

Monday	Time off. Study course that the bishop does with the men.
Tuesday	English classes in a school / leaders preparation meeting / Childrens activities preparation meeting/ prayer meeting.
Wednesday	English classes / visits to invite the children to the Kid's Clubs / 2 children's and adults meetings in the Chaco.
Thursday	English classes in a local school / Bible Study course for women / Children's Clubs in Ramonita and Villa Alta – 2 areas of Concepcion.
Friday	Bible classes in a local school – 4 classes in the morning and 4 classes in the afternoon / Visits to invite children and young people to Saturday's events / Manicure, sewing and cooking classes in Inmaculada.
Saturday	AM – Children's Club in San Antonio and Inmaculada, 2 areas of Concepcion / Lunch for the children in Inmaculada / PM Younger youth.
Sunday	AM – Church and Sunday School / Children's Club in Horqueta / p.m Youth and youth training course.

Praise

The Children and young people / the course in Inmaculada / the lunch in Inmaculada / the arrival of the new bishop / protection

Prayer

The team who work with the children, / more leaders for the youth work / the new bishop / that God will raise up more pastors / the teams who are preparing to come out

The letter is sent out by: Mrs Ina Robinson, 5 Castle Drive, Richhill, Armagh. BT61 9QH
If you would like to receive this prayer letter via email to reduce costs please email Claire at:
claramholmes@hotmail

This letter is produced by SAMS Ireland, and if you would like to financially support Claire, please contact:
SAMS House, 1 Irwin Crescent, Lurgan, Craigavon, BT66 7EZ.
Tel 028 38 310 144. Email: info@samireland.com

CLAIRE'S NEWS FROM CONCEPCION

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SUMMER 2009

Dear Prayer Partner:

How are you? I hope you are well. Thank you for all your continued prayer and support. A lot has happened since my last letter. I should write more often!

The first bit of news is that I have decided to leave Paraguay and return home at the end of the year. As a lot of you know, I have been thinking of this and praying about it for a long time but wasn't sure. Thank you for your prayers concerning that. It took me a while to be sure but I believe now that it is the right decision and I have peace about it. I told the leaders first and yesterday Bishop Andres told the rest of the church so it is all official. There were lots of tears yesterday so that is the start of it. It won't be easy leaving people after 9 years, but I am looking forward to coming home too – family, friends, oh and nice chocolate every day.

The past few months have had a lot of good things happening and a lot of challenges. At the beginning of February we had a camp in the church for the young people. About 40 of them participated in that. It is encouraging to see them, because most of them have grown up through the Children's Clubs which we do in the different parts of Concepcion. The camp itself had it's moments though. We went away to a river for a day. Everyone had a great day until one of the girls passed out and we couldn't bring her round. In the end we all went on the bus to a doctor who lived a few miles away. By the time we got there she had started to come round. We headed back to Concepcion, in the middle of a tropical storm that had just blown in. As the dirt road became slippery the bus skidded and almost turned over as it went off the road, into a bank and got stuck there. By a miracle it didn't go right over because looking at the angle of it, it looked like it should at any moment. But God looked after us all and we got all the young people off the bus. A few of the girls had to go to the hospital in the back of a lorry, mostly because of not being able to breathe because of the shock, and the girl who had been sick before went unconscious again. But praise the Lord in the end we got them all home safely. Thank you for all your prayers. It was a scary day, and I know it was prayer that protected us.

The other thing that has been a real challenge is that the other pastor in the church here resigned. That has left a real gap. Please pray for him and his family, and for the church. As Bishop Andres who is also pastor of the church is due to retire in 5 years, there is a real need for leaders. It isn't like home where a number go each year to theological college and you take it from there. The churches grow their own pastors. So please pray for good growth in these next years. On the whole the work with the children and young people is growing and going well.



Most of the children in the different places that we meet (7 plus Sunday School) come each week to the Children's Clubs. On Saturday mornings after the children's and young peoples groups in Inmaculada, we have a lunch for them, as it is an area where there is a lot of poverty. Most weeks there are about 80 there, and it is a special time together. Also in Inmaculada on Friday evenings there is a project for

young people and adults where they can learn sewing, hairdressing, and manicure. It is supported by the council, who provide qualified teachers in these areas and those who finish the course will receive a certificate at the end, which should enable them to find work. It is a really important project as it will help people to have a means of earning some money which in a town of huge unemployment, there is such a need. Because of the unemployment people will often take any job, accepting any wage. Employers know this and pay them a really small amount. When people receive a third of the minimum wage they consider it good by Concepcion standards. For this amount they often have to work more than 70 hours a week. Many places they have to work 7 days a week, and aren't entitled to holidays. Please pray that this situation will change, because it has people chained in a circle of poverty, and poverty often breeds all types of problems, especially when the mod cons are on display in the shops. Lots of people leave their children and go and work elsewhere.

One of the big areas for prayer is for the leaders and helpers in the different areas of work. There are 5 people working in the ministry with the children – Norma, Zuny, Narcisa, Adriana, and Ana. They have all been doing this for some years and are very committed. One of the biggest encouragements of my time here is to see how they have grown in their spiritual life, and how far they have come in their commitment to God and to this work. I have been trying to step back more and more, as they take on more of the responsibility. I know how important it is to surround them with prayer as the enemy will always try to attack teams.

The area that most worries me is the area of the young people. The couple who were working with the older youth gave that up at the beginning of the year as they felt they couldn't do it anymore. We have as a church been supporting that area since, but there are no specific leaders there. The younger youth has a smaller team this year as one of the leaders has found a job which means she is able to help less, and another of them has left the church. At the minute that leaves Narcisa and myself, and 30 – 40 of them. At the

minute it is fine, but I would love it to have a bigger team again, and me stepping back a bit before I leave. I am preparing a course on leading youth and teaching it once a fortnight to a group of young people who want to help in the area of the youth. I am learning too as I prepare it.

I had an idea a while ago with reference to the

young people. Here they call them adolescents and my idea is "Adopt an adolescent." Most of them are from homes where there are no other Christians in the house. Some of them are children of prostitutes, a few others their dad is an alcoholic and violent, others their mum has gone to live and work elsewhere. The idea is **JUST FOR PRAYER** which is what most of them need more than anything. If anyone wants to "adopt an adolescent" I will send you a page of one person, with their photo, date of birth, and a few details so you can pray for them and maybe if you ever want to send a letter. If you want to send them your details too, I can let them know who is praying for them. I think it will encourage them to know that someone loves them enough to dedicate to pray for them. If you would like to do this, send me an e mail to claramholmes@hotmail.com, and I will contact with the details. Thank you.

I had better stop or this will be so long that no-one will want to read it. Just to mention a few other wee bits of news. We are really pleased that the new Bishop Peter Bartlett and his wife Sally arrived in March. Also in July and August there are different people and teams coming to work for a few weeks in Concepcion and other parts of Paraguay, which again we are really looking forward to. Once again, thank you for your prayers and all your support, and if you have any things you want us to pray for let us know. One of the things I am reminded of and to encourage us always is "I will build my church, and the gates of hell will not overcome it." Matt: 16:18.

I will put at the end of the letter a list of the weekly activities of the church as some people have said they find it helpful for prayer.

Thanks again and God Bless.

Love and prayers.

Claire

