

Autumn 2020

# Latinfile

THE MAGAZINE OF CONTEMPORARY LATIN MISSION



## Stories of Hope



**Latin Link**  
COMMUNITY WITH A CALLING

**Responding to COVID-19**



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## WHAT IS LATIN LINK?

Latin Link works in partnership with churches to send and receive individuals, families and teams, to or from Latin America, to share God's love and hope. We do this through three programmes: Step, Stride, and Stay. You can read all about these programmes and how to get involved at [latinlink.org.uk/go-with-us](https://latinlink.org.uk/go-with-us).

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# A STORY OF TRAGEDY AND A STORY OF HOPE



**Latin America has been hit hard by the coronavirus pandemic. So many people already lacked reliable access to healthcare or a salary – a health crisis and a shutdown of informal work has been a disaster for millions.**

Amongst the news coverage, you may have seen some heartbreaking stories. Stories of families waving white flags outside their homes to inform neighbours that they have no food; stories of overcrowded hospitals turning people away; stories of mass graves in the Amazon; stories of migrants making life-threatening journeys across borders. And it's still going on.

But... in the midst of tragedy, another story is being written too. It's the story of God's people, compelled into action, showing love, care and bringing forth hope from the rubble.

In this story of hope, specialist teachers are ensuring children with learning difficulties don't drop out of school during lockdown (4). Determined volunteers are delivering crucial food and hygiene supplies to prisoners and their families (12). Bereavement

counsellors are using their training to support communities that have been torn apart by the virus (14).

This is a story of the hope that is found in and through Jesus, our living hope. As Latin Link, we've not only witnessed the Latin American church writing this story, but we've been able to step into it and play a part; both through the faith and determination of our members there, and the heartening efforts of our supporters here - who've literally gone the extra mile to raise funds for devastated Latin American communities (10).

So, as you read the story being told through this edition of *Latinfile*, we invite you to think about your own role in it. How can you, being inspired by the work of countless Christians across Latin America, be a bringer of hope in these difficult times? In the final pages, we explore the various ways we can all step into the story (16).

*"In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade."* 1 Peter 1:3-6

*Esther Stansfield*

Esther Stansfield  
Head of Mobilisation



# Letting Livni learn

Keeping specialist education going through Ecuador's lockdown

Livni is a friendly nine year-old girl living with her parents and brother in Santo Domingo de los Tsáchilas, Ecuador, just below the Andes mountains. Simply going to school has always been a huge challenge for Livni - she has Down's syndrome and suffers a lot with chest infections.

Against the odds, she has managed to find a place in education through a Christian project called *Habilidades para la Vida* (Skills for Life). But just as Livni started to thrive there, the project was closed by the coronavirus lockdown.

It could have been the end for Livni's prospects. But the *Habilidades* team were determined not to let her fall off the radar.

## A GLARING NEED IN SANTO DOMINGO

Staying in school for any length of time is not a given for children in Ecuador. Nearly 70% of children live in poverty, and face difficulties accessing or staying in

education. It's even harder for a child with a learning disability like Livni - the specialist provision needed simply isn't there.

Santo Domingo has half a million inhabitants but only one specialist school. A mission worker called Jill Ball - an experienced special education teacher - set up *Habilidades para la Vida* in response. Latin Link's Katy Griggs has been involved in the project for many years.

"The project started off in Jill's house, with just three children and a couple of volunteer helpers," Katy explains. "The vision was an educational project for children with learning disabilities associated with conditions like Down's syndrome, cerebral palsy and autism, with the aim of enabling them to be included in mainstream education in the future. The students learn literacy and numeracy, PE and art, but also social skills and practical things like how to shop and cook."

*Habilidades* had tapped into a real need, and it grew significantly. By 2014, there were three classes coming every morning, and the project moved to share premises with a Christian school in the centre of town.

## LIVNI'S JOURNEY TO CONFIDENCE

"Livni's mum Jessica heard about us and signed up Livni when she was six," says Katy. "But when Livni first started with us, Jessica found it hard to motivate her to come along. It was only when her little brother Lucas started attending the Christian school that Livni really found her confidence - she is very attached to him and loves coming along to school with him!"

"It's really helped Livni with relating to other children"

"Her mother says that, since getting more involved, Livni 'es mas

*despierta intelectualmente*', which literally means she is 'more awake intellectually'. The project has really helped Livni with socialising and relating to other children - she's always talking about her school friend Lizzi in particular."

In March, Livni, Lucas and Jessica all really enjoyed Katy's church's holiday club. Jessica, who has found it hard to attend regular church services recently, loved the Bible sessions for adults.

## AND THEN... LOCKDOWN

Then, of course, everything changed. In Ecuador, lockdown started in the middle of March. The crisis hit the family hard. Livni's routine was gone. Her father was laid off from his job as a taxi dispatcher, and could only work for tips. The family's ability to pay for school, rent and even food was threatened. In August, Livni's grandma died from Covid-19.

Ecuador's state of emergency was extended, and there was no prospect of schools and projects being allowed to open again in the near future. What could the team do for Livni and the other children and families who needed the project so much?

## WOULD IT WORK ONLINE?

"We knew this would be a huge challenge for the project, but we couldn't lose touch with those children," says Katy. "We had to try adapting what we did. The parents have phones, so in April, we started a WhatsApp group to support them, sending them videos of activities they could do with

the kids. At the start of June, we started providing one-to-one teaching for some of the children, via four half-hour video calls each week.

"We weren't sure how well this would work, but in fact there have been some benefits for Livni.

"She actually concentrates better in this setting"

"We've noticed that she is more focussed and actually concentrates better in this setting. Her mum says the calls have been a great help, and amazingly, Livni has not missed any video classes, whereas she used to miss a lot of time at the project with chest infections." It's been a hard time for Livni to navigate. But God's people are writing a story of hope here. While the family finances are so precarious, a church with strong links to the project has been providing food parcels. And

*Habilidades* found a sponsor to cover Livni's school fees to make sure she doesn't drop out of the project just when she's doing so well. For now, she can continue to learn online - and soon, they hope, skip off back to school with her brother.

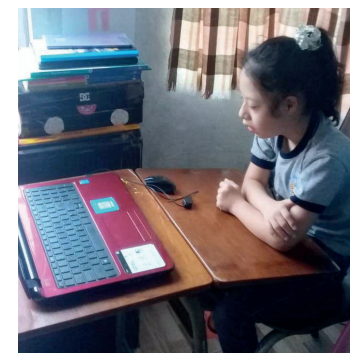
Katy and the *Habilidades* team have always sought to reflect God's faithfulness, love and hope to Santo's families and children in need. This year has challenged them to do that with more determination than ever.



## Please pray

- Pray that Livni will continue to learn and thrive through *Habilidades para la Vida*.
- Pray for Katy, and for the project as it faces its own financial challenges due to the pandemic.

"When Lucas started attending... Livni really found her confidence"



"But God's people are writing a story of hope here."



# Cultivating Hope in Guatemala



Covid-19 has increased the risks for children living in rural Guatemala. Many will lose their education and be further exposed to domestic violence.

It's a reality that much of the developing world has experienced this year, but projects like *Educando Para la Vida* (Education for Life) are doing everything they can to be a positive influence and bring hope to families.



Latin Link member Rodolfo Rodas is director and founder of *Educando Para la Vida*. With its team of volunteers, the project is adapting to the challenges. It's providing creative new initiatives to accompany families through this crisis and help at-risk children and young people remain in education.

Rodolfo shares: "Throughout lockdown, we've witnessed the intense strain that coronavirus restrictions have had on the families we support.

"Because schools have been unable to open, the children have gone months without access to proper education. In Guatemala, it's unlikely that schools will be able to reopen until next year, so we face the difficult challenge of keeping children engaged and motivated not to drop out of education.

"Many parents have lost work or been suspended from their jobs. Not only does this create a huge financial strain, but it means more and more families are having to learn to be together at home."

A devastating impact of lockdown in Guatemala has been an increase in domestic abuse rates. Financial pressure, fear, grief, and living in confined quarters have all contributed. Rodolfo says, "The uncertainty of life is creating a lot of anxiety; both about health and financial insecurity. And among many families this has led to a sense of disenchantment, discontentment and discouragement."

## ADAPTING AND RESPONDING

The team at *Educando* devised a plan. Recognising some of their community's key needs, they created three unique streams of support: The Alternative School at Home, School for Parents, and a new radio broadcast called *Educating Families*.



The School at Home provides educational material for children and young people, through a range of virtual teaching methods. "We thank God that around 80 families have been given support. More than 100 children, directly and indirectly, continue to receive classes from Monday to Friday in their own homes, with guidance from the volunteers."

For parents here, homeschooling is a completely new experience. "We created the School for Parents to equip them to overcome the challenges at home. Each week, around 25 families connect on Zoom or WhatsApp," Rodolfo explains. "This has not been easy, not everyone has access to the internet. Families make an extraordinary effort to pay for an internet card each week, but for those that do not have the technology, we invite them safely into *Educando*'s building, where they can pick up teaching guides and instructions for the week ahead."

To reach more families, the *Educando* team created a new weekly radio broadcast. "Educating Families is aimed particularly at parents and provides helpful advice on topics such as mental health, emotional wellbeing, and parenting responsibly. It teaches them how to support their children lovingly, and how to avoid domestic violence," says Rodolfo. "All our teaching is founded on biblical texts. We try to show families that the Bible is the source of strength, hope and direction for their lives."

## SOWING SEEDS OF HOPE

As well as the school support and radio broadcast, the team implemented another project that's been incredibly positive and transformational: *Seeds of Hope*.

*Seeds of Hope* is a project that teaches families about sustainability. It invites children and parents to convert small areas of earth outside their home into their very own vegetable garden! The team provides the families with the practical knowledge, tools and seeds to get started.

*"the project is cultivating hope in unexpected ways."*

For a community which is experiencing huge economic disturbances due to the lockdown, being given a way of growing their own food is a lifeline. And for many of the children, it's an



important life lesson in eating and living sustainably. But aside from providing food and offering life skills, the project is cultivating hope in other unexpected ways.

"It is extraordinary to see that *Seeds of Hope* not only produces a sustainable food source that can be shared between families, but it has also been producing harmony," Rodolfo shares.

"It has brought reconciliation within families. It has provided an opportunity in which children and parents can work together, learn together, and reap the fruit of their sowing together. We're seeing it strengthen family unity, which is something that has been under great strain since the beginning of this pandemic."

One of the mothers in the project says: "Seeds of Hope has supported me in learning these life skills, and so I am very grateful



to God...  
I hope that we will continue working with this and that it will be able to help even more families."

For many children in Guatemala, the challenges associated with lockdown won't go away any time soon. In a country that already has high numbers of children without access to proper education, and living in turbulent family homes, lockdown has only fuelled existing concerns. But thanks to projects like *Educando Para la Vida*, families are learning a new way - a sustainable way.



*Let's pray with Rodolfo and the team*

- Please pray that the children and young people in our community would stay motivated and enthusiastic about their education.
- Pray that their parents would commit to helping them study, rather than watching them abandon education like so many do.
- Pray that these young people would grow up to be professionals with a sense of dignity, of self-value, and with an awareness of God's love for them and plan for their lives.





# Indoor Expeditions: our community's response

AS COVID-19 BATTERED LATIN AMERICA, THE LATIN LINK COMMUNITY IN BRITAIN AND IRELAND CAME TOGETHER TO RAISE £30,000 FOR THE MOST VULNERABLE

## The challenge

As the first cases of coronavirus were reported in Latin America, Latin Link braced itself for the worst. Knowing the pre-existing challenges many Latin American communities face, the added devastation of a pandemic could be catastrophic.

Stories began flooding in from partners, friends, and projects connected with Latin Link, and many of our fears were confirmed. Families, communities, entire countries in urgent medical and economic need.

The situation seemed desperate and overwhelming, but Latin Link members were determined to do whatever they could. They began to rethink and re-structure their projects. They began to provide food parcels and medicine; they set up online support groups; they partnered with churches and local projects to provide shelter, clothing, and security. Wherever they could

serve, they did. But all this action came at a huge financial cost.

They needed support, and you responded in abundance.

When we launched **Indoor Expeditions**, we had no idea what to expect. We asked you, while locked-down at home, to engage both your imagination and your legs and trek the length of a famous Latin American trail – the 60km to Machu Picchu, the 46km to Colombia's Lost City, or 82km around the whole shore of Guatemala's Lake Atitlán (that's a lot of times around your garden pond!).

In the words of one Latin Link staff member, God gave the initiative wings from the off. Within days, we had Step teams and youth groups signed up; both long-term supporters, and people who had never heard of Latin Link all started walking, running, and cycling to provide crucial financial aid to Latin America.

In total, almost 100 people covered a combined distance of 6,269km, (which would just about get you to Latin America as the crow flies!) and through sponsorship, raised a jaw-dropping £30,000!

On behalf of all those in Latin America who are receiving support because of your efforts, we want to say a huge thank you to everyone who's taken part. Whether you've run, walked, sponsored, or prayed, your support has been inspiring.



## A few of the heroes

We simply don't have the space to mention everyone who got involved, but here are some highlights...

### GUATEMALA STEP TEAM

The 2019 Guatemala Spring Step team supported the work of a Guatemalan NGO called AMI San Lucas. During lockdown in Guatemala, AMI San Lucas has been serving vulnerable families around the community in a whole range of practical ways (read more on the next page).

Aware of the community's needs and how AMI San Lucas was responding, the nine Steppers decided they would each take on an Indoor Expedition!

"AMI San Lucas provides support to the people in their community who need it the most, and in a time like this they need all they help they can get. During our time in Guatemala, we stayed by the beautiful Lake Atitlán. So for our fundraiser, we decided to each walk the distance of the lake's shoreline – 82km!"

In May, they each began their week-long expeditions and between them raised an incredible £3,120.

### KILBRIDE YOUTH GROUP

Kilbride Presbyterian Church is a long-term supporter of Latin Link. When the youth group heard about the situation unfolding in Latin America, they all wanted to help.

*"Each of us faced our own personal challenge during our treks; poor weather, physical exhaustion, or getting lost amongst the hills! But along the way, we were all burdened with a call to support the church and raise money to help those most affected by Covid-19 in Latin America!"*



### PAUL TURNER

Latin Link's International Team Leader, Paul, is a seasoned runner. This year, he knew his running could change many lives.

"It became clear very early on just how big an impact Covid-19 was going to have on the lives of the most vulnerable across Latin America, so I jumped at the opportunity of taking part in an Expedition. I felt it was the least I could do.

"For 12 Saturdays between May and July, I set out at 6am to run 25km (16 miles) around the streets of Lima, Peru, making a total of 300km. Each of these three-hour runs gave me the opportunity to pray for those affected by the virus.

"In the beginning, I'd set a target of £1,500 and was overwhelmed by people's generosity. Ruth (my wife) walked 60km in the last week, and members of our sending church in Rasharkin, Northern Ireland, walked, ran and cycled the equivalent distance between Rasharkin and Lima, also adding funds. In the end, we raised over £4,000.

"Thank you so much to everyone who gave and took part. Together in God's strength we can make a difference."





## The impact

### EMERGENCY HELP FOR MIGRANTS LEFT HIGH AND DRY

With funds raised through Indoor Expeditions, Latin Link members have been able to support a number of Venezuelan migrants.

Because of the exceptionally high number of migrants living in Colombia (as featured in the last *Latinfile*), the government hasn't been in a position to support them during the pandemic. This has resulted in devastating scenes, with migrants forced to live and beg on the streets,

thousands attempting to walk on foot back to Venezuela, and many unable to access medical care.

In Colombia's capital, Bogotá, Latin Link's Ian Horne works with several projects that reach out to Venezuelan migrants, providing practical and spiritual support, including food parcels to those in need.

With Indoor Expedition funds, they have **reached more families** and made **the food parcels more nutritious**. They have also been

able to pay for some individuals' **emergency medical needs**.

Yesimar, a young Venezuelan mother living in Bogotá, is one person you've helped. She needed emergency surgery on her jaw to remove a tumour, but as a migrant she didn't qualify for state medical services and couldn't pay for the treatment with no income during lockdown. **The project used the funds raised to enable her to have the operation she needed.**



### SUPPLIES FOR INDIGENOUS FAMILIES WHO LOST THEIR INCOMES

AMI San Lucas is a community development project that works in rural towns and villages in the Sololá department of Guatemala. During the lockdown, many local families have struggled to earn a living and have been going without basic supplies.

Your Indoor Expeditions fundraising has helped to provide valuable **food parcels and hygiene kits to 66 families** connected to the project, which is around 264 individuals.

One family gratefully receiving this support are Petrolina, her husband, and five children. Petrolina's husband lost his job due to the lockdown. After some time, he managed to find a job selling firewood for one or two days a week, earning £3 a day – this simply couldn't cover the cost of living. Many times the parents went without food so the children could eat a little.

Thanks to the funds you raised, AMI San Lucas was able to provide the family with regular food supplies. Petrolina said: **"I am truly thankful to you for the support you have given me, which is of much help for my family."**

## Let's keep it going

We may be getting used to our 'new normal' here, but the pandemic continues to batter Latin America, with lockdowns continuing, healthcare struggling and communities suffering. Latin Link members and their projects are still bringing help and hope to people with no other support – it's crucial we keep on fundraising to keep them going.

So whether your thing is running, cycling, car washing, baking, leg waxing, sponsored silences, or church quiz nights, we'd love you to do what you can.

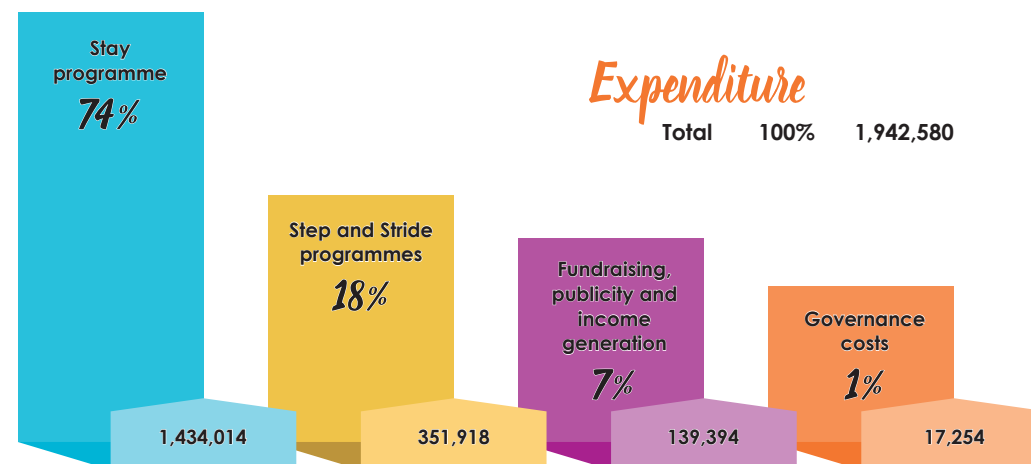
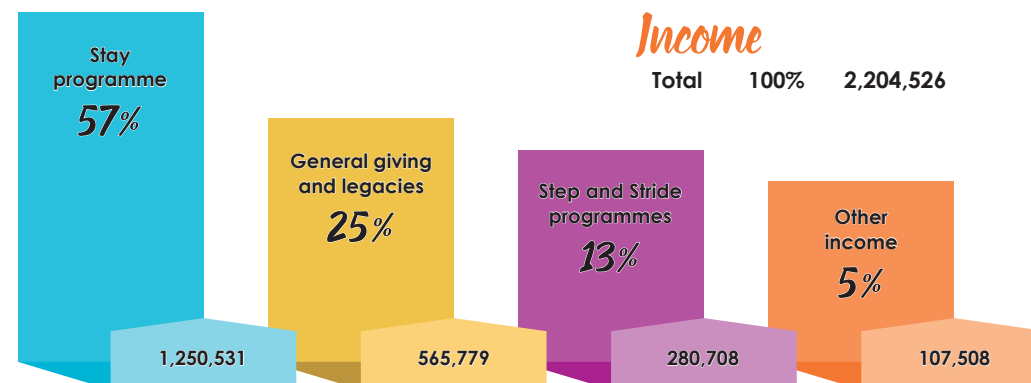
For ideas, resources, and to set up your own fundraising page, visit [www.latinlink.org.uk/fundraise](http://www.latinlink.org.uk/fundraise)



# God's provision

## Financial review 2019-20

We praise God for his wonderful provision during the past financial year. Your generous support has played a big part in this, and stands us in good stead for the rest of this year.



## The challenge ahead

We recognise that many challenges could be in store for 2021 as we deal with the knock-on effects of the coronavirus pandemic. Your support, both prayerful and financial is valued immensely. If you'd like to make a donation, either through a one-off gift or standing order, please visit [latinlink.org.uk/donate](http://latinlink.org.uk/donate). Thank you!



# LOCKED UP AND LOCKED DOWN

A lifeline for prisoners' children

WHEN BOLIVIA WENT INTO LOCKDOWN, PRISONERS AND THEIR CHILDREN COULDN'T HAVE BEEN PREPARED FOR THE CHALLENGES AWAITING THEM. LATIN LINK'S **JULIE NOBLE** EXPLAINS WHAT HAPPENED IN ORURO – AND HOW YOUR SUPPORT HAS MADE A DIFFERENCE.

“When mums or dads go to prison in Bolivia, their children face a challenging future. Under-sevens can live in the prison with their mothers, while older children live with a family member or friend outside. It can be a struggle to look after them with one parent's income now lost.



Angel Tree participant, sharing Psalm 103:8

Prison Fellowship Oruro set up the Angel Tree Centre to support these children and their families. The Centre provides lunch and an after-school club for the kids, as well as practical and spiritual support for their parents, in prison or out. I am part of a team that works inside the women's prison and the young offenders' institution, running discipleship groups and restorative justice classes.

## DOUBLE-LOCKED

You would think that prisoners are used to being 'locked down'. But this time has been very hard for the Angel Tree families. All prison visits were suspended from 15 March, so the children outside the prison have not seen their mums or dads for a long time. Schools are likely to remain closed until February 2021, and the children inside the prison are frustrated and bored at not being able to go out to school or the Angel Tree Centre. It's boring at the young offenders' institution as well, with no outside organisations allowed to run classes or activities.



*“All the young offenders asked for their food to be given to their families.”*

The young offenders are mainly worried about how their families are coping with reduced income in these times. Recently, schools distributed packs of food to their students and all the young offenders – who get fed by the Institution – asked for their food packs to be given to their families instead.

Prisoners haven't been receiving the practical help they usually get from their families, so they can't get hold of basic things like soap – so vital right now.

## YOUR SUPPORT PROVIDING A LIFELINE

It's thanks to our supporters that Prison Fellowship Oruro has been able to help these children and their families during the lockdown. Generous donations and your Indoor Expeditions have supported our efforts to make up food parcels for the Angel Tree families, help the kids with homework over WhatsApp, and keep in touch and pray with them.

The prisoners don't have mobile phones but the team speak to them and the children on the prison payphones. They asked the children to write or draw what they were feeling during the lockdown and were able to talk to them about it. The funding has

## Adela's husband is in prison; her daughter usually attends the Angel Tree Centre

“We depend on my income from selling shoe-cleaning brushes, but during the strict lockdown you could no longer sell anything except food. That affected us a lot and we started to lack basic essentials. I was pregnant and afraid of getting the virus so I didn't want to take risks - that made it even more difficult to support my family.

“As time went on, my landlords started to insist I make the monthly rent payments or we would be evicted. I didn't have the means to pay any more.

“That's why I asked the Angel Tree Centre for help, because I didn't know who else to turn to. They helped me with food, with words of encouragement, calling us every week and looking for other ways to help me. They have been a great blessing in my life in these times.”

also paid for vital hygiene packs (soap, etc) for the mums, dads and children in prison, and devotional materials for those in the prison discipleship groups.

The children are sent some work to do by their schools but sometimes don't have all the things they need to complete it – thanks to donations, school resources have been sent into the prison for them, as well as milk and porridge oats for the 15 mothers in prison with babies or toddlers – it's so tough for them having no family help or visits.

*“They asked the kids to write or draw what they were feeling during the lockdown”*

The Angel Tree Centre is a supportive community for these families, and the team is working hard to keep this going, despite having to remain closed to the children until schools reopen. They have been acting as postmen, delivering letters between the children. They're hoping to produce a newsletter to keep the families connected, and wondering if they could run a half day 'virtual camp', as the children are disappointed about the usual camp being cancelled.



Angel Tree volunteers

I am so grateful to God for the whole team's creativity and perseverance in these strange times. We have had great opportunities to pray with prisoners and their families over the phone or in socially-distanced encounters. We thank God that there haven't been many cases of Covid-19 in the prisons yet. And we thank God for supporters like you and the lifeline you're helping to provide. Please pray for God's guidance about more ways to support this community until we can reopen the Angel Tree Centre and be with the prisoners and young offenders in person again.



## Please pray

- Pray that the prisoners' children will stay safe while schools and the Angel Tree Centre are closed and won't fall behind with their education.
- Pray that God would show Prison Fellowship Oruro more ways to support prisoners and their families despite the restrictions.



# Helping a Continent Grieve

AT THE START OF 2020, KAY STOKER DID NOT EXPECT TO BE DELIVERING BEREAVEMENT TRAINING TO 17 COUNTRIES.

As the coronavirus continues to spread across Latin America, more and more communities are dealing with the sudden loss of loved ones.

In Cusco, Peru, Latin Link's Kay Stoker heads up Nueva Esperanza (New Hope), an organisation working with people who have been suddenly bereaved. It's co-lead by Wehrner, a local pastor and psychologist. Since 2016, they have been offering therapy sessions for children and adults, bereavement training for churches and schools, and weekends away for groups of bereaved families.

A large part of Nueva Esperanza's work is equipping others to come alongside a family member or friend who is grieving, and raising awareness about what bereavement is and how it affects people. "In Peru, so much about this topic is covered up or hidden," says Kay. "A lot of people don't know how to help somebody who is grieving because it's not talked about."

## A NEED LAID BARE

Peru has been hit particularly badly by the coronavirus pandemic. Despite a long, strict lockdown, it has one of the highest death rates per capita in the world, and in September cases were still rising every day.

There are tens of thousands of families suddenly grieving.

"We started getting so many phone calls from people who had lost family members," says Kay. "Then churches called too, asking what we could do to help them support their members."

*"We started getting so many phone calls from families who had lost people"*

"In Cusco and the Andes, there is a definite shame culture. We saw that people were hiding the fact that a family member had died from Covid-19, afraid of how their neighbours would react, or of being refused entry to shops. They had nobody to talk to or comfort them."

"We urgently needed to find a way to equip more people to support those being bereaved. But we had been in a strict lockdown in Cusco for months – training people in person would be impossible."

"Like so many others, we turned to video conferencing. Wehrner and I developed an online course that we could run each evening for a week, and used social media to advertise it."

"We had no idea how many people would sign up."

## LATIN AMERICA DIALLED IN

Kay and Wehrner realised that the course might have a wider reach than the Cusco area since people could dial in from home. What they didn't expect was 200 participants each evening, joining in from 17 countries across Latin America, and even a Hispanic participant from the USA.

*"What they didn't expect was 200 participants from 17 countries"*

People took part from Brazil, understanding most of the content despite the language difference, and a Brazilian mission agency – excited about the course – has now translated all the resources into Portuguese.

The 200 participants were a diverse mix of doctors, nurses, teachers, psychologists, charity leaders and church leaders – all desperate for help supporting people through this time of mass bereavement.

## WHAT DID THEY LEARN?

Kay says: "For two and a half hours each evening, Wehrner and I covered important topics like the different reactions to grief that people can have; practical tips and ideas on how best to accompany children, teens or adults through grief; what the Bible says about grief and sorrow and hope and mercy."

"Wehrner actually had mild Covid-19 at the time but he still did a brilliant job!"

People who took the course said: *"It was excellent that they taught about the grief of adults and children separately, so you could understand the difference and how to support these two groups."*

*"There was so much richness we could apply from what they taught;*



*other psychologists were delighted to listen... To know that death is part of life and to know there are people who went through this process and went forwards with God - that brings hope."*

## THE RIPPLE EFFECT

"The response to this course has been beautiful," says Kay. Beyond all her expectations, that one week has kick-started something across Latin America that is still gathering momentum.

Some churches had arranged for a team of church members to go on the course, and now they are putting it into action in their churches and towns. Other pastors are using the course videos to train up more people in their congregations.

"Switching to an online model for now has opened other opportunities," Kay adds. "We're planning to run small therapy groups online for bereaved people in different countries." And there's more. "The child sponsorship charity Compassion has asked us to repeat the whole

course for all their workers, link churches and psychologists in Lima," Kay reports. "They're not the only ones – children's homes want this training too, and one Peruvian district wants us to train all their school staff if possible! It's hard to think that so many children are grieving due to Covid-19, but heartening to see how keen these professionals are to support them through it."

Nueva Esperanza have a lot of work ahead as the Covid crisis continues. But Kay and Wehrner can see that God is doing something significant here. "The way God has used this online course to reach so many grieving communities is really humbling," says Kay. "We're here to help restore hope where it feels lost. And now more and more others are getting equipped to do that too."

*"Now they're putting it into action in their towns"*





# HOW CAN YOU Step into the Story?

## YOU CAN WRITE A STORY OF HOPE WHERE YOU LIVE



As you read the stories of hope in **Latinfile**, our prayer is that you feel inspired, encouraged and moved by the many ways hope is being shared across Latin America. But the story doesn't end there.

We want you to take these stories with you and share hope however you can in your own communities. Whether you live in Latin America, the UK, or anywhere in between, this is a time when people need hope more than ever. And as Christians, we know that real, lasting hope comes through Jesus.

So, what are the needs in your community right now? Extra provisions for the food bank? Better access to mental health care? WhatsApp groups for neighbours who are isolated? Financial assistance for those who've lost their jobs? These are all ways that Latin Link members are serving their communities in Latin America during this pandemic, and they're things our communities need as well. Will you step into the story?

As well as the stories in this edition of **Latinfile**, we've started compiling a whole host of videos and reports from Latin America on our website. They're there to inspire and encourage you - perhaps you could share one with your church community, friends or neighbours, and pray together about the ways you could write a story of hope where you live.

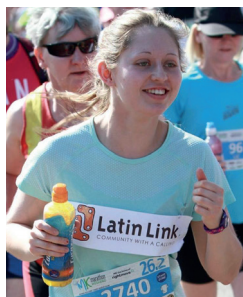
Get inspired at [latinlink.org.uk/step-into-the-story](https://latinlink.org.uk/step-into-the-story)

## YOU CAN FUNDRAISE



As we've seen through Indoor Expeditions, fundraising is an amazing way to step into the story and make a tangible difference in people's lives. And thankfully, there's no shortage of ways to raise funds! Here's a chance for you to get your creative hats on.

In the past, we've had people fundraising through bike rides, skydives, cakes sales, film nights, salsa evenings, and more. However you choose to do it, we're here to lend a hand.



We can supply leaflets, promotional material, donation envelopes, posters, recipe ideas, videos - the list goes on. And best of all, with a few clicks on our website, you can set up your very own fundraising page!

Get started at [latinlink.org.uk/fundraise](https://latinlink.org.uk/fundraise)

## YOU CAN PRAY



When you pray, you step into God's story. Whether you're a 'prayer warrior' or a first-time pray-er, Latin Link needs you to pray. We truly believe our mission depends on it.

If you enjoy praying in community, our local prayer groups may be right up your street. Groups gather weekly or monthly to pray for Latin America, Latin Link members, and each other. They are a fantastic way to get to know more people with a passion for Latin America.



Get in touch to find out if there's one near you. Right now, many of them are meeting online, so it's a great time to log on and say hi for the first time.

If there's no group nearby, perhaps you could start one? If that excites you, we'd love to chat more and give you the resources you need.

Drop our supporter care coordinator, Catharine, an email on [info@latinlink.org.uk](mailto:info@latinlink.org.uk)

## YOU CAN ATTEND AN EVENT - AT HOME!



You might be longing for the day that you can step into a busy conference hall, music venue or mission fair again. But events going online has an advantage - you can easily join in with some great events that might have been too hard to attend in person.

Last month, Spanish Worship Nights returned - live on Facebook. It was a wonderful gathering through which God moved and ministered in amazing ways.

Two Latin Link regional teams have now hosted Inspire! events live on Zoom. These have created a great space to make friends, learn from God's word and get more involved in Latin mission.

Over the next year, we're looking forward to bringing more events to you in your own home.

Social media is a great place to keep up to date with all our planned events, so follow us on Facebook and Instagram for the latest. Or you can get an overview at [latinlink.org.uk/events](https://latinlink.org.uk/events).

## YOU CAN MOBILISE YOUR COMMUNITY FOR MISSION



As the global mission scene continues to adapt, Latin Link is reminded time and time again about the importance of relationship.

We could commission a million-pound promotional video about Latin Link's work (we won't!), but in reality, people are much more likely to get behind the vision if they know the person telling them about it. You could be the key to engaging your church,

youth group or uni, and helping them step into the story of what God's doing in Latin America. Perhaps you could host a 'mission Sunday' at your church, lead a simple prayer, or share a story of hope from Latin America that inspires your community to respond.

We've got a friendly bunch of regional mission mobilisers around Britain and Ireland, ready to chat and give you advice on how to engage your community. We would love to increase our team of volunteer mobilisers, so if you have a heart to get others involved in Latin mission, let's have a chat and see how we can support you. Contact:



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# New Beginnings

National lockdowns and travel restrictions have caused a lot of problems in the world of global mission. For some of our members, it's resulted in prompt and unexpected departures; and for others, a long delay before they can begin.

## YOU CAN GO



### SUMMER STEP TEAMS 2021

Step is Latin Link's short-term mission programme for teams.

Summer Step teams share God's love and hope in a very tangible way as they live and work alongside

Latin Americans, offering their support through practical and community-based projects. For 3-7 weeks, Summer Step teams deepen and live out their faith together. We build teams from individual applicants, and can also find a placement for your own church, university or family team.

One of last year's Steppers said: **"You might think the main reason you're going out there is to help people in need, but most of the time, they are helping you. They demonstrate exactly what it's like**

**to live an honest and humble life in Christ, whilst being the happiest people you will ever meet. I genuinely am so thankful for seeing this with my own eyes."**

As we keep a close eye on the situation in Latin America and follow the available advice, we're prayerfully planning ahead for next year's Step teams. We decided to cancel our Spring Step teams, but we very much hope to send Summer Step teams to Latin America in 2021.

Ready for an adventure with God next summer? Get in touch! We are taking enquiries but not taking deposits or payments right now, in case the coronavirus situation changes. That means you can get your name down without making any financial commitment at the moment. So go for it!

To learn more, visit [latinlink.org.uk/step](https://latinlink.org.uk/step) or email [step@latinlink.org.uk](mailto:step@latinlink.org.uk)

### STRIDE PLACEMENTS 2021

Through our Stride programme, you can step into the story in Latin America for 6-24 months, on a project that's tailored to your unique skills and passions. It's for individuals, couples or families with a heart for cross-cultural mission. It could be an adventurous placement/elective for your language or medical degree. Or a chance to test a calling to longer-term mission in a supportive environment.

Josh Murphy is a Strider in Peru, working with children with learning difficulties. He says: **"Stride has given me the opportunity to get out of my comfort**

**zone, do things that scare and challenge me, and be part of an amazing host family in a completely different culture."**

Due to Covid-19, we've postponed new Stride placements until 2021 at the earliest. We'll be closely monitoring the advice given, and will only send people when it is safe for everybody involved.

But we are still taking enquiries and would love to talk through all the possibilities with you, so do get in touch.

Head to [latinlink.org.uk/stride](https://latinlink.org.uk/stride) or email [stride@latinlink.org.uk](mailto:stride@latinlink.org.uk)

There are so many ways you can Step into the Story. And a great place to start is with our new Hope-Sharer's Devotionals. You'll receive a monthly email, full of Bible reflections, inspiring stories, ideas and resources for how you can get involved. You'll be joining a community of people passionate about sharing the message of God's hope. **To sign up, scan the QR code or visit [latinlink.org.uk/hope-sharers](https://latinlink.org.uk/hope-sharers).**



Meet two of our new Striders hoping to get started with their placement when it's safe to do so:

## Anna-Claire and Stewart Cusick Shell, Ecuador

### What did you do before Stride?

We both currently work full-time. Anna-Claire is a doctor; she qualified five years ago and is currently working in adult medicine with an interest in Global Health. Stewart works as a design engineer for a company that develops sand washing quarry equipment.

### What will you be doing on Stride?

We are going to work in Hospital Basico del Oriente in Shell, Ecuador. Anna-Claire will be working there as a doctor and Stewart will be helping with the development of the hospital. It was closed several years ago and is slowly being redeveloped to become a full 24-hour hospital again.



### How are you feeling now?

We are both excited about what God has called us to and what he has planned for us. We are also both nervous about learning language and moving so far away from family and friends. Mostly, at the moment, we are frustrated by the delays due to the pandemic and are looking forward to beginning!

### What can Latin Link supporters be praying for?

We would really appreciate prayer for patience as we wait for decisions on when we will be able to go. Please pray for continued enthusiasm and commitment to language learning, and to the All Nations course we have started. Finally, pray for us as we try to raise financial support in these difficult times - thank you.



For all Stride enquiries, contact [stride@latinlink.org.uk](mailto:stride@latinlink.org.uk) or give our Programmes team a call on 0118 957 112



# Step into the Story

## WITH HOPE-SHARERS DEVOTIONALS



### SIGN UP FOR OUR BRAND NEW HOPE-SHARERS DEVOTIONAL

Journey with the Latin Link community through a monthly email devotional - full of Bible reflections, inspiring stories of hope and resources to help you step into global mission and make a difference wherever you are.

More than just inspiration in your inbox, this is an invitation to connect with a mission-minded community. Through occasional online gatherings, you'll have space to link with, hear from, and pray for frontline mission workers sharing God's hope in Latin America and beyond.

Come and be a part of it! Sign up at [latinlink.org.uk/hope-sharers](https://latinlink.org.uk/hope-sharers) or scan the QR code below.

