Life is beginning to slow down a bit as we settle into our new surroundings here in Cusco, Peru. In our last update, we spoke of our little, two-bedroom apartment and the blessings that were poured out on us as we moved in. Family members helped us install a kitchen shelf to act as a pantry, and a bookshelf in the bedroom. Hannah was ecstatic and couldn’t wait to load up the shelves with everything that still needed a home (spices, mugs, tea, and dry goods; books, art supplies, knickknacks).

Since then, we have been to Ayacucho and back, visiting Steve’s sister Esther, her husband, and their two small children. That visit lasted almost two weeks.

The bus trips there and back were spent almost entirely easing our way around switchbacks like this one...

May 1, 2016

Dear Family & Friends,

It is wonderful to be entering ministry here in Cusco. Steve preached his first sermon on Saturday April 30th to a youth gathering, and has two more sermons planned in the near future. We went to two church services on the 24th, Jesus El Buen Pastor and a church plant La Fuente which is near the city center. The main pastor at the La Fuente asked Steve to preach during an upcoming absence, and the pastor of Jesus El Buen Pastor also asked Steve to preach later this month. We started, the first weekend of May, participating on the worship band at church. Hannah plays the piano and Steve sings. It is a beginning, but faces are starting to be familiar and some names are sticking.

Hannah has been asked to consider teaching art to some homeschooled missionary kids and music to those wanting to play piano at our church. We are not sure yet which of these projects we can take on, but we feel very welcome and even needed. Our goal is not to settle into Cusco life longterm, and yet we are here to build relationships and serve as we are able. We look forward to being sent by our church community to Santo Tomas, just as our community in Indiana sent us to Peru; and then to come back and visit when we need times of retreat/refreshment.

Hannah continues to work diligently on her Spanish. It is wonderful to see her passion to improve even when she gets frustrated at herself for not picking it up faster. Steve is sure she will be very conversational in six months or less at the rate she’s going. Having often practiced her

Steve: I was asked to preach on the topic of fleeing temptation for my sermon last Saturday. I started with 2 Timothy 2:22, “Flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.” After giving a brief explanation of what “youthful lusts” consist of, I went into the heart of my message, how to flee those lusts. Paul doesn’t just tell Timothy what to flee from, he tells him what to flee to. And... (most importantly) Paul tells Timothy who to flee these lusts with. He says, “…with those…” Finding a community of fellow fleers is vital for the Christian who really wants to stay out of trouble. Satan’s favorite strategy is to divide and conquer. Stay close to those who are pursuing righteousness, faith, love, and peace, and you will find that pursuing these virtues is a joy; try to live in isolation from the body of Christ as you pursue those things and you will find yourself chasing the wind.

During our visit to Ayacucho, Esther’s daughter (right) and a neighbor practice the toddler skills of nonverbal bartering.

Steve working out a song in the hymnal shortly after we arrived at our apartment.
Spanish by reading her English/Spanish Bible, she can currently follow a sermon better than she can a
neighborly conversation. This is a joy on Sunday and a bit frustrating for her Monday through Saturday!
We want to thank you for your prayers! We have already gone through times of loneliness and
missing our friends and family back home, and we know that your prayers are helping us to stay strong.
Please know that even now, with this very real distance between us, you are still very much in our
hearts. Homesickness can come at unexpected times. We both realize changes like this take time, just
like none of our relationships with you happened overnight. Please pray that God gives us courage to
reach out even when feeling shy or introverted. Please pray that we can balance our pursuit of
community here in Cusco with our vision to move seven hours south to Santo Tomas.

Blessings,
Steve ‘n’ Hannah

Hannah: Last week on the return bus trip from Ayacucho, I made a list of topics I could include in the next few
updates to share about what life is like here, or what we are learning about Peru. I will call these facts, opinions,
and observations yapas, which means something extra (like a baker’s dozen in the US).

Yapa #1: What size is Peru? How does it compare to, say Indiana?
Considering the variety of geographic features and length of bus trips I’ve been on,
maybe the size of Texas? Nope, even bigger, reaching almost from the
top to the bottom of the USA. It is slightly smaller than Alaska and almost twice
the size of Texas, coming in at 496,200 sq miles. We live in southern Peru. If I
wanted to travel north to “nearby” Ecuador and stand on the waistline of Earth,
getting there would be about like traveling into Canada from Northern Texas.

Yapa #2: A description of an Andes Roadside Oasis.
On very long bus trips through the mountains,
typically at a meal hour, the bus will pull off in
the middle of nowhere at a rest stop. The big
buses have bathrooms on them, yes (I don’t
need to elaborate), but still there is a collective
rush for the bathrooms.

As buses are by far the most common mode
of transportation in Peru, both within cities and
between cities, roadside oases are well-
supported family businesses. Indoors is a
café-like restaurant and a store selling
packaged food and drinks. Outdoors are the
bathrooms. Animals, gardens, and laundry
lines are out back. The scenery is verdant; a
river rushes nearby; a parrot cocks its head
and scrutinizes visitors from a low-reaching beam. A fruit vendor may set up a stand on
the premises, too.

The restaurant offers a simple menu, often a chicken noodle soup made from a chicken that was previously
running around the backyard living a happy, organic life. You can ask for coffee; if they don’t have it, they might
offer you lemongrass tea instead.

The bathrooms vary in comfort. Some have functioning tanks for flushing; some are flushed with a bucket; and
on this most recent trip we took, I learned that some are holes in the ground—properly engineered holes; I mean
just as somebody buys a bathtub and installs it in their bathroom, these squatty-potties were purchased in one
piece, complete with treads alongside the bowl, and set into the ground with exit plumbing and a cement
surround. Also: one doesn’t expect seats on a toilets in Peru, especially public toilets. However, you can treat
the porcelain rim however you habitually would treat the seat of a public toilet in the States; the biggest difference
is what temperature to expect when you sit down. Also: it is practically essential to keep a roll of toilet paper with
you, as there is almost, almost never toilet paper in the bathroom. For your convenience, there is almost always
a woman sitting at a little desk nearby accepting 50 centimos for your use of the facility, and she will give you a handful of toilet paper.

The store sells bottled water, with and without carbonation, and other drinks such as bright yellow Inca-Kola. A display case offers a hoard of candy bars and chips, or popcorn, or unfamiliar parched grains for snacking. If you are obviously a gringo, you may pay more for the items you purchase. Sometimes this unofficial gringo tax is reduced if your Spanish is really good, but you ultimately have to decide for yourself if you are willing to pay the price they ask.

The bus driver is usually ready to leave before all the passengers are. I watched a family determinedly finish their breakfast while everyone else packed themselves back into the little combi (van-sized bus) in which we were travelling. Nobody got very upset, the driver just kept hunting around for the missing passengers. However, once everybody was packed in and the driver delayed for his own reasons, several passengers barked out complaints—“¡Hora! Time! ¡Vamos! Let’s go!”

In spite of some unfamiliar ways of doing things, we appreciate the way of life here, and are quickly feeling at home.