

Buena Vista

SAMS
IRELAND
South American Mission Society



WINTER
EDITION 2025

MISSIONAL / RELATIONAL / INTENTIONAL

CHAIRPERSON WRITES:

The past few months have brought a significant change to SAMS Ireland. At the end of September 2024 Rev Stephen McElhinney's time as Mission Director concluded and he has now been instituted as Vicar of Glenavy Parish in the Diocese of Connor. On behalf of the General Council, and indeed the wider SAMS Ireland family, I would like to express our sincere thanks to Stephen for his dedication and commitment to SAMS Ireland. Stephen offered excellent leadership during his time as Mission Director and we wish him God's richest blessings as he embarks on a new season of ministry in Glenavy.



In November 2024 the General Council commenced the process for the recruitment of a new Mission Director. We met, initially, to reflect on the mission and ministry of SAMS Ireland and we found this to be an encouraging experience. There are strong foundations on which a new and exciting chapter can be built and it is our earnest prayer that the Lord will bring the person of His choosing to be our next Mission Director. Please continue to pray for all involved in the recruitment process.

As you read this edition of Buena Vista, you will see that there is much to be encouraged by and to give thanks to God about. There are good news stories for us to celebrate and share with others. We are also looking forward to Friday Night Live which will be held on Friday 31st January in Annaghmore. This is always an inspirational

evening and we would really love to see you there. Perhaps you could even bring some other people with you. It would be simply wonderful to see Annaghmore Parish Centre filled to capacity!

This year our theme at Friday Night Live will be 'What Difference?' We will be reflecting on what it really means to stand out as Christians in our twenty-first century world. Throughout the evening we will think about Christian living and how we can make a real difference as we live out our faith in our daily lives. Our attention will be drawn to those famous words of Jesus from John 15:8, "This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples."

As Christians we want to celebrate the difference that Jesus Christ has made



through the lives of those who have served Him with faithfulness and dedication. We rejoice in the examples of people like Allen Gardiner, whose work and example have inspired 160 years of missionary activity in South America. We also give thanks to God for those who continue to serve Him and are passionate about Kingdom growth. During Friday Night Live we will hear stories and reports about such distinctive Christian mission and ministry.

SAMS Ireland and for your ongoing prayers. Please do join with us on Friday 31st January for Friday Night Live and I'm sure that we will be encouraged and enthused. It's my prayer that we would also be challenged to grow deeper in our knowledge and love of God, and live boldly for Him.

Peter Jones

SAMS Ireland Chairperson

Thank you for your continued support of



MELISSA IN ECUADOR

Can you tell us a bit about yourself?

Hi! I'm Melissa. I grew up in Richhill in Co. Armagh, but I've lived in many different places since, and currently count Dungannon as my home in Northern Ireland. I'm passionate about the Spanish-speaking world and Latin America, a tea-lover and coffee-drinker, mediocre 5k runner and former languages teacher.

Have you been involved with SAMS before?

I spent five months working alongside Claire Holmes in Concepción, Paraguay in 2017. During that time, I got to know St. Andrew's College and Esperanza home in Asunción, and spent a week in CEP in Santiago, Chile. In 2019, I got to return to Concepción for a 2-week visit.

What have you been doing since?

Since hearing God's call to longer term service, I have partnered with the United Evangelical Methodist Church of Ecuador, who were looking for someone to work with them with experience in teaching and youth and children's work, as well as a heart for Christian discipleship. Turns out that person was me! I arrived there in February

2022, and for the first year, I lived in a large city called Santo Domingo, but now I am based in a small town on the edge of the Amazon called Misahualli.



What do you do there?

I work alongside a local Ecuadorian pastor, Fabiola Tenecora. I support the local church in their outreach, discipleship and church planting. Each week I help at kids' clubs, the youth meeting, the Sunday services and church meetings and at the free lunches we have for school children two days a week. I also teach English, while also organising training and workshops for the church.

How can we hear more about your work?

I'll be back in Northern Ireland for Friday Night Live, before heading back to Ecuador in Spring 2025. I have a newsletter I send out, and you can follow my mission journey on Instagram: melissa.in.ecuador.

How can we pray for you?

- For God's protection and safety in my work and travel and for good health and wellbeing
- For God's guidance in how best to use my time, skills and resources to support and connect with the local church and community
- For all the ongoing church and outreach activities
- That my service would plant deep roots of discipleship in local believers

Thank you for your support, Melissa



FUSION VOLUNTEERS

My name is Ricardo Bartra. I was born in Chile but spent much of my childhood in Brazil. At 15, I came to know the Lord during a Sunday sermon, and He has transformed my life ever since. I have been involved in the Anglican Church of Santiago Apóstol since 2017, first participating and then serving in university ministry. During this time, I completed my psychology degree and studied an additional year in University Teaching. In my last year before coming to Northern Ireland, I worked as a psychologist in a school to support students. In my church I helped lead the university ministry alongside a team as well as the Anglican Youth Network in Santiago.

Here at St Columba's Derryvolgie Parish Church, I've had the opportunity to assist Rev James Boyd in his pastoral duties and the weekly church ministries like "Open Doors," Life Groups, Derryvolgie Kids, and Derryvolgie Youth, among others. I have also been able to connect with other organisations working with young people across Northern Ireland, such as Exodus and Youth Initiatives, as well as training programs like Ministry Training Academy (MTA) Ministries.

The main prayer requests are to give thanks for the opportunity the Lord has given me to experience these different realities and be encouraged by other believers; for encouragement to continue the work and find a steady weekly rhythm in my responsibilities; and to get to know the church, the brothers and sisters, and adapt to the country.

Ricardo



FUSION VOLUNTEERS (CONTINUED)

My name is Hugo Gutiérrez, I am 25 years old, and I am currently serving as an intern at "The Hub" Belfast, a university residence managed by the Church of Ireland and the Methodist Church in Ireland.

Before this, I was working as a public administrator at an agency in Santiago, while dedicating part of my free time to my church, Iglesia Santiago Apóstol, and discipleship. There, I served on the worship team, guiding the congregation in worship during each service. During the week, I was part of the leadership team of our university community, which met every Thursday at the apartment I shared with my friends, Joaquín and Ricardo (Fusion Volunteer in Derryvolgie).

It was in the early months of the year that my pastor, Cristóbal, suggested I apply for an internship in Northern Ireland. After carefully completing my application and praying about it, I wasn't selected initially, but I did make it on the second attempt.

In this manner, I arrived in Belfast on October 16th, and since then, I've been getting to know "The Hub": the nearly 60 students who live here, as well as the committed team that intentionally prepares activities for worship, fellowship, and outreach to those who do not yet know the Good News of Jesus Christ. Some of these activities include providing food on campus, open worship nights, community dinners, and more.

I would greatly appreciate your prayers for my heart during these 10 months here, as I face the challenges that come with being far from my home country. Specifically, I ask for prayers for fluency in communication, as I am still getting accustomed to the language and the particular accent in Northern Ireland.

Hugo



MISSION DIRECTOR NEWS



In July 2024, we heard the news that Mission Director Rev Stephen McElhinney had been appointed to the incumbency of Glenavy Parish, Co. Antrim, which began in November past...

A New Chapter: From Mission Director to Parish Life in Co. Antrim

In any story, there are chapters that come to an end, making way for new beginnings. As I transition from my role as Mission Director of SAMS Ireland to serving as a rector in a rural group of parishes in Co. Antrim, I am reminded of God's hand as the author of every page. For over six years, beginning in 2018, I had the privilege of working with SAMS, witnessing God's transformative work across a mighty continent and in many lives. Now, I step into a new chapter, with both gratitude and expectation, confident that the God of mission remains the orchestrator of each step.

My time with SAMS was a season of immense privilege. I had the honour of meeting inspiring local church leaders—men and women working in cities and remote communities alike—who shared a passionate heart for mission. These leaders strive daily to invite others into the love of God revealed in Jesus Christ. The Anglican Church in South America today stands as a testimony to generations of dedicated missionaries from the British Isles and beyond. Their unwavering sacrifices, fuelled by the Holy Spirit, continue to bear fruit, leaving a legacy of faith that deeply impacted my life and ministry.

Among the highlights of my work was organising the "Kingdom Come" conference with CMS Ireland in summer 2022, where we

welcomed 18 bishops and their wives from South America, Africa, and Asia for a week of fellowship and mission-focused activities following the Lambeth Conference. Witnessing the global Anglican community come together in shared purpose was deeply moving. Additionally, I had great encouragement from the SAMS 'FUSION' program which allows Latin American Christians to serve in Irish parishes for a year, enriching our communities and creating lasting bonds across cultures. It was equally exciting to open doors for Irish Christians to serve in South American churches, nurturing a reciprocal exchange of faith and experience.

Of course, the journey wasn't without its challenges. The COVID-19 pandemic reshaped every aspect of our ministry, demanding creativity, resilience, and trust in God's provision. I am deeply grateful to the General Council for their unwavering support, which allowed us to navigate the season with courage and adaptability.

As I move forward into parish ministry in Co. Antrim, I carry these experiences with me. My prayer is that this new chapter will continue to reflect God's love, as we journey together in faith and service. Though the roles may change, God's missional purpose remains steadfast, guiding each of us to make His name known and His love experienced in every corner of the world.

Your thankful friend

Stephen

MEET THE COUNCIL: REV ROSIE DIFFIN

Rev Rosie Diffin, together with her husband Ronnie, have served in various parishes within the Church of Ireland, including: Drumglass, Seapatrick, Kilmore & St. Saviour's Dobbin and currently the parish of Kilcronaghan, Ballynascreen & Sixtowns.

Rosie's heart for mission was sparked during her time in her home parish of St Matthew's, Richhill. It was there she became actively involved in prayer meetings and fundraising events in support of Claire Holmes, who at that time was serving in Paraguay with SAMS Ireland.

This interest in mission was recently reignited by a trip to Peru with SAMS Ireland. During her time there, Rosie gained a deeper understanding of the need to support the church in South America, as they work to share the good news of Jesus Christ.

The teaching seminars, and the opportunity to pray with her Peruvian brothers and sisters in Christ, was a very special experience for Rosie, who undoubtedly left a little piece of her heart in Peru. Moving forward Rosie is excited by her new role within the SAMS Ireland family.



SALTA, ARGENTINA

From May to August 2024, I volunteered with San Andrés Church in Salta, Northern Argentina. After some initial hurdles in Dublin Airport - and with the SAMS staff coming to my rescue - I made it to the gorgeous region of Salta, more specifically to the home of an eighty-two year old lady from church, who would become like family to me as we kept each other company over the next few months. I quickly settled into my weekly routine, focusing my time at a nearby church plant in Las Costas neighbourhood. Here, we hosted exercise classes, kids and youth clubs, and women's Bible study. The neighbourhood is predominantly made up of women and children, with many of them coming from difficult home situations. It was a blessing to work alongside them and study the Bible together, to see the joy and trust they had in Jesus despite difficult circumstances. Two mornings a week I spent in the San Andres church kitchen, preparing and serving lunch to up to eighty people living in the streets, and gospel videos were played for them to watch. Seeing the servant

hearts of the women who volunteered for this was so inspiring to me, and a humbling experience for my (lack of) cooking skills!

One of the most encouraging experiences I had was a trip I took to the Northern indigenous communities for a two-week annual teaching conference where people came to worship, pray and do Bible studies. It was an incredible experience to meet some of the locals and teachers who had travelled so far, and despite the language barrier between Spanish and Wichi, their love for God and His Word was so clear.

Please be praying for the vulnerable families in Las Costas, and the people in difficult situations on the street who are amazingly hearing the gospel twice a week at the community meals. I miss all of my Argentinian family dearly and it was a blessing to see how God is working in their lives.

Gracias!

Olivia



Andrés & ANNIKA IN CHILE AND PERU

The team from Ireland who were out in Peru in June really enjoyed meeting Andrés and Annika who are serving God in Chile and Peru. Annika is from Austria and Andrés is from Peru. They met in South Africa while studying theology and are missionaries in Santiago, Chile working with an Anglican Church (ISA) and teaching God's word to the next generation of pastors at a Bible College (CEP), where Andrés is part of the core group of lecturers. They also have a weekly student discipleship group and want the students to grow and walk not only in their Biblical knowledge but also in their walk with the Lord.

In addition to service in Chile a part of their mission in South America is to establish a relationship with the Anglican Church of Peru to explore the possibility of supporting their theological formation in the future. Andrés and Annika connect with leaders in Peru, and Andrés was invited to assist them with online teaching. In September Andrés

began teaching an online class for MOCLAM (Moore College Latin America) in Peru.

They write:

"The evangelical church has been growing exponentially in South America. However, theological training remains a privilege. Many churches are led by pastors full of passion for the gospel, but with little training to handle God's word. We want to invite you to join our mission to serve the local church ISA and Bible College CEP to complement their passion for Christ by equipping them to handle God's word better."

Andrés and Annika ask us to pray for them in the following way.

- 1: For Annika's Visa to come through. We have been waiting for over a year now.
- 2: For the CEP students that they may finish the year well and be encouraged in the Word.
- 3: For ISA church that we will grow in patience and love toward one another.
- 4: Thank the Lord for his provision and love towards us shown by the church, friends and neighbours here in Santiago.



CHRIST THE REDEEMER CHURCH, BOLIVIA

SAMS has been privileged to walk with Pastor David and Christ the Redeemer Church in Bolivia for the past five years. David speaks to us about what is happening currently in the church.

David, tell us what are some of the things the church is doing at the moment?

In Christ the Redeemer Church we are putting a lot of emphasis on discipleship, the Word of God and on being consistent in practising what we preach. We have some new people coming to church and also 3 young leaders who are studying either for lay leadership or possible ordination in the future. We are also focussing on prayer and on showing love.

At the end of the year we hope to do outreach activities with local people in need especially with elderly people and children.

We are praying for a mission outreach that

we have in a place called Ajaria amongst Indigenous people. This is led by Gonzalo who is a deacon along with some local christians.

We are also continuing our project 'ArteSanos Anglicanos' (Anglican crafts) where people learn to do different types of crafts which they can sell to make a living and tutoring in maths, physics and chemistry.

Is there something you have found encouraging over the past while?

It is encouraging to see the enthusiasm of some of the brothers and sisters of the church and see them grow in their faith and in their gifts. There is a faithful member of our church who has been really growing in her prayer life and other people are saying how much they are encouraged when she prays for them. God is also giving her opportunities to pray for people outside of church.



David, what are some things you would like us to pray for you?

Thanks for your prayers and we ask that you would pray for

- The Holy Spirit to fill us and guide us.
- For the evangelism and discipleship that we are involved in.
- For the practical work and maintenance that we need to do on the church building.
- For the Lord to provide all we need to do outreach in the local area.
- That God will help us as a country and bring an end to the current political and economic crisis that Bolivia, and especially the capital city of La Paz, is experiencing at this time.

Please give thanks for Rev. Chris Pollock and Saintfield church, who we are partnered with, and for all their kindness and support especially after the flooding which damaged areas of our church. We appreciate them and all the SAMS supporters for their prayers, help and friendship.

God Bless you.

David



Pastor David painting the church steps



ArteSanos Anglicanos in Christ the Redeemer Church

NEWS / WHATS ON?

Mission morning

On 19th October we had our mission morning at the T3 conference centre in Lisburn. It was a great morning of chat, fun and fellowship where we sang in Spanish and English, meditated on what the Bible says about mission and got to know Hugo and Ricardo, our Fusion volunteers, recently arrived from Chile. We also heard

from Melissa Newell, a SAMS mission partner, several weeks before her return to Ecuador. It was lovely to be together, to pray together and to share both spiritual food and some of the House of Vic -Ryn scones as well as typical Latin food. We hope to have another one again soon.



Safely Home

Helen Sohns, former SAMS GB missionary in Northern Argentina for 30 years, went to be with the Lord in November. We think of all the work Helen was involved in over her

time as a missionary in N.Argentina. We pray for her family and thank the Lord for her.

New Diocesan Bishop in Paraguay

Pastor Ronald Irene has been selected to be the next diocesan bishop of Paraguay. We pray for Ronnie, his family and the church in Paraguay as they prepare for the

consecration on 27th March 2025 and for the Lord to continue to lead, guide and bless them in His service in the months and years ahead.

New Diocesan Bishop in Chile

On Sunday 12th January Pastor Juan Esteban Saravia will be consecrated as a diocesan bishop in Santiago, Chile. We are delighted that Revd. Mark Lennox and Bishop David McClay will travel to Chile to be part of this. We pray for Juan Esteban,

his family and the church in Chile and also for Mark and David, for safe travels, the building of relationships and that they will be encouraged as they encourage the church in Chile.

Misión Indígena (Indigenous Mission)

Indigenous Mission is a hub for mission in and from indigenous contexts across the region (Chile, Paraguay, Peru, Argentina and Bolivia.) It gives indigenous leaders an opportunity to support and encourage each other as they plan and learn together. CMS supports this work and SAMS Ireland has also had the privilege of giving some support.

Tim Curtis (CMS Mission Partner in Paraguay) writes 'Please pray for the development and growth of this hub for mission and that it will bring blessing

to indigenous christians and leaders as they continue to grapple with the challenges of indigenous education, both christian and secular, and as they search for solutions especially in areas where indigenous people face marginalisation and confusion.'

We thank God for the recent congress where indigenous leaders from the different countries met together in Chile and pray for the upcoming congress in Lima, Peru on 16th - 20th January 2025.



Events and dates for the diary

(If you would like more details of any of these events please contact the SAMS office.)

Friday Night Live - 31st January 2025.

Prayer pockets in Ballymoney on the first Monday of every month at 2.15 p.m.

Prayer Pockets in Saintfield and Omagh.

FRIDAY NIGHT LIVE 2025

WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?



📅 Friday 31st January 2025
🕒 7.30pm
📍 Annaghmore Church Hall

SAMS
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GET IN TOUCH!

- IF YOUR CHURCH WOULD BE INTERESTED IN HAVING A VISIT FROM A SAMS IRELAND SPEAKER
- IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO CHAT MORE ABOUT VOLUNTEERING OVERSEAS
- IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO KNOW MORE ABOUT FUTURE POSSIBILITIES WITH MISSION TEAMS
- IF YOUR CHURCH WOULD LIKE TO KNOW MORE ABOUT THE FUSION PROGRAM

**WE WOULD LOVE TO CHAT FURTHER ABOUT
HOW YOU CAN BE INVOLVED IN MISSION!**



LEGACIES: SAMS is extremely thankful for legacies which are left by individuals for the benefit of the work in South America. Legacies can make a real difference to the ongoing work and the extension of God's Kingdom. Thank you for partnering with us. For further information in confidence contact the SAMS House.

Thank you for being part of the SAMS team. If we can serve you in any way please do not hesitate to contact us.



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