

News from Paul and Sarah Tester: SAMS Mission Partners in Lima, Peru



October - December 2009
"¡Feliz Navidad!"

"The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him 'Immanuel'—which means, 'God with us.'"
Matthew 1:23

Dear Praying Friends,

Here is a slightly delayed Christmas special update for you all! Thank you for waiting! We hope you enjoy catching up with all that has been going on with us here in Lima in a very busy but exciting couple of months. We'd also like to let you know that we will be back in the UK for a few months from mid-March until mid August 2010 and so we will hope to be catching up with many of you soon. More details to follow!

Sarah's news: It has been really great to have 'El Arca' play scheme up and running in San Pablo! Every Friday Lily, her daughter Lynn and I meet with around fifty children on the dusty hillside and spend an hour playing, listening to a bible story, singing, praying and having a snack. Lily is very committed to the project and does a sterling job registering the children and reading them stories. It was very special for the launch of the project to have the support and encouragement of Rev. Adam Foot and wife Kate from our link church, St. John the Evangelist, Welling. Adam looked like a 'World's Strongest Man' competitor as he lugged the huge bags of toys to the mission!



Children at San Pablo getting to grips with the marble run as part of El Arca



Cassandra enjoying the Christmas party in Ventanilla - face painted and present in hand!

After the effort of getting everything ready and the busyness of the first afternoon it was lovely when one little girl said, 'Come back tomorrow sister Sarita won't you?' I know the project is having a positive impact on the children and it has been so great to start getting to know the children and their stories. It is a privilege to be able to listen to them and pray with them.

It has been good to see at 'El Arca' in Ventanilla how some mums are helping out more. They cleaned the mission before the Christmas party, prepared the hot chocolate and helped decorate. The children are such a delight. Recently two of the older girls, Xiomara and Flor asked me to pray with them because they wanted to follow Jesus. The Christmas party (chaos though it was!) was a high point of all of us at the mission pulling together as a team. We pray that the children were blessed by it and will remember the message of the nativity play.

Paul's News: It was a privilege to have the opportunity to travel to the south of Peru and be part of the follow up to the youth mission in Juliaca. Working with Lizbeth, the diocesan youth coordinator, and the church in Juliaca, we prepared a day's activities for the young people there. It was great to have over thirty attend and see that the group that started after our mission trip there is still meeting and growing. I was also able to be part of youth leader training and leading youth groups in Arequipa as part of the same trip. It is encouraging to see many green shoots of youth ministry across the diocese. Please keep praying!

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Youth leaders from across the diocese came together for the youth leaders retreat in Lima which I, as part of the youth team here, helped to organise. It was particularly special that leaders from Juliaca, Arequipa, Ica and Lima were able to be all together for the first time. We had times of teaching, ministry, games, worship and fun on the nearby beach and it has seemed to encourage youth leaders in a number of congregations where youth ministry is a very new concept! Youth ministry is really beginning to be taken seriously in Peru and a few of us from the youth ministry team were able to attend the "Youth Specialties" national youth leaders conference which was an encouragement and inspiration for all of us. I hope and pray some of the connections made there will bear fruit for the future.



Yovana (from Ica) and Miguel (from Juliaca) enjoying the games at the youth leaders retreat

Youth groups in Surco, Ventanilla and our church, San Juan Evangelista continue. Adriana and Dafne from the group in Surco helped Sarah and I with the Christmas party in Ventanilla. There the kids are frantically fundraising to be able to attend the diocesan summer camps which I am helping organise for February. With new young people arriving at the youth groups at church, partly through the Compassion project linked to church and partly through young people inviting their friends we are excited about the future. Please pray for wisdom in how best to keep growing.

Bite-size Highlights:

- ⇒ We were delighted to have Adam and Kate Foot from one of our link churches stay with us for two weeks as part of their sabbatical.
- ⇒ Adam was able to join up with a team from the US in helping Paul with a construction project at Misión Sagrada Familia. We don't think that part of the sabbatical was terribly restful!
- ⇒ We were able to have a few days away in Paracas in November where we celebrated our wedding anniversary.

For your prayers:

Please thank God for:

- A good start to 'El Arca' in San Pablo
- For provision for the Christmas celebrations
- For Flor and Xiomara's desire to follow Jesus
- For youth groups across the diocese growing.
- The youth leaders retreat and Youth Specialties conference.

Please continue to pray for:

- For wisdom to know what areas of our ministries to hand over (and to whom) as we prepare to visit the UK next spring.
- For Mari, a lovely, helpful Mum at San Pablo. That she would be able to help regularly on Fridays at El Arca.
- For the forthcoming summer camps (12-16's from 5th-7th Feb, Arequipa & Juliaca from 12th-14th Feb and 17+'s from 19th-21st Feb) and that all the young people will raise the funds they need to attend, plus the visit of a US team to work with young people at San Mateo mission - for long term fruit and a new youth ministry there.

What would you do? - Going deeper No. 15

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:

A Going Deeper Christmas special for you this issue! There is a tradition in Peru for many of the well off, companies and all those who work in poorer communities to organise a Christmas party for children who don't have a lot. This normally consists of entertainment or games, hot chocolate and paneton for everyone and a present for all the children. It is very moving to see people like our neighbours involved in organising and providing for these parties.

However, this tradition of parties can lead people to expect gifts and to see gifts as a right. We have seen how people (normally the parents more than the children) can be transformed by their desire for presents, to argue, complain, steal from others or ask to swap a present if it is not quite what was wanted! It can lead to jealousy between communities and between members of the same community. Should we, the Church, put on these parties? If we do, how can we avoid the jealousies, greed, thefts and other associated problems?

Thank you for your support! We hope you have a very Happy Christmas. With lots of love and prayers from us both, Paul and Sarah