

PRAYER LETTER FROM CLAIRE

Dear Praying Friend,

I hope you're well. Below are some of the things that have been happening over the last few months and some prayer points.

THE CHURCH MINISTRY TEAM:

Next month we have our yearly church assembly where we make decisions, such as who will be on the church council - ministry team. In the absence of a pastor, Ricardo along with his wife Cristina, have agreed that he carry on for another year as the person in charge. Another new development is that Saul and Norma will be employed as part-time church workers to work alongside them as pastoral assistants. They already do a lot voluntarily for the church, running the shelter for the Indians, with Saul in charge of the music and Norma the children's work, so this seems to be a really positive step forward.

SIMPLY THE STORY:

In January we had our Bible Training course on using Bible Stories with observation and application questions as a method of teaching the Bible, and since then we have been developing this. Children as young as 11 years of age have been teaching the stories in Sunday School, as have the young people at the youth meetings and adults at some of the different adult meetings. Axel, a 17 year old who has a gift for teaching the Bible

told a story at the youth meeting in one of our annexes. He repeated the same story at Sunday School, having practised it again and I was amazed at the way he presented the story, the questions he asked, and the answers of the young people.

This year, instead of having a speaker at the diocesan synod, a team from Concepcion has been invited, both to teach some of the things we learned about telling

and studying Bible stories, and to do stories in groups. This is a big thing for us, especially for some of the young people who are preparing to be involved and we pray it will be a blessing both for our team and for the other attendees.

EASTER PLAYS AND OTHER EVENTS:

Apart from the usual weekly meetings with children, adults and young people in the central church and the annexes we have also had some special events. Some of the young people attended a youth conference in Asuncion and we also had a day away where they shared with the youth what they had learned. This was really good for them and for the whole group. There is now a strong team working with the youth and



it is encouraging to see many of them take on increasing responsibility.

Every year we do a dramatisation of the Christmas Story, but never the Easter Story. This year we dramatised the whole Easter Story with about 50 children and young people in two of our annexes - Ramonita and Villa Alta. We hoped to use this to reach the

parents and neighbours of the children and young people, but the main fruit seems to be in the lives of the young people themselves. We have a weekly Bible Study and Prayer Meeting in Ramonita which was originally intended to be mainly for adults. Very few adults come, but each week more and more of the young people are coming and joining in with prayer and Bible Study.

EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT:

Concepcion is developing very quickly as indeed is most of Paraguay. There are more possibilities for education (though not necessarily for good jobs) and many people are now going to University. Paraguay exports a lot of meat and there is a new abattoir due to open close to Concepcion which should provide around 1000 new jobs and will pay the minimum wage. As there is massive unemployment and poor wages in Concepcion this is an answer to prayer. We are close to the border with Brazil,

Saul & Norma



Mother's Day Events



and there are also plans to open a new port in Concepcion, to export by river, grains and seeds brought from Brazil. This should also supply employment.

CHILDREN IN NEED:

Technology has brought about massive changes especially for the young people. Many of them come from very troubled homes, and as drugs here are readily available and cheap (marijuana grows plentifully here) many people turn to them. A 13 year old came to me recently, really broken, because he had taken drugs the night before. He said he wanted to escape what was going on in his family, but didn't want to take them again as he knows that is not the answer. We pray for him and others in similar situations, and also that there will be others to disciple them and walk with them.

Mother's Day in Paraguay is in May and we had special family events in all our different areas of ministry. In each area, the mums came and it was a way of getting to know them better, honour them and pray for them. In our main church San Pablo, we had an event which included both, mums who come to church, and mums who don't, but whose children do. They enjoyed the evening and we hope to plan more

special events specifically for their parents. Many of the young people are praying for their parents and we join with them in this.

**... PLANTED ...
WATERED, BUT GOD
GAVE THE GROWTH: 1
CORINTHIANS 3:6.**

Just because I love encouraging stories and testimonies which show how God keeps working once a seed is planted, below are two stories from people I have bumped into recently.

When I first arrived in Concepcion in 2000 the church had recently started ministering in an unreached community 15 km from Concepcion. We met in a house there and some of the young people travelled into Concepcion each Saturday for the youth meeting. One of the young people was Rigoberto. Over time the meetings at 'Km 15' gradually

stopped as people stopped coming and the owners of the house we met in didn't want us to meet there anymore. I recently bumped into Rigoberto and he told me that when he moved to another town, he got involved in another church and is now a church leader. He is back in 'Km 15' and

is holding weekly meetings there, (with many of the people who were there before) attending plus others.

I attended a training event for an event to be held by 'Samaritan's Purse' and sat beside a lady from the Baptist Church who teaches the Bible classes in the

Baptist school. She said her Mum had become a Christian through some of the first Anglican missionaries in Concepcion about 40 years ago. The couple visited her regularly and prayed with her as she had bad arthritis.

Unknown to them her brother was sneaking off to the Baptist Sunday School, and didn't say anything as he thought he would get into trouble for going to an evangelical church. One day the Baptist church and the Anglican Church had a joint service in our church. The lady I was talking to went with her Mum at the invitation of the missionaries; her brother went at the invitation of the Baptist church. Their brother was very surprised to see them there and vice versa, but rather than getting into trouble they all rejoiced at how God was working separately in different members of the family at the same time, without any of them knowing. Don't you just love His sense of humour!

HUGO

Occasionally I mention a specific person with a little bit of their story to focus prayer on. I mentioned Hugo before. He comes to the meetings, in Ramonita. About a year ago he gave his life to the Lord at an evangelistic event. His mum lives in Spain, his Dad in Asuncion and he lives with an older sister who is often not at home. He was fifteen in March (which is the special birthday here) but no-one celebrated it with him. A few days after his birthday we had our youth day away and went to a swimming pool. He was so pleased as he said that was his birthday celebration. He comes to the prayer meeting in Ramonita and is praying that his family will be a family again. Please remember him in your prayers.

Thank you for your support and prayers.

God Bless.

Love

Claire



Ricardo, Cristina
and family