



Sharon Wilcox

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Contact details:

sharon.wilcox@hotmail.co.uk



Location: Ecuador



What I do: Working with people with learning disabilities, teaching them life skills and seeking to enable them to become independent.

Dear friends,

A huge thank you for your response to the request for help in my Christmas newsletter. I now have the necessary support to continue my ministry here.

In October, Joy, a short-term mission partner with Latin Link, arrived in Santo Domingo to work four mornings a week with us, as well as a couple of afternoons with the Life in Abundance Trust. She is a fine art university student in England and has been teaching 1:1 art sessions with the youngsters and will be doing a carpentry project with them when we start back in April. She will be with us until the end of May. I have appreciated her help and the students have enjoyed having a younger person helping them too. When she leaves, I will need more volunteers, otherwise we will only be able to be open for two or three days a week. Please join me in praying for God's provision in this.



Over-60s party

The hope to start another project, in Riobamba, has not been realised for a couple of reasons. The church that had wanted to partner with me could not find any people with learning disabilities needing support, and then at the beginning of January the country declared a state of emergency, which is still in place as I write. This was due to an increase in gang-related violence and kidnapping, which has meant it is not a good time to be travelling to unknown parts of the country.

I continue to help with Sunday school for the over-60s and enjoyed being part of their Christmas party. The new leader has found more people prepared to facilitate and lead the reflections on Sundays, which means I will be doing them less often this year.

Each of the three Orchid Projects held Christmas sales of work in December, which meant that all the students received some money just before Christmas to use as they please. Always a happy day as they begin to think about what they will spend it on. I reminded some of them not to forget whose birthday we were celebrating and whether we should receive presents at Christmas, as it is not our birthday!

Please pray for the Project in Cuenca, as they have had to reduce classes to two days a week due to losing a couple of volunteers at Christmastime. Pray that they will find other people to serve and that the students will remain positive and motivated to learn.

On Christmas Eve I went out in the late afternoon to help friends with their street ministry, feeding those on the streets and praying with each person. It is such a humbling and blessed time.

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**With Jesus
With each other
To the edges**



Classes have continued across all three projects since the beginning of the year. Though in Santo Domingo the youngsters have been on holiday since 24 February until 1 April. However, I organised a long-promised five-a-side football match between the Santo Domingo and Quito Orchid Projects in March, during the holidays. It was a very long day but greatly enjoyed by everyone. Before the match, one of the Quito volunteers led us in a time of devotion. A lot of new friendships have been forged as a result of the day. Santo Domingo won 7-3. Pastor William and Daniela (one of our volunteers) provided the transport. A couple of days before we travelled, a bridge

collapsed on the main route to Quito, which meant a longer diverted journey on some very bumpy B roads. More potholes than road in a lot of places. The main route will be closed for seven weeks, which will have a knock-on effect for the availability of food and other supplies.

After that I spent five days visiting Pastor William's aunt, Elsa, in the Ecuadorian Amazon, where I ate encebollado for the first time. It is a fish and onion soup which is usually eaten for breakfast. I have never had the desire to try fish soup for breakfast, but I had the option to try it at lunchtime, in a restaurant that received an award for theirs in 2021. It was delicious. I still would not eat it for breakfast though. It was my first visit to the Amazon in the 11 years I have been here. It was very hot, but I enjoyed the calm atmosphere. It is one of the few areas that does not currently have a curfew in place.

It was Elsa who asked me to be part of the team sharing with the over-60s on Sundays. A few months later she moved to El Coca in the Amazon, to be near her daughters. Her son-in-law is the pastor of a Baptist church there.

Then I went back to Quito later in March to train six new volunteers and take part in a meeting of all volunteers to iron out a couple of issues and to encourage them. Please pray for the new volunteers as they get to know everyone and serve the Lord in this way. Please pray that I will always be able to support them in the most appropriate way (visits, Zoom calls, WhatsApp messages).

I thank God for opportunities to stay connected to my home church in the UK through a weekly prayer meeting, and occasional requests for videos about life here in Ecuador.

I also thank God for all of your support which comes in so many different ways.

Wishing you a very blessed spring and summer wherever you are.

Sharon



Photos from top to bottom: Cuenca sale; money learning; five-a-side; Amazon River trip



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