

PRAYER LETTER FROM CLAIRE

Dear Praying Friends,

I hope this finds you well. Today is a cool bright day. I love these months in Paraguay as it is usually sunny with pleasant temperatures - a bit like the summer we would like to have in the UK and Ireland!

RAIN FOR THE CHACO:

I sent out a prayer request in March that reached a lot of you asking you to pray for rain as when we went to visit our annexes in the Chaco we found that in one area they didn't have a drop of water. We had a few litres of water with us that we had brought for ourselves and gave each person half a cup of water. It was like gold to them. The church arranged for the firemen to take them some water next day to temporarily relieve the situation but they so needed rain to fill the water tanks and ponds as they were dry. They were worried as it hadn't rained for most of the wet season and we are now in the months of least rain.



We are thankful to God for answered prayer. There was heavy rain at the beginning of April and again this week so they have water again. Thank you for your prayers. The Indigenous people generally live off the land. The communities we visit live by the side of the road (and have done for decades)

"Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with an attitude of thanksgiving; praying at the same time for us as well, that God will open up to us a door for the word, so that we may speak forth the mystery of Christ..." Colossians 3:2 & 3

as they don't have their own land. They are trying to get the government to give them land and we are praying with them that, that will happen sooner rather than later. Thank you for your prayers.

BIBLE COURSES:

Over the past few months different groups totalling about 25 people have been studying a variety of Discipleship Bible Courses. A lot of the young people did these in their summer holidays and many of them want to carry on studying the Bible in more depth. I was encouraged to hear some of them say that that they have been trying to read the Bible every day and others that they now read every night with their mum. We thank God for them and pray that each of them will continue to grow in Him as He continues to raise up disciples and leaders. The church works in a lot of different areas and the number of leaders is comparatively small. We urgently need more leaders to work with children, young people, and adults within Concepcion and with the annexes. Please pray that God will protect each leader and continue to raise up new ones.

BIBLE STUDIES & PRAYER GROUPS:

The local church has a Bible Study and Prayer Group on Tuesday evenings and also had a week of prayer during Holy Week with prayer each morning

at 5.00 a.m. I have to admit to not feeling very sociable at 5.00 a.m there was something very special about being together to pray as most people were waking up. It is following Jesus' example.

The Bible Study in Villa Alta which has been going for a few months is going well but there are a lot of battles there too. There is a group of 8 – 12 women who come and I have been encouraged to see when I have been out visiting in that area some of them sitting outside their house reading their Bible. There have been problems between different people within the group which has affected it but we are praying for them and their families. Last week one of the ladies was walking up to it and her husband went after her to bring her back home as he doesn't want her to go to it.



Ramonita is another area of Concepcion where we work with children and young people. We had a wee Mother's Day celebration there last night for the families of the young people who come and it was lovely to see a big group of mums there despite it being an outdoor meeting on a cold night. There is an openness in that area and I have been praying for a while that God will put it on someone's heart to start a Bible Study there with adults.

If you require further information concerning Claire's ministry in Paraguay please contact:

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LANGUAGE:

In Concepcion everyone speaks a mix of Guarani and Spanish. Some people speak mostly Guarani and others mostly Spanish. I should have learnt it properly a long time ago but had lessons every day through the summer and am trying to speak it more. I would appreciate your prayers for this and also for Gillian Neill from Northern Ireland who is here for a 5 month mission trip and is learning Spanish while she is here. It's lovely to have her here.



My (poor) efforts at Guarani which has sounds you make in the throat, others in the nose and everywhere in between taught me a lesson. There are some people I have only had very limited conversations with as my Guarani isn't good and their Spanish isn't good. It has been interesting how when they see me struggling but trying to speak Guarani, they also start to struggle but try to speak Spanish to meet you halfway. Often we wait to be good at something before we try it. We can be afraid to fail and forget that God's power is made perfect in our weakness.

VISITS:

We are looking forward to some teams and visitors coming out over the next few months. Bishop Ken will be here in June as part of the 50 years

celebrations of St Andrew's College, Alison Crawford will visit in July, as will a team with Mission Paraguay and another Mission Paraguay team from Ireland will be here in August. There are other visitors in October and December but I will save that for another Prayer Letter. We are looking forward to these visits. It is a real privilege to be partners in the gospel and in mission.

EMPLOYMENT:

A lot of people from the church and in Concepcion struggle to make ends meet. Prices are rising but a lot of people are paid only half of the minimum wage or less. While this is illegal if there isn't a system in place to make sure they get paid properly then it doesn't happen and because of so much unemployment in Concepcion people will accept those conditions because it is better than nothing. Other people are looking to move elsewhere to find work. Please pray for justice, and good ideas as well for those who are doing their own small business.

The church is teaching at the minute about using our money wisely and about giving to God and to each other with generosity, faithfulness and joy. One dad of a family of four who gets half the minimum wage said to me 'We put aside a tenth for God at the start of each month and thanks to Him we have never gone hungry, lacked clothes on our back or a roof over our heads. He has always given us what we need. And even if some months he tests us on it and we don't get all we need we still want to give back to Him the first and the best of all He gives us because He is God.'

UPDATE:

I will finish by updating you on some of the things that I mentioned in my last prayer letter.

Eladio – Eladio is safely through his brain operation. For some weeks after it he was unable to do anything. A few weeks later he came walking into church. His speech is coming back bit by bit as is the power in his right hand.

Jose and Shauna: Jose is still in prison although they say he has been proved innocent for both the crimes. Supposedly it is paperwork and red tape that still has him there but the solicitors fees keep adding up. He was moved to prison in Concepcion where we had a great visit with Him.

I mentioned the story of Joseph (Jose in Spanish) in prison and he went on to say it is his favourite story and told it to me from start to finish. He is back to prison in Asuncion waiting for the whole process to be completed so he can get out. His mum comes each week to the Bible Study in Villa Alta. She has got some treatment for her illness and is doing better. We keep praying for all the family.

Gaspar: Gaspar has had a few struggles recently but keeps going.

Please pray too for **Fabio**. He is 22 and serves a lot within the church and with the young people. He has an amazing heart for God and for people. Please pray that God will protect him.

Thank you so much for your faithful prayers and support. May God Bless you and please let us know too any things you want us to pray for for you.

Love and prayers.

Claire