



Linnette Tedman
CMS mission partner
Paraguay

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"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls." **Matthew 11:28-29**

Dear friends,

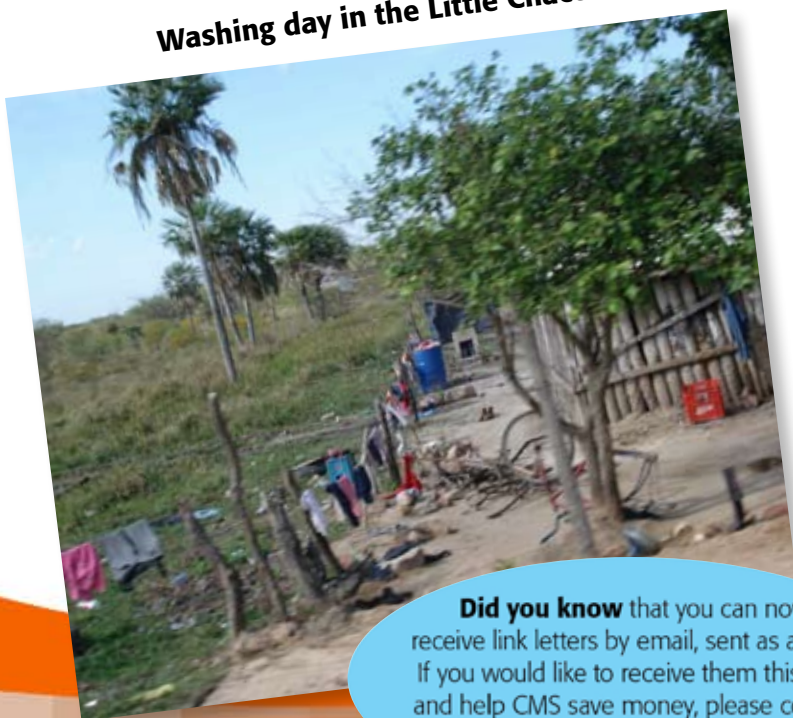
Greetings in the name of the Lord! I hope all is well with you. This is the month when we celebrate friendship day, so *Happy Friendship Day* to all of you! It has also been our holiday, a time for rest and recuperation in mind, body and spirit.

Thank you all for your prayers. The Lord is busy answering.

The last three months have been very busy with all the Bicentenary celebrations. This was a time of encouragement and hope for the future of the nation. The celebrations brought a long weekend of respite from the reality of day-to-day struggles for most people. We are told constantly that our economy is strong but the reality is that prices are continually rising and it becomes more difficult for the average family to put food on the table. The problems here continue. The news is so depressing and there is very little good news in the media.

At school, life is more cheerful. The Bicentenary celebrations

Washing day in the Little Chaco



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were swiftly followed by the first exams of the year. Students were very busy, studying and working hard. They still found time for fundraising. Each class supports a project to help others. They have been fundraising by selling cakes, crisps and barbecued hotdogs.

During this time the children invited their fathers to come in for breakfast to celebrate Father's Day. They entertained their dads with poems and songs.

Exams were followed by meetings with parents and handing out reports. This is always potentially a difficult time, but this time around it seems to have gone smoothly with mainly happy parents.

Finally the winter holidays arrived (two weeks of bliss), and just before we were delighted to have a visit from Murray Metcalfe (Murray and Penny worked as SAMS missionaries here for several years and they set up a home for children awaiting adoption). Murray came out here to redecorate and review the Esperanza home.

Many children left school early for the holidays to fly after some sunshine in places like Miami and Santa Catarina in Brazil. The rest of us have stayed home for a quiet break, in the rain and cold weather. I have been quite busy, visiting friends and entertaining others to meals in my little flat.

I recently received a family from school for homemade Cornish pasties and an English cream tea. They had taken me out for a meal a few weeks ago and had asked for my "story". This was an ideal situation in which to evangelise and to speak about Jesus. Now the mother wants to attend a

Colegio San Andres
Casilla 1124, Asuncion
Paraguay
ltedman@hotmail.com
<http://www.linninpy.blogspot.com>

Bible Study. I am not a natural evangelist so I have been very encouraged by this one to one encounter.

Last week a group of us went to Clorinda, in Argentina (one and a half hours away) to shop in the local supermarkets and to try and make our salary stretch, as the exchange rate is currently in our favour. The market there was very colourful in the sunshine. We bought as much as we could carry.

Many things were much cheaper there. I returned with a huge bag of heavy washing powder, toothpaste for three months and lots of cheese to put in the freezer. We loved the trip and saw some lovely rustic sights along the way. It was so liberating to be out across the other side of the river Paraguay and in the countryside.

Just out of town, the big Agricultural Exhibition is taking place. Several of our children's families are involved, with their ranching businesses. There is a big all-day show of animals, rodeo, motorcycle displays etc to keep families entertained.

Yesterday I spent most of the day gathering all my information together to fill in my UK tax form. The job hangs over my head ever year. It is a task that I hate doing. This year I prayed for the Lord's help and eventually it all slotted into place. Now I just need to find somebody reliable to take it back to UK for me. My online link failed.

A lovely, new family has arrived from Ireland: Matthew, Kim, Sam and Ben. Matthew has come to teach science in the school. We are also hoping that he will become part of the leadership team in the church here. Matthew was here 20 years ago as a Gap year student. Yesterday I took them to Aregua and for a walk along the beach by Lake Ypacari.

In our church we have started a month long course on building a healthy church. Looking in as a foreigner, I see quite an insular church. Hopefully the course will enable us to reach out more, which will enable growth.

As funding is down, mainly due to exchange rates dropping drastically, the Bishop is trying to persuade the Paraguayans to be more resourceful and less dependent on help from outside. They have some successful sewing groups but they need to look at marketing.

We have all been watching the football Copa de America. Paraguay has not yet actually won a match but they reached the finals on penalties. As I write they have arrived in Buenos Aires for the final against Uruguay. By the time this goes to press we will know the worst or the best. Either way it will be



Shopping in Argentina with friends

a just result, I am sure.

Prayer Points

- Pray for the Paraguayan government. There is an air of unrest. In some areas the poor have set up camps on private land, so ranchers are not happy. In the city, indigenous people have been camped out in some of the squares, in the very cold weather. They want better living conditions and work and help from the government. Pray for President Lugo and the government to address the needs of the people.
- Pray for the staff and children of St Andrew's as we return for the next term. Pray for health and strength to see us through. Pray particularly for Matthew and his family as they settle in and learn Spanish.
- Pray for Joyce, a local teacher, who will be joining us part time in the primary English department, that she will settle quickly.
- Pray for the churches here as they learn to depend more on Christ and to become more self sufficient. Pray that they will all become healthy churches, reaching out and growing, bringing more people to know the Lord and His love for them.

God bless

Rinnette

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 1131655
Executive Director: The Rev Canon Tim Dakin

