

Link Letter No.6 Christmas 2013

Dear friends,

“And anyone who welcomes a little child like this on my behalf is welcoming me.” Matthew 18:5

Our life in Paraguay is often characterised by phases, and a current phase we are looking at involves “welcome”, particularly the welcome given to children who are often amongst the most vulnerable members of society. Jesus’ disciples failed on many occasions but Jesus appears to be patient although firm with them in their crises and moments of failure. However, it is notable that when they failed to receive children with love and respect, Jesus was angry with them.

As mission partners we meet people from many different religious groupings and Sally was recently invited to visit a religious community called the Bruderhof who kindly gave us a copy of *Why Children Matter*. Author Johann Arnold, a member of this group, wisely writes: *“If we have children we must welcome them as they are.”* Peter has been visiting the city congregations teaching on “welcome” and, as part of this teaching, we are looking specifically at what each church is doing for children within their community. This process has so far involved interviewing each pastor and asking open ended questions that give space to think about vision



Concentration - playing in the toy library!



Peter and Sally Bartlett

CMS mission partners

Paraguay

Peter and Sally served as SAMS mission partners in Bolivia from 1992 to 2005 where they firmly established the congregation of Cristo el Salvador. They then spent three years at Parr St Peter’s in the Diocese of Liverpool. Peter became the Anglican bishop of Paraguay at the invitation of the diocese’s leaders and was consecrated on 29 March 2009.

and plans for the future.

The Anglican Church in Paraguay has historically been involved in several ministries that involve children and we thought that in this link letter we would share a little of this.

FEISA

We are both involved on the recently formed board of FEISA and excited to see the development of new courses to train more widely those who work in early years’ teaching. Sally has been involved in the FEISA toy library as a volunteer, along with FEISA director Ana Maria. We are having a rethink of the toy library

ministry, taking the decision to run regular sessions in fewer locations and particularly running sessions for Anglican children's clubs. The toy library sessions will also be used to train children's workers alongside other training courses that are going on for those who feel called to work with children in evangelism and children's groups.

Esperanza foster home

Sally is now the president of this small foster home which caters for one-five year olds from troubled situations. It's a small family home setting, looking after the children as they await the outcome of legal procedures – either to return them to birth families or place them with adoptive families. The Esperanza photo of the little feet cannot show the children's faces for legal reasons in order to protect their identities as they are wards of court of the Paraguayan State. Esperanza (meaning Hope) is now a non-profit organisation which has its own legal status. It is the judicial system, via the adoption agency and other government agencies, that places children in Esperanza for their protection and well being whilst their living situations are legally resolved.

Basically we are four ladies: Sally, Teresa Maidana (the wife of one of our pastors) and Ana Maria and Mary Liz, two sisters who are mothers from St Andrew's School. We really enjoy working together but the challenges are great, especially fundraising and the staffing of the home. The reward of being part of the story of a child's life, being able to pray, watching blessings flow, children flourish and develop and knowing that God does miracles for these precious lives, is a joy!



Woody the guitarist at the toy library, St John's, Roque Alonso



Esperanza feet...

GAFCON

Thank you for praying for our time in Nairobi at the GAFCON conference. Meeting with over 1,300 Anglican leaders from 40 different countries was a great privilege. It was a pleasure to participate in the variety of liturgy and worship in the morning services, and there was the opportunity to renew friendships and make new friends. We found the content of the week stimulating and beneficial.

Peter attended training and ministry for bishops and Sally a ladies' conference with Bible studies, time for talking, looking at priorities, sharing life and ministry experiences and lots of praying small groups. Caring for, protecting

and nurturing children in family, society and church was an integral part of both our mini-conferences. It was deemed by the conference as a whole to be of utmost importance for us as Christians to make a priority in our rapidly changing postmodern world.

The whole conference enjoyed an afternoon at Nairobi National Park watching

gazelles, buffalo, rhino, zebra and giraffes. On our bus, after we had seen an impressive rhino, one African bishop stood up and prayed, thanking the Lord for the splendour of His creation, the beauty of the animals and asking that each one of us would be given God-given strength like a rhino. The Kenyan welcome was a pleasure to receive, with food that was great, weather perfect, Jacaranda trees splendid, the snake park full of interesting tortoises, fish, crocodiles



Evelyn, from Nigeria, and Sally, Gafcon prayer partners



At Gafcon Nairobi 2013, representing the Anglican Church in Latin America

and snakes, handicrafts a delight to browse and the dress sense of the African ladies spectacular!

Happy Christmas

November and December are busy months in Paraguay in schools, churches and homes across the city. By the time Christmas comes we will have attended many end of year events and celebrations. Sally is organising a joint start of Advent service for the cathedral and chapel, with a lunch afterwards and then there's the carol service and Christmas Day worship. Peter will have spoken at several Anglican school events and Sally will have addressed the parents of the preschoolers at the end of year production. FEISA students

will have put on their end of year pantomime for the children of the Annex School.

Children in Paraguay look forward to celebrating Christmas with their families and like many families the crib will be the centre of our homes' decorations. And then of course there will have been special meals and celebrations. Life in Paraguay is hard work! We enjoyed the Marriage Encounter end-of-year day retreat and were voted as the best dancers in one of the icebreaking activities! We think that this honour was probably bestowed on us in virtue of our age, length of marriage and Peter's status as bishop rather than our ability to dance well!

With grateful hearts we thank the Lord for His strength and help throughout the year and thank you for your part in our life in Paraguay through your support and prayers. Regardless of whether Christians live in Kenya, Paraguay, the British Isles or the Middle East, as followers of Jesus Christ we all increasingly live as foreigners culturally in a world that is often contradictory to His Gospel and life style. And so our prayer for you and ourselves also in 2014 is that *"as God's chosen people living as foreigners, God the Father who knows us and chose us long ago and has given his Spirit, who has made us holy, who has called us to obedience and has cleansed us by the blood of Jesus Christ, may give us all more and more grace and peace. Amen."*

Please pray for:

- Good health, strength like a rhino, rest and renewal during January's summer holiday.
- Quality time with family and friends.
- Space to hear God in the midst of travelling.
- Wisdom and guidance in setting priorities for 2014.
- The practical running of the churches during the pastors' January vacation.
- Staffing needs at the Esperanza home as helper Marina leaves to return to studying and a replacement is urgently needed – we are looking for a young lady who will be kind, hard working and responsible.

With love and peace,

Thank you,

Peter & Sally

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