

Step

news

Spring 2002

Latin Link
Enlace Latino



Partners in Christian Mission

■ From the East ■ Three Sarahs ■ www.stepteams.org

Deaf Step

In March, we celebrate a major first for Latin Link: a Step team consisting entirely of deaf people leaves Belfast on the 12th, bound for Bolivia.

They will be visiting Cochabamba, Riberalta and Santa Cruz, leading worship, working with children in schools for the Deaf, and helping to repair the roof of a local pastor's house.

'I hope that everybody will understand our signs when we talk to each other, and also when we worship God.'

Michelle

The Steppers are all final year students on the Deaf Discipleship and Leadership Training course at Belfast Bible College - the first course at a residential Bible college in the UK in which all the teaching is done in British Sign Language. The course was devised by David and Denise Flynn - two Latin

Link members currently based in Belfast. Denise, who is deaf herself, and originally from Bolivia, is the principal teacher. The Flynns will accompany the team, along with an interpreter and two of the students' wives.

Three years ago, David and Denise were due to return

to England from Bolivia on home leave, when they received an invitation for Denise to preach at a Deaf church in Belfast. 'We talked there about the possibility of having a Bible course, and some training for deaf people,' says David. 'As far as we know, there's no residential Bible training centre anywhere in

Europe which has a discipleship training course for the Deaf in their own language. The Deaf have really appreciated having someone who can speak to them directly, rather than always needing to have an interpreter.'

'I met Denise and David at Kinghan Church in Belfast,' recalls Raymond Abernethy, one of the students. 'Denise looked so lost, I thought to myself: "This is impossible. How can these people set up a Bible college?" Some people told me not to be so negative; others said we didn't need a Bible college as we had a long-standing Christian community. The Flynns went to England, and when they returned, Denise's signing had

improved greatly. We all met up one night to discuss the Bible college. It was a big step; I thought we'd only get three or four people when it started, but 12 turned up.

'I thank God that this course started in Northern Ireland because, years ago, we were the first to have a Deaf Christian community. I thank God for Denise coming here. Before, so many of us were frustrated and lacking in confidence, but through Denise's work, we've all grown.'

'The good thing about the course is that my students aren't just students,' says Denise. 'They've become good friends - and that's been a blessing to me.'



Belfast to Bolivia: Deaf Step Team



More than words: a sign of friendship from a child at Vinto School for the Deaf, Cochabamba

'It's been really challenging, having this opportunity to go there and learn.'

Joseph

'I want to see how the Deaf cope in Bolivia, and to know what their Christian lives are like.'

Raymond



A word from the East

Hola & Oi to you all!

Welcome to the new face of Step News! With the start of a new year we thought it was time the newsletter had a face-lift and you had the chance not only to keep up with Step, but with Latin Link as a whole. Naturally the Step website (www.stepteam.org), should be your first port of call for all up-to-date news, but this is a supplement to that. Please feel free to pass this on to friends and anyone interested.

2002 has begun at a rapid pace and as the office here prepares for the *largest ever* Spring Step in our history, it is good to reflect on months gone by. We had a fantastic Debriefing conference in October with about 105 Steppers and Striders present. There was a real sense of God's presence and the times of worship in particular were very special indeed.

Since then we have been re-structuring and making plans for a busy year. We have had a number of new staff join (see below), and a number of remarkable projects in the pipeline coming to fruition. The most immediate is the project outlined overleaf, an exciting programme for the Deaf team from Ireland going to Bolivia. We also have a special team of experienced Steppers going to Peru under the watchful eye of David Frith. Later this year, we have the inaugural Step Spain/Portugal programme kicking off in July, and a 'Reverse Step' – bringing people from Latin America to Spain in October.

But wait, that's not all! This summer will be a bumper programme, with an expected seven or eight teams. Two of those teams will be coming from university CUs, and one or two churches are interested as well. So, if your church or CU has a team and wants to serve God this summer get in touch! It's not too late. We have really known God's provision and protection, and would love you to uphold the work in prayer this year. We need it now, more than ever! God Bless.

Laurence East
Step Co-ordinator



Step on the web

If you haven't seen the new Step website yet – where have you been? Designed by the award-winning team at Webshed, it has been receiving a very positive response. The site received close to 2000 hits in January, and in the week *Step News* goes to press, 700 hits!

Not only does it contain news stories and information about Step and Latin Link, you can actually apply online, download freebies and even see the individual Step project pages, updated weekly with pictures and diary extracts from Latin America. So the next time you go online, check out www.stepteam.org – and stay in touch.

www.stepteam.org

Meet Chris (you can)



Promoting Step in colleges, universities, churches and youth groups, Chris Stansfield is Latin Link's newly-appointed Mission Development Worker: 'Getting out and meeting

people, encouraging them to live for God, seeing them used by him – that's what I'm passionate about,' he says. 'I'm open to invitations!'



What did they make of it?

What *did* the short-termers get up to last year? It's all there in the Yearbook in black & white and glossy red. 80 packed pages. On sale now £1.50

Your Step contacts (yes, they're all called Sarah)



1 Sarah East – handles initial enquiries and guides you through all stages of the application process.



2 Sarah Ewins – once you're accepted, this Sarah takes care of everything to see you safely on your way.



3 Sarah Ainscough – your Latin Link home contact while you're abroad – and when you get back.

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Latin Link is an international community drawn from many churches, with a focus on Latin America and a commitment to world mission. Step is its flagship short-term experience programme for teams.

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