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Our Road to Uruguay

College

Our first experience was Baptist Bible College, Springfield, Missouri. God had called me to be a missionary when I was fourteen years old. At the age of twenty-two I arrived in Springfield with my wife and two month old daughter. I was terrified at the prospect of not having a job. I had never been without work and everyone had told me how difficult it was to find a job in Springfield. However, God led and two days later I had a Job. God really blessed us at B.B.C. and led us through many trials.

During the time of our training at Baptist Bible College my wife's dad passed away and our daughter had spinal meningitis. In spite of all the trials God allowed me to complete four years of training in only three years.

The Lord opened the door for us to return to our home church, Calvary Baptist Church in Odessa, Texas, and work for a year with Dr. Loys Vess. Dr. Vess was a real help and encouragement to us. As the time came for us to be approved as BBFI missionaries we began preparing for our deputation. My wife's mother became quite ill at this time. Because of her grave situation Glenna was not able to attend candidate school in April of 1980.

In May of 1980 we were approved and began deputation. As I look back I don't really see how we made it through those early months. The Lord is so good and I know that it was He who enabled us to go forward.

Mexico

In January of 1982 we packed our car and headed for Queretaro, Mexico. We spent all of 1982 preparing ourselves to live in a Latin American culture. We soon realized that surviving in a foreign country required more than just being able to speak the language. I really feel that we made the best decision by going to the language school in Queretaro. The school is headed by Miss Georgia Webb. She is a most qualified person in the area of language preparation and cultural change. After leaving Mexico we spent three months in Odessa, Texas. That time was spent preparing our things to ship to Uruguay and making last minute preparations. Finally, on March 25, 1983, we arrive in Uruguay.

Uruguay

We were received at the airport by the Fortune Family and a host of other people. We began looking for a house to rent and after two months we rented a large house in what is called Malvin, which is a part of Montevideo. I wanted to acquire a little more experience in the language so I worked for five months with the Eppler family.

Services Begin

We started holding service in our home the third Sunday of January 1984. We had seven in attendance the first service. This included my family and four members of the family next door. It was difficult in the beginning. Several times there was only my family in the service. The Lord blessed as He has promised to do and the work began to grow. A number of people have come and gone. In that aspect the work is not that much different from the states. The major differences are cultural.

In June of 1985 we began looking for a building to rent for the church. There were some opportunities, but the Lord did not allow them to materialize. Finally, in February of 1986 we were able to

rent a building in the business district of our section of town. We really have had peace about being in this location.

We consider our first term as a time of preparation. Our preparation involved learning and using a new language and new customs. Deciding where we were going to open a new work, finding a house suitable for services in the area where the Lord lead us also took time. When things were beginning to prosper most of our first term was over. We felt we were at a place where we could leave and take our furlough. We saw it also as a time to raise some necessary support.

1986 Furlough

In August of 1986 we arrived in the states to begin furlough. While in the states we lived for six months in Odessa, Texas and eight months in Cleburne, Texas near Ft. Worth. We thank the Lord for a very safe and profitable furlough. We were in over 138 churches, in thirteen states. The Lord also provided the extra support we needed.

November 13, 1987 we arrived back in Uruguay to begin our second term. While on our furlough the church we started went through a very difficult period. Due to a problem that arose, the church lost all but five or six people. Upon our return to the church, we were greeted by many new faces. Brother Rodriguez did a good job rebuilding the attendance.

Juan Jose Almiron, who was working with Brother Rodriguez while we were home, is pastoring a new work in a small village outside of Montevideo. This is a work that had been abandoned for several years. A group of people came to us and wanted to reopen the church. This work was reopened as a mission and in August of 1987 it was organized. This was all done without the help of any missionary and no stateside money was used. Brother Almiron was saved in our church in September of 1984. He lacks experience as a pastor but has a lot of enthusiasm.

BBFI Uruguayan Churches Planted

There have been missionaries in Uruguay with the Baptist Bible Fellowship International since 1959. Lavon Waters was the first BBFI missionary approved in 1958 and Jimmy Strickland was a missionary in Uruguay before he went to Argentina as a BBFI missionary.

Today as the result of the ministry by Lavon Waters, John Sawyer, Paul Steffler, Bill Fortune and myself, there are six churches which are organized, have their own pastor and do not receive any help outside of their own means. I believe that we can call these churches completely indigenous works. However, most are unable to pay its pastor a sufficient salary. In order to supplement his living the pastor has to find extra work.

Please remember to pray for the ministry in Uruguay.

Your fellow servants,

Jesse Parnell

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