



News and Prayer Requests from Patrick & Rosie Butler in Paraguay

February 2009



Dear friends,

One or two people have been in touch in the past few days wondering how things are going, particularly regarding plans for our return to the UK in July. So let me briefly bring you up to date with what is (and isn't) happening.

Life generally seems to be centred around four things at the moment, first and foremost **what we do when we leave Paraguay**.

Up until last week we had two options we were pursuing. One was me studying at Trinity College, Bristol, for a year in order to complete the long-distance degree course in theology I began 18 months ago. Having confirmed that (at a pinch) I could complete the course in an academic year we could see several advantages to this - having time to acclimatize to the UK before starting work, looking for role in pastoral ministry with studies completed, and being on hand for job interviews rather than having to make decisions from Paraguay. The question marks were the finance, and the risk that the children might have to move schools after a year.

The question of faith and finance is always a challenging one. Even though you are confident that if something is within God's plan he will provide the resources (recession or no recession) you still have to try and work out if it is in fact God's plan! So we decided to take my application for a student loan as an indication as to whether we should proceed or not. For a couple of months we pursued this with the help of a contact in the world of student finance in England, the issue being whether I would be eligible for a loan as I have not lived in the UK for the past three years (yet I have been contracted and paid from the UK). Last week the decision came through that I am not eligible, so we are taking Bristol as a closed door for now.

Then, just before Christmas the possibility of a post of assistant vicar emerged. This was in a church we had visited once and felt would be a good fit, and was also in a very good location for keeping in touch with family. For a few weeks this looked like a real possibility and we could see housing, schools and all the rest falling into place (a huge relief, especially for Rosie). But then this week (again) we heard the news that there were certain complications their end meaning that they couldn't offer us anything concrete just yet. So although that door hasn't completely closed, we have nothing specific to move ahead with at present.

I am certain the day will come when we look back amazed at how it all worked out, but at the moment it is one of those times when doors seem to be closing rather than opening with July drawing ever closer. But then, as a friend commented, God can be a bit 'lastminute.com'. I have all the forms and references completed with the C of E clergy appointments office so something may come from that. What is clear is that, having been ordained overseas, it would need to be for an **assistant post** to start with as I need time to finish my studies and maybe go through some official C of E 'add ons' along the way.

This leads me to the second focus of our lives at the moment and that is **studies**, mainly mine and Luke's. Although my theology course is part time, I am now doing two units at a time rather than the one I did last year and this has made life much more pressured. Excellent material and I really enjoy doing the essays, but reduced brain power (increased wisdom, of course!) means I don't get things done as fast as I would have done, in .. er .. years gone by.

What didn't help recently were problems with the post meaning that I lost six weeks before the study materials arrived, making it a working Christmas and summer break in order to meet essay deadlines. I do



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see the course as important, though, and really hope to be able to keep up, given all the other work pressures. The family is very supportive and Johnny now regularly asks me (as I emerge bleary-eyed from the study) "Have you finished your essay yet, daddy?" Bless him, he has no idea what an essay is yet, but believe me he will!

Luke does, though, and he wrote a number of them last term. He took his first three International GCSE's in November (A*, A, B) and sits two more in May. He was going to do seven in total but we found out recently that one can only be sat in November and with the other it seems he won't get through the syllabus in time. We found a very nice Paraguayan Physics and Chemistry tutor who could teach in English, but as he hadn't come across GCSE's syllabus we realised a couple of weeks ago that Luke won't get through all the material in time. So we have decided to focus on the Physics. Luke should have enough to get started on A-levels in September, though.

The third big thing in our lives is this stage of transition as we **hand on the work to others**. This email is getting long so I won't go into detail, suffice to say that we are very encouraged by the leadership we will be leaving behind. **Raquel** has come back from two years' theological study in Chile with a great attitude and much to offer. She has come at just the right time and is already a real asset. We are confident that EJE will continue, and also the secondary assemblies I have been doing monthly in the school for the past six years are now being taken on by a young team from our church - mainly ex-pupils. These links between church and school are so encouraging and we are grateful to God for the way things are falling into place (this end at least!). Bishop-elect **Peter and Sally Bartlett** arrive in the next few weeks which will bring much needed direction to the diocese, so that is encouraging too. Prayer needed as to who takes on the English chapel.

The last thing (and if all the above are items for prayer, then this one is too) is to do with **Rosie and dentists**. About 18 months ago Rosie found a tooth was moving against another and causing her some discomfort. She went to see a dentist (recommended to us) who explained that the spaces in her mouth meant that teeth were beginning to move and that this problem would increase as time went on. So he suggested some fairly radical orthodontic treatment which involved closing gaps and inserting implants. The major part of the treatment was supposed to have been completed last month, but it now turns out that the dentist wasn't as experienced as we (or he) had realized. Two second opinions have confirmed that it is a case of point of no return and major problems. As you can imagine, this has been added stress for Rosie on top of everything else. She does now have another dentist advising the first one and it seems we may be able to get the follow-on help we will need through SAMS once we are back. But please remember Rosie and the dentists in your prayers.

So that's all for now. We plan to arrive back in the UK on the **19th July** as Luke insists that he celebrate his sixteenth birthday (on the 17th) on Paraguayan soil - a reminder that there are huge changes ahead for the children, particularly Luke and Jess. Rosie has found herself genuinely looking forward to this next stage in our lives, something that has surprised even her as uprooting from Latin America is a big thing for her too. We would love to have something concrete to be thinking about and working towards but we know that God is in it all and will work things out in his way and in his time. In the meantime thank you as always for your interest, prayers and the way you support us in so many ways.

With our love,

Patrick, Rosie, Luke, Jess and Johnny.



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