

Lugtigheid's Latest



Pete & Linda's news, June 2010

Four little angels with dirty faces curled up in their sleeping bags in the tent. Out here, away from street lights, the sky above is a spectacular show of God's creative splendour. Over the past couple of months we have had the opportunity to visit some of the rural communities together as a family. It has been a good reminder for me of why we are here.

Our first trip was to Munaypata, to see the families there that we have got to know over the past four years. Many of them we now consider friends. We went with four visitors from Santa Cruz and USA: as usual many curious children gathered as we set up our tents. This gave David, one of our FEDI members, the perfect opportunity to teach a short Bible lesson to the children. As the sun set over the surrounding hills, four precious little ones asked Jesus into their hearts. Apart from our friend and co-worker Leopoldo and his family, who no longer live in Munaypata, these are the first Christians in this village. How beautiful that Jesus, who said "Let the little children come to me," would begin to build His church in this place in this way!



The following morning we were all up bright and early. Pete, Leopoldo and David headed off to Irimo, a community further along the road. Only recently Irimo has asked us to work with them in training about chicken and pig health and management: an incredible open door in a community that is resistant to the Gospel and bound up in the darkness of animistic traditions. The visitors and I stayed in Munaypata hoping to meet with the people and worm some of their horses.



Teaching children in Munaypata

By the time breakfast was over no people or horses had appeared, so we walked along the road, looking for victims. At one house four horses were ready and waiting, and we were able to treat them, receiving payment in rice. We headed back to the school and rung the bell: nobody came. Once again, many children were gathering, so we played games and sang songs and taught them the creation story....there, among the forested hills of Munaypata, the truth of how the God Almighty created the heavens and the earth seemed to take on new meaning. By the time we were done, a few ladies had gathered at the school, and we met to chat about their lives and their animals. Their biggest need just now: teaching about family planning. I promised that as soon as possible we would return with some information, although the ladies begged me to teach them right then: "we might be pregnant again before you come back!" they laughed.

We packed up and began the long trip home, thankful to God for what He had done in the short time we had been in Munaypata, but at the same time disappointed that we hadn't been able to meet with more people. Pete and Leopoldo had a equally disappointing day in Irimo: the planned workshop was postponed until next month. On their way back to Munaypata they made a few visits to families who we had worked with in previous years. Only God knows what fruit will result from these conversations and the seed that has been planted in this area.

The following day was Sunday, and Pete, Leopoldo and David were back in Munaypata. People began to appear from their homes, with representatives from almost every family gathering at the school. But this time they did not want to talk about their farms: they wanted to hold a church service! So, in a little old mud-brick building, the first ever evangelical Christian service was held in Munaypata. The people were enthusiastic and eager to hear teaching from the Bible. At the end a young man came to Leopoldo asking if he would pray with him to receive Jesus Christ as his saviour. The angels were rejoicing!



Worming horses in Munaypata

Please pray with us for the young plants that are sprouting from the seed we have sown over the past four years in Munaypata: these little shoots are so fragile and vulnerable, and they face much misunderstanding and opposition from others in the community. Pray for Leopoldo as he tries to visit the village as often as possible to water the fields and continue the harvest. Pray that God will continue to build His church in this place.

A few days later I was walking up a rocky hillside in Machua by torchlight with Adelaida, David and Agustín. Machua is another place as hard and resistant as the stoney ground it stands on, but Christ's light is already shining through a Christian family who live there. We had come to visit them, and were ushered up the hill to a room where they meet to hold family services. A plate of fried plantains appeared, and we waited for the parents to return from a school meeting. As we sat I chatted to Adelaida and Agustín, and in the protective darkness they opened their hearts and told me a little about their childhoods.

Agustín was brought up in a village high on the barren Altiplano outside La Paz. His mother abandoned the family when he was two or three years old, leaving his father to bring up him and his brothers. His father found a new wife, but she didn't always treat the children well. A few years later Agustín's father died, leaving him and his brothers essentially alone in the world. David commented, "You must have suffered much." Agustín did not reply, but nodded his head softly in the comforting darkness.

Adelaida had a similar story. When she was just a baby, her mother abandoned the family and ran away to another community. A couple of years later, now with a new husband, she returned for her children. They also grew up with a step-father who was harsh and often mistreated them. "Apadrazgo just isn't the same as your father," she commented. Even now Adelaida does not like to spend time in her family home, because of her step-dad's bitterness towards her. One of the issues we struggle with in the churches here in Apolo are broken families and unhealthy relationships. Agustín and Adelaida's stories shed new light on the problems of this generation: with this kind of model, what hope have today's young people of making good decisions and creating loving, godly families? No hope, except the hope of Christ! In the midst of the tragedy of these stories, there is a beautiful thread of light: both Agustín and Adelaida's lives have been healed and restored by Jesus, and this has allowed them to provide loving, stable homes for their own children.

The family we had come to visit finally shuffled into the room, and by candle-light we held a short service. FEDI has been visiting this family for several months as they have passed through a time of illness and suffering. One man in the meeting was a new widower: just a few weeks ago his wife died after a long illness, leaving three small children. They huddled with their daddy in the darkness, clinging to him for comfort. His sister helps look after the children during the day, but she also has a beautiful, special six-year-old called Eva, who is mentally handicapped and very demanding. This family cling faithfully to God when circumstances and tragedy threaten to overwhelm them. We prayed for them, for comfort, for healing for little Eva, that God would provide for their needs. Then we went back out into the starlit night and drove back to the comfort of our own homes in Apolo.

Please pray for this family, as they struggle through their daily lives. Pray that they will continue firm in their faith and will know God love, comfort and provision in the midst of their suffering.

We give thanks to God for these experiences and especially for the people who open their homes and lives to us, and count us as their friends. Through these visits God reminded me why He called us to Apolo: for these beautiful people created in His image, so many of whom are still lost and "like sheep without a shepherd" until they are brought to abundant life with Jesus as Lord.

*Love from us all,
Pete, Linda, Finian, Aiden, Kalisha & Kylan*

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