



Tim Curtis

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Location: Paraguay



What I do: Building up the body of Christ through writing, translating and producing discipleship training and study materials in the Énxet language.



Empowering people pushed to the edges of life to reach their God-given potential

Dear praying friends,

Greetings from the Paraguayan Chaco, where spring is with us once again. The tall paratodo trees are a blaze of bright yellow. The winter weather is over, although this year we had quite cold days well into September. We are now hoping that it will not be too hot in the coming weeks and that we will continue to enjoy the blessing of further spring rains.

The water at the Anglican Centre lasted throughout the winter, although I was out of water at home for a few weeks at the beginning of September until we had the first of the spring rains. Fortunately, the translation office underground water storage tanks (or “aljibes” in Spanish) and those of the other buildings in the compound still had abundant water, and I was thankful to be able to use the precious water available in them.

In August we said goodbye to former health auxiliary Cirilo Benítez, who had been ill for several years. He died at his home in San Carlos, El Estribo after his remaining leg was amputated. He remained cheerful and bore his suffering with patient endurance. He began his work in the clinic in Makxawaya in the 1970s and later worked for the Paraguayan Ministry of Health in El Estribo. During his illness he was given a great deal of support from nurse Beryl Baker and Dr Trudi Hiebert who had known him and worked with him for many years. His funeral service was attended by just about the entire community of San Carlos, the sadness mixed with thanksgiving, and the joyful singing of a community that knows that Jesus is the resurrection and the life.

The well-known Chaco Christian radio station ZP30 celebrated its 50th birthday on 15 September, and then the Mennonite Mission organisation ACOMEM had its 90th birthday on 17 September. I joined in a celebratory meal in Filadelfia with translators Brígido, Evencio and team coordinator Arnold. ACOMEM CEO Siegfried Duerksen prepared the barbecue. We were joined by the Nivacle indigenous translation team who have been working on a revision of their Bible. We also met Abraham Giesprecht, who travelled to Paraguay from his home near Winnipeg, Canada, and who was responsible, from 1989–1994, for creating some of the radio programmes. I remember that in those days I used to meet up with most of the Énxet and Angaité pastors to record their talks and sermons for ZP30. We did the recording in a simple hut in La Herencia, and there were often background noises such as the croaking of frogs or the loud chirping of crickets during the rainy season.



Me with a paratodo tree in the background (taken in El Estribo)

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



We had enough water at the Rio Verde centre during the winter to continue with the pastoral retreat in August, with Bible teaching, music lessons and an electricity course. We celebrated Angaité pastor Agripino Sanchez's 59th birthday with a large birthday cake for the more than 40 of us present.

Our indigenous colleagues have been particularly encouraged by the opportunity to improve their music skills with colleague Marco Klaue who has joined the Chaco team. Marco's background is Mennonite. He is the organist at St Andrew's Chapel Asunción, with its English-speaking congregation and has now started taking part in the pastoral retreats in the Chaco. During his last visit he brought up a considerable number of guitars, keyboards and a ukulele for everyone to practise on, which made him very popular!

My colleague, Anglican pastor Gustavo Flores, based in Asunción, was recently made Archdeacon by bishop Ronald Irene. He is responsible for the Chaco region. His ministry among the Southern Éñxet and Angaité communities has been much appreciated, and increasingly he is getting requests to take weddings in addition to his other pastoral visits. I have been helping Pastor Gustavo with logistic support, making sure the Toyota truck is available for these trips. Pastor Gustavo took a wedding in Dos Palmas, El Estribo, in August which has led to another request to take a wedding there. Pastor Gustavo is fluent in Guaraní. In fact, it is his first language, as he grew up in a rural area of Paraguay and did not speak Spanish until his early teens. I give thanks for his good relationship with the indigenous people, and pray that his ministry among them would continue to grow and bear fruit.

I have continued to enjoy working with Asunción Rojas on discipleship training materials. His wife, Cipriana, is much better after a recent illness. Their community, Santa Fe, in El Estribo, about 15km from the Trans-Chaco Highway, has also been blessed with rain in recent weeks, putting an end to worries about water supply. Asunción's parents, Ester and Nenito, are now quite elderly, but in good health. Asunción's sister, Narcisa, continues to work as a health auxiliary in Santa Fe.

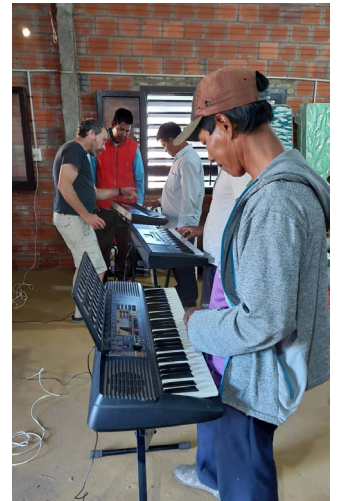
I am grateful to CMS, and to bishop Ronald Irene, for granting me a couple of weeks of compassionate leave in the UK during the summer to visit my father, Tom Curtis, who is making a good if slow recovery after fracturing his hip in February. He has always given me wonderful support, and supported the work of SAMS and CMS over many years.

Just one last thing. I have CMS home ministry coming up next year, from late February or the beginning of March onwards, so I hope to be in touch with many of you in the next few months to arrange suitable dates for visiting.

"May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit." Romans 15:13

Many thanks for your prayers,

Tim Curtis



Photos from top to bottom: Saying goodbye to Cirilo at the graveside; Marco during a music lesson with indigenous church leaders; Gustavo Flores taking a wedding in the Chaco; with my father Tom Curtis and my sister Roz in August



Empowering people pushed to the edges of life

It builds my faith when I hear stories from other CMS partners working with people pushed to the edges of life. I hope that you're inspired as you read about Elise and Jon in Thailand who are working to keep families together and children out of care. And about Makol in South Sudan whose life got dramatically saved during a peace rally. You can read their stories, and others, at churchmissionsociety.org/empower

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