

Hi, my name is Katharine and I've recently returned home after completing my "year abroad" for my modern languages degree. I spent 4 months in a city called Lisieux in Normandy, France with a missionary organisation called The Bless Network which works with various churches throughout Europe. I spent my time at a lively Baptist church which was just planted four years ago. It was so exciting to be involved with the church activities, such as kids' work, the Alpha Course, 24-7 prayer events, school visits, youth work, outreach projects in deprived estates of the city, and so much more! My language skills were also put to good use, doing translations for the pastor and participating in staff meetings. There were definitely plenty of challenges, but it was such a rewarding placement and I was made to feel very welcome by the church family; especially as I celebrated Christmas with them.

Following a month in England including a week's training, I spent 6 months on a Latin Link placement in the Argentine capital, Buenos Aires. My project took place in a children's home for boys aged 7-18 years old. These boys came from a variety of backgrounds and difficult situations – some had been abused, abandoned, orphaned or their parents simply were unable to take care of them. I spent most of my time taking them out to the park, playing games, organising creative activities for them and showing them lots of love and attention....as well as playing lots of football! The children's home is run by the pastor of a Pentecostal church next-door, and I was also involved with church activities there, including co-leading the Sunday school for the boys. It was such a privilege to be able to tell these boys who had been abandoned by their families that they are so loved by their Heavenly Father and He will never abandon them!

This motto really is true: "Take something out, bring something back." I gave a lot of my time, love and energy over to this project, but in return I feel I have received and learned so much more. I have made such special friendships; and I have come to know and love another culture, language and people. I have learned to be a lot more grateful for things that I used to take for granted, and I have come to trust and rely on God through all challenges.

On my first Sunday back at St Peter's, I was given the opportunity to share a little of my story with the church family. It was an honour, and something which I think is really important. After all, mission doesn't just take place abroad; it should happen at home too! St Peter's has always been a very supportive church for missionaries, and I feel that it's partly thanks to growing up in this church community that my passion for mission has grown over the years.

Joshua 1.9 "Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or discouraged. For the Lord your God is with you *wherever* you go."

www.latinlink.org [Latin Link] ~ www.bless.typepad.com [The Bless Network]



Inside the church in France on December 24th; celebrating Christmas with some people from a deprived estate nearby.



With some of the boys in the children's home in Buenos Aires.