



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.

Dear praying friends

Greetings from Rio Verde, in the Chaco.

The Paraguayan winter is nearing its end, and after some unexpected rainfall in the middle of August – rain in August occurs roughly every 12 years – the grass is green again, and the paratodo trees (*Tabebuia aurea*), misleadingly known in English as Caribbean trumpet trees, are in full bloom.

At the end of May, I made a short trip to the UK to attend my father's 90th birthday celebrations. His birthday treat was a helicopter ride over Gloucester and along the River Severn. It was good to enjoy his company and to find him in such good health, keeping active, enjoying life at his home in Tewkesbury, and worshipping in the beautiful and historic country churches of Stoke Orchard, Tredington and Deerhurst. They are under the pastoral care of a local ministry team. His birthday party was held at my sister Roz's home in Cheltenham. I was able to have a much-needed holiday, and returned to Paraguay much refreshed.

In July, I attended the anniversary service in Makxawaya, led by pastors Juan Sosa and Romualdo Rojas. It was encouraging to see the Sunday school children take part under the leadership of their teacher Guillermo González. After the service there was a community meal, followed by football matches. I took the opportunity to do some visiting and catch up on local news. The pandemic is hardly mentioned now in the media, and everything seems to be back to normal.

The highlight of these last few months in Rio Verde has been the visit of educationalist Jane Jerrard (formerly with CMS in Pakistan), and then shortly afterwards, but coinciding with Jane's visit, a visit from Andy Roberts, director of mission at CMS, and manager in Latin America Paul Tester.

I looked after Jane from 10–25 August. Before leaving for the Chaco she visited the Anglican school El Redentor which is located in Ceballos Cue on the outskirts of one of the more disadvantaged areas of



*Dad's 90th birthday party in Cheltenham;
Dad's birthday helicopter ride*

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

Asunción. Some of the teachers and pupils live or have lived in a nearby shanty town.

Once in the Chaco, I drove Jane around the different indigenous schools and churches in the so-called “Anglican Zone”, clocking up well over a thousand miles on the numerous trips. Jane’s visit came about in response to requests by indigenous pastors and church leaders for help in evaluating educational needs and aspirations. “We don’t want our children to be like us” is a comment we hear quite often. Access to higher education has been extremely limited, with just a tiny handful of indigenous students from the Chaco making it to university. Last year, from England, Jane interviewed a number of indigenous pastors in Zoom meetings which took place in the translation office. Now she was able to meet them in the flesh in their respective communities and see first-hand the challenges they face. I translated for Jane in meetings with teachers, parents and church leaders in La Patria, El Estribo, La Herencia and Makxawaya. Jane also met with ministry of education director Willi Goertzen and his wife Uti; Willi has been responsible for education in a large area covering El Estribo, Lolita, Nueva Vida and Irala Fernández. It was important to find out who is doing what, and which few schools offer the chance to go on to higher education. In view of these concerns, education will be one of the main focus areas of the indigenous congress to be held in Salta, Argentina, in October this year.

A week after Jane arrived we were joined by Andy and Paul. They also stayed at the Rio Verde centre and were able to visit a number of the Énxet and Angaite indigenous communities in La Patria, El Estribo and Makxawaya in the company of Agustín, the vicar general, and pastor Gustavo Flores. It was encouraging for me to have so many visitors. On one Saturday evening I cooked a typical Chaco stew for our guests (the Rio Verde restaurant was closed), and the following evening, Jane produced a shepherd’s pie for the hungry group. We were joined for supper by two Angaite indigenous students, Edgar and Junior, who had been interviewed the previous day by Jane. Jane learned of the sacrifices they and their parents had made in order for them to get a good education.

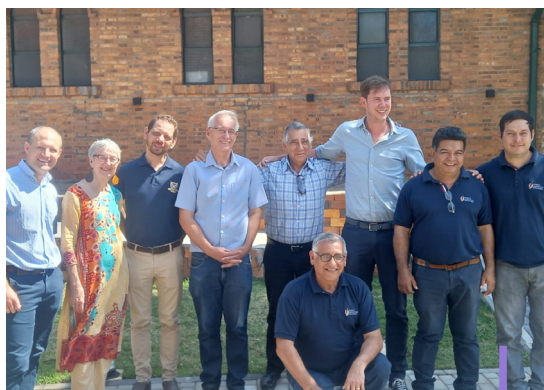
We visited the Mennonite mission team in Filadelfia Luz de los Indígenas and had a meeting with executive director Siegfried Dürksen and Northern Enlhet Bible translation team coordinator Arnold Boschmann. We met in the building where the revision of the Northern Enlhet Bible is taking place and where I work as a part-time consultant. We discussed our shared history of living and proclaiming the gospel among the indigenous peoples of the Chaco. The Mennonite team stressed how they, unlike members of other mission organisations in Paraguay, live permanently in the Chaco as a people who started settling there from the late 1920s onwards. They are here to stay and they now number around 11,500 people.

At the end of the visit, our guests met with diocesan pastors, church leaders and the diocesan office team in Asunción.

As mentioned, we were blessed with unseasonal rain in the middle of August just as the water situation was getting tight. God provided for our needs. God is good!

Look to the Lord and his strength; seek his face always.
(Psalm 105:4)

Tim Curtis



Photos from top to bottom: Jane with teachers in Makxawaya; Jane in action; CMS visitors in Asunción with pastors and leaders



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