

News from Paul and Sarah Tester: SAMS Mission Partners in Lima, Peru



April 2008

Something about San Juan Evangelista!



"The water I give will be an artesian spring within, gushing fountains of endless life" - John 4 v 13-14

Dear Praying Friends,

This month we have a "Church Special" for you! We've been getting more involved in supporting our local church, San Juan Evangelista (St John the Evangelist's), recently and so we thought it would be good to tell you a little more about it. April has been flying by with all the good things that have been happening accompanied, of course, by frustrations along the way. Please keep praying - we continue to see prayers answered and really appreciate your support for us.

San Juan Evangelista

San Juan Evangelista began as a small bible study group in the Pamplona Baja area around 15 years ago. As numbers grew a building was bought and its current Pastor, Luis Villalobos, and his wife Teófila moved to the church soon after. Since then, the church has grown to about 50 adults with a good number of children and young people. There are Sunday services at 7p.m. with a Sunday school in the morning. There is a prayer and bible study meeting on a Tuesday evening, a ladies group on Wednesdays and a younger teenagers group on Saturday afternoons. Paul has been helping lead the younger teenagers group and has spoken at the prayer and bible study group and last Sunday at the main meeting. He is also hoping to help get a group for the older teenagers and twenty-somethings going. Sarah plays her cornet in the worship group and is hoping to help with the Sunday school and the 'Compassion' programme.



Luis and Teófila



Some of our church's youth on a trip out

What we have particularly appreciated about the church is the faithfulness of its members. Many of them have been there for a good number of years and at last Sunday morning's prayer and fasting meeting from 7.30a.m. until 1.30p.m. there were around 15 people who took part. Around 15-30 people regularly come for the prayer and bible study. Prayer times during the Sunday service really impact us. People are so enthusiastic and fervent in their prayers (in Spanish and Quechua, an indigenous language) that it can be difficult to get a word in edgeways!

The church building previously housed a medical centre which has moved to a new location, leaving space for the Compassion Child Sponsorship Centre which we hope will begin in May / June time. The church building has been remodelled recently to cope with the influx of 140+ children! They will come for half the day (children at state schools here either attend in the morning or in the afternoon) and receive a nutritious lunch, Christian education, help with homework and education on nutrition, health, values and much more. Parents are encouraged to be involved as well with seminars provided for parents and of course the spiritual support that the church provides. Our hope and prayer is that the project will lead to significant church growth.

Changes in the mobile phone system here mean our mobile numbers now have an extra 9 at the front. Our landline remains the same

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Paul and Sarah's News

Paul has been using both strings to his bow this month! He has recently written a vision and strategy for the diocesan youth work which is now being reviewed by the youth team before going to the Bishop and clergy for approval and support. He helped organise a successful joint meeting of the youth from different churches which 60+ young people attended and is helping to start a youth alpha in Ventanilla, a mission which has yet to start a youth work. He's also prepared a couple of building work estimates for projects so that new buildings are available for churches and missions to use. Sarah's "El Arca" ministry continues to go well and she is now looking at where else she might take the scheme. She has also been attending a very helpful children's ministry course with Diana, a 16 year old, who helps at Sunday school at "Jesús el Nazareno" church. Frustrations for us include the lower priority many give to youth and children's work compared to work with adults, a lack of willingness of some to work together with others, the slow pace at which things seem to happen and a difficult class at school (most, if not all, of which are problems we would have encountered in the UK!).

Paul has recently begun playing rugby in the Peruvian Premier League! Granted, there may only be two leagues with four teams in each league but he's pleased to say his team, the University of Lima, is currently top having won their first two games of the season. He's injured his leg so please pray for healing. We continue to enjoy our day off on Mondays although Sarah's course is on Monday evenings so please pray we continue to make time to relax together. We've also both had the odd tummy problem / virus this month and Sarah had a small operation to remove a cyst from under her arm so please pray for good health for both of us.

For your prayers:

Please thank God for:

- San Juan Evangelista church, Pastor Luis and Teófila and that we have found a home there.
- For the joint meeting of different youth groups and for God's presence there with us.
- For good synod last month - many commented on the clear sense of unity shown.
- For the children's ministry course and the contacts Sarah has made through it
- For Paul's opportunity to play rugby and the friends he has made there.

Please continue to pray for:

- San Juan Evangelista church, its leadership and the soon to start Compassion project.
- That the Church would be a beacon of light to the drug addicts who meet on the hill next to the church.
- The diocesan youth ministry, as the team leading it (including Paul) look to the future and for God's vision for it and work with others to make it a reality.
- A youth alpha to start in Ventanilla.
- Bishop William who returns to Peru on 24th April but is not yet in full health
- The poor in Peru who are struggling to make ends meet with the global rise in food prices.
- Good health (particularly for Paul's leg) and for protection.

What would you do? - Going deeper

There are lots of issues, linked to cross-cultural mission, that we meet during our time in Peru. We thought it would be helpful to give some examples so you get an idea of some of them - not to give us "answers" - if there are any - but to help you know what we are thinking and feeling. Here's number 6...

Many Peruvians who have work will work six days a week, often long hours. In their spare time, church members will attend church meetings, help run church activities and some study in the seminary! What is a day off? Our training and advice is always to have one full day off a week and we try to do that. But what is work and what isn't? When we go out we are practising our language skills! Most of our friends here are linked to the church. Is time with church friends work or time off? Often some of the best opportunities for evangelism and discipleship occur in activities that wouldn't traditionally be considered "work".

When the boundaries between work and rest are so blurred and the cultural norm is to work so hard how do you decide when to have time off and what exactly that means?

Thank you for all your prayers. With love from us both, Paul and Sarah