

Land for Life Fundación Refugio

Circular No. 49 November 2019

Dear Friends,

We write this a few days after the tragic car accident that has so deeply affected A Rocha, an organisation that has inspired much of work here in Argentina. *“On Monday 28th October Peter and Miranda Harris, co-founders of A Rocha, and Chris Naylor, A Rocha International CEO, together with his wife Susanna, were involved in an horrific car accident in Port Elizabeth, South Africa, in which Miranda, Chris and Susanna did not survive”.*¹ We are deeply saddened by this loss. At same time we are so thankful for the way in which they dedicated their lives to caring for this planet. They have inspired us and so many others to do the same.

This past week has also seen the murder Paulo Paulino (22), yet another indigenous environmental leader killed because of trying to protect his people’s land and forest in Brazil. Our thoughts and prayers go out to his young family.

On a different note, Argentina’s outgoing government has made legislative changes that could mean Argentina becoming a [new dumping ground for plastic waste](#).²

We recognize that our individual efforts here in Argentina make little if any difference to the national and global environmental situation, and these sad events just seem to make the challenges loom even larger. Climate change, we learnt recently, is categorised by theorists as a *“hyperobject” - a conceptual fact so large and complex that it can never be properly comprehended*.³ What hope can we have? This is where our faith comes into the equation. This is where we sense that God wants us to do what we can within our sphere of influence. We therefore plod on in faith! We can take encouragement from that fact that a small but growing number of individuals in our diocese are expressing concern and acting to protect their local environment. As the following paragraphs show, there are small things we can celebrate, and we ask that you pray that these initiatives will continue to grow in number and effect.

La Caldera



La Caldera, with its new look. From left to right: Mavis (Maria’s tutor), Bishop Drayson, Catherine, Maria and Gilda

The refurbished dormitories and kitchen in the diocesan retreat house in La Caldera were inaugurated in October. The house recently hosted 100 people on a two-day retreat, and we are pleased to say just about everything functioned as we had hoped for! We have completed all the reports for the donors and are now preparing to work on a new phase, in which we aim to rebuild the main meeting room and refurbish the original adobe-built farmhouse.

Maria is enjoying her course on Christian Rural and Environmental Studies (run by the John Ray Initiative and A Rocha UK). Her tutor, who had been lecturing in Peru, paid us a visit last week. We enjoyed her stay and she was a great

¹ <https://www.arocha.org/en/press-statement/>

² <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2019/nov/01/argentina-plastic-waste-dumping-ground-imports>

³ David Wallace-Wells (2019) *The Uninhabitable Earth: A Story of the Future*

help in supporting Maria with her studies. Together we visited La Caldera, and were able to review the work done together with Bishop Drayson and his wife Catherine.

Environmental workshops

In June, Andrew was invited to lead workshops on environmental awareness by “*Primera Infancia*”, a national government programme to support child development amongst poor families and to assist poor families in bringing up their young children. The teaching was well received and has reportedly had a notable impact on programme staff. This came about as a result of the regional leader of “*Primera Infancia*”, Viviana Andrade, who participated in the Lima conference we coordinated on Church and Climate Change. It’s encouraging to see the effects of that event, and how they cascade into shaping new opportunities.



Primera Infancia extensionist workshop – Tartagal

Bishop’s statement

Another effect of the Lima conference has been that Bishops in our province are now more able to act together on matters related to creation care. While there is some local work going on at diocesan levels, it has also been encouraging to see Bishops make a [statement](#) on the recent fires affecting Amazonia and parts of the Chaco.⁴ *Representing the largest indigenous church membership in Latin America, it stated: “We believe that without genuine repentance on the part of all of us, we will continue to pay a huge price with greater disasters than those we have recently seen in our countries.”*⁵

Family

Tomas moved from working for a multinational corporation running airports, to a small aero-engineering consulting firm that oversees maintenance for Latin America’s largest airline (LATAM). His work takes him to various countries, and at the time of writing he is in Puerto Rico. Ceci continues working, studying and teaching here in Salta. She is also applying to do a Master of Laws (LLM) in the USA. Maria is in Cordoba visiting Carolina. Andrew will be visiting his parents during the first week of December, after a short work visit to Ethiopia.

Prayer Pointers

Please pray for the following points:

- Give thanks for the work achieved so far with La Caldera - pray for the next phase of refurbishment
- Give thanks for our children’s progress with studies and work
- We continue to do battle with the property development project which will affect a 70-acre property across the road from us. It’s a real struggle, and its proved hard to keep neighbours motivated and engaged. On the bright side, it continues to help us learn more about the intricacies of environmental struggles. Pray for the court case we are dealing with and that a just outcome may be achieved.

Please do email us if you want further detailed news; it is always good to hear from you!

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⁴ <https://www.anglicannews.org/39821.aspx>

⁵ <https://www.anglicannews.org/39821.aspx>