

Link Letter 22 November 2009



Dear friends,

Greetings, once again, from the south coast of Spain!

A lot has happened since we wrote our last Link Letter, although those of you who receive our informal email 'Update' will be mostly up-to-date with the changes. For those who don't receive these emails, let us fill you in on the last few months.

The summer

From our last letter you will know that in the summer we were in the UK to visit Sarah's parents and a number of supporting churches. We enjoyed two weeks with Norman and Jean, giving Norman a break as cook/cleaner/carer and celebrating with them their 40th wedding anniversary. The boys had a wonderful time there, and Jean enjoyed playing with them in the garden. While there, we also made a referral to Social Services so that Norman



Sarah's parents



Felipe and Sarah Yanez
With Samuel and Aaron
CMS and SAMS mission partners
(Spain)

could have a break 1-2 days a week. As we've been writing this letter we have heard that Jean will now be able to attend a Centre, where her sister-in-law also attends, at least once a week... a real answer to prayer.

In the summer we also had a few lovely days with Felipe's sister and family and saw God answer your prayers for our travels around the UK. We had some great visits with supporting churches and all the practicalities fell into place (in six weeks we met with people from 12 different churches and stayed in 11 different beds). We were immensely blessed by people's hospitality through hosting or having us for meals, and enjoyed sharing about our work with individuals, small groups and congregations. Pray that as a result of our visits, individuals will take steps forward in their own areas of 'mission', whether in their family, neighborhood or elsewhere.

All change

In our last letter, we mentioned the need to broaden our ministry here in Malaga. We had felt in the earlier

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Our new home

part of the year that God was probably leading us out of both the Centro Cultural and church, La Puerta, where we had been involved for two years. In May, in agreement with CMS and SAMS, it was decided that we should offer our resignation to both the project and church, although stating our desire to stay within the church informally. Unfortunately, we were unable to do this and so by the end of May found our involvement in both coming to an end.

However, God through His consistent faithfulness in leading and guiding His people, had already placed new areas of ministry into our paths. We had formed a growing relationship with a couple who had been serving in the area of hospitality and hosting for ministry purposes, encouraging throughout the area South American workers in transit. As they were to leave Spain in the summer, it was decided that after our home assignment we would continue this much needed ministry.

As mentioned in our last letter, we had also been in conversation with other organisations, and growing from this was the desire to see a project started in support of the immigrant community in Torremolinos, just along the coast from Malaga. We have continued meeting with two couples who share this vision, and are trusting God's timing as we pray together and seek ways to make this a reality.

These new areas of work have necessitated a change of home, as we need to live nearer to Torremolinos but still with easy access to the airport and Malaga. We are so grateful for people's prayers (via the email *Updates*) as we have now found a house to rent. It is an old house and needs a bit of maintenance and updating but has a lovely garden and terraces with beautiful views. We feel

it is just right for hosting visitors and for us as a family, and the boys have already enjoyed the garden and playing 'ball' with the oranges off the tree. Strategically it is closer to the airport, a short drive to Torremolinos, and with a regular bus service into central Malaga. God is good.

The move on from La Puerta has also meant finding a new church. We decided to wait until we had moved house, so in the meantime have been visiting different churches, and enjoying meeting and networking with people who, in the new ministries, we may need to connect with.

So with all these changes, can we ask you to pray for:

- A smooth 'move' and that we can get the necessary house maintenance done
- Provision of the right school for the boys
- That moving costs can be met for a few furniture and garden items as well as van hire. [Related to that, our budget-to-date with CMS is still running at a deficit, so please also pray for more 'regular' givers to meet the shortfall (contact us or CMS for details)]
- Finding the right church for us as a family and for ministry
- God's timing and financial provision for developing the project in Torremolinos
- For peace and patience for all of us amid the changes
- Keeping our eyes on the Cross

Felipe has recently been doing a lot of reading, trying to make sense of the last two years when helping the ministry in Malaga

Map of Torremolinos





Finishing school for the day...

city. His major reflections have been that we are in a battle where the enemy wants us to quit and to stop pursuing God's love for the poor: economical immigrants are mostly poor. In his book *The Call to Conversion*, Jim Wallis calls them 'victims' because of the structures of this world that are so unbalanced economically, mainly due to original sin. Wallis's prophetic voice tells us that the main victim is Christ, who took on Himself all this suffering when He died on the cross for us to break the power of sin in our lives. He has experienced, and truly understands, how immigrants and asylum seekers feel to be in exile, to have fear and to be abandoned.

Even though Christ loves everyone, He favours the poor and He tells us that if we help one of them, we are helping Him. That's why being a Christian transforms our lives and we cannot omit the care for those who are in need. It's what happened with Jesus' encounter with the tax collector who, when he met Jesus, gave back to the poor over and above what he had taken and received salvation. One of the major factors of today's 'crisis' has been idol worship: MONEY. This god tries to keep us away from God Almighty through greed and over consumption, and guess who is more affected... the poor and the disenfranchised. We need to keep our eyes on the things that will last forever; we need to awake, as one day all of us will have to give account to God.

For us personally, what helps keep us focused on Christ and constantly seeking His face is keeping face-to-face with the poor. Please keep praying for our biggest challenge, which is to open

the Centre in Torremolinos to help immigrants – and to be a listening ear, to bring peace, to seek justice, to give people skills, and to feed and clothe them. As you will know, Africa is suffering a major drought this year and this will, no doubt, bring more people to the Spanish coast. We need your help to make the vision for this Centre a reality, and your prayer and support can influence every step we take. For God, nothing is impossible.

Make the most of every encounter

When one plans to move away from an area, the response can be to start distancing oneself from people and places, and question if it's worth making the effort with new relationships and activities.

Aaron started school in September, with a staged timetable as they got used to the hours. This brought the opportunity to wait at the school gate with a new, and smaller, group of Mums and Dads. The question of whether to make the effort, as we were moving in three months, was real; however, God wants to use us in every situation and this was no different. Sarah started a conversation with a Moroccan lady whose daughter was also starting school, and the lady asked to accompany Sarah to the supermarket. Her Spanish was basic and it turned out that she wanted to make a birthday cake for her daughter who was turning three. How do you buy ingredients for a cake if you don't know – and even if you did, you can't read – the words for flour, baking powder, icing sugar or candles?

Felipe's friend and family (see text on page four)



Having helped her buy the necessary, Sarah then overheard a conversation the lady had as she met a few other Moroccan ladies. It turned out she was interested in taking Spanish classes, but as she didn't have her 'papers' couldn't attend most centres. Sarah suggested an NGO providing free classes, similar to the Centro Cultural but closer to her home, and the following week they went together. Having been to the Centre once with Sarah, she then had the confidence to go alone to enquire about food parcels the following week. Pray that, as a result of these few brief encounters, this lady builds a relationship with the people at the Centre, and has a chance to hear about God's love through Christ.

A happy ending and a new beginning

Three years ago, Felipe's Colombian friend arrived in Spain with a contract to work as a waiter in a chain of restaurants. He left back home in Colombia his wife and one year old son and, although was able to return and see them once or twice, had not spent any length of time with them. Three years later, in mid-October, Felipe had the pleasure of driving his friend to Malaga Airport to meet his wife and son at the airport. They are now renting an apartment near us, and adjusting to a new start as a family. Pray for them as they adjust to life as a family, as they make new friends and as their son settles into the local school. *See the photo on page three.*

It's a small world

A few weeks ago we received an email from a girl who had come to live in Malaga for a year as part of her university work placement, and had been here since the summer. She had been given our email by her grandparents, who attend one of our supporting churches. It turned out that she had moved to a new flat only recently, and now 'happened' to live literally around the corner from the boys' school, about three blocks from our flat. We have enjoyed getting to know her and have been able to introduce her to a local church, as well as taking advantage of her child-minding skills.

Someone else in the UK was given our details after his mother 'happened' to meet Sarah's godmother and realised the mutual interest in cross-cultural mission and connection

with Spain. He and his wife 'happen' to be supporting a group of people from Egypt working elsewhere in Spain, where an Egyptian friend of Felipe's 'happened' to have moved over the summer. We are now trying to put them in contact with each other. It turns out that the people we are planning to start the new Centre with also 'happen' to know this group as they work for the same organisation.

The Christian world is often like this... someone 'happens' to know someone, who 'happens' to know someone. God has a purpose for these 'happenings', so let's keep putting people in touch with each other and building these networks. We never know how God might want to use one of these connections to build His kingdom.

If you would like to connect with us, put others in contact with us, or receive our email *Updates*, please do get in touch with us by contacting the Church Relations Team at CMS for our details (CMS address/phone below) or, if you are from one of our supporting churches, find out who the 'link person' is. We love hearing news from the UK, and what God is doing at that end, so do keep letters, emails and texts coming through. If you would like more information about how you can financially support us or the project, or regarding our current support levels, please do contact the Church Relations Team.

So, until the next time:

... we pray for you, too, that God may open a door for your message, so that you may proclaim the mystery of Christ clearly, as you should, being wise in the way you act towards outsiders and making the most of every opportunity. May your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.

(Colossians 4:2-6, paraphrased)

May God bless you richly, especially this Christmas and in the coming year.

Felipe, Sarah, Sam and Aaron

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