

Prayer Letter May 2011

Greetings once more, we trust this letter finds you well.

The Brazilian Baptist Convention has chosen for 2011 the theme, 'Life in all its fullness and the Environment' [in Portuguese it sounds much better: 'Vida Plena e Meio Ambiente']. Anyone who knows us well will realise that we have found this exciting and stimulating, as it has given us a practically unprecedented opportunity to treat this important issue through national denominational publications and events. Experience and knowledge gained in Ceará, through the partnership between the CIBUC convention and the Christian environmentalist organisation A Rocha, have given us a good base from which to develop Bible studies, models for local church environmental programmes, teaching materials and other aids. Being able to report on a number of churches in Ceará, with concrete positive contributions made in their local communities, is important for spurring others on to action. If you have a working knowledge of Portuguese (a bit of Spanish would help, or a webpage translator) and would be interested in seeing the material we have put on the Baptist Convention's webpage, go to www.batistas.com/acaosocial and click on this picture.



Another exciting development over the last few months has been the opening of two 'Space to Fly' groups in Rio de Janeiro. After two training sessions with Suzana, involving nine churches, and a feeling that nothing would happen as a result, we heard from two of the ladies, who had got groups up and running under their own steam. One of them, in Magé, Suzana has already visited and the other, in Botafogo, she hopes to get along to soon. A third group tried to 'take off' in Mangueira, but unfortunately it never reached the end of the runway. In the local church we have become members of, Nova Canaã, there was already an after-school club of sorts running. Suzana is going along



twice a week as a volunteer, but as yet there are no plans to use the 'Space to Fly' materials.

This week the finishing touches are being put on a new 'Space to Fly' manual about children's rights, based on the life of Martin Luther King. At the end of last year a special edition manual was launched with a Christmas creation theme, which was used in Ceará and went down very well. To see more about that, visit the BMS webpage: www.bmsworldmission.org/news-blogs/archive/space-fly-brazilian-kids .

On the personal front we are beginning to see some light at the end of the tunnel in terms of forming new friendships. Suzana has found a pastors' wives group to be part of, and Mark is getting on well with a new colleague at the convention offices. He brought his wife and son for a meal at our home recently, and the wives got on well too. Suzana is now working at the convention offices also, instead of from home, and that has brought welcome variety to her day.

Edward and Ana continue to develop very well academically, although the extra study load as they grow older means that they have to cut down some of their extra-curricular activities. Edward is now taller than Suzana, and Ana is in baptismal class at church.

Recently we had a sabbatical visitor from the UK. We had a great time, and we thought that having some of the prayer letter written from his point of view might make things a little more interesting for a change. So here he is...

"My name is David Wise and I am the pastor of Greenford Baptist Church, currently on sabbatical in Brazil and I recently spent a week with the Greenwood family, although Suzana was away for most of the time. You will probably be aware that the main part of Mark's role with the Brazilian Baptist Convention is gathering information on, sharing best practice and encouraging the development of social action programmes in Baptist churches throughout the whole of Brazil. Do have a look at the website he has put together.



David on Tijuca Peak, Rio de Janeiro's highest point

"Why is this work so important? In yesterday's newspapers there was a report of a just published government investigation into poverty. It found that there are 16.2 million Brazilians (8.5 per cent of the population) living in extreme poverty. This is defined as having a monthly income of less than R\$70 (£28). Half of these people live in rural areas and half in urban. This is only one aspect of the huge social challenges in Brazil.

"I have had the opportunity to visit a number of church projects, these have included environmental improvement projects, clubs running in low income urban communities for at-risk children that teach music, art, dance, computer skills, football coaching, homework support etc., all aiming to increase skills and self-esteem and at the same time present the good news of the gospel. For adults in similar areas I have seen art and craft projects, a drug rehabilitation centre with a success rate ten times higher than the government equivalents, advice and support services; always with the gospel shared. I stayed for a few days in a low income community controlled by a drug gang where the police do not go, and where the lure of the R\$1,000 a month paid by the drug gang to young boys was very strong. Here the church was trying to offer an alternative.

"Historically Baptist churches have not seen the need for social engagement, only for faithfully preaching the gospel. Pray for Mark and Suzana as they encourage Baptist churches to engage effectively with the social challenges.

Brazil is a huge country (the fifth biggest on the planet) pray for Mark and Suzana as they travel. Pray for them also as they try to live out their faith in the community where they live. They have joined a church in a nearby low income community but are finding it a slow process to become integrated.

"It is such a privilege being here and seeing first hand the current work of BMS in Brazil but also to see the legacy of previous generations' work. The Brazilian leader of a project now with 65 full-time staff told me that his inspiration had come from the preaching of a now retired BMS missionary that he had listened to as a youth. Please pray that the legacy of Mark and Suzana's work will last for many generations to come."

Well, thank you once more for all your support.

May God guide you through all your struggles and prosper all your pursuits.

Mark, Suzana
Edward, Ana Muriel

At any one time BMS World Mission supports between 350 and 400 personnel working in over 35 countries of the world. Together they are involved mainly in church planting, development, disaster relief, education, health and media and advocacy. If you would like to support work like Mark and Suzana's you can make a one-off donation, or you can become a 24:7 Partner by committing a monthly amount. Visit www.bmsworldmission.org or call 01235 517617 for a 24:7 Partners leaflet, or 01235 517641 for our donation hotline.