

## **1. Life in God's Garden**

### **The work of the Anglican Church in the Amazon**

2. The Amazon rainforest is the largest on earth – 18 times the size of Britain and Ireland – and home to the world's greatest variety of plant and animal species.
3. Some people call it 'God's garden' because fruit and fish are in abundant supply, and small crops can be grown easily.
4. But this is not the Garden of Eden. Big business is plundering resources and destroying land – making life difficult for small scale communities.
5. This is the story of how the Anglican Church in Brazil is helping a small community to safeguard its livelihood and grow spirituality.
6. Duca de Castro and his family live in the small village of Maria Ribeira, a 30-hour boat journey from the nearest big city, Belém.
7. Maria Ribeira is a quilombo – a settlement founded by former slaves – and Duca's family has lived here for many generations.
8. For years, the people of Maria Ribeira have survived by fishing in the Amazon, collecting berries and growing manioc.
9. Duca said: 'We were born and raised under this culture: we take what we need from the forest.'
10. This healthy diet must work. Duca's father lived to 88, his mother to 87 and his grandmother to 107.
11. But this lifestyle is in jeopardy because fishing corporations are depleting fish stocks, so that harvesting fish is becoming increasingly difficult. Duca said he had to start using nets to catch enough fish. It is possible to work for the big companies, but the wages are very low.
12. He said: 'We catch the leftovers. The big companies even have electronic shoal detectors to help them.'
13. The Anglican Diocese of the Amazon heard about the plight of the Maria Ribeira community and offered to help. Working with a local ecumenical group, the church supplied two fridge freezers.
14. The freezers give Duca and his community more flexibility. Fish can be kept for longer and surplus stock can be sold to generate an income.
15. The success of this initiative led to interest in the Anglican Church, with Duca and his daughter founding a small worshipping community, which they have named St Peter's, after the fisherman. Duca said: 'In the Anglican Church I found a partner for a new model in evangelising, liberating and taking action.'

16. USPG Mission Companion Ruth de Barros is based in the Amazon. Her husband Saulo is the Bishop of the new Anglican Diocese of the Amazon. Ruth has been supporting Duca and his family as they work to establish a active Anglican community.
17. Ruth said: 'This is God's Garden and the people work with that, the way God intended, not disturbing the ecological balance, but respecting nature.'
18. Ruth met Duca in 2006. She said: 'Duca could see the Anglican Church was concerned with the whole lives of people, not just their spiritual lives.'
19. Ruth added: 'For me, mission includes not just the spiritual side and praying together, but the whole of people's lives.'
20. The future looks uncertain for the people of Maria Ribeira. But, with the Anglican Church and USPG, they can face the future with hope.