

## Dear Everyone

Greetings from celebratory San Francisco! Apart from the football, the academic year here also finished on Friday, so the general atmosphere is holidayish and demob happy, and Christmas hasn't even got going yet.

Our big school trip project is coming round fast, from the 3<sup>rd</sup> to the 5<sup>th</sup> of January, so we are putting the final details together and chasing parents for paperwork – that is going to be the hard part. For those of you who pray, please do! For the paperwork, and for the trip as a whole. It is a big undertaking and Hazel has a lot on her shoulders.

### When the football isn't about the football....

Many of you probably saw the celebrations in Buenos Aires on international news channels. The same scenes were repeated all over the country – this photo is San Francisco town centre. Our household is not very good at watching football. When we first arrived, we were given to understand that since football is culturally significant here, it would be important for us to show an interest. Hence, for the 2006 world cup we watched more football than ever in our lives. These days we think we have been here long enough to be granted permission to be ourselves, so sometimes we have done other things, like going on long cycle rides (Hazel and Joni), and it is from this perspective that two things have particularly struck us.



One; There were a lot of other people who also weren't watching the football. We met them; riding their bikes, walking their dogs, washing their cars, or just sitting out in their front gardens enjoying the lack of traffic. It felt like a little club as we greeted people to whom we might never have spoken otherwise. And two; many football fans know even less about football than the non-football fans of the Frost household! Vis the young adults celebrating one of Argentina's early wins, who had no idea where we were in the tournament or who Argentina might be playing next. Or the Scout leaders arriving for a meeting directly from celebrating the semi-final who weren't sure who had been on the pitch for Argentina "Messi, and er, the other one...". Or the kids showing us their sticker album... "I haven't got Messi yet, but I have some other good ones." "That's nice, which other good ones do you have?" "Er... I can't remember."

Fandom is far more important than simply football. And as many a good anthropologist has observed, peoples' real reasons for doing something don't always coincide with why they think they are doing it. In Argentina, parents dress their babies in their team's onesies from birth, and the child learns which team is "theirs" long before they have any inkling that this is related to a ball game or what the overlap between the two concepts might be. So, it probably isn't too surprising that for a significant percentage of those celebrating in the plaza, fandom is more about being with friends, singing songs, jumping up and down, and having a reason to celebrate, than it is about whatever happened on the pitch. And if we are honest, there are plenty of people in our churches whose reasons for being there appear not to stray too far from that model. But even where our churches are concerned, it is probably less helpful to start moralizing about the "shoulds" than it is to recognize and understand that this is where we are starting from.

Which is pretty much what Hazel preached last Sunday. We read the Christological hymn in Colossians 1, together with the Nativity account in Luke 2, and talked about how the creator and ruler of the universe became a vulnerable human baby in order to walk with his people in all their messy reality, and ultimately to redeem his creation to himself.

We hope you have a blessed Christmas, whatever you are doing with it. Thank you to everyone for your prayers and support through 2022, and we pray that you have good start to 2023.



Joni & Daniel

Hazel  
X  
Martin



Latin Link 

