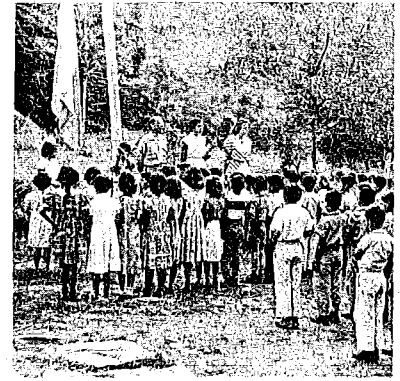


April 1, 1955

NUMBER ELEVEN

COLOMBIAN NEWS



Cachipay, Cund., Colombia, S. A.

THIS IS A
CALL TO PRAYER
FOR
THE LORD'S WORK
IN
COLOMBIA

INFORMATION SERVICE OF THE MENNONITE MISSION IN COLOMBIA

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EIGHT YEARS AGO

Eight years ago on March 4 Mary Becker opened classes in the newly organized Colegio Evangelico Colombiano with only nine students. A few weeks earlier, after a year of language study in Medellin, Gerald Stucky, Mary Hope Stucky, Janet Soldner, and Mary Becker had moved into the large country house, really a hotel, which was to become the center for the future missionary activity of the Mennonite Mission in Colombia.

During the first years this building was used as dormitory, apartment, laundry, office, kitchen, dining hall, school, clinic, garage, play-room, and chapel.

Through the years the American Leprosy Mission and the Mennonite Board have made possible the erection of additional buildings to accomodate the present increased enrollment. Besides the original building, the plant now boasts two dormitories with apartment space, a school, a dining-hall, and kitchen, a laundry and a shop.

MISSION SCHOOL OPENS FOR NINTH YEAR

On January 10 our school opened for the ninth year with an attendance of seventy-four children. Of these, sixty-two live at the school home and are a part of our large family here on the farm. The others come from the nearby community.

Our school serves the needs of two groups of children. The greater part, 38, are from Agua de Dios, the leper colony. We seek to take these children out of the leper colony and give them a Christian environment and education. The others come from needy Christian homes. Most of the Mennonite children who live at the school are from Anolaima. Those who live in Cachipay are near enough to attend as day students only. And, in La Mesa, a mission school has just been opened to serve the needs of the children there.

YE SHALL BE WITNESSES

A few years ago before violence devastated so many rural areas in Colombia, a faithful Christian witness gave two young men from the country a tract. Deeply impressed by its gospel message they were pleased to note that an entire Bible could be purchased in Bogota.

Those two young men had never been to the city before. They knew nothing about its streets and avenues. A five hour walk took them to the railroad station. Another five hours and the narrow gauge train stopped at the terminal station in the nation's capitol.

Later the same day at the headquarters of the World Evangelistic Crusade they listened attentively while an Australian missionary explained to them the way of life. The following day, cherished Bibles in their possession, don Marcos and don Antonio made the return trip to their isolated mountain community.

These young men not only accepted the gospel. They lived it. Spiritual growth was phenomenal. Their enthusiasm overflowed into the lives and homes of their neighbors. Soon a large group of new believers erected a crude chapel. Occasionally workers from the Crusade visited them.

Two years ago when violence was at its height, don Marcos, the owner of a small rural tailor shop, awoke one morning to find his shop empty. Although every one knew the thief, political conditions made his arrest impossible.

Unable to make a living in his home community, don Marcos moved his wife and three children to La Mesa, later to Cachipay. There he operates a small tailor and barber shop. On a shelf in front of the barber's chair the customer sees New Testaments, Bibles, gospels, and tracts. The Bibles and Testaments are sold. Gospels and tracts are given away. As William Carey, don Marcos' business is to preach the gospel. He cuts hair and sews khaki trousers to make a living.

PETER KLASSEN ARRIVES

The huge Avianca Constellation landing in Bogota on the morning of February 18 brought to us another voluntary service worker from the North, Peter Klassen of Hague, Sask. Mr. Klassen, the 16th volunteer under this program to visit Colombia since 1950, is the first to come during the winter months.

Awaiting him in Cachipay, besides the 74 vivacious children who never fail to give northern visitors a hearty welcome, were leaky faucets, damaged truck springs, balky motors, broken windows, and tired washing machines plus a multitude of other tasks.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

As we curved and dipped along the narrow highway to Cachipay, I was much impressed by the beauty of the landscape. On every side were buildings that perhaps vacationers had built for their retreats. The climate here makes it an ideal spot for summer camps. I was amazed and drank in as much as I could of the beautiful trees, flowers, and fruits that grow everywhere.

These hills hide a multitude of sins. Perhaps God let nature deck herself in such beauty so that to the innocent tourist the low moral standards would not be so evident. Physical and spiritual poverty rank high.

As I look at Colombia from the Christian view-point, I see that this tropical paradise is a challenge to the Christian youth of today. The mountains and valleys, although beautiful to look at, are a challenge to the red blooded youth of America to go out and bring the tidings of salvation and peace to a lost people under the yoke of sin and the Roman Catholic Church. -- Peter Klassen.

MISSIONARY GIVES NORMAL SCHOOL LECTURES

Arthur Keiser was the special speaker for the consecration days opening the Presbyterian Normal School at Ibague on February 14 and 15. This year there are three girls from our mission studying in this school. Since there are few Christian teachers in Colombia, we are looking forward to their future help. One of the girls is from La Mesa where a mission school has just been opened. She is preparing to return to her own community to teach.

The theme of the two days devoted to consecration and meditation was Power. In addition to the Bible studies on the Book of Ephesians, meditations and discussions were held each day upon the sources of power in the Christian life.

MUSICAL FAMILY HOLDS MEETINGS

For two weeks in January the Elof Anderson family of the Evangelical Alliance Mission conducted special evangelistic meetings in our churches and school. Mr. Anderson's persuasive preaching was well supported by his wife and children's musical contribution. With Mrs. Anderson at the piano, Timothy (13) and Priscilla (10) with their cornets, and Mr. Anderson himself with his trombone, they were able to present a type of appeal seldom found in Colombian churches. Twenty-two people professed faith in Christ during their stay.

With only two missionary families left in Colombia working under the Alliance Mission and a large area with many churches to visit, we recognize that their service in our churches meant no little sacrifice. Their visit has convinced us (some of us to our own chagrin) that every missionary should play some type of portable musical instrument.

NOEMI COMES LATE

Noemi surprised us one evening late in February by arriving just in time for the evening meal. Although only eight years old, she had made the six and one-half hour trip by train all by herself, carrying all of her possessions with her. She was one of our more promising children last year, but with school now six weeks in progress we had given up all hope of her returning. Her mother was very sick, and because of the extreme poverty of the family, Noemi had to stay home and take care of her. The mother is a fine Christian, but the father has deserted the family, leaving them to shift as best they can for themselves. We rejoice with Noemi, therefore that the return of an older sister to help in the home made it possible for her to come back to us, even though late and unexpected.

CHURCHES ORGANIZED

Early in January both the Anolaima and the La Mesa congregations were organized into self-governing churches. In Anolaima on January 4 Victor Pinzon, Cecilia de Pulido, Rosa de Oliveros, and Sofia de Pedraza were elected to the church board. Two days later in La Mesa, Eliecer Buitrago, Jesus Beltran, Bethsabe Munoz and Vicente Molina were chosen to govern the church there. This step in self-government provides an added impulse to the achievement of a state of complete self-propagation and self-support.

During the same period there were four baptisms in Cachipay, four in Anolaima, and five in La Mesa. Each candidate gave a personal account of his experience leading under the providence of God to his knowledge of Christ. One became interested in the gospel due to the violence that Protestants had received, above all the stoning of the Keiser residence in Anolaima in 1950. Another attended at first out of curiosity and a basic dissatisfaction with the popular interpretation and practice of Christianity. All had experienced in Jesus Christ a new life which brought freedom from sin and religious superstition.

CONFEDERATION OF EVANGELICAL CHURCHES

Armando Hernandez, a promising young ministerial student, represented the Colombian Mennonite Churches of this area at the annual convention of evangelical churches in Barranquilla early in December. Despite both governmental and ecclesiastical opposition, the Protestant cause continues to show notable progress. Many new congregations were formed during the past year.

At this convention each group of churches reported on its progress during the year. One delegate told of six men who had attacked a car in which Protestants were traveling in an attempt to kill. Of these six, two are in prison for other crimes (Protestantism can usually be obstructed with impunity) and the remaining four are now evangelical converts.

WEDDING BELLS

Almost all marriages in Colombia are solemnized in the Roman Catholic Church. At times even Protestants find it necessary to go to a priest in some distant city or town in order that their union may be recognized by the State. Reluctantly the government makes allowance for a civil marriage, but the Roman Church has seen to it that sufficient obstacles are presented to discourage all but the most stout-hearted.

A case in point is that of Jorge Bulla and Blanca Caro from the Cachipay Church. In September they notified the judge of their intentions, secured the witnesses that the law requires to prove their religious status, and began the 40 day waiting period. But at the end of this period, the judge had failed to notify the Roman Church authorities. This demanded another month of waiting while the parish priest threatened ex-communication and economic boycott.

Legal obstacles out of the way, the marriage was solemnized on December 4, first in the judge's office in Anolaima and later at the Mission chapel.

STUCKY FAMILY ON FURLOUGH

The Gerald Stucky family arrived in the States shortly before Christmas for their second furlough. They had planned to travel by sea, but after waiting for several days at a Colombian port, they were finally informed that their ship had not yet reached Panama on the return voyage. Cancelling their reservations, they took a plane in Cali which took them to New York the same day.

During March and April Mr. Stucky is visiting churches and schools in Canada. Mrs. Stucky has remained in Berne where the children are in school.

MISSION ACQUIRES JEEP

A friend in Chicago once described the 1 1/2 miles of cobblestones leading from Cachipay to the Mission School as the "world's bumpiest road". Judging by the limited service life of vehicles that travel on it, he was undoubtedly correct.

After four years of service the Chevrolet station wagon showed its inability to travel these roads much longer. By selling it, it became possible to purchase a 1955 Jeep. Its ruggedness and economy should solve our most pressing transportation problem.

Since many towns lack highways and rural areas are accessible in no other way, much of our traveling must still be done on horse back or on foot.

THIS AND THAT

Alice Bachert reports that recent efforts in Girardot have shown more promise. Her classes enjoy an increased attendance and a growing number respond to the gospel message.

Prospects for the entrance of the Calvin Flickinger family now waiting in Hutchinson, Kansas, are a bit brighter. Although the foreign office is still studying their case, the legal representative of the Evangelical Churches feels that there is room for optimism.

A recent decree from the Ministry of Education threatens the existence of all evangelical schools in Colombia. This decree demands academic standards which few private schools enjoy at the present time. Despite the fact that Colombia is only 51% literate, schools which deviate from the official religious views are not appreciated in governmental circles.

On the morning of March 10 the local priest from Cachipay conducted mass at a private chapel across the road from the Mission. Using a public address system he stated that he in union with two other priests was beginning a concentrated campaign in this community. Special target -- nominal Roman Catholic parents who send their children to the Mission School.

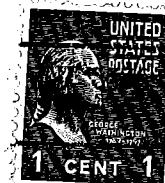
Any one wishing to send gifts to Colombia should contact the Mission Board or a missionary to ask advice. Aside from books all shipments weighing more than eight ounces go through customs where they are delayed from 3 to 6 months. The duty is often equal or greater than the original cost.

PRAYER REQUESTS

1. Pray that the new school in La Mesa may be able to continue to meet the needs of the Protestant children there.
2. Pray for the eight young people from our churches who are studying to become ministers, nurses, and teachers.
3. Pray for the Stucky family on furlough and for the Flickingers that they might soon be able to enter Colombia.
4. Pray for new Christians.
5. Pray for your missionaries.

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