

PRAISE POINTS

- **Relaxing holidays**
- **Lots of rain in January**
- **More class time this year**

PRAYER POINTS

- **1st year re-sit exams**
- **Romina's recovery and operation**
- **Romina's fundraising**
- **Surubii (sports ground)**
- **Perla**

So after a long and rather hot summer its back to school for a new term. Its been a rather busy few months so I'll just run through things in the order they happened.

November was the school exams. The classes which sat their GCSE's didn't take any more exams, so I only have one class sitting an exam. Some have had to come back to school early now to have their third attempt at passing, and they are quite frustrated that I won't make the exam easier for them to allow them to pass, as seems to be the norm here with their Paraguayan syllabus. So please pray for the kids that are struggling, that they would eventually get over their problems, and progress well this year.

The first week in December I visited Claire Holmes in Concepción, which is about a 6 hour bus journey from here. I stayed with her for a weekend, during which we visited a river with the children Claire works with. This was their end of year treat, like a Sunday school trip at home. They went all day long for a Saturday. It wasn't a big river, but the kids loved it. They paddled and splashed and played, and never once complained of boredom. They ate lots of food and had a really good day. It was such a blessing to see the kids so grateful and happy for something so simple

and basic as a day at the river.



The kids at the river

During the weekend I also had the opportunity to visit a girl called Romina, who Claire and the Anglican church in Concepción have been looking after. Romina is almost 4 years old, and weighs just 9kg. She was born with no anus and her mother didn't get her any medical treatment. Since Romina rarely ate, she never grew properly. Her mum hid her from friends and neighbours, and left her alone regularly. The Anglican church took care of her treatment from around last May. She is brought to Asuncion for treatment, and so far has had one operation. She is having a 2nd in March which will allow her digestive system to function normally, but for this she needs to weight 10kg. She cannot walk or talk, and her muscles are very weak. She needs to be lifted almost like a new born baby, just longer. It was very sad to see the stark reality of what a lack of care for a child like that can do. Her operations have to be paid for since they are being done by the private Baptist hospital in

Asuncion. In addition she will need follow up treatment and physiotherapy to develop her muscles. Her operations cost around 300 pounds each, which is a huge amount of money here, so please pray that funds will come in for that.



Romina

The next thing that happened was Barrie arriving on 8th December. We enjoyed a few days in Asuncion before beginning our holidays to Chile. During these few days we took the opportunity to swim in the school pool before school. There was a dead insect / unpleasant animal caught in one of the ropes dividing the lanes, so I went to explain this to Miriam, who is in charge of maintenance. I told here there was a dead creature caught in the rope in the pool and I thought someone should do something about it. I was quite calm, and Miriam asked me to explain again, with quite a worried look on her face. Thinking my Spanish was wrong I tried again, slowly and pronouncing all my vowels clearly, as you do. But still she looked confused and asked me to show her. So we went poolside and I

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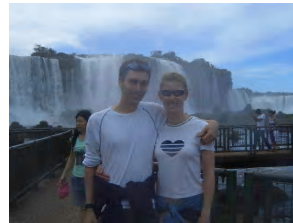
pointed to the dead "thing". Miriam burst out laughing and gave me a great big bear hug. Utterly confused I asked what was so funny. Well it turns out the word I had used to describe the "creature" was the word for small child, so poor Miriam couldn't understand why I was so calm about there being a dead child in the pool! It provided the staff room entertainment for that day anyway!

School finished on 10th December and off we went to Chile. Chile was lovely, nice and cold! The countryside was beautiful, full of contrasts from volcanoes to rhubarb growing at the side of the beach! We came back to Asuncion for Christmas and enjoyed Christmas dinner with two other missionaries here. Its was around 45 degrees during the day, and for me it just seemed wrong enjoying a Christmas dinner in shorts and a t-shirt. For me since I've arrived it just feels like its been one very long July, as the weather doesn't suit any other month of the year!

After Christmas we went to Iguacu falls for two days, and that's we're Barrie proposed. It came as quite a surprise, and left us about 4 days together to plan a wedding, which turned out to be plenty! So we're getting married on 9th September this year, just 9 weeks after I'm due to leave here.

Barrie left on new years day and January was for me a very

relaxing month. I had no commitments with school or church, so I was able to just take time to chill. I must admit I wasn't looking forward to so



Where we got engaged

much free time, as I tend to get board rather easily, but now that its passed I could quite happily spend another few weeks like that!

This term starts properly for the kids on 14th February with a welcome back service in the Anglican cathedral. All the school will be together, primary and secondary. Class begin after the service. The term is short before Easter, just 4 weeks of classes, so it will break us all in gently" This term I will be teaching the two maths classes for GCSE, equivalent to 4th and 5th year in Ireland. I will also be teaching a small group for English. Those of you who know me well will understand how much the kids of that group need prayer! My command of English grammar is far from good, so I expect to be one of those teachers who goes on learning, keeping just about one step ahead of their pupils! I was initially quite apprehensive when I found out, but now I'm quite looking forward to it. It will increase

my number of hours teaching, which is a good thing as I don't have a lot with just maths.

This year, like last, the kids will go the sports ground outside the city one day a week. Please pray for this, as it is a bit chaotic and pointless for a lot of pupils as well as teachers who have to go. The pupils who avoid sport like the plague are usually spotted hiding in various places from the showers to the kids climbing frame, and the teachers, like me, who have no classes to teach this day, simply have to pass 6 and half hours sitting there. There is no indoor places to sit if its hot, which can be a huge problem for us foreigners!

This last few months I've been getting to know a girl staying across the road from me called Perla. She is only 19 years old but has already been in prison and is a recovering drug addict. She is now a Christian thanks to a lot of persistent visits from a missionary here, and its been good to get to know her and to try to help her progress. Her family often say they'll visit her and don't turn up which is very disappointing for her. Please pray for her that she will continue to grow in her faith and that I will have the opportunity to help her and to talk to her more.

Well that's my news in a nutshell. As always photos are on bebo. www.bebo.com/giraguarani.