



Andy and Kati Walsh

Link Letter no. 9 | April 2024

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Location: Brazil



What we do: Working with local church partners in Florianópolis, helping people in challenging contexts to find hope in Jesus

Dear friends,

We'd like to update you about our funding situation, following the news we shared in our previous letter. Firstly, thank you so much to those of you who gave in response to our request – we are so grateful. Secondly, a donor has very generously agreed to match all new gifts given or pledged between now and 31 August – so if you start a new regular gift, increase your regular gift or make a one-off donation via our webpage (churchmissionsociety.org/walsh) during this period, your gift will be matched up to the value of £10,000!

Since our last update before Christmas last year, we're happy to announce that we've gained approval from a senior judge in the criminal justice system to authorise a sentence reduction for those who actively participate in the Bible training course we're running. This approval covers all three units in Florianópolis, including both male and female prisons as well as the penitentiary. We had to make a legal application for this endorsement to facilitate the implementation and ongoing delivery of the course throughout the prison system. Once we received this authorisation, it became much easier to arrange meetings with the directors of each prison.

In 2023, we concluded with 142 men and eight women being baptised following the efforts of the team led by Pastor Antônio through evangelism across the prison system in Florianópolis. One of the men, Anderson, shares his story in a piece called [Life on the Inside](#), available on CMS's website.

As we approach the end of our initial term as mission partners in Brazil, we're grateful for the Lord's faithfulness in guiding us and making our mission clearer as time goes on. When we first started, we wanted to learn and understand where we should focus our efforts based on how we felt guided by the Spirit. Along the way, we've met many people and connected with various local partners with different experiences. As we explored different ways of helping those in need in our community, we were cautious about rushing into things without careful consideration, as we didn't want to have to backtrack later. It was useful to adopt a posture of learning and observing as we meaningfully engaged with local partners in terms of hospital outreach, volunteering within existing community projects in the favela, leading informal church services in drug rehab centres and street prayer and evangelism.

However, it's the prison system that we are being drawn deeper into and to remain with, seeing it as a path we are meant to follow in our mission work for years to come. This area seems to be where we can make the most impact, even though it's also the toughest to make progress in for various reasons.

Navigating the challenging environment of a prison, with its restrictions and unique working culture,



Preaching the gospel of the Kingdom, Palhoça Semi-Aberta

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presents considerable barriers to any form of engagement beyond what they timetable for. Occasionally I am left waiting in a corridor for over an hour before a class can begin due to the management of a security incident.

The lack of clear understanding of the value of our work (i.e. discipling new believers with structured Bible classes) among staff, especially at senior levels, further compounds these challenges. In consequence, the battle of garnering the necessary support and/or any goodwill can hinder the inception of new projects from the outset. We often encounter scepticism and even hostility from some staff members, particularly prison guards. Questions about why we direct our efforts towards individuals who are often deemed unworthy or undeserving of our time could be discouraging. However, we try to show Christ to them also.

Among all the groups we've been reaching out to, prisoners have the least opportunity to hear and accept the gospel, yet our efforts in this ministry are proving the most fruitful. In such an environment, we've learned that to take any form of stride forward demands patience, resilience and prayer.

We find inspiration in Matthew 25:36, where Jesus speaks of visiting those in prison, and in verse 40, where he emphasises the importance of caring for the least among us as if we were caring for him. These verses hold special significance for me, Andy, as they were some of the earliest teachings I can remember when they were quoted to me in a school assembly hall in London as a five-year old.

We hope and pray that our ongoing dedication, combined with the transformative power of the gospel, will show the clear benefits of supporting those in prison. Over time, we aim to gradually change attitudes and garner more support to bring about further positive change in the future. As we move forward, we're continuing to pray for our long-term vision. We ask for prayers, especially regarding how we can encourage men and women to stay engaged with the church after completing our eight-part Bible course in the prisons.

In one of our most joyful moments during our mission so far, a few men lead worship while others are being baptised. This video captures the essence of our mission's purpose and makes all the effort worthwhile: <https://youtu.be/MFURmIpp1XY?si=wNLUraikQ-p5nETm>

Currently, Andy is delivering the Bible course in the men's prison on Wednesdays and Fridays, and in the penitentiary on Saturdays, with 12 men in each class. Some mornings, Andy also preaches the gospel in a semi-open prison in Palhoça, an outer suburb of the city.

Unfortunately, we're unable to progress further with Case Regional, the prison for young offenders, at the moment. However, due to a recent management change at the women's prison, we were able to negotiate starting the Bible course there, with a tentative start date set for April 2024. Kati's sister will take over delivering the course if we're unable to be present.

We're eagerly anticipating our first return to the UK since becoming mission partners in May, where we'll reconnect with our supporters, meet with family and have a packed three-month schedule visiting our supporting churches, attending training sessions, and reconnecting with our employer CMS in Oxford. Once again, we express our gratitude for all your support, and we're excited to meet with you in person in the coming weeks.

Warm regards, Andy and Kati



Photos from top to bottom: Kati and her sister with approval to start the Bible course in the women's prison; men in Gallery E with their baptism certificates; Eva celebrating her fifth birthday party in February!



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