

Link Letter no.4 September 2012

Bishop Henry Scriven, CMS Mission Director for Latin America, writes: *"Since we follow a God who is always on the move, it should not be surprising that He moves us on in His mission. After 35 years of faithful service in Paraguay, Ed and Marie Brice have responded to a call from the Bishop of Northern Argentina to move to the other side of the Pilcomayo River to the Argentine Chaco. They will be based in Tartagal where many mission partners have worked over the years; the church, however, is in need of encouragement and the Wichi Indians in the Northern Chaco will value a new person in the leadership team. I'm excited about Ed and Marie's move and know you will continue to support them faithfully in your prayers and giving. Thank you."*

Dear friends,

This is our second link letter of the year but will probably also, be our last from Paraguay.

Not quite according to plans...

Praise the Lord that the planned conference for Makxawáya took place in April. Representatives were not able to come from some of the communities because of bad flooding. But two local pastors from the community of San Fernando did make it despite having to wade through water up to their waists. There was an excellent attendance of Makxawáya people which was a real encouragement. Bishop Andrés and pastors Agustín and Luis were also there to help.

A further encouragement was the significant financial contribution made by the folk from Makxawáya who covered half of the costs of the food. This experience encouraged us to think about doing something similar in La Patria where

The April conference in Makxawáya



Ed and Marie Brice CMS mission partners **Paraguay**

One of CMS's longest serving mission partners, Ed has a heart for the indigenous Enxet people of Paraguay's remote, rural Chaco area. It was there that he met Marie when they were working in mission and education. Ed was ordained in 2007 with special responsibility for the Río Verde area of the Chaco, although for the time being the couple still live in the capital, Asunción. Ed wants to see more ordained Enxet and the church becoming mature, "attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ".

there are at least seven churches, each with several workers.

We had thought that our next conference in Río Verde would be in June but for a number of reasons it didn't take place until last week and then for just two and a half days. Once again we had problems with the invitations sent by the local radio. So not all those we had expected were able to come but praise the Lord, as there were two new participants from La Patria. While we were pleased to have Bishop Peter, Teodosio (diocesan administrator) and Chris Hawksbee with us for the whole time, we felt keenly the absence of Pastor Agustín. He suffered two heart attacks in the last month and is now recovering from surgery.

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Jasmín, the children's worker, doing puppet work in Río Verde

It was, however, a moving experience to be able to intercede together for Agustín and his family last Wednesday at the time he was undergoing surgery. The same evening there was a small presentation ceremony after the evening service as a farewell to Marie and Ed who, God willing, will be moving to Northern Argentina next month. Hardly surprisingly, on the last day of our conference, Pastor Romualdo, acting as spokesman for all those present asked: *"Will these conferences continue?"*

Puppet work

Jasmín, the children's worker, clown and puppet operator, is finishing her teaching degree. She needed more work to help cover her costs, so it's good news that she has work on Fridays, Saturdays and Mondays, but it means that she has not been able to make trips to the Chaco this year. Easter, however, was an exception. Praise the Lord that she and Marie were able to put on a programme in the home of one of the key families we have contact with in Río Verde and in one of the smaller communities of Sombrero Pirí, called *Palo azul* (blue stick). Marie has also been

busy getting the text of her book about Abraham and Sarah ready for the printers. We are especially grateful to Neill for his help manipulating the images using his computer graphics skills.

Carlos Velázquez

As you know, the task Bishop Peter had given me (Ed) was to prepare the next generation of pastors. It's hardly surprising then, that I was especially interested, when visiting Sombrero Pirí in May, to hear of a young man who helped out regularly in the local churches there and who *"preaches really well in our language"*. According to the enthusiastic young man who provided this information he lived in the village of Primavera. This community is about a year old, made up mostly of people who have moved out of La Herencia/ Yatnata. So it was my next port of call.

A visit to Benancio's house seemed in order; he is the one who normally leads the church services there. There was no one at home... maybe he was away working on a ranch. Working my way back to the next house in a clearing in the forest I found Cano and Catalina, a couple who had attended one of the Bible schools we held in Sombrero Pirí in the late 1980s. What a surprise, as our paths had barely crossed since then. The surprise was even greater though when it turned out that Carlos Velázquez was their son-in-law and, there he was, with his wife Beatriz and small baby. Carlos, thin with short hair and a serious expression, grew up in the El Estribo community of San Carlos (St Charles) but when he married Beatriz last year, he followed the Enxet

Carlos Velázquez, happy and content, with his wife, baby and in-laws





Leaving the truck and walking to El Estribo

tradition of moving in with his in-laws. I gave him some of the materials we had produced in Enxet and offered to go back and help him use them.

The next day I was due to visit El Estribo and Carlos sent me a text message saying he wanted to go with me to visit his family. In the morning, however, the news was that he was in the local clinic spitting blood. It turned out that Carlos had tuberculosis. He has started treatment and should make a full recovery if he follows the full course of treatment.

Unfortunately I haven't been able to follow up my offer of help to Carlos but the latest news I got was that he has extended his preaching ministry to a regular slot on the local FM radio station in La Herencia. Please pray for this young man and his family, that he may develop the gifts God has given him and use them for extending the Kingdom.

Floods

The trip to El Estribo was worthwhile. For two months it had been impossible for anyone to visit due to the floods. The roads were still damaged and where the bridges had been washed away I had to leave the truck and walk. I was especially pleased to see Pastor Lucio. He told me that two weeks earlier he fell off his motorbike, which had left him momentarily unconscious. He had obviously been shaken by the experience and was still recovering.

Some of the sesame crop had been damaged by the floods but the people were still hopeful that the roads would soon be repaired so they could get their crops out. This, however, was



Francisca in her garden in Rio Verde

not to be. Shortly after my visit, more rain made the roads completely impassable again, and it would be over a month before repair work could restart. My next visit to El Estribo was with members of the Mission Paraguay team at the end of July. Much of the sesame harvest was lost but now people are busy preparing to plant again.

Although people received few visits from the Anglican Church during the floods, we praise the Lord that the local authorities did an excellent job of providing isolated communities with foodstuffs and medical care. The images of flooded houses on the national television also produced a spontaneous and generous response from the general public.

In Rio Verde, Francisca, one of the recipients of moringa plants, was encouraged by the damp conditions to plant a kitchen garden. We bought onions, lettuce, radish, tomatoes and cabbage seeds all of which produce a quicker return than moringa. I haven't received a full report about this effort but I know that Francisca brought a thank offering from the extra income she made.

Tartagal

Tartagal is a town in the north west of Argentina, with a population of 56,000 people just 34 miles from the Bolivian border and 64 miles from the Paraguayan border. It's about 220 miles from the provincial capital Salta. The Indian population is about 4,000; most are Wichi but there are seven other groups represented.

It was to this town that Marie and I travelled at the end of

May to meet up with Bishop Nick Drayson (Bishop of the Diocese of Northern Argentina). He had invited us to visit with him some of the Indian communities in the area with a view to seeing if God might be calling us to work there. It took us about 19 hours and three coaches to get there from Asunción.

One of the Indian communities we visited with Nick was Misión La Paz about 80 miles from Tartagal on the river Pilcomayo and connected to Paraguay by a road bridge. This is community of mostly Wichí Indians, but there are also some Chorote and Nivacle. It was here that we joined in one of the conferences organised by the Christian Education team and met with René Pereira and David Stokes who, like Bishop Nick, are based in the town of Ingeniero Juárez. We also met four members of the Anglican Church's Asociana team who work on land rights and other social issues involving the Indians. Two of them live in Tartagal and two nearer to Misión La Paz. There are other members of the team, some of whom we know already and others who we haven't yet met.

Leaving Paraguay

Once back in Paraguay, as we prayed and saw how the situation was developing, we eventually decided that this was the way God was leading us and praised Him for opening this way forward.

It will not be easy to leave Paraguay, not only because we have been here – on and off – for over 35 years but also because we are just about to see the number of our grandchildren living here more than double. We praise the Lord that Marie's mum health is much better, but it is still a concern leaving her.

We would value your prayers for these changes and, of course, the adjustment to a new culture, new languages, new work and new colleagues. There are then the practical questions that we need to address, related to the move. Having an Argentine wife has its advantages when it comes to requesting permanent residence, but Ed still has some paperwork to do with the Argentine Consulate in Paraguay before we can start that procedure.

Marie, as a returning national, has a right to take her personal effects back into Argentina without paying customs dues. However, we have yet to find a way of transporting our personal effects in a way that makes it worth our while taking them. The only quote for the

removal that we have had so far is for over \$7,000, so we may be reduced to taking just what fits in our cases.

Prayer and praise

For praise

- The conferences in Makxawáya and Río Verde which reached a wider audience and for the help of Bishop Andrés and Peter, pastors Agustín and Luis, Teodosio and Chris which made them possible.
- Marie and Jasmin's puppet presentation in Rio Verde and Palo Azul over Easter.
- Neill's help with the "Abraham and Sarah" book.
- The way that local authorities responded to the flooding in the Chaco communities.
- The repair of the roads in El Estribo and the enthusiasm to plant sesame and the kitchen garden in Río Verde.
- The progress made so far in getting documents sorted for our move to Argentina.

Pray for

- The future of the conferences for church workers in the Chaco and the pastoral care of San Mateo.
- Pator Agustin and his family.
- Carlos Velázquez, his wife and baby, his health and the development of his ministry.
- The details of our move to Tartagal, documentation, transport and the development of our new ministry there.

In Christ

Ed and Marie