

Pat Blanchard

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The call in action

Greetings!

I finally arrived back in Lima on Friday 16 July and was encouraged by the perseverance and ministry of the church community during my absence. In-person Sunday services started in August and the WhatsApp platform remains very active for daily devotions. The soup kitchen continues serving the church and community, meeting an urgent need in this time of political and economic instability. This will finish at the end of November when Shalom will support families with food hampers and Christmas activities.

This is my last letter to you from Peru, as after 21 years of ministry I feel it's time to step back from Shalom and Peru and return permanently to the UK. Diocesan Bishop Jorge Aguilar presided over a special service in Shalom on Sunday 15 August where the Shalom family were told the news and I shared testimony of God's faithfulness throughout the years and the burden I now feel to return to my family. It certainly was a surprise for them and quite an emotional time. In the service Rev Raul Taipe was named as the new rector of Shalom and he has taken over day-to-day leadership. I give thanks for Raul, for his dedicated service since joining Shalom in January and his commitment to God and the church. I truly give thanks for God's timing in what have been very difficult circumstances. God has given me peace and confirmation of this important decision I have made with him. The church moves forward with a group of committed Christians who I have seen grow so much through the years and especially through the challenges and trials during the Peru COVID pandemic. They have a strong commitment to remain connected to God and with each other and serve others in a shared vulnerability, especially with the disabled community around them. Pray for Raul and the church as they move forward in faith into this new phase.

There is still no plan for reactivating the therapy project, but when the time is right God will show the Peruvian leadership the way forward so the ministry which grew so strongly in past years will once again develop as he sees appropriate, to serve and support those living with disabilities. There have been communications with different organisations looking at possibilities of a partnership to run and maintain the ministry. Rev Raul and Bishop Jorge are committed to pursuing these opportunities to move forward, please pray for wisdom for them.

I've been trying to use my time to the maximum but packing and sorting seem to be never-ending!



Name: Pat Blanchard

Location: Lima, Peru

My call: To serve, share and live each day alongside God's community in Peru.

My role: Leader of Shalom church and director of Shalom Rehabilitation Centre for children and adults with disabilities and their families.



Rev Raul Taipe and me in a recent service

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I've been using up resources and running creative workshops, making earrings, bracelets, cushions and a complete set of liturgical altar and lectern cloths – and there are still boxes and drawers full of things!!! So I will bless others with resources and carry on creating with others in the time remaining!

I spent some time in Arequipa, visiting and sharing with friends and church contacts, remembering my work with the schools, children's home and other ministries when I first came to Peru. I had a lovely time at the churches' project for the disabled, run in conjunction with the government, celebrating three years of this church/state partnership caring for 20 young men with disabilities. I was inspired by Artisan International worker Laura renovating premises for a shop and cafe providing employment for the disabled, creating lovely jewellery and craft designs, reminding me of my Tearfund days! I feel creativity needs to play an important part in any future ministry I develop! In Lima I've enjoyed meeting friends for painting evenings, finding relaxation and inspiration in my watercolours in this time. As yet my future is not so clear but I wait for God to open the next chapter and put before me the way to go. During my recent time in the UK God spoke over many issues and I look forward to discerning his will and pursuing new opportunities with him.

You may remember the straw figures I used to bring from Peru, made by Gaudencia from Jesus El Nazareno church. Sadly Gaudencia died while I was in Arequipa but I returned in time to accompany the family. Please pray for the family at this difficult time.

There were also happy celebrations for my birthday and I know there will be moments to gather as I say goodbye at special services on Sunday 28 November and at other times. I am also hoping to have a short break away with a friend in November.

I return permanently to the UK at the beginning of December, and am thankful that the red list has disappeared! Great answer to prayer! I will be in touch in the New Year to organise visits to thank you in person for your support and partnership during these 21 years. Please continue to pray for Peru with the ongoing challenges of COVID-19 and political changes and uncertainty.

I quote again from Psalm 40:5: Many, Lord my God, are the wonders you have done, the things you planned for us. None can compare with you; were I to speak and tell of your deeds, they would be too many to declare.

That's so true and I thank God for the privilege of experiencing so many amazing things and having the opportunity to share my life and faith with so many wonderful people in Peru and in the UK. Thank you for the part you have played in all these memories and experiences. What a privilege it's been and the ministry continues on... for all of us, wherever we may be!

Blessings and love

Pat



Photos from top to bottom: With Bishop Jorge, celebrating Luis's birthday; presenting the finished altar cloths; my watercolour painting; walk up the hill

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