



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

Dear friends,

Kati, Eva and I are all doing really well. We are becoming increasingly adapted and settled as a family into our new life here in Florianópolis, Santa Catarina. Eva is really enjoying school and is popular among the children at the church, even though they are slightly older there. We are also learning, as the Lord guides and prepares the way, where to focus our missional activity.

Over the course of the last quarter, working ever more closely with our friends at Vineyard Floripa, we've continued to engage people through street evangelism in the local community. Andy has particularly learned a lot in terms of the cultural differences around how people on the street prefer to be approached. People generally welcome an opportunity to receive prayer into personal situations, before moving into a short conversation about faith and then hearing about the location/time of the church service. Although some people are open, there's also a high incidence of other religions including Mormonism, Jehovah's Witness, Spiritism, Candomblé, local pagan gods and syncretism, i.e. Christianity mixed with other beliefs. It's challenging but as a team we're committed to prayer and intercession combined with street evangelism, fortnightly on Thursday afternoons. Next month as church we are moving to a new building in the area, so more change and transition is afoot!



Eva, four-and-a-half now, happy, full of beans and growing up fast!

We have enjoyed the opportunity to lead church services at a drug rehab centre called Guerreiros de Deus in collaboration with Pastor Paulo and Pastora Ana Fernandes. We continue to learn much from them in terms of how to contextualise the gospel message. Andy preached recently on The Work of the Holy Spirit and Freedom in Christ. On both occasions many of the residents took a step forward during the ministry time and received prayer, which was really encouraging. In the upcoming period we will be exploring other possibilities to lead informal church services in similar settings more locally. In this regard we will be able to forge stronger relationships with people and put ongoing work into discipling new believers.

Our main priority and focus has been our ministry in the prison system, which has been progressing well. Kati is a regular member of the team that visits the women's prison. She has enjoyed the opportunity to share the gospel among the inmates and also enjoyed it when four women got baptised at the beginning of August.

In May we arranged for FBAC (the Brazilian Fraternity for Assistance to Convicts), the local partner working in collaboration with Prison Fellowship International (PFI), to provide us with training to deliver the PFI Bible

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course specifically geared towards discipling new believers in the Brazilian prison system, which explores the fundamental questions around the Christian faith. We (Andy and Kati) were joined by three other members of the Vineyard church and all five of us are now accredited training facilitators of Viagem do Prisioneiro, an eight-part discipleship training course delivered over 16 hours.

One of the highlights over this last period was finally receiving the approval from the prison director of the male prison in Florianópolis to initiate the course. It is very challenging to initiate new activities in the prison system here due to the set way in which religious organisations are permitted to access the prison population.

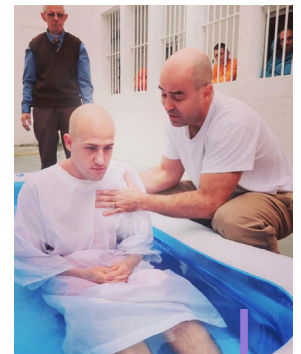
Rehabilitation of the prisoner is a significantly lower priority relative to punishment in Brazil compared to in the UK and many other countries. The prison chaplain function does not exist in the prison workforce structure. Another thing that restricts the spiritual welfare of the prisoner and the capacity for someone to be reformed through faith in Christ, is that selected church volunteers are only permitted to access the prison for a 90-minute period each week. At the discretion of the duty prison guard we are directed to a different prison wing each week, drastically reducing our ability to follow up with specific people. The focus of this ministry over the many years my team members have been involved can really only be evangelism. So we feel very fortunate to have the favour of the prison director and his authority to deliver this course. Pastor Antônio who leads our team is very pleased we have taken strides in this direction and is very supportive.

As we prepare this update, Andy is halfway through delivering the second cycle of the course. On each occasion he received the maximum number of referrals (12). Each person receives a Bible, the language of which is adapted to prisoners' needs and he makes the sessions as friendly and interactive as possible. He includes extracts from other materials he's familiar with such as testimonies from those that have found Christ while in prison. On course completion each person receives a certificate. The men really welcome the ongoing support in their newfound faith and Andy has received a good deal of positive feedback. One man called "Anderson" said, "I now know the reason I came to prison. I realise God brought me here and it was to find faith in him and for me to complete this course." Here is a two-minute video which reveals a little more: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AZKGUGS-Y9M>

Two men who completed the course are due for release in four–six weeks and are from the same suburb where our church is located. They expressed their desire to meet on a regular basis and potentially become Vineyard Floripa members.

Looking forward we aim to replicate this model in the women's prison and in Case Regional de São José, for young offenders. We've already hit the expected roadblocks to mobilise the course into these settings, having recently been refused in both instances. We therefore would appreciate if you could join us in prayer for breakthrough in these areas in the upcoming few months. Thank you for all your prayers and support,

Andy and Kati



Photos from top to bottom: A needed family break away to Urubici, a nearby mountain range; Kati together with the team and four women baptised in the prison; the first recruits to the prison discipleship course; men finding faith, being disciplined and baptised in the prison



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Adelante: Saturday 23 September 2023. A hybrid event – in-person and online – to celebrate, learn about and pray for mission in and from Latin America. Book at churchmissionsociety.org/Adelante

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