



newsletter 61

december 2010

“Tychicus, the dear brother and faithful servant in the Lord, will tell you everything, so that you also may know how I am and what I am doing. I am sending him to you for this very purpose, that you may know how we are, and that he may encourage you.”

Ephesians 6:21–22

No doubt as Christmas approaches many of us will be writing cards and letters to friends that we rarely get to see. It's always good to hear from them how they are doing but there is nothing quite like being able to meet them face to face. Sometimes, as it was for the apostle Paul and the church at Ephesus, it's impossible to meet but the next best thing is to have someone like Tychicus who brings first hand news personally. We can't manage that through a newsletter but we do have Terry Thraves and Seren Boyd's first hand accounts of visits to our friends in Colombia.



Nancy greets Terry and Seren in Bogotá

Reporting Back

In October Terry Thraves and Seren Boyd, IMC–UK trustees visited Colombia. Here's a question and answer report of their time with our friends.

Editor (Ed): Terry, Colombia is a long way away and you were planning on a week long visit, how did things go?

Terry: For various reasons we finished up with only four complete days in Bogotá! But we did make good use of this limited time and with Nancy's help we were able to do all that we had intended.

Ed: You had a long 'to do' list so what were your main aims of the trip?

Terry: The main purpose was to re-establish a dialogue with the Junta (the IMiC board), to see for ourselves how things were running and to discover the root cause of IMiC's financial difficulties.

We in UK have unintentionally neglected our friends in Bogotá. No UK Trustee or Summer Team has visited for two years! This has led the Junta to wonder if we had a problem with them or if our enthusiasm was waning or, alternatively what the reason was for our long delay in visiting.

What we didn't realise was that Nancy as Director, and the Junta valued these visits, contacts and connections so highly.





The UK Trustees have in mind that this visit would be the first of two, the second being probably in February, will be designed to go into more detail particularly about addressing the financial issues.

The main purpose of this trip has been to show solidarity with our Colombian colleagues and to stand with them during this crisis.

Ed: Before we look at some of the difficulties can you give us some of your impressions of the various programmes you visited during your hectic four days?

Terry: Seren and I were delighted to visit all of the IMiC sites and we were very pleased to meet up again with our Colombian friends 'on the ground'.

The Comedor (feeding programme) is up and running and looks very good as always although there were slightly less numbers of children in attendance. Nancy thought that this was normal and accepted that numbers fluctuated from time to time.

Lucy's programme had of course moved out from Altamira and is now housed on the first floor of a dwelling nearer to the centre of Fusa. Although the accommodation is limiting, the children were clearly happy and well supported. There is no space available for the children to play outdoors and so staff have to take them to a local park.



Homework time at Lucy's Programme

There are 27 children in Lucy's programme although only 23 of these are 'IMiC' children. In order to cope with the restricted finance many of these children return to their homes each evening, but there are 12 IMiC children who remain as residential.

At Peniel Farm we met up with the staff as well as Grant and Leah from UK who is spending six months with IMiC. Unfortunately Leah was unwell at this time and was unable to be with us during our visit, but Grant acted as our guide and interpreter and shared his perspective on progress there.



Distributing presents from UK supporters

Ed: Now to the main purpose of the visit to renew contacts with the Junta and address the issue of finance. What can you tell us about the meetings and problems?

Terry: We had very good and positive individual meetings with Nancy, Alfredo and the Junta, all gave clear answers, which is not normally the case with our Colombian friends, and we felt that we came away with a good understanding of what the problems were and how they arose and even touched on some thoughts of how we could begin to address the issues.

In a nutshell the basic problem is one of exchange rates between the Pound Sterling, which is weakening on international markets, and the Colombian Peso which at the same time is looking to be quite strong. The result is that there has been the equivalent of a 35% devaluation in sending funds to IMiC. We normally send around £8,000 per month but in Jan 2007 the exchange rate was 4,400 pesos to the pound, whereas it was only 2,800 pesos in October 2010. These funds were sufficient when IMiC was set up some years ago but the shortfall makes the Junta's job very difficult indeed.

Imagine that your family income was reduced by 35% how would you cope?

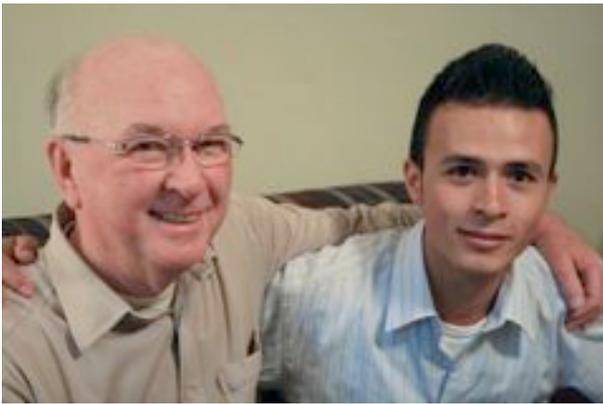


Ed: Thank you Terry, that's a good question to leave hanging for our thoughts.

Seren Says...

"It was seeing one particular child that made perfect sense of why I'm involved with IMC.

"We were in a board meeting with the Colombian trustees in Bogotá when there was a polite knock at the door and in walked Maicol. It was the same Maicol I met 11 years ago when I first visited IMiC Colombia — the same beaming smile and gentle spirit. Only this time he towered above me — and everyone else in the room. Today Maicol is an adult, a good man, a role model for his friends, working and studying hard — and a glorious example of what God is doing in His mercy through IMiC.



Terry with Maicol

"It was a whirlwind trip but one shot through with wonderful glimpses of God at work restoring broken lives. It was precious to spend time with Nancy, our faithful guide, and the rest of the IMiC team, so committed and so cheerful, despite the huge pressures upon them. Their grace was humbling.

"And it was wonderful to see the difference their work is making in the lives of children and families through Peniel Farm and through Lucy Leal's project and the feeding programme in Fusa. Thrilling to see happy, well-behaved children, clucking over our camera and excited by the presents so many supporters had sent out for them. Amazing to see how Lucy Leal has turned a small first floor flat into a warm and welcoming home for children who were at

the IMC-supported home in Altamira until very recently.

"It's tough in Colombia at the moment as exchange rates have plummeted and needs spiralled. And Nancy and her team are over-stretched and in real need of our prayers. But they are perfect examples of Isaiah 58:10: 'If you spend yourselves on behalf of the hungry then your light will rise in the darkness, and your night will become like the noonday.' I'm reminded what a privilege it is to partner with them and share in what God is doing 6,000 miles away."

Message From Maicol

This is a translation of part of his letter to the UK board.

"I ask a favour of all the board in England that you don't let this great project (which is Fundación IMiC) begin to be extinguished. The Foundation is a dream for many children of Colombia.

"Sisters and brothers, I ask you to strengthen us a little more, so that more people who don't yet know how life could be, who are just beginning to know what they want, and what they want to be... so that what better guide than the foundation, the persons who direct, the persons most noted to do so... that we do not allow the vision for the children to be clouded, to lose sight of the horizon which has been planted since the beginning, the objective since more than 12 or 13 years. We have to throw ourselves on God. In his hands he has yet clear miracles for many girls and boys of this country. We only need to know when he is speaking, and how he is doing, so I ask you please not to turn aside from the problem of those persons who have to go out and help others regardless of the quantity if not the quality of humanity with which we do it.

"Your friend, Maicol."

News from Nancy

"We are thankful to our great God who enabled us to put on a concert for IMiC, it was a great night, the boys sang like angels and everyone



was moved by them, the presentation of IMC's work and our reflection on God's word by Pastor Henry Lopez was really special.

"We praise God too for answered prayer for the boys at Peniel Farm whose behaviour has improved a lot. There is a much better atmosphere in the house but we need to continue to pray for all the boys.

"Please also pray for the adolescent boys who are facing lots of difficulties at school, especially with drugs.

"We thank God for the blessings we have received from a neighbour who has a dog breeding and training business, he is teaching the boys how to train dogs which they are enjoying very much, it is very therapeutic for them.



"A few days ago some veterinary students from the university visited us and donated their time and medicines to treat the animals and they want to continue to do this.

"Leah's arrival has been a real blessing to IMiC, she is helping out at the farm with the younger boys and is currently learning the ropes as well as the language and is settling in very well. Next week she is going to visit the programmes in Fusa. Please pray for Leah, for wisdom to learn the language and for the cultural change she is experiencing, pray that God would strengthen her, and pray for her safety.

"Please keep praying for finances for IMiC, for the end of year plans, for help for Grant in the

workshop where the boys are making things for the garden to sell. We are also organising visits from schools to the farm to raise funds."

Newsletter by Email

Would you like to receive the newsletters by email and save the cost of production and postage thus making more available to go to Colombia?

If so send an email with "subscribe" in the subject line to news@inministrytochildren.org which will automatically put you on the emailing list for future newsletters. Thank you.

And Finally...

It's been a year of challenges and difficulties, setbacks and successes, and children's lives have been changed for the better.

It is clear from Terry and Seren's visit and also Nancy's prayer request that there are challenges ahead particularly in financing the work due to the current economic conditions both here and in Colombia. Please pray for resources to continue the work. Pray also for the Colombian and UK boards for wisdom to manage things well. And as always pray for the welfare of the children.

Thank you for your support, have a restful and joyous Christmas and may we all be refreshed for the challenges of the New Year.

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