

Murray and Penny Metcalfe in Paraguay



We have now made the transition from Asuncion to Cheltenham and are very grateful for your interest, prayers and support. Here is a brief overview of the last few months

Leaving Paraguay

We left Paraguay a frustrated country with much expectation of President Lugo's government turning to frustration at little visible change. The nation at least takes pride in being top of the World Cup football qualifying table for South Africa 2010!!!

We've learnt a useful lesson – never underestimate the amount of time it takes to finish up and pack up. We hadn't reckoned on the amount of stuff we'd managed to accumulate over the last 10 years. Even though it was easy to sell or find good homes for everything, it seemed an endless process of sorting and distributing. Our neighbours were very sweet bringing us meals and presents, grateful that the contents of our house were spilling out into theirs!

We felt very comfortable handing the foster home supervision to Pastor Agustin and Teresa, although the end of the year is always a minefield when children's situations are resolved at the very last minute before the Christmas break.

We had a number of "goodbye" events that seemed unreal and a bit stressful as our kids were unsettled by the extra attention. The last week was very hot, Luli had a fever and Alber managed to get a nasty cut on the leg, and so it was quite a relief to arrive at the airport with our 10 bulging suitcases containing all we had decided to bring back. We had to do a quick repack in front of the check-in as one of the cases was far too heavy, leaving only a few minutes to say goodbye to dear friends and then we were through. Despite all this we felt calm and secure all the time and the journey was probably the smoothest we've ever had. We had a slight delay at British immigration whilst the hard-won visas were inspected and we had to register the kids at the Health post at Heathrow but we were soon in Devon to be welcomed by both very relieved sets of grandparents.

Starting in Cheltenham ...

After being very spoilt by family and friends over Christmas and New Year we have settled back into the house we lived in when we were first married. Going into the loft and rediscovering many of our belongings has felt unreal at times and the kids are very taken by the fact that this house and its contents are "ours" and not borrowed. They've coped well so far with all the changes, despite sometimes saying they want

to be back in Paraguay where it's warm (who can blame them?). After our time together at the SAMS staff conference in Sussex they started at their little village school a few minutes' drive away which has been so friendly and welcoming. The staff are doing various assessments with Alber and seem to be taking his special needs seriously. We are hoping that the authority will grant him a "*Statement of Special Educational Need*" which will entitle him to more help with his learning.

In general there seem to be so many decisions to take so quickly that at times we can't take it all in. We've more or less decided to stay in this house until we know where we are on the job front, but to do a loft conversion as soon as possible to give us a third bedroom. SAMS supports us until Easter and we want to use the time not just to visit link churches and finish setting up house but also to explore different job possibilities for Murray full time and for Penny probably part time.

We're very open to whatever God has in store but some form of teaching or international involvement seems most likely. We are also committed to continuing to fundraise for the Esperanza Foster Home in Asunción and to continue to inform those interested of its progress.

Our home church of Holy Trinity has grown significantly while we've been away but there are still many old friends we've enjoyed catching up with. It's very different merging with such a crowd after our small and intimate church in Asunción but it's been good to just sit and listen without any responsibilities. The children's work is extensive and our three have been going out happily to their own sessions.

We've already had a visit from a social worker as Britain doesn't recognise our adoption and classes us currently as "privately fostering" (sticks in the throat a bit after 7 years!). However, he was very relaxed and said we had nothing to worry about as we go through the process of adopting the kids here.

Meanwhile, we give thanks for:

- God's presence and help as we left Paraguay and arrived here.
- The kids' school and the way they've settled in.
- Provision of all that we need for now.

We'd appreciate your prayers for:

- Continued security and good health for Alber, Jack and Luli, the right provision for Alber's needs and a smooth adoption process over here.
- Wise decisions regarding jobs, future housing and church involvement.
- The Esperanza Foster Home and especially little Jonathan who has finally been able to go and live with his birth mum.
- St. Andrew's school and its staffing needs.
- The future of SAMS as it links up with the Church Mission Society.
- The nation of Paraguay.

As always this comes with very much love. *Murray, Penny, Alber, Jack and Luli.*

"Because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness."

Lamentations 3:22,23