

Link Letter No.8 August 2014

Dear friends,

The Virgin Mary on tour...

By the time this gets into your hands the results of the World Cup final will be history, but we are writing the day after Argentina won its place in the finals. Within half an hour of the match ending, the streets of the town were once again completely blocked by motorbikes and cars full of flag-waving revellers. Only 24 hours earlier the same streets had been blocked by an equally large crowd as a statue of the Virgin Mary (known as *La Virgen de Urkupiña* from Cochabamba in Bolivia) made its way through the streets, eventually to the Roman Catholic church behind our house. Yesterday morning it continued its tour to the next town on route; it will eventually travel to Salta, the provincial capital, before



La Virgen de Urkupiña



Ed and Marie Brice
CMS mission partners
Argentina

One of CMS's longest serving mission partners, Ed and Marie have recently moved from Paraguay to Tartagal in Northern Argentina after 30 years serving the Enxet people group within the Chaco of Paraguay. Ed and Marie have taken on the pastoral oversight of the Anglican Church in Tartagal and will work in the northern area of the Chaco.

being returned to Bolivia.

One of the curious and even ominous things about this particular statue is that it is a favourite of those involved in drug trafficking.

Youth victims

Situated as it is on a main road from Bolivia, Tartagal has become increasingly associated with the illicit business of drug trafficking over the

last decade and has not escaped the horrific consequences of drug abuse either, especially visible among the youth. Agustín, the 19 year old nephew of one of our members, is one of them. As a child he attended the church Sunday school and is very happy to read the Bible when Ed visits him. He has had a number of frustrated attempts to leave the life of the gangs and the consumption of



Welcome little mother of Urkupina

cocaine paste and petty robbery. On a number of occasions he has been viciously attacked by members of a rival gang and, as a way to escape the danger, is thinking of going again to a rehabilitation centre in the city of Cordoba if he can raise the bus fare.

A ministry of hope

Here in Tartagal, the centre “*Clamor en el Barrio*”, run by ex-drug addict Pastor Martínez, has its roots in the work of Nicky Cruz in the USA. They operate in a small house not far from where we live and currently are helping six young men break the habit of drug addiction and discover new life in Jesus Christ. One of the ways they sustain the work is by making bread and selling it on the streets. It was almost a year ago that this ministry came to the notice of some of the members of our congregation when they featured in a short documentary on the local television. Probably because of the feeling of helplessness that drug problems gives us, this ministry of hope sparked a real interest in the



Clamor en el Barrio

congregation. So we now support them with regular gifts of food stuffs and flour for their bread making, as well as the occasional bed or mattress. Agustín did join the community briefly but hasn't shown the necessary determination to stick at it, yet.

A new harvest

In August we plan to invite Pastor Martínez and some of the men being rehabilitated to a special event in the Buen Pastor church in Villa



Sowing seeds...



Victor with the children

effort and the seeds that came from the Ministry of Agriculture's extension programme, it has been transformed.

Those who gave us the seeds are keen to see the results as are the Sunday school children who helped plant them and have watched their steady progress with great excitement. Please pray that this event will be a fitting celebration of God's gracious provision through creation, an

Güemes. It will be an event based on the old idea of a harvest festival. We hope to be able to invite many of the contacts we have made and, once again, those who used to attend the Sunday school in the past. The harvest we have in mind is the produce from the vegetable garden which Victor, one of our members, has cultivated behind the church. It used to be a place overgrown by weeds where the neighbours threw their rubbish. But, with Victor's patient



The vegetable garden

opportunity to plant and cultivate the spiritual seed which has been sown in this part of the town over the years and a practical help for “*Clamor en el Barrio*” and others in the area.

For praise:

- The faithful ministry of Pastor Martínez among drug addicts.
- The transformation of a rubbish tip into a productive vegetable plot and Victor’s loving and sacrificial work that has made it possible.
- The interest shown by the Sunday school children.
- The contacts that Marie is visiting regularly and for Valeria who she met in a taxi.
- The opportunity to visit our family in Paraguay.

For prayer:

- Agustín and other young people trapped in the vicious cycle of drug taking.
- Those trapped in drug trafficking in an attempt to escape poverty and their family members, some of whom we meet in our visiting.
- Mabel, Jorgelina, Romina, Cristina and her disabled daughter Camila who Marie is visiting regularly. There are a number of others whose husbands we hope to visit as well.
- For the Harvest celebration and the people whose lives will be touched by it.
- The Asociana team as they work through the necessary changes to their work practices.
- The Provincial government, that it will demonstrate in practice the commitment it says it has to resolving the obstacles to handing the land over to the Indians and the Criollos.

In Christ

Ed and Marie

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