

## A New Dawn on a New Day in a New Year and a New Season - Bolivia



*Now listen, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money." Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. Instead, you ought to say, "If it is the Lord's will, we will live and do this or that." James 4 13-15*

Don't be concerned – I don't have any plans to begin a business and make money! This verse needs to be understood in the context it was written. However, the teaching is a theme I believe is very important and appropriate as I share about the trip to Bolivia, and indeed it's important in every single aspect of my life, wherever I am in the world. 2022 marked 30 years since I became a Christian, marking my own individual decision to accept the amazing gift of grace in salvation, through repentance and believing that God is God, and Christ died for my sins.

Having grown up in a Christian home in the Highlands of Scotland, I knew about God, but never had a personal relationship with Him, and pretty much lived ignoring His reality, making my life choices and decisions around my will. Having grown up in that culture and community I was very familiar with people talking about plans for the future, and concluding their words with the phrase "God willing". It was also so used frequently in written form. My father, if he was writing about future plans, would close the sentence with the letters "DV" which stand for the Latin "Deo Volente", meaning "As the Lord Wills".

Now the language of submission can be sensitive to some, even misunderstood, but this is submission to the will of God, He's God! He is creator God, He gave, and continues to give us life, each heartbeat and breath is given by Him – He knows all things, and He loves us so incredibly we can scarcely believe it at times, as I, like many of you, continue to struggle with the reality of sin, within ourselves, in others and the fallen broken world we live in. As Alex Motyer writes, "We receive another day not as a result of natural necessity, nor by mechanical law, nor by right, nor by the courtesy of nature, but by the covenanted mercies of God."

A friend told me that when she sees my newsletter coming into her inbox, she always pauses to make a cup of tea because she knows that it's usually quite a long read. My suggestion is now maybe not a cup of tea but a pot of tea because there are quite a few stories ahead. I've wondered how to share each of the parts. First of all, I'm going to tell of the facts and logistics, about how the trip went regarding flights, places I visited, people I met and then towards the end I will try and share

some of my overall reflections, and my thoughts on areas where I would particularly value prayer as we are moving forward with the possibility of ministry in Bolivia.

### **Bolivia Trip Plans**

Thank you to everyone who has reached out to me with words of encouragement and prayers regarding this trip to Bolivia. As you would have read in previous newsletters, I have prayed for God's leading and guidance, His will regarding making the transition from AIM to Pioneers International, then searching for His will as to where He would send me, to serve Him with children at risk. Together with my home Smithton Church, and Pioneers UK, we began exploring the possibility of serving in Bolivia.

After some great zoom meetings with Greg Muir, the Pioneers Bolivia Team Leader, then together with Pioneers UK and my home church, plans were made for a field visit 8th-27th Nov. At the end of October, I had been to Bawtry outside Doncaster to meet with some of the Pioneers UK Office personnel. We had some security training that was good if quite difficult at times, for 2 days, then meeting with the office team and getting to know the faces and the characters behind the various names. The plan was I would return from Bawtry to Inverness on Thu 3<sup>rd</sup> Nov to have a quiet weekend before preparing to fly to Bolivia on Tues 8<sup>th</sup> Nov.

However, my sister Christine in Portree had a bad fall and fractured her left leg and ankle and needed to come through to Inverness for surgery. It became clear that it would be difficult for her to get back to Portree and manage by herself so, after discussions with the Pioneers Europe Team, Bolivia and Smithton Church the decision was made to postpone the trip for a week to fly 15<sup>th</sup> Nov. Just a note that Christine is improving considerably. Thankyou to everyone who knew about that situation and were praying for her. That was the first of many changes to the plans ...

### **Arrival in Bolivia**

The first flight from Inverness to London went as planned. However, the London to Madrid flight was delayed, such that I would miss the flight from Madrid to Bolivia. So, I was re-routed to Sao Paolo, Brazil, then on to Santa Cruz in Bolivia, and finally to my first destination Cochabamba.

Unfortunately, my suitcase only caught up with me the day before I left Bolivia. At times it was uncomfortable to be without familiar items like clothing and toiletries. Yet I was witnessing children in extreme poverty and on the streets, and God was reminding me that, although the material contents of my suitcase were important, I should be thankful for what I had - shelter, clothing and food. With all my international travels over many years it's amazing that this is the first time my luggage has gone missing and there were many important lessons God was teaching me through this. However, I was more than delighted to be finally reunited with my suitcase at 7pm the night before I left Bolivia. Not just to have my own things again but also Scottish calendars and shortbread and other small gifts I had brought for my various hosts. To be able to hand them over was a delight.



On arrival in Cochabamba, I was met by Tom Sutherland, a Pioneers Team Member, who took me to stay with my hosts, a lovely Bolivian family, Renee and Miriam. They didn't have any English and I had no Spanish but we managed to communicate and I'm very thankful for their hospitality for those first few days. The reason for going to Cochabamba, for those who may not have read the previous newsletters, was that this field visit was planned around the three locations in Bolivia where Pioneers are working. The plan was to start in Cochabamba then go to Sucre then on to Tarija for a

couple of days, then back to Sucre and return to the UK. I'm very thankful for the opportunity to have seen all three locations and get a feel for the geography of Bolivia but the logistics made it a very busy and, at times, tiring and exhausting trip, physically and mentally.

### **Cochabamba**

Arriving in Cochabamba, I was very tired from the journey, but after some food and rest we went off to visit various ministries. As Cochabamba is at an altitude of approximately 8,400 feet, I was already anticipating that I would experience symptoms of this altitude, breathing, just getting enough oxygen, and also dryness. A significant mistake was that I had packed my altitude medication, that could have helped with a lot of the symptoms, in my suitcase which I didn't have. Unfortunately, this medication is not available in Bolivia. My experience of altitude in Cochabamba and Sucre was that I would easily tire, and become breathless during short walks and while talking. After any stairs it would take some time to catch my breath. I don't want to sound over dramatic but it was difficult at times. The dry air made for dry eyes, mouth, skin and particularly nose causing occasional bleeding. However, I'm informed by the Pioneers Team that you can acclimatise after a few weeks however, my trip was short and involved moving about quite a bit. I would hope and anticipate that my body would adapt if I were to be there for an extended period.



Cochabamba is a large city of about 2 million people. I hear there are parts that are very beautiful, but my impressions were very much within the poorer areas, under developed, under served and under resourced, and that is reflected in my biased experience of these few days. However, that was why I went there, why Pioneers are working and serving God in the poorer areas.

I went to see ministries that are helping children at risk in a variety of different ways. One ministry in particular is of a very sensitive nature. For that reason, there are no pictures and I'm not able to say the name of the organisation. However, it was a real blessing to have the opportunity to meet with the Bolivian lady who started this work and her team and to meet some of the children, young children up to teenagers, in very difficult circumstances. That was a real blessing that occupied most of the first day.

The second day, I was trying to be careful with my mood, being quite tired and not having clothes, toiletries, etc but I really recognise that God was doing His own work in my heart to appreciate even the clothes that I had and that God had provided a home and shelter and food. I had to be reminded to be thankful for all that rather than defaulting to being out of sorts for not having my own personal things.

I was quite surprised when Tom said he was going to pick me up at 06.30 am on the second day, but the reason was we were picking up some young children from the Women's prison. I'd understood we were going to a day care facility for young children in a very poor area that is very much under served. Families in these communities are recognised to be vulnerable, but this additional aspect of the prison was something I'd heard about but never encountered.



We arrived at the prison, and for security reasons and post covid precautions, were not allowed in. It was uniquely moving to see 11 under 5's came running out to meet the team. The youngest was only 18 months and for his own reasons decided to sit on my lap which was a blessing. These children have either been born to or were very young when their mothers were imprisoned. They stay in the cells with their mothers but Pioneers, with the day-care ministry, have permission to come and collect these children Mon to

Fri. The day-care facility was a beautiful vibrant place, very child friendly and colourful. The children that we brought and the other children coming in from the community received a lovely welcome, are given breakfast and there are play areas and opportunities for early learning and catch up education amongst other aspects of the ministry.

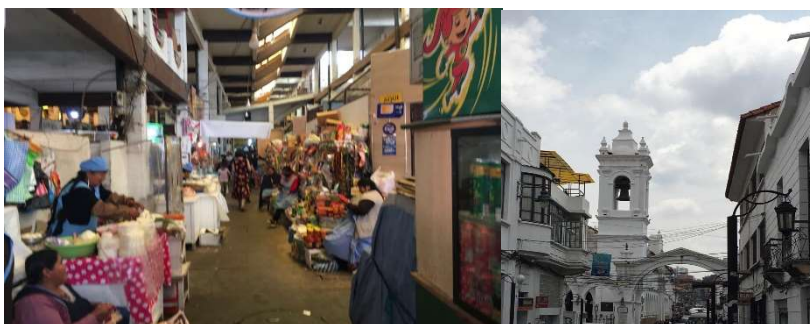
After that we went to a nearby school, linked with the same ministry, that also serves the more vulnerable families in these poorer communities. It was such a blessing to be able to be there. I was able to have some time with one member of the staff who helps with first aid. We had a bit of time together and there are certain areas in healthcare that they would love to develop.

Later on that day we went to see a small factory producing natural grain snacks, called the seven grains of the Inca. It's an income generating project for women to help fund these ministries. It was great to see and meet with these ladies and be encouraged to see what ministry is going on there with Pioneers team members partnering with local people and reaching out to some of the most vulnerable children.



### Sucre

On Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> Nov I flew Cochabamba to Sucre. Some people have been asking if Sucre is the capital as Santa Cruz had been known to be the capital. There's history and politics there but I do understand that Sucre is the official capital. It is smaller in population than Santa Cruz, Cochabamba and La Paz. I understand that Santa Cruz is the economic capital and has the international airport. The seat of government is La Paz but Sucre is the place of independence from Spain. That's where Greg and Lily Muir, the Pioneers Team Leaders in Bolivia, have been ministering for about 15 years. They work with the Bolivian Church, a Baptist Church with 3 locations in the city and a missionary working to reach the Quechua people.



In Sucre I saw more of the mixture of European/Spanish influences, architecture and culture - the plazas, the big Roman Catholic churches and buildings and then there are the poorer areas where the indigenous Quechua people are living and working.

There's an area, the farmers market, an open market selling fruit and meat and many other things, where I was able to get some of the toiletries I needed and buy a few T shirts. The contrast between

some of the more affluent areas and the poorer areas really struck me as quite significant, even though I was only there for a short time.

The people groups are really quite different. The indigenous Quechua people, the women particularly, with their colourful outfits, felt hats and the wraps they hold their babies in. A lot of similarities all through the trip to Africa and India, particularly with women and children. I have much to learn about all that. The anthropology, history and politics of the people groups.

It was good to be in Sucre, to meet with Greg face to face rather than over Zoom, to stay in their home with Lily his Bolivian wife. Greg is Canadian. The picture is with Greg, Pastor Abdias Mamani of the Sucre church and his wife Betty, myself and Lily, Greg's wife.



Again, the altitude at 9,200 feet is a bit higher and that was significant. Because I didn't have the altitude medication, I wasn't able to see if that would have made a difference.

It was good to meet with Greg and Lily and get to know them as brothers and sisters in the Lord. It was good to hear from them about Bolivia and Bolivians and get to know their thoughts on the possibility of joining the team. Lots of good discussion time and freedom to ask questions and I'm thankful that God gave us that openness to build up relationships.



There isn't currently a ministry with children on the streets in Sucre, but there are a lot of thoughts and concerns about the increasing number of children from the Quechua people group on the streets. Therefore there wasn't a ministry to visit but the thought is to explore what could be developed with

the Bolivian Church and to look at what might be the underlying issues that are contributing as push or pull factors to the streets. It was good to be able to go with Lily around the farmer's market, visit a community clinic trying to reach out to the Quechua people group and get a feel for the city, moving around on public transport. We were able to see some of the other markets and the European plazas, drink some nice coffee and eat some nice food. I certainly never went hungry during my time in Bolivia.

My time in Sucre was good. It was helpful to meet with other team members. Rodrigo is Bolivian, married to Emily who is Australian and they have a little daughter Hannah. Some other team members are on home assignment but I was able to connect with them through the team prayer meetings.



### Tarija

The following week, Lily and I went for a few days to Tarija, in the south near the Argentinian border, where Pioneers have been working and partnering with the local church. We stayed in a hostel and I met with some of the pastors and some of the women's group there. Very kindly we were invited for lunch by a lady called Diana. She is 81 and a great grandmother, was originally from California but came to Bolivia with the Peace Corps in 1963 and met and married a Bolivian Pastor. She invited us for to join her and her family for thanksgiving lunch and what a



blessing it was.



She showed us around her beautiful garden where she grows such beautiful flowers, herbs and also Grapes, Apricots, Lemon, Peach, Pomegranate, Orange, Grapefruit, and figs! The meal was as delicious and somehow, they had found out about it was my birthday, so it was a combination of a huge thanksgiving dinner with their extended family ending with singing happy birthday. Quite a unique 54<sup>th</sup> birthday celebrated in Bolivia.

### Back to Sucre

And then back to Sucre. It was good to be able to have two Sundays in Sucre to get a feel for the church there. Again, very new and very different, not just that it's in the Spanish language but how they worship. It was good to just sit and be part of such a fellowship in a new continent, a new country, a new culture. The first Sunday I was able to listen in live to the Smithton Church service (6.30 am) before going to the Sucre Baptist Church morning service (10 am).



<https://vimeo.com/782116836>

The second Sunday ended up being quite a bit busier as in the afternoon (3 – 6 pm) we went to join a Quechua church that the Bolivian missionary from the Baptist Church has been setting up. They were celebrating two years of their church so I hope you enjoy the video clips of some of the music and celebrations and food. <https://vimeo.com/785385579>



From the video, in the car travelling to the church service, I was fascinated to hear the lady in pink speak in the Quechua language which to my uneducated ear seemed so different to the Spanish European language. I asked Greg to ask her for permission to video her speaking to show my friends and family in Scotland and around the world that are interested in this trip. I asked her if she had any words for them as I wanted to show a beautiful Quechua lady speaking in her beautiful Quechua language. She laughed at the suggestion initially and

then it was translated that what she was saying was that she was a beautiful Quechua lady speaking in her beautiful Quechua language and she was sending love to the people in Scotland.



The Quechua church is in an area on the outskirts of Sucre and it's certainly a lot poorer than some of the more urban areas. Coming out of the car and hearing this beautiful music and singing was a unique experience. However, it was a joy to worship together with them and give thanks for the two years that God has given them. The Quechua language, even to my ear that doesn't yet understand Spanish, is so different. In the midst of such poverty, men, women, young and old, with children running around and women cooking, the sense of community, the sense of joining together, and their joy in worshipping the Lord in their own language was quite special. Greg is fluent in Quechua and actually preached in Quechua. I



felt very welcomed and privileged and loved being there.

Al Ferrero ministry in Sucre is important for young men and women and also reaching out to university students. It's a subsidised café with a hangout area, a place to get good meals and socialise but also for young women who are pregnant with a support network and counselling around that ministry that Pioneers has been partnering with as well.

### **The Way Forward**

At various times I was asked, both in Bolivia and from the UK, if I was deciding or had decided to be part of the ministry serving God in Bolivia. I want to try and make it clear that the process with Pioneers, as with many organisations, is that first of all it's not an individual choice or decision. Every missionary has to be part of a home church, which for me is Smithton Church, under the leadership of the Missions Committee. There has to be that collective agreement with the Kirk Session and the Elders to even apply to an organisation. That process was gone through with Pioneers and in July I had been accepted by Pioneers.

The field trip itself in many ways went well. There were lots of opportunities to see the country, see different locations, different ministries, meet different people and see and hear so much and I'm very grateful for all that. My mindset was that this was a time to be there, to watch and listen and learn and explore and ask questions and discuss.



Now this is a time to debrief with my Missions Committee, to talk and discuss and also, with the Pioneers UK and Pioneers Bolivia Teams. I'm reminded again that my newsletter of January 22 had the title 'A New Dawn, on a New Day of a New Year in a New Season'. 2022 has had a lot in it as I'm sure it has for all of us. We've had many joys but also many sorrows but there is a sense that now there's a similar theme so, we're exploring the next steps. The trip itself was an important step but it's just one step of many others that all need to come together. Different people need to discuss and agree and ultimately if it is the Lord's will it will happen. If it's not the Lord's will then we will explore what the Lord's will is.

### **Return to Scotland**

The trip home was eventful. It should have been Sucre to Santa Cruz in the afternoon, 11 and half hours overnight to Madrid, then the next afternoon to London and an evening flight to Aberdeen. Unfortunately, it took three days as the Bolivia flight was delayed so I was late for the Madrid

connection and had to stay overnight. Travelled to London the next day, on to Aberdeen in late afternoon then the train to Inverness. Made it home at last at 11pm on Saturday the 3<sup>rd</sup> of December. Started coughing a lot on Monday and tested positive for Covid and had a long week of fairly constant coughing and sneezing and running nose. Began to feel better by the 12<sup>th</sup> December and was pleased to test negative.

### **Communications**

Please feel free to ask me any questions if you would like. Please remember to use my new email address [hebrides88@gmail.com](mailto:hebrides88@gmail.com) As I have now completed service with AIM, my AIM email address will not be working anymore.

### **Partnering – Financial Giving**

Thank you to everyone who has expressed an interest in partnering in ministry by financial giving. For anyone who has been giving towards my support with AIM, my allowance from AIM has now ceased. If you have been supporting me financially through AIM, and wish to continue to support me through Pioneers, then any regular payments or standing orders to AIM should now be redirected to Pioneers. This will not happen automatically and it will require that any existing standing orders or regular payments to AIM be cancelled and new arrangements put in place with Pioneers UK. However, if anyone is not clear about any of the previous instructions, please email [finance@pioneers-uk.org](mailto:finance@pioneers-uk.org). They are a very helpful team so feel free to contact them and ask about what you need to do. Please make sure that you allocate any gifts and standing orders with my reference code, if that is your wish, otherwise the fund will be allocated to the general Pioneers fund.



Regarding ways to give please see the options below and ensure that you use the following as the reference: **300SC1-Campbell.**

1. **Bank Transfer:** - If you have access to online banking, you can make a payment online/set up a standing order which you can control (when to start and stop) or if you want to increase or decrease the amount. Please note: We can't set up a direct debit on your account as only your bank can do that.
2. **Cheque:** - You can send a cheque to Pioneers UK who will bank the cheque same month they have received it.
3. **Stewardship or CAF:** - You can also gift using these organisations and Pioneers will be able to collect the funds from them.
4. **Website:** - This payment option is currently down. As the new website is almost complete it is hoped this will be available soon.
5. **PayPal:** - Supporters can also give via PayPal

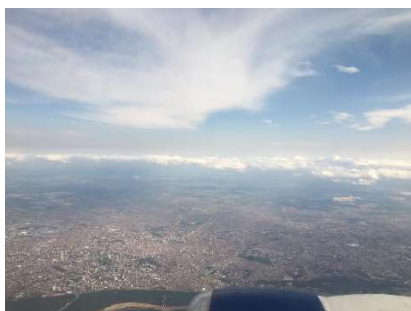
### **Bank Details:**

PIONEERS UK MINISTRIES  
NATWEST BANK  
SORTCODE: 60-02-50  
ACCOUNT: 69239584

Once the first payment is received, if this is a standing order, you will be set up as a donor and emailed a donor number, which can be used as a reference for future donations.



## Reflections



As I am such a Celtic story teller, I hope you will have gained some understanding of how the trip went. As you will have read there were significant issues with flights being delayed, rescheduled or rerouted but I am thankful to be back safe and sound having survived all of that. I hope I answered some of the questions about the logistics, what it's like being at high altitude, how the travel went, what I was able to do and the ministries I was able to visit. Also, for you to understand where we are in the sequence of steps on this journey to ministry

wherever God wills. Decisions have not yet been made and that's ok. There are some meetings ahead in these coming weeks where there will be more discussions and God willing, and agreement on an assignment. I understand that many have been asking about a timeline, not just if I have decided to serve God in Bolivia but also when I would be going. There is not a definite timeline as yet because we are still at the discussion stage but I ask that you would pray with us as we follow along this journey.

I would also ask each one of you, those of you with the Christian Faith or those without, to feel part of this journey. To feel as if you really are partners as I believe you are, each of you as you are reading this. Partnership in ministry isn't just those who pray for me, although that is obviously so very important, or those who partner in finance, and I'm extremely thankful for those who do that but all who read these newsletters or share your interest and encouragement, you are all partners. I hope as we continue on this journey together that you will increasingly feel part of what God is doing, not just in and through me but being part of what I believe is an exciting opportunity to serve God with some of the most vulnerable and under-served and at-risk children.

## Conclusion



I ask even now that you think about and pray for each child who is on the streets, not just in Bolivia but around the world. It's unimaginable for many of us and yet the reality of the humanity, the heartbeat and breath of every child is not lost with the Lord. There are no estimated numbers with Him but each one is precious in the Lord's sight.

It would be a great privilege to be a part of serving them. However, as Jesus prayed in Gethsemane, "... yet not as I will but as you will" (Matt 26.39)

**Marsali**