



## Link Letter no.2 November 2012

**Dear friends,**

**Whose work is this?**

Andrew hit the big Five-O in September, and his birthday will be remembered as the day we lost Fru-Fru. This rather special little dog somehow fell out of the truck on the wrong side of town. We searched high and low for him, knocking on doors and trespassing on private properties. We called off the search after dark and went home to share the sad news with the kids. When we got home, there was Fru-Fru, waiting for us at the gate, tail wagging. We will probably never know how he got back, navigating an unknown route, dodging dozens of street dogs, and crossing a very busy main road. What we are certain of is that his reappearance did not come about as a result of our best efforts.

This little episode reminds us that the outcomes of our ministry are not proportional to the effort we put into a given

### Mr Fru-Fru



### **Andrew and Maria Leake** CMS mission partners **Argentina**

**Andrew grew up in northern Argentina, and his parents and grandparents served with the Anglican Church among the Toba and Wichi Indians. He studied environmental sciences and rural social development, before serving with Tearfund in Honduras, where he worked on indigenous land rights and rainforest protection. Following doctoral research in Paraguay, he joined the Anglican Church in Northern Argentina where he led work in mapping indigenous land-use and monitoring deforestation. He is currently director of Land for Life, a Creation Care initiative aimed at establishing protected areas within the Chaco. His wife Maria is involved in children's work with their local church. They have three children. Read their blogs at <http://leake.blogspot.com>**

venture. We can plant a seed, and we can water it, but we can't make it grow. *"Night and day, whether he sleeps or gets up, the seed sprouts and grows, though he does not know how"* Mark 4:27. This is the nature of God's work, and yet time and again we fall into the trap of thinking that it all depends on us.

We realise that no matter how much effort we put into trying to protect the Chaco's environment,

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**Cow slaughter - one of the many odd things one may do while establishing a working relationship with local criollos**



**Andrew and government park ranger Niceforo (left) meeting with a criollo family affected by deforestation**

humanly speaking we can do just about nothing. Just last week we were informed that our efforts to stop a further 30,000 acres of forest from being cleared had had absolutely no impact – zero – whatsoever on the government decision to give the green light to the bulldozers.

Greed, political inertia, and rampant corruption are fuelling the massive wave of deforestation that continues to sweep across the Chaco. It appears all but impossible to stop the process, and we often feel powerless. We can only believe, pray and trust that God will do His bit, and that through His intervention at least some of the Chaco's ecological integrity might be preserved for the wellbeing of local people.

So it is, then, that we look forward to seeing how God responds to proposals we are now sending out to raise support to purchase tracts of land for conservation in the Chaco. For those of you interested in a more detailed and ongoing account of our work with

Land for Life (Fundación Refugio), please see our bimonthly circulars which can be downloaded via our blog (see address on the front page).

#### **Working in a fragile political environment**

Argentina is entering a period of uncertainty, undergoing a painful political process at the moment. The country is increasingly polarised between the middle and working classes. The government, via its social handout programmes (much of it financed from soy bean exports), has improved the lives of millions of poor people, and in so doing, bought itself an almost insurmountable number of votes. Political clientelism (vote buying) has nurtured dependency and corruption, all of which does not bode well for the coming years. There is a deep concern among a large sector of national society that the country is following Venezuela's path to socialism. One of the many similarities already prevalent is the fact that one cannot buy US dollars. This is a consequence of an increase in state control of the economy. A prominent politician pointed out the irony that it is now easier to buy a gun in Argentina than it is to buy a dollar.

#### **A near miss**

Driving is a scary business here. We are thankful for the fact that what could have been a very serious road accident

#### **Playing marbles with the kids in the Chaco**





**Andrew meets up with the Tobas in the forest**

ended up being nothing more than a bit of fright. We were on route to Cordoba and had a collision with a young girl on a motorbike (no licence, no helmet, no number plate, and no insurance). We were doing a good 75mph along a deserted stretch of road when out of the blue she drove straight into our lane without looking! Thankfully we managed to avoid a head on collision by swerving off the road, and she ended up glancing off the side of the truck.

Despite her fall she was physically fine. Local police and ambulance staff were very helpful and efficient, and after a delay of three hours we were able to continue our trip.

### Visitors galore

We have enjoyed having several visitors during the second half of the year.

■ During July Paul Wright visited us from England. He was instrumental in helping Andrew understand some of the statistics behind a research project we are doing on the effects of deforestation on bird life.

■ Felicity Hall, who helps with our Land for Life communications, spent the month of August with us. She travelled with Andrew



**Maria with her Sunday school children**

to the Chaco where she met Toba Indians involved in Bible translation, and to visit a plot of land that Land for Life is hoping to acquire for conservation.

■ Tom and Sarah Salisbury then came for a week in September. Tom, previously a member of our home church in St Albans, undertook field work in the Chaco in 2006 as part of his geography degree, and was keen to catch up with friends he made then.

■ Last but not least, we enjoyed a visit from Phil and Rosemary Tadman, who are old friends of the Leake family.

### Family news

Our Tomas (aka Monty) has recovered well from his cut tendon and some other, stress-related symptoms. He appears to be regaining momentum with studies, which is encouraging. He enjoys his course and gets on well with his student colleagues. He has also made good friends with an American missionary couple who live in Carlos Paz.

Ceci, now 18, recently achieved the status of *abanderada* (flag bearer), in recognition of being top student in her school. She is now dealing with the bureaucracy of applying to a British

university. She has recently enjoyed participating (as Ambassador for Panama!) in the Model United Nations. She continues to enjoy her dancing classes and has just returned from an international competition held in Cordoba where her troop took first place in their category. She is now the proud owner of a driving license, something acquired in less than an hour and without any questions concerning whether she could drive or not!

Carolina also continues to do well at school, and has just completed the second of three annual batches of exams. She enjoys being with her friends, many of whom turn 15 this year, which will mean many late-night parties! (15th birthdays for girls are really important in Latin America). Rollerblading, volleyball and ping pong are among her favourite sports, alongside her regular gym. She has started her driving lessons with Dad.

### **Messy Sunday school**

Maria continues to be involved with Sunday school in a very poor neighbourhood, not far from where we live. The kids come from some very sad family backgrounds. Preparing a card for mother's day, a little boy mentioned that he was looking for his mum who had left him with his grandmother and simply disappeared.

The children love the weekly event which includes arts and crafts as well as some sport for the older groups. We could do a lot more with the children, were we to have a fixed place for the weekly meeting. We currently meet in a soup kitchen, but this is sometimes occupied by others (Maria's group literally meet in the kitchen). We are thinking and praying about the possibility of either renting or buying a small property in the neighbourhood.

### **Summer deputation**

We were due to travel back to the UK this December,

but have postponed our planned deputation until July 2013. We are still waiting for the 2013 school calendar to be defined before we make our bookings.

### **Our blog**

We have been developing our blog ([www.leake.blogspot.com](http://www.leake.blogspot.com)) with our more informal family news updates, and our Land for Life (Fundación Refugio) bimonthly circulars can now also be accessed in a downloadable (PDF) format via the blog.

### **Prayer pointers**

- Please pray for success in raising the funds required to acquire land for conservation
- Pray for courage and wisdom as we speak out against the destruction of the Chaco's environment.
- Pray for for Maria who holds the fort while Andrew travels
- Pray for the children in their studies.

In Christ

*Andrew and Maria*

### **Cecilia as an *abanderada* (flag bearer)**

