



News and Prayer Requests from Hugo & Techi Vergara in Northern Argentina



27/10/08

“Living on the Ragged Edge”



This is the title of Charles Swindoll’s book on Ecclesiastes. It is also the Bible book that I am studying these days. One of my favourite verses is “He has made everything appropriate in its time.” (3.11 - NASB). This really puts me at ease as I contemplate my deepest desires for helping the church grow and improve in the midst of serious conflicts.

If I were to add up all the miles or kilometers travelled during these last two years – not counting our international trips - this would amount to two times the circumference of the globe. I have travelled overnight to

face a day’s work, travelled during the heat of day to take a preaching engagement in the evening or teamed up with my Christian brother Hans to resolve all sorts of conflicts.

- San Salvador de Jujuy. A city of 300 000 inhabitants 120 km from Salta with strong Andean cultural influences. Every weekend I travel there by car with Techi and this means that we return home after midnight. During this year we have faced the crisis of helping the fellowship grow deeper roots and this hasn’t been easy. However, important steps have been taken: (1) once a month we celebrate a Communion service (2) there is a Sunday School (3) the study of biblical books was given continuity (4) we have reflected on our Anglican identity (5) the visit of the Bishop was experienced as very positive and (6) two weeks ago we held a retreat where we worked on goals for the future. Now ten people are ready for Confirmation. The leadership team has been enriched by the arrival of a couple from the Methodist Church in Salta; they have expressed a strong commitment to the fellowship. We had become very good friends with them in Salta through an ecumenical group. We had hoped for the arrival of another missionary couple to consolidate our efforts, but when they appeared in September they came to say that they wouldn’t work with us. They were tired and needed to be in a place that would recharge them. That’s why they went to another church and some of our fellowship went with them. It needs to be clarified that he married a woman from Jujuy and that for three months they shared the house of his in-laws ... We have moved on from that crisis and some returned when they saw that we were serious about forging ahead with the task. We meet in a building we can use for free, but the school governors have now asked us to look for an alternative; this is one of our latest concerns. Please pray for renewed enthusiasm and energy, that the church may march on.
- Tucumán lies some 400 km from Salta and the four-and-a-half hour coach ride is tiresome. Often Techi has accompanied me to help out with the couples and the youngsters who are studying, but it hasn’t been easy. First there was the aftershock of Pastor Eliseo’s departure and the difficulties people had with not grasping the reasons. There was a sense of abandonment mixed with a feeling of betrayal because of some bad decisions he took. We were recovering slowly, but for different reasons the PCC has taken another knock: we lost one of our leadership team due to issues of secular employment. The leader of the musicians had to step down because of a questionable sentimental involvement. The church is faced with the challenge of exercising and



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Allen Gardiner Cottage, Pembury Road, Tunbridge Wells TN2 3QU
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establishing its own leadership and this is not easy for Tucumán. This is going to take time, I think, and honestly we could do with someone to help develop leadership.

- Another town that we have visited a couple of times with my brother Hans is Ingeniero Juárez, 600 km from Salta. A beautiful tarmac road has reduced travelling times to some seven hours. The most recent visit was with Bishop Greg for a Diocesan Council meeting. The encounter was an interesting mix of future challenges, complaints and requests, but I think an indigenous leadership is being put in place slowly. The urban ministry in Ingeniero Juárez functions well and the clergy are reliable. There is a stable group of lay leaders and the leadership team as a whole does well. Over the next couple of days we shall be doing workshops with them on our Anglican identity and the principles of ministry. The two pastors continue despite the difficulties caused by Pastor Palavecino's leaving and taking half the congregation with him.
- There are always other journeys, like the one to Misión Chaqueña and trips with the Bishop. The last trip was a giant triangle via San Salvador de Jujuy, Tartagal and Ingeniero Juárez. We returned to Salta just in time for an ecumenical meeting marking the opening of the 'Month of the Bible'; we were held up by a roadblock of protesters. 'Adventurous Living on the Edge' would also be an apt description of our lives in the ministry. A trip to Peru for the Provincial Council is about to be added; here the meetings are always long and exhausting.
- We continue to share with you our 'Northern Adventures'. Please continue to pray for our work in the midst of a global crisis. The financial situation of the diocese is tricky due to preparations for the arrival of Nick Drayson and the possibility of his taking up a senior leadership position. Pray for the work in San Andrés, particularly for the ministry with married couples. For the university outreach that we have taken on together with the young people of San Andrés. Intercede for the church in Tucumán, for its leaders like Roberto, Claudia and Hector.
- My last and very complicated trip was to a church 120 kilometers from Juárez, called "El Quemado" (Burnt). It took 3 hours on a very dusty road, and at three o'clock in the afternoon was 45°C. We arrived at 7am when the sun was already burning in a very blue sky. It is a town of roughly 300 hundred people where no one knows about a global crisis. The service started two hours later and the small room was crowded with about 30 people; we sang for about thirty minutes and the pastor Juan from Juárez introduced me, saying Hugo is ready to preach and share about the Bible - just when I was about to faint through the terrible temperature inside that room. We returned at ten o'clock TERRIBLY EXHAUSTED and I was wondering if it was MY LAST TRIP TO NOWHERE.

Isaiah 30:20-21 You will hear a voice saying, "This is the road; turn around and walk here."

Hugo and Techy

Email: flia_vergara@arnet.com.ar

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