

Link Letter No.1 December 2010

Dear praying friends,

Feliz Natal! Merry Christmas! Greetings from Joao Pessoa, Brazil where summer temperatures are soaring into the mid thirties Celsius! No white Christmas for us, unless 'white hot' counts...

At home

Rebekah is eight months and continues to bring great joy and plenty of laughs to Mum and Dad! She was an early crawler so we reckon she'll soon take her first steps. At the beach, she was initially wary of sand but now loves it! She also enjoys her "swimming" classes – a good job since I (Marcus) will be baptising her on December 19! It promises to be a memorable occasion, particularly since my parents will be here, remaining with us over Christmas.

At church – the Cathedral of the Resurrection (*Marcus is assistant minister*)

We're busily planning 2011. Aldo, the Dean, is keen to continue our mentoring and equipping leaders. In the midweek studies I take, we're learning to read/interpret Scripture in a more informed way. Most folk are middle aged and treat me affectionately like a younger member of the family – and some like Walter keep me on my toes with all manner of theological

With some of the Wednesday night study group



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Marcus and Tamara Throup
CMS mission partners
Brazil

questions! I've been pleased with the dynamic with the group praying and caring for one another.

These studies are complementing Aldo's sessions on leadership formation and our Sunday sermon series on the Sermon on the Mount. We hope that these leaders will take the vision forward in outreach initiatives to a neighbouring poor community and the plan is to get reenvisioned on a retreat for the whole church family (200 people) early next year.

In the wider context of the Diocese of Recife, I've been serving on a committee which is looking into the (canonical) process of appointing new bishops. Our diocesan bishop intends to appoint two suffragan bishops leading up to his eventual retirement and the consecration of a new diocesan. However, we face a shortage of candidates for the episcopate since a number of senior clergy are battling cancer, not least the Rev Miguel Uchoa, rector of the largest Anglican Parish in Latin America and to my mind the best person to succeed our current diocesan bishop.

A word from Tamara

Life has changed a lot since Rebekah was born! We have a saying here "*to be a Mum is to faint in paradise*" and now I understand this! Being a parent is really hard work but it's an amazing joy at the same time. Though I was going out to work this year, we took the decision for me to come

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home and look after Rebekah full time, which also took some of the pressure off Marcus and freed him up more to concentrate on his church activities and study. I would like to thank you for all your prayers and support during this year which has been an important one for us. I've needed your prayers more than ever lately, because I'm so busy with Rebekah that I'm even finding it difficult to get my daily quiet time with God – so keep holding us up in your prayers!

Marcus' PhD research/writing

I'm now a second year doctoral student in New Testament studies (Mark's Gospel) at Nottingham University, via St. John's College. Fitting 20 hours a week of PhD research around church commitments and all things baby related isn't always easy! However, my supervisors seem pleased – so far so good. Here in Brazil, more of my material in Portuguese is being published as I look to make a contribution nationally through my writing.

Sadly though, our theological college has struggled lately with only a handful of students. However, given that these will progress to positions of leadership and ministry (usually ordained), the task of preparing them remains a special and valuable one. I've particularly enjoyed teaching preaching and working from my own book. I realise that sounds totally pretentious but it's not meant to! The thing about working from my book is that (most of the time) I know where the relevant bits are and can make the connections smoothly in the classroom. The longer term vision which I and others share – that of establishing a centre of excellence and training for Christian ministry in our region – is still on our hearts; the key to making this happen may be through a partnership I'm exploring with a 3,000 member Baptist Church in our city called 'Cidade Viva' (City Alive) linked to the Willow Creek movement in the US.

Praise and prayer points

- Give thanks with us for Rebekah (her baptism is on December 19) and pray that she would continue in good health and growth!
- Give thanks for a good first year of PhD study for Marcus, and pray for good time management, wisdom and clarity of thinking as he takes it to the next level and uses his knowledge to equip others and pray for mastery of languages relevant to his study (Greek, Hebrew and German). Pray also for negotiations and the possible



Rebekah helping daddy do his research... well, if you will read on the bed daddy!

partnership with the Cidade Viva church, that the Lord will open (and close!) the right doors. On a physical note, pray that Marcus' eczema won't irritate him too much in 2011!

- Pray for energy and wisdom for Tamara as she looks after Rebekah and Marcus.
- Pray for the Cathedral, for the equipping of the leaders and for outreach initiatives planned for 2011 – that the good news of Jesus would reach the poor and needy in our region.
- Pray for the Diocese of Recife as it looks to appoint new bishops and plan for the future. Pray particularly for Rev. Miguel and for Quintino who are battling cancer.

Quick Christmas Brazil trivia quiz (*Answers in the next link letter!*)

- (1) What is the capital of Brazil? (a) Rio de Janeiro (b) Brasilia (c) Sao Paulo
- (2) How old is the famous Brazilian footballing legend Pelé? (a) 60 (b) 80 (c) 70
- (3) Which colour is NOT found on the Brazilian flag? (a) white (b) black
- (4) Joao Pessoa is the capital city of which Brazilian state? (a) Pernambuco (b) Ceará (c) Paraíba
- (5) In Brazilian general elections, Brazilians are legally obligated to vote. True or false.

Finally, as Tamara said above, thanks again for your interest in us and all your faithful support. We are abundantly blessed to have such a great support network behind us, and we give thanks to the Lord for all of you.

*Marcus, Tamara,
Rebekah*

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