

Mission Paraguay 2015 Report



Working together, changing lives, growing in faith.

A short term mission trip is a faith building experience and those who participate whether to Africa, Eastern Europe, Asia or to Paraguay will inevitably say upon their return as Paul, a former Royal Engineer from Yorkshire said to me in a recent email, *'it was so rewarding that there is no doubt I gained far more from this experience than I could ever give'*.

Mission Paraguay volunteers help to build and strengthen cross cultural relationships by assisting the ministry of the local Anglican Church. Sharing their love of Jesus they use their skills and experience working for three weeks alongside fellow believers living in different regions of Paraguay. Through our many generous supporters God provides funds and other resources to source a wide range of projects.



During July and August 2015 two groups of Mission Paraguay volunteers visited Paraguay.

One group from churches across England was based at San Juan Church in Roque Alonso on the north eastern edge of Asunción, the capital. This is an excellent base for daily visits to local communities at Mirador, Remansito, Zeballos Cue, Luque and Ipvu where we were able to work alongside local church members to distribute second-hand spectacles sent from the UK; undertake repainting work in church premises and work with children and young people. This included assisting with the mobile toy library operated by FEISA (the Anglican teacher training college) which throughout the year visits different communities enabling learning through play for children who often have few if any toys of their own.



Building upon the success of sewing workshops which have operated for a number of years, daily visits were arranged specifically to develop sewing skills to assist women to provide for their families. One very enjoyable day was also spent at the Esperanza Foster Home cleaning and tidying the garden.



A typical day began with an early rise, a DIY breakfast followed by the sharing of a Bible passage and prayers then usually the preparation of a packed lunch. Once again we are so grateful to Silvia, a Paraguayan member of St Andrew's English speaking church, who has assisted us for many years with transport and translation. Our evening meals prepared by a member of San Juan Church, were followed by a time of sharing experiences and feelings about the day concluding in a devotional time of worship and prayer and relaxation.

Five days of the visit were spent in the Concepción area undertaking a similar programme of activities while working alongside missionary Claire Holmes from Northern Ireland and members of the local churches. It is always encouraging to revisit communities such as Ramonita and to see how ministry

is developing reaching out to local people from a building constructed by local church members a few years ago with materials supplied by Mission Paraguay. The seven hour bus journey north east from Roque Alonso to Concepción passes through the sparsely inhabited, flat wilderness of the Chaco which was described by the earlier visitors as *'the green hell'*. As in past years one day was spent in an Indian community in the Chaco approximately twenty miles from Concepción.



Owing to transport limitations the team which visited the Chaco in August was restricted to Ken and Derek from West Lancashire and Rod from Watford. They worked with missionary Chris Hawksbee and Paraguayan and local Indian builders to construct simple brick homes, rainwater storage tanks and toilets for families living in shelters of timber, polythene sheets and old corrugated iron in areas where for many years the Anglican Church has been ministering. The team were based at the Anglican Centre at Rio Verde where they met Tim Curtis and his team who for a number of years have been translating the Bible into the local Enxet language. They travelled with Chris to a number of different Indian communities to visit some of the self-sufficiency projects which he is developing with the local community leaders. A visit to La Patria coincided with the 32nd anniversary celebrations of the foundation of this Indian homeland and they were able to meet some of the original Indian leaders who were instrumental in the establishment of the now thriving community. They were greatly touched by the welcome received from so many people who had very little but put their trust in God to provide for their daily needs which they readily share with each other and visitors.



Relaxation time for both groups at the end of their visit allowed for an exploration of Asunción to purchase souvenirs from the street market selling traditional Paraguayan craft items. We also visited the excellent small railway museum where there is rolling stock from the now defunct Paraguayan railway system originally built under the supervision of a British engineer in the 1850's. There is also an art gallery and other small but interesting museums with displays of traditional Indian culture.

In his book *'The Purpose Driven Life'*, Rick Warren wrote that participation in a short term mission trip will *'enlarge your heart, expand your vision, stretch your faith, deepen your compassion, and fill you with a kind of joy which you have never experienced'*. Mission Paraguay is about changing lives and while clearly the projects which we are able to complete each year will greatly benefit people in many different communities; it is also the development of friendships and interdependence between Christians of different cultures who worship and pray together usually in a number of different languages; who relax together and work for a common purpose learning from each other while serving the Lord that also has significant results. In his recent email, Paul, who for the last two years has been a member of the Mission Paraguay group based at Roque Alonso, also wrote that the experience had changed *'my hopes from being that there was a God, to a belief that there is a God . . . from being a weddings and funeral Christian to being a regular church attender and helper . . . and I am even happier for it and I am never embarrassed at admitting to anyone that I am a believer'*.

Grateful appreciation is expressed to Bishop Peter Bartlett and members of the Anglican Church in Paraguay for their hospitality and assistance in enabling Mission Paraguay 2015 to take place.



Projects funded by Mission Paraguay during 2015

Through the generosity of our supporters the following projects have been funded this year. Some projects are ongoing with funding being provided on an annual basis while owing to their nature others are completed over a two year duration.

In Asuncion

- funding repairs to the toilet block at the PEPE school operating at the Redeemer Church at Zeballos Cue;
- supplying materials for repair work and the repainting of church premises by the Mission Paraguay group and members of the Redeemer Church at Zeballos Cue;
- funding materials for work with children in a number of church communities in the Asunción area;
- supplying toys and clothes for children from the Chacarita shanty area who attend the bi-weekly meal and events at the diocesan multi-use building;
- funding window repairs at the Esperanza Foster Home;
- funding the annual staffing and transport costs for the mobile toy library operated by FEISA Teacher Training College. A quantity of toys was also supplied.



In Concepción

- funding materials for electrical repair work and repainting carried out by the Mission Paraguay group and church members at Barrio Inmaculada;
- funding materials for home improvements for a church worker at Villa Alta;
- providing funds for work with children and young people.



In the Chaco

- assisting to fund the employment of local expertise to work alongside missionary Chris Hawksbee to promote self-sufficiency projects among the Indian communities;
- building four long drop toilets for families with inadequate facilities;
- the construction of a 21,000 litre underground rainwater storage tank at La Flores and funding repairs to enable a nearby existing storage tank to be brought back into service;

- the construction of three brick homes with sheet metal roofs and concrete floors to replace overcrowded homes built of palm logs, plastic sheets and other discarded materials. Small underground rainwater storage tanks were also constructed for houses;



Loading new doors and windows for houses in Chaco

- supplying materials for self-help home improvements;
- supplying new mattresses for the diocesan accommodation at Rio Verde used by pastors and other visitors;
- funding food and transport costs for a training day for pastors and assistants from Indian communities in the Chaco;
- supplying a second-hand motor cycle for use by pastors at La Patria and funding repairs to the motor cycle previously purchased for use at Rio Verde;
- funding transport costs to enable visiting pastors from Asunción to visit communities in villages in the Chaco.

General items

- supplying and distributing over a 1,000 pairs of spectacles to communities in Asunción, Concepción and the Chaco;
- providing additional sewing machines and consumable materials for the sewing workshops which have operated for the last eight years in locations in Asunción and Concepción to encourage self-sufficiency;
- supplying medical items for use by Nurse Beryl Baker working in the Chaco;
- supplying clothes, blankets, toys and other items for distribution to people in need. Some clothes are sold for a nominal sum to raise funds for work with children and to operate the Saturday comedor which provides a nutritious meal for children in a number of communities.



Thank you to everyone who supports our work through your prayers and generosity.

For further details or information about joining a Mission Paraguay group please contact:
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Mission Paraguay works through the South American Mission Society UK and Ireland to support the ministry of the Anglican Church in Paraguay, 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 encourage self sufficiency.**