

Link Letter No.1 December 2010

Dear praying friends,

Just a few lines to bring you up to date with where things are...

It's been 33 years now since we flew to Paraguay with four year old Timothy and two year old Nicola, 18 years since we landed in Bolivia with the addition of 13 year old Caroline and 10 years since we arrived in Argentina with our Bolivian terrier Trixie.

The family now includes Ronnie and Donny, Nicola and Caroline's husbands, and five grandchildren, Natasha, Tamara, Daniel, Tomas, and Samuel. All the family now lives in Asuncion, Paraguay with the exception of Greg and Sylvia who are in Buenos Aires.

Ronnie and Nicky moved there at the end of 2009 and Ronnie is pastoring two congregations in the Cathedral. Donny is the bishop's secretary and pastoring

The Venables family



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Greg and Sylvia Venables
CMS mission partners
Argentina

a congregation in Luque as well as helping with the evening Cathedral congregation. Nicky and Caroline are teachers at Colegio San Andres where Greg was head for 12 years. Tim is working with a Dutch ecumenical credit company and participating actively in the life of the church, both in Luque and at the Cathedral.

Recent significant events for Greg and Sylvia have included the Provincial Synod in November where Greg handed the Primate role over to Tito Zavala the bishop of Chile, after nine years. The meeting was a good and united one, emphasising the priorities of the church here as mission, training and youth.

Sylvia continues to give bible studies in the local church and at home as well as leading a weekly devotional time in Babs, which is our home for elderly people.

Greg continues as diocesan bishop of Argentina and is also for the time being looking after the Northern diocese of Argentina. This includes a handful of urban churches in Salta, Tucuman and nearby places but which mainly consists

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of the enormous quantity of Indian communities with whom the Anglican Church has been working in Argentina for a century and includes around 200 Indian clergy.

The presence of the new suffragan bishop there, Nick Drayson and his wife Catherine, is proving to be a blessing and encouragement giving us hope for the future in what was a very sad state of affairs. There have been a few anxious moments this year with three of the family hospitalised, a freak storm which destroyed the roof of our house in Olivos, the death of Greg's mother and the obvious knock on effect of the international financial crisis. The positive side of the financial crisis, however, has been the renewed determination of the church in Argentina to draw a line under a hitherto long term financial dependence and seek a more Christian basis to its existence.

Greg and Mario Agreda, the secretary to our Synod, have spent the year visiting all the congregations throughout this vast diocese with the challenge to be Christian communities rather than "religious clubs" and to fix their eyes on Christ, listen to His word and direct their ministry towards the people outside the church who need and perhaps long to hear the good news of the Lord Jesus Christ and His gift of love and salvation. The challenge has been well received.

The diocese of Argentina meets in early December to consider the draft of our ongoing vision and will meet as a Synod in early April to launch this next stage. The diocese of Northern Argentina will meet to celebrate its first centenary in April and its Synod in September.

An outstanding and moving moment recently was a visit to the southernmost tip of Argentina, the uttermost end of the earth. We met with leaders of the historical



**The Allen Gardiner monument
at the ends of the earth**

churches as well as evangelicals and Catholics there, and went to the places where the earliest missionaries gave their lives and set up the first communities.

We remembered with gratitude and respect the arrival of the first bishop, Waite Stirling, in that very place and renewed the commitment of the church here to the vision and sacrifice of Allen Gardiner in a ceremony in which we were accompanied by the Argentine navy and civic leaders.

God has honoured the sacrificial lives and deaths of those men and women and the vibrant life of His church here today is a witness to His faithfulness and their commitment to His call in Matthew 28 18-20: *"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."*

This comes with our thanks for your prayers and support.

Greg and Sylvia

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