as oppressive as the heat was, July became a month of journeying. While summer baked the landscape, the Lord prepared a roadmap of ministry across the lands. The month began in the **Raleigh** area, where I had the privilege of preaching at **Community Baptist Church in Garner** for my good friend **Mike Knight**. From there, the journey carried me across **Michigan** and into **Minnesota**, visiting churches, reconnecting with ministry friends, and meeting new partners excited to celebrate the Gospel's advance.

(continued on p.4)

THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION IN URUGUAY

STATE OF THE UNION

John Mark & Deborah Steel, Missionaries to Uruguay, Director of the Bible Institute



What is IBD?

The **Misión Evangélica del Uruguay (MEU)** is the association of Uruguayan churches historically connected to EMU. These churches are now essentially independent, but we continue to encourage and support their ministries, not only in the context of **Camp Emmanuel** but also by our participation in the **MEU Bible Institute**. Still occasionally referred to as "the first Bible institute in Uruguay," at some point, it also picked up the name of its founder, **Dr. Fred Dabold**. Today, almost eighty years after its beginning, the **Instituto Bíblico F. V.**



INSTITUTO BÍBLICO

F.V. DABOLD

Dabold, or **IBD**, still attempts to do what the Dabolds began: train men and women in Uruguay for the work of gospel ministry. In 2019 I took the baton of leadership from **Pastor Gabriel Gómez**, who as a teacher continues to be a valuable asset to the institute program.

What does IBD look like today?

The 2020 shift to online instruction not only responded to the **COVID-19** pandemic but also ultimately propelled us to combine what had been two separate institute programs. For many years previously, the **Montevideo** program met in person with live teachers, whereas the churches in the interior of the country used recorded video classes (from **Oremundo**) supplemented as desired by the pastors of those churches. Beginning in 2023 we combined everything into a single online program with two certificates: a 30-credit option (intended to help train church workers) and a 60-credit option (more focused toward the preparation of pastors or missionaries). The classes are currently taught via **Zoom** by several MEU pastors and church leaders.

(continued on p.2)

Bible Institute - Continued from P.1

Other courses are delivered via pre-recorded online **Oremundo** classes, now updated. Approximately 40 students are regularly enrolled in anywhere from one to six classes each semester. These students live throughout **Uruguay** and, on occasion, in **Argentina** or **Peru**. Students participate in the ministries of their local churches and in evangelistic efforts in **Montevideo** and in other locations around the country.

Since my family arrived in Uruguay in 2013, we've been part of both IBD and **FEBU** in varying roles each year. The differences between the two institutions justify their separate existence, whereas their similarities make it possible for the two schools to sometimes share resources and combine classes. IBD's history, the trust it continues to enjoy among the MEU churches, and its accessibility both economically and academically make it a viable option for many beginning students. FEBU's more extensive program and connection with a wider base of churches positions it to contribute in other ways to the same needs in Uruguayan churches.

Where does IBD go from here?

Here are some of my assessments and hopes for the future of the Bible institute.

I believe that the MEU pastors and churches are able to shape, direct, and teach the Bible institute in ways that are compatible with and supportive of the association's mission, vision, church culture, and doctrinal emphases.



Bible Institute teachers and students gathered at Camp Emanuel in June for their annual conference

At the last workers' retreat, we discussed options for more pastoral involvement in the Bible institute.

The three main possibilities we considered are these:

1. Some pastors are able to teach an entire Bible institute class.
2. Some pastors are able to combine a weekly Bible study (already part of their church schedule) with an institute class. This has been done in the past with some success.
3. Some pastors are able to teach one or two weeks (2-4 hours) per semester in collaboration with others, sharing the teaching responsibilities among themselves within a single course. A variation of this is for a primary teacher to regularly invite another pastor to participate at key points in the courses they teach.

Every church that is aided by the institute (and, for that matter, by the camp) should support it (or the camp) in some way. Pastors' participation as teachers is not the only way to support the institute, but is an excellent opportunity for them to commit to current church members and future pastors and missionaries the training they have received and the valuable experience they have gained in the ministry.

Every pastor and teacher should continue to prepare himself both in knowledge and in godly character evidenced in servant leadership. **Annual conferences** have been and continue to be a great blessing in this regard. FEBU and other institutions also offer options for continued training. I trust these opportunities will not only continue but will also increase in their doctrinal precision and their delivering of tools for pastors to do their own exegesis and theology.

If most MEU pastors would teach one institute class per year, either as a separate class or as a class combined with another church activity, classes could continue to be offered at the current rate that allows a student to finish both certificates within three years. Courses can continue to be supplemented by recorded Oremundo materials as needed. The online Oremundo courses by themselves provide robust instruction for the first 30-credit certificate and/or as part of the second 60-credit certificate. Ultimately, the church trains her own leaders. The Uruguayan church is doing this; at the same time, many needs remain. I believe there is still a wide-open door for IBD to assist Uruguayan churches in their evangelism and ministry training. We ask your prayers that the Lord would be pleased to allow this.†

2026 First Semester Schedule

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
Local church ministries Evangelism at the Tristán Narvaja market	<u>Methods of Exegesis: Arcing</u> In cooperation with Biblearc Professor: Pineda / Steel 2 credits	<u>The Life of the Pastor (Men)</u> Text: Baxter / Bounds Professor: Díaz 2 credits	In cooperation with Oremundo <u>Apologetics</u> Professor: Latham 1 credit <u>Christ in the Psalms I</u> Professor: Latham 1 credit	In cooperation with FEBU <u>Daniel and Revelation</u> Professor: Carlisle 3 credits Oremundo <u>The Gospels</u> Professor: González 1 credit	Christian Service (Required for all students) 2 credits

Matias & Kristine Espinel Missionaries serving in Uruguay



As we reflect on the Lord's goodness over the past few months, we are excited to share how He continues to bless the work at **FEBU**, prepare hearts through upcoming ministry opportunities, and care for our family. Thank you for being part of what God is doing here...

FEBU First Semester

On June 26, we concluded our first semester at FEBU. We are so thankful that this semester marked **the highest enrollment in FEBU's history**, with approximately **100 students** enrolled through our full-time, part-time, and single-course programs. Our second semester begins on August 10. **Matias** will be teaching the book of **Acts** while continuing to serve in the administration of the school.



FEBU stands for Faculty of Biblical Studies of Uruguay, where Matias serves as Director

God is Changing Lives

Matias's weekly ministry at the **rehab center** has opened doors to build meaningful relationships with young men overcoming drug addiction. Around 50 men currently live at the center, and many are still grappling with spiritual decisions. Please pray that God would soften their hearts and bring them to salvation.



The Espinel Family: (L-R) Matias, Megan, Kristine, Sofia, Emma, and David, Sofia

Kristine continues to invest in discipleship and gospel-centered conversations with women in the church. She is currently helping one woman study the Bible and work through years of confusing teaching, while also encouraging others who are beginning to show a growing interest in God's Word. These opportunities are a reminder that God is patiently opening hearts and drawing people toward truth. Please pray for Kristine to have wisdom, discernment, compassion, and endurance as she points others to Christ and helps them understand the gospel clearly.

Upcoming Conferences

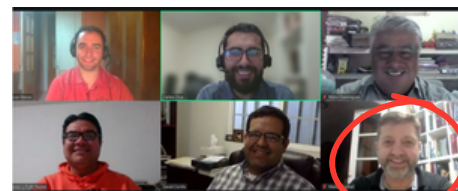
- **Biblical Counseling Conference**

On August 14–15 we will host our annual Biblical Counseling Conference.

This year's keynote speaker will be Dr. Daniel Berger, who will address the topic of mental health issues from a biblical perspective. We are praying that the conference will encourage and equip pastors and church members throughout Uruguay to minister God's truth with wisdom.



In October, Matias plans to travel to **Guatemala** and **Peru** to serve alongside **Tom Luttmann**, family friend and director of **Bible Visuals International**, during a Vacation Bible School and Family Conference. This trip will allow Matias to help with translation, strengthen ministry partnerships, and learn more about BVI's work throughout Latin America.†



Matias

BJU Seminary recently added to its **"Going Global"** Initiative through an innovative effort to teach **Biblical Hebrew** to leaders in the Spanish-speaking church.

The Hebrew course represented a collaboration between BJU Seminary and various alumni. The Seminary provided the curriculum and the oversight of **Dr. Ken Casillas**. On behalf of his alma mater, **Carlos Cruz** taught the course from **Colombia** via Zoom. And the course was offered by a Bible college in **Uruguay**, the **Facultad de Estudios Bíblicos del Uruguay**, where graduates **Matias Espinel** and **John Mark Steel** serve. The eighteen students hailed from **Uruguay, Mexico, Chile, Venezuela, and Colombia.** †

It has been a joy to have Bill and **Jocelyn Lovegrove**, part-time missionaries with **GFA** and members of **Mount Calvary Baptist Church**, the Steels' sending church, come alongside us in ministry.



They spent the month of June in Uruguay, in language school and ministering in churches and camps. Bill spoke at the **Bible Institute Retreat** at Camp Emanuel.†





PO Box 790
Taylors, SC 29687

Return Service Requested

NONPROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
GREENVILLE, SC
PERMIT NO. 1371

Across the Lands *(continued from p.1)*

One highlight was spending time with former EMU missionaries **Tim and Cheryl Chapman** and preaching five times at **Cornerstone Baptist Church**. I was also grateful for the hospitality of **Calvary Baptist Church** in **Midland**, whose mission house became home for a week. Along the way, I enjoyed visiting **Camp CoBeAc**, making many new ministry connections, and participating in a Missions Emphasis Sunday with **Pastor John Isham** and the folks at **Childs Bible Church**. Meanwhile, **Joanna** was in **Minnesota** awaiting the arrival of our tenth grandchild. On July 11, **Pierston Jeffers Prigge**, Abby and Caleb's second son, arrived right on schedule. Later in the month, I flew to **Minneapolis**, where I enjoyed a wonderful week with family, meetings with ministry friends, and new contacts before preaching a Missions Emphasis Sunday at **Chisago Lakes Baptist Church** with **Pastor Ben Gunderson**. Joanna and I are now safely back home after a long day of weather-related flight delays. As I look back on the month, I'm grateful for the many miles traveled by road and air.

Long miles and hot days, heatwaves and highways led to a journey more memorable than the weather: seeing God at work in the lives of His people **across the lands**.

Billy Judson continues to strengthen churches across **India** through intensive biblical training, celebrating several graduation services this quarter and equipping Indian nationals who are now returning to their congregations prepared to teach God's Word. His doctoral studies at **BJU Seminary** are already shaping the curriculum at **Good News Bible College and Seminary**. Ministry often takes him far beyond the classroom—traveling hundreds of miles to encourage pastors, distribute Telugu Bibles, and witness new believers publicly profess their faith. Please continue praying as he prepares for the upcoming **Good News 360 Church Leaders Conference** and expands training into new regions of North India.

Josh and Amy Jensen continue serving faithfully among the **Jarai** people in **Cambodia** as their translation team completes its review of **Romans** and prepares for two major ministry events in August. A group of Korean doctors and Khmer volunteers will conduct **medical**

outreach in Saom Kaning Village August 17–19, where the Jarai team will organize gospel preaching, singing, and personal workers to pray with each patient. Later in the month, **August 25–28**, their staff will join translators from across Cambodia for a retreat designed to strengthen relationships and provide spiritual and emotional refreshment.



Recent Jarai Conference on Hermeneutics

Finally, pray for the **work trip to Camp Emmanuel in Uruguay** as **Rick Jensen** and a small team serve **August 3–16**, completing projects that strengthen year-round ministry to children, teens, families, and pastors. **Significant funding is still needed, especially for the Water Safety Fund**, which remains one of the camp's most urgent needs. Please ask the Lord to supply the resources required so the camp can continue serving with excellence. **For more information, see emuinternational.org/water.** †