

Laura Kyte & Fabio Gonzalez
Cachi, Salta, Argentina
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A very **FELIZ AÑO NUEVO** to you! We spent **Christmas in Cachi** with Fabio's family, which was also quickly followed by our nephew's **5th birthday**, so there was another get-together just a couple of days later. We then returned to Salta in time for **New Year's Eve**, attending the final service at San Andrés and dividing the evening between friends from church (see photo on the right!) and relatives, seeing in the New Year with the rest of the family from Cachi who had also made the trip down to the city.

There was a busy end to the year, although unlike in the UK, not with activities strictly related to Christmas! There is a very different atmosphere here in **Argentina** as the festivities approach, there is of course some buzz and last minute rushing around to prepare, but there is a lot less commercialism and a definite **summer holiday** feel, as Christmas comes at the beginning of school and university holidays, and shops tend to close and take a break; as well as many offices and places that deal with important paperwork!!

From **December 16th-18th** I attended the annual conference organised by Argentine sports ministry organisation **Atletas de Cristo**. I have been in contact with **Hector**, the director of **AdC Argentina**, since 2009 and felt that we shared a common vision for proclamation of the gospel in sport by sports people and for serving the people of sport. However, **AdC** has very much prioritised **football** since its beginnings, so my direct involvement with them has been limited, although I have always received encouragement to keep up the similar vision within athletics. Having been invited various times before, it was good to finally attend the conference and this time in particular with my heart open to exploring new opportunities within sports ministry in **Argentina**, sharing my thoughts with **Hector** in particular, including some of the challenges I experience living in **Cachi** and a desire to see sports ministry develop in the city of **Salta**.



*At the AdC conference, l-r: praying for the provinces of **Argentina**; group photo; with two AdC members from **Santa Cruz, Bolivia***

I had hoped that I would travel with others to the conference both from **Salta** and **Buenos Aires**, but unfortunately, it seemed to be the wrong time of year. This is a common challenge in **Argentina**; you may give advanced warning, and some may even say "I'm coming!" but you can never really be certain of who will go until the event is in progress! **AdC** are looking at changing the dates of the conference for 2017, so perhaps this will help the cause?!

Back in **Cachi**, the premiere "**Sports Personality of the Year**" took place! Unfortunately for me, this was on the same weekend as I was in Buenos Aires, but Fabio did a great job in organising what we hope will be the first of many annual sports presentation evenings. We were delighted that our race-walker **PG** won the overall prize, and also that **Fabio** himself received the first ever recognition from local authorities for his contribution to sport in **Cachi** as an athlete and now as a coach.



l-r: Fabio receives his award from the P.E. teacher that first introduced him to the sport; PG shares a few words; athletes enjoying a tasty dinner in our home.

There were a handful of athletes training in **Cachi** over the Christmas period (from **Argentina and Uruguay**), so it was good to be able to invite them for a meal. One of the ladies knew me from running on the track, and was also a member of my Facebook sports devotionals group, “**Deporte y Biblia, qué tiene que ver?**” even though I had never had contact with her before. This was encouraging!

Among the multitude of athletes that will descend on **Cachi** between January and March, we recently discovered a sister in Christ, **LG**, who will train for 10 days in January. She had contacted **Fabio** about accommodation and commented on his “Whats App” status (quoting *Joshua 1.9*), saying that she is a Christian. This is the third runner I know in **Buenos Aires** who is a committed Christian, as well as a few others that are seeking God in some way or who just need some encouragement to see the relevance of their faith once more. This is definitely the area that I feel most passionate about- helping athletes to stay on track with their faith in Jesus- and I sometimes struggle to see how I can serve them effectively at a distance. However, it is important to remember that it is **God’s work** and not my own, and I pray for wisdom in how best to play my part. I have a great example in Verité director **Stuart**, who manages contacts from all over the world, praying for and keeping in touch with them, trusting God’s work in each heart!

Some of you are aware that I chose to be based in **Salta city** over the last few months, in order to explore opportunities to develop a **network of Christian sports people** and to share a **vision** for sports ministry with different churches. I have been meeting up regularly with **EV**, from **San Andrés Church**, to encourage her in her witness to two girls that she trains regularly with at a gym, praying together and sharing about how God speaks to us through our experiences in sport. I was also spontaneously asked to share a bit about **sport as worship** during a 20’s-30’s meeting, as well as translate a visitor’s testimony from English to Spanish on the same theme.

I am looking at being based again in **Cachi** from the beginning of March, as I feel it is important that I am present to support **Fabio** and our projects there, which thrive and bear their fruits. However, it is likely that I personally will divide my time more between the city of **Salta** and the small town of **Cachi**, due the strong conviction I feel about discipleship of Christian sports people in particular and encouraging churches to understand the opportunities that God creates in and through sport to be a **witness for Christ**, to love and to serve others locally, nationally and internationally. Practically, this would mean regular visits to **Salta** with the intention of following up contacts in sport and churches, and I value your prayers as I look ahead to working more closely with leaders of **Atletas de Cristo** and **San Andrés Church in Salta**. It has taken some time to re-think not only my personal vision for being here in **Argentina** but also our vision as a married couple, but we give thanks to the **Lord** for sustaining us and guiding us, and for the **prayers, friendship and support** of loved ones near and far.

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