

Sharon Wilcox

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The call in action

Dear friends,

Welcome to 2020, and my 19th newsletter. I hope you were able to enjoy the Christmas season.

For the first time in nine years I found myself in England for Christmas. It was not one of my planned visits, but for my own peace of mind I came home to visit my mum in the nursing home she moved into in September. She appears to have settled in quite well, and after a few visits she was able to recognise me without prompting. I now feel much happier, having seen her, and pray that she continues to settle and accept where she is and why. I also enjoyed Christmas Day with my brother and sister, for the first time in over 10 years. My brother cooked Christmas lunch for us which was lovely. I was not even allowed to do the washing up. Most people here in Ecuador find it unbelievable that a man would cook such a meal (or do the washing and ironing etc).

Other updates from my last letter:

Hombre Nuevo Church have now completed a bit more of the construction work. There is now a useable space upstairs, although it is still awaiting separate rooms.

I have planned to do some training in Huaquillas, on the Ecuador/Peru border, and in Quito in March. Please pray that it will take place, as I am still waiting for confirmation from both groups.

The Baptist Church Friendship Ministry team had a bit of a break from doing visits in the summer, but we restarted them in October. We have had a lot of people to visit, but it has been a real blessing for everyone involved.

Other news:

You may have heard about the riots that took place in Ecuador in October. The government took a decision to remove fuel subsidies that had been in place for 40 years, with only 24 hours' notice. Obviously people were very upset. The country needs to pay off some of its debts and the president decided this was the best way. The people took to the streets. In Santo Domingo the traffic stopped for two days, and some people blocked roads in and out of the city. Then things returned to normal, except that schools were not allowed to open for almost two weeks. In Quito and other large cities some of the indigenous peoples continued to protest for almost two weeks, burning roads, buildings and infrastructure. Then the president backed down and reinstated the subsidies. With help from the UN and the Catholic Church, there is now dialogue between the group leaders and the government to try to decide how the debts will be repaid. Of course, they cannot agree. So we are left wondering what is going to happen. But for now there is peace. Please join me in praying for peaceful solutions to be found.

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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.



*Construction work at
Hombre Nuevo Church*

I think we then spent November recovering from all that had happened. In December we had our annual open day, which went well, even though it was not as well attended as previous ones. Five of the students sang the Shalom song they learned from Pat Blanchard (CMS mission partner) in July. Rehearsals had not been going well, but on the night they did manage okay. We made cheese to serve everyone with a coffee. The cheese was such a success that we received some orders for more.

A couple of weeks before Christmas, a couple from the Hombre Nuevo Church paid for each member of the group to have two riding lessons each, and provided the transport to get us there. It was such a blessing. All were extremely nervous, but enjoyed it enough to persuade their parents to pay for them to continue going this year, once a fortnight. Two couples in the church are going to provide the transport.

As usual, on the last day before breaking up for Christmas, we celebrated with the parents. We had chicken and pork with rice and Russian salad, followed by pancakes. I also took the opportunity to share about one of the UK's Christmas traditions, kissing under the mistletoe. You can imagine the embarrassed giggles at first, but then... they thought it was fun.

We finished for Christmas on Friday 13 December and returned on Wednesday 8 January, so that I could return to England. It was lovely to be able to spend time with my family, as well as my church family. I had two speaking engagements, and gave a chat at my home church about Christmas in Ecuador. But most of all I enjoyed carol singing around the streets, and a Carols by Candlelight service (singing in English for a change).

Paul Tester (CMS mission development manager for Latin America) had been in Ecuador for the weekend of 4-6 January, and when he realised that I would be arriving as he was leaving for Peru, we agreed to meet up for a coffee - in Quito airport! In July I teased him about Ecuador being the last on his list of countries to visit when he took on his new role. Now he has visited twice in six months. Thanks Paul.

That is all my news for now. I pray that each of us have a very blessed 2020.

Thank you again for your continued support.

Every blessing, Sharon

Photos from top to bottom: Shalom song; horseriding; Cristian and the Nativity scene; Jonathan with the mistletoe



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