

Link Letter No.13 March 2014

Dear friends,

We write this almost exactly halfway through our period of leave in England. We have been based in our small house in Salisbury, which has worked out very well. Despite the dramatic winter storms and flooding, it has been really good to have a change from the extreme heat of Juarez at this time of year. It seems like a good moment to give an update on some developments in Argentina as well as to talk about our leave so far!

The day before leaving Argentina, David was able to leave *Lhatenekhi*, the Wichí hymn and prayer book, with the printers in Salta. A legacy from a missionary covered the cost for printing the first 1,000 copies. The date for completing this was originally early January. But then, the Argentine economy underwent a period of turbulence in January and the firm said that they were unable to obtain paper for printing. The copies should be ready around the time you receive this letter and these copies will be sold at cost price, and the money put towards a further print run, but because of high inflation the money will go less far! While here in England, we are investigating possible sources of funding to enable a larger, more economical print run next time. It has been encouraging that several link churches and individuals are taking steps to help with this project, which will benefit the Wichí speaking churches significantly.

We were delighted to hear that Isabel Vilte, a remarkable Wichí lady, has started an



Isabel in action



David and Shelley Stokes CMS mission partners *Argentina*

Former SAMS mission partners, the Stokes returned to the Diocese of Northern Argentina in November 2010 with CMS. They are accompanying the mainly Wichí speaking congregations at a time of rapid change. David is involved in encouraging and training new and existing church leaders. Shelley works mainly with the women, helping with the women's conferences and encouraging the start of parenting groups.

Abundant Life course for women in Juarez. She did the course with us last year. Our experience is that there is sometimes plenty of initial enthusiasm with students, but then a slow tailing off of numbers as the course progresses. Much perseverance and encouragement will be needed both for Isabel and the students. Isabel will also be a key person in the team for the forthcoming women's conference scheduled for 23-25 May in Pescado Negro ("Black Fish").

We are now just over halfway through our visits to our dozen link churches. These started with visits to churches in Salisbury we know well and continued with one to



Jonathan, Shelley and Sarah in Sicily

Weymouth, the church where we were married in 1986. The next ones were to a large multi-cultural congregation in London, a large village church and then a small village church near London. Another was to two churches near Edinburgh. It has been very encouraging to meet familiar faces as well as many new people. Each link is obviously unique. We do thank God for these links and those who have been supporting and praying for us and the churches in Northern Argentina. It has been a challenge attempting to distil our experiences from such a different context into presentations that resonate in some way with people's experience of what God is doing here.

We very much appreciated the contacts with other CMS mission partners at a recent conference. It was very helpful to be able to share experiences of the highpoints and stresses of living in different cultures. We were especially struck by the mission partner serving in Ukraine, in the light of recent news. It was also good to have some excellent input from members of the CMS home staff. We are looking forward to a retreat at Lee Abbey at the end of April.

It has been important to spend good time with our children. Jonathan (24), now engaged, is still based in Dublin; Sarah (22) is doing an "intercalated" year in London before completing her medical studies at Cardiff next year. We were able to have a week with them in Sicily accompanying Shelley's 93 year old father on his annual trip there. David's father is in a Sunrise care home near Guildford. Our distance from family while we are in Argentina makes these times with family very precious.

We look forward to visiting our other link churches most weekends, with a break over the Easter weekend, until early May. We then have some time with Shelley's family and a short holiday before flying back to Argentina on 12 June.

- Praise for good contacts with family and friends, and pray for Jonathan and his lovely fiancée AJ (Anna-joy).
- Praise for the strengthening of contacts with our link churches.
- Pray for the successful publication of Lhatenekhi and sufficient funds for a larger print run.
- Pray for encouragement for Isabel leading the Abundant Life study.
- Pray for the women's conference in Pescado Negro, 23-25 May, and the leadership training, led by Rene in Juarez, 5-17 May.
- Pray for God to prepare us for our next three years in Argentina.

Thank you for your love and support for us!

With our love, and in anticipation of seeing you soon,

David and Shelley

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