

Cumbria-Argentina Methodist Partnership

Visit of Bishop Americo and Pastora Maria Esther, Summer 2023



Bishop Americo and Pastora Maria Esther attended the Methodist Conference in June 2023 but Maria Esther came ahead to South Cumbria, hosted by Ruth Briddock and Glenda Clark.

Photo R to L: Bishop Americo, Rev Dr James Tebbutt (Cumbria Methodist District Chair) and a translator at the Conference

Tuesday 27 June

A.M. A visit to the Barrow Foodbank, which is housed in the Baptist Church, Abbey Road, Barrow-in-Furness. The visit was facilitated by Kathryn Aldred, a volunteer at the Foodbank and a circuit steward in the South West Cumbria United Area (SWCUA). The deputy manager of the Foodbank spent time with Maria Esther, answering questions and showing her around the warehouse (with the help of Google Translate).

L to R: Deputy Manager Matthew, Kathryn Aldred and Maria Esther.



This was followed by a visit to the “Re:New” Community Charity Shop in Barrow Town Centre. Here Maria Esther met and spent time with the shop manager, Tim Jeffries, learning about the work with the community done through the shop as well as his involvement with Cumbria Pride. Again, thanks to the availability of Wifi, it was possible to use ‘Google Translate’ to help with communication.

L to R: Glenda Clark, Volunteer Sheena, Maria Esther, Kathryn Aldred, Tim Jeffries

P.M. Lunch in Ulverston at Gillam's with Rev Dr Helen Hooley and Rev Kate Hunt of the SWCUA. The lunch-time chat was lively, but unfortunately there was no Wifi available here, so Kate valiantly cudgelled her brains to retrieve her Spanish conversation ...

L to R: Maria Esther, Kate Hunt, Helen Hooley, Glenda Clark.



P.M. Despite the weather – it was a very “Lakeland” sort of day – we took our visitor to Cartmel on the way back to Allithwaite/Grange. Here there was an opportunity to look around the Priory, visit Cartmel Methodist Church and walk around the village square.

Maria Esther with Glenda Clark in the Methodist Chapel, Cartmel.

Wednesday 28 June

A.M. Drop-in at the weekly coffee morning held at Grange Methodist Church; coffee and chat with a number of the regulars, as well as an opportunity to see the buildings and learn more about Grange MC past, present and future!

P.M. A visit to Levens Methodist Church to see the redeveloped premises. Then to The Hub, Milnthorpe, to meet young people from the Kent Estuary Youth Project (KEY). A visit to Croftside care home (and the later visit to Woodlands, Penrith) highlighted the commitment of Maria Esther and Americo to make such provision in Argentina.



Thursday 29 June



A sunny day! First stop - Hawkshead Methodist Church for a mid-morning act of worship. The door was already open when we arrived ... and the visitors' book shows that many tourists and others come through the door.

Glenda and Maria Esther outside Hawkshead MC.

The remainder of the morning was spent visiting Hawkshead Hill Baptist Church and Retreat Centre before going on to Windermere for some lunch. This was followed by a ride up through the Lakes to Penrith, stopping at Rheged for a cup of tea before leaving Maria Esther at the District manse.

Thursday 29 June

Bishop Americo returns from the Methodist Conference with Cumbria District Chair, Rev Dr James Tebbutt.

Friday 30 June



A day of rest and relaxation with visits to Derwentwater and Ullswater.

Saturday, 1 July

A.M. A visit to the Coffee Morning at Kirkby Stephen Methodist Church for an opportunity to meet Rev Jacky Betts, lead



coordinator of Cumbria Methodist Women in Britain (MWiB) - seen here with Maria Esther and local supporters of MWiB. (Maria Esther had helped lead a Cumbrian MWiB Conference in 2016). The visitors received a warm welcome from Rev Stephen Radford, the Superintendent Minister, and a large number of attenders.



P.M. A visit to Skelton Agricultural Show, north of Penrith, where Americo and Maria Esther were fascinated by the farm animals – and the range of agricultural vehicles and classic cars.

Lunch was enjoyed in Penrith Circuit's marquee.



Sunday, 2 July



A.M. A visit to Tebay Methodist Church for an ecumenical service which included the local Anglicans. The helpful translation of Bishop Americo's sermon was provided by a Uruguayan member of the congregation and her daughter.

P.M. Americo and Maria Esther visited Langwathby Methodist Church for the monthly "Taize" style service within the East of Eden Mission Community. On this occasion the service had an Argentine flavour, was led by Joan Wager, and included participation by the two visitors.



Monday, 3 July

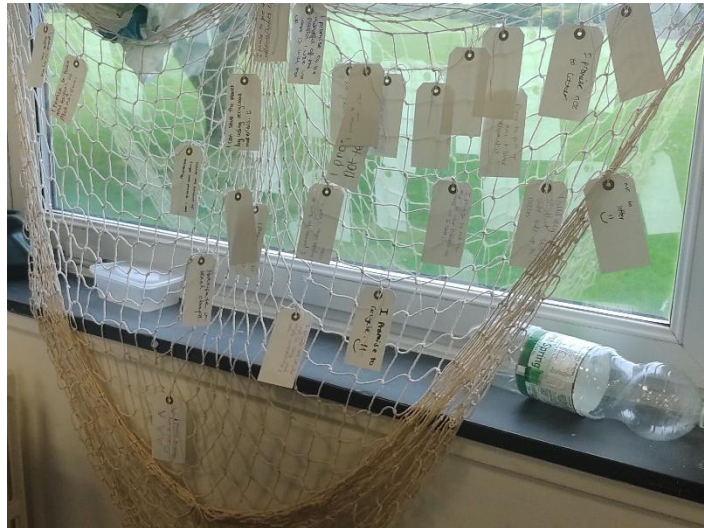


A.M. The visitors were hosted by Irene McKay for the day. They visited Cartmel Priory Church of England Secondary School along with the local Methodist Minister, Rev Jo Rand. It is one of only two C of E secondary schools in Cumbria and Jo leads collective worship weekly.

A prayer space is set up once a year for a week and features in a lesson for each class.

Jo provided lunch at her home, where the visitors were joined by Hazel and David Edmondson and Jo's son, Amos. The conversation covered the special engagement each had with community support projects in Cumbria and vulnerable communities overseas.

A visit to a shop for a particular personal item highlighted the difficult economic situation in Argentina and how much the Partnership is valued in contributing to the development of supportive community projects there.



P.M. A sightseeing tour followed, travelling via Windermere and the Bowness ferry to Coniston. The visitors enjoyed the views of mountains and lakes, a return visit to the historic Hawkshead Methodist Chapel and Retreat Centre at Hawkshead Hill, a walk round Tarn Hows and further exercise on Coniston Old Man!

Tuesday, 4 July



A.M. After a short visit to a meeting of the District Policy Committee, Americo and Maria Esther were taken to Blunderfield Farm near Kirkoswald, where they were welcomed by Helen and Brian Armstrong. They toured the cattle sheds and milking parlour and learned how a mixed cattle and sheep farm operates. Brian described his role as a volunteer with the Farm Crisis Network, supporting farmers in difficulty,

and spoke about agricultural chaplaincy. Helen spoke about their church in Kirkoswald. The visit ended with lunch and a short hymn sing.

P.M. In the afternoon, the visitors were taken to Woodlands, MHA retirement accommodation in Penrith. They were warmly received and one resident was discovered to be able to speak some Spanish. All were impressed by the standard of the accommodation and the lively atmosphere in the residents' lounge.





Today we were joined by Rev Cesar Guidi, a retired supernumerary minister from Argentina, at a shared meal. Cesar has served in the Methodist Connexion for many years. Notwithstanding our gratitude to Google Translate, it was great to have a fluent Spanish speaker to translate our conversation.

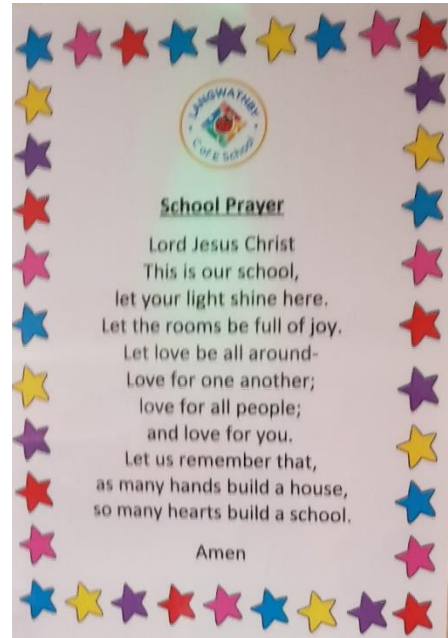
Photo: Cesar on the right, with the visitors, James Tebbutt and the Manager of Woodlands Retirement Apartments (second from the left)

Wednesday, 5 July



A.M. The visitors were taken to Langwathby C of E Primary School by Joan and Ray Wager, who had facilitated a link with "CEL" Methodist Primary School in Rosario, Argentina, following their visit in 2019. There they met Sarah Hinkley, another member of the Partnership Group (who is also in education). A tour of the school followed and, after coffee, we

attended the school assembly. We were impressed by the children's Spanish learning and by Americo's ability to tune the Head's guitar and accompany the singing of a hymn. (In the photo – Christie Love, Deputy Head, and Sally Hay, Head Teacher)



This was followed by a visit to Penrith Methodist Church and a meeting of ministers in their early years of Ministry. Bishop Americo presided at an informal service of Holy Communion and led the group in singing some Spanish choruses. He asked the ministers about their hopes for their ministry and the Church.

P.M. The afternoon was the opportunity for all members of the Partnership Group to meet over lunch provided by Sheila Mallinson and her helpers at the Cottage Wood Centre near Penrith. Americo and Maria Esther were presented with a number of gifts, including a candle holder and crosses (made from redundant pews from Levens Methodist Church)



In the evening, Americo and Maria Esther again visited Penrith Methodist Church to meet with some members of the

Young Adults group. One member had previously attended the Argentine Methodist Church Youth Assembly. By way of introduction, James Tebbutt shared some of his videos and experiences from his visit to the Argentine Asamblea in October 2022. With the help of Cesar, our translator, an extensive conversation followed about the Church in both countries and today's world, and the young people's own concerns and commitments.



Following a full day, and this being the final evening, the District Chair cooked pancakes in the District manse, where Americo and Maria Esther had been staying, but "we were too busy eating and enjoying to provide any photographic evidence..."

Thursday, 6 July



The visitors, having packed their bags, were brought to the monthly Meeting Point at Langwathby Chapel. A lively conversation ensued, again aided by Google Translate. After lunch Americo and Maria Esther were driven to Newcastle Airport for the start of their journey home.

REFLECTION

When five Cumbrian Methodists visited Patagonia in 2005 the World Church Office briefing stated "Go and make friends". This has proved good advice. We have achieved a strong Partnership, which has enabled us to learn much from each other.

Whilst we have been able to support several projects of particular benefit to women, children and families, we have also been greatly enriched by experiencing the vibrant faith and worship of Argentine Methodists. We have been inspired by their deep commitment to human rights and justice. Some deep and lasting friendships have been formed and our prayer is that the Partnership will continue to go from strength to strength.