

A woman and a young child are the central figures. The woman, on the left, wears a wide-brimmed red hat, a blue turtleneck, a red sweater, and a vibrant, multi-colored striped shawl. She has a gentle smile and is looking slightly to the right. The child, on the right, is wearing a pink knit hat with a long earflap and a red sweater. They are both looking towards the camera. The background is a blurred landscape of dry, brownish hills under a clear blue sky.

sams
IRELAND

South American Mission Society

Buena Vista - Winter 08

BUENA VISTA


Aspiring to be a praying, serving, affirming, listening,
partnering and transforming mission agency.

Dear Friends

The heart of mission is reaching out to others with the message of the Gospel. In this issue of Buena Vista there is information on people and projects which enables SAMS Ireland to carry out God's command to 'go into all the world'. Our summer **btn** teams have all returned safely and many lives have been changed as a result of these visits to Paraguay and Argentina. We have several year out students with the **Red Box Project** and our nationals working with the **fusion** programme in Ireland continue to make a significant impact.

Please continue to pray, and thank you for your generous giving which enables God's work to progress in South America.

Yours in Him



Denis Johnston

Canon Des McCreery

1935-2008

Desmond McCreery was an amazing man. He had such a breadth of interests, a width of acquaintances, and a depth of relationships with people from all kinds of backgrounds. He was enthusiastic, energetic and encouraged many along the pathway to Christ and to Christian service. He was a Gospel man with a heart for mission.

For most of his long ministry he was part of the backbone of SAMS Ireland. He was involved in every aspect of the life of SAMS and one of the highlights of his life was a trip to South America just before the birth of one of his grandchildren. Jesus Christ was the foundation of his life, the focus of his faith, his reason for living, and his hope in death.

His holiness of life, his faithfulness in Gospel ministry, his sense of humour, his time for people and his consistent life endeared him to many. We in the SAMS family are thankful to God for all his work, wit and wisdom. We will miss him!

On the Order of Service Sheet at his Funeral Service were printed the words "For me to live is Christ and to die is gain" These words of St. Paul summarize Desmond's life. We assure Frances and the whole family circle of our continued prayers. We thank God for the privilege of knowing Desmond and we are grateful for his willingness to be an important part of the heartbeat of SAMS Ireland.

Bishop Ken Clarke
Chairman SAMS Ireland

Claire Holmes

How are you? I hope that you are well and that you had a good summer. I hear it was a rainy one. Here we had quite a lot of cooler weather and a shower or two of rain which was lovely. The rain often doesn't reach the Chaco and presently a state of emergency has been declared because of the lack of rain. There is a lot of sickness as well from drinking dirty water. We trust and pray that the rain will arrive soon.

The last few months have been busy and varied with lots happening both in the country and in the church. On 15th August the new president, Fernando Lugo started his time as president of the country. After a long process a new bishop has also been elected for the Anglican Church in Paraguay. He and his wife will be arriving at some point in the first half of 2009, so we are all looking forward to that.

During July and August a lot of people came to Concepcion and other parts of Paraguay from the UK and Ireland, as part of large teams, small teams and also private visits. It was lovely having the different people out here, and being able to share the vision and work together. It was a big encouragement for the church to have all the different visitors come and participate in what God is doing here. Thank you to all who came out.

Thank you to each of you for all your support and prayers.

I know Bishop Andres and Estela would appreciate your prayers as they are very tired, and Estela sometimes has to travel the 6 hours to Asuncion and stay there for a time as her mum is sick. Pastor Guillermo has to travel the 50 kms to Yvapovo on the dirt road on his motorbike and would appreciate your prayers for safely in travel.

God bless you and thank you again.

Lots of love
Claire Holmes



Christmas Gifts



Got Christmas all sewn up, or still looking for that PERFECT gift?

In July a SAMS **btn** team in partnership with the local Paraguayan Church and Mission Paraguay travelled to Paraguay for three weeks. In that time we were involved in establishing sewing projects and working with childrens initiatives. Words can not express how amazing an experience this was as we had the opportunity to interact with so many people. In all this we saw a great need for physical assistance and spiritual nourishment.

Sewing projects were established in three centres. Women and young girls were taught how to use an electric sewing machine and given the opportunity to make simple garments. The facial expression of sheer wonderment and joy as they achieved this goal is something we

will never forget. Children were so keen to make every day items such as a scarf or to sew a pillow case. Thanks to the very hard work on the part of Caroline and Estela the projects will be able to continue. But they need financial help.



The sewing projects help women and young girls make simple garments for their own use and for sale. The women involved are very poor, with limited employment opportunities and they live in marginalised communities. They have no money and feeding their family is a daily challenge. While we are dreading this winter with the forecast of spiralling prices, the poor of this world suffer most and thousands go to sleep each night hungry.

To assist these fledgling sewing projects and to support the vital work through the Kids Clubs, where children are given some simple food for their bodies as well as spiritual input. SAMS Ireland is launching ALTERNATIVE GIFT Cards. These cards are an ideal gift for all occasions especially Christmas. The money raised through this will ALL go to support the sewing projects and Kids Clubs.

If you are excited or challenged by this and would like to buy some of the gift cards at £10 each or could sell them to your friends, family or church, then please contact SAMS and they will put you in contact with the Alternative Gifts volunteer co-ordinator.

Be assured this will make such a difference in the lives of extremely impoverished people as they are valued, supported and loved through this practical initiative.

"For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat,...I needed clothes and you clothed me... Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you... or needing clothes and clothe you? The King will reply. "I tell you the truth, whatever you did for the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me" Matthew 25v35-41.

Moirá Lindsay





beyond the norm

Enables individuals and churches in Ireland to visit and participate within church communities in South America.

The **btn** programme doesn't exist in isolation. One of the key aims is to create opportunities for individuals to be reflective within a community context. As a mission agency SAMS hopes and prays that **btn** participants will be challenged by the numerous images which will be imprinted upon them.

Being made in God's image is much more than simply a theoretical discussion. The way in which we understand the image of God will have radical implications for how we live and engage with God's creation. The image of God is what we are created in. It is the basis of human dignity and if we deny that image our lives become living contradictions. When Jesus walked this earth an essential part of his ministry was prayerful reflection. Without reflection we are in danger of creating God in our own culture bound image - becoming paralysed in our ineffectiveness.

Contemporary western culture surrounds us daily with the notion that people can remake their

image with a mixture of astounding promises, fashionable techniques and amazing products. The **btn** programme seeks to enable participants to wrestle with and embrace a deeper calling on their lives. It's something that can't be found in glossy magazines. The **btn** programme seeks to remind volunteers that they and the people in South America who they serve alongside are amazingly and wonderfully created in the image of God. Humanity may be the pinnacle of creation, but this position of grandeur is not one of power, rather it's one of service. This is what defines our rights as individuals alongside our collective responsibilities in God's world.

Be encouraged as you read the various stories from this years **btn** teams. Continue to pray for the sending and receiving churches. Pray also for those who have experienced mission in an overseas context that they will be encouraged and empowered to continue to participate in God's mission here at home.



Eglinton

A cruise, or a trip to the south of France, that's how some people want to spend part of their Summer, thankfully though, I was given a far better opportunity with memories and experiences which will last a lifetime.

In August I set off with a SAMS Ireland **btn** team bound for Paraguay. The team I was with was involved with the renovation of the local church working in partnership with the local church.

On numerous occasions we had the opportunity to accompany a SAMS Ireland mission partner Claire Holmes. She gave us the opportunity to help out with kids clubs, and they were absolutely amazing. Being able to travel about with Claire, and witness the different areas and her ministry was one of the greatest experiences. Hearing the laughter of children, and watching the smiles on their faces as they came running

after the Bishop's truck as he drove past would have made anyone feel ecstatic.

Some of the most intimate moments for me from a personal faith perspective were during the morning and evening prayer times we had with each other and the Bishop. Despite the fact we didn't know many of the team until our arrival, we all managed to help each other in times of need, and share personal experiences. It was also great to reflect on what had happened that day, and just have a bit of quiet prayer time.

This was an amazing opportunity which I am thankful for, and an article cannot do it justice. The only thing that I can say is that no matter what you think may be holding you back, get out there, and experience it!

Warren Keys



Love for Life

Love for Life is a local charity based in Waringstown working in the area of relationships and sexuality education with a long history of working in schools across Ireland. Last year alone, Love for Life programmes were delivered to over 26,000 young people in schools with the vision “to influence change within society so that young people have a healthy respect for themselves, relationships and sex.”

This summer, Love for Life once again had the great privilege of working in partnership with SAMS and the Anglican Church in Paraguay, delivering programmes to young people and parents in Paraguay, working in schools and churches in Concepción and Asunción. The team this year consisted of Philip Hartin and Olwyn Mark, who both work full-time with Love for Life,

and Hannah Collins and Alison Crawford. Both Hannah and Alison, having both previously been SAMS mission partners who had lived and worked in Paraguay, contributed hugely to the success of the visit, not least with their language skills, understanding of the context and culture, and sensitivity to the needs of the local young people and the subject matter.



The need for clear biblical teaching on relationships and sex is increasingly evident, along with the practical discipleship of young people. The core messages of the 'Love for Life' programme include value for self and others, love and respect in relationships, God's design for sexual relationships, and grace to make new choices. Programmes were very well received in all schools and one teacher commented that she wished every school in Paraguay could receive this presentation and that it had even impacted her as an adult.

Culturally it appears that there is very little media censorship in this area, and children are exposed to violent and sexual scenes from a young age. Yet at the same time there appears to be a social taboo in talking about these issues, particularly in the home. The team had the great opportunity to speak at two school parent evenings, where parents expressed fears that children as young as thirteen were already sexually active. Some key parenting skills were shared and parents were encouraged to talk to their children openly.

There is great potential to develop work in this area across schools and youth groups in Paraguay and elsewhere in South America.

Olwyn Mark



Please pray for:

- Young people in Paraguay, who are faced with many conflicting messages and pressures.
- Churches across Paraguay as they present clear biblical teaching on relationships and sex.
- Parents and teachers as they seek to support young people in making relationship choices.





Dungannon & Fivemiletown

After the best part of 40 hours travelling we finally arrived in Salta. When we felt human again we headed off to an area northern area called Pichanal. This is a more rural location and the poverty here is a lot more evident. We spent time on various projects which enabled us to work alongside local people and build relationships. Some of the team were fence building, others worked on replacing an old roof. We were involved in kids activities which included face painting, games and puppets. The local young people tried to teach us some break-dance moves and one of our team members happened to be very versatile when it came to dancing so he taught Jive - who ever said that Tyrone men can't dance!

We participated in several church services sharing our faith stories and listening to local stories. We shared many special moments with the people as we worshipped God together, sometimes they sang one song in Spanish and we would then follow with the same song in English.

We returned to Salta encountering many more wonderful people and experiences. We assisted in kids activities, painted the church, took part in services and got our hands dirty whenever the need arose. I know that for each team member this was an unforgettable experience.

Although we had been helping in different activities we felt that we had been served so much more by the local people.

We were shown incredible hospitality and love. By the end of our time in Argentina we had been taught so much. The faith and dedication that we saw was at times beyond expectations. We realised that sometimes our passion, love and dedication now and again can be distracted by the materialism within our culture that forms so much of our worldview.

The people who we met may not have the same in terms of material things but in ways it creates a sharper focus on the need for community and working out in practice God's call to mission in practical ways. As I conclude this brief overview of our 'beyond the norm' experience I know that we have returned with a desire to grow in our walk with God and engage fully with His world.

Mission isn't about a short-term experience overseas, it's what you and I do with the opportunities that God gives us wherever we happen to be today. If you want to see any of us we would love to share more of our **btn** experiences with you, so contact us via SAMS Ireland.

Jo Hamilton





Down & Dromore Youth

In July 12 young people from Down and Dromore Diocese travelled to 'La Caldera' in Salta, Argentina for a three week **btn** experience. For some it was their first overseas mission experience, for everyone it was an adventure.

Aims of the trip

- To work in fellowship with Christians from the Diocese of Northern Argentina and experience the Kingdom of God at work in another culture.
- To assist in the modernisation of La Caldera retreat centre, helping the Diocese become more financially independent.
- To deepen the links between the Church of Ireland and the Diocese of Northern Argentina.
- To share faith, work hard, and be an ambassador for Christ and the Church in Ireland.

Background

The diocese of Northern Argentina is a combination of indigenous congregations which number

around 100. Pioneer work began nearly a century ago in the Chaco. The outcome is a fully indigenous ministry with the churches led by 186 ordained and many other lay leaders. Training future leaders and building up current ones is a key challenge. Distance learning and residential courses are the means used, often with experienced indigenous ministers providing input.

As part of the residential programme 'La Caldera' plays a strategic role. The retreat centre takes its name from the 'La Caldera' village, where it is located. In early colonial times the area was a stop-over place for mule-caravans that travelled the trail connecting Buenos Aires with Lima, Peru. On the site of the village once operated a lead melting-plant that featured an enormous pot with clear water, hence the name 'La Caldera', Spanish for 'boiler' or 'cooking-pot'. The documented use of the name 'La Caldera' can be traced back to late sixteenth century title-deeds.

The property that is now the retreat-centre was purchased by the Anglican diocese of Northern Argentina in the 1970s. Since then, the centre has served local Anglican parishes mainly through youth retreats and children's camps. These activities have always been co-ordinated by the diocesan department of Clergy and Lay Training. Over the years, hundreds of young people have been resourced through this ministry. Much of today's leadership and membership are the fruit of these camps and retreats. Currently the centre can offer accommodation to around 70 people, it has hot and cold running water and the majority of sleeping facilities are bunk-beds in dorms.

In June 2007 the diocese saw a change of authority and the new Bishop and his staff quickly perceived the need for optimising the use of the 'La Caldera' centre and the project for modernisation was conceived. One of the priorities of the diocese is to become less dependent on donations from abroad and to increase the percentage of ministry-budgets they can finance themselves. Modernising the 'La Caldera' retreat centre is part of this priority.

In July 2008 a team of young people from Down and Dromore went to 'La Caldera, in Northern Argentina to encourage the church and develop a link. They visited churches, participated in services, organized outreach, and worked hard on various 'hands-on' practical projects. The team were amazing. They

worked hard, had fantastic fun, and excelled at representing the Church of Ireland in Argentina.

With such a successful trip Bishop Harold Miller has asked that the project continue. In the coming years more young people will have the opportunity to develop relationships, meet and share with Argentine Anglicans through the SAMS **btn** programme. At the same time through partnership the strategic and historical retreat centre at 'La Caldera' will be built-up. Theological training is also an on going part of the wider project and SAMS seeks to link churches here in Ireland to ministry students in Argentina. This will create the opportunity for churches to follow the individuals through training and praying for them as they become ordained ministers.

So, well done to the churches from Down & Dromore who sent young ambassadors to Argentina. We look forward to the on-going developments in 'La Caldera', Salta and the wider diocese of Argentina.

Stephen Trew



Lisburn Cathedral

The 3 weeks in Argentina as part of the SAMS **btn** programme will be etched on all the teams' hearts for the rest of our lives. Being in Salta with the people there was a humbling experience to say the least. We were all blessed by the warmth, love and hospitality of our brothers and sisters in Christ.

Our first day was one of relaxing and seeing the sights of Salta and was a great introduction for us into life in Salta, then we were ready for the challenges that lay ahead. We spent 4 days working with a small church in the centre of a Shanty Town on the outskirts of the city. Dusty roads and potholes greeted us as we made our way through what seemed to us a different world. Our time there was amazing. God moved in such a powerful way. We worked at clearing space to plant trees; we moved fences and rubble and more importantly built relationships.

As we assembled at the play area we were swamped with children, smiling and eager to meet the "Gringos". We played with them, organised games, had volleyball matches with the older teens, did dance, drama, face painting, puppets and just tried to share God's love. Parents cried, as we were the first people to help. This was such an inspiring time and I know we left our hearts in that place.

The church where we had our base was amazing. We worked with the youth group and the friendships built over our time there blew us away. Wonderful Christians, with insignificant worldly possessions yet rich in their faith and love of God. We went on a Retreat with the Youth Group and saw young people come to faith as God came upon them in a powerful way. The leaders encouraged us as they said that our visit had shown them a living God who impacts lives and reaches out.

We had a truly awesome experience running teaching workshops for 72 teenagers and leaders. The impact on the teens was fantastic and many issues were challenged and tackled. Also the time we spent Training Leaders was really a privilege for us. We found such a hunger and desire to learn and receive from God.

We had the opportunity to do drama, teach dance at local schools, to sing at church and to preach in the church on our final Sunday. We spent time at a local orphanage with bouncy castles, face painting, singing and just creating the space to play and laugh with the children. On reflection you begin to realize how well off we are and really how little we have to complain about.

We are delighted that a young man from the local church we worked with has joined our Year Out Team which started in September. David is a wonderful guy with a passion to serve God. This will be a whole new world to him and a real challenge.

Please pray for David as he settles down to life in Lisburn.

We have been deeply impacted by our time in Salta and we have a link there, which we want to develop and hopefully we can be part of the privilege of resourcing local churches in South America. This is an exciting development for us as we support World Mission in a way that will have lasting effects for years to come.

Keith Neill





Embracing Evangelism & Social Action



Core Aims

- Developing children's and youth work.
- Enabling training opportunities.
- Overseeing soup kitchen project.
- Facilitating educational sponsorship programme.
- Assisting SAMS gap year programme.

Overview

The Red Box Project is an initiative committed to supporting the Church in South America. SAMS is dedicated to resourcing local people through prayer, training and seed funding. SAMS is thankful for the numerous opportunities and possibilities. Cecilia Valdiviezo from Argentina works as the Red Box Co-ordinator and her teaching background, a commitment to community

development and a passion to serve God have enabled numerous openings for service. Remember, God calls and sends all of us into our communities to participate in His mission. Mission demands identification without loss of identity: it means going beyond our comfort zones and entering other people's stories, as Christ entered ours.

There are now three young women living with me in 'not so sunny at the moment' Salta, Argentina. The eldest and wisest is Naomi Francey from Gilford Parish, Helen King the middle one has just turned 21 and is from Shankill Parish, Lurgan and the wee one is still a teenager, Megan Johnston from Lisburn Cathedral.

Naomi is nearly half way through her time in Salta and has been involved in a 'comedor' which is a place slightly out of town where children from the local shanty town can come and get help with their homework, a nutritious lunch and Christian teaching. Naomi has enjoyed working with the church, especially with the kids clubs and the teenagers.

Megan first arrived here with the Lisburn Cathedral team who worked with a local church and ran programmes for the youth, including an exciting initiative called 'Romance Academy'. Megan is teaching English to numerous people. She is a leader in several children's 'Happy Hours' and works in public and private schools. Her highlights so far have been seeing the progress of her students and developing life long friends.

Helen, who just arrived in Salta a few weeks ago is spending eight months here as part of her university year abroad. She is already getting involved in the life of the church and local community. She is enjoying her time so far, in particular, her work with the children. Helen fell in love with Salta when she first came to Argentina in 2005 as part of a SAMS **btn** team and is delighted to be back.

The people in the local church have embraced all the girls and this has impacted each of them as they grow in faith and live their lives for God. Megan, Naomi and Helen are learning so much everyday through their work as SAMS year out volunteers.

Even though the time in Salta seems to be flying past, the girls are trying to make the most of every opportunity that God gives them during their time here.

At the moment I am running three small groups during the week just for teenagers and at the weekends there are youth meeting, so I am always running from one place to the other but so far I'm doing fine.

Last month the Lord blessed us with a car which helps the ministry in such a way. We know that this couldn't have happened without the support and generosity of our brothers and sisters from Ireland.

Summer is coming soon and the girls will be involved in different activities at the summer camps so pray that they can adjust to the new schedule and they can cope with the rising heat. Once again thank to all of you for your support and friendship and I look forward to seeing you at Friday Night Live!

Cecilia Validivezo

Please pray for:

Pray for Cecilia and the local church as they share the love of God through words and actions in challenging circumstances. Pray also for Naomi Francey (Down&Dromore), Megan Johnston (Connor) and Helen King (Down&Dromore) who are volunteering with the Red Box Project on gap year placements.

The SAMS **fusion** programme offers placements to people from South America within a church setting in Ireland. This is an evolving and exciting development which aspires to challenge, encourage and resource future leaders.

David Alanis

I have been living here now for five weeks, with two other people who are part of the year out team, working within a youth and children's ministry for Lisburn Cathedral. I will be on placement here for eleven months and am excited about what God has in store for me.

For three years I have wanted to come to Ireland to serve God following a SAMS team, from Lurgan Shankill Parish, that came to my home church in Salta, Argentina. I didn't know when or how this could happen and then all of a sudden, 4 months ago, God started to open up all the doors.

A team from Lisburn Cathedral which has an article in 'Buena Vista' came to my church for 3 weeks this summer, on placement, and asked me to come and join their youth and children's team for the year. Unknown to me the SAMS Ireland Development Officer, the Red Box Coordinator and the youth worker from Lisburn Cathedral had been discussing placement opportunities.



When I was told about a possible opening to serve in Ireland I was both nervous and excited.

My first impression here in your country was the climate. In one day there can be sun, rain, wind and even snow and sometimes all at the same time! The people here have been very welcoming and friendly and although I am far away from home I feel like I have family here.

I am continuing to learn more and more about God and I am able to participate and share about Him in various programmes and in various ways such as Kidzone, Sunday school, school assemblies and youth cell. In the church I am involved in a team that co-ordinates an under 18s nightclub and drop-in centre, called 'Fusion', where we get up to 350 teenagers attending every Saturday night. 'Fusion' is a safe place for

teenagers to come hang out and have a good time and I have the opportunity to share about God. I have found the tools for evangelism here to be different from Argentina but the necessity to share about God remains the same here, in Argentina and in every part of the world.

I am enjoying my time here, learning lots, making the most of this opportunity that God has given me and I am enthusiastic about the year ahead. Please keep me in your prayers.

David Alanis



Friday Night Live 09

Key Note Speaker
Rev. Dr. Maurice Elliott

Hosted By
Bishop Ken Clarke

Special Guests

Cecilia Valdiviezo
Red Box Coordinator

Esteban Alvarez Chile

David Alanis Argentina

Virginia Morales Uruguay

Miriam Carmona Spain

Rev. Peter Bartlett
Bishop Elect of Paraguay

'Beyond the Norm' Teams

Worship led by Shankill Parish Music
Group

Please Pray for ...

Teachers for St. Andrew's School in
Asuncion.

Claire Holmes serving in Paraguay.

**Cecilia Valdiviezo, Naomi Francey,
Megan Johnston & Helen King**
serving in Argentina.

Esteban Alvarez serving in
Craigavon.

Samuel Lago serving in Belfast.

David Alanis serving in Lisburn.

Virginia Morales serving in Donegal.

The 60 **btm** participants who have
returned home.

Christmas Gifts Initiative.

Craigavon Civic Centre 6th February @ 7.30pm.

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