

Brazil revisited with 'Mission Direct'

In the November magazine I said that my hope on my return to Campo Largo, a town of 100,000 people in the southern Brazilian state of Parana, would be to see again the working of the Holy Spirit in people's broken lives.

On my return after two weeks in the country I can report on the ways in which the experience matched my hope.



Building Houses

The house building project has doubled the number of occupied houses from 6 to 12. Work has moved to the opposite side of St John Street and our team started on the 13th house taking it from foundation to roof level in less than two weeks. Mission Direct will be financing the building of up to 50 houses. The need is still immense as the waiting list contains 3,000 families who are still living in wretched, unsanitary conditions in the favelas (slums) where they are also exposed to the threats from the drugs gangs. During our short stay 5 young men were brutally murdered in the vicinity.

Building Lives

We were privileged to share the joy of the move of the family of Jacob, his wife Maria, who is eight months pregnant and 8 year old Kimberley from a filthy wooden hut to their new 2 bed bungalow. Under the supervision of the local building director and pastor, Samuel Santos, we assembled and erected the kitchen units (which had all been recycled and repainted!). The pride and love of the neighbours was apparent in the caring manner in which they had brushed and dusted throughout for the newcomers.

Unfortunately a lifetime spent in the favelas has serious health implications. Like many others, Jacob suffers with an eye disease and has difficulty reading. We presented him with a large print Bible which he received with the words 'This is the bread of life'



Building communities



This is a new community where all are expected to leave behind the old ways. The objective set by Christian project leaders is to take the individual out of the slum and the slum out of the individual. We could see ways in which this is working in practice. There is obvious attention to the upkeep of the houses and gardens. There is neighbourly love shown in the regular invitations to each other's homes for refreshments and willing childcare by grandparents for the young mums.

Each week there is a house group which meets alternately in several of the houses. It was uplifting to join the 20 people of all ages perched on tables, chairs and worktops studying God's word, singing his praises and thanking him for the blessings in their lives. There were several more people peering through the open windows.

A spiritual battle is still being fought and prayers are needed for the young people who are still victim to threats from the drug dealers.

Witnessing the work of the Holy Spirit

Other spiritual highlights for me included the service for homeless people in the state capital of Curitiba (population 1.7 million) when I was invited to speak about my decision to revisit Brazil. Afterwards we served food and prayed with them. On the Sunday morning we joined 4,000 other Christians for morning worship in the First Baptist church of Curitiba. There were other opportunities to see the Holy Spirit at work when we visited the sick in their homes, the reforming drug addicts in their secure unit, and the children in the favelas.



Other delights!



And God was pleased to share with us some special delights : the abundant variety of fruit, vegetables, meat and spices; our favourite was the Brazilian national dish feijoada- a stew of pork, sausage and smoked meat cooked with black beans served with rice and chips, and to drink- refreshing real fruit juices (sucos) or guarana, a fizzy drink made from Amazonian berries; the Latin American dance show that showed 'Strictly' fans how the tango and samba should be done; the dazzling butterflies and birds around the Iguacu Falls, and the football matches with the boys from the favelas.

If you would like more information on my trip to Brazil then let me know or go to the Mission Direct website www.missiondirect.org

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