

James Palmer in Chile in March 2008

Wow. I just got back from the USA two days ago and it's been a bit of a whirlwind, paying bills, making sure my utilities are not cut off, washing, sorting, etc. 7 weeks is quite a long time to be away from home. Looking back it was a VERY good thing to get out of Santiago for the summer. I was overtired physically and emotionally by the end of the year and getting some distance was exactly what I needed. It has made a huge difference to my frame of mind and I feel a lot more relaxed and positive than I was at the end of last year. It was also very useful for me to spend two weeks in Guatemala. Not only was the language school outstanding, but it was good to live in another Latin American culture for a little while and realize how many good things there are in Chile which we take for granted as westerners, but are not there in most of LA.

I learnt some practical lessons (like don't fly via Miami if you can avoid it, always leave at least 3 hours to make a connection when you fly into the USA), and had almost everything that could go wrong with planes happen (long delays for weather, mechanical problems etc, last minute cancellations, missed connections, lost baggage). We didn't crash, though, which was a great relief.

It was good to see friends and churches in the USA. That is always a pleasure. I had a good week's holiday at New Smyrna Beach, mostly walking on the beach, reading and watching movies (aka films). I also spent most of a week with my friends the Yates in Philadelphia (where there was snow and temperatures in the 20s, or in English about 5C). I did most of my year's clothes shopping and got some good deals in the second largest mall in the USA (and didn't lose my bags again, so it's all safely home).

I have "only" one class to teach this semester and I am in the process of sorting out the details and handouts, etc, this morning (now that I have paid the electricity bill and no longer fear a power cut!).

Never one for an easy life, I am also going back to university and moving house this semester. (It seems that I like to make things hard for myself: who else would choose to teach subjects that were not their specialization in a foreign language they had been studying for less than 6 months? I have to accept that I have a masochistic streak; the evidence cannot be denied.) So you could say it's self-inflicted, but please do remember me this semester with all the changes that are going on. This is going to be the year of settling in that all normal missionaries have when they arrive in their new country, but as well as making life hard for myself I also have a tendency to do things backwards.

Pray for: teaching, studying, moving house, all to run smoothly.