



Dear Friends,

We hope you all had a happy and blessed Christmas. Like many of you, we had a very busy, but great Christmas day. We took the service in the morning on "Jesus, God with us" and then had the majority of the congregation (all 14 of them) back to a shared lunch. On the whole Paraguayans don't celebrate on Christmas day but have their main celebration on the night of the 24th.

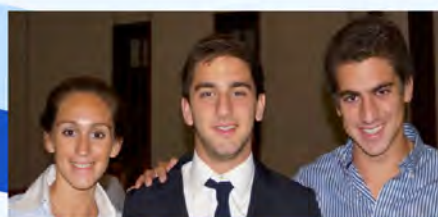
The month of December has been a very mixed month from some very difficult times, to sad times, to big celebrations. The difficult times were when we had to tell two sets of parents we wouldn't be taking their sons next year and, as you can imagine, it didn't go down well! We also had a few teachers to tell them we wouldn't be renewing their contracts for various reasons. Not an easy few weeks.



This was interspersed with special events for Eva, the head of primary, who retired after 34 years in school and for Miriam, the administrator, who retired after 21 years in school. These events were good but tinged with sadness as we will really miss both these people.



At the same time we had the special events for our 6th form leavers. First of all their special service in the chapel where they are each prayed for individually, followed by a supper in school for them and their parents. Two days later we had their posh party given by their parents. This was followed two more days later by their official graduation service. I think the thing that stands out from all of these is that when asked to speak in them the parents have all given a Christian message and have been very grateful to school. In both cases the parents were ex pupils. All of these events were very special.



End of Year



We finished the year with a staff meal in school...a barbecue, in typical Paraguayan style. We bring people in to do the cooking so all the staff can be in the meal. The man cooking the meat was a Christian and also brought along his guitar as he wanted to sing! At the same time we had engaged a Christian harpist to play as it was a special farewell time for those leaving. The cook talked to the harpist and they played along together and had everyone singing with them and even got some of them dancing!! So, we finished on a high note which was really good. In many ways it's been a tough year but the Lord has been faithful and I think we have learned a lot about trusting Him.



We finally agreed on the work the architect will oversee in the holidays. A space we had for indoor games which wasn't well used will now become a new dining room and kitchen. The present one is in what were 3 old classrooms and not in a good place for food. At the same time work has started on a ramp which will go from the entrance to the top floor. This involves quite a few changes to the entrance area as well. Both these things have now begun and should look really good when the work is finished.



On our hols

Joint Advent service with the English and Spanish congregations



Our lemon tree is full of lemons



HOLIDAY

In August we had decided we'd like to go away to somewhere different this year and we managed to find a cheap package holiday to Cuba...somewhere we really wanted to go. I think it was cheap as it was still out of the main holiday season here leaving on Dec 15th and returning on the 22nd. So, school finished on Friday and we were off to the airport at 4 am on the Monday. We spent a full day in Havana and then were taken to the coast where we had 5 days in a very beautiful part of God's creation. It was just what we needed after a very busy year and we had a great time there. We got in at 3 am on Tuesday morning and then had to get ready for our service and Christmas lunch. Fortunately we had managed to get a lot of it ready before we went.



As you can guess, it's very hot here but we are very grateful for airconditioning in the house...it does make it harder to go out though!! We now have January off school with a few visits there every so often. We have lots of plans...as usual, for all we will do in the break. I think a few lie ins are called for!



We and our animals are all fit and well. Splash the puppy, was in bad books when he ate the Baby Jesus (ceramic!!) out of our crib scene. He also ate a Christmas bauble and a few buttons! ...then he was sick! He didn't learn though as a few days later he went on to eat the manger as well. He wasn't bothered by the telling off's. He was finally tired out yesterday after playing with Tommy Brooks (5 yrs old) all afternoon. We look forward to spending more time with them all.

This comes with our best wishes for a Happy and Blessed New Year and many thanks for all your support for us. Thankyou for your gifts and prayers which mean so much to us.

God Bless, Love Mags and Gwen.

