



## O EN LA MISIÓN

mission • Conectando • missão  
iner Mission • Verb • Missie

# Together!

International Assembly ushers in a new era (pages 4–5)

Alan Tower (left) hands over the International Team Leader role to Paul Turner (right) at the International Assembly

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## Contact us

**Latin Link**  
87 London Street  
Reading RG1 4QA  
t 0118 957 7100  
f 0118 957 7115  
e info@latinlink.org.uk  
w latinlink.org.uk

**Latin Link Ireland**  
285a Woodstock Road,  
Belfast BT6 8PR  
t +44 (0)7736 033253  
e ireland@latinlink.org

**Latin Link Scotland**  
18/13 McGregor Pend,  
Prestonpans,  
East Lothian EH32 9FS  
t +44 (0)1875 819856  
e scotland@latinlink.org.uk



facebook.com/latinlinkpage  
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instagram.com/latinlink

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and Sarah Smith  
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## What is Latin Link?

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

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


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

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

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

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

**Latinfile** can be viewed online at [issuu.com/latin-link/docs/latinfile\\_spring\\_2018](http://issuu.com/latin-link/docs/latinfile_spring_2018)

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

## Change is in the air

**Welcome to the Spring edition of Latinfile, which focuses on some of the big changes happening in Latin Link and mission generally.**



**Latinfile provides a place where we can read stories from Latin Link members about their work and ministry. It's also provides an avenue to look at some of the big mission debates that are currently raging.**

There are some tremendous articles in this edition, featuring a blossoming children's and leadership training ministry in Colombia, as well as two articles looking at the training and support of Latin American mission workers. These articles in particular touch on some of those big mission debates, as does the article about the International Assembly (IA) in Guatemala. It's wonderful to be able to include a report from this gathering of Latin Link members so soon after it took place, especially as the main sessions at the IA considered some of the big mission issues facing Latin Link and mission agencies in general. Issues such as:

- how migration is affecting the mission world, creating fresh opportunities and new challenges;
- how we do mission for and with millennials;
- the continuing changes in the mission workforce from the global north to the global south.

As Latin Link moves into its next phase, with a new International Team Leader (see page 16), so we need to adapt to the changing mission environment. For a mission agency that works into and out of Latin America, that includes having strategies for mobilising, placing and supporting Latin American mission workers. So it's fascinating not just to learn about the training of mission workers, but also to read about some of those who have now gone on to their new countries, and also about our two Latin Americans who have just started working in the Scotland and Ireland offices. Change is in the air indeed!

*Andrew Johnson*

**Andrew Johnson**  
Team Leader, Britain and Ireland



# Together!

Latin Link held its latest quadrennial International Assembly (IA) in Guatemala from 1-7 February. The roving reporting team (Sarah Smith and Sharon Jones) caught the atmosphere.



'There has been a real sense of unity in Christ as at the same time we celebrated our diversity and encouraged one another.'

**Paul Turner (Peru)**

'It has been very exciting to have themes and subjects which are very relevant to our situations that we can take back with us.'

**Andrew Johnson (B&I)**

'The conference has been very good. It's been a great group of people here, a great spirit. I think there's been great friendships and connections made.'

**Alan Tower (International)**

'Seeing the whole spectrum of Latin Link people is amazing. To see people praising God in Spanish, English, German, French,

Quechua, is a good reminder of Revelation – that he saves people from every nation, tongue.'

**Mike Fernández (B&I)**

'A lovely sense of unity and people getting on really well together. It's exciting to see so many young people and to see older friends as well.'

**Ruth Turner (Peru)**

'The best bit of the week for me was the trip. What impacted me most was when we visited the rich

places, and then this graveyard. From there you could see this massive bin, where all the rubbish of the city goes. It was the size of eight Wembley stadiums, and you could see all these little people, moving like ants – kids, teenagers, adults, just going through the rubbish. It was very sad to see.'

**Zac Frith (Bolivia)**



The assembled group



Plenty of fun!

'My favourite time is the fellowship – talking, sharing, praying together, in informal ways, in corridors, after and before meals and coffee. It makes you feel you aren't the only one facing issues, or praying for people.'

**Mayra Gomez (Mexico)**

'I enjoyed Suzanne Potter's talk about mobilisation and mission. It's something we have been thinking about – how to engage people in mission – new ways and new models. That was exciting to see Latin Link thinking outside the box and how mission is going to continue.'

**Hannah Flatman (Brazil)**

'I went to the Leading Others leadership track. I learnt so much and am going to be mentoring a Strider come May, so lots to put into practice.'

**Ruth McKee (Peru)**

'My highlight was the worship times and devotionals. They were special. Great sense of community, of worshipping together. God was there!'

**Douglas Cowan (Spain)**

You can view more photos and the daily and session videos from the IA by visiting the Latin Link page on Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/latinlinkpage>).



The afternoon visit to Oasis ministry provided many inspirational moments

'The fellowship – well, you can never beat it. It's always good to see people face to face and catch up.'

'This IA has refreshed and renewed us as a community.'





# Equipping for the frontiers



*CEM students get involved in local evangelism*

**Brazil has become a big player in mission. But with that has come issues to do with preparation and training. Phil and Jan talk about the contribution of the Evangelical Missions Centre (CEM) in preparing and sending mission workers.**

The emergence of Brazil as a major sending nation has been one of the big developments in mission in the past few decades. Research published in 2017 found that Brazil had about 15,000 cross-cultural mission workers.\* Some work with groups in Brazil – with indigenous peoples, riverside dwellers, people from the arid interior of the north-east etc. But the majority work overseas.

Such dramatic growth has not been without its issues. In the

\* Brazilian Association of Transcultural Mission (AMTB)

early days, few places offered mission preparation; sadly, the return rate of those sent out was high. Although this has improved dramatically (nine in ten workers now confirm that they have had some form of mission preparation), the Brazilian Church still has a twofold challenge. First, the appropriate and sustained financial support of cross-cultural workers, especially in the midst of a severe and prolonged economic crisis. Second, appropriate and adequate emotional/spiritual/physical support (member care)

of workers spread out throughout the world. Both these needs are being addressed but continue to be a challenge.

It is in this environment that CEM in Viçosa, Brazil, is working.

## Years of preparation

CEM has been preparing Brazilians and those from other Latin American countries (such as Peru, Chile, Argentina, Bolivia and Ecuador) and from Portuguese-speaking African countries (such as Angola and Mozambique) for over 34 years. We arrived in 2006, Phil as a teacher and Jan to help with the newly formed Interserve Brazil mission agency. From early on we were excited by the vision and ethos of the centre. Gradually our involvement increased. Phil is now director of the Mission School, Jan the personnel coordinator

of Interserve Brazil. We continue to teach and mentor students, and Jan is coordinator of the English course.

## The courses

CEM offers a two-year residential course in which students learn from the experienced teaching staff and put into practice what they learn. The course includes three hours of lectures a day, the first year being biblical theological subjects and the second year missiological subjects. They also have the option of studying English and Spanish.

The students then serve in different ministerial projects in the nearby town or surrounding countryside for three hours a week. They are involved as a team in a weekend outreach each term. At the end of the second year they have a six-week cross-cultural placement. We believe that the training covers all aspects of the students' life and ministry – head (knowledge and intellectual understanding), heart (character and attitudes), and hands (service and ministry).

CEM also offers a postgraduate course in missiology for those who've already had some overseas experience or who are going on to teach mission.

## Salt and light

J and M trained at CEM shortly after getting married. They went to South-east Asia and were later joined by a second couple, J and K, also CEM graduates. After studying the local language for two years they have started a carpentry business enterprise, with the aim of providing employment for local people. The wives have started sewing and craft groups with local women. Both couples are involved in local churches and actively seek opportunities to befriend local people, being salt and light in a strongly Muslim context.



*The class of 2017!*

The real excitement comes in December each year when we see another group of students graduate and prepare to go into mission. The 2017 graduates are heading off to places such as India, Spain, Germany, Ukraine, Poland, and the Amazon to work with indigenous peoples. Sometimes we wonder what we are doing in a little town in the interior of Brazil – but then we see that what we are doing is contributing to the

expansion of the kingdom of God in so many different places, and our hearts fill with joy.

## New for 2018

CEM is constantly seeking to adapt to the changing mission world. This year we plan to offer something new at CEM – the well-known *Perspectives* course, which is a basic course in understanding mission and the challenges in the 21st century. We hope to offer this in the second half of the year, lectures being given every two weeks on a Saturday, with reading and work to be completed between lecture days. Our expectation is to attract people from the region who are interested in knowing more about mission but unable to commit two years to a full residential course.



*Students doing evangelism in rural Brazil*





Building relationships in a mission context

### The proof is in the pudding

Training is one thing; sending and keeping workers in mission is another. Currently, 200 CEM graduates are in service. Some are working in Brazil in cross-cultural contexts – with indigenous peoples, with riverside dwellers etc. Others are serving overseas in African countries, in the Arab world, and in many places in Asia. Brazilians are known for their easy adaptation to new situations, their resilience in difficult financial circumstances, their commitment to family and to friendship (which makes them particularly welcome in Arab and Asian contexts where similar values are important) and their perseverance.

But it's not just about sending workers. Getting churches on-board is also key, so that they not only send workers but also see the need to support them.

For example, the Eighth Presbyterian Church of Belo Horizonte first sent students to CEM many years ago and has maintained a good relationship with the centre. Two members have just graduated from the residential course and are going to serve in India. In the past two years the leader of its mission committee, Celia, has studied the postgraduate course in mission. She confirms how this has broadened her understanding of mission and the church's responsibility. Last year she brought 30 people from the church to visit

### Mission partnership

Dani, a young professional who had been working with her local branch of Youth For Christ (YFC), came to CEM for our two-year training. She then served in the far south of Brazil, starting local groups in communities to do evangelism in local schools. After two years there are now strong groups functioning in 28 towns or cities.

Dani has just been invited to be the national vice-president of YFC's 'School of Life' project. She tells of one young girl who accepted Christ through the School of Life and then did the course to learn how to share her faith with her friends. When Dani visited the YFC Bible club she was amazed to hear so many students sharing how they had come to be there because of this one 14-year-old girl. Dani was so struck by the importance and value of the training she (Dani) received at CEM that she persuaded the YFC national leadership to enter into a partnership with CEM, whereby all Brazilian YFC workers going into cross-cultural ministry must study at CEM first.

CEM for a day. We showed them round, explained the courses we give, answered questions and gave them a mini-lesson. We hope to see more students come from that church.

That is the heart of CEM: training, preparing and supporting mission workers.

### Work with CEM!

CEM has received two Step teams and about eight Striders over the years, and is very keen to receive more.

We can place Striders to teach English to the residential students in CEM, and also in local church ministries, with underprivileged children and teenagers in a local project, and with university students in the next-door university.

Interested? Contact [stride@latinlink.org.uk](mailto:stride@latinlink.org.uk) or phone 0118 957 7112

Providing employment opportunities in a mission context



# Between a Step and a Stride

## Short Term Coordinator Liz Diskin looks at adapting the Step and Stride programmes to the specific needs of some applicants.

Recently, some of the lines between Step and Stride have blurred, particularly as several Bible college students have requested month-long placements to complement their studies in theology and mission. It's given them a chance to explore their calling and apply their classroom teaching.



### Ashley Townsend

All Nations Christian College  
3-week Summer Step  
Community Development,  
Nicaragua



### Beth Lindon

Oak Hill College  
4-week Mini-Stride placement  
Oasis Girls' Home,  
Guatemala



### Simon Howling

Moorlands College  
5-week Mini-Stride placement  
Compassion children's project,  
Bolivia

### Why Latin America?

**Ashley:** I became interested in Latin American mission after a trip to Brazil. Also, if my calling is to Latin America, it would prove useful to visit a Spanish-speaking country, as way more countries speak Spanish than Portuguese!

**Beth:** I'd always wanted to go to Latin America and liked the idea of learning Spanish. The opportunity in Guatemala was exactly what I'd like to do in the future.

**Simon:** I have strong family ties to Latin America (my grandparents were mission workers there). I did a gap year with Tearfund in Bolivia and fell in love with it, so knew I had to go back.

### What did you learn about cross-cultural mission?

**A:** It has its challenges, be it timing, appearance, expectations, relationships etc. The local

church and mission partners were so welcoming and patient. The team-leading experience will be valuable for future mission and for being a husband!  
**B:** I was able to think about what long-term cross-cultural mission might look like and its challenges and joys. It was an inspiring project and great to see the difference it is making in Guatemala.

### How does this opportunity relate to your course?

**A:** My course made me very aware and more equipped to deal with living cross-culturally, working in teams, and advising my team on cultural issues and adjusting to mission life.

**S:** My degree looks at how we can take the theology we learn in classes into different settings and apply it to lead people to Christ. So here's a chance to put it into practice!

### And for those thinking of doing something similar?

**A:** I'd definitely recommend Latin America to Bible college students: the people are warm and welcoming, the climate is challenging and beautiful, local church services are electric yet biblically centred, and give plenty for theological reflection.

**B:** I loved my time. Latin Link is a great organisation to go with. It's always great to see faith lived out in a different culture, and the people were so friendly and welcoming.

### Calling Bible college students!

Find out more about doing a placement in Latin America at [latinlink.org.uk/step](http://latinlink.org.uk/step) or contact [step@latinlink.org.uk](mailto:step@latinlink.org.uk) or 0118 957 7112.



# New faces

## Paul Turner

- International Team Leader



### Introduce yourself.

I'm Paul. I was born and grew up in Peru. My wife Ruth and I are members of a Presbyterian church in Lima.

### Latin American experience?

I lived in Peru for 16 years before moving to England to study. I was part of two Step teams to Argentina and Peru while at university. After graduating I returned to Peru for seven months on something similar to a Stride placement (before Stride had been invented). I visited Peru a number of times while a teacher in England before returning as a Stay member 11 years ago.

### Mission experience?

I've always valued being part of churches with a mission focus, and have helped in numerous church-based mission events and projects. When

In the past few months, there have been some key staff appointments in Latin Link both internationally and in Britain and Ireland. Here they introduce themselves.

### What are your hopes?

That we would become a more prayerful community and that prayer for Latin Link and those we serve would increase. That each of us would be committed to the Holy Spirit transforming our lives to be more like Christ, day by day, even as we work to see transformation in the lives and communities where we serve. That our community would have a multiplying effect, that we would be much more than the sum of our parts, as we respect and value each other, support one another and serve one another in Christ.

### What excites you about Latin Link?

The diversity of our membership, with so many different gifts and skills, from so many different backgrounds. I'm excited that we're committed to mission not just in Latin America, but from Latin America.

I first returned to Peru I worked in Arequipa as a teacher at the Shalom Centre for children and young adults with disabilities. I then helped set up a small project at our church called *Nuevas Fuerzas* (Renewed Strength), for young adults with disabilities to socialise together, hear from God's word, and learn and practise different skills. Between 2013 and 2017 I had the privilege of leading the Latin Link team in Peru.

### How did God lead you to the ITL role?

When the role was first made known several people from Latin Link got in touch to see if I was interested. Ruth and I started to pray and asked others to join us as we tried to discern God's will. After feeling it was right to let my name go forward there was a selection process, culminating in the Latin Link community voting on my nomination – and here we are!

## Mike Fernández

- Scotland Coordinator



### Introduce yourself.

My name is Mike, and I'm from Iquitos, on the edge of the Amazon River in Peru. I'm married to Arlene (who is Scottish), and Thiago is our boisterous son.

Following our marriage we set up home outside Edinburgh. I want to help and serve the growing Hispanic community in the city. We worship at Bruntfield Evangelical Church.

### Latin American experience?

As a born-and-bred Latino, I have first-hand experience with the Latin-American culture, inside and outside the Church. I am familiar with the ups

and downs of my culture. I have served the Lord in both Peru and Colombia, and for a short time in Brazil.

### Mission experience?

I was involved in our church's mission programmes in Peru, trying to reach out to communities throughout the Amazonian rainforest, and wider Peruvian communities.

### What are your hopes?

As a Latino living in Scotland I hope to encourage the Scottish Church to continue supporting global mission in Latin America, as well as receiving more Latin Americans to serve in Scotland.

### What excites you about this role?

Working in a job related to the gospel excites me, especially one linked with two of the things I am most passionate about: global mission and Latin America. I believe that thinking about mission globally has a huge effect and benefit in the way we think about mission locally. Facilitating people and churches to partner with what God is doing in Latin America is amazing.

## Suyai Rodríguez

- Ireland Office Assistant



### Introduce yourself.

I'm Suyai – wife and mum, among other things. I was born in Chile, but I've lived in Northern Ireland for a long time. I attend Shankill Parish Church in Lurgan.

### Latin American experience?

I am Latin American! I have several nationalities, so I'm kind of an insider/outsider even in my own culture(s). I love the extrovert nature of my home culture, the passion, the constant celebration of life, meals that can last a whole day, long church services that end up with more food, the natural curiosity.

### Mission experience?

Before moving with my husband to the UK as South American Mission Society mission workers 12 years ago, we had done short-term mission in Chile and elsewhere in Latin America. God gave us a desire to partner with others in reviving a heart for the gospel in Europe, and brought us to a land we knew nothing about, except for its amazingly talented writers and musicians!

### What are your hopes?

To be involved and help as much as I can, even if it's in small ways, to make mission relevant to Christians in Europe, Latin America, and the world. It's a privilege to work for a Christian organisation and I'll do my best to serve in whatever ways I can.

### What excites you about the role?

It's exciting and a gift to be part of the movement of mission workers from so-called developing countries coming to work in nations where churches used to send mission workers.

## Host a Latin American mission worker

Both Mike and Suyai are Latin Americans serving in Britain and Ireland. Interested in hosting a Latin American mission worker to help with your church activities? Contact [im@latinlink.org.uk](mailto:im@latinlink.org.uk) or 0118 957 7100.





# Clubs in the community

As Fiona Christie comes to the end of her time in Colombia, *Latinfile* interviewed her to find out the place of a funky frog in her life.

## Why Colombia?

Well, it's a long story. I met current Latin Link workers, Manuel Reaño and Patty Cuellar de Reaño, in Scotland in the mid-1990s. I stayed in touch with them when they returned to Colombia and finally plucked up the courage to visit them in 2006 (you may remember the reputation Colombia had in those days!). Manuel invited me to teach English in the Bible Seminary of Colombia in Medellín. My mouth said, 'I'll pray about it,' while my heart said, 'You know you're going to do this.'

I went to Colombia on a two-year Stride placement in 2008 to set up the English courses at the Seminary. While there I was able to visit displaced communities on the Atlantic coast. Their needs made a huge

impression on me. When I finished Stride I applied to join Latin Link longer term to help the Vive/ Rana Bacana project on its Bible curriculum for children's clubs.

## Vive? Rana Bacana? Explain!

Rana Bacana translates as 'Funky Frog', and is a project that works to empower local churches to work with children in areas particularly affected by the civil conflict on Colombia's Atlantic coast. Vive Foundation is the legal entity, registered in Colombia in 2014, under which Rana Bacana operates.

The Rana Bacana team trains and equips local Christians to run a club for the children in their communities and supports them in their development as children's club leaders. In the club, the children

play, worship and learn the Bible with their leaders, who commit to praying for them regularly. This project has its roots in the work of Simon Walsh, a former Latin Link mission worker, who led short-term mission trips to these areas from 2003 onwards.

## What was the state of Rana Bacana when you joined?

When I returned to Colombia in 2011, there were four Rana Bacana clubs, one of which later folded, and little structure to our processes and activities. The club activities had been established, as had the basic idea for a Bible curriculum. The team had good relationships with many people on the coast because of Simon and his team's earlier activities, but that was about all.



Having fun is a key part of the clubs

## Where is Rana Bacana now?

There are now 41 Rana Bacana clubs on the Atlantic coast and several pilot projects in Medellín. There are over 30 series of Bible lessons, and scores of churches in other parts of Colombia use our materials for their Sunday schools. There are teams of local people who train club leaders ('Facilitators') and write the Bible teaching materials ('Curriculum Constructors'), plus a fledgling group that hopes to work in Child Protection.

The project now largely belongs to the leaders on the coast, rather than being controlled by the team in Medellín. There is a second office on the coast, with three employed leaders.

## What's been key in developing Rana Bacana?

One key early decision was to empower local people. The local club leaders with their pastors and elders are quickly given ownership of their club: they are responsible for running their club and for solving problems as they arise. This sense of ownership has led some leaders to train neighbouring churches in the Rana Bacana model without any input from the Medellín office. (We call the resulting clubs 'pirate clubs'; every now and then their leaders complete the official training and are received into the Rana Bacana fold.)

Other key elements are our focus on relationships; the emphasis on

our materials being both highly contextualised and theologically rigorous; local pastors' increasing awareness of the importance of work with children; being flexible enough to discard what isn't working; a focus on process over product; and a highly motivated and committed team of young people.

## What's been your last piece of work for Vive?

Putting together a Child Protection policy. It's the culmination of five years of work in the area of prevention of child sexual abuse with the Rana Bacana leaders. There's a growing awareness in Colombia of the need for Child Protection but many churches and Christian organisations still have to grapple with this issue. Our policy was developed by the leaders themselves – a model of grassroots involvement that could be helpful for other organisations.

## You must have seen some exciting things happen through Rana Bacana.

Lots! One thing I realised early on was the profound effect the project was having on the leaders, helping them to grow in their faith and in confidence, and giving them opportunities

## Give to Vive

Vive Foundation is in a time of transition from being almost completely dependent on funding from abroad to being self-sustaining through selling its Bible materials and raising financial support in Colombia. However, that's probably still two or three years away. If you would like to support Vive in this period of change, visit [latinlink.org.uk/appeal/vive-foundation](http://latinlink.org.uk/appeal/vive-foundation).

Fiona has published a short story, *The First Colombian in Space*, which imagines the life of a five-year-old who attends a Rana Bacana club. All proceeds go to Vive Foundation and Rana Bacana. Find it on Amazon!



they might not otherwise have had. John Manuel is young man from an indigenous community who suffered great hardship and rejection as a boy. He was taken in by a local pastor, came to faith and began to serve in the Rana Bacana club in his church. He now trains others to be children's club leaders, has taught at Rana Bacana events, travels around north Colombia and is being encouraged to continue his studies. John did not become a Christian through Rana Bacana but he has grown in confidence and in the exercise of his gifts because of it.

her to the doctor and made sure she was treated, and whose parents started coming to church too; the boy whose older brother had been murdered, who gave up on his thoughts of revenge after a few months at his Rana Bacana club.

### Personal highlights?

The work on the Bible curriculum was intensely satisfying. To know that thousands of children in Colombia are receiving Bible education that is theologically accurate, culturally appropriate and fun because of work I was involved in is wonderful.



Engaging in prayer

But perhaps what I will remember most are the encounters with individual leaders who shared their stories of abuse or trauma and to whom I was able to minister, however imperfectly, something of God's healing and grace. I felt extremely privileged to be trusted with this glimpse into people's hearts.

**I am excited as Rana Bacana becomes better known...**

**What are you most excited about for the future of Rana Bacana?**

I am excited as Rana Bacana becomes better known beyond the Atlantic coast and as local leaders continue to grow and develop. As we (they!) become better known I think we will have opportunities to serve entire denominations in Colombia with our materials and training – denominations with 700–1,000 congregations! After that, the whole Spanish-speaking world is our oyster!

### Want to get involved?

Rana Bacana has positions suitable for a Strider: fundraiser, web-designer, or marketer, plus someone with experience (and relatively good Spanish) in helping victims of abuse or in implementing Child Protection in an organisation. Interested? Contact [stride@latinlink.org.uk](mailto:stride@latinlink.org.uk) or phone 0118 957 7112

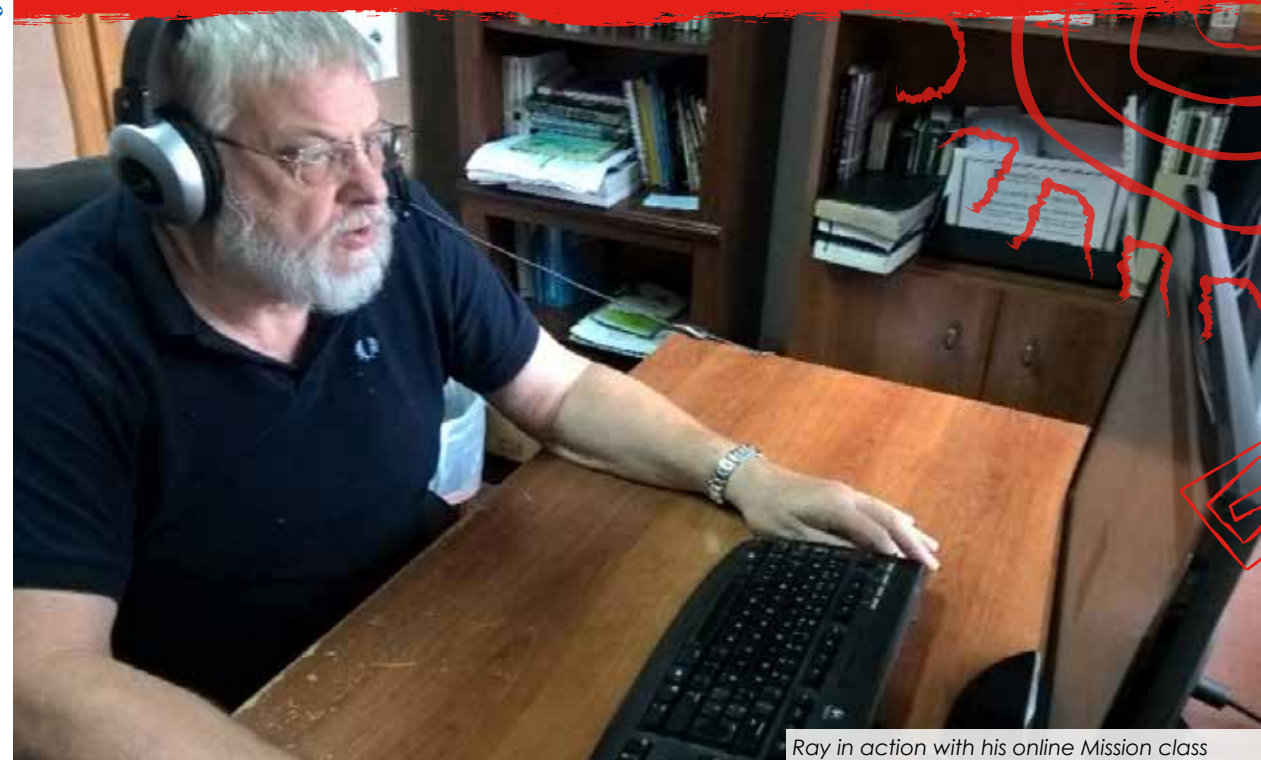


Having secure, safe bonds between the club leaders and the children is vital

One of my favourite stories of the response of children to the Bible teaching was of two little boys being taught the story of the two blind beggars in Matthew 20. One of them surprised their leader by shouting out, 'That's like us! We're the beggars and you're Jesus!' On investigation, it turned out that their house had been blown down in a storm and the church had rallied round to rebuild it.

There are so many other stories: the boy who was on a local armed group's hit list for being a thief and who was taken in by his local Rana Bacana club, which probably saved his life; the little girl with the wound that wouldn't heal, whose club leaders took

Then there are the events. In last year's camps, I watched club leaders acting in dramas that revealed that they knew the importance of Child Protection, and the steps to take when things go wrong. And I loved the last Circus (training event) I attended in January 2017: seeing the children's rapt faces as they watched a drama about the resurrection of Jesus was unforgettable.



Ray in action with his online Mission class

## Online: the way forward?

**With the national and cultural make-up of mission workers changing, there is a need to adapt how these workers are trained. Ray Miller introduces one approach to more accessible training.**

The rapid rise of mission workers from the global south has been remarkable. The nature and speed of this change has challenged the traditional way of training mission workers. As was said at a recent major mission event: 'Of the 24,000 Latin mission workers less than ten per cent have received adequate cross-cultural training.' Though the 'old' ways are still valid and work in many situations, they can no longer meet the demand. New ways of providing training are needed. This is where the digital world, with virtual connections possible from almost anywhere to anywhere, is coming into its own.

### Welcome to the virtual world!

ProMETA (Accessible Masters Programmes in Theological Education) is a dynamic 'virtual university'. Its base is in San José, Costa Rica, but its teachers and mentors are dotted around the globe.

In 2012 my wife Bridget and I were recruited to develop an online mission studies programme for Pro-META, out of which EMA (Accessible Missions Training) was born. Five years on EMA runs a two-year Diploma in Intercultural Studies and a Certificate in Islamic Studies. On the drawing board is a three-year Masters with an emphasis in Mission, and (in coordination





The ProMETA exhibition stand. Aldo is sitting on the right

## How it's done

Typically, students take two three-credit courses in an eight-week bimester (two-month period) and annually a total of ten courses in five bimesters. Each course requires about four hours' study and participation each week. They can study at a time that suits them, but there is a deadline for participating in the weekly forums and completing their investigative blogs.

We normally have groups of 12 students with a trained mentor. We create a dynamic, virtual, multicultural classroom where students contribute from different countries and from widely differing life and theological experiences. The courses are designed to be highly interactive, challenging and transformative. Each week there will be multimedia materials to stimulate students and questions or issues they have to address individually and as a group in the weekly forum. Some of these forums are face-to-face seminars, with all the students participating together in a conference call with their mentor.

EMA now has a team of specialists covering Spiritual Formation, Theology, History, Missiology and Anthropology, plus four covering Islam. All our teachers and mentors have cross-cultural and hands-on mission experience.

## Time for reinforcements

Andrés, Erica and family are South American mission workers in Indonesia. They completed their theological studies in seminary and English while in the Philippines for a year. During this time they felt the need to reinforce their missiological and particularly Islamic studies. They will complete both the Intercultural Diploma and the Islamic Studies Certificate and will graduate in December, studying thanks to a grant from England. It is hoped that Andrés will join the team of mentors in the Islamic Studies programme.

## Leadership handover

Two years ago I handed the team leadership to Aldo Cayuba, who is a Bolivian and nationalised Costa Rican. He and wife Jeaniny have worked with Muslims in New Delhi, India. He has also been the associate Director of Wycliffe in South America and founded Christ for the City in Bolivia. He is an excellent communicator and has a real heart for mission. Jeaniny heads up the Certificate in Islamic Studies with a team of three experienced mission workers, one of whom works with Muslim refugees in Europe.

I am now the Academic Coordinator and Bridget deals with student relations.

## Africa-bound

Keytlin has been a star student who has dedicated herself full-time to her preparation with EMA, completing both the Intercultural Diploma and Certificate in Islamic Studies in just two years. She plans to go to East Africa later this year, to teach and reach out to Muslim women.



Keytlin with her Sunday school class

## Publishing spin-off

A spin-off from the courses has been the development of Seedbed Publications. We are aware that Latins don't tend to read books, so we produce a series of booklets on mission. These are currently sold at conferences we speak at, and at our own regular mission day conferences in Costa Rica. Once the legal details have been completed we will be able to sell them in bookshops, churches and mission agencies.

## Faith venture

EMA is a faith venture. All our staff have to raise support: only Aldo receives a salary. Inevitably lack of finance is a limiting factor. Yet, at a time of global crisis in Theological Education, when Bible colleges are closing down due to spiralling costs and lack of students, we have been able to move forward.

Virtual training is the future and we are among the leaders in Latin America. As a result, there are plenty of opportunities to be part of this vibrant and developing ministry training Latin American mission workers.



Nations (in red) with current EMA students and mission workers

## Access all areas

At present all our courses are completely virtual or online, and in Spanish. Online courses provide three key areas of accessibility:

- **Geographical.** EMA students don't have to leave their homes or church ministry to prepare for a future mission role. Those already serving in mission can complete their studies while working in another country.
- **Financial.** EMA courses are highly competitive compared to the costs of studying in a seminary. We offer an almost two-for-one discount for couples in mission, as we want to see both partners fully trained.
- **Academic.** There are no academic entry requirements for EMA, as we build in the skills and tools for on-going education. We have students with no academic background and others with undergraduate and Masters degrees.

As a result of this accessibility, we have students in most Latin American countries as well as in Spain, Germany, southern Russia and Indonesia.

## Studying for the future

A Central American family who completed their Intercultural Diploma in 2017 are now studying Russian in southern Russia, with a view to working further south with a completely unreached Muslim people group. While studying Russian they are also finishing their Islamic Studies online with EMA.

## Interested in lending a hand?

Job-wise, EMA desperately needs a webmaster. Contact [info@latinlink.org.uk](mailto:info@latinlink.org.uk) or 0118 957 7100.

Most of our students are self-financed; where possible ProMETA tries to encourage them from a grant fund. There are options for giving to this fund. To find out more, visit <https://www.latinlink.org.uk/fundraisers/training-latin-americans>.



# What can I do?



## Get Inspired! Conference alert!

The 2018 Inspire! Conferences are fast approaching!

Book your place now:

- 28 April – Inspire! Ireland, near Belfast
- 4–6 May – Inspire! Scotland, in Pitlochry
- 19 May – Inspire! England and Wales, in Reading

The theme for the conferences is 'All things new', reflecting that there are lots of exciting developments in Latin Link. The conferences will focus on what has been taking place recently in the Latin Link community both internationally and locally, and some of the plans and ideas for future

growth. All within the context of a changing mission environment and a globalisation.

Recently appointed International Team Leader Paul Turner will be a special guest at all three, along with a number of Stay members, ex-Striders and ex-Steppers.

**Come along and get inspired for Latin American mission!**

Visit <https://www.latinlink.org.uk/events> for more details about and the booking form for each conference.

## Play with a purpose



Do you have an interesting fundraising idea or story?

Contact us with your ideas and stories on [info@latinlink.org.uk](mailto:info@latinlink.org.uk) or 0118 957 7100.

**How's about this for a novel idea for fundraising for Latin Link?**

Recently, a Latin Link supporter who is a theatrical director was given the opportunity to give all the profits from the sales of programmes for the play she was directing to the charity of her choice, which was Latin Link. The play – Bedroom Farce – was a huge success, as was the fundraising!

Just say 'Yes!'



**WARNING: If you don't read this, you may never hear from us again!**

Changes to the laws governing how we store and use your data are coming in to force soon. You

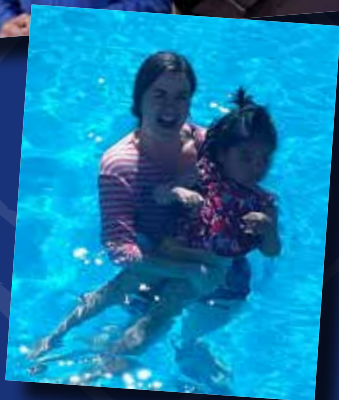
will have full say over how charities use your data and what communications you receive from them. So if you don't give your permission, Latin Link won't be able to send you any more mailings.

We'll be in touch with you about this soon, so keep an eye open! Please make sure you respond, to ensure we can continue to send the communications you want to receive. Thank you.



# Stride

## Find your calling... Explore God's heart



Are you at BIBLE COLLEGE? Or STUDYING mission?

Looking for an opportunity to PUT INTO PRACTICE what you are learning in the classroom?

We offer 4-8 WEEK STRIDE PLACEMENTS for Bible and mission college students.

SEEK God's direction for your future while getting HANDSON experience.

Stride is for 6-24 months. Individuals, couples or families work with churches and local projects to meet a wide range of spiritual and practical needs.

We are currently recruiting for February 2019. Closing date for applications is 30 April 2018.

## Apply or find out more

visit [latinlink.org.uk/stride](http://latinlink.org.uk/stride) or email [Stride@latinlink.org.uk](mailto:Stride@latinlink.org.uk) or call +44 (0)118 957 7101



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Latin Link, 87 London Street, Reading RG1 4QA. Registered charity no 1020826