

AUTUMN 2021

# Latinfile

THE MAGAZINE OF CONTEMPORARY LATIN MISSION



**Latin Link**  
COMMUNITY WITH A CALLING

## *In God's Image*

the recognition and  
restoration of **human dignity**

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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](http://latinlink.org.uk/go-with-us).

**Cover Photo:** Human dignity in Puncus, Peru. Read more about Sharon Jones' mission trip to this remote mountain village on page 4.

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## CONTACT US

**Latin Link**  
t 0118 957 7100  
e [info@latinlink.org.uk](mailto:info@latinlink.org.uk)  
w [latinlink.org.uk](http://latinlink.org.uk)

**Latin Link Ireland**  
t 07736 033253  
e [ireland@latinlink.org](mailto:ireland@latinlink.org)

**Latin Link Scotland**  
t 0131 554 7744  
e [scotland@latinlink.org.uk](mailto:scotland@latinlink.org.uk)

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# CALLED TO RESPOND



Welcome to the autumn edition of *Latinfile*! Through an assortment of stories, reflections and prayers from Latin Link mission workers, we explore what it means to recognise the dignity of each and every life, as people made in God's own image.

The sad truth is, much of our world doesn't acknowledge the equal value of humankind, with millions of people facing mistreatment on a daily basis. And as Christians *called* to love our neighbour as we love ourselves, we are *called* to respond.

In this edition, we hone in on a handful of troubling social issues. But more than simply shining a light on injustice, the stories told are ones of perspectives changed, dignity recognised, and of God's hope restored.

As we turn the first page, we'll learn about Sharon Jones' travels to a rural mountain village in Peru; where poverty is rife, but the community's faith is being renewed (p. 4-5).

Elsewhere, Paul Crothers introduces us to some of the disadvantaged children and adults who have fallen through the cracks in Brazil's education system, and are now seizing a new opportunity to learn (p. 6-7).

From Guatemala, Kate Moreno shares about a new resource offering girls support as they enter the courtrooms in the fight for justice against sexual violence (p. 8-9).

And in Trujillo, Peru, we meet the ministry giving practical and pastoral support to people living with a disability, as well as educating local churches to reach out and champion inclusivity (p. 14-15).

We also take time to reflect on the pressing issue of climate change, its impact on human dignity, and some of the green actions Latin Link are taking in the months ahead (p. 12-13).

We conclude with an invitation to step into the story; God's story of mission in and from Latin America. This year, that includes an exciting opportunity to join our new community fundraising challenge, as well as connecting with the Latin Link community at upcoming events (p. 18-19).

As you read on, we hope you feel moved and inspired by the Latin Link members spreading God's love, standing for justice, and restoring dignity across Latin America and beyond.

**Will Pitchfork**  
Communications Coordinator





# In God's Image:

WHY EVERY PERSON DESERVES THEIR HUMAN DIGNITY

What do we mean by 'human dignity'? At heart, it's a belief that every human being is incredibly valuable and should be treated as such, no matter who they are or where they're from.

As Christians, this belief comes from our conviction that human beings are created by God 'in his image and likeness' (Genesis 1:27) – there's something in our nature that reflects God, giving every person an inherent dignity. And we also believe that God loves and values every human being equally, regardless of their history – enough to come and die for them. 'God demonstrates his own love for us in this: while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.' (Romans 5:8). Every life is precious to him.

But we know that many people in our world have their human dignity disrespected, trampled on and taken away. They are exploited, abused or neglected by others. This isn't the way God wants things to be. Latin Link's Sharon Jones was struck by this reality on her recent trip to the mountain village of Puncus, near Ayacucho, Peru.

## WHEN DIGNITY IS DENIED

"On my first day in Puncus, I met Adriano, an animated boy with a huge smile," says Sharon. "When I asked his age I was shocked to hear him say eight - he looked more like six. Poor nutrition here means that most people are smaller than average. They don't get their fair share of food."

"Lots of people in this village aren't living with dignity due to the poverty that inequality has forced upon them. Young children are left to roam around alone as their parents work long hours in the fields."

"It was shocking to discover many elderly people living in very basic and vulnerable conditions. All of those we visited were facing difficult physical challenges – deafness, joint problems, high blood pressure – often alone and without access to the medical care they really needed. Sadly, one elderly lady had been raped."

*"It's clear that some groups of people don't have their rights protected"*

"Travelling out of Lima and into rural Peru, you instantly see people's human dignity being violated. It's clear that some groups of people don't have their rights protected. There's a very unequal distribution of wealth, they don't have the same access to education that other people enjoy, and they aren't treated fairly by the justice system."

## LATIN LINK'S RESPONSE

Human dignity has been Latin Link's theme of the year for 2021. Believing that all humans are created with dignity 'in the image of God' has a huge influence on the way we approach our mission work, and inspires us to challenge discrimination and oppression.

We have set up a Human Dignity Team, making sure that the recognition and restoration of human dignity is part of every Latin Link ministry.

Many of you joined in our Week of Prayer this May, where we collectively prayed into many situations that threaten people's dignity in Latin America – from disability discrimination to migration and poverty.

## SPEAK UP

God calls the Church to take action for marginalised communities like Puncus. We have a mandate to 'Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves'; to 'defend the rights of the poor and needy.' (Proverbs 31:8-9)

Sharon visited Puncus with a Christian organisation called *Misión de Amor Perú* (Mission of Love Peru). Motivated by this call to defend human rights and dignity, they take practical action to support communities and churches in need.



*"The Church has a mandate to 'defend the rights of the poor and needy'"*

Communities that were already disadvantaged have struggled the most in the pandemic. Due to Covid-19, food prices around Puncus shot up and it became harder for villagers to access other resources they needed. But *Misión de Amor Perú* didn't forget about this remote village. Sharon explains:

"Working with the village church, we sat down with people to identify their areas of need. We were then able to give practical assistance like food parcels, clothes, books, new beds and even kitchen equipment where needed. Latin Link donations helped support this response, so thank you!"

Human dignity is not just about having a fair share of material things; it's also having your emotional and spiritual needs taken seriously.

"As well as meeting practical needs we visited the loneliest people, organised a kids' show, ran a session on marriage, and spent time teaching parents about the prevention of child abuse," says Sharon. "We led Bible studies, preached and encouraged the church, especially those whose faith was faltering. I loved the sense of community as we all shared food together."

The work of *Misión de Amor Perú* is just one example of God's people helping to restore human dignity in places where it has been damaged. This edition of *Latinfile* is full of more examples, and we hope you will join us in the mission to defend the dignity of each and every human life.



## Join The Mission:

The full Week of Prayer resources, highlighting pressing prayer needs relating to human dignity, is yours to access. Biblical reflections, challenges and children's worksheets are all free to download at [latinlink.org.uk/week-of-prayer-2021](https://latinlink.org.uk/week-of-prayer-2021).



# READ, WRITE, HOPE

## GIVING BRAZIL'S FORGOTTEN TEENAGERS – AND THEIR PARENTS – A FRESH START WITH LITERACY

Maria has got very good at hiding the fact that she can't read. "But it is so tiring," she says. "I always have to have somebody else with me in case I need to read a sign – all the time trying to hide my problem from them. I don't know what work I could do. The worst thing is not being able to help my kids with their homework – I feel ashamed of that and it really makes me want to learn now, if I can."

### FROM FOOTBALL CLUB TO READING CLUB

God used a football club and a pandemic to lead Paul Crothers to a local literacy problem. Each week in Recife, Brazil, Paul and his team from the Vale project

play football, pray and chat with around 100 boys and young men who don't have many male role models in their lives.

The pandemic sadly put the football evenings on hold – along with school. As Recife's lockdown started to lift, Paul visited some of his teenagers and was concerned.

"We saw that many of the teenage boys from our project had had their education badly affected by the school closures. All of these boys attend over-subscribed, underfunded and understaffed schools. Many of them also come from dysfunctional families where education is not always valued, so even before Covid, they were at a disadvantage."

According to a report from UNICEF, Covid-19 left five million Brazilian children aged 6-17 with no access to education in 2020.

"During the pandemic they weren't going to school for many, many months," says Paul. "If the schools ran any online teaching, few of these kids had the equipment to access it. It only widened the gap between our boys and others their age."

*"During the pandemic they weren't going to school for many, many months"*

"We could see that even their basic reading and writing skills were starting to suffer, and I was disheartened to imagine the struggle they were going to face in life if they didn't get back on track."

There was no extra support offered to these teenagers, so Paul and his team decided to step in. They began running a class twice a week for two

hours to help the boys catch up and improve their writing skills.

But it wasn't just the football boys facing this problem – many of the community's teenage girls were in the same situation. Through the work of Latin Link Strider Suz Rothwell, the Vale team has got to know a lot of local girls who Suz felt also needed help. She encouraged them to come along, and for the past six months, both boys and girls have been learning together.

### NEXT UP, THE PARENTS

Running these groups for the local teenagers opened a can of worms for the Vale team. It became clear that many of the young people's parents had fallen through the cracks of the school system themselves – and that many of them were actually illiterate.

"Many of these adults left school at a very young age – in order to earn money or for other reasons – and they never had a proper opportunity to learn to read and write," Paul explains. "Others have special educational needs and never received the support they needed. We realised some parents weren't even able to sign their own name."

"We strongly felt this was an affront to their human dignity. Parents like Maria told us how embarrassed they were about not being able to read; the lengths they had gone to to try and hide it and what a burden their secret was."

"Not only that, illiteracy puts lots of stumbling blocks in their way. These families already live in poverty – and not being able to read creates another barrier to accessing their rights. Some told us they were unable to apply for benefits because they couldn't understand the forms."

*"Illiteracy creates another barrier to accessing their rights."*



Celebrating learning at the adults class

Seeing their teenage children benefitting from classes suddenly gave these adults a surge of hope that they could learn too. Paul asked what the opportunity would mean to them – they said they wanted to be able to help their children with their schoolwork, to read the Bible, and most of all, they wanted the chance to lose their shame and feel some self-respect.

So now, three evenings per week, a groups of parents and other adults from the community gathers to study reading and writing with the Vale team.

### NEW LIFE THROUGH LITERACY

"It's been so positive," says Paul. "The most obvious impact has been the increase in people's self-confidence and self-esteem. The adults have been incredibly committed and are determined to make the most of this opportunity. It is clear that they are really proud of the progress they have made so far."

*"The most obvious impact has been the increase in their self-esteem."*

Paul feels that God led the team to this hidden need in their Recife community. They only needed to respond to see God start to restore the human dignity of whole families who had been left behind and forgotten.



As the Vale team continue to run reading and writing classes for teens and adults, they hope and pray that their students will end up with a brighter future – one with more independence, a chance of a decent job, or simply the ability to come out of hiding and hold their heads up high.



Pray

for the resources needed to expand the literacy courses to more people in the community. Pray that those who come will experience God's love for them, along with a new sense of confidence and better future prospects.

According to a report from UNICEF, Covid-19 left five million Brazilian children aged 6-17 with no access to education in 2020





# I AM David

## GIRLS SLAYING GIANTS IN GUATEMALA'S COURTS



"Everyone has a Bible passage that motivates them in life," says Kate Moreno. "For me it's Psalm 10. Verse 18 says that God 'defends the fatherless and the oppressed, so that mere earthly mortals will never again strike terror.'"

Each day in Guatemala, Kate lives out these verses by supporting girls who have been victims of sexual violence. These young people have had their lives de-valued and their human dignity stripped away by the adults who should have been protecting them.

Children are not always viewed as equals in Latin America. Their feelings and voices may not be taken seriously, with physical punishment widely accepted. In 2014, UNICEF reported that 'more than half of the girls, boys and adolescents in Latin America are victims of physical and emotional abuse, negligent treatment or sexual abuse,' and the isolation and lockdowns of the pandemic are thought to have increased these risks.

*"Bringing a case to trial is very challenging. The voices of children are not valued"*

The girls Kate works with have suffered the most damaging forms of abuse, which make them question their own worth. Her passion is to restore

their rights, show them their value, and give them back their human dignity by seeking justice for them in court.

### JUSTICE BRINGS HEALING

Kate is a trained social worker, serving with Latin Link at the Oasis ministry run by Kids Alive. She spends much of her time writing expert guidance and policy for the other social workers and psychologists at Oasis. They work to help these girls recover from their trauma. But the team also believes in the importance of seeking justice for them through the courts – something that rarely happens in Guatemala.

"It's incredibly daunting for a child to participate in a criminal trial in the UK, and it's even more challenging in a Latin American context," explains Kate. "The voices of children (especially girls) are not valued, corruption is rife, and impunity is high – it's a David and Goliath situation. But we cannot ignore Psalm 10's call to 'call the evildoer to account for his wickedness that would otherwise not be found out' (v15).

*"Seeing justice done in their lives helps them to heal."*

"Although it's a massive challenge for the girls, we have seen a huge positive impact on their recovery by taking their cases to court. Seeing justice done in their lives helps them to heal. We're showing them that what happened did matter, that it was wrong, that it was not their fault, and that it is taken seriously.

"When we press charges, it clarifies to the young person and to the wider society here in Guatemala that these abuses are crimes with terrible consequences for the victim and the perpetrator – not something to be covered up or normalised.

"Finally, when the abuser is sent to prison, it often allows the girl to return home in safety and enjoy the basic right to a family life again."

### FROM VICTIMS TO VICTORS

The girls needed more help to get through the difficult process of testifying in court, but Kate couldn't find any resources aimed at children or teenagers in this situation.

"The best thing I found was a book made for children testifying in Costa Rica, but it didn't apply to the justice system in Guatemala. So some Oasis colleagues and I decided to write our own book, with the help of a Christian graphic design student. It's called *Soy David* ('I am David').

"It features two teenagers - one has just finished her criminal trial and describes what happened to the other. She uses the analogy of a race to explain the different stages of the legal process and the things she needed to do along the way. All criminal proceedings vary, depending on the case, and so too can races - they can be long or short; have more difficult parts and easier parts. You need to train well, and you may encounter obstacles.

*"Before entering court, the girls always declare: 'I am David!'."*

"The conversations between these two teenagers explore the concepts of truth, justice, and

forgiveness, as well as providing lots of practical support and encouragement around the different steps the girls need to take to testify against their abusers. It also includes help about how to self-regulate when they feel anxious, and how to remember what to say under pressure."

The book is having a great impact on the girls' confidence and self-esteem as they courageously stand up for their dignity.

"Yes, it's a David and Goliath situation," Kate acknowledges. "The abuser and the justice system seem as big as Goliath. But God is bigger.

"*Soy David* features this Bible story to show the Oasis girls that God is on their side, even when they feel small. They come to see themselves as warriors and victors, despite having to face a giant, because God is with them. The girls are always so encouraged and comforted by this story; they had been made to feel powerless, but now they feel empowered. Before entering court, Oasis girls now always declare: "I am David!"

The Oasis team aims to freely share the book with similar organisations across Guatemala, to help more children seek justice through the courts and reclaim their God-given dignity. Kate knows how much it can transform their lives.



## Pray

That *Soy David* will come to be used widely across Guatemala and help to bring justice, healing and restoration. Pray for greater safety for children across Latin America and that their human dignity would be respected.



# GOD IN THE WAITING ROOM

What's it like when you've heard God's call but have to wait years before you can follow? Joanna McCree, our Short Term Coordinator, talks to two Striders-in-waiting to hear how they've held onto their calling through a long wait.



The highs and lows of support raising!



## Bhoke Magotti

Bhoke has been waiting to start Stride since 2017. She plans to go to Mexico in January.

### HOW DID YOU FEEL CALLED TO STRIDE?

Volunteering abroad wasn't something I had planned to do because of the cost, but I heard about Latin Link when I'd just finished school. I had studied Spanish and had an interest in other cultures so I looked through Latin Link's website, and was excited to see lots of amazing opportunities which led me to apply for Stride.

### YOU'VE HAD SEVERAL HOLD-UPS ALONG THE WAY – WHAT'S BEEN MOST CHALLENGING?

There were some big hold-ups! Having to apply and pay for my UK residency, fundraise, and then the pandemic... the hardest part was not seeing a way out of each situation. Whenever there was a setback, it was easy to think it was a sign that I'm not meant for this mission. It tested my faith,

but I had encouraging conversations and a prophetic word which kept me going. I found it helpful to stand on scriptures like 2 Corinthians 9:8 and Ephesians 3:20.

### WHAT HELPED YOU PERSEVERE WITH SUPPORT-RAISING?

Support raising was the biggest challenge, but I've learnt to rely on others for help. At times things moved slowly; in those moments knowing who I am in Christ was important. I battled feeling ashamed and guilty for not doing enough or raising enough. I learnt that instead of relying on my efforts, I had to trust God's provision. And I have seen him provide in amazing ways! I've received donations from strangers, people giving monthly, my work even held cake sales for me. And just as I was about to postpone Stride again, I received an anonymous donation that pushed me beyond my target! Latin Link has always emphasised prayer, and I now understand why – it helped me surrender everything to God.

### WHAT HAS GOD TAUGHT YOU IN THE WAITING?

My mum always taught me to put God first and then it's easier to be at peace if things don't go to plan. It was tempting to make Stride the goal, rather than the glory of God. In waiting, I was able to reflect on my intentions. The peace I had when things weren't going my way showed me that God is enough, and he uses the waiting. There's purpose in being where you are, despite how disappointing or frustrating it feels.

### HOW CAN WE PRAY?

Pray for the practicalities – my visa and passport application, and for Mexico to get Covid-19 better under control.

To follow Bhoke's journey, email [bhomatti@gmail.com](mailto:bhomatti@gmail.com) and join her email news list.



## Abby Murphy

A former Stepper and Strider, Abby is returning to Ecuador in November to complete Stride before becoming a Stay member – something she's been planning since 2016.

### SHARE HOW YOU FELT CALLED TO STAY – WAS IT EXPECTED?

Although my experience on Step had a big impact, I didn't think that would involve Stay, but God started to reveal otherwise! Living overseas wasn't particularly my plan, but God has grown a passion in me for the people of Latin America. I've always had a heart for working with the vulnerable or marginalised; throw in my love of the Spanish language and it all came together!

### YOU'VE SPENT A FEW YEARS PREPARING FOR STAY, HOW HAS GOD REINFORCED YOUR CALL?

Returning from Stride in 2016 was when I felt a calling to Stay. At the time, I thought I would just extend my Stride placement, or that I'd be back after a year, but I'm so thankful to have had five years in Sheffield since. I've learnt so much through this time and think it will equip me to serve well. It's also given me the opportunity to study the Bible and mission with Redcliffe College. I prayed that if

moving back to Ecuador longer-term was God's calling, he would keep reminding me and nudge me at the right time. And that's what's happened.

### WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNT THROUGH THIS PERIOD OF WAITING?

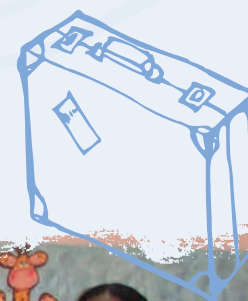
That wherever we are in the world, our call to love God and people is the same. It's a call to a missional lifestyle whether I'm in Sheffield or Ecuador, so I got stuck in in Sheffield. And in the waiting I've been learning to hold my plans lightly and surrender my desires to God, so that I could say yes to returning when the right time came.

### HOW HAVE YOU OVERCOME ANY DOUBTS?

Over time I've got a little comfortable in England and have doubted if I should really go back. However, God is gracious, and each time I've wobbled he's gently reminded me of the call he's given me and the passion he's put on my heart. Wrestling with the doubts and questions has been helpful in growing my conviction to go; when God is in it, he's not going to abandon us in that place of doubt.

### HOW CAN WE PRAY?

Pray as I say goodbye to friends and settle into Ecuador. Please pray that I would stay open to learning and adapting as I serve the local church and discern how to get involved.



You can follow Abby's adventures as she returns to Ecuador at [www.abbymurphy.wordpress.com](http://www.abbymurphy.wordpress.com)





# Climate matters

## WHY LATIN LINK HAS A NEW ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY

It's quite easy for most of us in the UK not to notice climate change yet – but in Latin America the effects are already significant.

### TOO DRY FOR CROPS

In 2019 and 2020, huge fires in the Amazon rainforest made the headlines. They weren't just due to logging - unusually dry weather had made large parts of this essential ecosystem into a tinderbox and fires spread out of control.

Dry seasons and droughts are getting more severe...



Dry seasons and droughts are getting more severe in much of South and Central America, partly due to the warming of the Atlantic Ocean pulling moisture away from the continent.

On the west coast of Central America, this is creating a disaster for agriculture. There was already a dry climate and farming depended on a predictable pattern of annual rainfall. But now the pattern has shifted towards longer droughts followed by torrential rain, causing repeated crop failures and food shortages along with dangerous landslides. Many farmers have been forced to leave their lands and migrate to survive, with tens of thousands in recent years heading towards the USA.

### TOO WARM FOR ICE

Global warming is very visible in the Andes, where glaciers are shrinking fast. Researchers have calculated that the area covered by glaciers in Peru shrank by nearly a third between 2000 and 2016. Peru's famous Pastoruri glacier has halved in size in the last 20 years – where tourists used to trek and sledge on the ice, they now visit for a climate change tour.

This is a disaster in the making, as small and large South American communities depend upon the glaciers' meltwater for their water supplies – from Andean villages growing crops, to major agriculture, to the capital cities of Peru, Bolivia and Chile.

## A HUMANITARIAN CRISIS

The World Health Organisation warns that right now, 20 million people worldwide become refugees from climate catastrophes every year, and this will only increase.

We know that becoming a refugee or migrant puts people's human dignity at risk. Accessing a permanent home, education and job in a new country is not simple, especially for those who were already disadvantaged. In Latin America, some are forced to work in unsafe and undignified informal work to make ends meet, like picking through waste on landfill sites.

Put simply, climate change poses a serious threat to human life and dignity.

## OUR RESPONSIBILITY

*God spoke: "Let us make human beings in our image, make them reflecting our nature So they can be responsible for the fish in the sea, the birds in the air, the cattle, and, yes, Earth itself." Genesis 1: 26-28 (the Message)*

God not only gives us the privilege and responsibility of caring for his creation, as creatures made in his image, but also calls us to care for people who are marginalised, exiled, excluded, or suffering – that now includes those affected by climate change. To truly follow our calling, we need to look at the ways we are contributing to the climate crisis by our daily actions, and make some changes.

20 million people each year become refugees from climate catastrophes

Glaciers in Peru shrank by nearly a third from 2000 to 2016, seriously threatening water supplies

Huge parts of the Amazon burned in 2019 and 2020 as dry conditions caused fires to spread

Droughts, landslides and powerful hurricanes are on the rise in Central America

## OUR ACTION

This year, our newly-formed Environmental Action Group has been hard at work reviewing the changes we can make to minimise Latin Link's

environmental impact. Here are three basic steps we're taking. To read more, please have a look at our 2021 Environmental Policy – it's online at [latinlink.org.uk/environment](https://latinlink.org.uk/environment)

**1. Offset carbon emissions:** As a mission organisation that sends and receives international volunteers, we recognise that it is not possible for us to eliminate all air travel. Instead we will seek to mitigate the effects of international travel through a Carbon Offsetting option for the Step and Stride programmes, as well as monitoring and managing our programmes and events so that we only take flights when necessary.



**2. Reduce digital footprint:** Doing things digitally uses energy too. We're committed to reviewing, improving and changing our practices to ensure that our use of technology is necessary and sustainable. That means weighing up the impact of digital vs paper, actively reviewing our website's carbon footprint, and making greener choices regarding digital solutions.



**3. Eliminate single use plastic:** We're on a mission to reduce - and eliminate where possible - single-use plastic in our office, at events, and elsewhere. This Latinfile magazine actually came wrapped in compostable packaging – a small change, but an important step in the right direction.



## CONTINUING THE CONVERSATION

Knowing where to begin with climate action can feel daunting. We don't claim to be experts on the topic, but we're committed to listening, learning and continuing the conversation, especially as we see the serious impacts of climate change on Latin American communities. If you have more ideas about how we can take greener steps forward as a community, we encourage you to share them with us. Send your thoughts to [info@latinlink.org.uk](mailto:info@latinlink.org.uk) – we look forward to hearing what you have to say.



To read Latin Link's new Environmental Policy, visit [latinlink.org.uk/environment](https://latinlink.org.uk/environment).



# Peru

## IS FOR EVERYONE

FOR THE 4.5 MILLION PERUVIANS LIVING WITH A DISABILITY, THERE IS RARELY EQUAL ACCESS TO EDUCATION AND WORK, AND SOME FACE A STRUGGLE TO EVEN LEAVE THE HOUSE.

Mirjam and Jürg Hofer are Swiss Latin Link members working in the coastal Trujillo region. They felt called to Peru to challenge the neglect and injustice that many people living with a disability experience there. Working alongside Christian organisation *Corazones Unidos con Personas con Discapacidad* ('Hearts United with People with Disabilities'), they provide practical support, training, and promote inclusivity.

Peru was the first Latin American country to implement laws in favour of people with disabilities, but putting them into practice is complicated.

"The biggest problem for people with disabilities here is finding

work to support themselves, so the majority live in poverty," say the Hofers. "Healthcare isn't free, so it's very difficult for them to access effective therapies, medical treatment or equipment like walking aids that would make their lives easier.

"And the picture doesn't look good for the next generation right now – 40 to 50 per cent of children living with a disability do not go to school. Why not? Specialist schools for those with severe disabilities are rare; there may not be one anywhere near the family's home. Sometimes parents just struggle to get their child to school physically because they don't have a wheelchair.

*"40-50% of children with a disability do not go to school"*

"Other times, the reason is cultural. A surprising number of families we meet still believe on some level that disability is a punishment from God. They feel ashamed and helpless in the face of disability in their family. In some cases, families have tried to hide children with disabilities, keeping them at home and robbing them of their dignity."

Some government support is available for individuals with disabilities in Peru, but poorer families generally struggle on alone, without the expert input of professionals who could help if families had the knowledge and funds to access them.

### WHEELCHAIRS OPEN UP THE WORLD

*Corazones Unidos* is trying to level the playing field for those living with disabilities around the Trujillo region and restore to them their human dignity. One lifechanging service they provide is distributing donated wheelchairs and walking aids.

We are very lucky that the NHS provides this equipment free of

charge in the UK. In Peru, poorer people living with physical disabilities may never even be able to explore beyond their street. So receiving a wheelchair can hugely improve a person's quality of life. Suddenly some of their independence is restored; they can access more of the world and take part in it.

"We've opened up a repair shop in Trujillo where people can go if they have a problem with their wheelchair," says Jürg. "We teach the users and their families how to do their own maintenance and repairs too."

### VALUABLE AND LOVED

Practical help is vital, but the Hofers also want to help people with disabilities to regain their self-esteem where they have felt devalued. This involves their own attitudes and those of the people around them.

"We want to convey that each person is loved by God and that is why their life is valuable," explains Mirjam. "We take time to listen to them, value their experiences, and encourage them.



"We also offer holiday camps for the families of children with disabilities, to express that they are loved and give them a break from their daily routine."

All of this work is run in collaboration with local churches, but there is still a lot of work to be done to

"In our church, we invited a man with a visual impairment to help lead the ministry to the elderly. For him, this invitation had a huge impact. He's been unable to work and provide for his family. He felt useless. His wife told us that she sees such a change in him – and he's really growing in his faith since he has been part of this ministry."



Several years ago, Mirjam and Jürg met two Peruvian wheelchair users, and connected them with *Corazones Unidos*. They were embraced by a church and now lead a key church ministry for children and young people in the community, playing floorball matches in the park.

help more churches better support people living with disabilities.

"We teach churches not to see that person as an object of charity, but as a valuable member of the community who has lots to contribute. Offering opportunities to use their gifts and serve in the church really raises a person's self-esteem when they have been excluded from contributing in other parts of society."

### CHANGING PERSPECTIVES IN THE CHURCH

Covid-19 suspended some of *Corazones Unidos'* work. But one positive thing came out of the lockdown.

"Before the pandemic, we had problems motivating busy church pastors to come to our training sessions about the Biblical

perspective on disability," says Jürg. "But the lockdown gave pastors extra time, and taking the sessions online was a big hit – we're now running our seventh online course!

"The pastors are shocked and moved when we explain the issues faced by people with disabilities. Our hope now is to see them put this learning in practice and introduce changes that champion their human dignity. We pray for church and society to be truly inclusive."



*Inspired to champion people's rights?*

If you feel a calling to make sure everybody in society is included, see page 18 for ideas on how you can Step into the Story where you live, or explore the possibility of a Stride placement in Latin America. See [latinlink.org.uk/stride](http://latinlink.org.uk/stride) and get in touch!



Mirjam (back row, 3rd from left) and Jürg (back row, 4th from left) with the *Corazones Unidos* team



# A LATIN *Legacy*

As a registered charity, it's only thanks to your financial giving that Latin Link is able to continue its ministry in Latin America and Europe. We're grateful for each and every gift we receive and take excellent care in how we manage your donations.

*"We are acutely aware that giving to charities requires a huge level of trust, and we want to assure you that each and every penny is used in accordance with our mission – to partner in God's work in Latin America and beyond and bring honour to him. Our desire to see God's kingdom come means that we are careful and prayerful in the stewardship of all donations to our ministry. On behalf of the trustees, we thank you for entrusting us with your generous giving."*

Jo Jowett, Chair of Trustees



## A GIFT THAT LASTS MORE THAN A LIFETIME

**In the past eight years, almost £1 million has been given to Latin Link through legacies.**

The impact of this generosity can be seen across Latin America in many different ministries that are meeting needs and developing strategic projects: transforming vulnerable communities, building churches, feeding the poor and providing shelter – but there is still so much more to be done.

If you're over the age of 18, it's highly recommended that you write a will. However, surprisingly, only 45% of the adult population in the UK have written one, and that's just 24% of under 35s. A will is a legal document that sets out your instructions for what should happen to your estate (property, money, possessions) when you die.

As well as being an important opportunity to make careful provision for your loved ones, a will is also an opportunity to leave gifts to the charities and organisations you support. Legacies are an amazing way to help sustain and develop the work you care about – now, and far into the future.

Many of us may not have much to give right now (especially with the added financial burdens of the past 18 months) but we may still have a great deal of equity tied up in assets or investments that we might consider using creatively in the future. This is what makes legacy giving a really good option for providing financial blessing to others, when we no longer need it ourselves.

## WHERE TO BEGIN

Writing or changing a will can be daunting, and sometimes it's hard to know where to begin. To help, **we've just created a new 10-page leaflet** outlining the key information surrounding will writing, legacy giving, and more. It's a really helpful guide to get you started.

Download the leaflet for free from our website, or request a paper copy by emailing our Legacy Officer, Catharine Turton - [catharineturton@latinlink.org.uk](mailto:catharineturton@latinlink.org.uk). We are here to chat through any questions.

Download your free legacy leaflet at [www.latinlink.org.uk/legacy](http://www.latinlink.org.uk/legacy)

# FINANCIAL REVIEW

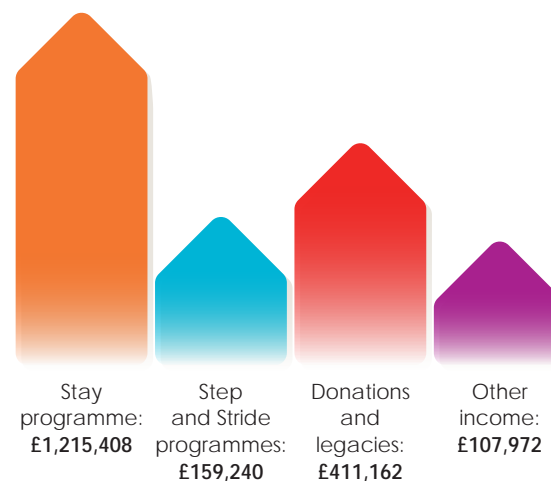
This year, we've been greatly blessed by donations received from Latin Link supporters, particularly in response to the pandemic. Thanks to your involvement in fundraising activities, and general giving throughout the year, we've been able to

continue supporting hundreds of families across Latin America and beyond - meeting practical, emotional and spiritual needs. Here's an overview of how your money has been used to extend God's mission during the past financial year.

## Our income

– how it's given

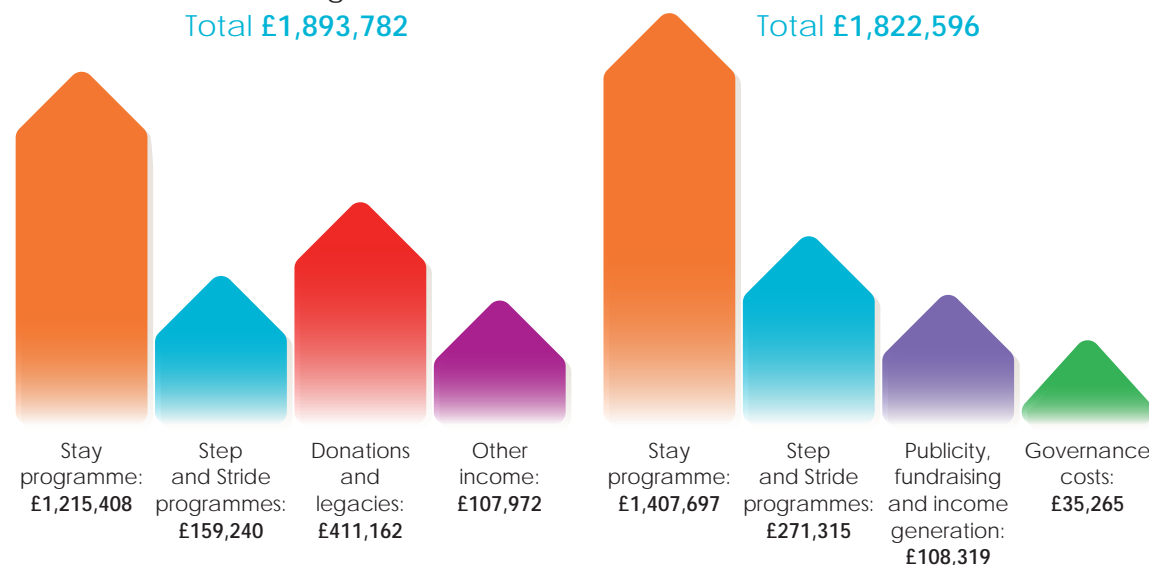
**Total £1,893,782**



## Our expenditure

– where it's used

**Total £1,822,596**



**STAY PROGRAMME:** Sending, supporting and equipping longer-term mission workers - releasing them to serve and support the ministry God has called them to.

**STEP AND STRIDE PROGRAMMES:** Resourcing the next generation of mission workers, and providing practical help to churches, projects and communities in need.

**PUBLICITY, FUNDRAISING AND INCOME GENERATION:** From Latinfile magazine and fundraising appeals, to exhibition stands and equipment – everything needed to mobilise more people into mission.

**GOVERNANCE COSTS:** The day-to-day running of a charity – from staff costs to financial audits; all the behind-the-scenes activity needed for making our global ministry effective.

## How do I give?

If you would like to make a donation to this work, either a one-off gift or via monthly standing order, please visit

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



*Thank you!*



# Step into the Story



## BY FUNDRAISING

### NORTH TO SOUTH: COMMUNITY CHALLENGE

**Going the distance together to help Latin America's Covid recovery**

Across the length of Latin America, Covid-19 has pushed millions more people into poverty. Economies have been crippled, health care systems overcome, education put at risk, and levels of unemployment worsened.

As the enduring effects of the pandemic advance through the region, Latin Link mission workers continue serving among the poorest, most vulnerable communities, working to restore lost hope, provide opportunities for physical and spiritual development, and demonstrate the love that Jesus has for all.

And this November, you can help raise vital financial and prayer support for these Latin American communities on the road out of Covid-19.

Take part in Latin Link's team distance challenge, raising **£15,000** as we travel **15,000km** - equivalent to the length of Latin America, from Mexico to Chile.



You pick your individual distance, then get sponsored to walk, cycle, run or swim it (or something creative - kayak, skate, cartwheel, anything goes!) Just add your contribution to the team total and help us reach our community goal!



**You can support this fundraiser by helping to cover the distance or sponsoring others as they go.**

### HOW TO JOIN THE TEAM

Register to join the journey at [www.latinlink.org.uk/north-to-south](http://www.latinlink.org.uk/north-to-south). After you've signed up, you'll have full access to the My Virtual Mission platform, allowing you to share your distances, view the team total, comment on other people's fundraising efforts - or integrate your total with Strava and other mobile apps.

### HOW TO SPONSOR THE TEAM

If you'd like to sponsor this fundraiser, please visit [www.latinlink.org.uk/N2S-give](http://www.latinlink.org.uk/N2S-give) and follow the instructions. Any gift, little or large, is greatly appreciated.

As we move along the length of Latin America, we'll share prayer updates about the people and projects who your support is helping. To keep up with us on the journey, and find out how much money has already been raised, hop over to [www.latinlink.org.uk/north-to-south](http://www.latinlink.org.uk/north-to-south), or follow our mission on Facebook and Instagram.



## BY ATTENDING

We've got some fantastic events on the horizon. And even better, they're all accessible online! Here's what's coming up before Christmas. Information about all these events can be found at [latinlink.org.uk/events](http://latinlink.org.uk/events).

### NOVEMBER 11, 2021 | 7:30PM | BRAZIL COUNTRY COMMUNITY GATHERING

Do you have a heart for Brazil? Maybe you've been on mission there before, or plan to go in the future. Or perhaps you pray for mission in Brazil and want to learn more. Whatever your connection, the Brazil Country Community Gathering is an excellent opportunity to gather with likeminded people and hear compelling stories from frontline mission workers across the country. Register online to join the Zoom event.

### NOVEMBER 23, 2021 | INSPIRE IRELAND

The Latin Link team in Ireland are hosting a regional Inspire! event, where you can hear from Latin Link members serving in or sent from there. It's an opportunity to pray together, build community and discover more about God's mission between Latin America and Europe. Join the Zoom event by signing up via our website.

### DECEMBER 2021 | CHRISTMAS SPANISH WORSHIP NIGHT

Christmas jumpers at the ready, hot chocolate in hand, vocal chords warmed up...the Spanish Worship Night is going into festive mode this December! Together we'll be praising God by singing much-loved Christmas carols and contemporary worship songs, in Spanish and English. We'll be joined by Latin Link members around the globe, who will share stories and reflections throughout the night. You can join this Christmas event live on Facebook and YouTube.

## BY VOLUNTEERING

### STORY-SHARERS

How did a short-term mission trip impact your life? What's it like to serve on a Stride placement abroad? How have you seen God's hope being shared during your time serving in Latin America? So many of us have stories about our unique mission experiences and adventures. Are you one of them? We're currently growing a team of 'story-sharers' who can journey together as they inspire local communities about global mission. If that sounds like something you want to be a part of - whether it's sharing a story on social media, or telling your testimony at church - we'd love to hear from you.

### MOBILISERS

We are building a network of mobilisers across Britain and Ireland who will create opportunities to inspire others to step into God's big mission in the world. That could mean representing Latin Link at churches or gatherings, organising a mission event, starting a prayer group, creating fundraising opportunities, etc. If you're interested in learning more and getting involved, please do get in touch.

To join the volunteer network, either as a story-sharer or a mobiliser, or to learn a bit more about what's involved, chat to Jenny Brown (part of the Latin Link Mobilisation Team) by emailing [jennyB@latinlink.org.uk](mailto:jennyB@latinlink.org.uk).





## Get active as part of our community fundraising challenge

Together, we're travelling the length  
of Latin America to help communities  
on the road to Covid-19 recovery.

Will you join the journey from  
north to south?

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