

May 2008 Prayer Letter from Tim Curtis
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Dear friends,

I am now back in Paraguay after three and a half months' home ministry in the UK. I had good flights back to Asunción, via São Paulo, arriving here on April 16th, plus all baggage.

I was met at the airport by our diocesan administrator Teodosio Rivas, who drove me to the St Andrew's College flat which I have been given the use of during my visits to Asunción. The city was full of election fever: posters, banners, flags, for the presidential election on 20th April, were everywhere to be seen.

EXCITING GENERAL ELECTION!

The country seemed to be very calm in the days running up to the general election. Standing in the election contest for president were the ruling Colorado Party's Blanca Ovelar who hoped to become the country's first woman president. The Colorado party had been in power for over sixty years! In the event, the election was won by Monseñor Lugo for the Alliance party with nearly 41% of the vote. Blanca Ovelar (Colorado) came second, and General Oviedo third. Monseñor Lugo is a former Roman Catholic bishop. The defeat of the Colorado party means the end of a political era.

On Sunday evening (April 20th), the city of Asunción, which had been very quiet all day, suddenly burst into life as Lugo supporters flocked to the Pantheon of the Heroes in the centre of Asunción to celebrate. Car horns honked, and people let off firecrackers. I watched the election on TV in Asunción. Later that night Blanca Ovelar graciously admitted defeat, and outgoing president Duarte Frutos promised that the transition to the new government in August would be peaceful and orderly.

Please pray for Paraguay and the new president during this period of change. Paraguay is the second poorest country in South America, and although the economy has begun to grow quite healthily again in recent years, mainly due to the fact that Paraguay's agricultural and livestock exports are fetching much higher prices on world markets, unemployment and poverty are widespread. Meeting peoples' high expectations will be a challenge for president Lugo. He has become the champion of agrarian reform, and many of the country's campesinos voted for him.

The day after the election, I travelled up to the Chaco, joining the St Andrew's College students who were on a three-day trip to the Chaco. We all spent the afternoon at Makxawáya, where the students painted a couple of the school classrooms. The girls played volleyball with the Enxet girls, and the boys took on the Enxet football team. It was good to see folk in Makxawáya again. Anita, well into her 80's, was looking well. Enxet pastor Juan Sosa and his assistant Romualdo Rojas organized the St Andrew's students' activities. I handed out newspapers with the election results which folk in Mak seemed keen to digest. Later in the evening we set off for Rio Verde, where a barbecue was soon being prepared, and where the students stayed the night. I was delighted to find my house just as I had left it.

The translators, Juan, Martín and Asunción, coped well during my absence and the office itself was in good shape. The translators and their families have been kept in good health during these past few months. After a day spent mainly unpacking, I joined the translators in the office and gradually readjusted to our daily routine.

Since I returned, most of our work on the translation has been group work, checking the drafts that the translators have been working on during my time in the UK. We have been sitting around our large table slowly checking through Juan's draft of Lamentations, Martin's draft of the Psalms, and Asunción's draft of Ezekiel. For a few days at the end of April two trainee readers from Makxawáya also sat in on our work sessions. Their involvement is all part of our PR work with the local Enxet churches.

I have now transferred most of my things, such as clothes and books, from my room at the house that John and Judie Ellison occupied to the school flat. The flat has one large bedroom, a bathroom and shower, a kitchen-dining room area, and another room which can be used as a small lounge. There is still a heavy desk to move from my old quarters. I am hoping to install a washing machine in the new flat. I have already purchased a clothes horse and fan with which to dry the clothes. Because the flat is on school premises, security is tight, with numerous doors to unlock and one gate with a padlock to contend with, not to mention alarms which might go off at night if I stray down the wrong corridor! There are internet facilities in the flat, so I shall be able to communicate more effectively with the outside world when I am in Asunción.

APPOINTMENT OF A DIOCESAN BISHOP

The Nominating Committee has made a recommendation for the post of Diocesan Bishop of Paraguay. There is to be an extraordinary Synod on Saturday 31st of May to discuss and hopefully approve their nomination. Please pray for the Synod. Delegates from all over Paraguay who will be travelling to Asunción for the meeting.

A SPECIAL THANK YOU TO...

I would like to close by thanking people at the different churches around the UK for making me feel so welcome during my three month period of home ministry. I was encouraged by the visits, knowing that so many people are praying for the translation team and supporting us in different ways. I visited the following churches: All Saints Bedworth, All Saints Saxtead, All Saints South Cave, All Saints Weston, Bath, Emmanuel Morden, Holy Trinity Redhill, St Andrew's Oxford, St Barnabas St Pauls Cray, St Barnabas Joyden's Wood, St Chads Patchway, Bristol, St Johns Eden Park, St Johns Elmswell, St Lawrence Morden, St Mark's Cheltenham, St Mary's Chipping Norton, St Nicholas' Durham, St Wendreda's March.

Tim Curtis

This letter is sent to Tim's link churches by Mrs Elizabeth Hay, 51 Beechcroft Road, Oxford, OX2 7AY, UK (Elizabeth.hay@dsl.pipex.com) and to other friends and supporters by the Rev TJ Curtis, 60 Courtney Close, Stonehills, Tewkesbury GLOS, GL20 5FB, UK.