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Cachi, Salta, Argentina
March 2015



Cachi populated with athletes!

After two and a half marvellous months in the UK, it is now back to “the day job”! After what had felt like a difficult and unsettled last couple of years, I was well and truly ready for a trip back. My last Christmas in the UK was in 2009, so I couldn’t wait for the tree, the tinsel and even the cold! This was also Fabio’s first English Christmas, making it that little bit more special. Saying good bye is never easy, but after so many encouraging, inspiring and challenging words from so many people, I definitely felt assured of God’s call to the remote town of Cachi, Salta.

We had planned a trip to Spain to visit friends in Granada, where I spent a lot of time as a student. It was lovely to see people after so long, and an opportunity to encourage the church who had experienced some difficult times after their pastor suddenly left (some of you may remember a similar story with “El Madero”, our church in Buenos Aires). In addition to this trip, we were surprised and blessed by an invitation to Altenkirchen, Germany! Bernd Breitmaier of SRS (national sports ministry organisation in Germany) was eager to meet Fabio and I to share ideas about how we can best serve athletes and fellow runners (Bernd is a keen runner himself!). Bernd also oversees a project in Kenya called “Complete Sports” which exists to give promising Kenyan athletes the opportunity not only to train full time, but also to receive mentoring, spiritual support and holistic coaching, which is not solely focussed on results, but on the physical, mental, social and spiritual well-being of the athlete (see www.complete-sports.org). We were encouraged to keep following the Lord and where we sense He is leading us in terms of long term projects in Cachi (see John 12.26).



With “family” in Spain



With Bernd



A very special Christmas!

After Fabio returned home at the end of January, the rest of my time was spent anywhere between London and Sheffield, though primarily in Oxford and the Birmingham area, seeing all the people I possibly could! Fabio, meanwhile, arrived back to Cachi in the middle of the Summer holidays, but got the ball rolling straight away with our extension (to which no work had been done whilst he was away!) and also getting some of our young athletes back training....although most of them were still in Summer holiday mode!! We have been very happy to see RB back training after a mystery illness towards the end of last year, many of you asked about her. She is more like her normal self and just taking things very slowly.

We give thanks to the Lord who watches over all of our comings and our goings for safe travel during our time in the UK (Psalm 121). We value your prayers for CG who will be having her tonsils out in Salta on March 20th. Please pray that all would go well and that she would recover quickly.

I feel I should mention some very sad news I received whilst away, which continues to be difficult to process. My very dear friend Emily passed away suddenly at the start of January whilst on holiday between jobs. The exact cause is still not known, and I would be grateful if you could hold Emily’s family in prayer as they grieve and come to terms with life without her. Emily was a friend from university, we crossed paths often as we both studied Spanish and were involved with outreach to and the welcoming of international students in Oxford as part of our college Christian Unions. She was passionate about Latin America, especially Peru where she frequently visited a children’s home. On her “way” to Peru in December 2013, she came to visit me for a few days in

Buenos Aires, which was a wonderful time for me. Already very enthusiastic about our work in Argentina, and an extremely supportive friend, I think our friendship grew deeper after that visit, and Emily was always one of the first people to reply to an update, ask how I was or how specific things were going. Her death was a painful shock to all who knew her, and amidst the questions, there is comfort in knowing that she is **home and at rest** with the Lord, and as her memorial service so clearly showed, her life will go on impacting many even in her physical absence. Below are some memories of my precious friend, Emily.



London 2012; as a witness at our wedding; day trip to Colonia, Uruguay, 2013

“On God rests my salvation and my glory; my mighty rock, my refuge is God. Trust in Him at all times, O people, pour out your heart before him; God is a refuge for us.” Psalm 62.7-8, referenced at Emily’s memorial service

The new year has just gotten under way here in **Cachi**, with youngsters returning to school this week, although while our young “**more than conquerors**” have been enjoying a change of routine, many elite athletes from different parts of South America have been taking the opportunity to escape the sometimes unbearable humidity of the city, choosing to flee to **Cachi** for a stint of altitude training. Even now, many are arriving to prepare the national 10.000m track championships and some national Gran Prix races happening in **Buenos Aires** at the end of the month. Although we currently do not have anybody staying with us, there will be plenty of occasions to invite people around and spend time with them, especially those we know already. Please pray that we might be able to share our lives and God’s love particularly with:

LM

NE

VR

MP

SL

All of these athletes have either stayed with us or know something of our faith, although we always want to be “**prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have [...] with gentleness and respect...**” (1 Peter 2.15). We also find that through his role as *sports masseur*, Fabio is able to interact with many athletes and sometimes talk about our project and vision. We pray that those who pass through the doors of our home would sense something that little bit different to other places, something of God’s spirit of **peace, joy, love, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control** (Galatians 5.22-23); not because we are all these things, but because **He is!**

Finally, some exciting news: **I have been selected as a chaplain for this year’s Panamerican Games in Toronto!**

The Games will run from the 10th – 26th July, although I need to be there a week earlier for accreditation and uniform, as well as being on duty in the athlete’s village during the previous week as competitors, coaches and officials begin to arrive. I will send out some more specific information soon, but I am very much looking forward to building on my experience as a chaplain at the **Para Panamerican Games in Mexico in 2011**, learning more about serving athletes in their competitive environments (rather than just training, like in Cachi) and how best to **encourage them and build them up** in God’s love. A good number of both Argentine and South American athletes coming and going from Cachi are of course hoping to qualify for this highly important event, **the third largest international multi-sport games** in the world (after the Olympics and the Asian Games).



Thank you for journeying with us, wherever in the world we find ourselves!

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