

## Experiences to Treasure

### Colorado

One thing we love about our work is that it gives us the chance to continue to meet and connect with lots of incredible people. For example, I didn't really know any of the ladies in this picture before the leadership conference we attended in Estes Park in mid-April, but we totally bonded during 10 days meetings interspersed with long talks, walks and meals together. To be honest though I'm torn between being grateful for the chance to get to know them and hating the fact that we all live on different continents!



In the 5 hours that were called our "day off" from the meetings, we drove up into Rocky Mt. National Park with six OC Int'l colleagues from Guatemala, Spain, Indonesia, and Asia. We had a great time, watching herds of wild elk and drinking in the majestic views. We hiked in the snow for over an hour up to a waterfall. Since it was cold, windy, and snowing a bit and we didn't have the proper clothing, the perfect ending to a lovely afternoon was coffee together at the local Starbucks!!



### Lookout Mountain

Our few days of vacation with Tim's parents in their new home were very laid back. We got caught up (we hadn't seen each other for a year and a half), enjoyed the house and deck, got together with friends, and took in the new sights in downtown Chattanooga. As sad as it has been for us to lose our sense of "home" as both our sets of parents moved from where they have lived our whole married life (and in my case my whole life!), both the house and mountain feel like home. Now all we need to do is memorize the address and phone number.

Tim's sister Kathleen flew down with our 5-year-old nephew Christopher so we celebrated a special combined birthday dinner overlooking the Tennessee River. We topped the evening off playing bocce ball in an arboretum covered with wisteria. Ah, the heavenly smell. And although the game involves balls, which usually is a big strike against a game in my book; we had a lot of fun. I think Christopher earned himself the title of MVP for the evening.



I was so hoping that **spring** would be in full bloom when we were there, and I was not disappointed. The trees were bright chartreuse with their new leaves, punctuated by the white and pink of the dogwoods in bloom. The azaleas were just beginning to bloom when we arrived, a promising sign since we were there for almost two weeks. One of my favorites was a tree i don't remember seeing before; Joy called it a "Snowball tree" and the blooms do look just like the Hostess brand "snowball" snacks i loved when i was little.



After an incredible time at the annual missions conference at Lookout Mountain Presbyterian Church and its sister congregation North Shore fellowship we left Atlanta at 1pm on Wednesday and arrived in Buenos Aires Thursday at Noon. En route we had a 3½-hour layover in Mexico City, during which we met up with Nahum and got caught up on life in Toluca before heading out again.

## Argentina

Our 40-hours in Buenos Aires was actually a "layover" because our real destination was Chile, but the airplane tickets were half the price if we stopped through Argentina. We always have a great time in Buenos Aires and this trip was no exception. We caught up with friends over wonderful meals and even got to be a part of the EJE youth event, which just "happened" to be going on that very weekend. We really felt connected because the children of two friends of ours were attending the event (one came from Spain and the other is an American living in Argentina), and a girl from our youth group in Toluca was working it, as were all of our Argentine friends who came to Mexico in January. One of them even put us in his work group, so we could have a place to belong and somewhere to receive our mail!

Although it was technically fall in Argentina, they had a bit of an Indian summer, helping us move through all four seasons in our 5-week trip.



## Chile

We met up with our area director, Ric Escobar, at the airport in Santiago, Chile a Sunday evening and by Monday morning we were well into an intense ministry schedule. Our first event was speaking at a Pastor's Alliance breakfast which was held at the seminary where our friend Aaron is teaching a course on youth ministry based on our materials. We also had a meeting with the president and academic dean of the seminary, which has 22 extension programs around the country and is interested in being able to offer the youth ministry course in those programs using the animated classes we're developing.



After a busy morning we flew down to the city of Concepcion, where we were planning to attend Ric's training event. To our surprise the pastor whose church was hosting of that event had planned to use Tim & me to speak to his church for three nights. We had heard nothing of this beforehand and were only in town for 2 nights! We don't usually accept impromptu invitations but decided to go ahead and teach the evenings we were available. The classes went well i think. Someone told us later, "I was talking with the pastor and said 'if this is what they do with no preparation time, what it would be like if they did have time to prepare.'" That of course made us feel good, but the only thing that really matters is if what we taught ends up making an actual difference in their practice, something which only time can tell.



We then spent four days in Santiago with our friend and co-worker Aaron Arnold and his family. We know Aaron from the Summit, an annual meeting of people who train youth workers in Latin America, but had never met his wife Angie and their two girls, Sophia and Mackenzie.



We had enough time to get to know them as a family, as well as to learn more about what Aaron is doing and to brainstorm with him about where his ministry can be heading and the courses he will be teaching at the seminary. Aaron and his ministry "The Youth Ministry Network of Chile" is a great example of how North Americans can be involved in ministry in Latin America, not doing work what local Christians can and should be doing for themselves, but serving them by being a facilitator, trainer and catalyst. Now that we've been in his world, we know better how we can help him help youth leaders throughout Chile.

After sleeping in seven different beds in five weeks we were glad to get back to our own, but, even though we love our two dogs ☺, we sure miss the incredible people we got to spend our days with.