



Iglesia Evangélica Luterana Unida
Congregación Esperanza del Sur
Agustín P. Justo y Chacabuco | Esquel | Chubut | Patagonia Argentina |
e-mail: esperanzadelsur@ielu.org.ar

Esquel, October, 2005

Here in Argentina we are half way through spring and enjoying very pleasant weather in Esquel and in the Andean region. The work in both communities increases every day as both congregations become stronger, grow and face new challenges and goals. For this we thank God. I hope to inform you, as briefly as possible, of the fruits of the labour that we are carrying out together.

Cushamen

Worship:

This year, we have increased the number of worship sessions. Instead of having them twice a month, we now hold them three times each month. At the same time I have started to stay in Cushamen and this way I am closer to the community, can make visits, and strengthen the pastoral presence in town.

Copa de leche – Cup of Milk Program

With much effort but with also with much pleasure our church has been bringing the Cup of Milk Program to the Cushamen community year after year. This current year, in addition to the traditional Cup of Milk during winter school break, we have decided to hold it on Saturdays and Sundays throughout the year and this way enhance the nourishment of over 80 boys and girls. The women of the community make this possible as they take care of this task so lovingly.

Catechism for boys and girls:

This new activity occurs on Saturday afternoons. The boys and girls learn about the Bible, do handcrafts, play, and mainly grow together in faith.

Deaconry:

Thanks to the collaboration of many, especially the women's group, the Lutheran College of Caresor in Buenos Aires, the ladies group of Florida and many others, we have been able to donate food and clothing. These are distributed to the families in the interior of Cushamen who are very vulnerable due to their socio-economic circumstances. In many cases, we are just now able to go near their homes due to the long distances and the bad road conditions, that is, when there are roads. In many cases we have to walk to be able to get there.

Baptism:

We shared the joy of the Christening of Jorge Nicolás.

Multicultural Ministries:

The Multicultural Ministries Forum was held in Uruguay from the 11th to the 15th of October of this year. It was organised by the World Council of Churches. Father and daughter, Jorge Leiva and Ana María Leiva, members of the Cushamen community, represented our church very well.

Goals for 2006:

- Strengthen and establish the participation of new members.
- Create a working group in the deaconry area to bring together our efforts in the Cup of Milk Program, the community garden, the sewing workshop, etc.
- Improve the conditions of our meeting room.
- Confirmation course for children and adults.
- Strengthen our work with Aboriginal peoples, helping them strengthen their identity and rescue their values and traditions.
- The dream of building a church, although we know is far away, continues to be present in the minds of the community.

Esquel

Confirmation Course:

A great motive for joy this year has been the development of a course for future confirmands. Liliana, María, Irma, Julio, Tatiana and Alejandro have participated every Saturday from 14:45 to 16:00 during the entire year. We were able to share and learn together about the Bible, the history of the Church, the sacraments and rites, liturgy, the life of Martin Luther, creeds, and much more. They are adults who have become members of our community in the last few years and have manifested their intention of confirming their faith in the Lutheran Church. We all anxiously wait for November 13, when they will become full members of our congregation.

Cup of Milk Program:

The Cup of Milk Program in 2004 was a very enriching experience for all. For this reason, we felt we had to continue this program that unites all of us in our efforts to share our gifts with the girls and boys.

Sunday school:

This is an area that without a doubt has become stronger this year. We have a Sunday school teacher: Tatiana. Many children attend on Sundays with their families to participate in this special area, where girls and boys come together to celebrate their faith in their own way. Without a doubt, the repairs to the parish hall have been very important. They have more room and are more comfortable.

“NO” Protest march to the mine:

The Lutheran Church continues fighting for the abandonment of the mine exploitation with cyanide project. This is a struggle the entire city is participating in. Every fourth of the month, there is a demonstration, we have been present and we will continue to do so until this project is abandoned.

Worship

Without a doubt another of the great joys we have to share with you is the growth in participation we have seen this year in Sunday service. We can say that our attendance has already doubled in comparison with last year and we hope to continue growing.

Guitar playing:

A new activity that we have added is the *Guitarreada*- the guitar playing evening. Every Saturday at 16:30 hours we get together and play the guitar and other instruments. We hope that this activity will be the initial kick-off to start the youth meetings next year.

Baptisms and Weddings

This year we have shared the joy of the baptisms of Selin Willhuber, Melany Velásquez and Lorena Belén Díaz, the wedding of Steven and Antonia on the 29th of December 2004 and on the 27th of January 2006, we will celebrate the wedding of Eduardo and Julieta.

Congregation Council:

This year we were able to establish the Congregation Council, which is made up as follows:

President: *Alicia Jung*

Vice-president: *Rodrigo Vargas*

Secretary: *Isabel Herrera*

Treasurer: *Lina Pastore*

Vocal: *Norma San Martín*

Esquel Centennial:

Next year, more precisely in February, the city of Esquel turns 100 years old. As a community we have committed to being part of the celebrations. We have already sent the history of our Congregation and photographs that will be published on the Web site of the centennial.

Construction, Repairs and Painting of buildings:

- **Congregation Hall:** This was the most damaged space that we had. We have invested much time, money and work into it since it is such an important space for the congregation. Because of this we have an area where we can get together after the service. The children have their own space for Sunday school and the Cup of Milk program, and soon we will add other activities for which it was imperative to have an area in good condition.
- **Church:** the church had severe cracks in its walls, damage to its masonry, paint, water filtration problems when it rained, damaged windows, etc. It has been a great pleasure to be able to change this. Currently, we are painting the inside. We have already painted and set up the pastoral office inside the church.
- **Perimeter fence:** We needed a fence around the property. This was very important. Not only for security purposes, but also for the safeguard of our girls and boys who can now take advantage of the yard and play safely.
- **New Pastoral home:** The new home of the pastor is on the same site as the Church. It has three bedrooms, two bathrooms, kitchen, dining room, living room, laundry, cold room and office-studio. And it is a Canadian style cabin as they are called here. We are very close to finishing it and hope to do so soon.

Goals for 2006:

- Continue strengthening our work with the girls and boys. It is growing at an accelerated rate.
- Continue and strengthen the Cup of Milk Program
- Begin the following activities: Bible Study, Prayer Group and Youth Group.
- Build a bell tower: No church in Esquel has a bell tower. It is our dream to have one.
- Natural Gas Network: One of our great needs is to be able to have a natural gas network. Currently, we rely on gas in containers, which are much more expensive and less efficient than gas via a network. This year we have had to suspend the cup of milk program, the girls and boys' meetings, and other activities during the winter due to the cold and the absence of adequate heating in our buildings.

Patagonia District:

I must say that it is a great honour to have Pastor Octavio Burgoa and Pastor Gustavo Gómez as my colleagues in the Patagonia District. We meet periodically to share our work and strengthen each other mutually. This year, the District Assembly will take place in Esquel on the 12th and 13th of November. The entire Esquel community is involved in the preparations for this event and is very happy to be able to host the people from Cushamen, Comodoro Rivadavia and Bariloche.

Without you, all of this would not be possible. We hope that our work, our willingness, our happiness and especially our growth in our faith can be the best that we can give you in return. You have so lovingly and from so far away sustained us, taken care of us, strengthened us and helped us to grow as a community in our faith in Esquel and Cushamen.

I ask that you pray to our Lord constantly for the communities of Esquel and Cushamen and for my work as Pastor of the United Evangelical Lutheran Church supported by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada.

God bless,
Pastor Sergio Utz