

Southern Theological Seminaries

“I am with you always…” (Matthew 28:20)



In this Issue:

A CALL TO DISCIPLE MAKING

How STS answers the call to make disciples, to encourage and build up the church in Patagonia

UPDATES AND PRAYER POINTS

A lot has happened since our last newsletter. It is encouraging to see how God is answering our prayers.

RECENT EVENTS IN ARGENTINA

Argentina is seldom in the UK news, so you may be unaware of some major upheavals and financial difficulties the country is facing.

FINANCIAL UPDATE

Income and expenditure summary for 2019 to date.

“I am with you always ...”

There is that saying “People need people”... and it’s true. We are not solitary beings and the presence of another, or others, be it to encourage, comfort, guide, or just walk the journey of life alongside us, can make such a difference to our lives. Nevertheless, the journey we walk, from a human perspective, can at times be solitary, and there are those places on the road, where we can only pass in single file...

What the disciples made of this encounter with the risen Jesus described in Matthew 28:16-20 may never be clear to us, but, here they are in Galilee, having, over the past weeks, gone on an emotional rollercoaster, with high expectations of Jesus, Messiah. They had been part of that triumphal entry into Jerusalem, taken part in the Passover, watched as Jesus was arrested, tried and executed... fled, gone back to their “day jobs”. Now they have encountered the risen Jesus, summoned to meet with Him in Galilee. It is possible to understand and even be a little sympathetic to the hint, hidden in the account that “some doubted”... (28:17)

Yet, when you explore that phrase, it is not one which reflects an absence of faith, but more the need to keep a focused faith. The term used by Matthew to reflect “some doubted”, only appears one more time in the Gospels, and that is when Peter steps out of the boat to meet Jesus on the water. It is when Peter takes his eyes off Jesus and begins to sink – he loses focus for that moment, and it all starts to sink... literally! It was never that Peter did not have faith (would you or I have stepped out of that boat?) but he ended up distracted and his faith faltered. Jesus reaches out to him and all is restored and they come to land. Here Matthew records the same hesitation.



What Does This Mean for STS ... the challenge to make disciples

In this encounter with Jesus, Jesus reaches out to them in two ways. He affirms before them His status – one to whom has been given “all authority in heaven and earth”. On the basis of this authority, he gives them the disciple-making charge, but also reassures them... “I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” Jesus reaches out to his disciples, and also to us, today, with the promise of his presence. He does not leave his disciples to their own initiatives, but promises his disciples that he (who holds all authority in heaven and earth), will be with them and His presence will be the guarantee that his purposes will be worked out. What is asked of the

disciples, is the willingness to be flexible and obedient, listening and trusting in Jesus’s leading. This is not a matter of planning, success or failure, the model of modern business, but about listening and obedience, the model of Christian discipleship, and Acts tells the story...



We aim to finish the evening workshops by 22:30, but it is always a nice sign when students would rather stay and ask



We want to keep improving and offering workshops that folk want and need. Here students are filling out feedback forms to help us to do just that.

God loves the people that we work with and Jesus’s command to us, as the people of God today, is also to make disciples. This work is only made possible by the presence of Jesus in all that we do. We are, at best, facilitators for the Spirit of God to work in the lives of individuals, and often that work is hidden and unseen, but we have the confidence that, if we seek to work out, in whatever way possible, what Jesus has asked us to do, He will keep to his promise and be in the middle of it all. Holding to this perspective, there is a freedom from having to prove ourselves before the world as “successful” (usually dominated by facts & figures) and from getting distracted by the enormity of the events going on around us. It is Jesus who transforms lives, it is Jesus who asks us to be faithful, it is Jesus to whom we will ultimately be accountable. The danger for STS is to place ourselves as the centre of our activities – and when you realise how difficult mission can be, that is easy to do! The constant challenge is to remember it is God who gives the increase, and he will do as He wills. He always consistently just asks from us obedience, nothing more.

It has nevertheless, been encouraging to see Jesus at work in the lives of people we encounter over the past years. It has not been without resistance, but the slow growth and the demand and hunger for learning and getting to know God better, is still evident. The requests for the July-September teaching programme and the building of relationships through the Inductive Bible Studies and Workshops, tell us that Jesus is working in the lives of individuals and that a transformative discipleship is taking place. All we can ever do is facilitate, provide the context, express the care and love of God for those that we meet, and trust Jesus to be true to his word. This is never to say that it is easy. We are mindful that we have an enemy who will seek to disrupt what God is doing, one who will seek to discourage, divert and destroy, and we have to commit all that we have to the protection and care of our risen Lord, the one who is with us – even to the end of the age - in the knowledge and confidence, that nothing or no one can stop what he is seeking to do.

Updates and Prayer Points

During August the second year of our condensed teaching course commenced and along with some familiar faces, we also had some new ones. We have been pleased that Jorge’s wife, after seeing the change in Jorge’s life, has come along to this year’s course and has been engaging well with the material presented. Alongside her, we have also had Lucas and his wife come along. Lucas is the son in law of one of the local pastors he wanted to come last year, but met resistance from his wider family. It has been good to see them along this year, and we hope that this relationship can build and hopefully bear fruit in the future, as it is possible that he will succeed to the pastorate that his father-in-law currently holds..

The Workshop on Paul’s understanding of the Holy Spirit was well attended with a few new faces attending. We also recommenced our colporteur trips to Maquinchao and had the opportunity to give the same workshop there, as well as renew earlier contacts. The workshop was well received and during this visit, we had the opportunity to talk about some of the needs of the area and begin to explore ways in which we could assist the congregation with which we have been engaging. This may vary from one to one training, the running of a Counselling course as well as work with young people. We have therefore returned to San Martin with some ideas and thoughts, but these need to be worked through over the incoming weeks to see how we can be of practical help without stretching our resources. We would ask you to commit the following to the Lord’s care and seek his protection upon them:

- The continuing preparation and delivery for the remainder of the course, and later reflection on how we might be able to deliver future courses
- The impact of the Workshop on the Holy Spirit, that those who were challenged and interested in what was shared, may be willing to explore further and also engage with STS
- For the next generation of pastors in San Martin and Maquinchao, that we will have opportunity to teach and train them both in biblical study, but also in delivering counselling skills suitable for their ministry.
- Wisdom in the working out of the relationships we are building with congregations in Maquinchao
- That the recently renewed links with congregations in Junin may be maintained and that Pablo can be pro-active in following up the links with individuals.
- For the development of partnerships with other agencies and missions and that we will have fruitful working relationships
- For a strengthening of our prayer support and financial provision



Recent workshop on the Holy Spirit in the Apostle Paul’s Letters. San Martín de los Andes, August 2019

Recent events in Argentina

... have not hit the mainstream media, apart from some reference on online news forums, but the fallout from recent elections in the country on 11 August 2019 have had a major impact on the population.

On the 11 August, the government received a major defeat at the polls, with the result that the Argentine economy suffered, according to some commentators, its biggest crash in its history. The value of the Argentine peso dropped some 20% and on 18 August the economy minister resigned. Argentina is currently in economic recession and likely to default on loans to major economic creditors. The country posted 22% inflation for the first half of the year, one of the highest rates globally, and official figures, which sometimes play down situations, report that more than more than 1 in every 3 Argentines are currently living in poverty.

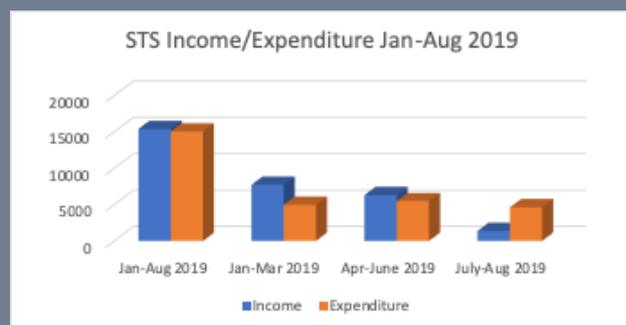
In San Martin, people are frightened of what will happen; and, in an area which already experiences poverty, the likelihood that life will get harder is a certainty as the value of the peso continues to remain uncertain, prices rise and families are left to reconsider their financial priorities. In all of this, STS is not immune. Orders placed for bibles and books when on the colporteur trips have been cancelled as people make do with what they have, and we are expecting rental charges to rise.

Yet, in all of this, Jesus still calls us to be a light in the darkness that has engulfed the lives of so many. We worship a God who gives life, and whose presence is life, so please pray for us as we assess and respond to the changing situation in San Martin over the incoming months, that we may know wisdom and can adapt to continue to show the love of God in practical ways. Pray for the people of San Martin, and for those who name the name of Jesus, that in the midst of uncertainty, they will know the leading and guiding hand of our God.

Finance

In the Spring Newsletter we gave an update of the budget for 2019 and our income for the first quarter. We are pleased that God has been faithful and the financial commitments for the year have been met to date,

but we are also very conscious that we cannot rest on this issue and we continually need to seek God's provision. At the end of August 2019 our income against budget for the year was £15,388.63 against a target income of £20,000 for the same period. We have provided a chart of the year's income and expenditure to date, including a breakdown for each quarter, below. We would ask you to continue to bring this need before the Lord and if you feel you could help with a monthly donation, we would ask you to please get in touch.



Registered office – 3 Dunraven Avenue,
Belfast BT5 5JR

email – stsbelfast@gmail.com

Website – www.stsargentina.wordpress.com

NI Charity Number – NIC 100376