

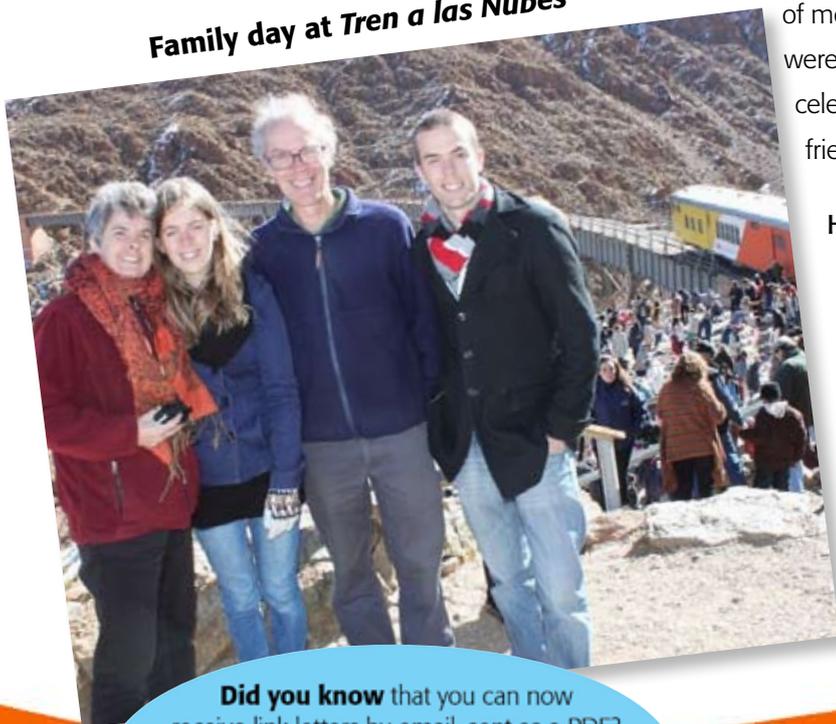
Link Letter No.4 August 2011

Dear friends,

Time for celebration

The Anglican Church here is celebrating the centenary of the arrival of the first Anglican missionaries in 1911 and the spread of the gospel amongst the Wichí and other indigenous groups. We have been to several celebration weekends in various Wichí communities, and more are planned for the rest of this year. Last Sunday, we sat in a packed church, with many men and women wearing the liturgical poncho of deacons and priests. Local leaders led well, inviting various people to speak or sing in Wichí or Spanish, and using Anglican liturgy in Wichí for Communion. People had poured in from surrounding communities, wanting to share in the celebration. Services often last for three hours or more, as old people share memories of the arrival of the gospel in their village and numerous music groups, some highly skilled and some less experienced, want a turn to play and sing. Food is abundant – huge cauldrons of pasta or rice with beef, cooked on a

Family day at *Tren a las Nubes*



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David and Shelley Stokes
CMS mission partners
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wood fire. The Wichí churches face many problems and challenges, but there is vibrant spiritual life and much to celebrate.

Time for family

For us, the hardest thing about living here is the distance from our family, especially our children and elderly fathers. You can imagine our joy when both Jon and Sarah made the long journey (three days and two nights) to come to see us in Juarez. We had a wonderful time with them here and in Misión Chaqueña, where they both caught up with Wichí friends from primary school. Then we went to Salta, where we splashed out and took the "*Tren a las Nubes*", a long day trip by train way up into the Andes, reaching 4,200 metres (over 12,000 feet). The air was very clear, if a bit thin, and the views of mountains, ancient cacti, llamas, and the railway itself were spectacular. Then we all went to a Wichí centenary celebration before Jon left for England and Sarah met a friend to travel with for a month.

Health matters

Health is an ongoing issue for many here. Our daughter Sarah, who is studying medicine, visited our hospital in Juarez twice – once to go to the equivalent of A + E (Jon had a nasty cut which was very promptly dealt with and glued

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together!) and another time to visit a Wichí young man with serious arthritis and gall bladder problems. The system works like this: if the medical service in a local community cannot deal with a particular patient, they are sent to Juarez. If Juarez cannot deal with the case, they are sent on to Formosa (a seven-hour journey). In the last month a number of Anglican leaders have spent time in Formosa – one whose wife is seriously ill and another whose son needed further attention (the young man mentioned above). Usually one member of the family accompanies the patient to give moral and practical support.

We mentioned Lucrecia, the young mother from Misión Chaqueña, last time: after very encouraging results last month, her latest results were much worse, so she is now undergoing further, stronger chemo treatment.

Both of us have also needed trips to doctors various times in the past months: Shelley for tendonitis in her shoulder, David for infected insect bites and bronchitis. The climate here is demanding: in this winter period there a strong swings of temperature over several days.

Leadership and direction

Health has been a concern for Bishop Nick and Catherine Drayson this year. They are presently in England and Catherine is expecting a major kidney operation in August. This means that Nick needs to delay his return to Argentina till later in August. This delay has meant that the first synod for six years, planned for mid September, has had to be postponed. Nick was elected Diocesan Bishop of the Diocese of Northern Argentina in May, and will be installed in a ceremony in the (postponed) synod. Nick has been assistant bishop for the last two years focussing mainly on the indigenous churches. This new responsibility means overseeing the smaller number of urban churches as well. The synod will be important for setting course after nearly a decade of leadership problems in the Diocese.

Points for praise and prayer

- Thanks for the ongoing centenary celebrations
- Thanks for good visits with our children
- Pray for Nick's new role as Diocesan Bishop and course

setting for the Diocese at the delayed synod

- Pray for Catherine's post operative recuperation and courage for Lucrecia
- Pray for our health and ongoing clarification of our roles here.

Thanks to you all for your ongoing support for our work here as we seek to serve the churches in this special part of the world. Do keep sending us your news – at times we feel rather cut off from our former lives!

With our love,

David and Shelley



Top: Centenary lunch
Bottom: Centenary in Misión Chaqueña



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