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.

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

Dear friends and supporters,

This final year in Ecuador has flown by. As I write this, I am in Quito getting ready to return home to England. As you can imagine I have very mixed emotions. I am looking forward to the next phase of my life, but also sad to be leaving behind so many amazing people.

The Orchid project in Santo Domingo has continued during the summer. Mary organised a sale of crafts the youngsters had made, at the Baptist church anniversary celebrations, which raised a small amount of funds for the project. The anniversary was over three days and included a talent night, a family day and a celebration at church on the Sunday morning. At the beginning of July, Charlotte, our Latin Link volunteer left us, to go and live in one of the Tsachila communities so that she can learn Tsafiqui, the indigenous language of Santo Domingo, and to immerse herself in their culture.



Farewell with the Quito group

I gradually reduced the number of days I was working, so that everyone could get used to me not being there. That brought a few challenges for the volunteers who found themselves with new responsibilities. Mary has flourished in the coordinator role, though she admits it is hard. She loves organising events, so I had three leaving parties with the Orchid project. The volunteers took me to the beach for the day, we then went to a water park with the youngsters, their families and the volunteers. After that the volunteers took me for a final farewell coffee. I think in total I have had 12 leaving celebrations, including a farewell service at church. All have been lovely but emotionally draining, not just for me. A couple of friends have found it hard to say goodbye. I am grateful that we have electronic means of communication these days, so that we can stay in touch with each other.

Please pray for the project going forward. That everyone will settle into the new way of working and that the Lord will guide Mary. The First Baptist church will provide spiritual support for Mary and safeguarding support for everyone, as necessary.

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With Jesus
With each other
To the edges



As I have been reflecting, I realise now just how much God has done in the lives of the youngsters, both physically and spiritually. Several now have a relationship with the Lord in some way and others have developed good understanding of what it is like to be a Christian. Just a couple of days ago, I heard that one of the Quito students has found a job as a warehouse assistant in a university. Such a blessing to see things coming into fruition. None of this would have been possible without the volunteers who give of their time each week.

The situation in Santo Domingo continues to challenge daily life with many gangs fighting each other. There is currently another state of emergency, though thankfully without a curfew. The climate in Ecuador is changing. The El Niño impact has started to take hold, with unusually heavy rains for summertime in both Santo Domingo and Quito.

I am pleased to have had a couple of days by myself in Quito before flying home. I have been able to process some of the last 13 years in Ecuador and begin to look forward to the next few months. Please pray with me that I will quickly realise where I should settle and enjoy the process of doing so.

I am looking forward to my church visits which begin as soon as I am back home. I still have one or two to book in before the end of March 2027 but will hopefully get to visit everyone. I am so incredibly grateful for all the support I have received during my time in Ecuador and would ask you to hold me in your prayers until 5 April 2027 which is when I officially finish working with CMS and retire.

With every blessing and many thanks.

Sharon







Photos from top to bottom: *Leaving gifts from students; staff meeting in September; watermelon was far too juicy!; farewell party at the waterpark.*



Discovering creative ways to share the hope of Jesus

I love to hear from other CMS partners sharing the hope of Jesus with people not yet connected to church. Read Andy Roberts's reflection on his time with the charity ReVive in Brazil and hear his thoughts on how mission needs to keep creatively changing. And be challenged by a thought-provoking piece on the role of migration in mission. Read and learn more about creative mission at **churchmissionsociety.org/bringhope**

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