



Andy and Kati Walsh

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Location: Brazil



What we do: Working with local church partners in Florianópolis, helping people in challenging contexts to find hope in Jesus



Bringing hope where people have given up on God and the church

Dear friends,

This past season has been marked by both highs and lows in the mission here in Brazil. While we've made meaningful progress in presenting our proposal to develop dedicated church spaces within the prison system, we've also faced some setbacks that remind us to trust in the Lord's greater plan.

One of the more difficult moments came when the director of the women's prison decided to cancel the course we had been preparing to run there. Unfortunately, the director was unable to see the value of the Prison Fellowship course, which centres on understanding the gospel and how this can prepare inmates for life after release. Instead, a sewing course has been introduced. While we lament this decision, we continue to pray for any barriers to be removed and trust that the seeds sown will bear fruit in God's time. It's also worth noting that this is the third director in as many years, and with such frequent changes, we remain hopeful that new opportunities may arise in the future. For now, this particular initiative is on hold.

In the men's prisons, however, the ministry continues to grow. During this term, we completed two full terms in different prison units, and in mid-April, a third cohort will finish the programme. That's nine full terms delivered so far. The course has now been expanded to 12 sessions, meaning that over 24 hours together we are able to explore the foundations of the Christian faith in depth, with ample room for questions and rich discussions. With each cycle, our understanding deepens and our portfolio of resources expands!

The prison authorities are now keen to select participants themselves rather than us doing so. While this takes the decision out of our hands, it's opening doors for men who may never have encountered the gospel to hear it for the first time. It's in these conversations that we see how culture so often distorts and dilutes the identity of Christ. Many assume that salvation is a broad and all-encompassing path, when in reality, Jesus clearly taught that "the gate is narrow and the road hard that leads to life, and only a few find it" (Matthew 7:14). The guards are also becoming more familiar with us, and while they still find it unusual that, as a foreigner, I (Andy) would choose to be here rather than living and working in the UK, small conversations with them are opening doors for deeper connections. Kati will co-lead the groups with me to strengthen delivery once her security clearance comes through to enter the men's prison.

A breakthrough came when our proposal to plant churches within the prisons was approved by Pastor Luís



A privilege to witness seven men publicly declare their faith in Christ – behind bars, but truly free

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**With Jesus
With each other
To the edges**



Magalhães, the regional lead for the Baptist prison ministry in southern Brazil. With this endorsement to proceed, we presented the plan to the director of the São Pedro de Alcântara penitentiary. We were accompanied by Pastor Antônio, whose nearly 40 years of experience in the prison system added valuable weight to our meeting.

The leadership team received us warmly and acknowledged that the initiative aligns with the constitutional right of inmates to participate in church services – something that, in practice, never happens in the local prison system.

Following this, we had a similar meeting at the Florianópolis penitentiary. In what can only be described as the Lord's timely provision, Pastor Luís was able to join us unexpectedly at the last minute, as he happened to be travelling through the state from his base in Curitiba.

We had been stirred for this moment for a long time, knowing this was a pivotal moment in the mission. We were met by director Max Cléber Orth, who unexpectedly introduced himself as the regional superintendent overseeing all five prisons in the area. A practising Catholic with a personal interest in prisoner rehabilitation, he listened attentively and expressed support for the project. He approved the proposal on the spot for São Pedro de Alcântara, saying it was an ideal fit.

Regarding Florianópolis, Max expressed support but explained that due to the prison's planned relocation, structural investments and new initiatives are currently restricted. This means a delay but not a closed door. The proposal is now being reviewed at higher levels of authority. While this was very encouraging, we are aware that it will require follow-up. A further meeting will be necessary to ensure that the next steps are taken, and until then, we'd be grateful if you can continue to walk with us in prayer for the breakthrough we want to see!

We are deeply encouraged by where things stand. Each time we walk through the prison corridors and glance out at the courtyards where inmates gather for their two-hour break outside their cell, we see groups of 20+ men praising God, sharing the Word and pursuing Christ together. And yet, in the penitentiary, which has over 1,800 men, and is at 20 per cent over capacity, there is no one officially recognised to shepherd these men in their faith. Some, by exception, now have a Bible but most have no consistent pastoral care. It brings to mind how Jesus, seeing the crowds, was moved with compassion, for they were like sheep without a shepherd (Matthew 9:36). This vision strengthens our resolve to press forward.

Alongside the prison ministry, we continue to serve as leaders in Vineyard Church Florianópolis. Andy preaches regularly, while Kati is organising ministry teams and supporting leaders. As a church, we have completed some challenging series on The Way of the Disciple and Doctrines of the Gospel, both of which have deepened our understanding of following Christ. After a season marked by various transitions and the intentional work of restoring stability, we are now witnessing renewed growth within the church and we are full of faith and anticipation for all that God has prepared ahead.

Thank you for your prayers and partnership in this mission. We look forward to sharing more updates soon.

Andy, Kati and Eva



***Photos from top to bottom:** There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents (Luke 15:10); Kati continues to shape the church with love, vision, and servant leadership; Eva's sixth birthday party – celebrating the joy she brings to our world!; leaving the meeting with Pastor Luís – hearts full of faith for what the Lord has in store*



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We've been encouraged to hear stories from others who are part of our wider area of work. In Honduras, Carlos had a change of heart working with a Christian ministry, and in the UK Garry Ion reports on how Carlisle's Community Shed is sharing skills, community and Jesus. Read more at churchmissionsociety.org/bringinghope

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