

November 2015 – Prayer letter 15

We're here! We're finally here, on Argentine soil! We've taken our time about it, but we are here. Thank you for your prayers for us in the last few tumultuous weeks of packing and goodbyes. In these last few weeks we've done LOADS of travelling, met our new nephew and niece (thank you to Nadja and Jo for impeccable birth timing!), had a traumatic farewell dinner, said goodbye to every shop in Muswell Hill ('bye-bye hairdressers, bye-bye Rainbow Nails etc...) and tried not to cry on our 'last' phone calls from the airport. It's been a bit emotionally draining to be honest. But, did I mention, we're here!! Now we breathe and start settling in.



So, where are we again? We are in **Lomas de Zamora**, a large suburb in the South of Buenos Aires. This handy photo shows where we're going to live: a block of flats about 10 minutes walk from church, and outside the main town centre. We're so thankful for answered prayers in the provision of this flat, as it has a communal garden area, with a climbing frame, swings and even a swimming pool for the children! As you can see from this photo, there are no parks anywhere near us, so to have a garden is wonderful. We'll also benefit from the security of the site, as crime rates are very high here at the moment.

ARGENTINA – ALL CHANGE?

La familia Walker have arrived in Argentina at a really exciting time. We're slap bang in the middle of the presidential elections and it looks like things in government are about to change. The hope of many in Buenos Aires is that on **22nd November**, the Kirchnerist government will fall and a new man, Mauricio Macri, will step in to guide the country to more stable economic waters.



To give you an idea of how distorted things are economically at the moment, I'll briefly quote *'La Nación'*, one of the national newspapers, on Sunday: *'In the current chaos, one month of electricity can cost less than one pizza; for the price of a kilo of courgettes, you can travel by bus 11 times in Buenos Aires, and it's normal to pay less for a litre of petrol than for its equivalent in long-life milk or beer.'* The government has subsidised some things (gas, electricity, petrol, public transport) so extensively, that it practically has no value at all to the man on the street. Meanwhile, food, clothing and other goods have much higher prices than they're really worth. The result is incredibly confusing!

Add to this the fact that there are two economic exchange rates: the official rate and the 'blue' rate. Today, the official rate is 14.6 pesos to £1. The blue rate is 24.25 pesos. Which means that if I get some shopping for 200 pesos, it would cost me £13.70 officially, but only £8.25 on the blue! You can see that this makes a big difference to our bills, especially the big things, like rent. At the moment, the only way you can get the 'blue' rate is to bring money (usually US dollars) in to Argentina from outside. But, obviously, it's risky to have large quantities of cash in your house, or in your wallet. So, prayers for wisdom, safety and financial savviness would be much appreciated.

LA IGLESIA SANTA TRINIDAD

At one of the first bible studies I ever went to in Argentina, they spent the whole time talking about Trinidad. I was utterly confused as to why we were talking about a Caribbean island, until someone helpfully translated. Holy Trinity Church it is then. No coconuts here.

After three Sundays, we can report that we've had a very positive reception. The church family is not large, but we are already excited about possibilities we can see for growth and discipleship. The pastor and his wife, Mario and Paula, had their third child, a little boy called Fermín, just a few days after we arrived so, unsurprisingly, have had their hands full, but as things go settling down we're looking forward to getting to know them better. Andrew will be working with Mario as a curate, so the idea is to watch and learn as much as possible. We'll hopefully be able to give you some more details in the next update.

CATCH UP

A HUGE thing that we have not mentioned until now is that Andrew finished and handed in his dissertation!! Cheers and claps all round for a massive effort over the last year, not least reading a whole library in Olde Englishe. We don't have the results yet, but we'll let you know when he can officially add an MA to his name. (Assuming he's passed)

Thank you to those of you who have prayed and asked about my blocked tear duct. I had an operation at Moorfields a month before we left and all went very well. We're hopeful that the 'mono-weeping' has gone for good, although recent signs are that it may have come back. But, on a positive note, we are incredibly thankful that I did not have to have my wisdom teeth removed!

Sadly, shortly after arriving here, we heard the news that my (Bethanie's) grandfather had died, following a short spell in hospital. These are the things that make it especially hard to be so far away, but we are so thankful that we saw him shortly before we left and had a really lovely time together.

PRAYER AND PRAISE

- **Praise God for the completed 18 months of study at Oak Hill. It has been a huge challenge and joy to us all. We pray that this would have equipped Andrew well for his role as curate, but that we would both depend on God's grace in the ups and downs of ministry life.**
- We're so thankful for a safe arrival and relatively smooth transition so far. Thank you for your prayers for Maia and Emilio, they have been AMAZING and have both been sleeping and eating wonderfully.
- **Please pray for Andrew as he meets with Mario (the pastor) to work out how Andrew can serve in the church. We're praying to be in Argentina long-term, so please pray for wisdom, patience and humility in these early days, alongside a real desire to build relationships well.**
- Practically, please pray for us to find the things we need for our flat. It's a helpful reminder not to be materialistic! Also, would you pray for us (especially the children) to stay safe? Health and safety isn't a huge thing here, so we have to be attentive ALL the time. There are lots of pointy or broken concrete things and the kids have already had three nasty falls.
- **Praise God for new nephew and niece, Timothy Ebling and Charlotte Walker and for the chance to meet them before leaving!**
- Please pray for Bethanie's family as they prepare for her grandpa's funeral.

Meeting up with old friends, Analía and Nacho from Tucumán



Thus endeth another prayer letter. Thank you for reading, praying and partnering with us as we finally get back into life in Argentina. If you would like a spangly magnet to remind you to pray for us, and you have not yet received one, then please email us and we'll try to get one to you!

Lots of love,

Andrew, Bethanie, Maia and Emilio

XXXX

Please contact the Crosslinks office to change your contact details

Crosslinks, 251 Lewisham Way, London SE4 1XF Tel: 020 8691 6111 pletters@crosslinks.org