



	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



Dear friends,

I hope that you have been enjoying the beginning of summer, wherever you are in the world right now. The climate is certainly changing. We have had much less rain this year than in the previous three years that I have been here in Santo Domingo.

An update from my last letter – Lesly’s therapy went well and she has not needed an operation, although she is not able to continue with her swimming, which means her dream of swimming in the next Special Olympics has gone.

Since my last newsletter, I think the only thing that has not changed is that I am still in Santo Domingo. At the staff meeting at the end of the school year in February, Luz Celly announced that she would be making changes to the Foundation’s working practices, and that this would affect the Life Skills programme (although at that point she had not worked out how). She told us to go on holiday, forget about everything and she would let

us know on our return.

During that time Jill Ball had arrived from the UK, with news that the funding from the UK was being cut with immediate effect. So on our return to work, Petita and I were informed that the directors needed to use the building we were in, to raise funds for the Foundation, so we needed to move out.

The only alternative was to use a medium-sized classroom in the school. Pastor William admitted that he had no idea how we would be able to continue the programme, but that that was the only option. Luz Celly also informed us that we would no longer just be working with the Life Skills programme, but with all the children from the age of five and upwards. I decided that I needed to think hard about what to do, and spent the next couple of weeks doing a lot of praying. I thank many of you for joining with me in prayer



Top: The “Hombre Nuevo en Jesucristo” church - see text on page two

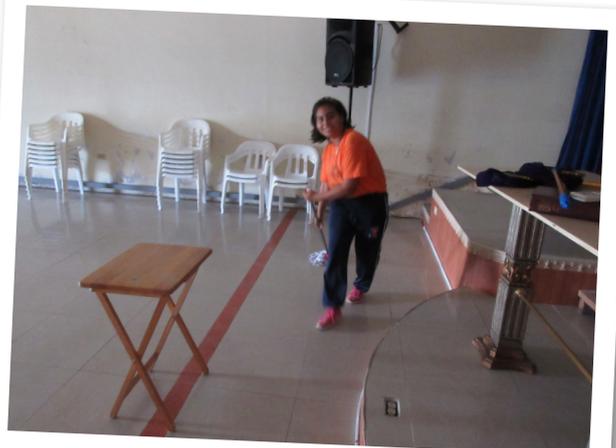
Above: Petita and I enjoying a coffee in Quito during the holidays





Top left: Camila and Gloria playing basketball

Top right: Camila mopping the floor



at that time. I realised that to stay would mean that I would not be doing the will of God as he had called me to do. So I resigned.

I thank Katy Griggs and Luz Celly for their attempts to alter things a little so that I might stay, but you can't teach people to cook without a cooker, and it would have meant me helping to deliver classes planned by other people, reverting me to a classroom assistant. I do not believe that is what God called me here to be. I left before the New Year started, and this year they now have 10 students.

I had no idea where God wanted me to be, but Pastor William offered to take me to visit some churches, to see if they would be interested in starting a programme. The pastor of the second church we visited, Hombre Nuevo en Jesucristo, immediately said "yes". We agreed that it would be a social enterprise of the church, which would ensure that we did not need to register it with any other official body. The pastor asked me to come and talk to the congregation to get their

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approval, and to see if we could find a volunteer to work with me. As a result we found a volunteer, called Gloria. The congregation

were enthusiastic, so on 29 May we started a new programme with just one student, Cristian. A couple of weeks later, a young lady called Camila joined us. She uses sign language. I had been in the middle of telling her grandmother that we did not have the skills to be able to communicate with Camila, when the church secretary interrupted to say that there was a member of the church who used to teach sign language, and so she would ask her if she could help us. She said yes. So Camila joined us and on 24 June we had our first sign language workshop.

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Cristian enjoyed making Father's

PRaise AND PRAYER

Please give thanks for:

- All the things God has provided for me.
- The 12 students now being helped as a result of the project I wrote.
- The help I received from Pastor William, and his continued support.
- Petita and her sons, who helped me decorate the flat, and who are always here for me.
- Lydia and Mark being here.

Please pray for:

- Gloria as she learns how to support the young people.
- Petita as she continues to support 10 students without sufficient resources.
- Life in Abundance Trust in Ecuador, as it tries to provide the same standard of service as before, but with less money and several changes.
- Pastor Gustavo and the church where I work. That their ministry will continue to grow, and that their support for the programme will increase as they see the benefit to the young people.



Above: Camila making hard work of squeezing oranges!

Day cards, which were bought by the youth group in the church for their dads, which means we have a few dollars for new materials and Cristian has a few dollars to spend on himself.

At the same time as leaving the Foundation, Jill Ball let me know that I needed to leave her flat by the end of June as I was no longer working with LIAT. Thanks to help from Petita, I was able to move into a flat at the end of May. It is a couple of blocks from where she lives, which means we are able to meet up regularly to study the Bible, pray and go for walks, which is lovely. It is also around the corner from where Cristian lives. Every afternoon when I enter or leave my flat, I hear a voice shouting my name. The next day he cannot wait to tell Gloria what I had

been doing, or who had been visiting me! I think the lessons on our right to personal privacy need to happen sooner rather than later.

As I take stock of what was a difficult couple of months (April/May), I realise how richly I have been

blessed for remaining faithful to God, and seeking to do his will. I have a new job, with a new purpose; a new home with new furniture; someone teaching us Ecuadorian sign language, and a real sense of contentment that doing God's will brings.

As well as all of this, Lydia and Mark Tresize (CMS short termers) arrived in Santo Domingo, following a few weeks of language study. They are hoping to start a new project helping people with physical disabilities. We have agreed to meet together once a fortnight to chat, pray and do a Bible study. Great use of my new flat! We are also excited that from 9-10 July, Henry Scriven and Susie Hart from CMS will be visiting us for a few days. It will be Susie's second visit this year, as she is helping Lydia and Mark start up their business.

Thank you for all of your support,

Sharon

You can give online to

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Left: Cristian making a bracelet