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COLOMBIA

COLOMBIAN NEWS

Cachipay, Cund., Colombia, S. A.



INFORMATION SERVICE OF THE MENNONITE MISSION IN COLOMBIA

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WE GIVE THEE THANKS OH GOD

Special cause for rejoicing at the beginning of the tenth year of school work at the school-home for children in Cachipay is the possession of the official license permitting us to function which was granted by the Ministry of Education. The concession of this license has been a matter of special prayer during the past year. For lack of it many schools have been closed, and during the past year the Cachipay school was seriously threatened with closure. We raise our hearts in grateful thanks to God for the possession of this license.

ONE HUNDRED YEARS AGO

In 1856, shortly after Colombia became a republic independent of Spain, the first Protestant missionary, Mr. Henry B. Pratt, a Presbyterian, arrived in Colombia. To celebrate the anniversary of his arrival, the Evangelical Confederation of Colombia has planned special programs to take place throughout 1956. Particular emphasis is

being given to evangelism and evangelistic campaigns, with three large climaxing meetings to be held in the larger cities of the country. Outstanding speakers have been invited from the U.S. and from other parts of Latin America, and all Protestant churches are having special evangelistic meetings. Many churches have set individual goals in this year for revival within as well as bringing others to the fold of Christ. The church in Cachipay has made as its goal the contacting of fifty new converts for the Kingdom of God.

One of the aims of the Centennial is the distribution of 20,000 copies of the New Testament which have been prepared with the help of the American Bible Society. They have a special stamped binding commemorating the 100 years of missionary work. We look forward to a great advancement for Christ during this year.

SCHOOL BEGINS TENTH YEAR

The new school year opened on January 30 with a total of which 72 reside at the school-home. Five of these have finished primary school and are taking special concentrated studies in English and typing. Of the total number, 41 are children whose parents are suffering from leprosy and who live in the government colony of Agua de Dios. The remainder are children of needy evangelical Christians who have no other school to which to send their children. Many of them come from our own families in Anolaima where there is no evangelical school, and from Pena Negra, a small village located about three hours' distance from Cachipay, and also without any evangelical school.

A great contrast exists between the well-filled classrooms in our modern school today and the small class that was present at the beginning of the first school year. Today we have three full-time teachers: Vernelle Yoder, who is also principal, Berta Correa who has had three years of teaching experience with us in the past, and Lucia Barrera, a recent graduate of the Evangelical Normal School in Ibague.



BROTHER AGAINST BROTHER

One day Jose returned to his house to find the only path blocked by a wire fence. This was the work of his brother Noah, who had turned into a bitter enemy since Jose became a Christian. He had already been challenged to a duel with long knives and had received all manner of abuse at the hand of his brother, and now his path was cut off where it led through Noah's farm to his own.

The next time that a visit was planned to Jose's house it was decided to visit Noah as well if it were at all possible. It was a happy surprise on arriving at the home to be cordially received by the family instead of by the fierce dogs that had been sent to meet the missionary and his friends before. Fruit was offered to the visitors, and evangelical literature was given to the family. On reaching Jose's house later, the group joyfully listened as he told of how a short time before his brother had called him and asked forgiveness for the things that he had done. While he has still not accepted Christ, Noah and his brother are now living in peace, for which we give praise to God.

EVANGELICALS TO HAVE CEMETERY

One of the most urgent matters facing Colombian Christians and missionaries of this area for several years has been the acquisition of a lot for a cemetery. Since Protestants are refused burial in the existing cemeteries which are controlled by the Catholic Church, this has been a matter of great concern. However it has been impossible to secure a lot which could fulfil the necessary requirements for a cemetery, or where neighbors in surrounding communities did not object to its presence. It has been decided, therefore, that a small plot located in an isolated part of the mission farm where the children's home and school is established will be used for the purpose. Already the local hygiene authorities have given their approval, and we trust in God that all necessary requirements can be filled so that this may be our permanent Evangelical cemetery.

DIFFICULTIES IN PENA NEGRA

The most recent addition to our evangelistic stations in Pena Negra, situated about three hours' walking time from Cachipay in a beautiful section of the country where papaya, mangos, and oranges flourish. About a year ago regular visits were begun and services were held in the individual homes. From the very beginning great opposition faced these people, but in spite of it they have been zealous in carrying the Gospel in their neighbors. The rural store refused to sell to them; one man was fined because the missionary crossed a certain bridge to reach his home; more recently they have been threatened with heavy fines if they continue to have services in their homes; rumors fly constantly as to what will happen to the missionaries if they continue to visit there.



Some have found the cost too great and have withdrawn, but at the present time four families are faithfully following Christ and have placed their children (pictured at the right) in our school in Cachipay. Many others have expressed interest, but have requested that the missionary not visit them just yet as they realize that this would bring persecution to their door. In the meantime they are reading and studying their Bibles in secret in their homes. Christ said that the gates of hell shall not prevail against His Church, and so it is that we know that even with all the threats and plotting, the Church of Christ in Pena Negra will go forward.

IT NEVER FAILS TO HAPPEN

Weeks may pass without an illness, but when the nurse goes on vacation, everyone seems to need nursing attention. Visitors to the clinic may be few during most of the year, but when school begins, you may be sure that there will be many illnesses. It happened again this year! While the nurse took a few days vacation in January, the epidemic began, and so the very opening day of school found some children in bed, with more down as the days passed.....sometimes as many as 10 or 12 at a time. But fortunately these things pass, and helped by the good nursing care of Miss Soldner, by then back on duty, the children were soon up and in school again.

CLINIC TO BE CONSTRUCTED

The epidemic of colds and fevers at the beginning of the year emphasized again

that our problem of isolation is an increasing one with the greater number of children enrolled. Therefore it is planned to begin construction of a clinic in the near future. The proposed building will have two sickrooms, nurse's room, bath, and an adjoining caretaker's room with private entrance.

It is hoped that illnesses will be few and far between, and that when not in use as a clinic, the building can also be used as a guest house.

DID YOU EVER SEE A TREE WALKING?

It is not unusual to have things disappear or have them stolen. Fruit is a common item to disappear from trees. Recently however, Gerald Stucky was not a little surprised when he found the Washington Navel Orange seedlings that he had nurtured for the past five years gone. Undoubtedly someone had urgently needed this type of orange, and the best way was to take the tree and all.

In September the mission and the Rutschman family also suffered the loss of material equipment when thieves broke into the main house, taking typewriters from the commercial room and taper recorder, typewriter, and phonograph from the Rutschman living room.

CACHIPAY CHURCH EXPANDS

In 1951 the Christians in Cachipay enthusiastically gathered at their recently purchased lot to build a chapel for their services. From early until late one Saturday they worked, and with the closing of the day their first church stood finished. It was nothing more than a roof supported by wooden posts, but it was a shelter and a place where they could gather to worship God together. A year later that crude structure was replaced by a more permanent cement block building which provided a more adequate meeting place. However the building had never been finished, and its one room was not sufficient for the expanding Sunday School.

Recently the church has taken steps to improve the appearance of the building and provide room for another Sunday School class. The lot has been improved by leveling and plantings, some permanent changes are planned in the building structure itself to give added beauty as well as a more serviceable form, and a slight addition has been made at the back of the church to provide a veranda-like space for the children's classes. We rejoice in this forward move on the part of the Cachipay Christians who have undertaken the direction of this expansion by themselves.

TULIO AND HIS CHICKENS

One of the greatest joys which a missionary can know is when a person is willing to give up everything to follow Christ. Sometimes this involves untold sacrifices. It was so with Tulio, a blind man in Anolaima, who eight years ago dedicated himself and his family to God. From that time forward Tulio has had a difficult road to follow because of his loyalty to Christ. First he lost his business, and then because he was an evangelical and because of his physical handicap, he was unable to enter a new business. During all this time he and his wife and family of eight children have been sustained largely by charity.

Several months ago it was suggested that he might profitably raise chickens, and since that time all family efforts



have been toward that end. Now it seems that at last they will soon be self-supporting again through the sale of eggs and dressed chickens. With joy and thanksgiving they presented their tithe unto the Lord, returning to Him that with which He has prospered them.

Tulio has recently been chosen by the church council in Anolaima to assume the duties of direction of the church and preaching at times when a pastor of missionary is unable to be present.

LA MESA LICENSE STILL PENDING

After many trips to Bogota regarding the license for the school in La Mesa, and being told each time to return a week later, it was a bit discouraging to learn that the application and accompanying documents were lost and it would be necessary to submit new ones before the matter could be further considered. A new application has been submitted and we are trusting in God that the license will be granted. In the meantime our student pastor, Armando Hernandez, is giving the children private lessons so that if the school can be opened later they will not be too far behind to complete the year's requirements.

VACATION BIBLE SCHOOLS HELD

In December and January, Vacation Bible Schools were held in La Mesa and Cachipay. Each was for a two-week period which was a rich experience for teacher and pupil alike. We rejoice in the victories won in the children's lives. Not too many children outside of the church families were reached, for those who have not accepted the Gospel do not wish to have their children taught our beliefs. We are thankful for the contacts that were made. In La Mesa where Vernelle Yoder was assisted by two of the young people of the church the enrollment was twenty-four, and in Cachipay where she and Janet Soldner worked together with a young student, twenty-two attended. The schools were not large, but they helped meet a need in the Christian Education of our children. Each school ended with a short program presented before the entire church.



HERE AND THERE

Flying from Bogota to Miami on March 19 to begin her furlough was Alice Bachert, missionary in Girardot. She plans to spend April, May, and part of June in Miami where her address will be 950 N.E. 130th Street, N. Miami 38, Florida. After that time she will be in her home community in Kitchener, Ontario, where correspondence may be directed to her at 57 Stirling Avenue N., Kitchener, Ontario, Canada.

It is a happy occasion when family members can visit missionaries. Coming from California to spend Christmas holidays with the Arthur Keiser family was Mrs. Keiser's brother, Paul Morrow.

Those wishing to write to the Rutschmans, now on a two year leave of absence from the Colombian field to serve in Uruguay, may address all correspondence to Mr. and Mrs. LaVerne Rutschman, Guadalupe 1230, Montevideo, Uruguay.

THANKSGIVING AND PRAYER

THANK HIM for those who in the past 100 years have learned to know Christ and who have faithfully witnessed for Him.

for granting the official license for the Cachi-pay school-home.

for the victories which new Christians have won in the face of persecution.

PRAY that the license for the La Mesa school may still be forthcoming.

that the meetings during this Centennial year may bring a great ingathering to the Kingdom of God.

that the children in our schools may enter into a vital relationship with Christ early in their life with us.

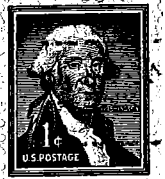
that those in Pena Negra who seek to follow Christ in secret may have the courage to confess Him publicly.

that the necessary approval for the use of our lot as a cemetery may be granted.



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