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The Bell Family

Missionaries to Brazil

“Working with The Lord to fulfill The Great Commission in Northern Brazil”

September 2018

Dear Praying Friends,

My heart is heavy, as I sit and compose our latest report. Outside I can hear thousands of precious souls singing praises to Mary after finishing a mass in preparation for the Círio de Nazaré. Earlier as I walked around trying to understand what was going on I saw thousands of young people barefoot. They were waiting for a chance to pull a rope connected to a box that contains the statue of the “Virgin Mary,” the object of their devotion. The street was adorned with displays paying homage to it. I passed a sign that roughly translated said, “The ministry of public works greets the virgin of Nazareth, the daughter, wife, and mother of God.” These sights and others expose the spiritual darkness that dominates the thinking of so many people here. These people are no more lost and blind than others that are living in the world without Christ. We need to not grow complacent when it comes to the spiritual condition of the people around us every day. Thank you for working together with us to reach the lost with the Gospel of Christ.

God continues to work on and through us here. Progress is still being made on the language front. I have noticed improvements in listening and thinking. We have been able to share the Gospel with several people through tracts last month. I met an Uber driver that was interested in practicing speaking English, please pray about this. It is more common for someone to say they are “interested” than for them to follow through. We were able to have another family from our neighborhood for coffee. I think it was one of the best visits we have had. Our children enjoyed playing with their three boys. They had studied English in school and between our children’s growing knowledge of Portuguese and their English, they got along quite well. The husband and wife are both professionals with very traditional values. They seem to be fairly strong in their Catholic beliefs. When they were explaining to us how important the Círio de Nazaré holiday is to people here in Belem, they likened it to Christmas. They spoke with great emotion.

There are several concerns that could use your prayers. Brazil had major elections in the beginning of October. The results require a runoff to be held October 28th, to see who the next president will be. Please pray for God’s will to be done. After the Círio de Nazaré holiday, we need concentrated prayer for those that received Gospel tracts. On the home front, we are having a birthday party for Elijah and Caleb this Saturday. We will have friends and family coming, some of whom are not believers. Pray for good fellowship and Gospel opportunities. Finally, we are attending my brother’s wedding towards the end of the month. We will be stateside for a couple of weeks and are looking forward to seeing friends and family. Pray with us about this trip. Thank you for taking time to read and pray.

For the Glory of God,
Chris Bell

Prayer Requests:

- **Preparation of hearts in Belém to receive the Gospel - Building relationships with neighbors**
- **Language Acquisition - Open doors to share the Gospel- Bell Academy**

“Unto Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.”
Ephesians 3:21

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Next Wednesday, October 17th, we mark our first 6 months in Belem. Thank you for making that possible! Here is a bird’s-eye view of our progress.

1. We are the proud possessors of a rental contract, all the customary appliances and utilities, three air-conditioning units, a bank account, a cell-phone plan, an internet plan, national I.D. cards, driver’s licenses, and a car. Although it all sounds simple, some items were laborious to acquire, and we are thankful to have them. Virtually the only middle-class accoutrement we lack is a dog!
2. Elijah, Sarah, and Caleb rarely even mention the heat, eat Brazilian food with near-local zest, cheer for the Brazilian national team (though not with near-local zest, which may be a good thing), and have adapted to their vastly changed circumstances with resilience. All three are growing more confident in exercising their Portuguese skills. They have acquired some 2 or 3-times-a-week playmates through Jiu-Jitsu, but we are still praying for deeper friendships. Now that we have the car, we hope to be able to interact more with the children at the church in Ananindeua.
3. The Bell Academy closed out one school year and charged into the next. Okay, maybe we didn’t exactly *charge*, but we are plodding steadily. And if plodding was good enough for William Carey, how can I disparage it?
4. We have had all our immediate neighbors over except the right-diagonal-across-the-street (how’s that for an adjective?) set, and I finally met their matriarch, Sra. Fatima, last week. The family that shares our left wall eluded us for about 3 weeks, but on the 4th try, we made contact and enjoyed a warm visit later that week. Their names are Renato and Janaina, and they have 4 sons, 3 of whom we met. He is a lawyer and she is a veterinarian who teaches at a local university. They seem to be nominal Catholics and robust social conservatives. Their sons are 17ish, 11, and 6 and we hope the kids will become friends at least to some degree. Dona Sheila, who lives in the street, is disintegrating before our eyes and doesn’t seem to care. I interact with her almost every day; please pray for her.
5. We witnessed our first Cirio. I had heard of it, seen pictures of it, prayed about it, and “braced” myself for it for months; I was still unprepared. As hundreds of people streamed through our quiet neighborhood, many barefoot for the sake of penance, most wearing shirts depicting the “virgin of Nazareth,” it was impossible to ignore or overlook their lostness. But in fact, they are equally lost every other day of the year. It was a graphic reminder of why we are here, and of how completely inadequate we are for the task, apart from the help of God. Thank you for praying.

So, I end where I began: *Thank you for making it possible for us to be here.*

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