
FROM ARGENTINA WITH HUGS

JOSH AND ERIN

YAGM Newsletter · Nov-Dec Edition

Happy 2014 from Grand Bourg!

In the two months since our last newsletter, a lot has happened in our lives and in the life of our community! On Reformation Day, San Lucas celebrated the 25- and 50-year anniversaries of the confirmations of several of their members - a wonderful way to remember the rich history of this congregation. In mid-November we traveled to an organic farm and retreat center in Colonia Valdense, Uruguay for our first YAGM program retreat. Along with the other Argentina/Uruguay volunteers, we shared what we had seen, heard, touched, tasted, and smelled as we began to process our first months in service. The end of November brought the IELU's* Assembly of Life and Mission where we learned more about this beautiful church body that has received us. The youth of San Lucas had a special role in the assembly, performing a drama entitled "The Legend of the Fairy and the Wizard" that they had written and rehearsed for months. On November 24th and December 1st, two classes of 38 total fourth-graders received First Communion after much preparation and anticipation. Since the school year in Argentina goes from March-December, we helped English students prepare for final exams, attended end-of-year celebrations, and witnessed several different graduation ceremonies (including an adorable kindergarten graduation!). We were surrounded with love and hospitality as we celebrated Thanksgiving, Christmas, and the New Year with our new community.

*Iglesia Evangélica Luterana Unida, the United Evangelical Lutheran Church in Argentina and Uruguay

Read our blog at joshanderin.com



Top: Josh puts on his game face for a heated soccer match during the YAGM program retreat. **Middle:** Erin (The Moon) and Maxi (The Elf) relax after their debut performance at the IELU's Assembly of Life and Mission. **Bottom:** After weeks of being rowdy in catechism, Ramiro is solemn as he receives First Communion, accompanied by his godparents. **Background:** Front facade of Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago where YAGM Orientation took place.

THE MOST WONDERFUL TIME OF THE YEAR

Sharing the holidays with our community was both difficult and beautiful. Even while we were feeling nostalgic for our family and friends in the United States, our Argentinian family and friends received us with open arms and held us in love. The warmth we felt wasn't just figurative either - the temperature got up to 100° F in December! Read on to learn about how we experienced the holidays here in Grand Bourg.

THANKSGIVING



We celebrated Thanksgiving twice this year, neither time on Thanksgiving Day! First we celebrated with the other Argentina/Uruguay YAGM during our mid-November retreat. Everyone brought a favorite family recipe to share, and we compiled a list of all the ingredients we would need. Someone (Erin) forgot to include the turkey on the list, so it was a meal of side dishes! But it was beautiful nonetheless. Our second celebration was a few weeks later in La Plata, Buenos Aires, in the community of fellow YAGM Kristyn. Since Thanksgiving is primarily a North American holiday, we had the opportunity to share what Thanksgiving means for us, and to introduce some traditional foods, including homemade pumpkin (butternut squash) pie!

CHRISTMAS

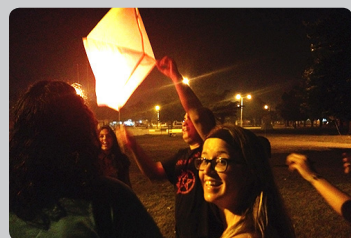


The weeks leading up to Christmas were a very busy time for us! Congregación San Lucas held several Christmas Workshops, which included learning the Christmas story, making crafts, singing Christmas carols, baking cut-out cookies, and rehearsing a Christmas Pageant. The Pageant was held on December 22nd outside on the patio, and it involved youth, children, babies, singing, dancing, costumes, scenery, and a surprise visit from Papá Noel (Santa). The closing song was *Noche de Paz* (Silent Night), sung by candlelight.

We spent Christmas Eve in the home of the Caceres-Araujo family. We ate made-from-scratch chicken and beef empanadas and *ensalada rusa* (potato salad with peas, carrots, and mayonnaise) for dinner, followed by a massive spread of sweets for dessert. The most typical Argentinian Christmas sweet is *pan dulce* - like a tall, fluffy, fruit cake similar to the Italian *panettone*. Per tradition we weren't allowed to start eating the sweets until midnight. Since the weather was so warm, we ate outside, and at the stroke of midnight the air filled with the sights and sounds of fireworks all over the neighborhood. We shared stories and laughter, toasted to family and friendship, and stayed up way past our bedtimes watching the movie *Elf*. On Christmas Day we shared another beautiful evening with the family of Pastor Eva.



NEW YEAR



The New Year is probably the biggest celebration of the year in Argentina. Our friend Juan de Dios invited us over to spend the evening with his extended family and neighbors. The sidewalk in front of their houses was converted into a dining room and we ate outside, a potluck-style dinner where every family brought something to contribute. Like Christmas, there were fireworks at midnight, and we watched as his family tried to light a fleet of *globos*, sky lanterns, that annoyingly tended to burn to pieces rather than floating peacefully heavenward.

First: Erin prepares a made-from-scratch butternut squash pie. We baked a total of six pies in November in an attempt to share the experience with as many people as possible! **Second:** Mary and the angels sing during Congregación San Lucas's Christmas Pageant. Their signs read, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth, peace to the men and women whom he loves." **Third:** Christmas Eve with the Caceres-Araujo family. From left: Blanca, Reina, Alejandro, Macarena, Francisco, Enzo, Erin, and Josh. **Fourth:** Erin watches with excitement as Juan and his family successfully launch a *globo*.

ARGENTINA SINGS CHRISTMAS



One of the best parts of celebrating Christmas in Grand Bourg this year was learning new songs. Singing Christmas in the words of this community opened our ears to hear the story of Jesus's birth in new and meaningful ways. On this page we want to share excerpts from two songs that changed the way we experienced the Christmas story.

The Night of the Poor Ones

Words and music: José María Santini (Uruguay)

*The little boy is born
beneath a roof of branches;
his eyes have a heavenly gaze.
The willows soothe him with lullabies;
the moon is round and full.*

*It is the night of the poor ones;
it is the night of love.
Born poor, and he is the King;
he is hungry and he is Bread;
he is cold and he is the Sun.
Go to sleep Jesus,
for the four stars of the Southern Cross*
are watching over your sleep.*

*A distinctive constellation, most visible from the Southern Hemisphere

This song puts an exclamation point on the surprising circumstances of Jesus's birth. We call God almighty, creator, provider, and King, yet God becomes flesh and enters the world as a vulnerable infant, born on a cold night to a poor teenage mother, in a dirty animal stall.

The Incarnation reveals that God's mission is to show up right in the midst of our poverty, messiness, and pain. God does not simply love the world from a safe distance. God does not simply love the parts of the world that are easy to love. Rather, God enters into the stories of the poorest and most vulnerable, loving the world by being hungry and cold right alongside us.

We, too, are called to this mission: to make the stories of the poor part of our own story, to love beyond our comfort zones, and to care for the vulnerable by walking alongside them, even when that means making ourselves vulnerable too.

He Has Come!

Words and music: Betty Sainz de Rodriguez (Argentina)

*I know a tiny town,
a town called Bethlehem;
and it is there, on a starry night,
wrapped in diapers,
that the light-child arrived.
He is a rosy-cheeked and mischievous boy
who is no stranger to mud and soap;
a little kid who does somersaults,
who runs, who plays and cries too.
And Jesus is a boy and he is God;
he is my friend and my protector.
He loves you, he seeks you,
he calls you, he invites you to his house,
he takes you fishing.
He is the son of the heavenly Father
who comes bringing Christmas.*

This song invites us to imagine a part of Jesus's life that the Bible doesn't say much about: his childhood. Nothing makes the Incarnation more relatable than imagining little kid Jesus doing somersaults and inviting you to go fishing!

But this song is more than just cute; it reminds us of Jesus's total humanness. Too often we think of Jesus in that cheesy, made-for-TV movie kind of way, where he walks like the Mother Abbess in the Sound of Music and speaks like a therapist on muscle relaxants. Jesus was not nearly that boring!

Jesus got dirty, and his mom had to clean him up. He ran around outside and played with his friends. He liked to go fishing. He knew what it meant to get hurt. And he was not always well-behaved; in fact, he quite liked upsetting the normal order of things! Jesus for us is a Savior and Lord, yes, but also a human and a friend.

And if we dare to imagine that Jesus might not have been so different from us, perhaps we can also begin to imagine that we have the potential to be more like him.

Banner: The manger scene is on display in the Caceres-Araujo home on Christmas Eve. (Song translations on this page by Erin)

HOLY HILARITY

In this issue, we bring you a story that is hilarious in that “Is this real life?” kind of way. As mentioned in the previous newsletter, I (Erin) have been singing in a couple of choirs here in Buenos Aires. One day, one of my choir friends, Agustin, asked me to do him a favor. He had sent his resume into an opera company and was hoping they would call him in to do an audition soon. The only problem is that he didn’t have an accompanist. Would I be willing to accompany him? I happily agreed, and he gave me the sheet music to practice. After a few rehearsals with Agustin we were ready to go. A few days later, I found myself seated at the piano on the stage of the beautiful and historic Teatro Avenida in downtown Buenos Aires, stage lights shining in my face and surrounded by aspiring opera performers, talented pianists, and probably-famous directors. It was not until that moment that I realized this was actually a crazy big deal! It was awesome and hilarious, and it was real life.



Agustin thanked “Herin” with coffee.

A LOOK AT THE WEATHER

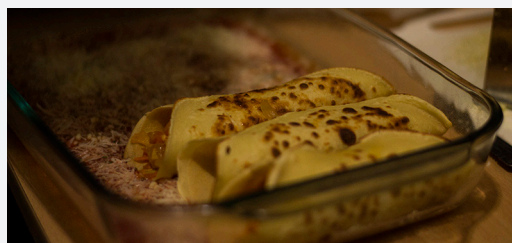
With all the hot weather we’ve been having, people have been asking us what the weather is like in Nebraska. We start to say that in the summer it is pretty common to have several days of over 100 degrees, but when we notice the look of confusion on their faces, we remember that the U.S. is fairly alone in the world in its use of the Fahrenheit scale! We are slowly becoming more fluent in expressing temperatures in Celsius. So, for your reading and educational pleasure, we have included here a table sampling interesting temperature conversions.

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|---------------------------------------|--------|--------|
| Water boils | 212° F | 100° C |
| Nebraska record high | 118° F | 48° C |
| Buenos Aires record high | 110° F | 43° C |
| The temperature we wish it always was | 75° F | 24° C |
| Water freezes | 32° F | 0° C |
| Buenos Aires record low | 22° F | -5° C |
| Nebraska record low | -47° F | -44° C |

RECIPE - ARGENTINE PANQUEQUES

We love making these thin, crêpe-like pancakes because they are so versatile! Try spreading them with dulce de leche, nutella, or fruit with whipped cream and rolling them up. Or fill them with eggs and sausage for a delicious breakfast crêpe. Even better, fill them with a sauteed veggie or beef mixture, line them up in a pan, cover them in sauce and cheese, throw them in the oven and call them *canelones* (pictured). The possibilities are endless!

Ingredients: 3 eggs
2 cups milk
1 cup flour



Beat the eggs together, then mix in the milk, and beat in the flour. Heat a medium frying pan over medium heat. You can use a nonstick frying pan (best) or melt a pat of butter in a normal frying pan. Add a spoonful of the batter to the pan and pick up the pan by the handle, moving it around until the batter uniformly covers the bottom of the pan. Cook until the panqueque is flip-pable, about a minute, then flip it and cook the other side. Don’t worry if you destroy the first few. Practice makes perfect and the result is so worth it! Makes about 20 panqueques.