

Link Letter No.1 November 2010

Dear friends,

As we write our first official CMS link letter, we want to wish you a very Happy Christmas! May God bless you richly over this Christmas time as we join in together with our Christian brothers and sisters all over the world in celebrating the birth of our wonderful Saviour.

After a two-year wait, we now have tickets to return to Argentina on Tuesday, 16 November... we are racing to keep up with events! These days our lives are full of visits to link churches, planning visits to say goodbye to our children and fathers, lots of admin, and trying to dispose appropriately of all of our possessions except what will fit and survive in a single garage. *(That last task is probably good preparation for returning to live in that part of Argentina!).*

It's good to look ahead to our arrival in Juárez, Argentina. In a

A Wichí church wall with the diocesan logo



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David and Shelley Stokes
CMS mission partners
Argentina

way, November is a silly time to go, as that is when the serious heat is just starting. However, that does give us time to make plans for next year with the Assistant Bishop for Northern Argentina and his wife, CMS mission partners Nick and Catherine Drayson, and René and Marina Pereira – Argentine colleagues involved in education. It also gives us the opportunity to decide what needs doing to our house.

Our colleagues will leave Juárez for the summer holidays, which start just before Christmas. We hope to spend Christmas in Misión Chaqueña where we used to live and then use the rest of the summer holidays to settle in and get to know people in Juárez. It would be good to be mainly settled by the time the school year starts and travelling becomes easier at the end of February. We feel a mixture of excitement and anxiety about it all!

It will be hard to leave our family. Our son Jon is studying civil engineering in Bristol but spending his third year at the University in Barcelona. Sarah is starting her second year of medicine in Cardiff. Both are settled and doing well. Shelley's father, aged 90 and living in Vermont, and David's father, aged 85 and living in Hertfordshire, are reasonably well.

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The past two years have not been easy, but in retrospect we can see that the Lord's timing has made sense. We have both enjoyed and learnt from our part time jobs (David as hospital chaplain, Shelley as worker at a local drop-in centre) as we have waited for the Lord to open the way for our return to Argentina.

The period of transition as SAMS has been integrating with CMS is now nearly complete. We both enjoyed the CMS induction course – the input was excellent and we had the opportunity of getting to know the lovely people we will be dealing with at the head office in Oxford as well as others about to leave to serve with CMS all over the world. We have visited various link churches (some previous links and many new) and enjoyed the hospitality of old and new friends. We have been encouraged as financial and prayer support has been coming in – thank you so much for your support for us, and for supporting the churches in Northern Argentina!

During this period of waiting the Lord has also been teaching us lessons about trusting Him when there are few signs of forward movement and winds are contrary. One friend is making a poster for us. We decided to choose these words in Wichí from Isaiah 41.10: *Yej nowayhen, tsi oi'amejen* (Do not fear, for I am with you), a promise that has become special over recent months.

There are still some significant obstacles ahead, and we would value your prayer support. One is communication. Our contact with family and friends will depend to a large extent on the internet (neither of us are gifted technologically!) and internet connections in Juarez may prove difficult or intermittent. The postal service to Juarez is also not very reliable.

To end, we want to say what a privilege it is to be returning to serve the churches in Northern Argentina once again. The churches there are facing many challenges at the moment, and it is a time of real opportunity.

Points for praise and prayer

- Praise God that He has opened the way for our return
- Pray for our family – Jon, Sarah and our fathers – as we leave
- Pray for settling into our new house, and the town of Juárez and building relationships there
- Pray for protection on communications with family and supporters, especially in the early months
- Pray for the churches and their leaders in the Chaco, especially among the Wichí

We hope that you like the new format for our link letters, and that they will help you keep in touch!

We'll close by sending you all rather early Christmas greetings!

With our love,

David and Shelley



David's family



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