

Link Letter No.2 September 2009

Dear friends,

Endings and Beginnings

Like many other families who are governed by the academic year both for schooling and work reasons, we think of June as the end of the year and September as the beginning.

This June brought two graduations in our family. Although Jonathan passed his Ph.D. viva in December we had to wait until June to celebrate officially. In some ways it would have been good to have had the graduation earlier but when we arrived at St Andrews at the end of June we thoroughly enjoyed the ceremony and seeing family.



Jonathan and Hilary Rowe
With Elizabeth and Benjamin
CMS and SAMS mission partners
(Spain)



St Andrews Beach

We would like to thank all of you who faithfully prayed with us through 'the Ph.D. years'.

Unfortunately, in order to be present at one graduation we had to miss another. Benjamin has moved from Junior to Senior school this year and the Junior school puts on a graduation ceremony with speeches, certificates and the singing of the same Latin anthem



which was sung at St Andrews. In fact, as the children have several practices they manage to make significantly more noise than a full graduation hall in St Andrews.

Please pray for Elizabeth and Benjamin, now both at the local Spanish secondary school (*see photo overleaf*). Like most local schools it has its advantages and disadvantages. Please pray for wisdom in their friendships and the ability to concentrate in class where the noise levels are sometimes unhelpful, to say the least.

Seminario Evangélico Unido de Teología
Apdo 7, 28280 El Escorial
Madrid
+34 91 890 11 01
jonathan.rowe@centroseut.org

A new beginning for Elizabeth this summer was her first Spanish Christian camp. She went without knowing anyone, but it turned out to be a big success. She now has several new friends to chat to on "Messenger", although will be able to meet up only occasionally as most of them live in the centre of Madrid. Thank God for these new friendships. She says of her new Christian friends that "it's great not to feel wierd and to be accepted for who you are".

Please pray for Elizabeth and Benjamin who are the only Christians in their class and among their friends in the village. Neither of them also really enjoy the services at the church here in El Escorial. We are, of course, very involved and the very small size of the Evangelical church in Spain means that there is no nearby alterative.

September 2009 marks an ending – and a beginning – for us as a family in another way. We arrived in Spain in September 1999, so are celebrating the end of a decade and the start of another one. When we are in Britain people inevitably ask us how much longer we expect to be here. The answer is that we don't know. Sometimes we find ourselves thinking that we don't feel totally "at home" in either Britain or Spain and are reminded of the Letter to the Hebrews where the writer speaks of Christians being "aliens and strangers in the world" as they look for a heavenly home.

We have recently had a visit from Hilary's brother and family. Living as foreigners in a small town it's easy to think that everyone else has family around the whole time. Elizabeth and Benjamin are very careful what they say to their friends about other people because most people are related to several other people in the village in some way or other. However, a few days ago, Hilary got talking to one of the local bakers. El Escorial has three bread shops which all bake bread on the premises. There is obviously fierce competition between them. The nearest one to our flat, which is in a quiet side street, is usually a bustle of activity. As well as the person serving customers, several other people are busy in the back tending the wood fired ovens.

Recently the owner of this bakery has opened up another

tiny shop on the main street in the hope that the more prominent position will attract business. He is in there on his own every day. Hilary went in the other day for our usual bread and just to make a little conversation asked him what he felt about being on his own in this little shop, since it seemed such a contrast with the main establishment. It's amazing, sometimes, what a casual question can start. The man went on to describe how he was alone at work and alone at home. He has been a widower for years and although his two sons work in the business they have their own lives when not at the bakery. He went on to describe how hard it was for him to go home after work and be alone and face all the jobs to be done alone.

While the children have been struggling with the style of services we have had various chats as a family as to why we go to church, which is related to what we expect to give and receive when we are there. One of the reasons is that Christians meet together so that they are not alone in their faith but can encourage one another. Our church building is now situated in the same main street as the new mini bakers.

■ Please pray for us at a church, that we can meet people's practical as well as spiritual needs. There are several events organised for this month and it would be great if the baker could come along and find enjoyment being with other people.

Love

Jonathan and Hilary



www.cms-uk.org



Church Mission Society

Watlington Road, Oxford, OX4 6BZ Tel: 01865 787400 Fax: 01865 776375
Email: info@cms-uk.org www.cms-uk.org Registered Charity Number 220297
General Secretary: The Rev Canon Tim Dakin