

Sharon Wilcox

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The call in action

Dear friends,

Greetings from Ecuador. As I write this, we have – like many of you – been having a sunny summer; it has been good to see blue skies instead of the usual grey ones.

Since I last wrote, quite a lot has happened. I went with the youngsters and Gloria to speak to the church congregation where we work, and as a result we now have a new volunteer, Marcela, with us on Fridays teaching crafts. Another lady has also said that she wants to join us five days a week once her son stops breastfeeding. These are both real answers to prayer.

The Baptist Church Family Day with baptisms, and anniversary celebrations with a wedding, went well and our ministry team had very little to do with the organising except for buying trophies and medals for the sports competitions. As a result, we were able to enjoy the time more this year.

The construction work at Hombre Nuevo Church has come to a standstill once again due to a shortage of funding, so we are still waiting for the kitchen to be completed (although we can use the facilities). Please pray that the church finds a way to prioritise its spending and sticks to the plan.

In July, we had our first visit from Paul Tester, CMS's mission development manager for Latin America, and Pat Blanchard, a CMS mission partner from Peru. Susie Hart – a social entrepreneur, former CMS mission partner, founder of Neema Crafts in Tanzania and now director of Craft Aid International – was also here visiting Andy and Jess Lynch, CMS short term people in mission, so Santo Domingo was full of CMS personnel. It was a packed few days as they wanted to see all that CMS was involved in.

Paul gave a talk at the Baptist Church on sending and receiving missionaries and it seems that there are three or four people from the church interested in exploring the possibility of serving overseas. Their main concern was how to finance it but I was able to share a bit of testimony and reassure them that if God wants it to happen, the finances will come. It was good to be able to spend time with Paul, Pat and Susie. Pat taught the youngsters a song (*Shalom para ti*) which they want to sing for everyone at our next open day. We have already started rehearsing.

In August, I celebrated my 60th birthday and ate far too many cakes. I also attended my first full Ecuadorian wedding, as Gloria's eldest son got married. Most of the wedding photos were taken at sunset as the ceremony didn't start until 5.15pm due to the bride being an hour and 15 minutes late!



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.



The visit of Paul Tester and Pat Blanchard

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At the Orchid Project, we have been continuing to make things to sell. A lady who makes beads came to do a workshop, teaching the group how to make keyrings of tagua “men” (tagua is a very hard inedible nut, found only in two or three countries in South America). We had the opportunity to spend time with a mission team from the USA and they were very generous, purchasing several of the heat pillows, lavender bags, sugar hand scrubs and soaps that we had made.

The youngsters decided that they would pool the money made in order to have a day at the beach together with their families. So, at the end of term in September, we all went by private bus to the coast (about three hours away), setting off at 6am. It was a really lovely day enjoyed by all, building sand castles, playing beach volleyball and swimming, as well as eating fresh seafood for lunch.

Whilst the mission team was here, I went with them to a couple of different suburbs to witness, pray with people, play with the children and give out food. In one of the suburbs I was approached by the local pastor and asked if I would go and give a talk to the congregation on how they can better support people with learning disabilities. Then a friend of mine was at a conference on the Galapagos Islands where she met a couple of people from the south of Ecuador who are part of a team of occupational therapists. They have started working with individuals with learning disabilities in their home environment but have little expertise. My friend explained what I do and they have asked if I would go and run a series of workshops for them. I replied that I would think about it. However, I now wonder if this is something God wants me to do once I have more volunteers, rather than start up a new group myself – training others to start groups in their regions. I would really appreciate your prayers to help me discern God’s will and to accept his decision (I would definitely be out of my comfort zone).

I would also appreciate your prayers for my siblings and my mother as she has just moved into a nursing home in England. Please pray that she would settle there and not miss her own home too much; it was not an easy decision for my brother.

My next link letter will be in the New Year, so enjoy all that the Christmas season brings when it arrives.

Thank you for your continued prayers and support of all kinds.

Every blessing

Sharon



Photos from top to bottom: One of my birthday celebrations; Gloria’s son’s wedding; the Tagua workshop; the trip to the beach at the end of September.

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You can give to Sharon at:
churchmissionsociety.org/wilcox

Contact details:
sharon.wilcox@hotmail.co.uk

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