



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.

My dear friends and supporters,

I want to start 2023 by thanking all of you for your support during what is almost 10 years of my being in Ecuador. A lot has happened over those years for all of us, not least COVID-19. I thank you for praying for me, the Orchid Project, the first Baptist church in Santo Domingo, and for the encouragement you give me through your messages, Christmas greetings, emails and financial support.

An update on my health is that when I returned to Ecuador at the end of August, I began to feel some after-effects of having had meningitis. I had been warned that this could happen. I am grateful for God's provision. I went to my doctor here in Santo Domingo – he immediately thought he knew what the problem was and he was correct. In the space of 7–8 weeks I needed five CT scans and a lot of medication to get myself fit. I reflected that had I still been in the UK I would probably have waited eight weeks to have one CT scan. As I swept the floor of my flat at the weekend I realised that there was very little of my hair in among the dust (for two months there had been a fair amount) and that actually now in January I appear to be free of any after-effects, and feel 100 per cent well.



Clearing the veg patch

As we approached winter in November, the youngsters in the project began to clear our vegetable patch, as we cannot grow anything again until May. We have a new student called Edwar and we did this on his second day. Eager to impress, he began digging over the soil with gusto and was digging a bit too deep. Within a minute we were scurrying away as he unearthed a tarantulas' nest! My first ever experience of seeing them up close. Please pray for Edwar to grow in maturity so that he is accepted by his peers.

Then there was the football World Cup. The government told schools to stop lessons so that everyone had the chance to watch La Tri, as Ecuador's team is known. How could I not do the same? There were highs and lows, but for a few days the feel-good factor was amazing.

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churchmissionsociety.org/wilcox

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



At the beginning of December we held our annual open day, but this time in our new location. We were a little disappointed with the turnout, but were nevertheless blessed by the amount of donations we received for the things we had made. I made an appeal for more volunteers, and as a result we will have a lady helping one day a week and two young men helping for two hours on different days. Please continue to pray for more people to come forward who can do at least one or two days a week for four hours, as that will allow me to go and train people in other locations so that the Orchid Project can spread across the country.

Christmas was quite quiet for me, although I did find myself cooking a traditional British dinner for Melissa (a missionary here with the Methodist Mission Society) and me, as it was her first Christmas away from her family.

Then on New Year's Eve I flew from Ecuador to Ushuaia in Patagonia for the first ever CMS Latin America

conference. There were almost 60 mission partners, mission associates, strategic partners and staff from the office in Oxford. You may wonder why we went to the southernmost tip of the world, in their cold summer. Well that is where CMS (or SAMS as it was then) began, with a man called Allen Gardiner. The conference was called Refresh and it certainly was a time of refreshment. We heard some really interesting stories of what God is doing among us, as well as hearing from the pastor of a local church, who told us how grateful they are to those British missionaries who brought the gospel to Ushuaia over 160 years ago. There were workshops on a variety of topics and Bible teaching every day. We also had time together seeing some of God's amazing creation. Stunning mountains, glaciers, penguins, sea lions and whales to name just a few. As a result of networking with colleagues that week, I am in the very early stages of conversations regarding the possibility of starting new projects in Cuenca (12 hours' bus ride away) and Quito (three hours away). Please join me in praying for God to lead the way in those conversations so that his will is done.

As you can see, there are several things to pray about. I am excited to see how God works out his purposes here in 2023.

Every blessing to all of you this year.

Sharon



Photos from top to bottom: Goal for Ecuador in the World Cup; open day 2022; worshipping together in Ushuaia, "the end of the world"; mission partners in Ushuaia



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