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PERU - A NEW COUNTRY

David and Bertha Barnes were recently accepted as appointees to Peru, a new country for UFM. However, Peru is not new to David and Bertha and their son, Esteban (12): Bertha is Peruvian and David has lived and worked in Peru for the last 13 years. Here they introduce us to the country and to the work they have been called to.

Located on the West Pacific coast of South America, sharing borders with Ecuador, Colombia, Brazil, Bolivia and Chile, Peru is a fascinating, varied and exciting country. Lima, its capital, is home to around 8 million of the country's 26 million inhabitants. Politically, the country is now a democracy, but corruption is seen at all levels of society. Average wages are around £5 per day and there are thousands of street children in Lima and other major cities. Around 100,000 Peruvians ▶



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► now have the HIV virus. Peru has seen difficult times politically and economically in recent times, as well as fifteen years of terrorism (1980-1994) which caused 30,000 deaths, including around 750 Evangelical leaders martyred for their faith.

The state religion is Roman Catholicism with around 78% adherence, but this is very largely a nominal commitment mixed with superstition and syncretism. As well as Roman Catholics, there are growing numbers in different sects, such as the Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses.



For the evangelical church, these are exciting days. Over the last 20 years, church membership has tripled with new churches being planted every week. However, only around 6% of churches have pastors and leaders with any formal Bible training. There is a great need to train leaders that the church may be strengthened and kept safe from doctrinal error. The growth of the evangelical church is causing increasing institutionalised opposition regarding the number of missionary visas issued, the requirement of baptismal certificates for entry to some schools and restrictions on contacting remote indigenous communities.



Lima has been our centre of ministry for many years now and it has been exciting to see the Lord work through us in church-planting and Bible-teaching ministries at local churches and at an evening Bible Seminary. Please pray for the many Bible students who study several evenings a week after a full day's work, as well as being very involved in their local churches. It is not easy to balance church and family commitments, nor is it easy for them to find the finances required.

Another exciting ministry we were involved with was setting-up a bilingual Christian primary and secondary school. It has been wonderful to see how many students and their families have come to Christ as a result of this ministry. Please pray for students and all who work in the school, and for new teachers as the school continues to grow (around 180 students this year).



God is calling us back to Peru, but this time to the other side of the Andes, to Iquitos, a city of around 300,000 people in the Peruvian jungle on the River Amazon. Iquitos has a number of small churches, but there is great need for church leaders and pastors to receive solid Bible training. We have been asked by them to help with this at Iquitos Baptist Bible Institute, which at present is in urgent need of teachers.

Up and down the Amazon there is also a need to provide Bible training for pastors and church leaders in the numerous villages. We hope to help by providing regular modules of Biblical studies and TEE courses so that the leaders won't need to leave their villages to go and study in the city, from where very few return.



We are so excited about the prospect of returning to Peru with UFM to serve the Lord in this new mission field. We deeply value your prayers as we prepare to return in the near future. We are also praying that God would call more workers to his harvest field to work with us in Peru through UFM. Who knows.... maybe God is calling you. (Mat. 9:35-38; Is. 6:8)! ■

David & Bertha Barnes

