

THE NEXT CHAPTER

December, 2015 - April, 2016

For this is the message you heard from the beginning:

We
should
LOVE
one
another.

– 1 John 3:11



by Kari (and Justin) Eller
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MOVE in ways that inspire you; *BREATHE* in and out like the ocean's
tide; *MOVE* FOR JUSTICE; *BE* more to others; *BREATHE* in
God's peace and out the old; *EAT* from God's table and nourish those around you;
have hope and trust in God's *MOVE*ment; *BE* God's good news.



December, 2015



In December, Justin's mom, Cathy, came to visit while he was in Chicago during the ELCA Global Mission In-house. For two weeks, Justin attended many meetings on the 2016 budget, crafting realistic goals-objectives for project Planning, Monitoring, and Evaluating (PME), and updated job descriptions for ELCA GM Regional Representatives (like him). He also presented new Latin America and Caribbean (LAC) country strategy formats as a unit-wide initiative to update all the strategies with our companion churches and institutions around the world.

Returning home right before Christmas, he had a few days to enjoy his mom's visit and we spent time together as a family. Cathy came for two weeks to be with Everette and me, during an important time of the year, attending Everette's end-of-year school play,

going sight-seeing around Buenos Aires, and enjoying the tastes, smells, and music of Argentina.

We closed the year spending Christmas with dear friends and their family as well as with our Lutheran Church family. Argentine Christmas was quite the experience: hot temperatures, cold foods, midnight fireworks, and dance music to welcome the birth of Jesus Christ!

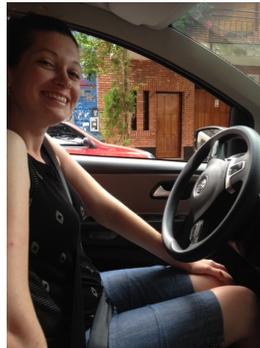


*For unto us a Child is born,
Unto us a Son is given:
And the government will be upon His shoulder.
And His name will be called
Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.*

-Isaiah 9:6



January, 2016



January in South America is a summer month, so like in July in the US, many church activities slow down for relaxing vacations and spend time reflecting on the past year. Justin and I spent the month finishing up year-end reports and accompanying our companions with their reports as well.

We rang in the 2016 New Year with more fireworks, food, and dancing than Christmas and practiced driving in a more rural area of Buenos Aires. After several driving practice trips with friends (they really love us!), we also achieved a personal goal for both of us: **LEARNING TO DRIVE STICK SHIFT!!!** We came to the following conclusion...I am

the driver and Justin is my personal onboard navigation system (my own personal JPS, not GPS)!

This functional system worked well when I drove all the way to Mar de las Pampas Beach on the Atlantic Coast (8 hours for a 4 hour trip due to traffic!). There, we rented a beach-front house with our friends for several days. The kids played in the sand, we took long walks, drank mate, learned how to play *tejo*, ate well, and most importantly, we rested!



Guide us to thy perfect light...



February, 2016



Justin’s travels in February were extensive! Earlier in the month, the IELB (Bolivian Evangelical Lutheran Church) welcomed into its fold the new ELCA missionary, the Rev. David Thorp, and Justin went earlier than normal to Bolivia to spend time with him, helping him to get settled and to go with him on his first trip, getting to know the IELB. Another important part of his visit to Bolivia, was to accompany Dr. Rebecca Duerst, ELCA Global Mission Director of Diakonia, visiting the IELB and seeing its Integral Community Health program in action! On the next page, you can read all about this ministry of the church and how through the ELCA World Hunger program we are actively accompanying rural Lutheran health promoters.

Speaking of health, on a family level, we also give thanks to God for our health and Everett’s first successful dental cleaning. The dentist was quite

impressed with his tooth brushing skills (as evidenced in the picture of him above brushing the elephant’s teeth) and encouraged him to keep up the good work! I guess he had this on his mind when we went to see the dinosaurs and his comment about the T-Rex (his favorite dinosaur) was that he has a lot of teeth to brush!

Justin returned from Bolivia with Rebecca, to one happy little boy ready to see his father and as a family, we welcomed both Karin Columba (also from the Diakonia team, pictured above giving a “Martian” greeting to Everett) and Rebecca to stay with us as they visited CAREF here in Buenos Aires. CAREF, like so many other programs the ELCA supports, renews my faith and hope in the goodness of the world, as together we strive for justice. Read more about it in the following pages!

IELB RPS Rural Health Promoters in Bolivia

By Justin Eller

As Amalia timidly stands up with her hands clasped together, taking her turn to present on the traditional medicines she made from local, ancestral plants found throughout the area surrounding Lake Titicaca near La Paz, Bolivia, she gently speaks in Spanish to explain that the majority of the women in her rural community, many who had gathered to hear her presentation, only speak their indigenous Aymara language.

With her first words in Aymara, she transforms from an eager student to a commanding, informative, and inspiring teacher. She explains the illnesses, treatments, and remedies of each of the four colored bottles on the table in front of her with their corresponding medicinal plant ingredients and where to find them. Her educational presentation captures the attention of the 20 plus women huddled together, which brings forth testimonies of previous illnesses in some of them and how Amalia had helped in their healing process.

Many of the community members who benefit from Amalia's training, care, and medicines have little-to-no access to formal medical attention or clinics due to their rural locations. She chuckles as she explains that sometimes she arrives to a neighboring community and people come in search of her to consult her about a minor illness or call her cell phone asking her to visit a sick relative. She goes on to explain that



“Sometimes I arrive to a small town or village and before I’ve stepped off the bus, someone is waiting for me with an illness saying that they heard I was coming.”

Amalia - IELB member of the Congregation Cachilaya, Lake District

Photos: David Thorp

she doesn't just take the medicine she has prepared, but also listens to their stories, prays with them, and teaches them about how they can better their health.

Amalia is one of about 30 members (lay and clergy) of the Bolivian Evangelical Lutheran Church (Iglesia Evangélica Luterana Boliviana- IELB in Spanish) being trained as a Rural Health Promoter (Responsable Popular en Salud- RPS in Spanish) in the “Integral Community Health” program of the IELB, which is supported by a ELCA World Hunger grant. The project began in 2008 and has recently completed an in-depth evaluation with recommendations on how to further develop and bring to market their traditional medicines, widen their curriculum to involve more women from rural areas, and explore ways to include an intentional “Train the trainer”

methodology into the two-year program.

Together, the Integral Community Health program of the IELB in Bolivia and ELCA World Hunger are actively accompanying rural Lutheran health promoters in their traditional medicine training, making natural herbal medicines (syrups, juices, clays, and pomades), community support, and spiritual accompaniment skills. Your support, through ELCA World Hunger, helps make real, sustainable impact in the lives of the program participants and in the betterment of health in their communities. Thank you for helping to make projects like this possible.



CAREF Rights for Women in Argentina

By Justin Eller

Argentina has a long history of its people struggling and fighting for their rights. From the mid-1980s to the mid-1990s, Argentina witnessed the return of Argentines exiled in Mexico at the end of Argentina's "dirty war" period of state terrorism at the same time that Chileans, exiled in Argentina, also began returning to Chile after their almost 20-year dictatorship.

During those dark years, the Argentine Commission for Refugees and Migrants (Comisión Argentina para los Refugiados y Migrantes-CAREF) helped many people who were suffering, seeking shelter, or families of the "disappeared". In 2004, about twenty years after the arrival of democracy to Argentina, CAREF's focus and mission expanded to work with the rights of refugees and immigrants. 2004 also brought new laws that made it possible for immigrants and refugees to receive access to public healthcare and education despite their immigration status.

CAREF has teamed up with various organizations and leaders to change the mentality of seeing immigrants as invaders. Sadly

though, discrimination against those who enter Argentina in search of a better life can be still seen in everyday practices when hospitals and healthcare workers deny care and treatment because the patient does not have the appropriate documents.

CAREF has been a leader in helping change public understanding and legal policies to ensure that public officials and healthcare workers are educated on Argentina's stance that access to medical care and treatment is a basic human right. Accompanied by lawyers and social workers, CAREF has had direct life-saving impact for: a Colombian child who desperately needed a kidney transplant and was initially denied because she was a refugee, a transgendered immigrant with HIV who was denied access to treatment and medicine, Bolivian women leaders who have been training trainers to fight for sexual and reproductive rights in their communities, a sex-slave trafficked from the Dominican Republic who had experienced gender-based violence and abuse, and countless other women, each with a story of how CAREF has intervened, cared

for, and walked alongside them in moments of deep crisis.

Together, CAREF and ELCA World Hunger are actively accompanying immigrant women and children who desire a better life, struggle against systemic racism and xenophobia in accessing medical attention, and fight for and promote their own human rights. Your support, through ELCA World Hunger, helps make real, sustainable impact in the lives of the program participants and in the betterment of health of vulnerable women and children. Thank you for helping to make projects like this possible.



*Truly I tell you, whatever
you did for one of the
least of these brothers and
sisters of mine, you did
for me.*

-Matthew 25:40



March, 2016



In March, Everette started Kindergarten here at his school in Buenos Aires! He was also super excited to see his friends again and help create a classroom library (rotating books home on the weekends to students). His class also went on their first field trip to see the artwork of Benito Quinquela Martín in La Boca, Argentina and as a result our artistic sides have flourished (hence his artwork on the front cover of the newsletter)!

Later on in the month, our brother-in-law, Kevin, came for a visit to Argentina and got to enjoy ice cream in the park with Everette (vanilla with sprinkles of course!) and site-see some of the city. Since March is in the fall season, we took advantage of the Bosques de Palermo (Palermo Forest), paddle boats at the lake, bike riding lessons, the rose garden, crisp sunny days,

and geese (well...we tried to feed them from the paddle boat but it didn't go so well for us as they began to attack us in flocks, scaring Everette and turning Justin and me into adrenaline powered paddlers...lesson learned, check!).

March closed with reflective time as we journeyed through Holy Week and the Triduum celebrations. We again participated in the Belgrano Ecumenical Good Friday March through our neighborhood and had an opportunity this year to accompany survivors, friends and others during a *via crucis* (Stations of the Cross) held at a former torture and detention facility during Argentina's Dirty War dictatorship. You can read about this in the excerpt included from Justin's sermon on John 20:19-23.

Excerpt from Justin's Sermon

John 20:19-23

On Holy Saturday, Kari and I participated in a stations of the cross march at the former Navy Mechanics School (called **ESMA** in Spanish) near where we live. It was a haunting experience because during **Argentina's Dirty War from 1976 to 1983**, ESMA was a detention and torture facility for victims of the military dictatorship and the **state-sponsored terrorism**. For years, the majority of Argentines lived in a **continual state of fear**: fear of torture, fear of being disappeared, fear of being wrongly suspected. Although democracy returned to Argentina in 1984, the **lingering, murky history** of the Dirty War still **sows seeds of distrust and suspicion today**. Even 40 years after the last military coup d'état of 1976: **when we walked through areas where blood once watered the ground, we could still feel people's fear of speaking out, of saying something, of telling their story of torture, detention, or survival.**

In spite of the locked doors and the fear of the disciples, Jesus "came and stood in their midst" and said "Peace be with you." Previously in John 14:27, Jesus had spoken of *peace* as **an antidote to fear**, he said: "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I don't give to you as the world gives. Don't let your hearts be troubled, and don't let them be afraid." ***Every time you tell Jesus' story and share in the promise of his peace, you are resisting fear...you are resisting that same fear that if you talked, you would be tortured, disappeared, or crucified too.***

After Jesus showed them his hands and side, they rejoiced at seeing him and he said to them again, "*Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.*" **With Jesus' breathy peace comes a movement, a march from darkness to light.** He sends them out and beckons them not to stay locked up. If fear was the infection, Jesus' peace was the anti-biotic that healed them so that they could go out and be who he had called them to be, **to be his followers with a counter-cultural message.**

When cultures and public figures condone violence, incite riots, and permit silence in the face of abuse against women and children...then the peace that Jesus gives becomes counter-cultural, it's when **"peace be with you" is revolutionary good news!**

Lord, make us instruments of Your peace. Where there is hatred, let us sow love; where there is injury, pardon; where there is doubt, faith; where there is despair, hope; where there is darkness, light; where there is sadness, joy. O, Divine Master, grant that we may not so much seek to be consoled as to console; to be understood as to understand; to be loved as to love; For it is in giving that we receive; it is in pardoning that we are pardoned; it is in dying that we are born again to eternal life. Amen.

-Prayer of St. Francis of Assisi



April, 2016



Did you know: “Cusco, Peru was the most important city in the whole of the Inca Empire and governed as far north as Quito in Ecuador and as far south as Santiago in Chile? Cusco sits over 11,000 feet above sea level in the heart of the Andes. This Peruvian city is widely considered the archaeological capital of the Americas thanks to its incredible mix of colonial and ancient Incan architecture” (USA Today). Not that I’m jealous or anything, but Justin traveled to Cusco, his favorite city, in April where he spent time with the children at the Huch’uy Runa School and learned from them about their organic garden and ancient Incan fruits that they still grow. He also visited the Lutheran Church in Peru and led a workshop on reconciliation in the church, family, and society.

Also, this month, I finished the mosaic I have been working on for a few weeks. It started out as a simple

rosette but everyday turned into something a little more. Doing mosaic work is becoming my new favorite hobby! I love how the individual pieces (none of which are perfect cuts) work together to express something beautiful.

The IELU (United Evangelical Lutheran Church in Argentina and Uruguay) held their 54th National Assembly at the end of the month. Not only was it an event that welcomed in a new National Church Council, but it also celebrated the ministries completed over the past two years. The Rev. Gustavo Gomez Pascua was re-elected to a second 4-year term as the IELU’s Pastor-President (like our ELCA Presiding Bishop).

Oh yeah, and we also went bowling as a family and taught Everette to play pool!

PLEASE PRAY WITH US...

- for new missionaries starting and ending service abroad, especially Pr. David in Bolivia and the Arg-Uru YAGM volunteers about to conclude their year of volunteering;
- for those affected by the earthquakes in Ecuador and food shortages in Venezuela;
- for so many who lost their livelihoods in Chilean fires;
- for Pr. Pres. Gustavo Gomez Pascua and the newly elected IELU Council and their families that support them in these leadership positions;
- for the ministries and projects that impact the lives of the most vulnerable in our midst;
- for peace in the world and that we can be agents of that peace;
- for all immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers who feel trapped in the system, that they not lose hope.



Thank you for your support and prayers!! If you know of another congregation or individual interested in supporting us as well, please feel free to share with them the following information...

Congregations may include their gift in their remittance to the synod office, clearly marked with our name and 7-digit code [Kari and Justin Eller (MSG0682)] QR congregations and individuals may write their checks directly to "ELCA Global Church Sponsorship" and write our name and 7-digit code in the memo line.

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In addition, sponsors may also arrange for gifts by credit card, or for automatic monthly withdrawals from their bank account, by contacting 800-638-3522. Please let us know if you have any questions!

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