

## Words of life!

Celebrating the new *Contemporary Bible Commentary* (pages 4-7)

Eminent theologians René Padilla and Samuel Escobar

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Rose Wade and team at AMI San Lucas, Guatemala

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**Latin Link**  
COMMUNITY WITH A CALLING

## What is Latin Link?

**Latin Link's vision is to see vibrant, Bible-believing Christian communities in every part of Latin America, impacting their neighbours, their societies and the wider world.**

**We work in partnership with churches to send and receive individuals, families and teams, to or from Latin American communities, to share the love of God. We do this through three programmes:**

**STEP** is Latin Link's short-term mission and discipleship programme for teams. Step provides hands-on, practical experience of living and working with local church communities in Latin America or Spain. We select and send teams for three to seven weeks during the summer, and for four months each spring. We welcome applications from individuals of all ages, and from groups wanting to create a team from their church or university.

**STRIDE** is an opportunity for individuals, couples or families to spend six months to two years putting their faith into practice in Latin America, working with a church or Christian-run project. It's a chance to use and develop skills during a gap year, career break, university language year, sabbatical or early retirement.

A two-year Stride is also the pathway into longer-term service with Latin Link.

**STAY.** We currently have over 100 members of 14 nationalities living and working in Latin America and Europe on a longer-term basis, from three years upwards. Their work varies from training church leaders to caring for children at risk, from supporting university students to generating employment opportunities. Members are based in Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Britain, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Guatemala, Ireland, Mexico, the Netherlands, Nicaragua, Peru, Spain, and Switzerland. See [latinlink.org.uk](http://latinlink.org.uk) for a taste of current opportunities, or contact your nearest Latin Link office.

**Latinfile** can be viewed online at [issuu.com/latin-link/docs/latinfile\\_spring\\_2019](http://issuu.com/latin-link/docs/latinfile_spring_2019)



Download the Latin Link App from all the usual stores (Apple, Google, etc) to keep right up-to-date with all things Latin Link.

# A message of hope

*As Latin Link's new Head of Mobilisation, Esther Stansfield is passionate about encouraging the whole church in mission.*



**'In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.'** (John 1:4-5 NIV).

In a world so often marred with sorrow, shame and death, our hope is found in Jesus. This message remains as crucial as ever, and it is shared by Latin Link members wherever they go. This edition of *Latinfile* looks at how 'words of life' are impacting people across Latin America and beyond.

The first article (pages 4-7) tells the inspiring story of the *Comentario Bíblico Contemporáneo* (Contemporary Bible Commentary). 12 years in the making, this is the first ever complete Bible commentary written from Latin America for Latin America, and it is just about to be launched!

Other articles reveal some of the incredibly challenging situations in which Latin Link members bring the life-giving message of Jesus to those in desperate need of it. Like Louis and Maribel Woodley, in the spiritually oppressive mining communities of Potosí, where many people live in fear of the devil-like *El Tío* (pages 8-9). Or the work of Sharon Jones and the Aurora project in Peru, uncovering the hidden world of abuse that many children are confronted with every day (pages 12-13).

This edition also explores how short-term volunteers can overcome language barriers to share God's love (page 14); and how the flower carpets of Antigua, Guatemala, connect with the story of Easter (page 11). We also remember the life of our friend Dennis Smith (page 15), and celebrate the truth of the gospel. It doesn't matter who we are, where we've come from, or what skills we have; we're all just very ordinary people, putting our hope in an extraordinary God (pages 16-17).

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading 'Esther Stansfield'.

**Esther Stansfield**  
Head of Mobilisation

# Words of life!

## Celebrating the new *Contemporary Bible Commentary*

This spring, we are delighted to celebrate the launch of a landmark publication: *the Comentario Bíblico Contemporáneo* (*Contemporary Bible Commentary*). This long-awaited volume is the first of its kind. A commentary on every book of the Bible, written in Spanish, from Latin America and for Latin America. Culturally relevant, highly readable and deliberately accessible in price, this book is set to change the landscape of theological study across the continent for years to come.

It is fitting that General Editor, René Padilla, should describe it as 'a dream come true'. Created to address the need for greater depth of training among evangelical churches and leaders in Latin America, this project has taken 12 years and the hard work of over 100 women and men. Experts in the Bible, in theology, or the social sciences, representing nearly every Latin American country, and from a wide range of ministries and cultural backgrounds. What an achievement!

Here's the story so far...

### A dream come true

Dr C. René Padilla was born in Ecuador, raised in Colombia, and has lived for many years in Argentina. He's an eminent evangelical theologian and missiologist, best known for coining the term Integral Mission. A founding member of the Latin American Theological Fellowship and the Kairos Foundation in Buenos Aires, he was International President of Tearfund for 12 years and is now President Emeritus of both the Micah Network and the Kairos Foundation. As well as being General Editor for the CBC, he wrote commentaries on Colossians and Ephesians, and articles on 'Discipleship', 'How to read the Bible', 'Imperialism', 'The Jubilee' and 'Church'.

The *Comentario Bíblico Contemporáneo* is a dream come true. A dream of many who—though representing different Christian ministries and cultural backgrounds—shared basic theological convictions.

An initial meeting considering this project took place in the Kairós Center in Buenos Aires, Argentina, in March 2007. All present agreed on the need for a one-volume Bible commentary, one that was written by Latin American authors in a simple, direct, and accessible style.

It should be an exegetical and contextual commentary for all interested in understanding the relevance of the biblical message for the contemporary world; [including] articles about current topics, written from



René Padilla

a biblical perspective, for the purpose of helping readers connect biblical principles with the ethical issues of today's Latin America.

This commentary would encourage pastors and teachers to expound the biblical message with depth and faithfulness, their sights set on the renewal of the hearts and minds of Latin America's people in general and the people of God in particular.

At the publication of the CBC, we give joyful thanks to God for allowing this project which began as a dream to become reality.



## Overcoming obstacles

**Latin Link's Ian Darke has worked for more than 30 years in Latin America, first in Peru and now in Costa Rica. He's been the coordinator for the CBC project since its inception in 2007. We asked what some of the main challenges had been in the creation of this wonderful publication:**

At that first meeting in 2007 there was a lovely sense of the Lord's presence, as the various groups agreed to join forces, drawing on resources from across the continent. I had the honour of being invited to join the core team, as project coordinator.

We initially talked of completing the commentary by 2010, but soon realised this was hopelessly optimistic! Any image we had of contributors working calmly in book-lined studies was soon dashed by the realisation that many also had a heavy teaching load, pastoral work and other responsibilities. There were family crises and health problems to overcome too.

**We are incredibly excited because this is an extraordinary resource**

Experts in the Old Testament were hard to find, while some scholars found it a challenge to communicate deep content in

Linguistically, we also had to make sure that the Spanish was sufficiently international to avoid regional confusions, and to



Ian Darke

simple language. However, we saw this as an opportunity to help them become better communicators, producing even more resources in the future.

It has been exciting to be in touch with Bible teachers and scholars from every part of the continent. Almost all evangelical groups are represented, as are almost all Latin American countries. Given such diversity, our editors had to be careful that commentaries explain different perspectives on issues that can cause division.

translate contributions written in Portuguese into good, flowing Spanish, which is harder than it may seem!

**None of this work would have been possible without a host of contributors**

Another challenge was the sheer number of contributors! In addition to the commentaries, over 100 contextual articles were included, on matters of great relevance in Latin America, such as: prison ministry; domestic violence; care of orphans; concern for people with disabilities; magic; secret societies and political violence. Each was written by someone with extensive experience.

**'The CBC is a great blessing, because every time I consult it, I learn something new. The most enriching thing is precisely that fresh and familiar Latin American perspective that it contains. I thank God for this resource.'**

Sofía Quintanilla (Old Testament lecturer at a Bible seminary)

The editorial team (L to R): Ian Darke (Project Coordinator), Rosalee Velloso (Editor, New Testament), C. René Padilla (General Editor), Milton Acosta (Editor, Old Testament), Gilbert Montero (Editorial Assistant)

We would like to express our deep gratitude to the individuals and institutions which have made the publishing of this commentary possible...the authors, translators and editors, and all the friends (individuals and organisations) who have supported the project in prayer and financially.

None of this work would have been possible without a host of contributors: the writers, the core group of editors, and many other editorial helpers. Some reviewed theological content or language style, others prepared study questions which are included throughout.

Finally, the cost of producing a work of this size and complexity has been huge! So many thanks go to donors, especially SIM and Langham Partnership.

Now, after 12 years of so much effort from so many people, the commentary is complete! It is certainly not perfect... no human book ever will be. But we are incredibly excited, because this is an extraordinary resource, available in a beautifully printed edition, at a remarkably good price, and being distributed across the continent by the thousands. It will soon be available on electronic platforms, such as Logos and Accordance, and accompanied by a freely-

accessible web site, containing extra resources and information.

Please join us in thanking God for his goodness. **PRAY** for the book's distribution to every part of the continent. **PRAY** for the Portuguese edition, still in the pipe-line. **PRAY** for the launch events in many cities, along with workshops on expository preaching and leading Bible studies.

## FACT FILE

12 years  
100+ contributors  
66 chapters  
100+ articles  
1,696 pages

## Collective effort!

Dr Samuel Escobar, a native of Peru and a leading Latin American theologian, was one of the key participants in the 1974 International Congress on World Evangelization at Lausanne, Switzerland. He is Honorary President of the Latin American Theological Fellowship, Emeritus Professor of Missiology at Palmer Theological Seminary and a past president of the International Fellowship of Evangelical Students (IFES). For the CBC he wrote commentaries on 1 Peter and 2 Peter, plus articles on 'Spirituality', 'Patriotism and Nationalism', 'Hospitality', and 'Migration'.



Samuel Escobar

The CBC is the collective effort of several generations of Protestant scholars. They offer us a reading of the Bible without losing sight of the missional and evangelistic dimension. At the same time, the commentary seeks to respond with intellectual honesty to the pressing pastoral needs of a society undergoing rapid changes.

Getting scholars from throughout the Americas—both men and women, from vastly differing denominations, and from the gamut of generations—to work together on this project has been an unfathomably complex endeavour, both editorially and in terms of pastoral, training, and administrative issues.

Back in 1970, at the founding of the Latin American Theological Fellowship, [I] was calling for the development of a theology that could distinguish the biblical message from the Anglo-Saxon dressing in which it so frequently came clothed.

## We celebrate the culmination of this editorial feat with profound gratitude to God

We could not be more delighted at the publication of this commentary which, with its committed faithfulness to the text of the revealed word, has also sought out precise contextual relevance. We celebrate the culmination of this editorial feat with profound gratitude to God and to those who have worked tirelessly on this project.'

## Right here, right now



Rebeca and Fabián

**Rebeca Santiago and her husband Fabián are part of Ekklesia - an independent church plant in Puebla, Mexico, reaching out to students with the gospel, by preaching and teaching, and mentoring future leaders. Rebeca writes:**

In Mexico, as in many parts of Latin America, the huge problems of violence, corruption and poverty are impossible to avoid. Not a day goes by when we don't hear another tale of death, shameless greed, or exploitation.

It is perhaps no surprise that just as many ordinary Mexicans choose to retreat into their walled secure neighbourhoods, so the Church here has mostly retreated into a gospel detached from reality, emphasising prosperity, happy families, and the world to come. The truth is that the big problems

of our context can only be faced with the big truths of Scripture, and the big truths of Scripture need to be studied and taught, learned and preached.

There is a young generation of Mexican believers who are keen to learn, and who understand the relevance of the great themes of Scripture for our society. They know that engaging with these themes will allow us to bring the gospel to our neighbours in a way that makes sense.

They need and want to be trained for ministry, but the lack of resources and adequate theological institutions often leads to training being informal: through part-time distance learning, mentoring, and reading. Lots of reading.

**Engaging with these themes will allow us to bring the gospel to our neighbours**

Finding good, up-to-date theological material in Spanish is in itself a challenge! And finding material that actually speaks into the issues we face as Christians in Mexico is even more rare.

We will be doing everything we can to ensure that the young people we mentor, already working hard for the expansion of God's kingdom, will be able to get a copy of the CBC, and we pray that the Lord will use this new tool to equip and encourage a whole new generation of leaders.



Senior proof reader Adriana Powell (right), at work with friend and colleague, Psychology professor Silvia Chaves, who wrote the article on 'Singleness'.



## You're invited!

All are welcome to a thanksgiving and launch event for the CBC on 20 June 2019 at the Oxford Centre for Mission Studies, where you can hear more and meet members of the editorial team. For details contact [info@latinlink.org.uk](mailto:info@latinlink.org.uk)





# The underground god of Potosí

## Tackling syncretism in Bolivia

There's no easy place to be a mission worker, but Louis and Maribel Woodley face particular challenges. They are bringing the gospel to a mining community which (like others across the Bolivian *Altiplano*) practices syncretism: combining Catholicism with indigenous Andean practices, including devil worship.

We love Potosí and have worked here for over eight years. At 13,500 feet, it is said to be the world's highest city and was once one of the richest cities in the world. Potosí's history and geography revolve around the economy of mining, as Cerro Rico (Rich Mountain) dominates the city's skyline. This mountain has been a source of silver, copper and tin for over 500 years, but resources have gradually depleted and Potosí is now one of the poorest regions in Bolivia.

The city's inhabitants are mainly of Quechua decent and although most consider

themselves Catholic, traditional Andean religions dominate cultural practice - most notably, in the mines themselves.

### ***El Tío***

It is commonly believed that God rules above the ground, while below is the domain of *El Tío* (The Uncle), a figure that closely resembles the devil in Christianity. It's said he is responsible for the supply of minerals, as he mates with *La Pachamama* (Mother Earth) to produce them. If he is worshipped, they say, the mountain will produce. If he's neglected, miners will die.

Over the centuries, hundreds of thousands have died working in the mines and although this is due to highly perilous working conditions, the miners blame *El Tío*. Consequently Cerro Rico has

a reputation as 'the mountain that eats men' and *El Tío* is worshipped to appease him.

There are around 500 mines and at the entrance to each one is a



Cerro Rico miners. Many children work here, some as young as 7.

**Syncretism** (noun): an amalgamation of the beliefs and practices of different religions and cultures.





Photo: Ponds.com (Jesse Kiehl)

El Tío statue in a Potosí mine entrance

statue of *El Tío*. The miners present daily offerings of cigarettes, coca leaves, and alcohol. Llama foetuses are offered too and, in some cases, aborted human ones. There are also regular sacrifices of adult llamas, their hearts removed still beating, and their blood smeared around mine entrances in the hope that *El Tío*'s bloodlust will be satisfied. After this sacrifice, the rest of the animal is eaten in celebration.

## The challenge of syncretism

In this context, there are huge difficulties in presenting Christianity as an exclusive set of beliefs. There is a real belief in the power of *El Tío* and *La Pachamama*, and people don't generally recognise a contradiction in worshipping both them and God.

During our time here, we have seen the evangelical church in Potosí grow. However, it remains deeply divided by denominationalism. The miners themselves remain largely unreached, with very few coming to accept Jesus.

**Our mission challenge is to guide them through the religious noise, towards a truly biblical understanding of Jesus.**

The Christian miners that do exist are often blamed for accidents, or the mountain's declining yields, as they refuse to worship *El Tío*. Thankfully, levels of Christian persecution are not what they once were. But the spiritual oppression remains tangible, as you might expect in a place where the devil has been worshipped for 500 years.

Officially, the government defines Andean beliefs as culture, rather than religion, and with the active promotion of the Andean worldview in schools, these beliefs and practices are on the increase. Christian teachers are often forced to teach this view or take part in activities that clash with their own beliefs.

## God is at work!

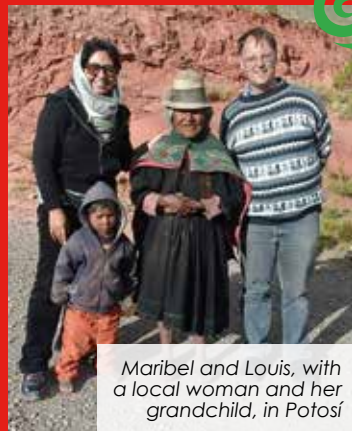
Nevertheless, despite the challenges, God is on the move in Potosí. Because of the high levels of spirituality in the culture, people are open to Christian beliefs in way that they might not be in some western cultures. So our mission challenge is to guide them through the religious noise, towards a truly biblical understanding of Jesus.

It's commonplace for people to see the Bible as just one of many truths on offer in the spiritual marketplace, turning to any-and-all deities for protection, prosperity and the like. Therefore, we see much of our mission as teaching people that Jesus is above *all* else and the Holy Spirit has real power to transform their lives and give them hope.

Steering people towards truth is crucial, but from our experience, it cannot be done without relationship. We can't expect people to hear the gospel and be transformed immediately. It's a process that we have to be prepared to journey through with them. And the hope is always that our way of life would serve as a testimony to the communities of God's grace and love.

## The Conquerors

In one ministry called The Conquerors, Maribel works alongside widows of miners, some of whom have been told that their husband's death was the punishment of *El Tío*. Being able to support these women through their grief, and share the hope-filled message of Jesus, is a joy and privilege.



Maribel and Louis, with a local woman and her grandchild, in Potosí

## Could you help bring the good news to Potosí?

Check out [latinlink.org.uk/Stride](http://latinlink.org.uk/Stride) or email [stride@latinlink.org.uk](mailto:stride@latinlink.org.uk)

# Brave beginnings

Fresh Striders just starting out



Katie  
Rowell

**Previous occupation** I worked for a Mental Health Recovery Service.

**Stride assignment (2 years)** Having finished initial language study, I'm now starting work with a church in San Mateo, Soacha, on the outskirts of Bogotá, Colombia. This church ministers to an economically deprived community, including many internally displaced people and Venezuelan refugees. I'll work particularly with women there, in mentoring, evangelism and discipleship.

**How do you feel?** I am thankful for so many answered prayers already since I arrived in Bogotá, and I'm looking forward to getting to know the church family and the community. At times, I worry that I won't have enough Spanish, and that the needs in San Mateo will be overwhelming.

**How can we pray?**

Please pray that I would trust God as I settle into San Mateo, and that I'd build strong relationships there. Also that God would guide me as to what ministries I should get involved with, how best to reach women in the community. And that He would use me, even as I go out in weakness.



Simon  
Howling

**Previous occupation** Moorlands Bible College Graduate

**Stride assignment (2 years)** I'll be working in the city of Trinidad in Bolivia, for the El Jireh Church. My main role will be helping to lead youth ministries and working alongside the teenage boys in discipleship and mentoring. I'll also be preaching and teaching within the church. Alongside this, I'll be working with a charity that has strong links to the church, helping with their youth football ministry.

**How do you feel?** Absolutely buzzing to get started! I've been to Bolivia before with Latin Link, and I couldn't be more thankful to God for providing a project that will challenge and develop me, while using my skills and passions for youth discipleship, preaching, and football, in a country that I love.

**How can we pray for you?** That I can build good relationships and have many opportunities to show and tell people about Jesus.



Edie  
Swain

**Current occupation** Final year medical student

**Stride assignment (medical elective)** I'm in Guatemala for 7 weeks during March and April, working at a medical clinic called Ami San Lucas. I work alongside the medical team, caring for patients as well as being involved in local health education.

**How did you feel before you arrived?** Excited and nervous! I was looking forward to serving the local people and seeing God at work in the community, but aware that this was going to be completely out of my comfort zone!

**How can we pray for you?** Please pray that I would be able to serve with humility, and be able to love the community well.



# A closer look: The flower carpets of Antigua



**It's Easter. And throughout the build-up to *Semana Santa* (Holy Week), the city of Antigua is bustling with thousands of tourists, arriving to witness a spectacular display. Suzanne Potter and Kate Moreno of Latin Link Guatemala explain:**

Antigua is a stunning city of fine colonial architecture and, in the weeks running up to Easter, its cobbled streets gradually become breath-taking demonstrations of vibrant colour and creativity, as groups of residents and businesses in each road club together to create carpets of flowers (*alfombras de flores*).

Made of dyed sawdust and sometimes decorated with flowers, vegetables, or fruit, most have religious images, others geometrical patterns; all are intricate and take ages to create. Streets are often closed to traffic and there's a real party atmosphere.

## **Palm Sunday parade**

Despite the cost, hard work and preparation, these carpets aren't just designed to be looked at. Throughout Lent, and especially on Palm Sunday, many huge processions take to the streets, carrying large 'floats' depicting various stages of the Easter story. And they will walk right over these beautiful creations!

Some floats can be enormous and heavy and require up to 100 people to carry them. Others may be smaller – like one depicting Mary, carried only by women,

some traversing the cobbles in stilettos, clutching handbags.

As the parades pass, along with crowds of people and marching bands, the beautiful, delicately-made arrangements are trampled to pieces and ruined.

**The practice originated with Mayans who made the carpets to welcome the spirits and then processed over the carpets to dispel the evil spirits. When the Catholic Spanish arrived, the practice continued, but the images changed.**

## **What does it mean?**

For a Christian, Easter in Guatemala can be a strange experience. Some people find these processions

very moving; visual reminders of Jesus' work on the cross. On the other hand, it has become for many a cultural experience, rather than an expression of faith.

Protestant Christians in Guatemala tend to stay away from the processions, and view them as an expression of the idolatry of the Catholic Church. However this aversion can go so far that many Protestant churches don't even mention Easter, to avoid any possible confusion with the Catholic celebrations! Meanwhile, others take the opportunity of the season to put on huge evangelistic events.

For me, the preparation of the carpets is the most poignant aspect, and makes me think of how palms were laid in preparation for Jesus' entry to Jerusalem. Regardless of your religious view of the processions, they are fascinating to watch and are a key cultural event in Guatemala.





# Speaking the unspeakable

## Aurora's story

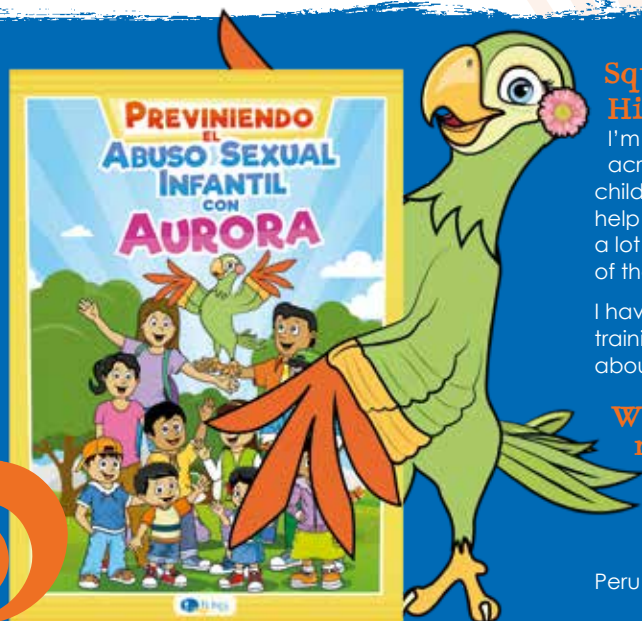
Statistics of child sex abuse in Latin America are alarming. In Peru, the rate is estimated to be around 20 per cent, with girls being the victims in three out of every four cases. Most often, the abuser is a family member or part of the close family circle.

Every day in the news, there is another awful story of abuse. In some ways, society has become

numb to it. Meanwhile the topic is rarely talked about in churches.

Sharon Jones, a Latin Link member coordinating the ministry of *Buena Tierra* (Good Soil) in Peru, really wants to see this change. 'We have to break the silence and stand up for those who are suffering', she says.

Their innovative solution is making a massive difference.



**Squawk! Squawk!**

**Hi everybody! My name is Aurora!**

I'm a cheerful parrot that flies here and there across Latin America and I talk to adults and children about what I see. Why? Because I want to help protect kids from child sex abuse. Sadly, I see a lot of it on my travels and I really want to be part of the solution to reducing this problem.

I have help from Sharon Jones, who coordinates training and helps me teach many grown-ups about what they can do to help.

**Would you like to know a bit about me?**

I was born in Peru, in an organisation called *Paz y Esperanza* (Peace and Hope), but I spent most of my early days in the jungle with Bernardo and Johanna Wenk, Latin Link Peru team members from Switzerland.

**"We see so many sad cases in the news and it was really comforting to be able to teach the children in the church how to react in dangerous situations when someone wants to hurt or touch them."**



### **Training changes things for good**

**We asked Sharon about the impact this project has had so far:**

As a team, we've trained over 2,500 people in ten cities across Peru and we recently launched an international version at the 'Expolit' exhibition in Miami, where I also delivered some training. The Aurora materials offer tools which are really effective. The

Now I am spreading my wings and flying all over Peru, and even to other places like Mexico, Honduras, Ecuador and Paraguay! I visit the coast, the mountains and the jungle in my efforts to educate adults on this difficult topic, mainly in churches and schools.

### **What tools do I use?**

We have a book filled with 17 lessons, giving children aged 4 to 12 the tools to protect themselves from abuse. We try to share this with as many adults as we can, so they can teach the children in their care, whether that's in their Sunday School, their neighbourhood, their school or their family. The lessons are dynamic and fun for the children, helping them to understand this difficult topic.

book includes information on the theory and statistics of abuse in Latin America, the factors that increase risk, and the steps needed to get help. It also provides clear instructions for teachers and activity sheets for the children. They can also obtain Aurora puppets and a digital resource pack with visual aids, Bible verses and a giant game.

Teachers have told me about tough situations they are facing and that it is such a relief for them to be able to approach this theme from a biblical perspective. They also love the practical applications through the lessons.

After participating in these lessons, some children have opened up for the first time about abusive situations they are in. Although the process of justice is not easy here in Peru, we can nevertheless show God's love and compassion to those who are suffering and that is so important.

To be honest, I often feel overwhelmed by this topic, but I've seen God at work and felt him strengthening me. I'm also very grateful for the six Peruvian volunteers who help with training. It's encouraging to see them grow as they teach others.

**"The content not only gave the kids tools for prevention so they are more alert, but it also challenged us and drove us to commit ourselves to work more in favour of protecting the children we work with. Thank you so much for sharing this valuable material."**



**"Many children were attentive and interested because, although it is a delicate topic, it is real and tangible."**



Training participants in the mountain village of Arin, near Cusco. Some travelled for over six hours to attend.

## **Your prayers are needed!**

**Recently Sharon has felt that there is a strong spiritual battle going on around this area.**

**PRAY** for Sharon and the team from Buena Tierra, delivering the training across Peru.

**PRAY** for protection for the teachers boldly introducing this topic in churches and schools.

**PRAY** for children at risk of abuse: ask God to use his church to help form healthy families.

**PRAY** for a better justice system in Peru: for prosecution to be faster and less open to corruption.



# When the words aren't there

## Adventures in a new language



**Meet Joanna McCree: the new Short Term Coordinator for Britain and Ireland. She recently visited Guatemala and Colombia for her orientation and, like many of the Step Team members she looks after, Joanna didn't have much Spanish...What could possibly go wrong?**

"But I don't speak any Spanish or Portuguese, is that ok?" This is a common question asked by potential Steppers. And it's a justifiable question to ask. We all know that feeling. You realise you've said something entirely wrong, but you're just not sure what it is... Or worse, you have to choose between enduring a pained silence, or digging around in your memory for some school Spanish that's tucked away, trying to converse with a slightly random vocabulary list: 'Fútbol', 'café', 'perro'...



*Oh no... What did I say this time?!*

At the annual debrief conference last year, for returning Steppers and Striders, conversation quickly turned to language mistakes. We all laughed at stories of mispronounced food orders, accidental insults, endless blank looks of confusion, and even an inadvertent proposal of marriage! There were dozens of them. Latin Link could publish a book of *Latin Language Mishaps*!

However, it seems these mishaps and mistakes form an important part of the short-term mission experience. You are vulnerable. The whole idea is that you'll be pushed out of your comfort zone, into full reliance on God. That's where the fun starts! Learning to communicate without a common language is just one part of that, as you can experience God working not only despite language barriers, but through them.

I recently spent time with a Swiss Step team in Guatemala, where Swiss German was the main

language, with bits of Spanish thrown in. I, speaking neither, found myself at a loss. During the first meal together with the team and our Guatemalan hosts, I frantically pointed at the glass in front of me. "Wasser" I said, with some pride. They laughed and clapped, the ice was broken.

From there we muddled through conversation, learning basic German and Spanish, and nervously laughing at potential jokes. Despite the language barriers, or perhaps because of them, I went away feeling encouraged and humbled by the realisation that God is not restricted by language, and that making an effort to communicate says a whole lot.

**God was there, where he always is, in the midst of community.**

Back at the debrief conference, teams shared how language barriers were broken down through cups of coffee, shared meals, and the universal language of football. There were relationships at the heart of every story. Whether that's children coming to the rescue to teach them the basics, or unplanned Portuguese lessons in a neighbour's kitchen. God was there, where he always is, in the midst of community.

So don't be put off by your lack of language skills. God isn't going to let that get in the way. Just as long as you don't make the mistake one Strider made, and ask if the contraception\* is in the cupboard, you'll be fine.

*\*They were looking for jam, in case you're wondering.*



*Find laughter in common interests*

**Interested in going on a Step team?**

There's still time to apply for Costa Rica or Brazil, Summer 2019. Deadline: 30 April 2019.

Get in touch! **0118 9577101** [step@latinlink.org.uk](mailto:step@latinlink.org.uk)  
More details: [latinlink.org.uk/Step](http://latinlink.org.uk/Step)



# Tribute to Dennis Smith

From the memories of Don Ford (former EUSA General Secretary), with contributions from other former colleagues



Dennis Smith was 27 when he went to Peru in 1954 to join the team of missionaries working with the Evangelical Union of South America (EUSA).

**'His leadership, twinned with his uncomplicated humility, touched the lives of many of us.'**

Bartow Wylie

He had become a Christian during his National Service in the RAF, after which he studied at Lebanon Bible College. Dennis then felt God calling him to Peru, having been deeply challenged by an article by Gertrude Montgomery (a EUSA missionary in Peru), asking 'Where are the missionary men?'

He was initially based in the Andahuaylas region, among small and growing Quechuan churches, alongside missionary Ken Case. When Ken married Frances and went to live in Cusco, Dennis joined them there. It was at the annual Conference that Dennis first met Brenda Chalker, a missionary working in Arequipa. Their friendship eventually led to marriage and together they worked in the Cusco area, alongside Dr David and Netta Milnes.

Close to the city centre in Arequipa, EUSA had the Colegio

*Internacional* (International School). The principal, Dr Lydia Sewell, was due to retire to the UK, so the mission was looking for a successor. The leadership team decided that Dennis was the man for the job!

He led the Colegio from 1965 and, under God, fulfilled a tremendous ministry over a number of years, transforming it into one of the leading secondary schools in Arequipa. He was an excellent headmaster and oversaw immense changes, including the construction of a completely new school building, from which the school provided a superb education for hundreds of Peruvian youngsters, who have gone on to make an excellent contribution to national life and progress.

During these years, Dennis and Brenda were also blessed with their own children, Carolyn and Jeremy. In the mid-1970s the family returned to the UK, where Dennis took over the leadership of the EUSA London Office from Colin Grant. It was a period of significant change in mission.

Dennis's gifts of wisdom and discernment were clear, as EUSA joined forces with other agencies (including the Andes Evangelical Mission and part of Regions Beyond Missionary Union), leading finally to the formation of Latin Link in 1991.

Dennis and Brenda retired soon after this and continued as active and well-loved members of St Paul's Church, Banbury for many years.

**'He was a gifted preacher and a humble man, who served the Lord with simplicity and integrity.'**

Nat Davies

Sadly, Dennis passed away on 8 September 2018. We give thanks and praise to God for the wholehearted commitment and wonderful example of Christian ministry that Dennis and Brenda have shown over so many years.

**'He thought big, both in terms of areas of God's world and the work we should be praying for. He believed that God was able to do abundantly more than we could ask or think.'**

Anne Jarvis





Latin Link

# Extra/Ordinary People?

## You are extraordinary!

When was the last time you took a long hard look at one of your fingerprints? If it's been a while, go on and have a look now.

What do you see? Something a bit...well...just plain old...ordinary? Look again. This time narrow your eyes and focus on those swirls and loops.

Isn't this 'ordinary' fingerprint something rather extraordinary? A one-off masterpiece, with the potential to leave a unique imprint on the world?

Our God is into transformation. In his hands our 'ordinary' becomes extraordinary. Moses' sheep-steering staff becomes a water-parting wonder. Fish and loaves: a bountiful banquet. Ordinary water: extraordinary wine.

From members in Latin America to office volunteers, and prayer and financial supporters, Latin Link is a movement of ordinary people who, with God's help, are changing lives in extraordinary ways. People just like you!

### Iyanu Joseph

**Ordinary passions: Serving God and helping people**



I am going to study International Development and Economics at University but for now, I work in retail. I love volunteering in the office, where

I am helping put together a photo bank for the Communications team to use. And in the Summer I'll be going to Costa Rica with a Step Team! I'm excited to see what God can do through me!

### Terry Lockyer

**Ordinary passions: People, problem solving and teamwork**



I love the way God has moved me from a technical background (working in electro-mechanical engineering), via ten years

as a mission worker in Brazil, to now serving him in a way I never thought I would, as Head of Programmes for Latin Link.



### Ruth Turner

**Ordinary passions: People, books and food.**

One of the things I really love to do is help Peruvian mission workers, coming back from abroad, to process their experiences. We often prepare some nice food and have good conversations. It's important time for them to rest and enjoy being with someone who understands.



## Kate Moreno

**Ordinary passions:** People, social justice and exploring.

God is really using my ordinary passions as a social worker in Guatemala. Together with amazing Guatemalan colleagues in the Oasis ministry, we aim to bring Christ-centred, trauma-focused care to this country and to restore and transform the lives of children affected by sexual trauma.

## John, Shirley, Beryl, Olwen and Rosie

Doing everything from making sandwiches to updating the database; from shredding to filing; and from prayer to providing hospitality for visitors. They and others (like Olwen's husband, DIY legend Lawrence!) help keep the Reading office running smoothly.



## Dave Stoker

**Ordinary passions:** Technology, coffee and photography.

I sit with, chat with and get alongside people, hearing their problems and their challenges and just being there to support and disciple them. I also use photography to try and show some of the things that the people of Peru are doing – the love that they have, and some of the beauty in their country.

## Kay Stoker

**Ordinary passions:** Being a mum, friendships and listening.

My desire to be a good listener has helped me when working with bereaved families in Peru who are dealing with a traumatic loss.

## We need you!

**Are you ordinary? Excellent! How might God use your 'ordinary' to change lives in extraordinary ways? (Remember, your imprint on the world is unique!)**

We need people who are willing to share stories, pray, fundraise, or just get creative about Latin American mission in their church or community. Whether that is making flapjacks, running a

half-marathon, talking to a youth group about your experience in mission, or experiencing mission in Latin America first hand.

If you would like to **PRAY**, to **GIVE**, to **GO**, to **FUNDRAISE**, or to **MOBILISE** others to get involved, we really would **LOVE** to hear from you!

Your 'ordinary' could make an extraordinary difference.

Email us on [info@latinlink.org.uk](mailto:info@latinlink.org.uk) and let's explore together!



# Inspire! gatherings coming soon!



Would you like to meet up with others passionate about Latin American mission? Keen to discover how God is changing lives in extraordinary ways through Latin Link? Want to be inspired to pray for God's kingdom to be built across Latin America and beyond? Then check out the Latin Link *Inspire!* gatherings and other events coming up in your area!

The year's theme is: **'Extra/Ordinary People?'** So however ordinary or extraordinary you might be, the good news is that everyone is welcome! Come if you are curious about exploring mission, keen to pray for mission, called to give to mission, or ready to go on mission!

## England and Wales

This year, instead of one big *Inspire!* England and Wales conference, we've planned smaller, local brunch gatherings. Come along to hear inspiring stories of transformation from members serving communities across Latin America, meet other mission-minded people and pray for Latin Link's work.

We kicked off in March with gatherings in Exeter and Eastbourne, and will be announcing other dates and locations soon, including in the Midlands and the North of England.

For more information, keep an eye on social media and the website [www.latinlink.org.uk/events](http://www.latinlink.org.uk/events) or give us a call on **0118 9577100**.

## Ireland

Saturday 27th April 2019 (10:00 – 16:00)  
Downshire Presbyterian Church, Victoria Road  
Carrickfergus BT38 7JE

### **Inspire! Brunch:** 10:00-12:30pm

An opportunity to eat together in a relaxed café atmosphere, chat to like-minded people, worship, and learn more about God's mission.

### **Inspire! Afternoon:** 1:30-4:00pm

A chance to hear from Latin Link members, including Rodolfo Rodas (Guatemala), Neil and Jenny Stewart (who served in Chile), and Ellen Cupples (returned

from Peru), as well as hearing from our members overseas, via the wonders of technology!

Visit the website to find all the details and let us know you're coming! [www.latinlink.org.uk/inspire-ireland-2019](http://www.latinlink.org.uk/inspire-ireland-2019)

## Scotland

Friday 3 - Sunday 5 May 2019, Pitlochry

### **Inspire! Scotland Conference**

Join us for an action-packed weekend in Pitlochry! Come for the whole weekend, or visit for a day or half day. All are welcome.

Spend time with people passionate about mission; hear real stories of hope and transformation from Louis and Maribel Woodley serving in Bolivia, and Andy and Brenda Parkins who served in Peru for over 30 years. Learn how God is using the ordinary passions of Latin Link mission workers to do extraordinary things in Latin America and beyond.

Check out the website to book your place!  
[www.latinlink.org.uk/inspire-scotland-2019](http://www.latinlink.org.uk/inspire-scotland-2019)



# What can I do?

## Meet the mobilisers: your Latin Link locals!

Here's the thing: Latin mission needs mobilisers. Movers and shakers, speakers and pray-ers, out'n'about-ers who love to ignite passion and inspire action. Mission-minded motivators who love helping people explore God's calling and develop their gifts to meet the need in God's big world.

Did you know that Latin Link has a team of mobilisers based in Scotland, Ireland and England? They are

available to chat with the curious, and to speak and represent Latin Link in churches, CUs, Bible colleges, youth events, mission fairs and festivals. They would love to connect with you in your locality!

New to Latin Link? Praying about going to serve in Latin America? Why not get in touch? Wherever you are in your journey, we are here to support and serve you.



**Esther Stansfield**  
**Head of Mobilisation**  
Local to: South West  
England  
E: [esthers@latinlink.org.uk](mailto:esthers@latinlink.org.uk)



**Jenny Brown**  
**South East England**  
Local to: Eastbourne  
E: [jennyb@latinlink.org.uk](mailto:jennyb@latinlink.org.uk)



**Mike Fernandez**  
**Scotland**  
Local to: Edinburgh  
E: [scotland@latinlink.org.uk](mailto:scotland@latinlink.org.uk)



**Jenny Stewart**  
**Ireland**  
Local to: Belfast  
E: [ireland@latinlink.org.uk](mailto:ireland@latinlink.org.uk)

## Could you help?

The team is small and their mission and geographical areas are HUGE. Could you join your Latin Link locals to mobilise people in your church/CU or home group to pray, give or go? Have you spent time on mission in Latin America? Could you share your story? Represent us at a local CU mission fair on a stand? Please contact Esther Stansfield or your local mobiliser for a chat!

## Latin Nights (or mornings/afternoons/evenings!)

Want to bring a taste of Latin America to everyday life? Long to inspire others to pray, give, or go on mission? Then this is for you!

The Latin Nights resource pack is brilliant, fun, free and simple. It's bursting with creative ideas including mini-films, games, quizzes, recipes, music and creative prayer ideas. There's even some mandatory llamas. Or are they alpacas?

Flexible to use with friends and family, a small group, your CU, or your whole church! From simply having some latin snacks and a chat over coffee, to showing a video, playing games, running quizzes and cooking up a latin storm for a full blown fundraiser. It's your call as to how loco you want to go!

Whatever you do – big or small – it'll be making a difference



through raising awareness, prayer, or support for the ministry of Latin Link. Thank you!

**For your free pack, email:**  
**[info@latinlink.org.uk](mailto:info@latinlink.org.uk)**



# Next stop: Latin America?

God leads us into some surprising places. Maybe places we never quite imagined being. We don't always know where we're going, but we do know who's taking us.

Photo: Don Harris

## Are you up for an adventure?

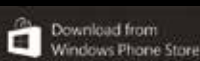
Whether it's sports ministry, student work, prison ministry, football outreach, or discipleship, there are opportunities for you to serve God in Latin America. We arrange placements of 6-24 months for individuals, couples or families, tailor-made to suit your skills and gifts.

Get in touch.  
Get involved.

W [latinlink.org.uk/stride](http://latinlink.org.uk/stride)  
E [stride@latinlink.org.uk](mailto:stride@latinlink.org.uk)  
T +44 (0) 118 9577101



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