

Crònica Catalana

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NB: This is now my only valid e-address.

April 2008

Dear Friends,

This letter has been a month in the writing but has kept being overtaken by events. If I give you a run down on the varied activities of this last week, it may give you a feel for life and ministry here.

Monday: Make sure the Food and Clothes banks were ready for action before heading off for a day conference for Continuing Education for Pastors. The subject was: A Relevant Church in a Spiritually Open Society. Write a letter to the Archbishop of the Finnish Lutheran Church on behalf of Bishop Carlos, expressing support in the aftermath of a terrible road accident in Malaga involving a coachload of Finnish tourists. Visit María, just recovering from a major operation.

Tuesday: An important meeting with Social Services concerning the project to centralise and coordinate Food distribution in the city. The project is on the point of foundering before being launched. Deal with an enquiry concerning the grave of the church's founding pastor; there is difficulty in locating his grandson, and the issue is still pending.

Wednesday: Sant Jordi (St. George's Day) Spend all day with church members outside the church selling roses and Christian books – 228 roses sold raise money for an Evangelical Children's Home; books only purchased by church members. However, it helped passers-by to know we exist and produced some interesting conversations. People responded well, but with surprise, to Antonio's greeting them with a "God bless you". Reports indicate that 6.000.000 roses and 10% of the annual total of books were sold on that one day in Catalunya!

Thursday: The monthly allocation of Food from Barcelona's Food Bank is delivered; only 300kg this time, including three sacks of potatoes and four boxes of hot peppers, all on the point of going off. Make use of a local convent's cold store in the hope they would still be edible on Monday (today). They were – just! We usually only distribute canned or packaged foods. Hospital visit to see Araceli on the eve of a major operation. (She is making a good recovery).

Friday: Work on the church's monthly bulletin. A phone call in the early afternoon means dropping everything to go into Barcelona. Enric, a church member who lives alone, has been found dead in his flat. The neighbours have called me, but I get there after the police have removed the body to the mortuary. He had been dead several days. There followed an intensive course in the workings of the police and other official bodies, fielding the many unanswerable questions by members of the church as the news spread, and the beginning of lot of heart-searching about pastoral care in the church. Phone conversations today confirm that it was a natural death.

Saturday: Finally get the bulletin finished; a long pastoral conversation over the phone; prepare the Family Service; find some suitable ready-prepared materials for next week's cell groups - praise the Lord for SEAN!

Sunday: Family Service goes well. Followed by a church lunch and the showing of a short DVD about Bolivia. Then a long late afternoon siesta!!

And in between times, deal with phone calls, emails, general administration and co-ordination, and try without success to find a space to write this *Crònica!* Today is Monday, and the round has begun again. You may notice there was no day off last week. I had just returned from an unforgettable week in USA visiting my Bolivian god-daughters, Laura and Nataly, whom I hadn't seen since 2000, when they were only 5 and 3 years old respectively. And I am going to take three days off this week, over the 1st May. Another breathing space is much needed.

Here are some calendar events for the next few months:

- 7th May Meeting with Paul Needle and Peter Jordan, chaplains in Alcossebre and Barcelona respectively, to discuss the development of Anglican ministry in the area south of Barcelona
- 9-11th May Diocesan Women's retreat in Zaragoza, organised by the Sabadell ladies. Zaragoza is home to this year's EXPO focussing on water, so our theme is *Living Water*.
- 10th May For the men and others, a work day putting to rights the church garden after nearly a year of being affected by the neighbour's construction project. We have got a brand new and much neater wall at no cost, so cannot complain.
- 14th May Madrid for a small group meeting to work on the new Diocesan Plan.
- 17th May Concert of Andean music, with the group Catari. We hope many of the South American beneficiaries of the food distribution will come.
- 18th May Reus, for a Communion service in the evening.
- 20th May Plenary Committee of the *Consell Evangèlic de Catalunya*.
- 25th May Inaugurate the new church garden. We are inviting a few friends from St. George's to join us.
- 31st May Annual supper of the *Antics Joves* (those who as youth were members of the church, 30 or so years ago).
- 2nd June Meeting of Sabadell pastors to plan the united outreach in June 2009.
- 7th June Diocesan Standing Committee in Madrid.
- 9th June Pastors' Continuing Education. My attending these days organised by the Baptist seminary, and the good relationship with the three Baptist pastors in Sabadell mean they now consider me an "honorary Baptist".
- 15th June Visit the church in Valencia to preach and preside at Holy Communion. They are currently without a pastor.
- 27th June Wedding of Albert and Gemma near Valencia.
- 27th-29th June CRUZIAL 08 – Diocesan youth event, and a Diocesan Pastors' Conference.
- 8th July Fly to UK for Home Ministry
- 13th July Visit Emmanuel Church, Southall.
- 20th July Visit St. John's, Henley-in-Arden.
- 27th July Visit the churches in Claverdon and Preston Bagot.
- 29th July Fly back to Spain.
- 2nd August Wedding of Tomás and Pilar.

So far this year, there has been a very good atmosphere in the church, a good number of people visiting for the first time, and we regularly have 6 or 7 children attending on a Sunday. Pray for **new leaders** for the Sunday School; for **Dani** now on the second module of his theological studies; and for the implementing and amplifying of **teams** responsible for different tasks. Pray too for the continuing focus on **sharing our faith**, and for folk to gain confidence in putting into practice what they have learnt.

On a wider front, Catalunya is desperately short of **water** – reserves are at only 21% when at this time of year reserves should be full. There are plans to bring water to Barcelona by ship and by train! Please pray for some good rains, gentle enough to soak in without damaging the crops, and in sufficient quantity to see Catalunya through what is usually a long, hot summer.

Thank you once again for your prayers, which do so much to uphold my ministry here. I cannot imagine how things would be without you all behind me. I look forward to meeting up with as many as possible of you in July.

With love in the Lord Jesus
Sue

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