

Link Letter No.6 January 2015

Dear friends and supporters,

As we start a new year, I want to thank you for sharing my journey in Ecuador for more than 20 months now. I pray that Christmas was a time of blessing for all of us.

England wins the world cup!

First, let me say that England won the school “world cup” on sports day, so an improvement on the team in Brazil! We also had an open day, which concentrated on the cuisine of the three countries of Ecuador, Colombia and England. It was interesting to see that the Ecuadorian view of English cuisine was very accurate – sandwiches, jelly, cake and tea (so much for my healthy eating ideas!). It could have been worse though as they could have chosen fish and chips or roast beef and Yorkshire pudding.

Busy, busy...

Since my last letter, I have been busy but have had an amazing few months. The first week

in September we had a visit from Jo Anthony (my CMS regional personnel officer) – her first visit to Santo Domingo. She was able to see the work we are doing, and had meetings with LuzCelli, the school director, as well as with Pastor William of the First Baptist Church. She visited one of the women’s projects, as well as the school and the orphanage for those affected by HIV/AIDS.

Irina and I both appreciated having time to chat to her, as well as



England winning the school "World Cup"...



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.

the goodies she brought.

The rest of September was spent relaxing, and sightseeing with a friend from the UK, with a little bit of work in the middle. We were able to visit some amazing places, and see the beauty of God's creation here in Ecuador, from mountains to the ocean with a few waterfalls for good measure. I have never before seen so many sea lions, giant tortoises and pelicans in their natural habitat. I thank God (and my Mum's generosity) for the opportunity.

At the beginning of October I attended the Latin Link annual conference, on the outskirts of Quito, a time of fellowship, prayer and listening to interesting stories from visiting speakers. It was also a good way to get out of holiday mode, and back to concentrating on what I am here to do. The same month, the church took part in a march for the bible, in Santo Domingo. About 600 Christians walked through the streets, starting at 8am. This was followed by a time of praise and worship until 1pm.

November saw me hand a copy of my project to Emily, a Guatemalan Latin Link Strider, who speaks English almost as well as Spanish. She is proof reading the project for me, which will be no easy task as I am sure I will have made a few notable mistakes with my Spanish. God is so good to have brought her here in September. She is also working with the Foundation in the school and the women's project.

School life

My classes continue to go well, and the children seem to be enjoying what we do. We got very involved with crafts in the run up to Christmas, making festive mice as well as various things to go up on the wall. We have been back using the Foundation school building on Fridays for the healthy eating class, so that we can use a cooker. We have made "omelettes in a bag" and as a treat, just before Christmas, we made a chocolate fondue to go with our marshmallows and strawberries!

Following a meeting with the president of the Foundation, and a chat with Jill Ball (the founder of the Foundation), since Christmas I am now



Jo Anthony visiting one of the women's projects



Galapagos sea lions



First Baptist Church during the 'March for the Bible'

teaching all my classes back in the Foundation school. This is because the noise levels in the main school are such that even the children find themselves shouting to the younger children outside the classroom to be quiet. I was struggling to hear myself think, let alone hear what was being said to me. It also gives Irina and Emily more space to do physiotherapy and speech and language therapy.

After speaking with Jill in December, there is a possibility that the Foundation will start a

centre for the young people leaving school, using my project. If so, they would employ someone to lead it, and I will work alongside that person for a year to train and assist them. This is dependent on funding for a leader, being able to use the Foundation building, and the board wanting to take on the scheme.

Christmas celebrations

At Christmas, the school children and their families had a celebration on 22 December, which included performances by each class as well as dances by children from the Baptist Church School. I was able to celebrate the Lord's birth on the evening of 24 December at the church, followed by a meal with pastor William, his family and friends. Then on Christmas Day, I was invited again to share a traditional UK Christmas dinner, at the home of a British couple (Mary and Fred), along with Emily, Dr Andy (author of "Guinea Pig for Breakfast" and "Guinea Pig for Brunch") and her family. It still seems a bit strange to eat a roast turkey dinner in this heat and humidity, but it was a really lovely day.

I have already begun



Sing-a-long with the Christmas trees (Jesus, Edwin and Damaris)

thinking about the possible implementation of my project, and some things the young people could make, in order to sell them. This will be an opportunity to learn employment and business skills. If we are able to use the Foundation's building, we would have space to practice many different life skills. I have met up with a North American couple who are working in a town about three quarters of an hour away, who have offered us the chance to go horse riding on their ranch. They have six horses. Other friends have connections to a hotel chain, and they may be able to provide "on the job" training for one or two of the group.

I think the next few months will be busy planning, and possibly organising a trip to Chile to speak to families who have children with special needs. This was a request of Bishop Tito, when he attended my commissioning service. On New Year's Day, I met a volunteer at an orphanage near Cuenca, in the south of Ecuador. The orphanage caters for children with special needs, and they have very little to occupy them. The volunteer told me about there being 40 in one room with two or three people to help them. I now have a contact name, and have said I will contact them to see if I can offer any advice or ideas.

Please thank God:

- For Jo's visit in September.
- That I was able to complete my project on time.
- That my life skills classes have been going well.
- For the opportunity to have two weeks off over Christmas.

Please pray:

- That the Foundation will be able to implement a programme for the teenagers leaving school, using my project.
- That the Foundation will find a new director for the school, if Luz Celli decides not to continue.
- That I will have time and funds to go to Chile, Los Angeles and possibly Peru before I return to the UK in 2016 (if all are in God's plan for me).
- For wisdom regarding the things to say "yes" or "no" to, when planning this year.

Many thanks.

Bendiciones/Blessings,

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 email links@cms-uk.org

www.cms-uk.org



Church Mission Society

Watlington Road, Oxford, OX4 6BZ Tel: 01865 787400 Fax: 01865 776375
Email: info@cms-uk.org www.cms-uk.org Registered Charity Number 1131655