



**Paul and Sarah Tester**  
CMS mission partners  
**Peru**

## Link Letter No.5 December 2011

### Dear praying friends,

Last time we wrote to you we were able to share the exciting news that we are expecting a baby in May time. There's not much that can top that, but we imagine that if we shared that someone else was expecting God's baby this December that might do it! At Christmas we celebrate God choosing to enter this world in the human form of Jesus, His Son. *"And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Saviour of the world."* 1 John 4:14. It sometimes seems too unthinkable to be true and yet we can testify that we see that very salvation worked out day after day amongst the lives of the children and young people here in Peru.

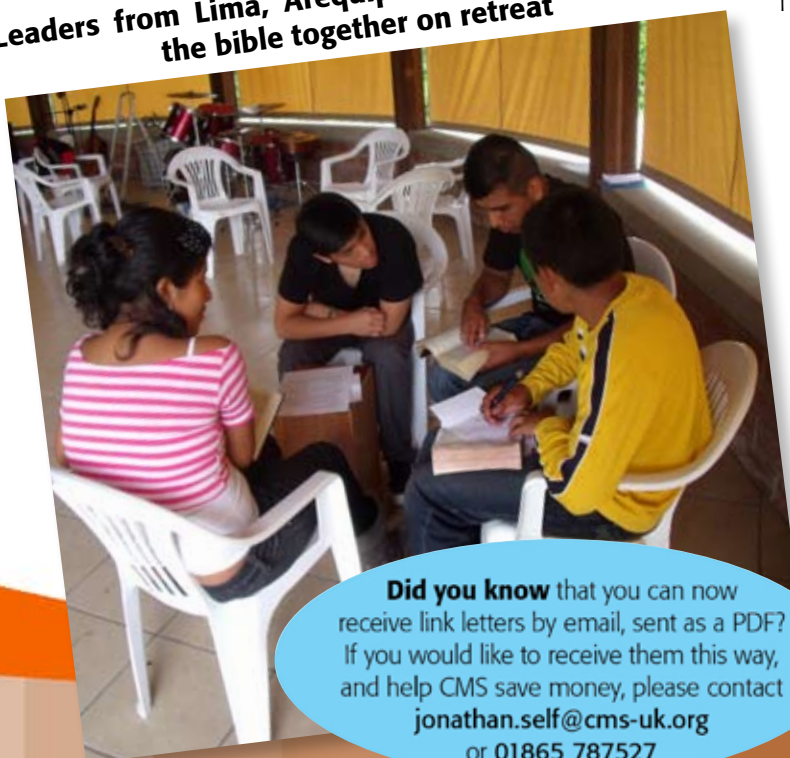
Paul recently took part in our annual diocesan youth leader's retreat with over 40 youth leaders attending from Lima, Ica, Arequipa and Juliaca. Some of those leaders had to travel over 20 hours each way on a bus to attend. It has been so encouraging to see the growth in the number and faith of these leaders and the retreat was a very special time. Based around Psalm 34:8 – *"Taste and see that the LORD is good"*, as leaders we spent time with God in prayer, in reflection, in teaching, in worship and in community. Many of the leaders have commented on what a special time it was and we know

that God was particularly helping those who had come hurting. We all left encouraged and particularly challenged to continue spending time with God in our daily lives.

Over the last year or so we have been encouraging all of the youth leaders to connect to Jesus, the true vine, using spiritual disciplines. We seem to be beginning to see the fruit of this connection although we are sure that God has much more planned, which He will do in the future. Over the next couple of months we have three youth camps, one in Arequipa and two in Lima which last year left Paul so tired he nearly fell asleep walking down the road! Do pray for these special times, particularly for people to take on responsibility for different parts of the camps and that the young people who attend would connect to Jesus and remain in Him for the whole of their lives. Both San Patricio and San Juan Evangelista youth groups will be having a trip out so do pray that Christmas would be a meaningful and joyful time for them as well the children!

Christmas is such a special time and yet the build up is not a time Sarah looks forward to as there are so many extra things to organise (the parties, gifts, food, nativity plays etc). Parental expectations are that if their child has attended church a couple of times they should receive a gift. It is always a stress as to whether a child has been missed off the list of 250+ children (a friend here explained that when he was a child his name was missed off the Sunday school gift list and he was so upset he never went back!). Another concern is whether on the day the party is arranged for, there will be another more attractive event on

### Leaders from Lima, Arequipa and Juliaca studying the bible together on retreat



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**Post:** Artesanos 150 #151, Apartado Postal #116, Lima 33, PERU  
**Telephone:** +51 1 273 2721  
**Mobile (Paul):** +51 990919306;  
**(Sarah):** +51 990919307  
**E-mail:** paulandsarahinlima@hotmail.com  
**Skype:** paulandsarahtester  
**Facebook:** PaulandSarah Tester

elsewhere and no one will come (or as happened one year, everyone will show up but very late!). What a good thing that we have a God who is in control, who loves us and blesses what we do in His name, forgiving us when we get things wrong. Our prayer is that the practicalities won't take the focus away from the simple message of Christmas that these children so need to hear.

I am really pleased that 'Fuente de Vida' mission, in the north of Lima is interested in using 'El Arca' (The Ark) play project idea with its children. The deacon of the mission, Edith, has been to visit 'El Arca' in Ventanilla to see what we do and we are confident that it will be a blessing to the children there. The mission already has 80 children meeting three evenings a week for a snack, singing and Bible teaching. The new project will be led by people already working with the children and I will just need to resource them and visit very occasionally.

#### Bite-size highlights

- Charlotte (Paul's cousin) continues to help us here with youth ministry during her gap year and we are looking forward to her sister Eleanor coming out to visit and to spend Christmas here with us (Sarah is excited as there will be enough people for proper party games!).

#### Praise points

- For the greatest gift of all, Jesus, as we celebrate this Christmas
- For our baby as he/she continues to grow
- For the blessing of gifts for all children in 'El Arca' projects and Sunday School, thanks to generous gifts from a private school in Lima and for surplus 'El Arca' funds.

#### Prayer points

- For protection for Sarah and our baby, and wisdom to know what and how much to do during the run-up to Christmas.
- For the summer youth camps – 20-22 January in Arequipa, 6-10 February and 17-19 February in Lima.
- For the Christmas celebrations here, that they would be a time of real joy

#### **What would you do? – Going Deeper No. 24**

Getting to grips with cross-cultural mission and some of the issues we encounter. Take some time to chew over the issues! Here's this month's:

Everyone expects a Christmas gift from the church. There's not a lot of money at church to go around. The youth



**Top: Christmas treat for young people from San Patricio**

**Bottom: A nativity play at San Juan Evangelista**

leaders paid for their retreat although some were helped financially. The diocesan youth ministry paid for their travel so that those who had to travel could attend, but it doesn't have a huge amount of money either. Christmas is a time for giving. Christians should be generous.

How many gifts do you give? Everything? (Mark 10:21) How much can you/do you spend? How much do you help people financially? How much does it depend on what you have? Is sustainability important to consider when you think whether to give? How does God's unending generosity impact our giving?

*Paul and Sarah xx*

Church Mission Society

Watlington Road, Oxford, OX4 6BZ Tel: 01865 787400 Fax: 01865 776375  
Email: [info@cms-uk.org](mailto:info@cms-uk.org) [www.cms-uk.org](http://www.cms-uk.org) Registered Charity Number 1131655  
Executive Director: The Rev Canon Tim Dakin

