

Link Letter No.3 January 2014

Dear friends,

Happy New Year to all of you, and many thanks for all the wonderful Christmas cards, letters, emails and gifts that I have received. It is really lovely to know that we are thinking of each other, and praying for each other.

As we start 2014, I have been reflecting on the past year – saying goodbye to family and friends, my commissioning service, settling in with my host family in Quito and starting at language school. All of these things had the potential to be stressful (many were emotional); however, I have to say that I have felt pretty free from stress. When I mentioned this to someone, in an email, he replied “*stress free! In a foreign country, foreign culture and a foreign language*”.



Province Day



Sharon Wilcox

CMS mission partner

Ecuador

Sharon Wilcox is a CMS mission partner working and living in Ecuador. She is working with children and adults with severe learning and physical disabilities, in a culture where disability still carries a high level of stigma.

I paused and realised that, to come to Ecuador in my own strength would have been impossible as I would not have survived a week. I had trusted EVERYTHING to God, and He has been faithful. He has been in everything – “*Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with*

thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4: 6-7). I really have felt stress free (apart from wondering if I will be able to understand what people are saying to me – but not really stress), even spending my first week in the school in Santo Domingo not understanding anything that people were saying.

Since my last link letter we have started a new term, which has seen a lot of activities happen including the Province Day, celebrating six years of Santo Domingo being a province; the children learning a dance and a drama to perform at several public events; local heats of the Special Olympics, which has resulted in two boys in my class being selected for the national event in October this year (the World event is in Los Angeles in July 2015 and I am hoping to go there to promote the work of the Foundation I am working with as well as doing some evangelism).

The homework club continues in Laura Flores, but the numbers are dwindling as parents do not appear to think it is important for their children. November saw me begin to teach a “healthy eating” class on Friday mornings. This is important as so many people here have a poor diet. They eat a lot of rice, salt and cola and



Healthy eating classes...



The Special Olympics Team

the adults do not seem to want to change their eating habits, so I hope that by encouraging the children they will grow up eating more healthily. The children have enjoyed cooking as well as learning about hygiene and kitchen safety. Every lesson starts with a prayer of thanks for the food God provides, and asking Him to keep us safe whilst we are cooking. I will never forget the excitement in



Dancing for joy...

the voice of one of the boys when he arrived at school, on a Monday morning, immediately telling one of the staff that he had made a tomato and avocado salad, and how tasty it had been. The children are allowed to eat what they make, or take it home. The school is extremely grateful to the Life in Abundance

Trust in the UK, for donating the money to buy the equipment for these lessons.

In December I wrote to the board of the Foundation, to ask if they would like me to develop a project for the children once they have reached 16 years old and have to leave school. Currently there is very little in Santo Domingo for them to do. Having spent 35 years working with young people and adults with learning disabilities, I felt God saying that this is what He has planned for me to do whilst I am here. The project will involve planning occupational activities, employment training and developing Life Skills.

With this in mind, Jill, Pastor William and I met with people from the Salvation Army and CLAI (a Latin American organisation which works with churches) to seek advice and ideas as they do similar work in Ecuador. It quickly became apparent that there are no organisations offering meaningful support to young people or adults with special needs once they leave school (at least not in Quito or Santo Domingo). I am still waiting to hear whether the Foundation wants me to undertake this project, but following these meetings I now know that I have to write it, for the sake of the children in the school who have no future if I don't. God will provide the people to take on the project.

I am also waiting to hear if the Foundation wants me to visit churches in Oklahoma and Arizona in North America, on their behalf, to maintain and develop relationships as well as promote the work of the Foundation. It needs to be someone who knows the Foundation and speaks English (we currently only have three possible candidates who meet the criteria). I was happy to volunteer.

Then Jill told me the Church in Oklahoma has a congregation of around 7,000 people.

For your prayers...

Please thank God...

- For increasing my ability to speak Spanish.
- For the enthusiasm of the children in the “healthy eating” class.
- For showing me what it is that He wants me to do during my time here.

Please pray for...

- The work in Laura Flores, and the two new barrios; that the women there will be freed from abuse and become more independent, at the same time as getting to know the Lord.
- That the Foundation will find a Latin American to take over from Jill as director of the School and the work of the Foundation.
- That I am able to produce a project which will work, and for which funding will become available, (and that I will be able to produce it in Spanish).
- That a new telephone helpline will be up and running this year, for anyone in desperate need to call. A team has already been trained ready to start.

Blessings/ Bendiciones

Sharon

PS. Did you know that you can now receive link letters by email, sent as a pdf? If you would like to receive them this way and help CMS save money, please contact **Jonathan Self on jonathan.self@cms-uk.org or 01865 787527**

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Church Mission Society

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