



**Name:** Sharon Wilcox

**Location:** Ecuador

**My call:** To show God’s love in action to people with learning disabilities

**My role:** To teach life skills that enable people to become independent, valued members of their community

## Hello from Ecuador!

**Dear friends,**

I hope that you had an enjoyable Christmas and New Year. I pray that we will all find peace and happiness as we walk with the Lord this year. As always, I thank you for your continued support and encouragement. 2016 was a mixed year for me, and I apologise for the absence of a link letter throughout the past 12 months. However, I know that many of us met during the past year so you know a lot of what I have been doing.

From January to the end of March 2016, we continued working with our two students, Jostyn and Washington. It was during this time that Jostyn finally learned to write his name without assistance, an occasion that delighted him as well as us. I also said “goodbye” as I was unsure if I would be returning to Ecuador, although I had promised

Petita (who I worked with) that I would try to return for three months to see how things are going.

I arrived back in the UK on 2 April, and was just finding my way back into British culture when, on 16 April, Ecuador suffered a huge and devastating earthquake. I wanted to fly straight back to offer a helping hand but I then found myself feeling grateful that I was home and that God had spared me the trauma of being in Ecuador. And then just before Christmas, there was another earthquake on the coast which caused the death of three people, buildings to collapse and nearly 700 families facing the prospect of sleeping on the streets over Christmas. Please pray for the



*Top: Speaking at the Adelante conference in the UK last May*

*Above: During the Christmas party at the Foundation*





*Top left: And then there were seven... (the students I am teaching)*

*Top right: Watching the Olympics*



nation and for all the families affected.

In early April I had the chance to catch up with family and friends for the first time in three years, before beginning a tour of England visiting churches and speaking at conferences and various groups. In total, I gave 22 talks in all and it was such a joy for me to be able to meet some people for the first time and revisit churches that have been supporting me.

The hospitality I received was amazing – a big “thank you” for your generous provision. I truly enjoyed meeting all of you and sharing some of my experiences as well as learning more about you.

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to continue the project that I had started. The answer was beginning to dawn on me when, at the beginning of June, I went

on a four-day retreat and really felt God saying that I should return and follow advice from people at CMS. So I decided to do that and in October I returned here to Santo Domingo for another three years. I am here to support and train Petita while working currently with seven students.

When I returned I found that, typically, several things had changed including news that the Foundation was in the process of changing its statutes to exclude working with adults with learning disabilities! This was precisely what I came back to do!

However, thanks to the prayers of many of you, I managed to find a time to meet with Luz Celly, the Foundation’s director, and we reached an agreement whereby the youngsters who come to us from the school can remain in the programme until the age of 25-30 if necessary. If we want to give them some employment training as well as life skills, most of them will probably need to remain.

I am so pleased that the

## PLEASE PRAY...

group has grown, and that we will retain the seven students until the end of February. As the school year ends, the chances are that the group will grow, bringing more challenges but ones which we will embrace, like when I realised that one of the group is deaf and uses Ecuadorian sign language. I have managed to learn a few words so far, and at the Foundation's Christmas party we sang a Christian song with signs as well.

Some of you will have seen a video of that, taken by one of the parents. I should say that four out of the seven youngsters do not have any speech so using sign language is useful with them too. Some of the parents are fearful that by doing this their child will not attempt to speak, so they do not want us to teach it but hopefully the song will show that we will always use the two, speech and signs, alongside each other.

In November, William who is 17 was entered into the Ecuador National Special Olympics swimming event which was held in Santo Domingo. We all

went to support him, which was both fun and a privilege. He won both a gold and bronze medal! The following week, several of the others expressed a wish to learn to swim – so that is now on our agenda for next term if we can find a pool which we can afford to use once a week.

Christmas time for me was very relaxing. We had a week off and I was invited to spend five days with an American friend in Quito. During this time, we shared Christmas dinner with 10 other people, went hiking at the Molinuco Waterfall and swam in the thermal waters at Papallacta. Once I returned to Santo Domingo, Petita and I walked out to San Gabriel de Baba (about 7km), and bathed in the river before returning home in the pouring rain. That was the day that the rainy season really started. However, walking in warm rain is quite pleasant!

So now the new year has arrived. We started back to work on 3 January, and we hope that the youngsters will continue to learn and enjoy what we are doing.

Blessings/  
Bendiciones,

*Sharon*



*Left: William wins the gold medal!*

### Please give thanks for:

- A lovely time back in the UK.
- A wonderful Christmas time.
- The seven students who are a blessing to me every day (well almost!).
- Petita and all that she managed to achieve whilst I was away.

### Please pray for:

- Student Lesly, as she has therapy for a hip problem; if successful she will not need an operation.
- Petita and I as we plan for the new year of classes.
- Jill Ball who will be visiting in February for a couple of months – that she will be healthy and able to do all that she has planned to do. And that she will be happy with any changes made by the Foundation.
- Ecuador as the tremors continue to happen and cause people to be fearful. Pray that they may find peace.

### You can give online to

#### Sharon at:

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