



# On The Move

A migrant's journey (5-6)



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Spring Step Team 2020, Colombia

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## 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\\_20](http://issuu.com/latin-link/docs/latinfile_spring_20)



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# On the Move

## *Welcome to this Spring edition of Latinfile*



In every corner of our world, people are on the move; whether it's just moving town, crossing borders, or migrating continents. For some, it's an emergency exit from an unstable or dangerous situation, or a difficult move in search of a better life for their children. Even in 2020, when so many countries have experienced lockdowns and closed borders because of coronavirus, we still hear stories of migrants on the move, desperately searching for somewhere safe.

For other people, movement is a free choice; a chance to see new places or take on new opportunities. And for others still, it's a calling - a belief that God is moving them on to show his love and care for people somewhere new. There are countless reasons why people move, but what is clear is that we live in a time where migration affects almost everybody.

In this edition, we're exploring the reality of life on the move. In the opening pages, we meet Rebecca who, after fleeing the crisis in Venezuela, finds herself navigating a new life in Colombia (5-6). This real, vulnerable encounter offers a perspective on migration that many readers will never experience themselves, but one that is far too familiar in many parts of Latin America and beyond.

From the experience of one migrant to those serving them, we'll discover how students in Brazil are seeing God at work in cross-cultural interactions with refugees (7). And we'll hear how some Latin Link members have been getting 'on the move' in a different sense, to help raise precious funds for Latin Link's work (9).

In pages 16-17 we also reflect on the life-changing impact of following God's call to get on the move. 10 Steppers share their experience of life after Step, 25+ years on! And we'll also hear why one member, Rose Wade, decided to return to Guatemala after her short-term placement ended (12-13).

As we explore life on the move together, we encourage you to consider how you too can make a difference, whether that's by living life on the move, or supporting those who are. There are so many opportunities to pray, learn, give, mobilise others, and go! Are you ready to begin the journey?

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Esther Stansfield".

**Esther Stansfield**  
Head of Mobilisation



# On the move

## Migration is changing communities, cultures and lives.

**A huge 3.5% of the world's people now live in a different country to the one they were born in\*, and the United Nations expects this number to rise. While many are refugees fleeing violence, unstable countries or persecution, others cross borders to join their families, to study or work, or to gain better opportunities for their children.**

What does this have to do with us? For those of us looking to share God's love across cultures, migration can open doors.

We see individuals from 'unreached people groups' coming to countries with a strong Christian presence, where they can hear about Jesus for the first time. We see Christians migrating to countries which would be closed to formal mission workers, taking the gospel with them. God uses these situations to reach people who haven't had the chance to hear about him before.

Where people have made the tough decision to leave everything and move to a strange land for the sake of their families, Christians can be on hand to provide a welcome, friendship and help where we can.

### Latin America's migrant crisis

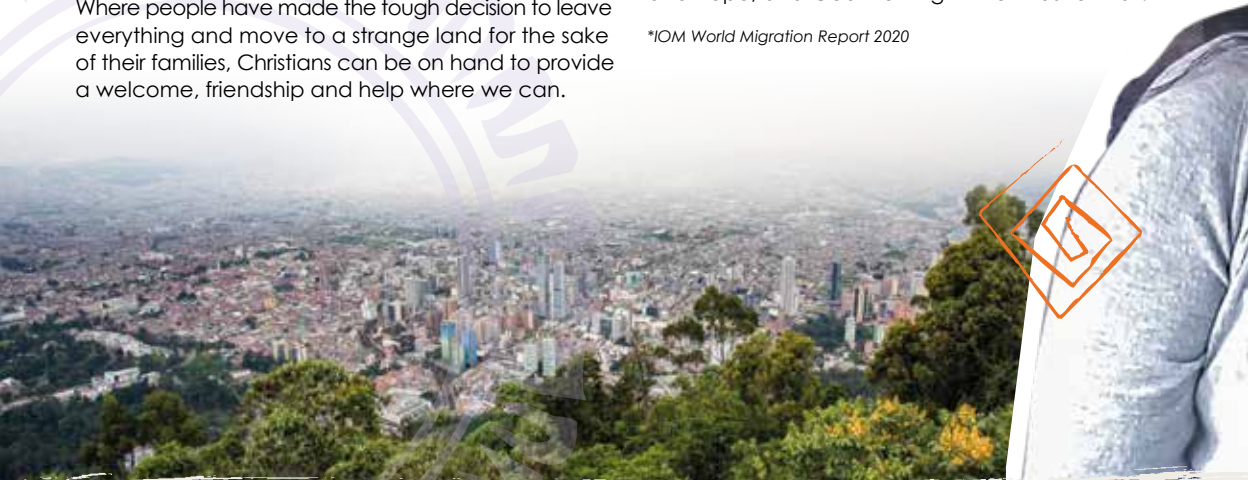
In Europe, we're probably most aware of the number of refugees fleeing Syria, but Latin America is dealing with a crisis on a similar scale: a huge exodus of people from Venezuela.

Since the economy began to collapse in 2016 and simple items like clothes, medicines and even food became increasingly unaffordable, an estimated 4.5 million people have fled Venezuela – over 15% of the population.

About 1.5 million of these have migrated to neighbouring Colombia, and the UN expects another million to follow them by the end of this year.

Suzanne Potter recently met **Rebecca**, a Venezuelan who moved to Colombia, and heard her story first hand. It's a personal story of hardship and hope, and God working in the midst of it all.

\*IOM World Migration Report 2020



# Rebecca's story

Suzanne Potter reports

There's a lady volunteering at the community *comedor* in San Nicolás, on the outskirts of Bogotá. She serves up lunch for the children who come to the clubs, and helps them with their homework. She clearly loves being around the kids and is bright and cheerful with them. Her name is Rebecca.

I heard about Rebecca from a recent Strider who worked here – Anisa Marsh. She told me: "Despite having experienced so many painful things, Rebecca comes to the *comedor* every single day, making everyone around her laugh with her endless humour."

And sure enough, here she is. She seems so integral to this community project that it's a



surprise to learn Rebecca has only lived here for five months. When the neighbourhood kids have all gone home, I ask if she'll tell me her story.

## Leaving a life

Born and raised in Venezuela, Rebecca and her husband ran thriving small businesses – she cooked school dinners and her husband repaired electrical items. But, as the economy began to crash in 2016, both their businesses seriously struggled. As the country became more unstable, life got harder, with everyday items becoming unaffordable and scarce.

Holding back tears, Rebecca tells me how, when her father died, the hospital sent his body back to her house – resources were so few that there

was nothing to bury him in. "It was hard," she tells me, with immense understatement.

**"It took a lot to make the decision to leave"**

But, like so many Venezuelans, Rebecca didn't want to leave her home and family. Her husband had permission to work in Colombia and decided to give it a try. When he got there, he was fortunate to find a job and a place to live, and encouraged Rebecca to join him with the children.

"It took a lot to make the decision to leave," she says. But after living for a month with barely any food and seeing her children getting ill, she finally felt she had no other choice. She would take her two youngest children, and leave the eldest with her mother.

Rebecca remembers trying to decide what to bring. "Only take the essentials," people told her, but she needed clothes for the



children, food for the journey... She attempted to pack their lives into a bag. She says she was lucky to be able to take the bus instead of walking miles to the border. Even so, the journey took three days.

Arriving in Colombia for the first time, Rebecca was homesick. She missed her wider family and everything familiar. But she felt she had made the right decision.



"I was so surprised by the price of food! Everything is so cheap here compared to Venezuela," she says. "We hadn't been able to afford a Coca-Cola for two years! We had only been eating beans and potatoes." At this point, her 10 year-old son suddenly interrupts: "Biscuits!" It had been unthinkable to buy biscuits in Venezuela.

### For the children

Rebecca talks with pride about her children doing well and enjoying school, and of finally being able to feed them well. But their life looks very different now. From having his own electronics business, her husband now travels for two or three hours to get to his job on a road construction project, where he turns the stop/go sign for ten hours a day.

**"We hadn't been able to afford a Coca-Cola for two years!"**

Rebecca hasn't found paid work yet. San Nicolás, where they have ended up, is a poor district on the outskirts of Bogotá, where people use drugs openly in the park – that didn't happen where they lived in Venezuela.

The homesickness hasn't worn off. But in everything, she's putting her children's needs first. "For me, I want to go back home, but it's more important to be able to feed my children."

### Discovering God's welcome

Being an immigrant can be hard. The huge number of people migrating from Venezuela has stirred up negative attitudes in parts of Colombia. Rebecca has experienced racism, and her son was bullied at first. But the family

found this *comedor* and church to be a welcoming place.

So how did she end up volunteering here? Two weeks after arriving in San Nicolás, a woman who passed Rebecca on the street offered her some children's clothes, and took her to the *comedor*. Rebecca enrolled her children in the project's homework clubs, sports and activities, and saw a place for herself there as a volunteer. While she's not at work, she's using her skills to make lunches for children again, and it feels good to give back to the community.

In Venezuela, Rebecca had attended church occasionally, but she says that since coming to Colombia and getting involved in this project, she has learned to trust God more and found a way to serve him.

### Refugees need refuge

"It's so sad – a country like Venezuela, with all its oil and resources – to see it how it is now is so sad! I hope in God that things will settle down there."

But Rebecca knows that may take a very long time. She longs to go back, but she's realistic. "I know I'm staying here," she says.

Thanks to the respect and care shown to her, Rebecca can provide for her children and has become a positive force in this poor community. But there are many other migrants who haven't found their feet, and are left without homes, jobs or support.

Latin Link members are working alongside local churches in Colombia to help create places of refuge for migrants through projects like the San Nicolás community *comedor*. But it's a huge challenge, and much more help is needed.

### Please pray

For the millions of people just like Rebecca, searching for safety, security and purpose as they step into the unknown – and that local churches will be ready to embrace them.



# A training ground for cross-cultural mission

Mission students from a Brazilian training college have found cross-cultural opportunities right on their doorsteps. They're working with migrants now, knowing they will soon be migrants too.

At the Evangelical Missions Centre (CEM) in Viçosa, Brazil, Latin Link's Phil and Jan Greenwood are training a new generation of Brazilian mission workers to serve God cross-culturally. The course has been evolving recently to recognise the increase in worldwide migration.

Brazil itself has seen a big influx of refugees in the last few years. UN figures from 2018 show 204,000 refugees, asylum seekers and displaced people in Brazil, three times as many as in 2016.



So, part of CEM's training now involves studies of migration movements and the mission opportunities that come with them. The course includes a six-week cross-cultural placement – and increasingly, the students are able to do this without even leaving Brazil. They're working with migrant and refugee communities on their doorsteps, and it's proving to be an eye-opening experience.

"Time and time again, we hear stories from students about the incredible encounters they've had, where God has brought empathy, healing and joy, despite cultural and language barriers," says Jan. "Individuals from both cultures are enriched by getting to know one another."

And there's another aspect to this as well. "Most of our students will go on to become immigrants in other

countries around the world," explains Phil. "So this experience gives them valuable insight into the challenges and opportunities of sharing God's love across cultures, and what it might be like to live as a migrant."

Here are some of the students' reflections:

"I enjoyed getting to know the history of the people I had the pleasure of meeting. As well as seeking solutions, I loved experiencing the connections between people and their stories."

"I enjoyed living cross-culturally, and being able to serve unreached Muslim peoples within Brazil. I was surprised by their initiative in adapting and learning about our country, but bringing their own culture and religion at the same time. For me, it confirmed God's call to work amongst Muslims in North Africa."

"I loved being able to contribute the physiotherapy knowledge and skills that I have, however basic. I saw myself as an instrument in God's hands to guide others."

**Phil and Jan, "By serving alongside migrants and refugees here, our students discover first-hand how God is at work in other cultures, his love for them, and the responsibility Christians have in providing care and support."**

**PRAY:** Please pray for CEM's mission students as they go on to serve God cross-culturally around the world.

**GO:** If you have a heart for migrant or refugee communities, get in touch with Latin Link to explore a Stride placement of your own. Call **0118 957 7112** or email **stride@latinlink.org.uk**.



# The church of medical students

**Santa Cruz, Bolivia has its own 'Brazil Town'. Thousands of young Brazilians come to study here every year. One church has made it their mission to give them a home from home.**

Santa Cruz is a unique city in Bolivia. Generally wealthy, with a large middle class, it boasts over a dozen universities. These attract thousands of international students, who come to get a good quality education while living cheaply.

It's especially popular with Brazilian medical students; the cost of living and the tuition fees are much lower in Bolivia than neighbouring Brazil.

These young medics study in Santa Cruz for six or seven years. It's a long time to be away from home, especially when you come from such a family-oriented culture.

## Santa Cruz's immigrant pastor

Pastor Neto knows something about this struggle. He's a Brazilian immigrant himself, who has lived in Bolivia for many years. Latin Link's Amanda Cunningham met him on a visit to Santa Cruz, and was fascinated to hear about his unique mission.

"Leaving home and starting somewhere new is such a hard thing to do," Neto told her.



He explained that these Brazilian medical students have to adapt to a new culture as well as having the extra challenge of operating and studying in Spanish – not their native language.

**"Starting somewhere new is such a hard thing to do."**

His church took up the challenge of welcoming, looking after and sharing God's love with these student migrants. Today, 90% of the congregation are students. Their motto is: "God sets the lonely in families" (Psalm 68:6), and that's the heart of their mission – to create a family for these young people, far from home.

The pastor pointed out that this is often the first taste of independence for these young Brazilians, so they are working out who they are, what values they want to live by, and how to cope without a family close by. The church wants to help with all of that.

## A mission for medical migrants

The church members reach out to the city's students through sports activities and street evangelism - in Brazilian Portuguese. They host small discipleship groups and offer marriage preparation counselling,

as plenty of students find partners during this time of their lives. But Amanda was impressed to learn that the students also take on a mission of their own.

Pastor Neto explained how twice a year, he takes a team of 20-25 medical students from the church to run clinics in isolated towns and villages in the Bolivian countryside around Santa Cruz. It's a much-needed service for families who haven't been able to see a doctor due to the distance or cost involved. And a great way to use the congregation's unique skills.



## Called to work with students?

"The pastors of this church have a huge task on their hands," says Amanda. "They would love support from people who have a passion for international students or leadership training."

If that's you, please get in touch! Contact us on **0118 957 7112** or [stride@latinlink.org.uk](mailto:stride@latinlink.org.uk)



# Swimsuits and hiking boots

At Latin Link, we love to encourage active, creative and fun ways to support Latin mission. We're so grateful for the supporters who have gone the extra mile for us – in some cases, literally.

As we think about people 'on the move' it seems only right that we tell you about a couple of very active fundraisers...



*The Brown Family, training for the trek!*

## Taking the long way home

After meeting on a Step team in 1992, Roland and Jenny Brown went on to serve with Latin Link in Peru for 10 years. With their silver wedding anniversary approaching, they plan to mark the occasion by walking the South Downs Way, from Winchester to their home in Eastbourne – a 100 mile trek!

Two of their children, Ben (14) and Katy (11), are hoping to complete the whole challenge alongside Roland and Jenny, which should take 10 days from start to finish.

"Since this will be quite a challenge, sponsoring Ben and Katy would be a big encouragement for them and us!" says Jenny.

They'll be raising money for Latin Link's short-term mission programmes - where it all began for them! They hope the support raised will enable other people to follow God's call.

Follow their progress and sponsor the kids at:  
[www.latinlink.org.uk/ben-and-katy-hike](http://www.latinlink.org.uk/ben-and-katy-hike)

## Sponsored swim... Piece of lake!

Later this year, Latin Link member Suzanne Potter will jump into Lake Atitlán, in Guatemala, and swim 20 kilometres to the other side over three days. Her route from Panajachel to San Pedro La Laguna is roughly two thirds the width of the English Channel!

Suzanne has been instrumental in getting mission workers 'on the move' to and from Guatemala. She says:

"I'll be raising money for Guatemalan members of Latin Link who cross oceans to serve God in other countries. For many of them, the task of raising support to serve in a country with a higher cost of living than their home country is a huge challenge, so I thought it appropriate to take on a huge challenge to support them!"

You can support Suzanne's mega swim here:  
[www.latinlink.org.uk/suzannesswim](http://www.latinlink.org.uk/suzannesswim)

## Looking for your next big challenge?

Why not test your limits and get 'on the move' to raise funds for Latin Link? We'd love to help you! Just visit [www.latinlink.org.uk/fundraise](http://www.latinlink.org.uk/fundraise) for fun ideas and to set up your own support-raising page.

**We know that many active fundraisers won't be possible until lockdowns and travel restrictions are lifted, so if you're looking for a more immediate way to fundraise, read about our indoor expeditions on page 15.**



# A window of opportunity

## Church planting in Puebla, Mexico

Amid all the turmoil in Mexico, there's a hunger for God. Latin Link's **Joel Gonzalez** and **Mayra Gomez** have been training up a team in Puebla, Mexico to plant the churches that people are looking for.

Puebla is one of Mexico's largest cities, bigger than Manchester, with a population of around four million. But there are very few evangelical Christians and churches here.

Until recently, Puebla was a relatively peaceful city; a nice place to live. But even here, crime rates are starting to rise, and we can feel the political instability and uncertainty that much of Mexico has been dealing with for some time.

**"People are realising that no government can really bring life"**

It's sad to see Puebla affected this way, but it has brought a window of opportunity. People are realising that no government can really bring life or solve all the problems facing society.

They are starting to wonder about faith again.

Pastors around us started saying that, for these hungry people to discover the hope and life there is in Jesus, the city would need many more places where newcomers to the faith could be nurtured and discipled. The message was becoming clear: Puebla needed more local churches.

18 months ago we started to feel that God was calling us to be part of this – to work at planting new churches. It was exciting and scary!

### **The team**

We became aware that a number of young couples around us were feeling the same stirrings...

But we knew we couldn't rush this. We invited them to meet up with us weekly for six months. We'd pray, study the Bible more deeply, and make sure we were on the same page.

Finally, with the blessing and support of their various church pastors, we now have a core team of three couples plus ourselves taking the first steps.

We've taught theology students at seminaries here for the past five years, so we have got to know many young Mexicans with a heart for God and a call to serve him. In the future, we'd love to get some of them involved too – this could be a great opportunity for them to gain experience of church planting so that, in God's time, they feel equipped to plant more churches across Mexico.



# "This area has 20,000 people but no church."



The Guatemala/Mexico team retreat in Puebla

## The neighbourhood

Our aim now is to plant a church in a lower middle-class area of Puebla which has 20,000 people but no evangelical church. We want to reach families from the neighbourhood, people from every different age group, and see the gospel's power of restoration on the community.

We are also aiming to reach out to university students. Puebla is a university city, with young people from all over Mexico coming to study here. We would love to see students coming to know Jesus and taking their faith back with them to their home states and into their careers. As young professionals they could influence Mexico's approach to issues like justice, education, ethics, and more.

## The first steps

We're desperate to see God bring real life and change to this community. But we're not just opening a new church straight away.

Experienced church planters tell us it's best to start off running Bible studies with people we already know in the neighbourhood. So we're just getting started, meeting up with some of our core team's colleagues, neighbours, classmates and friends to explore the Bible together.

There's little knowledge of the Bible here – the spiritual history in Puebla has involved a form of Roman Catholicism mixed together with indigenous gods and traditions. The people we've invited are all curious to find out what it really says in the Bible and open to hearing about our faith... It all starts from here!

## The help we have... and need

We've both learned a lot about doing church in different contexts and cultures through our time living in Cuba, Honduras, Spain, Scotland and now Mexico. But we still need help!

The Pastor of our local church, *Comunidad Cristiana de Puebla*, is being really supportive and helpful. We also get moral support from the Anglican Church of North America – somebody visits

twice a year to offer church planting advice and expertise. We couldn't do without our sending churches and supporters through Latin Link keeping us surrounded by prayer and encouragement.

**"Many pastors want help to plant churches now, in this window of opportunity."**

But we would really benefit from more volunteers. To have another person, couple or family to help us would be fantastic. We need more people with a bit of church planting experience, and we are going to need someone with pastoral skills to teach and visit Puebla's new believers. There's plenty of scope for a Stride placement here!

In fact, the whole country of Mexico needs church planters. 130 million people live here, and most of them don't have anybody nearby to tell them about Jesus. Many pastors are asking for people to help plant churches now, in this window of opportunity.

Please pray for us as we make a start here in Puebla.



Joel, Mayra and Joel Fernando

## Please Pray

- That we would remain in tune with God's plans and purpose for the people of Puebla as we start church planting.
- For our new Bible studies: pray for the right words to say to everybody to help them connect with God. Pray for patience and understanding of the different personalities, backgrounds and needs of those who come.
- It's great that several different churches are getting behind this church plant – please pray church unity would continue to be strong in the city.
- That more Christians would hear God's call to church planting in Mexico.



# Stride to Stay

After feeling called to mission many years ago, Rose Wade headed to Guatemala for a two-year Stride placement in 2018. Now, after three months at home, she's back in Guatemala, and this time as a Stay member. We chatted with Rose to find out what prompted her to extend her time in Latin America.

I had always felt a sense of calling to serve God with my life. I believe that mission is not something you 'do', but being missional is a way of living, wherever we are.

I worked for a number of years as a youth worker in Northern Ireland, and developed a strong heart for working with young people. I also had a particular desire to help people who don't have access to clean water or sanitation.

I was looking for a way to combine both of these things in service for God, something I didn't really think was possible. But through investigations with Latin Link, I was told about a Guatemalan Christian NGO called AMI San Lucas. They provide people with water and sanitation and were looking for someone to help develop their work with young people. I couldn't deny that God may have had me in mind for this job!

## What I did on Stride

AMI works in the area of San Juan La Laguna, Sololá, and its surrounding villages. Life can be hard for people here. Many struggle to provide for their family; there is a high rate of malnutrition, alcoholism, and in some areas people lack access to adequate sanitation and clean water. Where I work, the majority of the population are indigenous Maya, with Spanish being their second language.

AMI San Lucas is all about integral mission, with a focus on health. As a Strider, I was involved in developing a leadership programme for young people from eight different communities. It was amazing to see these indigenous young people



develop in their confidence and leadership skills, becoming brave enough to run activities. I was involved in the local church's youth work at the same time.

On the sanitation side, I got involved in AML's home assessments and providing families with toilets and water filters.

### Why I'm staying on

When I applied for Stride, I asked for a two-year placement because I wanted to see if long term cross-cultural mission was feasible for me. I didn't have a clear intention of staying longer, but by the end of my placement, I felt a definite call to stay. It took several discussions and a bit of time and prayer to work it out, though.

**I felt a definite call to stay. It took several discussions and a bit of time and prayer to work it out.**

One reason to stay longer was a sense of not being finished yet. I want to see AML San Lucas realise their vision for the community, but by stepping away after my placement ended, there would have been a strain on their resources, with no-one to carry on the youth work aspect.

So one of my main aims in returning is to make sure the work I've been involved in is sustainable. We agreed that if I came back, AML would look to employ someone local who I could train up to carry on the work with the young people. I'm happy to say, that's exactly what I'm doing in Guatemala right now.

### What I've learned

This whole experience has taught me to be flexible and trust God! Things don't always work out the way we expected, but we have a good God who is there for us and protects us. It's been a huge lesson in trusting God, his goodness and plans.

I'm also really grateful to all the people who have supported and enabled me to go – you're a big part of this mission as well, and I think of you often!

### Called to use your skills?

If, like Rose, you have a particular passion that you want to explore in the context of cross-cultural mission, a Stride placement could be the right place to begin. Latin Link will help to find projects suited to your experience and skills, and support you throughout your placement.

Find out more: [latinlink.org.uk/stride](https://latinlink.org.uk/stride) or pick our brains on **0118 957 7112** or [stride@latinlink.org.uk](mailto:stride@latinlink.org.uk)



# What is Incoming Mission?



At Latin Link, we don't just *send* workers to Latin America. We also *receive* them. Mission is multi-directional, with all sides benefitting from cross-cultural interactions and support.

**Simone Lockyer knows a thing or two about this. As Latin Link's Incoming Mission Coordinator, Simone is responsible for looking after Latin American mission workers serving here in the UK. And being Brazilian herself, she can relate to the trials and opportunities posed by coming to this side of the world.**

**Here's Simone to talk about why she believes Incoming Mission is so crucial for UK churches.**

For 12 years from 2001, I served with Latin Link in Brazil, together with my husband Terry. We were both full-time teachers at theological seminaries in Anápolis, Central Brazil and Curitiba in the South. We had the honour of preparing hundreds of students for a lifetime of mission and ministry. Much of our emphasis there was in forming a theology of social care - helping the students to look outwards and think about active ways to support the poor and marginalised in their communities. It's not that they weren't doing this already, but their theological practice was much more geared towards telling people about Jesus' love, which is good, rather than showing love in practical ways.

Fast-forward to 2013, and we found ourselves back in England. Even Terry, born and raised in Britain, took a lot of time to adjust back to his 'home culture'. Church, theology and evangelism all looked very different on this side of the world.

In the UK, churches were very good at social action. There were countless community projects, charities and foundations set up for people with all kinds of needs. However, there appeared to be a lack of

'spoken' evangelism - an emphasis on speaking to people about the importance of Jesus beyond their immediate needs.

For Latin Americans, however, the openness in talking to people about faith is something that comes very naturally. In many evangelical, Latin churches there is such a strong sense of the Holy Spirit being alive and at work in all things - it's something that must be shared.

For me, these contrasting approaches highlight more than ever the need for cross-cultural mission. What one culture lacks, the other makes up for. And it really does work both ways!

Now, in my role as Incoming Mission Coordinator I'm able to draw on that understanding, and on my experience as a mission worker in another country, to encourage and support mission workers arriving in the UK. Whether it's sorting out visas, providing pastoral and practical advice, or finding new placement churches for prospective mission workers, I'm able to do it all with the firm belief that there really is a need for Latin Americans here; they can make a substantial impact on the communities they serve.

With over 100 years of mission in Latin America, Latin Link has gained a good grounding in, and understanding of, both cultures. We're in a privileged position to be able to send and receive mission workers in a way that's culturally appropriate, genuinely loving, and effective in sharing the gospel. It's exciting to be a part of it!



Incoming Mission members' annual retreat

If your church wants a fresh perspective on its local mission, why not consider receiving a Latin American mission worker and seeing the impact for yourself?

Chat it through with Simone on **0118 957 7100** or **[simonel@latinlink.org.uk](mailto:simonel@latinlink.org.uk)**

# Make your move

Loving your global neighbours while the world is in lockdown

We're living in uncertain times. With coronavirus COVID-19 affecting life in so many ways, and hundreds of countries experiencing lockdowns among other strict measures, it's easy to feel disconnected and helpless.

In many parts of Latin America, the impact has been severe. Fragile health systems and lack of social support have left many people in desperation. Unable to work due to lock downs,

thousands are unable to afford food and basic bills. Now more than ever, it's important that we look outside our four walls and connect with our global neighbours around the world.

At Latin Link, we want to help you reach out through prayer and action. Here's how you can make a move:



## Global Sofa: pray for your global neighbours. From their sofa, to yours!

#GlobalSofa connects Christians in Britain and Ireland with their global neighbours in prayer. We're producing a series of video interview with Latin Link mission

workers serving in Latin America. Each video contains information about what's happening where they are - giving a first-hand insight into life in their culture, and prayer needs for that country. They're a great tool for inspiring and informing our prayers.

As more and more churches and home groups hold gatherings online, we'd love to encourage you to include a 'global mission' segment; a time dedicated to praying for our world. **Our Global Sofa interviews are an easy to use resource to help your church connect with its worldwide community.**

**Find the videos at [latinlink.org.uk/global-sofa](https://latinlink.org.uk/global-sofa) and share them widely**

## Indoor Expeditions: get active for your global family. Small steps, BIG impact!

Throughout this period of uncertainty, Latin Link mission workers are still finding ways to show God's love to the communities they serve, many of which have been hit badly by the impact of COVID-19. Supporting Venezuelan migrants in Colombia, who face the option of rough sleeping or returning to the political instability of Venezuela. Ministering to street children in Brazil, who don't have the luxury of a home to be 'locked down' in. All their work is crucial, and completely dependent on the generous support of donors.

And that's where indoor expeditions come in...

**The idea is simple; get sponsored to walk, run, or climb the distance of a famous Latin American landmark... but do it around your house and garden!**



You could scale the summit of Machu Picchu on your staircase; walk around Lake Atitlan by trekking around your kitchen table; climb up the tallest volcano by venturing up that slope in your garden. Whatever you're able to do, indoor expeditions are a chance to get active for your global family. You may be confined by four walls, but your spirit of adventure doesn't have to be contained!

Do it on your own, with your family, your life group or church, or find someone to race with. Let's have some fun getting fit while raising precious funds for Latin Link!

**For more inspiration and information, visit [latinlink.org.uk/indoor-expeditions](https://latinlink.org.uk/indoor-expeditions)**



# Stepping stones

## Where are they now?

**How long does a Step team last? Three weeks? Four months? What's the point of such a short trip?**

For us, a huge part of short-term mission is the powerful effect it can have on the faith and lives of the Steppers themselves. We've been hearing from people who went on a Step team 25 years ago (or more), and it turns out that Step lasts a lifetime.

**Nick:** Step in Peru 1987, Argentina 1989, and Nicaragua 1995

**Where is he now?** Leads the Operation Christmas Child shoebox project at Samaritan's Purse

*"Step gave me my first opportunities to learn to lead other Christian young people and influence their involvement in world mission. This directly led to me working in mission mobilisation, first on staff with Latin Link, then at Redcliffe (mission training) College, then at OMF International and now at Samaritan's Purse."*

**John:** Step in Brazil 1988 and again in 1989

**Where is he now?** Vicar in Chesham

*"I came to personal faith in Christ on my first Step team, blown away by the faith and love of the team and the Brazilian believers that I met. My second visit gave me an opportunity to exercise leadership gifts, and perhaps sowed the seeds of God's call into a lifetime of ministry, including three years in Brazil."*

**Emma:** Step in Bolivia/ Argentina 1990

**Where is she now?** NGO work in Lilongwe, Malawi

*"I already had an idea that I would like to work overseas and Step helped confirm that. It was also a time to strengthen my own faith as my first time away from the family home. After Step I returned to the UK and trained as a doctor. After some years, I left the UK with my husband (another ex-Stepper!) and lived in Mozambique, India, Lao PDR and then Malawi where we still work."*



**Tim:** Step in Bolivia 1989 and 1990

### Where is he now?

Local church leader, and dry stone waller

*"I met my wife Tess while in Oruro on Step. The experience helped us to understand life in other cultures, provided a different viewpoint from which to question church life in this country, and challenged us to try and live 'mission' wherever we were. This included years of youth groups and cross-cultural outreach in Luton. With our young family we went on to do Stride in La Encarnacion, Honduras in 2004-5."*

**Julie:** Step in Bolivia and Argentina 1990

### Where is she now?

Latin Link member in Bolivia – supporting prisoners, young offenders and their families

*"Step gave me a love for Bolivia and her people, friendships with people passionate about God, a hunger for knowing the whole Bible and its application in daily life. I'm still in Bolivia today!"*

**Gavin:** Step in Bolivia 1989 and 1990

### Where is he now?

Archdeacon of the Meon, Diocese of Portsmouth

*"Step gave me a lifelong commitment to mission and the world church. I was a Latin Link Trustee for 12 years, and a*

*Governor of London School of Theology for nine. In my church leadership role now, I seek to promote an ecumenical and international church perspective that is rooted in the lessons I learned through Step."*

**Katie:** Step in Bolivia, 1990

### Where is she now?

Pharmacist in Edinburgh

*"Step had a significant impact on my personal relationship with God. I saw the complete reliance Brazilian Christians had on God and the sacrificial love they would go to, to bless others. In extreme poverty, I remember one woman offering us her last bit of coffee. I now work in the NHS and I have volunteered for various organisations working with the poor and vulnerable. My experience in Brazil has never left me, their approach to life has always inspired me."*

**Tim:** Step in Ecuador

### Where is he now?

Anglican church curate

*"I am soon to be a vicar, and my ideal for how church should work has been massively shaped by my experiences on Step. I think churches are most effective – and happiest – when they are geographically close congregations, finding friendship, trust and purpose through very regular shared worship. That was my Step experience in a nutshell."*

**Clare:** Step in Bolivia 1990

### Where is she now?

Adventure travel company in Cuba

*"I did Step immediately after graduating. I was supposed to train as a Chartered Surveyor, but knew I didn't really want to do that. After going to Bolivia on Step, I was sure that I wanted to work in international development, and that's shaped the course of my life! I got a job at Christian Aid and then worked for other NGOs. We've spent much of our lives living in different parts of Africa and now Cuba, always involved with the local church."*



**Paul:** Step in Bolivia 1992

### Where is he now?

Church pastor and Latin Link's Theological Consultant

*"My love of Latin America began as a Stepper. I ended up working for 10 years in Argentina. I have spoken and written widely on Latin America and its church. Latin American theology has deeply affected my own theology and I still use its methods in my teaching."*

## This is why we still believe in 'short term mission'. It's not for the short-term!

We love giving young (and older) Christians the opportunity to change things and be changed in the process; to challenge their perspectives; to find their faith and get rooted in it for life. The world needs people like that.

What might God do in your life, or the life of someone you know, through Step? Visit [latinlink.org.uk/step](http://latinlink.org.uk/step) to find out how to join a team or build one of your own. But beware – it could change everything!



# What can I do?



## On The Move

If you're looking to learn more about Latin Link's 'On the Move' theme, our Inspire! gatherings are the perfect place to be. They provide a space to meet other people who are interested in mission, to hear powerful testimonies from Latin Link members serving around the world, and to pray for all that God is doing. Special emphasis will be given to the topic of global migration, looking at what Latin Link is doing and how we can all play a part.

Throughout the year, we'll be hosting a series of regional gatherings up and down the UK, including one in Scotland, Northern Ireland, the North West of England and Surrey.

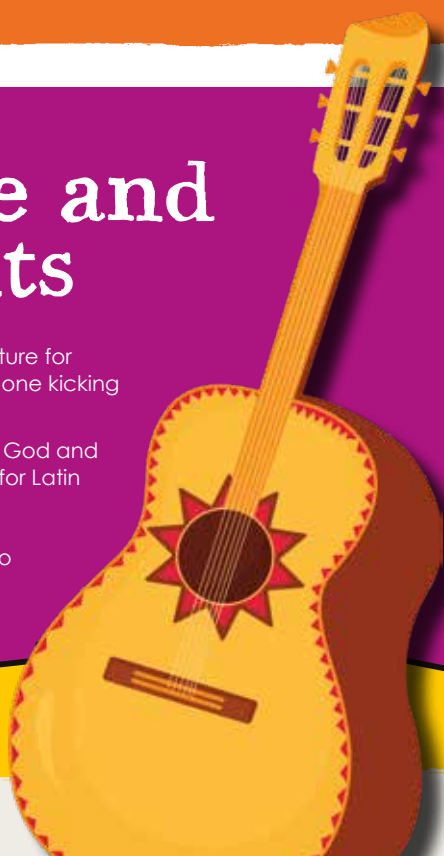
**Please visit [www.latinlink.org.uk/events](http://www.latinlink.org.uk/events) for all the latest information!**

## Spanish Praise and Worship Nights

Spanish Praise and Worship Nights are now a regular feature for Latin Link in Northern Ireland and Scotland, with another one kicking off in Exeter very soon!

These evenings provide a special place to come before God and worship his name in Spanish. There's usually time to pray for Latin American mission, and a chance to hear a short talk.

For details about all these events and more, head over to [www.latinlink.org.uk/events](http://www.latinlink.org.uk/events) or follow us on social media.





# Meet Amelia:

## Your new South West mobiliser!

In 2016, Amelia joined a Step team to Peru and Bolivia, and now she's mobilising churches for mission, in her local area.

### Why did you get involved in this?

I noticed that mission in Latin America is sometimes overlooked in Christian circles; having had such an amazing experience on Step, plus a passion for Hispanic culture, I wanted to help others see the great opportunity we have!

### Is anything planned?

We're about to have our first ever South-West Spanish Worship Night! We don't have a date just yet, but it will likely happen this autumn in Exeter. Last year, we hosted a Latin Link information brunch, which went really well, so that may happen again at some point soon. Stay tuned...

### Why should people come along to the Spanish worship night?

In my experience, worshipping in another language is a really great reminder that our Christian family is global, even if your Spanish only extends to "hola". It's also a great way to get into contact with other people who are passionate about Latin American mission, and to pray over what God is doing there - so exciting!

**If you feel called to mobilise Christians in your local area for mission, follow Amelia's lead and get in touch – we'd love to have you on board!**

Contact our Head of Mobilisation, Esther Stansfield, to start the conversation: [esthers@latinlink.org.uk](mailto:esthers@latinlink.org.uk)

## Pressing on in uncertain times

Coronavirus COVID-19 is affecting all areas of life, and people all around the world are feeling the impact. At Latin Link Britain and Ireland, all staff are now working remotely, and planned events have been postponed until further notice.

We are taking precautions to ensure the safety of members working in Latin America; some short-term members have now been advised to return to sending countries. But, as with other mission agencies, our work does not stop during this time, it just has to adapt.

Our members are a tangible expression of God's love in many different parts of Latin America, often in communities that have less health and social support. We want to ensure we can resource, support and enable them to do the work God has called them to, however possible.

**PRAY** | Please do pray for us as we navigate these challenges. Where there is fear and uncertainty, Latin Link members come alongside with the good news of salvation and share how Jesus is 'God with us'. Our work doesn't stop in difficult times, it is even more important.

**GIVE** | Thank you for your faithful support. Anything extra you can give at this time will make a big difference.

[www.latinlink.org.uk/donate](http://www.latinlink.org.uk/donate)

**We will keep our website and social media updated, but if you have any questions please call us on 0118 957 7100.**

Thank you for partnering with us.

**Neil Brighton**, Team Leader for Britain and Ireland

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