

Link Letter No.9 July 2013

Very dear praying friends,

“How churches get planted”

5.30-9am

Today, Sunday, I am up at 5:30am to spend a long time praying. During that time I finish a book by Yiye Ávila on the way all major evangelistic and mission advances have always been preceded and accompanied by much prayer. I focus specifically on praying in the Spirit for the two churches we would visit, Pirque and Rancagua.

Pirque has been meeting as a small fellowship for about a year. There had been a past attempt to start a mission there but it had floundered as the leadership that visited grew tired. It fizzled and the people came to La Trinidad instead. They began again asking for our covering and



Alf and Hilary Cooper CMS mission partners **Chile**

Alf is an Anglo-Chilean who became a SAMS mission partner in 1975. Hilary is the sister of Terry Barratt (a CMS associate mission partner) and she and Alf have pioneered many initiatives in evangelism, discipleship and church planting in their years in the Chilean capital, Santiago. Alf is pastor of La Trinidad church in Las Condes, an upper middle-class area of the city; a man of prayer and action, he's a key leader in the country's growing evangelical movement. He and Hilary have four children, born between 1979 and 1990.



The Urzúa family who are leaders in Pirque and who hosted us for lunch

leadership discipling and training.

We began to meet with three couples and train them, sharing Bible studies that they, in turn, shared in Pirque. They began to grow again and incorporate new members from Marriage Encounter contacts. They grew so fast that they soon had to ask the local municipality for use of their building.

Permission was given and this led to a service being held every two weeks on a Sunday or Saturday. The numbers were now up to around 50 adults and children. Last Tuesday I taught the leaders about the dynamics of a service, how to blend liturgy (the church from the past) with ministry in the Holy Spirit (the church today). We decided to place a moment of ministry every Sunday after the worship with simple prayer for any needs.



The last Pirgüe service

9am-3pm

9am and we leave, Hilary driving the distance for at least 50 minutes along good highways. I prepare the sermon a little more and catch up on email. We arrive early and watch as the leaders set up coffee tables, pulpit, chairs, sound system, projection, and marvel at their enthusiasm and commitment. Some of them were about to separate when they did Marriage Encounter and met Jesus. Since then they have led many others to Christ in the same Marriage Encounter. They face marriage and family problems but now with the Lord and the church around them for encouragement and support. Soon a reasonable nucleus has arrived and the service begins at 11.10 when it should start (this is Latin America!). Sure enough, there is great joy in the worship. A new couple from another church has joined and leads the worship. However, this is dangerous as I happen to know that they caused trouble in the church they came from. We whisper secret instructions to the leaders about giving them a chance here, but also to be very careful.

Over 60 adults arrive and we share in love and worship. The children's ministry has developed too and 15 rowdy kids leave the service after the worship; and then the new ministry time comes, as we had planned on Tuesday. What glory! At first shyly and then more and more openly, people came forward to give their lives to Christ, receive prayer for healing and blessing – tears, laughter and love spreads, as the whole atmosphere in the small church opens up to another dimension, that of the manifest presence of the Holy Spirit.

The order is the sermon, Communion, the offering and the notices, as we had prepared. We then had coffee and spent almost as long in the fellowship afterwards. When we went to the Urzúa's for lunch there was much joy in the hearts of all.

3pm

3pm and we are off again, Hilary driving and I sleeping! She is a much safer driver than I and this way my car becomes an office when it ceases to be a bedroom. After another 60 minute drive further down south along the same highway, we get lost but find the Rancagua venue eventually with the help of iPhone directions and through asking the locals. This is the first public service in Rancagua.

Omar and María Antonieta Fariás, long standing and trustworthy leaders of La Trinidad, have been doing regular and faithful work before our visit. They will be moving to Rancagua soon and so, having already planted the church in Vitacura from La Trinidad, we believe it right to now send them to plant



The new Rancagua Church

this new extension in the fast growing mining city of Rancagua. As with Pirque, we have many contacts from the past there – mostly Marriage Encounter couples who have moved there, or Anglo Chileans who were once members of La Trinidad.

Omar has been travelling the two hours every Thursday to attend a new house group there, and now he will start a service every Sunday. Our visit is a kick off. We arrive at a miner's club that has opened the doors to lend us a hall and whose director is a Christian. They have charged us one quarter of the rent. We now find the hall simple, clean, attractive, ironed cloths on the table, good seating for at least 80 people... perfect for our purposes! Thank you, Lord!

5pm-onwards

Then the church planter's agony – very few turn up... at first! 5pm is a little early for a service in Chile, but they had planned it kindly to allow for our two-hour journey back to Santiago. We wait until 5:30pm when 25 people have gradually appeared. Omar and I decide



Family life...

to begin. He leads and I will preach and conduct a Communion. In Catholic culture, Communion always attracts with its appeal to the sacramental. During the sermon another couple turns up, and we later learn that they had heard of our service and came seeking help in their marriage.

Again, the service is planned to maximise the important things, such as worship, the Word, the sermon and ministry time, and only later the offering and notices. It works well. We have a similarly blessed time as we had in Pirque in the morning, although here the sense of

beginnings is greater! There is joy that at last there is an Anglican expression to church in Rancagua. Everyone is enlisted to bring new people to the next service and the Thursday cell group.

WE can sense the future as we have lived it many times as we have planted over 10 similar churches in the last years. There is an initial enthusiasm and then they hit the first barrier of 30, later grow to 60, finally to 100. If they break the 100 barrier they can grow quickly to 300. Most stay at the 60-100 mark. That is why we are now thinking of growing La Trinidad to 2000 so that we can send out larger groups to plant churches, tithing our congregation by 200 per plant. Of course, nothing ever works out as neatly as we would like, but the Holy Spirit clearly leads the way and Jesus clearly *“builds His church”*.

When Hilary and I drive home, we are filled with joy at seeing the spread of biblical Christianity in Chile. We wonder at the fact that no one thought of giving us an offering for the expenses (at least £60 worth of petrol, tolls and other expenses), but we really couldn't care less and see it as our seed sown into a new project for Jesus, together with many others who are also sowing. Our church will, of course, cover Omar and María Antonieta as they make the constant journeys until they are resident there.

Meanwhile, back at La Trinidad, we hear there has been a day of glorious worship and Word. And so the church grows and is blessed. As we do closure at the end of the day, praying and asking the Holy Spirit where we could have done things better, been more open to His leading, we realise that every church planted could last for generations and evangelise many thousands. And so to bed, blessed!

Another great encouragement this month was my Hazte Cargo interviews with the President and the First Lady. Here they are for those of you (for those whose Spanish will allow you to enjoy them). We cover the Miners, his Leadership and his family experiences.

■ <http://www.haztecargo.cl/entrevista---a---la---primera---dama---cecilia---morel>

■ <http://www.haztecargo.cl/entrevista---al---presidente---sebastian---pinera>

“All this is for your benefit, so that the grace that is reaching more and more people may cause thanksgiving to overflow to the glory of God.” **2 Corinthians 4:15**

Finally, we send you our great family news. Jahnn and Ara are on their way in August to the UK to take up their studies in All Nations Christian College. Please pray for them!

With our love,

Alfred and Hilary

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