

CMS Link Letter June 2011

Crònica Catalana

Dear praying friends,

When one is only doing a few hours a day of work, the days and weeks seem to fly by very quickly, in my case measured by the (usually) three-weekly rhythm of the chemo sessions. Hence the long gap between the last *Crònica* and this one, in its new CMS in-house format; thanks to Jonathan in CMS for working on this! In addition to those of you who have been regular readers and prayers of the *Crònica*, I am also arranging for it to be sent to others who have said you are particularly praying for my health at this time. I hope that you don't mind receiving it, but it seems an easy way to keep you in touch with things.

The last few months have shown up afresh the fragility of the church here. Several members have moved away from Sabadell and their absence brings down notably Sunday attendance. That is discouraging for those who are relatively new to leading or speaking at the services. It seems likely that three more will move over the summer, and as they are among the young adults who have been such a blessing to the church in recent years they will be very sorely missed! However, we are still praying that a Chilean couple in particular will be able to stay on. The various moves mean we will urgently need new Sunday school teachers for the autumn.

Dani is growing well into leadership, and since he is currently

The children on Palm Sunday with their palms



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among the vast ranks of Spain's unemployed he has quite a lot of time available, which is good news for the church but not so good for him and his family. Australian mission partners working in our church in Barcelona, as well as the chaplain of St George's in Barcelona, continue to come out to Sabadell to preach from time to time, as do one or two local pastors from other evangelical churches. Their support and help continues to be very important to *Església de Crist*. I preside at Holy Communion once or twice a month, and occasionally lead the service, but apart from a couple of short talks on special occasions have not preached since the beginning of last summer. I still find it difficult to concentrate, although it is probably not insignificant that I am now very out of practice! The Lord however did enable me to take a leading role in our Easter services, from Palm Sunday through to Resurrection Sunday, and I really enjoyed being able to do that.

The new Pastoral Care Group is responsible for the basic networking and visiting, and that is going fairly well. However, I am very aware that there are still gaps, and despite the best will in the world, the group members (Lidia, Maria I, Dani and Israel) are each coping with their own difficulties in health, family or employment as well as other responsibilities in the life of the church. Please pray for them and the whole area of pastoral care.

Another area of major concern to me is the prayer life of the church. The attendance at the weekly prayer meeting has dropped off over the last year, and during the next couple of months the PCC will be looking at reorganising this key aspect of the church's life. Also on the theme of prayer, in the third week of June a small group from St Aldate's Church, Oxford will be joining us to help us organize a second 24/7

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prayer weekend (17-19 June). Please pray for the church to catch the vision, and for us to be able to share that vision with Christians from other churches. In the early autumn there is also to be a prayer service, uniting all the evangelical churches in Sabadell. Also coming up is the Diocesan Synod to be held in Madrid from 24-26 June. I hope to be able to attend along with Rafael who is Sabadell's delegate. Among other important issues, the Anglican Covenant will be under discussion. Pray for this very important meeting and for the "all business" to be discussed; also give thanks for the opportunity it presents for leaders and pastors who are mostly fairly isolated to gather and share together.

Over the next few months, the church will be preparing for a nationwide mission in December called "My Hope". This is being organised in collaboration with the Billy Graham Association and although some were doubtful, the PCC has agreed that we should be involved in this. We are also hoping to create other evangelistic opportunities, such as something like "Back to Church Sunday" on 25 September, and an Open Doors Day in November. My prayer for the church here in general terms this year can be summed up in the word "fruitfulness". Fruitfulness as gifts are used and developed, and fruitfulness in evangelism – both are needed if the church is to not merely survive but to grow.

Catalunya passed a law a year or so back that regulates places of worship. This was necessary because some city councils were acting in an arbitrary way against churches (and other non-Roman Catholic religious groups) and trying to move them out of city centres into industrial areas. This is probably going to require us to soundproof the church, and even if not will incur us in quite a lot of expense in preparing the required documentation for the city council. We have three and a half years to get everything in order. Pray for clarity and wisdom about what steps we are obliged to take and how to set about it.

I write this a few days after the recent earthquake which has affected the city of Lorca in the south east of Spain. The most elderly of the I.E.R.E. pastors lives in a neighbouring town, but thankfully neither he nor members of the group he leads have been directly affected. Most of the historic buildings of Lorca are reported as only fit for demolition, but slowly those families that are able to are returning to their homes. Although devastating in their human cost, such natural disasters provide a healthy reminder that even in the 21st Century, some things remain beyond our control, and that every single day our life is fragile.

Finally, on the health front, the chemo continues. A couple of months back the oncologist reduced the dosage of the chemo pills, maintaining the two intravenous doses in each cycle. The



Taken in April, 2011

result has been that the last two sets of blood test results have been less satisfactory, although still better than at the end of last year. So for this round the pills have been doubled back to what they were, and he has ordered a new CAT scan of which he should have the results by the time of my next visit on 24 May, when he will also have fresh blood test results. Until he has seen the new scan he is not worried.

In February, the (good) results of the series of blood tests and the second scan had led him to improve the prognosis a bit; now I'll just have to be patient until I have his verdict on 24 May. Meanwhile I continue to feel remarkably well, and this cycle of chemo (the eleventh) seems to have produced no side effects except a tremendous sense of lethargy for a few days in the second week. The photo of me included in this letter was taken at the beginning of April; the new hair style is to cover up where it has gone very thin round the edges, but enough is still hanging on for me to be presentable! My illness has been the catalyst for renewed contact with many old friends and former colleagues and this has provided me with an enormous amount of pleasure.

The thought that most struck me over Easter is from Ephesians 1, where Paul assures his readers that the same power that raised Jesus from the dead is at work in us who believe. That is true for me, for you and for *Església de Crist*, however things might appear to us at any given moment. Your prayers and messages and visits are a great source of support and encouragement, and I haven't the words to tell you how much I appreciate them.

With love in the Lord Jesus

Sue

Stop press: The CAT scan was "good" and the level of the indicator in the blood has stabilised. However, the oncologist has increased the dosage of the chemo pills for the current round, with the result that my hair is now virtually a case of "*Gone with the wind*"! I am due to see the oncologist again on 10 June.

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