

Link Letter no. 3 August 2011

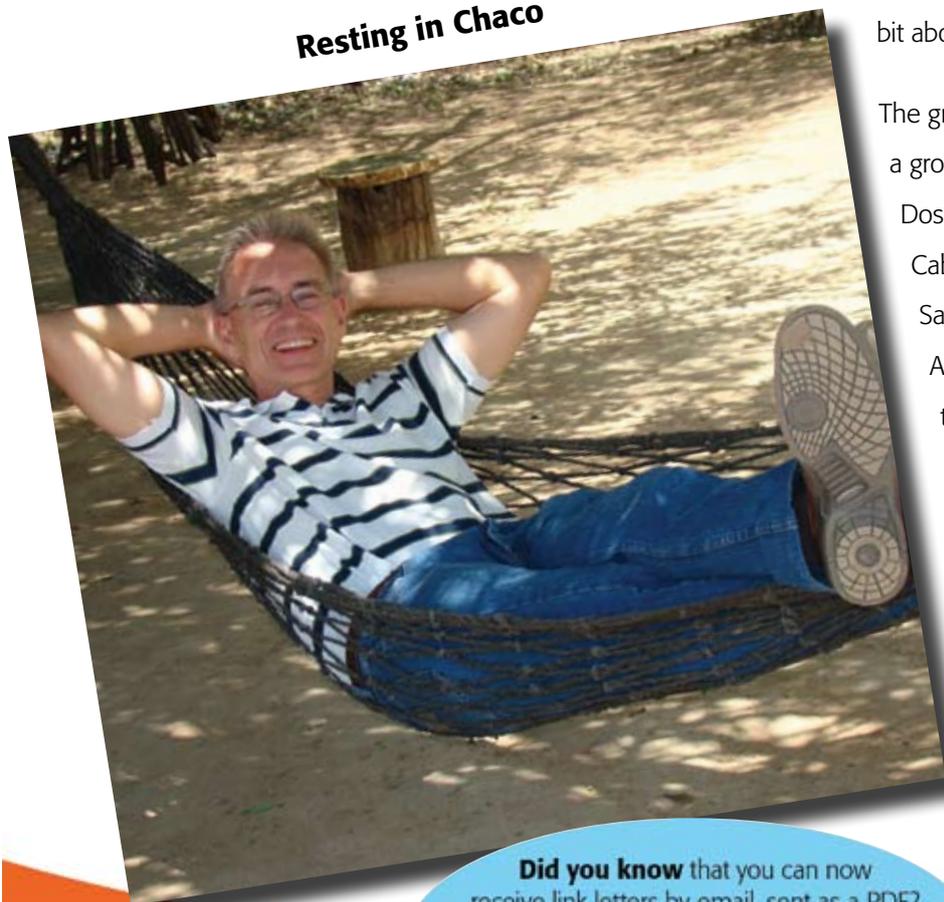
Dear friends,

Back...

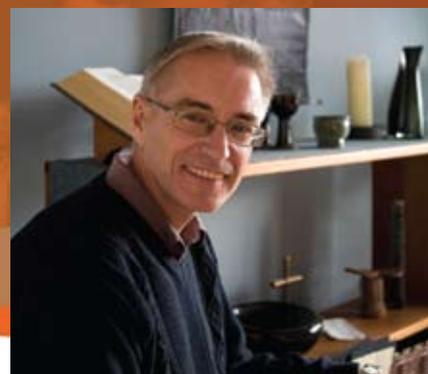
It is hard to believe that I have already been back in Paraguay for four months since my time of home ministry in the UK from January to April. It has been good to get stuck into the Bible translation work again with my colleagues on the team.

It was a relief to find the house intact, books not eaten by termites, the computers in the office working properly, and plentiful supplies of water. The greater emotion, however, was joy at being back with my Enxet colleagues on the team and with the members of the Enxet churches.

Resting in Chaco



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Tim Curtis

CMS mission partner
Paraguayan Chaco

Visits

The visit of several groups of young people from Colegio San Andres almost as soon as I got back kept us on our toes. As in previous years, they stayed at the Rio Verde Anglican centre and were accompanied by the deputy head, Mags Southern. Most of the time they were out and about working hard, very cheerfully painting classrooms in one of the nearby villages and digging a well, but there was time for a visit to the translation office to meet the translators and talk about the reasons for the translation of the Bible into indigenous languages and to find out a little bit about the Enxet language.

The group from Colegio San Andrés were followed by a group of young Enxet musicians from the church at Dos Palmas El Estribo under the leadership of Mario Caballero. They sang at several local churches including San Mateo. They were based at the weekend at the Anglican centre. I was able to spend some time with them in the translation office testing their reading skills in Enxet and was encouraged by the fact that seven out of the 10 could read well.

Sadness

Not long after I got back, Enxet pastor Elías Gomez died after a short illness. Elías had seen many many years' of faithful Christian witness

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Casilla 1124
Asuncion
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**Left: On the Trans Chaco Highway
Right: Visting Enxet**

in the Chaco as an evangelist, and pastor. He began preparatory work on the translation of the New Testament in the 1980s with SAMS missionary Elizabeth Richards, and completed drafts of Mark, John and Romans. He went on to form part of the translation team in the 1990s. He was present at the 1997 launch of the New Testament, and was a guest of honour at the centenary celebrations of the San Pedro church, in Makxawaya in 2006. He also appeared on the cover of the SAMS Share magazine and featured in a number of its articles. He also appeared on the cover of magazines of other missionary societies. Many of his sermons were recorded and broadcast on ZP30, the Mennonite radio station in the Chaco. His funeral was on April 30 in his home village of Armonía.

A home coming

At the beginning of July it was good to welcome back to Paraguay – albeit for an all too short a visit – former SIL linguist Don McKay and his son James from the States. Don and Sara and their family spent

nearly eight years in Paraguay (1992-2000) doing research into the translation needs of Sanapaná language, which is closely related to the Enxet language. James was born in Paraguay and the McKays lived on the same ranch as Beryl Baker during their first year in Paraguay, so during this visit I took Don and James to visit their old home there. We called in on Beryl Baker and her pet anteater. The following day I drove them to La Esperanza, which was their home for most of their time in Paraguay. Having a large concentration of Sanapaná speakers it was ideally suited to studying the Sanapaná language.

During their time in Paraguay I saw a great deal of Don and Sara and their family. Don gave me a lot of practical and technical help during the translation of the Enxet New Testament and he was present at the launch in 1997.

**Left: Tim in translation office with pupils from Colegio San Andrés
Right: Tim and Mags Southern**





Left: Enxet musicians visiting Rio Verde
Right: Elias Gomez with extended family in Mak last year

Downsizing

The most significant event concerning the translation project this year is that, sadly, we have had to downsize, saying goodbye to Martin Rojas at end of July. This was sooner than I had hoped, but the reality is that the continuing depreciation of the value of the pound over the last couple of years, and further depreciation in recent months, has meant that we can no longer afford to employ all three translators. The pound is only worth 50 per cent of what it was worth against the Paraguayan guarani five years ago. Adding to our difficulties have been the yearly wage increases decreed by the Paraguayan government.

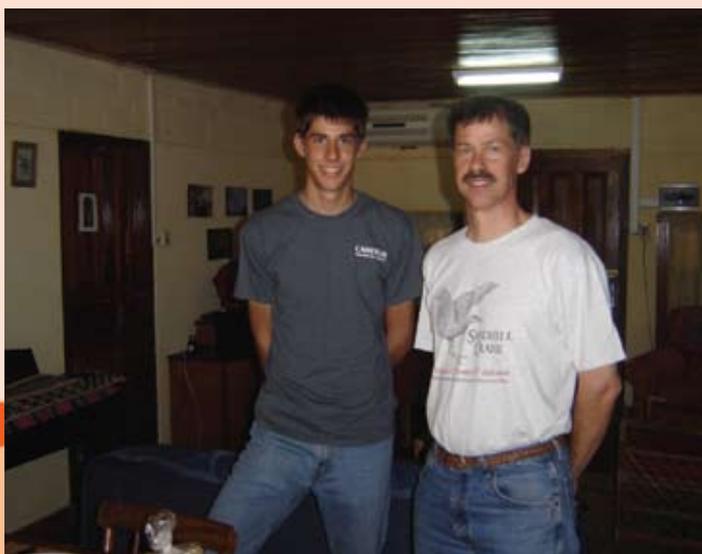
I should perhaps also mention that Martin's wife Mariana had been suffering from depression and emotional problems over the last year. The loss of the twins in April was another blow. The family is now back in Makxawaya, in fact just a mile and a half to the north of Mak at a place called Isla'i where part of the Rojas clan – Martin's parents, his siblings and one or two other relations – are based.

There is just a small cluster of simple palm log dwellings there near some woods and near the swamp nearby for fishing. It is a very pleasant spot.

In spite of the sadness of Martin having to leave the team, I felt that he left on a positive note with the satisfaction of him knowing that he has made a tremendous contribution to the translation project and that he has gained a vast amount of experience from it.

During the last few months Martin worked extremely hard with the rest of the team during July to finish the checking of his draft of Leviticus. In May and June we finished checking Martin's draft of Ecclesiastes and Amos. I am hoping to be able to employ Martin again, even if only on a temporary basis, perhaps towards the end of next year, but I feel it is right for him to be back in Makxawaya with his family for the time being.

Left: Don McKay and son James in Rio Verde
Right: Elvio Rojas in the white shirt escaped serious injury



On target...

We are still on target to complete the checking of 161 chapters of the Bible by the end of December. We are currently checking Asuncion Rojas' draft of Deuteronomy and we will also be checking Juan Martinez' drafts of 1 and 2 Chronicles and the book of Proverbs later on in the year. I will keep you updated on our progress.

During Martin's last weekend in Rio Verde at the end of July, his eldest boy Elvio, aged 20, was hit by a motorbike as he was walking along the edge of the trans Chaco highway accompanied by his 18 year old brother Virgilio. Mercifully Elvio was not seriously hurt – no bones were broken! He came down to Asuncion for a medical check up and has been given the all clear. We have been giving thanks for his deliverance.

My CMS mission partner colleagues Ed and Marie Brice will be in the UK from September to December, so I have been asked to preach a little more regularly at the San Mateo church in Rio Verde, just a few minutes' walk away from my house through the woods. It has a small mixed Latin indigenous congregation, all from Rio Verde and the surrounding area.

The translation team and their families continue to have a good deal of contact with the Enxet speaking young people of Yatnata, through church visits, football matches, visits to the centre etc.

Last but not least: Some of the Mission Paraguay volunteers have been based in Rio Verde during August. Their visits have always been a great encouragement to the local churches in the Chaco. This year they have been partnering with the Enxet speaking church in Makxawaya, painting the San Pedro church vestry and other parts of the historic building. In other parts of the Chaco, including El Estribo and La Herencia, they will be digging wells, building a number of Adobe huts, and a cistern. We are

grateful to David Orrit, Caroline Gilmour-White, and Chris Hawksbee for all they do to make Mission Paraguay a reality.

Points for prayer and praise

- Give thanks for Martin Rojas and contribution to the Enxet Old Testament translation project since 2003. Please remember him and his family as they settle back into life in Makxawaya.
- Pray for Juan Martinez and Asuncion Rojas as they continue with the checking of Deuteronomy, 1 and 2 Chronicles, and Proverbs.
- Give thanks for the opportunities we have to help Enxet young people with their reading and to visit Enxet speaking churches in the Chaco.
- Give thanks for the visit of the Mission Paraguay volunteers and their good relationship with the indigenous churches.

The daily contact with God's word continues to challenge me and draw me closer to God. I think I can say this is true of the translators as well.

"Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind"

Romans 12.2

With all prayers and best wishes from Tim and the team.

Tim



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