

Dear Everyone

Greetings from Winter in San Francisco. We are just a bit south of the tropic of Capricorn, so it is not terribly cold by UK standards. However, houses are mostly unheated and poorly insulated, meaning that the five or six degrees outside will be closely reflected in the ambience in the dining room and we take to wearing lots of layers indoors for these few weeks.

Covid remains the big news story in Argentina, and while progress is being made, any ideas that it might go away soon are being replaced by the realisation that the real world trajectory is more complicated than anyone could have imagined.

At the moment we are experiencing our second wave, coinciding with the Winter flu season, so healthcare systems are stretched, not yet quite to breaking point, but in some areas coming close. To give a brief snapshot in numbers, we are currently reporting nationally approximately 26,000 new infections per 24 hours, 600 deaths per 24 hours, and intensive care beds at 75% occupancy.

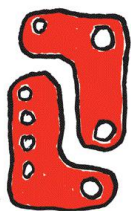


Argentina has been criticised both domestically and internationally for their handling of Covid. One, the high death rate; with 0.57% of the world’s population but 2.25% of covid deaths, Argentina is ranked 5th for mortality in countries with populations over 20 million people. Secondly, and probably relatedly, the slow vaccination rate; government published figures show that five months into the programme, the percentage of people with one dose is still only 29%, and with two doses a paltry 8%. And thirdly, and probably also relatedly, inconsistencies in social restrictions. To take one example, four people are allowed to drink round a table in a bar, but the same four people would not be allowed to play a game of tennis, because bars are allowed to open, but sports facilities are not, although we have not yet seen any information on the preventative properties of beer. This inconsistency and others, has led to a culture of open rebellion; for example in San Francisco, sports leaders got together and made a pact that they were all going to function anyway, and since they have public opinion on their side, the authorities are turning a blind eye.

The probably good news for us as a church is that the pastor phoned the municipality to seek permission to meet and was more or less told “Do what you like; everyone else is!” Today was our first Sunday back, we had a lovely, gentle service this morning, devoid of the intense emotions that had been so dominating meetings prior to lockdown, so we pray this might set a pattern for the next chapter. Martin has some preaching dates coming up, and Hazel is also back on the preaching rota after taking some time out.

Other good news is that there is a flurry of activity to improve the vaccination situation, possibly related to upcoming mid-term elections here in October. In San Francisco they gave a first dose to around five percent of the city’s population in one hit on Friday, Hazel included (Martin already has his first dose) in the city’s “superdome”, photo above. We are hoping that one outcome of this might lead to schools reopening since education seems to be the one area where lockdown is being strictly applied. Schools across Latin America, including in Argentina, have been closed for longer than any other region in the world. In the meantime we continue homeschooling as best we can, and give thanks for the “not-quite-legal” sporting activities that enable our kids to have outside interests and ongoing social contact with their peers.

Thank you for reading, and for your ongoing prayers and support. Have a good month!



Hazel
X
Martin



Joni & Daniel

