



# The Smith Family

Church planting in  
**Argentina**



Dear Pastors & Praying Friends,

February 03, 2010

The events over **the last couple of weeks have changed our lives** forever. On Tuesday, January 19<sup>th</sup>, Joel began experiencing hematuria. We took him to the local hospital and ER. They set up an appointment for Joel to see an urologist in Vanderbilt Children's Hospital in Nashville, TN on that Friday. Joel's symptoms increased by Thursday the 21<sup>st</sup> and we were advised to take him an hour away from our house to the ER of Vanderbilt.



During the renal ultrasound, a 2 inch tumor was found in his left kidney. More tests were conducted and the doctors said it was most likely a common and very treatable cancer called *Wilms' Tumor*. Surgery was scheduled and by Friday night the 22<sup>nd</sup>, **Joel's kidney had been removed**. The head surgeon reported to us the surgery went very well. The doctors expected pathology results on Wednesday the 27<sup>th</sup> to confirm the diagnosis of *Wilms' Tumor*, but the results pointed to something more serious and more testing would need to be done on the tumor.

After a week in the hospital, **Joel had recovered nicely** from a surgical standpoint and we went home Thursday evening the 28<sup>th</sup>. On Monday, February 1<sup>st</sup>, we went back for a full day of tests and scans to establish a baseline of Joel's health to monitor his reaction to future radiation and chemotherapy treatments. We also met with our oncologist who informed us about the results of further testing of the tumor.

Joel has a rare cancer called *Malignant Rhabdoid Tumor of the Kidney* that is in **Stage II**. Only 15 cases are reported per year in North America. The stats online about Rhabdoid are not pleasant with a survival rate of around 25%. When pressed, our oncologist put Joel's situation in a survival rate range of 35% to 50%.

**The treatment plan** includes radiation and chemotherapy and will start this Friday the 5<sup>th</sup>. The plan lasts 31 weeks or about 7 months. It may take longer if Joel has to skip weeks due to sickness or low white blood cell counts. Different chemotherapy injections require different amounts of time in the hospital. It will vary somewhat, but the basic cycle of chemotherapy treatments is this:

- Week 1- overnight hospital stay
- Weeks 2 & 3- one day outpatient
- Week 4- four day hospital stay
- Weeks 5 & 6- off

The first 3-4 weeks will be accompanied by outpatient radiation on weekdays.

All of this news has come very quickly. It has been hard to see Joel in pain and even harder to imagine losing our precious treasure. **Our Heavenly Father has given us His grace during this time**. Though this came as a complete surprise to us, God knew about it all along— before Jennifer and I were called to missions as teenagers, before we married, before Joel was born, before we started deputation, and before He led us in our decision about plane tickets for next January. God makes no mistakes and does all things well. We have taken great comfort in some basic attributes of God. He is all knowing, sovereign, all powerful, just, and He loves us.



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Jennifer and I have talked a great deal about all of this and **we do not believe it changes our calling** as missionaries, our plans of starting churches in Argentina, nor our goal to be on the field by January 2011. No doubt it will change *how* we go about deputation. Jennifer and Joel will not be able to travel with me most of the time; there may be times I must reschedule a meeting when my family needs me; and the overall difficulty will be much higher.

I realize the decisions we make moving forward may not be popular with everyone so I want explain our thinking behind all this. We discuss things and make decisions as a family with direction from God's word, and counsel from our pastor. While at college, I often heard Dr. Sexton say, "**God-given assignments do not conflict.**" Among other things, I am a husband, a father, and a missionary on deputation. Jennifer is a wife, a mother, and a missionary on deputation. These are roles God has called us into, so we don't have to choose between them. God will enable us to be the husband and wife we need to be, the father and mother we need to be, and the missionaries we need to be without neglecting the other roles.



I'm not saying it will be easy, but when God calls, He equips. One thing is for sure: when all is said and done, **HE will have to get the glory** because I would not have planned this, nor do I deem myself capable of handling all this. We believe that God has prepared us to deal with this as part of His plan for our lives. I am sure that God has much that He intends to accomplish through this trial, including: refining our relationship with Him, being a witness to the lost, and encouraging and challenging the faith of many believers.

I know God has already used Jennifer's faith to challenge my own! While in the hospital, I asked Jennifer if she thought all this would change our goal of being in Argentina by January of next year. She said, "No." I expressed to her that I was impressed with her faith to which she responded, "Well, what have you been preaching about all these months? --**how big is God?**" We have a Wonderful Savior!

We are so thankful for all those who responded so quickly to our urgent prayer update and prayed for us specifically. I realize that not all pastors have email these days, but for any future urgent prayer requests, **it would be good if at least ONE** member of each church was on our email update list so he could notify the pastor.

I do not like to turn prayer letters into wish lists, but many have asked us what we need. We believe that *most* if not *all* his medical expenses will be covered by his insurance, but there are some things that would make the road ahead of us a smoother one. The most obvious to us at this point are:

- continued prayers** [remember Jennifer is an expectant mother! (Aug. 9)]
- new supporting churches** (increased travel expenses for Joel's treatments)
- a second vehicle** (Jennifer needs the van for Joel's treatments while I travel)
- a laptop with webcam for Jennifer** [so we can do Skype (video) calls]

It is best if checks are made out to All Points Baptist Mission with "Josh Smith" in the memo, and sent to the *Support Address* listed below. An extra note about what it is for would be helpful. Thank you so much for your prayers and support. To pray more specifically, please check our blog [www.smiths2argentina.blogspot.com](http://www.smiths2argentina.blogspot.com) that we update frequently. May God bless you in a great way!

For His glory,

A handwritten signature in cursive that reads "Joshua Smith".

**"Brethren, pray for us." I Thessalonians 5:25**

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