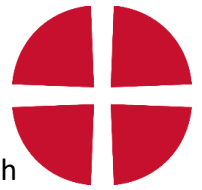




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Newsletter: 9

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Despite the best of intentions to send my newsletter before I left for furlough, it didn't materialize. This is what I had originally written as my introduction:

"On one hand, I can hardly believe it has only been 3 months since I moved to Misahualli: so many things have been going on, and I've had a packed schedule. However, this has been a very helpful time, as I've been aware that I will be spending a month in the UK and Ireland on furlough, which will give me time to reflect on how I will use my time when I get back. I'll try and give an overview of some of the things I have been involved with. Not all of these have been weekly, as there are clashes in my schedule, meaning I only get every fortnight."



I had even fitted in a visit back to the coastal region I served in last year, revisiting the church plant with an American medical team. Many of you may have heard my presentation covering much of the past 15 months while I was on furlough, so instead of repeating myself, I'll focus on Holy Week, one of the busiest weeks to date, and a good summary of all that's been happening.

Young People It's always nice to start with some good news, and one of these has been the opportunities to get to know the young people in the month before I left, and while it is slow, it is also steady. There are currently 8 young people coming on a Saturday afternoon. There are a few others I would love to attend, but for the minute, I'm focusing on helping this group. In the weeks leading up to Easter, we did a mini-series on the events of Holy Week, to help them understand these significant events better and how they fit into the big story of the Gospel.



English Graduation

Yes, I know, didn't I just arrive in Misahualli, and already the English course is finishing? Yet, somehow, we managed to fit in 10 weeks of classes before I left, giving a taster (or perhaps crash!) course, while also finishing perfectly in time for my furlough, allowing a natural break, with the promise of a new course (starting week commencing 29th May, all being well). On Good Friday (being a bank holiday here so classes were off) we held a graduation ceremony for 25 students and their parents, a mini-celebration and presentations, and cake afterwards.



Holy Week and Easter Weekend Services

Also on Good Friday, I organized a short service in the evening. As this was a new event in the Misahualli calendar, Pastora Fabiola and I weren't actually sure if anyone would turn up (as I said, the bank holiday here is Good Friday), but we were pleasantly surprised by a respectable turnout. I led the time of reflection,



The Sunday School on Palm Sunday

with readings and songs, and then Fabiola led Communion. When we went up to the Communion table, I somehow had 3 children clinging on to me – one in each hand, and one hugging me – a very moving moment for me of how far I’d come in just 3 months, and reflecting on the sacrifice of our Saviour, remembering the very reason which had brought me to Ecuador – to share Christ’s love.

Easter Sunday was a different story – bringing together more than 120 people from Misahualli and the church plant in Ongota. I gave the talk, which was an all-age interactive talk. Afterwards, 120 (live) fish were delivered, and these were soon roasting on the barbecue, wrapped in leaves to create the local specialty ‘maito’. I’m a big fan (once you get past the fact that you get served the fish whole, head, eyes, fins and tail included), and it seemed especially appropriate for an Easter Sunday meal.



Also during Holy Week (now you understand why my newsletter wasn’t sent!), we went to another community to give out shoeboxes. This was the third place we’ve given out shoeboxes through Samaritan’s Purse’s *Operation Christmas Child*, the start of a 12 week evangelism programme in each place. I’ll be joining in again now that I’m back.



Student Lunch – Many of you will have heard about the lunch for pupils of any age the church is providing on a Monday and a Wednesday in Misahualli as part of its commitment to fighting malnutrition in children. More on this next time, but this started about 2 months ago with around 10-15 children coming – the last time Fabiola messaged me, she said there were 60!



Decorating Easter eggs in English class with new phrases learnt

Prayer points

Giving thanks for 14 months in Ecuador, 3 in Misahuallí and growing relationships
 Pray for a renewed sense of God’s vision and guidance, and how to put that into practice in the coming months, and where best to use my time and skills
 For the young people and the youth meeting
 All the activities mentioned above – evangelism in Shiripuno, English classes, church plant in Ongota, student lunch on Mondays and Wednesdays

*Wishing you God’s richest blessing,
 Melissa*

