



# MISSION PARAGUAY



*In association with  
SAMS GB & SAMS Ireland*



# 2009 REPORT

# OUR MISSION

Mission Paraguay works through the Anglican Church in Paraguay to share the love of Jesus and change lives by providing funds and a volunteer work force for:

- practical projects, usually buildings;
- activities with children and young people;
- community based work to relieve hardship and need and to encourage self sufficiency.

Projects are identified to meet the most urgent needs of the Anglican Church and the communities in the three main areas of the country where the Church operates.

- **Asunción**, the capital which is a city of approximately 1.25 million people. There are a number of established Anglican churches in districts of the city most of which are characterised by high unemployment and a great deal of poverty.
- **The Chaco**, which is the semi tropical area in northwest Paraguay where the indigenous Indian people live. The Church is active in a number of Indian communities the majority of which are in isolated areas accessed via earth roads and without piped water or drainage systems and usually lacking electricity.
- **Concepción**, a town six hours bus ride from Asunción where there is large scale poverty and many serious social problems. The Church works in many of the poorer communities in the town and surrounding area.

Each year groups of committed Christians of all ages travel to Paraguay from the UK and Ireland to live and work in a local community for three weeks. The concentration is upon using the specific skills of the volunteer workforce and ensuring that through participating in a range of activities, the visitors are able to experience life in a different culture, see the local church at work in Paraguay, enjoy fellowship and share the love of Jesus.

People return home feeling that they have received far more than they give. Many find that the experience deepens their Christian faith and for some it gives a new direction for their life as they review their priorities.

During July and August 2009, 22 volunteers from Ireland and the UK from the following churches travelled to work in Paraguay:

Holy Ascension, Upton, Cheshire  
Magheralin Parish Church, Craigavon, Co. Armagh  
St Mary's, Harlow, Essex  
St John's, Harborne, Birmingham  
St. John's, Moira, Craigavon, Co. Armagh  
St John the Baptist Church, Burscough, Lancashire  
St Patrick's, Bunbeg, Co. Donegal, Ireland  
St Saviour, Church of Ireland, Craigavon, Co Armagh, Northern Ireland



The Anglican Church in Paraguay would find it very difficult, if not impossible, to fund these projects themselves. All projects are financed from monies donated in the UK and Ireland.

In 2009 a total of **£32,288** was donated to fund the programme of work.

**Donations are channelled to Paraguay through SAMS Ireland (Charity number XR67448)  
and Burscough Outreach Trust (Charity number 1089034)**

# THANK YOU

**Grateful thanks are expressed to Denis Johnston, General Secretary and all at SAMS Ireland and to SAMS GB for their support, encouragement and enthusiasm for Mission Paraguay.**

As in past years, the work would not have been possible without the generosity of churches and individuals taking part and of our other supporters.

In addition to individual donors, we are indebted to the following churches and organisations who gave donations of money, laptops, tools and equipment, spectacles, children's sports gear or other items to support the work:

All Hallows Church, Bispham, Blackpool  
Berrymans Lace Mawer, Manchester  
Birkenhead Priory Parish Wives Group  
Bunbeg and Carrickfinn and Dungloe Churches, Republic of Ireland  
Burscough Football Club  
Crossens Methodist Church, Southport  
Elliots Electrical Contractors Ltd. Burscough  
Emmanuel Church, Southport  
Homechase House, Birkdale, Southport  
Hugh Baird College, Bootle, Merseyside  
Middlewich Church, Cheshire  
Northwest Regional Development Agency, Warrington  
Ormskirk Church Housegroup, Lancashire  
Rainford High Technology College, Rainford, Merseyside  
St Andrew's, Clubmore, Liverpool  
St Anne's, Wrenthorpe, Wakefield, West Yorkshire  
St John's Men's Breakfast Group, Buglawton, Congleton, Cheshire  
St Paul's Church, Skelmersdale  
St Saviour's Church, Oxton, Birkenhead  
Shankill Parish Church, Sunday School, Lurgan, Craigavon, Co. Armagh  
Southport Christian Bookshop  
Stanley's Greengrocers, Birkdale, Southport  
Tarleton YL Group, Tarleton, Nr Preston, Lancashire



We express our gratitude to Colin Cunliffe and David Kay of the Fire and Rescue Service, to Peter Logan of the Fire Service of Paraguay and also to Graham Aston and Luxfords of Weybridge for allowing us to include cases of clothing, tools, sewing machines and medical items in containers being shipped to Paraguay.

Thank you to those volunteers who travelled to Paraguay in 2009. Every year we are overwhelmed by the sacrifices people make to pay for their own travel from home and living expenses whilst in Paraguay but especially for their commitment to the people of Paraguay and the work of the Anglican Church there. We also recognise however, that there is a back-up team raising funds, collecting gifts to distribute, providing organisational and administrative assistance and most importantly giving prayerful support before, during and after the project period. On behalf of Bishop Peter Bartlett and the Church in Paraguay, a big thank you to everyone.

During the actual project period there is a heavy reliance upon the Church in Paraguay to provide translators, accommodation, vehicles and drivers to enable groups of volunteers to operate. Local pastors and mission partners liaise on a day-to-day basis to enable arrangements to be made for accommodation and the provision of meals. The leaders of Mission Paraguay, on behalf of all those taking part, wish to express their sincere thanks to Bishop Peter and Sally Bartlett, Auxiliary Bishop Andrés and Estela Rodríguez in Concepción, Diocesan staff and members of the local churches for their assistance, hospitality, friendship and patience. Special gratitude is expressed to Caroline Gilmour-White and all other members of the 2009 support team in Paraguay who worked so hard to coordinate all arrangements for the group visits.

## WORK IN THE ASUNCIÓN AREA

In July a group of volunteers was based at Roque Alonso and worked with children, distributed spectacles, assisted with the sewing workshops, helped with some building work and undertook music ministry in Roque Alonso, Remansito, San Lorenzo, Mirador and Zeballos Cue all of which are areas of high deprivation on the outskirts of Asunción where the Anglican Church has a presence.

### WHAT DID WE FUND?

In 2008 we were able to purchase land at *San Lorenzo* to secure the future of a children's club which had operated there for 23 years. In 2009 a building was erected as a centre to expand the children's work, to house the sewing workshop begun in 2008 and as a base for outreach into the local community.



#### *Plans for 2010:*

*Construct a small flat for a church worker at San Lorenzo and provide toilets and showers*

*Remansito* is a particularly poor area with many social problems. There are no drains and people live in very basic homes often with earth floors, dangerous electrical installations and leaking roofs. Funding was provided to buy the land on which the church at Remansito and the adjacent sports field are situated. A sewing workshop began in July and is being led by a group of very enthusiastic local women.



#### *Plans for 2010 or 2011:*

*Construct an additional building for children/youth work at Remansito*

An entrance ramp and other works to improve mobility were paid for at the home of a disabled person at *Mirador*. His mother was given a sewing machine to provide income for the family.



Extensions to provide additional bedrooms were built to two very overcrowded homes at *Roque Alonso* and *Remansito*.



#### *Plans for 2010:*

*Undertake similar work to improve inadequate housing in needy communities*

Electrical installation work was completed at the Diocesan Centre at *Emboscada*. Erected through funding by Mission Paraguay in 2006 and 2007, this Centre is now used for youth and children's events and by members of some of the poorer communities in the Asunción area.

Silvia Torres a member of the congregation of St Andrew's Church in Asunción gave lessons in basic Spanish to the July group. Silvia provided transport and worked with groups throughout the whole project period.



**Please pray** for Teo and Lidia Rivas, their co-workers at San Lorenzo, for Pastor Luis Echeverria and his wife Regina and the congregation at Zeballos Cue and for the leaders of the churches at Remansito and Roque Alonso.

## **WORK IN THE CHACO**

The Chaco is the sparsely populated area in North West Paraguay where the indigenous Indian people live. In August a group of Mission Paraguay volunteers used accommodation at the Diocesan Centre at Rio Verde and worked on a number of projects in the area. In addition to providing facilities for the ministry of the Church in the Chaco, during 2009 there was been an increase in the amount of work undertaken to improve the living conditions of a number of poorer families and to provide facilities for the storage of rainwater in areas affected by drought for periods of the year.

We are indebted to Chris Hawksbee who made the arrangements for much of the Chaco work this year and led the Rio Verde group. Chris is a missionary who has lived in Paraguay for much of his life and is the driving force behind a number of self-sufficiency initiatives amongst the indigenous communities. Ed Brice, another missionary who has worked in Paraguay, particularly the Chaco, for much of his life, and regularly travels from Asunción to visit churches in the Chaco, also spent time with the Rio Verde group. Both Ed and Chris shared their vast knowledge giving a real insight into life in the Chaco. They discussed how from the first missionaries bringing the Gospel well over 100 years ago, the Anglican church has been instrumental in developing communities as the traditional hunter/gatherer way of life has ceased through land clearance and the development of cattle ranching in much of the Chaco.

## **WHAT DID WE FUND?**

The new church of San Mateo at *Rio Verde* begun in 2009 was completed with the aid of the August group and consecrated by Bishop Peter Bartlett on 29<sup>th</sup> November. The church will also be used as the base for the sewing workshops started in August by volunteers from England and Northern Ireland working with Marie Brice whose husband Ed pastors the new church.



***Plans for 2010 or 2011:  
Erect a small room for children's work at San Mateo  
as funds become available***

The Chaco suffers from severe drought for long periods each year. There is no piped water supply. Local communities rely upon stored rainwater but facilities are seriously insufficient.



In 2009 Mission Paraguay funded:

- a 40,000 litre underground storage tank (aljibe) to collect rainwater from the roof of the new St Mateo Church;
- a 21,000 litre aljibe at the Diocesan Centre;
- improvements to guttering on existing buildings to aid the collection of rainwater.

***Plans for 2010:***

***Provide further facilities for rain water collection and storage facilities as funds allow***

In the Chaco many of the Enxet Indian families live in overcrowded conditions in homes built from a mixture of plastic sheets, palm logs, pieces of timber and whatever other material is available. There are no builders merchants near these communities. Materials have to be transported long distances. This year as in past years a number of families were supplied with corrugated metal sheets and timber for self help projects to improve their living accommodation.



Ten adobe homes for Indian families and other adobe buildings for community health purposes which were begun in 2008 were completed at ***El Estribo***. One building is a home and clinic (pictured part completed) for Narsisa the midwife at El Estribo. Another was for Roberto Sanabria whose home (pictured above) houses 26 members of his family at Tres Tamarindos near Paratodoi. This family were provided with two adobe buildings. Families manufactured the adobe bricks themselves from local materials. The buildings have watertight roofs, concrete floors, a door and two windows. A gutter is provided to aid rainwater collection.



***Plans for 2010:***

***Fund more adobe buildings and supplies of materials for self help home improvements***

A new venture was to build two long-drop toilets at a cost of approximately £100 each. These were later transported for families to erect at ***El Estribo***.



***Plans for 2010:***

***Provide more long drop toilets for other families without toilet facilities***



Members of the August group had the privilege of attending a double wedding of Enxet Indian couples in the wooden church at the village of Dos Palmas, El Estribo.

**Please pray** for the communities of El Estribo, La Patria, Rio Verde and Sombrero Piri; for the community leaders and the local pastors and for their relationship with the wider Paraguayan church. Also pray for the ongoing ministries of nurse Beryl Baker, Chris Hawksbee and Ed and Marie Brice amongst the indigenous people and for their safety in travelling.

## WORK IN CONCEPCIÓN

During August the group of volunteers based at Concepción concentrated mainly upon assisting Claire Holmes, a missionary from Northern Ireland and her group of dedicated helpers with ministry to children and young people at different venues in Concepción and in a number of surrounding rural areas. These are all very poor areas characterised by serious social problems, drug and alcohol abuse. There are few employment opportunities and many of the children have difficult lives.



## WHAT DID WE FUND?

The new church begun in 2008 at *Yvopovo*, approximately 50km North West of Concepción was completed in late 2009. Since work began, the new building has been regularly used for events for the many children and young people in the area.



A number of Diocesan buildings at *Inmaculada*, *Villa Alta* and at the San Pedro Church at *Concepción* were painted and other small scale building repair work was funded.



### *Plans for 2010:*

*Fund other repairs to Diocesan buildings at Concepción*



This building which was completed by Mission Paraguay at Inmaculada in 2007 is well used for outreach into the local community. Each Saturday a nutritious meal is provided for approximately 80 children. This building also houses one of the sewing workshops begun in 2008.

### *Plans for 2010:*

*Provide funding to support the Saturday soup kitchen for children at Inmaculada*

**Please pray** for Claire Holmes, now back in Northern Ireland after working for 14 years in Paraguay and for her team as they continue their work amongst the children of Concepción. Pray also for the ministry of Auxiliary Bishop Andrés Rodríguez as he leads the work in the Concepción area.

## **THE SEWING WORKSHOPS**

These workshops began in 2008 as a venture to provide basic training for people who had never used a sewing machine before to enable them to make simple garments including trousers and shorts for children and adults, sheets, pillow cases and shoulder bags. Under the guidance of Caroline Gilmour-White, the workshops at San Lorenzo and Concepción have continued to develop after the volunteers left in August 2008. This year new workshops were started at *Mirador, Remansito, Zeballos Cue* and at Rio Verde using new sewing machines brought out by the volunteers and UK donated second hand machines sent out together with a range of fabric and sewing materials in containers earlier in the year. As expected in these communities where enterprises of this nature have probably never been encouraged before, progress was not always as anticipated and plans had to be refined often at fairly short notice but there were many real developments. The workshops at Rio Verde and Remansito were particularly successful. Many young people were involved notably at Remansito where they designed and made trousers and included them in the display of work arranged after the first training period. Gradually local women are being encouraged to lead and manage the development of their workshop and to make items which will generate income for themselves.



### ***Plans for 2010:***

***Continue to fund training and materials so that each workshop may develop at its own pace towards self sufficiency***

During early 2009 approximately 500 pairs of second hand spectacles, blankets, toys, children's and adult clothing had been sent out in space provided for us by the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service and by Graham Aston in containers from the UK. The high local cost makes spectacles unattainable for many Paraguayans and the acquisition of frames allows people to have lenses fitted to their requirements. These items were distributed by group members in July and August often using a sewing workshop as a base. We were fortunate to have a member of the July group with optician knowledge.



***During 2010 a similar range of donated items will be arriving in Paraguay for distribution***

**Please pray** for Caroline Gilmour-White as she leads the sewing workshops, works to establish a Diocesan library and carries out liaison work for Mission Paraguay.



## **MEDICAL AND CHILDREN'S WORK**

Once again in 2009 Mission Paraguay funded a limited number of medicines and medical assistance. Donated medical supplies were also sent in the containers or brought out by the volunteers to be used by Nurse Beryl Baker who has worked in the Chaco for many years. Although there are a number of local health promoters, Beryl is the only fully qualified health worker for many thousands of indigenous people living in isolated communities across a large area. People begin arriving at the small clinic near her home at 6.30am and her work is varied involving treatment for parasites, TB, snakebites, cancer and knife wounds and providing basic dentistry and family planning advice.



### ***Plans for 2010:***

***Continue to support Beryl's medical work wherever possible***

Advantage was taken of opportunities to visit local schools and work with children in different communities in Asunción, Concepción and in the Chaco. A number of significant donations were channelled through Mission Paraguay for specific areas of work with children and young people and to provide food for underprivileged children. Members of the all of the groups, aided by interpreters, worked with local people to organise games, craftwork and other events in different communities. They also worked with staff from FEISA, the Anglican Teacher Training College in Asunción helping with the mobile toy library at various venues. This valued resource travels to communities surrounding Asunción providing opportunities for children, many of whom have no toys, to learn through play.



### ***Plans for 2010:***

***Fund children's work in different communities in the Chaco, Asunción and Concepción  
Set up a toy library in the new building at San Lorenzo***

Remigio Romero who translates teaching materials for FEISA using one of the donated laptops sent to Paraguay during 2009. Other gifts of laptops are being used by student teachers in FEISA many of whom come from very poor backgrounds but have the motivation and strong desire to study to qualify and teach early years education. In Paraguay there is a desperate shortage of qualified teachers. In the Chaco where the schools are desperately short of resources, many of the teachers have no teacher training their only education being to basic primary level.



**Please pray** for the work of FEISA and for the continued success of the toy library in and around the Asunción area.

## **OTHER WORK PLANNED FOR 2010 AND BEYOND**

- Upgrade the kitchen and dining areas of the Diocesan Offices which are well used but are unhygienic and in urgent need of modernisation and redecoration.
- Erect a second storey to the multi purpose building at Zeballos Cue which was built in 2005 for use by the church community. It was designed to have a second storey when funds were available and the work had developed sufficiently to justify its construction. The additional floor will be used for the growing ministry to children and young people
- Carry out improvements to church buildings in the Chaco to replace timber walls with brickwork and provide small secure storage areas.
- Assist with funding towards the erection of secure accommodation as a base for missionaries who travel from Asunción to spend substantial periods each month working in communities in the Chaco.
- Improve an existing Diocesan building at Rio Verde to provide secure storage for a vehicle for use by missionaries visiting the Chaco. Having a already vehicle based in the Chaco will allow them to travel by bus from Asunción instead of having a more costly and tiring drive.
- Supply DVD players and other equipment and materials to assist in the training of future leaders in the Church. Such resources are urgently needed to use in training events.

*Plans are well underway for the projects to be undertaken in 2010 with the aid of funds donated through Mission Paraguay. As always this is a step of faith. We thank the Lord for the generosity of our supporters in past years and ask for His guidance as discussions continue upon the identification of priorities for 2010 so that monies donated may be used wisely to the maximum benefit of the church in Paraguay in spreading the Good News of Jesus and improving the lives of people in need.*

## **RELAXATION**

As in past years Mission Paraguay ended for each group of volunteers with a short stay in a hotel to relax after the project period and to allow for visits to the centre of Asunción. Although Paraguay has a very limited tourist industry there are a number of sites well worth a visit including the railway museum, the Pantheon de los Héroes which contains the tombs of past presidents and heroes of Paraguay and the Casa de la Independencia (House of Independence). This building which dates from 1772 is now a museum containing many colonial relics.

During one of these site seeing visits the August group met President Fernando Lugo, the ex Roman Catholic Bishop who was inaugurated as President of Paraguay in 2008. In August 2009 he was presented with a Mission Paraguay hat by Noel Boyd from Co Donegal. This unexpected meeting which ended with a conducted tour of the Presidential Palace featured in national newspapers and local television the following day.



*“God is not unjust; he will not forget your work and the love you have shown him as you have helped his people and continue to help them.” Hebrews 6 v10*

# MISSION PARAGUAY 2010

Plans are currently underway for the visits of volunteers from the UK and Ireland to work for 3 weeks on a variety of projects in Paraguay during the summer of 2010.

The provisional dates are:

## Group based in Asunción

leave UK 16th July (evening flight from Heathrow)  
leave Paraguay 5th or 6th August

## Groups based in Chaco and Concepción

leave UK 6th August (evening flight from Heathrow)  
leave Paraguay 26th or 27th August



These dates are dependant upon available flights. It may be cost effective to travel one day earlier or later.

Following their time in Concepción in August 2009 one of the visitors from St Candice's Church Eglinton wrote, "*We have been completely overwhelmed by the reception we have received here. I simply cannot articulate the manner in which we have been treated, everyone without exception has welcomed us into their homes and their hearts, we have forged friendships which I hope will continue for a long time.*"

**Please pray** that God will direct the plans and arrangements currently underway for the Mission Paraguay programme for 2010. Please also pray for the ongoing work of the Anglican Church in the Chaco, Concepción and Asunción and particularly for Bishop Peter Bartlett, Auxiliary Bishop Andrés Rodríguez and all pastors, missionaries and lay workers as they minister through the love of Jesus to people in this needy country.

**If you would like further information about how you may support the work of Mission Paraguay or if you wish to take part in a short-term mission trip to Paraguay in 2010, please contact the UK Co-ordinator:**

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*"God is a global God..... the first way to start thinking globally is to begin praying for specific countries. World-class Christians pray for the world.....Prayer is the most important tool in your mission in the world.....I urge you to do whatever it takes to participate in a short-term mission trip overseas as soon as possible. It will enlarge your heart, expand your vision, stretch your faith, deepen your compassion, and fill you with every kind of joy you've ever experienced. It could be the turning point in your life"*

Rick Warren *The Purpose Driven Life* (Zondervan 2002)

*January 2010*