

Prayer Letter

April 2009

I once heard a preacher at a new year say that it would be wise to view the new year as a battle. So often we have so many hopes for the new year, that we begin to see it through rose-tinted spectacles and we expect life to be easy. Thinking of the year as a battle is more practical, it says there will be challenges and there will be victories. Living in São Luis is definitely best viewed as a battle – there are great joys and many battles.

The city

It has been suggested to me that São Luis is the least developed state in Brazil. In January I had the privilege of visiting Brasilia (the nation's capital, purpose-built in a record three years) and the contrast between the two cities is huge. Brasilia has beautifully tarmacked, organised roads with traffic that obeys signals and even has a number of sports cars. São Luis has tarmacked main roads, but often these are full of holes and without road markings, most of the roads here are deteriorating from a mixture of the heavy rain fall and the baking sunshine. There is a general lack of organisation in the road system and so the traffic does not necessarily obey the signals and signs when they are present. Sports cars are very rare here, but the roads are full of 4x4 pick-ups.

The weather

We are now in the rainy season which brings frequent torrential downpours often for a couple of hours a day. The temperature varies between 20-30 degrees; it's strange to feel cold at 20 degrees. The rain brings with it high humidity which can be seen in the increase of mould and at times nothing dries which is a huge contrast to when the sun is shining and dries things dangerously fast.

The flat

I am now almost sorted in my flat and it's feeling a lot like home, but it's been a battle. The move was such a stressful time, everything seemed to have a problem that I needed to find someone to fix. Then there was buying the furniture – I decided to have it made by a carpenter



who was suggested to me by a trustworthy friend; only the carpenter took me for a ride and it took three months rather than the initial prediction of 20 days to finish the furniture.

The work

I arrived at the end of the school year to be a part of the final training and visit the 'graduations' of those children leaving the pre-schools. This was a real celebration of all the teachers and children had achieved over the year. In true Brazilian style they were great parties!



PEPE graduation

Holiday

My parents visited for Christmas, my birthday and new year. We did much visiting both people and places – it was great to have an excuse to go back and visit Fortaleza. The welcome from the my old church, Henry George Baptist, was amazing, it was great to catch up with them over new year.

More work

The year begins slowly in Brazil, we had a hectic week of training for the teachers from the pre-school, at the end of January. Whilst a few of the pre-schools got started

before carnival, the majority started after the national holiday of carnival. So I am now a month into making regular visits in the pre-schools, encouraging the teachers and working with them particularly on the teaching side.



Me teaching

Friends

Living in the flat alone has certainly brought some ups and downs; but I am particularly thankful for two sets of neighbours who take great care of me. I am also now settling into a small local Baptist church.



My pastor and his wife with Nelice, the friend who took me to church

The visa

Thankfully a friend went to pick up the next visa form for me and to find out what happened to the last one. Unfortunately, my visa was rejected in November and due to some gaps in the system, I still had not heard this news. This means that I have been living here illegally since November and makes life very complicated. Please pray that I manage to get a visa in my passport before leaving Brazil.

I am sorry this letter has taken so long to get to you. Thank you so much for the cards, letters, pictures, e-mails and gifts for Christmas and my birthday. Thank you for your support and prayers. I look forward to meeting you all on home assignment: May – July.

*Love
Julia*

I would value your prayers for all the moments and issues I mentioned above and:

Praise the Lord:

- ◆ For the volunteers and families of the 21 pre-schools open and running in Maranhão.
- ◆ That I've managed to cut wheat out of my diet.
- ◆ For Tabernacle Baptist Church and for the friends I have made here.
- ◆ For those who look out for me, cook for me and are a real blessing here.

Pray

- ◆ God will open a door way and provide me with a visa before I leave Brazil. That I will manage to get all the right paperwork in place.
- ◆ For the pre-school co-ordinators to be motivated, organised and encouraged in the work.
- ◆ That I will be able to make appropriate preparations for returning to UK.

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