

Andri Van der Merwe

Global Challenge - Hidden World Outreach - Newsletter



Hope everyone is doing well .

Wow time is flying by! I started typing a newsletter in Bolivia but never got around to send it out, so this is a quick update of what's been happening, where we are and where we are going.

Paraguay

The second half of the journey is flying by. Since we landed in Brazil it feels like someone has pressed fast forward. I am typing this on a 22 hour bumpy bus ride to Bolivia and I feel like yesterday I got on the bus to go to Paraguay!

Our time in Paraguay flew past, as a pioneering country we originally didn't know anyone there. Our Brazil contacts connected us to pastor Miguel and his daughter Belen who became our main contacts. We left Tiaan and Kenny in Brazil due to the issues with the visas and we had our Brazilian friend JP join us. So the 8 of us got on a 22 hour bus ride from Sao Paulo to Paraguay.



It was a quick bump back to reality when we reached a very cold Paraguay 27 hours later (yes the bus decided to give us a 5 hours

delay). The 8 of us slept in a small back room in the church sports ground and shared a communal shower with all the workers of the church. We stayed for 3 days preparing for our Luke 10 outreach and in this time we unfortunately watched the slaughter of the Brazil soccer team by Germany. I was very disappointed as I was really hoping Brazil would take the world cup.

Anyway so to the Luke 10 outreach:

Go your way; behold, I send you out like lambs into the midst of wolves. 4 Carry no purse, no provisions bag, no [change of] sandals; refrain from [retarding your journey by] saluting {and} wishing anyone well along the way. 5 Whatever house you enter, first say, Peace be to this household! [Freedom from all the distresses that result from sin be with this family]. 6 And if anyone [worthy] of peace {and} blessedness is there, the peace {and} blessedness you wish shall come upon him; but if not, it shall come back to you Luke 10:3-6.

Where to start?

Well, we had 7 days and 6 nights for our journey. My team was Carla, Eric and JP (the guy from Brazil). I started typing it out but it's so much detail so I will send our Luke 10 journey as a separate newsletter as soon as I can. I will say it was an incredible time, taking nothing except your Bible and toothbrush in a foreign Spanish speaking country really gives you the opportunity to completely surrender and rely on God. It was such a blessing to know that we know that we heard God's voice clearly when we went to a small town in Paraguay. As a team and personally it was amazing how we heard Gods voice and direction as to where we had to go. It was very challenging and maybe not the most exciting story for other people, but we were called to a place where people had been desperately praying for help. Us arriving unannounced in the town was an answer to their prayers as well. We saw Gods provision not only for us but also for the people we with whom were staying. This was an amazing and humbling experience. We really had the opportunity to minister, encourage and pray with the church and community and we saw a man give his life to the Lord.

We lived with people who had very little money. And wow! It is humbling to see how people who can't actually give anything, do so because they obey God. It was such a learning curve for me, just to experience God's love for His people through people.

After our Luke 10 journey, Belen took us to her father's church in a rural area just outside the city we were staying. It was beautiful and is smack bang in between trees and farms. During the time we spent there we painted the church and in the afternoon we played footy with the kids on their sandy football court. The pastor and a few members from the church heard about it and organised a proper match for us and members of the church. It was a lot of fun but let's just say it was a lot more serious than when we played against the kids. We also did all our dramas and dances with the youth of the church and at the Sunday service.

This was very entertaining as we only prepared a few items but they wanted to see everything! We also all slept in a class room and showered with extremely cold water. At one time I had to use the hose pipe and let's just say it wasn't too hot in during time there. Spectacular!



Our time went quickly and we all got super attached to Belen and her daughter Julia who is too cute for words. In a blink of an eye we were crying again and saying our goodbyes to our new family and getting on another bus.

Bolivia

Santa Cruz: It was another pioneering country and we had to take another 24 hour bus to Santa Cruz. We had one week there with amazing people. We all stayed with host families and Carla and I stayed together with a lovely family. The youth in Santa Cruz was really on fire for the Lord so we had a jam packed week filled with different ministries. We went to an orphanage, did park evangelism, we went to quite a few schools, participated in children's ministry at the church and they also had a prayer room where we had two 12-2 shifts. It was an incredibly busy time in Santa Cruz but it was really blessed. The youth all came to the bus stop and stood there for 30 minutes waiting for our bus to leave. It is only through God's love that you can so easily love and grow attached to people. Saying goodbye never gets easier.



La Paz: We travelled another 22 hours to La Paz where we were given some time off to debrief before our parents arrived. I've never experienced altitude like in La Paz. It is about

3,800 metres above sea level and the moment we arrived people started getting sick. My host from Santa Cruz luckily gave me pills so I just had a terrible headache for two days. It was such an incredible time to explore and chill as we had been very busy with ministries and we knew after the parents left we would be incredibly busy again.

Sal da Uyuni: I had the opportunity to go to Sal da Uyuni which is a salt desert. I have to say that it was really beautiful and a very different experience. Unfortunately in this time Eileen lost her passport and is still struggling to sort that out.

Copacabana: We went to Copacabana and it happened to be in the time of a festival where they celebrate the Virgin of Copacabana. I have never experienced anything like it before; there was thousands of people buying idols to sacrifice to the Virgin. People were reading their fortunes through silver, birds, smoke and herbs. The worst was that everything was done in the name of Jesus. People stood queues up a mountain to touch the Virgin and all we could do was pray that the Lord would open their eyes to free them from the chains of bondage. I just realised how fortunate we are not to have to sacrifice and do a million rituals to speak to our God.

Back to La Paz: We went back to pick up the parents in La Paz and it was such a blessing seeing our families and meeting everybody's parents. We spent a two days in La Paz where we quickly showed them around. Our whole team prayed for the parent's health as we all really struggled with the altitude. Amazingly the parents suffered only minor altitude sickness or nothing at all. We then went to Copacabana and we had the opportunity to speed walk across an island (Isla do Sol) on Lake Titicaca.

Peru

Cusco: We took a 16hour bus from Copacabana to Cusco, Peru, where we spent almost two days before going to Machu Picchu. It was really a once in a life time experience.



It was such a blessing to have my parents with me. Not only could they experience a bit of how we live (even though their time with us was luxurious compared to our usual living conditions, but it was really nice just to get some love and experience a bit of home.) It was hilarious to see the parents freak out about the toilets, hygiene and crazy taxi rides. It made me realise how fortunate we are in

South Africa and also how all of us had adapted to a lifestyle I never thought I could manage. Yet with our time left I am cherishing every moment but looking forward to clean water, running water, hot shower, healthy food, clean toilets and throwing my toilet paper into the toilet and not into the dustbin next to it.



Lima: We dropped the parents off in Lima (22 hours later on another bus ride) and said our goodbyes. Once again a bump back to reality after our luxurious time we headed unto the slums of Lima where we stayed a week with an incredible pastor at his church. Eating rice and rice and liver we really realised how spoiled we were with the parents. We stayed in a very dangerous area, never allowed to walk alone or with our phones. We started an hour after we dropped the parents with our ministry. We did hours of street evangelism, prayed for people, inviting them to our evening services and even did a few streets dramas.

There we lead the evening services and fellowshiped with the people. It was such a busy but blessed time to realise how people live and how hungry they are for the word. We received quite a bit of attention as the people never get tourists in the area due to its dangerous and poor reputation. So people were very eager and willing to chat to us in our broken Spanish.

Feraneffe: After our stay there we went to Oom Hendrik en Tannie Ronel in Feraneffe. They took us into the mountains and it was such a amazing time. It was one of my favourite times of this year.

Sause: In Sause we stayed in a little house on a straw mattress and ate traditional food. They dressed us up, we went hiking, fish hunting and fellowshiped with the people. We didn't shower for a week and never had running water. Went evangelizing in the area and at churches, prayed for people, dewormed school kids and handed out Bibles. It was quite a jam packed few days with incredible scenery and people. We had a few challenges, another language (Quechua) and the people are scared of white people. Within a day the rumours were going around that the white people will kill and skin you for food. We saw kids running away from us but when God wants to move no barrier will stand!



Kincawasi: We also went to Kincawasi where we helped with a project that Tannie Ronel is helping with. It entails the empowering of women and helping them sell their woven goods. The women of Peru work incredibly hard and have a very difficult life. This is really uplifting them and showing them they are worth it. It was really fun and exciting to help and be part of something so big.



I can go on for hours but we are off to Ecuador in a few hours on another 24 hour bus ride. I feel like all we do is ride busses these days. It's been such a blessed few months and we have been very busy but the Lord has been so good to us. So I just want to encourage you to always be open and to listen to His voice. Walking in His will is amazing and His plans are always bigger and better than yours.

Thank you for all the prayers, support and messages. Thank you for all the financial contributions as well. It means so much, just seeing how some people live and their lifestyles makes me realise how fortunate I am. So thank you and God bless.

Tannie Amanda! I also just want to acknowledge and thank my Aunt , Tannie Amanda who has recently passed way from cancer recently. She contributed to making this year

possible for me. Not only was she an incredible and inspiring woman who influenced people through her joy and charisma, but also just always loving others to the full extent that she could. I realised how short life is and I will always cherish her and her passion and love for people. One thing I realised this year is you can't always give something, but your love is enough! She has always been an example of that. So thank you and may you rest in peace.

Love and blessings

Andri