

Link Letter No.2 December 2010

Dear praying friends,

It's nearly Christmas, and we are all looking forward to celebrating the arrival of Jesus, God in human form, into the world. One of the great truths of our faith, which we celebrate at Christmas in particular, is that we have a God who knows what it is like to live in this world. He knows what it is like to suffer, to be poor, to be rejected and He is there for all those who experience the same. Recently we have been given stark reminders of how many of the children and young people with whom we work suffer greatly through no fault of their own. Neglected, abused, rejected, they need someone who can help. Thank God for Jesus! He understands, He cares and He will help. This Christmas, we hope we can share this amazing reality with those who desperately need to experience redemption and healing through Jesus.

Sarah's news

At San Juan Evangelista, we have recently had one of those "stark reminders". We were shaken by the news that a girl who attends Sunday school had been raped by one of her neighbours. She and her sister are now in a children's home. We are supporting the girl's mother and hoping that the authorities will allow us to visit the girls soon. Sadly, this is not

A traditional "retablo" with the nativity scene (top) linked to ordinary life - peruvian workers in the fields (bottom)



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Paul and Sarah Tester
CMS mission partners
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the first such case we have come across and only serves to demonstrate the great need for the Jesus who understands and cares to transform all of our lives, sinners and sinned against alike. Please pray for all those involved.

I've become very much aware lately of what a hard place the area around San Pablo is to live. Despite having lived there for years most families still don't have land rights and so can't chance investing in their property. Pig sties cling to the hillside, attracting insects and polluting the air (not just with the obvious (!) but also the plastic bottles burned as fuel to heat the pig's food). In the evenings a fog often envelops the dusty hill.

A visitor once likened 'El Arca' to an oasis in the desert. As the desert literally pushes its way in through the cracks in the flimsy wooden wall I am reminded of the spiritual battle that is going on. I am cheered that the children are hearing that Jesus loves them (even if sometimes it takes every ounce of our energy and patience!) and that the community has offered to dig back the wall of sand and replace the leaky roof. I continue to be impressed by the teenage girls who I meet with before the children arrive. These girls thrive when an interest is shown in them. Jesusa, who spends much of her time caring for younger family members, is really beginning to blossom.

Please remember the Christmas activities in your prayers as it is always an exhausting time shopping for the children's gifts and helping organise parties, nativity plays etc. Numbers have been increasing so much in Ventanilla (180 children registered) that we

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had to finalise the Christmas party list in October (any later causes tension as the regular mums see others turning up in December and feel that they are playing the system – turning up just to get a present, never to be seen again!) Please pray for grace and patience!

Paul's news

Over the last few months those of us in leadership in the diocesan youth ministry have discerned God leading us towards a clearer vision of what he wants from us. We have become quite proficient at putting on big events but God has challenged us that "*Unless the Lord builds the house, the builders labour in vain*" (Psalm 127:1). The vision we believe He has given us is to be a youth ministry of young people connected to Jesus, the true vine (John 15). Jesus says that if we abide in Him we will bear much fruit. We are now seeking to work out what "abiding" in Jesus really means for young people.

As leaders we are trying to practice this in our lives by ensuring that our priorities are times of prayer, reflection and listening to God. We recently held our annual retreat for youth leaders and deliberately left spaces for us to spend time waiting and listening in the presence of God. The results were wonderful. One of those invited as a "potential leader" became a Christian and we have had great testimonies from others who attended as to how the retreat was different and how they had felt God speak to them. Please pray for us as we seek to encourage young people to abide in Jesus and pray for God to provide the fruit as He sees fit.

A real encouragement has been the response of some of the younger ones who we took on the retreat as "potential leaders". They led parts of their youth groups in both San Patricio and San Juan Evangelista on the Saturday following the retreat and have shown great enthusiasm for reading the bible at home and for following up with questions.

Please pray for their development and growth and for both these groups as I seek to help leaders grow and take on responsibilities.

Bite-size highlights: Sarah recently ran in the Lima "Nike 10km" run and was delighted to finish in just over 53 mins.

What would you do? – Going deeper No. 18

Getting to grips with cross-cultural mission and some of the issues we encounter. Take some time to chew over the issues! Here's this month's...

Christians often teach of God's love and how, because He loves us, He will protect and bless us. Yet we know that life



Paneton and hot chocolate is the norm at Christmas parties in Peru

is not always that simple. Many of the children and young people that we work with have already suffered more than anyone should in a whole lifetime and continue to suffer.

Where is the God of love in these situations? How do we integrate into our lives the Jesus who knows suffering and rejection? How will Jesus "fit" in the lives of those who suffer? How can we, without sounding weak in faith, counter the seductive message that with more faith and less sin you will be blessed with happiness and wealth? Most importantly, how can each of us point those who suffer to Jesus?

Praise points

- For God's guidance for the youth ministry.
- For God's work at the youth leaders retreat.
- For the girls who help at San Pablo: Sarita, Estefanie, Jesusa, Lynn, Liz and Marisol.

Prayer points

- For all of the Christmas activities at the different churches and missions. And that the real meaning of Christmas will shine through all that is done.
- For the sisters from San Juan Evangelista as they adjust to life in a children's home and that they and their family would know God's peace and healing.
- For all of the youth leaders here and that we would see a generation of young people who abide in Jesus.
- For preparation for the forthcoming summer youth camps (January and February).

Thank you all for your prayers and support. We pray God will bless you with a very Happy Christmas. May you know His presence this Christmas time. With love from us both

Paul and Sarah

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