



# Sharon Wilcox

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**Location:** Ecuador



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



**Discovering creative ways** to share the hope of Jesus with people unconnected to church

Dear friends,

It is incredible to think that as I write this I have been back in Ecuador for four months. My final 12 months are passing very quickly, and a lot has happened.

In August, while I was in the UK, I heard news that five people had been shot not far from where I live in Santo Domingo. Four of them died. The only survivor was Cristian, the very first student in the Orchid Project almost nine years ago. I messaged his grandmother who was upset as he was injured and in hospital. I was so glad to be able to meet him in October and see that physically at least he had recovered. Please pray for his psychological well-being as he continues to process what happened.

A couple of weeks after I got to Santo Domingo, I was back in Quito to meet Sandra Kestrel, a short-term volunteer with CMS who planned to spend four months with me, working in the Orchid project. She stayed in Quito for two weeks with the mother of the coordinator of the Quito project. This was so that she could have 1:1 Spanish lessons in a language school. After her language classes in Quito, Sandra came to work in the project in Santo Domingo. It was good to have another pair of hands and some fresh eyes to observe the work we do. While she struggled with daily life here, she enjoyed working with the youngsters. Then, unfortunately, a couple of weeks before Christmas, Sandra had a minor accident and needed to return home, as the precautionary treatment she needed was not available in Ecuador. She managed to get home to her family three days before Christmas. I am glad to say that she has had no problems because of the accident, and we wish her well for the future.

At about the same time we were joined by a new student, Ismael, who is 19 years old with a lot to learn about working with others!

In November, Charlotte, a young volunteer with Latin Link, arrived to work in the project until June. She has settled in well and is very well liked by all. She has been involved in doing some one-to-one work with the youngsters recently, including helping them to tie knots so that they can make bracelets independently. I can report a 100 per cent success rate, which means that everyone will be able to make and sell them from home, if they wish. Please pray that Charlotte will achieve similar results as she continues to help the group on a one-to-one basis.



*Candle-making with Ismael*

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[churchmissionsociety.org/wilcox](https://churchmissionsociety.org/wilcox)

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



We continue to teach crafts and are currently working on candles and a woodwork project. The Quito project had some issues that meant they had to stop classes. In December they restarted one day a week with a birthday celebration and guided conversation classes. They will be working four days a week from February.

The project in Cuenca lost their only student in the autumn as she decided she no longer wanted to continue. We hope that there will be some school leavers with learning disabilities, later this year, who may want to learn life skills rather than sit at home. Please pray for youngsters to come forward before then, as the volunteers are waiting to help them.

I want to thank you for praying with me that we would find someone willing to take the reins as coordinator for the project in Santo Domingo when I leave Ecuador in October. In November I met with Pastor William

to discuss the future, and he mentioned the name of the person who I also had in mind: Mary (pronounced "marry"), our volunteer on Tuesdays. At the beginning of December, we met with her to ask her formally if she would consider it. With some reservations, she said yes. We have several months to work through her concerns and for me to explain, fully, the running of the project. I am confident we can achieve both during that time. However, she knows that she can change her mind at any time. Please do continue to pray for us as we meet and have open discussions. We believe that Mary is God's choice, not just ours.

Christmastime was busy, with our open day, a sale of work in a different church community, the Christmas Eve street ministry with Live by Faith and my cooking Christmas dinner for English-speaking missionary friends (with help from Abby Murphy, front right of the photo). All were successful.

The Friday before Christmas we had a celebration with all the volunteers, youngsters and their parents. The youngsters sang and danced and the mums cooked lunch. I sat back and enjoyed it!

Over the new year period, I went to Cuenca for three days to relax and recharge my batteries. It is great fun there on New Year's Eve as they make larger-than-life-sized effigies and then burn them at midnight. There is a city-wide competition to find the best ones.

One separate piece of news is that, for several reasons, we will not be able to start a fourth Orchid project before I retire.

As always, I thank you for all your support and prayers.

I am praying that we all enjoy many blessings throughout this year.

Sharon



*Photos from top to bottom: Birthday celebration in Quito; food and prayer ministry on the streets; Christmas lunch; group at Christmas*



## Discovering creative ways to share the hope of Jesus

It's so encouraging to hear news from other CMS partners sharing the hope of Jesus with people not yet connected to churches. In the UK, CMS's Pioneer Mission Training programme is equipping people to respond creatively to the Holy Spirit beyond the boundaries of traditional church. Read more and get inspired by other stories of hope at [churchmissionsociety.org/bringhope](http://churchmissionsociety.org/bringhope)

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