

# *Santiago Update*

*news from the Emery family in Chile*

February-March 2008



No, not the Andes--the Rockies! We enjoyed this panoramic view during our furlough, while interviewing with the Littleton congregation in Colorado for new sponsorship to continue our work in Santiago.

## **Headline news: We have a new sponsoring church!**

You may remember that in our last report we were facing a crossroads as our partnership with Southlake, our supporting church for the last 10 years, was coming to an end as of June 2008. During our recent furlough (mid-December through mid-February) we hit the fundraising trail in hopes of returning to Chile to continue our ministry rather than pack our bags for an untimely departure. For all those who didn't hear our great news on furlough, God answered our prayers by leading us to the Littleton Church of Christ near Denver, Colorado. We spent a week interviewing with this church in mid-January and flew back to Texas with new sponsorship secured!



Littleton Church of Christ - our new sponsoring congregation as of July 2008

We want to thank our brothers and sisters at Littleton for their incredibly warm reception and the trust they are placing in us to serve as their representatives in Santiago. We also want to thank our hosts in Littleton, John and Amanda Mann, former interns to Santiago who are now members of the missions committee at Littleton and encouraged us to seek sponsorship there. They did a fantastic job of preparing the way for our arrival. Finally, we thank God for answering our prayers and those of our church family back in Santiago, who were diligently lifting our family up before the Lord during our furlough (and e-mailing us constantly to tell us so!). We have never felt so loved by the Santiago church as during these past few months of awaiting God's answer together. As one of our brothers here told us, "We prayed for you so often that God must've been saying, "All right, already! I got it!"

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## Church News

### Welcome home from furlough

As you might imagine, a warm welcome awaited us back home in Chile, as we had already sent word of our new support. On our second Sunday back in Santiago, we were one of two couples assigned to receive people for prayer at the back of the auditorium. The first to approach us were Francisco and Dragana, good friends with whom we're serving on Marriage Encounter, but instead of asking for prayers Francisco told us he wanted to lead the four of us in a prayer of thanks for our family's safe return to Santiago and the fact that we had found new support! It was very touching for us to be prayed for when we were expecting to be the ones praying for others. It was also encouraging to see one of our church's men stepping up and leading, even in this small way.

During this same prayer time, we had specifically asked that a number of our leading men and their wives also seek out people in the congregation that they felt they needed to pray with. The result was fantastic, as a number of families went up to other members and prayed with them for their broken marriages, healing from illness, new babies and no doubt many other things we are unaware of. It was amazing to see the Chilean couples of our church be such servant-leaders through prayer with their Chilean brothers and sisters.

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## More answered prayers

While still in Texas, we received news that the younger son of our closest friends at church, Jorge & Paola Montecinos, had been diagnosed with a brain tumor. This was devastating news to hear, being so far away from this family we love so much! Felipe (10) underwent surgery in early March. Our church members filled up the waiting room praying, and after three hours we got the wonderful news that Felipe's tumor had been successfully removed and that the tumor appeared to be benign (this was to be confirmed through a biopsy). The doctors had tried to prepare Jorge and Paola for the many possible side effects of the surgery: numbness, seizures, loss of speech, etc. But thanks to God's mercy, Felipe experienced none of these and was back home within two days! Last Sunday Jorge went forward to thank the congregation for our prayers and to announce the results of the biopsy: the tumor was benign. Join with us in rejoicing at this miracle!



Felipe shows a cheerful smile right before his surgery. the 3-hour surgery.

Prayers were lifted up several times during

We have been working with Jorge and Paola since we studied with and baptized them in 2001. Over the years they have been through many ups and downs in their marriage and in their participation with our church family, but we're hoping that the strengthening of their faith through this trial will renew their

interest in becoming true disciples of Christ. We plan to invite them soon to begin more purposeful discipleship training with us. Scott has already begun meeting weekly with Jorge with this goal in mind.



the Montecinos family (l to rt): Felipe, Paola, Jorge and Jorgito

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## Marriage Encounter

Our church's next Marriage Encounter is set for mid-May. This time around we have been asked to serve as *jefes* (leaders) of the *Grupo de Apoyo*, the behind-the-scenes work team that executes all the details of the weekend. Although we were honored to accept the position of *jefes*, the title is somewhat of a misnomer, as we ourselves will be under the leadership of two Chilean couples carrying the title of supervisors. Between now and the weekend of the retreat, we are meeting every Friday night with the other couples in the *Grupo de Apoyo*, including our neighbors, Alvaro and Margarita. They are not members of our church (although they have visited before, and Margarita attended several weeks of Holly's class on the gospel of Mark last year), but having been through Marriage Encounter many years ago through another church, they were eligible for participation in the *Grupo de Apoyo*. Please pray for Alvaro and Margarita. They seem excited to participate, and we are hoping that the friendships they make with the other couples in the group will draw them into closer fellowship with our church family and strengthen their relationship with God. Like most Chileans, they are believers with a Catholic background but do not currently worship with any congregation.

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## Celebrating Easter -- *la Pascua de Resurreccion*

Each year at Easter our church family commemorates Christ's death and celebrates his resurrection with a weekend of special events. For the second year in a row, we held an interactive event on Good Friday, depicting various scenes from Jesus' final hours on earth with the help of sets and costumed characters who told about the events from their unique perspectives. Scott, for example, told the story of Jesus' crucifixion dressed as the Roman centurion mentioned at the end of the gospel of Mark who confessed faith in Christ after witnessing his death. Various Chilean church members gave compelling performances as Pontius Pilate, Barabbas, Peter, Judas and Mary the mother of Jesus.



Pontius Pilate (played by Luis) washes his hands

our group of actors

after condemning Jesus to death

On Saturday afternoon we switched gears and hosted an Easter-egg painting event for kids in the church's front courtyard. Our kids look forward to this event every year. Then on Sunday, after a service focused on the cross and the resurrection of Christ, we shared a picnic and Easter-egg hunt in the park across the street from our church.



members of the university group at our church's Easter picnic

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## University ministry: Preparing engaged couple for marriage

Many of you may remember Christian and Diana from our furlough pictures. They are the couple from our university group who got engaged a few months before we left on furlough. Joining us for our Sunday-morning sessions are Patricio & Alicia Navarro, one of our two supervising couples in Marriage

Encounter. We are using a translation of James Dobson's book for engaged couples, *Love That Lasts a Lifetime*. The wedding is set for the last weekend in April, and Scott is to perform the ceremony -- a first for him. Our plans are to ask Patricio and Alicia to help us continue discipling Christian and Diana following their wedding; we see tremendous potential in this young couple and are happy to see the rapport that these two Chilean couples are forming.

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### **University ministry: Discipleship study group to begin**

Last year we held weekly devotionals for the university youth group on Wednesday nights. This semester, class schedules for many in our group won't permit their participation in this devotional, so Scott is trying to set up a discipleship study with two of the university guys who are still available on Wednesdays. The study will be primarily for the benefit of David Vera, who was baptized last year. David's parents, Jaime and Erica (also members of our church) recently separated for a short time but are now reconciling, and it is our desire to support and encourage David as a new Christian during this tumultuous time in his family's life. Our team's intern, Garrett Bradford, and Rodrigo Rebolledo, a leader among the youth, will join Scott and David in the study.

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## **Team news**

### **Dean family departs**

The headline news from our team is the recent departure of the Dean family. Mark and Denise were part of the original team that arrived in Santiago in March 1999. Counting our year of team preparation before we hit the field, this makes 10 years of serving together with the Deans. In that time they have truly become our brothers and sisters, and we will miss them dearly. Our time since we returned from furlough has been filled with good-bye activities for the Deans. During our recent team retreat as well as our yearly team-anniversary banquet, we set aside special times to honor Mark and Denise, and as for Pierce and Mikayla, the kids treated them to a special going-away party last Saturday at a nearby amusement park. Last Sunday, their last in Chile, the Deans said farewell to our church family, and last Tuesday night a group of 30 or so joined them at the airport for a tearful good-bye. Please pray for the Deans as they enter a new phase of their lives and ministry, and pray for our team in our adjustment to the loss of this family.

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## **Family news**

### **Back to school!**

Savannah and Haydn started back to school the first week of March. Savannah is in second grade this year, and Haydn began Pre-Kinder at his big sister's school, Redland. Both are doing well, and we are especially thankful that Haydn seems to have transitioned easily into his new school environment. He has already made several friends and is being invited over to their houses after school -- our baby boy's social life begins!



Thank you for your continuing partnership with us.

Love,

the Emery family