

## **CUMBRIA ARGENTINA METHODIST PARTNERSHIP**

### **REPORT FOR GLOBAL RELATIONS TEAM – NOVEMBER 2020**

#### **PARTNERSHIP IN A PANDEMIC**

##### **1 Background**

The seeds of the Partnership were sown at the millennium, when Methodist Bishop Aldo visited Cumbria, and it really took off in 2005 when 5 representatives from Cumbria visited Patagonia. Exchange visits both ways by church leaders, members and young people since have cemented the Partnership between the Argentine Church (IEMA) and Cumbria District.

The Partnership is supported by the District Partnership Group in Cumbria and by the national leadership team in Argentina.

Although there is an obvious inequality of resources between our two countries, we and IEMA have wanted the partnership to be one of mutuality and, whilst we have supported some projects financially, we have also gained a great deal from our Argentine friends. They are streets ahead of us in the use of information technology, necessitated by the vast area that their church covers.

##### **2 2020 plans and actuality!**

The planned programme for 2020 included a visit by our new District Chair, which it was hoped would include development of a link with the Methodist University in Rosario. Cumbria was looking forward to a visit of Nora Viacava and Natalia Ochoa from IEMA – both being involved in a programme of development of lay leaders. Nora heads up FeMMA (equivalent of Methodist Women in Britain) and was to lead the Cumbria MWiB Residential Conference in November.

Both exchanges had to be postponed but close contact by e-mail, Facebook etc has continued.

A link between a village school in Cumbria and a Methodist primary school in Rosario was launched but has been put on hold while schools are closed. One of the teachers from Rosario (Geri de Paris) visited the school while visiting Cumbria with her family in 2018 and keeps in touch.

##### **3 Covid 19 Appeal**

Covid 19 has hit South America hard. We believe Global Relations gave a grant of £4000 specifically for an ecumenical food distribution programme in the Buenos Aires area. (We understand grants were given to many places, including a large one to Zimbabwe). IEMA helped with the ecumenical project but recognised need across Argentina and with the help of volunteers from their churches set up a programme to provide across this wider area. However, in July we received an urgent request from Bishop Americo to say that funds were running out and could we help? An appeal to our churches in Cumbria produced an immediate and generous response and just under £6,000 was sent to IEMA.

Bishop Americo wrote: "Our gratitude is immense for the generosity of your help with the families that IEMA is assisting. The money you have sent has benefited very many families who give thanks with joy and gratitude".

#### **4 Keeping in touch**

The far-flung nature of the Methodist churches in Argentina has led them to make much use of modern technology. Consequently they were well-placed to stream services during lockdown, make videos and generally keep in touch with each other and with us. A minister in the Patagonia District invited us to contribute a reading and prayer to a "devocional" (a short service on video) seen by church members in that part of the country. The Bishop also invited us to make a short video, giving thanks for the Partnership, which was circulated to all churches for inclusion in worship. Friends in Bariloche (Patagonia) sent us a message of appreciation of the Partnership together with pictures of their visit to Cumbria in 2015.

The strong link that has developed between the women of Cumbria District and FeMMA (the national Methodist women's organisation in Argentina) has continued with frequent exchanges by e-mail, Facebook etc. FeMMA has a Facebook page that we can tap into and IEMA has a good website.

Throughout the lockdown Pastora Cristina Dinoto has posted a daily prayer on Facebook, which has been relevant to the current situation and has proved inspirational.

#### **5 Plans for the future**

We look forward to reinstating the exchange visits postponed from this year and developing the school and university links. We have much to learn from each other and, whilst the use of modern technology is a great way to maintain ongoing contact, we have found that exchange visits and "making friends" have been invaluable in developing and deepening the links between our two churches.



Links: 'Devocional' video – <https://youtu.be/XhBRiR5Jijs>

Appreciation of the Partnership from Bariloche – <https://ark2.rumbleworks.co.uk/s/LbDq93kTY6GF6rl>

A prayer of Pastora Cristina Dinoto during lockdown:  
ENDING THE DAY. ...

It happens to all of us that we have days that we are well, encouraged, hopeful - and at other times we say " I can't anymore " and we feel discouraged and the sigh escapes us: 'how long O God?'

And that's when we feel your presence, we get settled in your words and, as fresh water that renews us, we remember a Bible verse with some of your promises, we gently begin to sing praise and we are in your presence.

And what Paul says to the Romans, I take it for us today: Rejoice in hope, show patience in suffering, persevere in prayer. Romans 12: 12

That's why we will pray:

Beloved Father, in the night of this day, when it seems that our whole being fails, Your Word, speaks to us of Hope, to persevere in prayer, to be patient.

These times are not easy but we continue to trust that you renew our strength every day.

We put in your hands all those who are most vulnerable, in your hands those who are facing sickness, those who seek work, for them we pray and for us too.  
Lord, may we rejoice in hope and may our strength be renewed tomorrow.  
In the name of Him who heals and gives new life to each one. Amen