



# Paul Bennison's Christmas News 2013



This Christmas, I hope and pray for you that it will be a time of rest, refreshment, and a reminder—as C S Lewis once said: 'We need to be reminded more than we need to be taught'—about the reality of the Son of God, coming to be a baby, a stable, and immense discomfort, all so that we can become friends of His and His Father. What an amazing story! If it were a fairy tale it would be unreal, but it is reality, and, this Christmas, I'm so, so grateful for a Father who loves me enough to sacrifice His Son.

2013 has been a year of immense challenges and blessings, not just for me, but for so many friends too. By Christmas, I will have made 4 trips to France, 3 to Colombia, 2 to Australia, 1 to Mexico, countless crossings of the Irish Sea. I've had astonishing 'highs' and some incredible 'lows'.

What an amazing God we have, though: even the lows fade into obscurity as He pours out his love, grace, mercy, and power all over the globe.

As a 'report' on the past six months, where to start? I've decided, in this newsletter, not to try and pack it as full as possible – I'm sometimes aware that there are so many words it can be overwhelming. Many of the stories I'd relay here I've told on [my blog](#) but if you can't get to that, let me know I'll forward you some via email. Speaking of which, if anyone wants to me to put their name on the list for receiving my blog via email, let me know or [sign up here](#).

## FRANCE

What an amazing county. I love France so much, and one of my great joys in the past 14 months or so, has been to go back and back again, to be involved in ministry after what seemed an interminable gap. Lisieux, and Rouen (twice this year – after December 9th!). Lovely churches, wonderful people, a lot of blessing, people healed. France has, one way or another, been part of my life for over 30 years, so it's a blessing to go and see God do stuff there.

## MEXICO

It was so good to go back to Mexico City – it was my 25<sup>th</sup> visit there (a year of 'milestones' – 50 visits to Colombia in August!), and really good to arrive at the very time my dear friends, Benny & Paty Osorio

discovered they were expecting their third baby, a daughter: Paola! It was 12 years ago that I had the privilege and the pleasure of being involved in their wedding in Mexico City.

There were a good number of churches in the city itself, and some of the 'fringe' cities, like Ecatepec (where, in 1996, I ate my first-ever cow's eye taco!), Ojo de Agua, and Polanco. One wonderful story: Lovely Alejandrina, in Ecatepec, was dying with cancer. She'd been sent home by the hospital to die: so that she could spend her last days with her family. Joel (Benny's brother) asked if we'd go to pray for her, as she only had a very few days to live. Sitting around the dining table in their living room, with the whole family, God healed her, healed some of the other members of the family, and one of Alejandrina's daughters gave her life to Jesus.

In a church one Sunday, a young lady (Claire – she turned out to be the youth leader) asked for prayer for impartation of the gifts of healings and miracles. I love that! As she turned to walk away, I told her to come back, as she was going to pray with the rest of the people with me! (A relief, as I was there on my Todd—'own' for non-English—and about 250 responded for prayer at the end of the service!). The first lady Claire prayed for had two prolapsed discs in her spine: incredible pain, and a large lump in her spine. She was healed instantly. I love that even more!

While I was there, Jois gave me stem cell treatment to my knees: I've noticed the difference both in pain levels but more especially, in the speed of 'recovery' after a long, busy trip, and long flights. I'm back there in February, so hopefully it's something he can repeat!

## AUSTRALIA

It is such a lovely 'event' to go back to the home of Robert & Shey Hall, and their four great boys, Wesley, Lucas, Damon, and Callum. To see, with a few months' interval between visits, just what God is doing in the lads, three of whom were at varying levels on the autism spectrum, is great. Anyone who says autism is incurable haven't heard of God, or met their kids, or Oscar Logan, in Bangor! It's progressive healing: one of autism's effects is interaction with other people, and boy, has THAT changed with the lads! And it's so good to be with Robert, who is so 'down to earth' with his faith – he doesn't beat about the bush with correct theological words, just says

it like it is, 'in the name of Jesus...' A good number of people were healed, often in homes, as much as meetings, and my 'take' on that—as far as my (limited!) theology goes—is that Jesus only healed one person in 'church' – the man with the withered arm. The rest were in homes, on the streets, on the sides of mountains. [See the blog](#) for more details. (Australia was September, Mexico August, France October). Robert's friendship has grown to mean so much to me, and I was so blessed that he chose to go to Colombia for the second time, in October/November). It's no small undertaking to get from Melbourne to Cali – last year, with the flights he could get, it took him 2½ days each way: this year, slightly better, just a tad under 2 days... no wonder God does stuff through him, he's really pro-active with praying for the people he works with, and he's also a keen (if slightly mad!) long-distance runner, and we have had the pleasure together of praying for some of his (atheist) running friends! One was wonderfully healed when she came to a meeting – no small 'event' for an atheist! – the healing happened over a few days, but who cares as long it's healed, eh?

## THE HOME FOR ABANDONED OLD PEOPLE, AGUA BLANCA, COLOMBIA



I don't just want to include Ana Beiva's ministry under a 'Colombia' heading: more and more, she seems to be becoming a genuine 'Mother Theresa' of the district Alfonso Bonilla Aragon, one of the worst areas of Cali. I'm so grateful to friends in the UK for helping her so much with finance: enabling the

purchase of the house next door, the repair of that house (less than a month after buying it, there was an earthquake, and the roof fell in....), and equipping it. My great mate, Martin Collins, who went home to be with Jesus in January, is unwittingly (though of course he knows from up there!) responsible for a lot of equipment: Janice, his lovely wife, gave a substantial gift in Mart's name for electrical appliances, and so Ana now rejoices in two large washing machines,



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two large freezers, a double door fridge freezer, and more... Thank you so, so much, all who have contributed.



With money that I was able to take in July, the foundations of the house were strengthened, and now there is proper provision for two MORE floors above the newly-renovated ground floor: Ana, when I first met her, had 60 'babies', as she loves to call them: by the end of the November trip, she has 120. Two more floors (which will cost what sounds like a phenomenal amount – 70 million pesos, but it's only £23,000, AU/US\$35,000) will increase her capacity to 200, which she anticipates with great excitement. [Her reaction](#), when I have the

privilege of handing her money, is humbling, to say the least! I can't go to Cali now without going to her home at least a couple of times, and I'm praying that God will provide one way or another, the money to build at least another floor next year, hopefully two.

## HERE, THERE, & A FEW OTHER PLACES

As I write this, I'm about to head over to Seaford, in East Sussex (S.E. England for the uninitiated!) A lovely New Wine Leaders Day in June, in Crawley was also a great blessing: a good mixture of 'New Wine Anglican' types, and Baptists working together is good. Thanks for the invitation, Simon Allaby! A lovely evening, too, speaking at the House of the Open Door Community's monthly celebration meeting: praying for a lovely lady, deaf in one ear, her husband the other side of her (who hadn't told me he was deaf too!) – both heard the next morning. Brownhill Road Baptist Church, Catford, and Green Street Green Baptist, Orpington, were also both lovely meetings: some folk at Brownhill reported having been healed on an earlier visit... Times of Refreshing Ministries, Belfast asked me to speak at their meeting

for supporters and intercessors, at the Waterfront Auditorium, the second largest in Belfast... but I have to say while 'Waterfront' looks good on the 'CV', it was in a side room, the Canberra Suite! It was a lovely evening, with opportunity to pray for a good number. City Church, Plymouth is ALWAYS a blessing, and I love being with them: still prayerfully attacking the Pastor, Julian's, M.S. though... more ferociously now than ever before!

I ought to confess to the odd 'non-Christian' foray – not repent, just admit(!) – Eric Clapton's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary tour concert, comedian Mickey Flanagan, The Who and last but not least, a colonoscopy for possible bowel cancer. I chose NOT to have sedation or pain killers, I wanted to watch and SEE that I didn't have cancer! It was – interesting! And fascinating to watch. And no, I don't have bowel cancer, thank you Lord!

## 2014

This is what 2014 looks like so far, and bear in mind I do love to keep the diary short-dated now!

January	Colombia
February	Mexico (2½) weeks
March	Australia (2½-3 weeks)
April	Colombia
May	Cuba?

I really feel I want to go back to Sweden and Finland; later in the year, Colombia again, and, I HOPE, India, plus a country or two I haven't yet been to!

## COLOMBIA

3 visits this year: one reported in the summer newsletter. In July, I went with my great friends, Alan & Barbara Gouck, Barbara really wanted to see it after Alan's 7 previous visits, wanted to meet people, and wanted to 'see' if she could help out at Pastor Willmar's church kid's foundation. I think I can say, on her behalf, and the behalf of the Colombians, it was love at first sight! We fitted in a few churches, with lovely Pastor William Castaño organising the

programme from now on. It was a powerful, blessed, and yet totally stress-free trip, a great blessing to be back in the city I love (and I think Alan's got a growing soft-spot for it!). People were healed, blessed, saved: we were blessed, happy, and fulfilled. What more could you ask for?

October/November: 3 weeks, with 'team' coming and going. Brian Loudon first up, with me: told me he was shy and had never preached. By the end, he was preaching and seeing God do miracles and healings through his own ministry, and not mine! That's my goal. We got to a couple of hospitals, too, where people were healed. Then Robert arrived, from Melbourne, so shyness sorta disappeared off the 12<sup>th</sup> floor balcony, and an injection of Aussie life and humour, coupled with Robert's faith, testimony, preaching (he'd doubtless call it sharing!) stepped up the gears a bit. Brian went, and Simon Allaby (3<sup>rd</sup> visit) and Nick Harding (1<sup>st</sup>) arrived.

William had organised the schedule so well. It would be impossible to 'document' all the miracles and healings in a newsletter: here's a brief summary! Eleven blind, or blind in one eye people saw; 9 deaf people heard; William's dad, 86, three compressed vertebrae causing partial paralysis & massive pain (no use of arms, no feeling in hands, partial use of legs that 'weighed a ton', was healed instantly, jumping and squatting in the hall of the house; Lisa, who works with William – severe scoliosis, felt her spine, discs, vertebrae move into place; her mum, Elisabeth, paralysed and screamed if she had to move (could only lay on one side), got up and walked around and then sat down; Daniella, 13, healed of asthma (an attack in church), terrible sight (no distance vision) saw perfectly, 'severe flat feet' (doctors words, nothing they could do even with inserts) – got her arches in, ooh, 12 seconds!

So many pairs of knees healed (yes please and thank you, Lord!), cancers disappearing, muscle & tendon (including the supra spinatus tendon) ripped from bone – healed. A young lady, Diana, 16 & in a terrible car crash 3 years ago, 3 failed spinal surgeries, intense pain, no lateral movement at her waist, of course she couldn't bend... one leg some distance short of the other... touched her toes, jumped, twisted, legs equal, and a smile the width of the Andes! Her gran, Flor, chronic arthrosis, mid-80s, couldn't walk unaided, no movement in arms, or neck. Well, the picture shows a few minutes later!





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instantly pulled over by the police (they don't generally have much to do with the barrio itself – they get shot there). Did we buy drugs? Guns? No! We prayed for people, and they were healed! Having searched us, and the car, they ended up thanking us for caring for their city!

And in Dario's home – where we were invited the next day. You NEVER get invited to the boss's home unless you're one of his 'generals'.... We breakfasted with Dario, who took his gun from his waistband as he sat down(!), then the house filled up. About 40 more people arrived: many, like the Thursday, healed, touched by the tangible presence of God. Sunday, in between meetings, we were at Dario's 'country' mountain estate (owns it with two other gang families) for a barbecue: in the middle of the Andes with goodness knows how many people with 'interesting' careers!



With about an hour before we needed to leave for another church, Dario told me that he'd invited ALL the families to his terrace for prayer. They came. I explained about a God who heals, and some stories from the earlier days: then Simon wanted to share a few words from John 3:16. It was absolutely right, and an immensely bold and brave thing to do. Simon is such a

good preacher: concise, clear, to the point. He prayed: Johan translated, and astonishingly, EVERY person on that terrace repented, asked God for forgiveness, and gave their lives to Him. Writing it in 'words' can't even begin to communicate the impact or the ramifications for the future.

My goal, in 2014, is to get more 'bosses' like them together, and introduce them to Jesus. I've believed for many years that, because of Cali's history, it will be just like God to genuinely begin revival there. So that's why I might just go back for 10 days in January!

## WHAT TO PRAY FOR? NEEDS? KNEES?!

Please, pray for Dario and his family: the other people who gave their lives to Jesus, and for Wilmar, as he plants churches in places where only gangsters go. I want to be with him. Pray that God will grow these seeds into something so beautiful in the middle of such squalor and violence.

Please pray for – and, if you can/want to – give to Ana Beiba. £23,000 will see her current house vision complete, and 200 thankful, grateful elderly people with a home, love, care, food, clothes, companionship.

I'm grateful that, with the exception of the shipping fracas from the USA, I've not had to urgently ask for personal help for a long time. But I DO need to live: and over the period of the recessions, my income has dropped alarmingly, yet God seems to have stretched it. I do appreciate it so much when I get 'new' supporters (I've just 'lost' 3 more due to the state of play financially in the UK). If you can help fund these exciting trips up ahead, I'd be so thankful. And, my knees: getting healed, slowly, I'd love the instant miracle for myself, but God's got other plans! Please pray that they will be healed and keep me mobile doing this amazing stuff for the next 30 years too

If you can help, Ana Beiba or me, then, usual routes: Stewardship ([www.stewardship.org.uk](http://www.stewardship.org.uk)), my name, account 20028331. Cheques to me at: 61 Belfast Road, Bangor, Down BT20 3PW. Or if you're not a taxpayer, and are happy with internet banking, I can send you the details.

My hope and prayer is that you will be blessed, refreshed, and rested over this Christmas holiday, and that you'll know, without any shadow of a doubt, that in 2014, Jesus doesn't love you any more than he does now, simply because it's not possible.

With my love and best wishes,

*Paul* xx

And, from a year ago, a growing friendship with a guy named Dario: a favela (cartel) boss who came to a church for prayer last November, having been shot multiple times, in a coma 26 days, not expected to live. God did a miracle for him that night. Each visit to Colombia since, I've tried to get in touch: these guys don't want to be found, and so it is difficult to see them. BUT, he came to another church, with his mum (yep, even gangsters have mums!) to see me. I was over the moon.

What happened in the next 4 days took me, Simon, Rob, and Nick, even further over the moon – a top favela/cartel guy, 26 years old, had committed suicide 6 days before, Dario asked me if I'd go into (seriously!) the most dangerous part of Cali, Siloe (Sil-o-ay) to pray for his widow and kids. The 4 year old son had seen dad kill himself. We went, they gave us a lovely lunch, then, whilst some guys were getting tattoos and others were cleaning their guns, we prayed. I can honestly say I've NEVER experienced the Presence of God like it: He was filling the house. About 35-40 people ALL had us pray for them. Dario has asked – and this will be for Wilmar, the Pastor – if we'll start a church there. As we left Siloe in the car, we were