

Into all the world – Reflections for Lent 2021

Week 5 – 21st March

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A change of direction?

In 2006 I applied and was accepted to train as a voluntary 'Experience Exchange Partner' within the Methodist Church. I had felt a very strong calling to work within the Mission field and was happy to do whatever was asked of me. Having completed my training, it was planned that I should work in the Street People Centre in Sao Paulo, Brazil. I applied for the necessary twelve months visa and began to learn to speak Brazilian Portuguese. Weeks, months and several visits to the Brazilian Consulate in London passed by. Eventually I received a phone call and was informed that, for no specific reason, they were not granting the visa. I was understandably disappointed and puzzled, and began to question my calling – had I got it all wrong?

Then, remarkably, all began to change. A few days after the phone call from the Consulate, I received a second phone call, this time from Margaret Alford, a remarkable lady who had worked for many years in Brazil translating the Bible into indigenous languages. Her friend Lynne McLeavy working with the UFM mission in the north of Brazil, had undergone an operation and needed to return to the UK to recover for six months. Did I know I was allowed to go to Brazil on a visitor visa for up to six months at a time? Could I help?

Going with the prayers and blessing of the Methodist Church, this was the first of many forays into rural Brazil teaching and working with women and children. I remember clearly during the flight of that first journey, simply praying 'It's over to you, Lord, I'm in your hands. I know vaguely where I'm going, I don't know what I'll be doing and who I'll be working with – help, guide, strengthen and direct me in whatever way is needed.'

'Maos Que Criam' is a scheme working with a community who scrounge off a refuse tip to survive. The aim was to teach the children who didn't go to school because they couldn't afford the books or uniform and to teach the women new skills with which to earn a living.



"For I know the plans I have for you" declares the Lord' Jeremiah 29.11. We cannot see the bigger picture. Sometimes our plans and God's plans seem to be in tune with each other, sometimes we're asked to take a different path, to venture out in faith on our journey.

To ponder : Is God asking me to take on new challenges in my journey of faith?

- Am I willing to take a new and potentially very different path if called to do so?
- Do I trust in God's plans for me?

Bible Link: John 11: 1–45

Hymn: *Singing the Faith* 158

Lord you sometimes speak in whispers,
still and small and scarcely heard