



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.

Dear friends and supporters,

Greetings from the south of England! I find it hard to believe that I have been back here for three months already. I have to say I am really enjoying the lighter evenings and very little rain.

On arriving at Heathrow in March, I took great delight in being able to remove my face mask. It was the first time I had been outside the house without one for exactly two years! In May the Ecuadorian government relaxed the law, and it is now optional to wear one. What a strange two years it has been for everyone.

It was a joy for me a couple of weeks later to be able to visit my mum on Mother's Day, with my siblings, and again two days later for her birthday. Due to her deteriorating health I had thought that she wouldn't still be with us. It was good to see her looking really well.

Then a week later my best friend passed away (three weeks after I got back). While it was a shock, I am grateful that I got to spend time with her just before she died, and that I was not still in Ecuador.

Visiting my supporting churches has been going well. I have had some wonderful conversations and fellowship with many people, which is always a joy. People have been very generous and looked after me very well. There have been suppers, afternoon teas and Sunday lunches. Great traditions and wonderful opportunities to share with so many of you who support me.

My home church recently held an international weekend, where local refugees were able to come and cook some of their traditional foods and share them, both among themselves and with the church. On the Sunday we had a couple who work in Costa Rica join us and tell us a little of what they do, and parts of the service were in English, Farsi and Spanish. I found myself doing a fair bit of translating for people from El Salvador and Honduras over the whole weekend.

The church has been the main organiser (with help from other churches) of a Jubilee celebration for 5 June. As I write this that is still two weeks away, so I will share what happened in my next newsletter.



A meal for refugees at my home church, at which those from different places cooked and shared traditional foods.

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churchmissionsociety.org/wilcox

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



Suffice to say that I have been busy helping to organise bunting, gazebos, food, games, competitions and much more since I got back from Ecuador. We expect to provide a totally free event for 500 people. As in much of the country, there are many people struggling with the recent increase in the cost of living here. We hope that it will be a fun day for all, but the main focus is that people will hear the gospel and respond to it.

The Orchid Project restarted on 4 May after a two-month break. I managed to find enough volunteers to help Gloria, although there will be a few days when the youngsters will have to stay at home. As most of you will know, there is still a stigma attached to

having a child with a disability in Ecuador, and meaningful occupation is almost impossible for them once they leave school. That was the main reason for setting up the Orchid Project. Just three weeks before I came back to England, I spoke to an Ecuadorian lady who owns a hotel (her daughter lives in Kent with her English husband), and after visiting her with the students and Gloria, she agreed to give them work experience at the hotel once a week! What an answer to prayer. The group is really excited and their parents are over the moon (as am I). Please pray that the youngsters will enjoy it and try their best. As I said to them, who knows if some may get a job as a result of the training. It will, at least, be something to put on their CV.

When I return to Ecuador, Pastor William has agreed to help me find other churches where I may be able to set up more projects, not just in Santo Domingo. I also still intend to do the training in Quito that was planned over two years ago. I do believe that is what God has planned. I have agreed to do more to help with the older members group of the church as well. Please pray for God to guide my path in the direction he wants me to go, and that I would hear him.

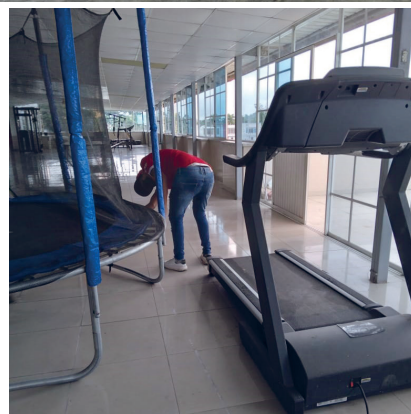
In May I was away on a retreat for five days in West Sussex. It was lovely to spend time reflecting on many things, with the Lord, as well as be guided through different aspects of Christian living and have the chance to walk in some lovely countryside. I also got to see Battle Abbey and the site of the Battle of Hastings of 1066. Praise God for that provision.

As well, it has been good to spend some time visiting the CMS office to catch up with the people who help me behind the scenes, without whom life would be so much more difficult.

Thank you for all your support as always. I really appreciate it.

Blessings,

Sharon



Photos from top to bottom: Visiting a supporting church; Exercise class at the Orchid Project; Cristian cleaning the hotel gym as part of his work experience; On retreat at Penhurst.



Going further with Church Mission Society

Prayer is the engine room of mission: Here at CMS, we know that the history of mission is the history of answered prayer. We would love you to join us as a praying community around the world at churchmissionsociety.org/prayer