

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

# COLOMBIAN NEWS



Cachipay, Cund., Colombia, S. A.

INFORMATION SERVICE OF THE MENNONITE MISSION IN COLOMBIA

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### CHILDREN ENJOY SPECIAL MEETINGS

Although our Cachipay children have many opportunities to learn to know Christ and things spiritual, none are more appreciated than the meetings that we have occasionally with visiting Christian workers.

Recently they thoroughly enjoyed some special meetings that were conducted by Mrs. Earl Wilder of the Gospel Missionary Union.

Mrs. Wilder is one of the finest children's workers that we have had the opportunity of knowing, and has a splendid and loving way with children.

Three meetings a day were held and the children were given excellent messages on Salvation and the Christian life. Since many of the children come from a non-evangelical background, and since they had never known the gospel message before coming here, many accepted Christ as their Saviour.

It is said that for a short earthly life a child prepares himself by sleeping 70 hours, eating, playing and working 67 hours, and is in school home 30 hours a week. His preparation for eternity is often only 1 hour in Sunday school.

We are glad that here we can give the child a much more adequate preparation for eternity--as well as for his life.

### SHOP CONSTRUCTED

During the last two months we have been busily engaged in building a small shop.

The shop was designed to house our light plant, car, and electrical tools. It is also designed to serve as a place to do carpentry, shoemaking, teach ceramics, etc.

This building is expected to be the last of our building program for the time being. Since 1948 we have constructed a school, two dormitories with apartments,

Much of thanks and credit for making possible this building program goes to the American Leprosy Missions who have very generously given that these may be possible. They are also supplying the funds for taking care of the children that come from leper parents.

#### HOW ABOUT AN INJECTION?

The people who come to the mission for medical treatment are almost always rural people who live in some poor hut hidden away in the mountains. This is not always the case as the landowners and the people with better means also call upon us for medical help.

Frequently the people come from long distances, a half-hour's walk or more. It is not uncommon for a patient to say, "Can you give me some of that wonderful medicine you gave to my neighbor whose child was cured immediately upon taking the medicine you gave?"

Sometimes they say, "Can't you give me an injection?" thinking that any kind of an injection--just so that it is an injection--would cure them. The people think that the most important treatment for most any illness is some form of an injection. Whenever a patient is too ill to come to the mission, the nurse also goes out into the homes to visit the patient.

The ideas many people have in regards to prevention and treatment of diseases are interesting. Many of the superstitions are gradually disappearing but here are a few that one frequently hears:

It is unthinkable to bathe during the time of illness. A man must never shave when he has a cold. To put the hands in water after ironing causes rheumatism. To stop bleeding from a wound one may apply ground coffee. A cure for malaria is to drink black coffee with garlic and caraway seeds. A remedy for whooping cough is to wrap newspaper around the chest and apply a black tar. Night air is harmful when one has a cold, and a handkerchief put over one's nose when leaving a building at night, especially where there has been a crowd of people, prevents a cold. Lemon juice is used in the eyes of a new-born infant. To hold up a baby over your shoulder will cause it's cheeks to fall. A child's hair should never be cut until he can talk or else he will be mentally retarded. For that reason many little boys have long curls.

The government has established health centers in many places for the poor people, but the doctors generally have a limited amount of drugs and equipment. Few medicines are given out free and those which the doctor at the health center orders for the patient usually costs more than double his daily wage.

There is much to be done for these people in health teaching, treatment, etc. We do the little bit we can in teaching and helping them.--J.S.

#### EXTENDING THE MESSAGE

Due to fanatical conditions, several months have passed in San Javier without a definite program of services for Sundays or week-days. Miss Bachert and her co-workers have offered to accommodate the day and the hour to the wishes of those interested.

When people are invited they usually reply, "Next week we are planning to attend." But few are willing to be pointed out as a follower of the "Communist party", as the local priest there labels the evangelicals.

But there is work to be done for the Lord. Much time is spent in prayer. Contacts are made one by one. A refugee believer was cheered along the thorny pathway. What gratitude and comfort was the response of one pastor from a distant town who was accompanied by a man who had been driven out of his home with his family and from a prosperous farm at the beginning of a bountiful harvest. Some of the animals had been killed and others robbed for use. They had come to seek a safer place to live. It was a joy to have prayer with them and to be able to encourage them to remain firm in the Lord.

In nearby La Mesa, a small group of believers had been disbanded like a flock of sheep without a shepherd, not knowing which way to turn. Some of the small group were losing their desire to congregate. With much patience and prayer, we are now finally able to have a culto each week in different homes.

In Anolaima meetings are continuing with more responsibility placed on the shoulders of the nationals. They have been organized and can call and lead their own meetings.

Our aim is to launch out again, and to open another town to the gospel with the help of all the volunteer believers. We want to work while it is day, for the night cometh when no man can work.--A.B.

#### VOLUNTARY SERVICE WORKERS

For three summers we have had the joy of having voluntary service workers come from the States. This summer, we are sorry to write, none have come. The workers have been a great blessing to the mission staff because of their Christian fellowship and also in the help that they have given in the work.

There is a possibility that a program of Colombian Voluntary Service workers can be worked out. Although the Evangelical Church in Colombia is not so big, yet there are those young people that are seeking an avenue of service. To them we are offering the opportunity of coming here for a month of service.--G.S.

#### THE INDIGENOUS CHURCH

Just what makes a mission successful? The value of its plant? adequate funds to build churches, schools, and hospitals? or an independent, self-supporting national church dedicated to the task of evangelization?

A few days ago LaVerne and Harriet Rutschman and boys returned from a visit to Palmira, Colombia, where their cousins Ray and Carol Zuercher are working. While there they were able to observe the work of one of the oldest and most successful missions in Colombia, the Gospel Missionary Union. Due to limited funds this mission has from the beginning emphasized indigenous church principles. Local groups of believers, finding it impractical to continue holding services in private homes, have on their own initiative built their own chapels. They have chosen their own pastors. Seeing the need of schools for their children, they have hired their own teachers and operated their own schools. A few years ago the believers found that to continue to send their sick to Roman Catholic hospitals or public hospitals under the control of the Roman Church was impossible. With no financial support from the mission other than the lot where the mission compound is located, the national churches erected a 40 bed hospital which they administer completely independently of the Mission. Plans are now being made to enlarge it.

If the churches, schools, and hospitals are completely maintained by the national churches, what do the missionaries do? Basically they consider themselves servants of the church. They teach in the Bible Institute. (But each student must pay his own expenses. The Mission wisely does not subsidize theological students.) The missionaries are constantly engaged in evangelistic work in places yet unreached. But in no sense do they stifle the independence of the church. Should missionaries be forced out of Colombia, these churches would continue.

This indigenous plan, so successful in Korea, sections of Africa and in other parts of the world, should, we are convinced, be our policy in Colombia. The Mission Board has urged us to take immediate steps of self-government, self-support, and self-propagation in the groups now functioning in Colombia under our oversight.

#### BELIEVERS JAILED IN LA FLORIDA

In May four young men from Cachipay, fired with evangelistic zeal, found an opening in the neighboring town of La Florida where they could conduct a meeting. Apparently the local police, who consider themselves obligated to maintain the Roman Catholic religious and cultural pattern, were advised of what was happening. Just as the group dismissed, two policemen appeared demanding identification papers. Two members

this pretense they were jailed. Only through the persistent efforts of another believer, Mercedes de Pedraza, were they released before the police inspector closed his office on Saturday noon. The police had hoped to keep them imprisoned at least until the inspector's office was opened on the following Monday.--L.R.

### THIRTEEN NEW BELIEVERS BAPTIZED

On Pentecost Sunday, May 24, 13 new believers were received into the fellowship of our churches through baptism. Immediately preceding the baptismal service each candidate gave a testimony relating to his experience in receiving Christ. Following are a few excerpts from these statements:

For many years Rosa Vargas was accustomed to spend some of her few pennies each week to buy oil or candles to burn before the images and pictures of the virgin and some of the saints. One day a believer explained to her the gospel, suggesting that she attend evangelical meetings, and that she place her money to better usage than that of burning oil or wax before a lifeless image or picture. Finally after weeks of vacillation she decided to make an experiment. For an entire week her saints were left in darkness. And her business, chosen as the criterion, showed better returns that week than in previous weeks. To her this was the voice of God. Images, rosaries, mass and all of the other accretions of the Roman Church now had no attraction. She gave herself to Him who is the Truth, and the Truth released her from legal bondage and superstition. Despite her sixty years of age and her poor eyesight, she has an insatiable desire to learn to read that she may see for herself the Word of God. Another member of the church is helping her to that end by using the Laubach method of teaching the illiterate.

Otoniel La Rotta related how some three years ago one of our missionaries gave him a tract. Through those few words his interest stirred. He purchased a Bible. Distance precluded attending meetings for many months, but he studied assiduously. On Catholic holidays both he and his wife, instead of following their neighbors to the village where money needed for food and clothing was spent in drinking and useless diversions, stayed at home and together studied the Word of God. Their home was changed. Relatives tried to dissuade them, shunned them, ostracized them. But the cost was not too great. Both Don Otoniel and his wife were among those baptized on Pentecost. We are confident that their lives, after years of searching, are on the Rock.

Dona Rosario told how before her husband's conversion their home was bedlam. Christ changed her husband, later her. They are now united in the family of God and have found true happiness.

Don Julio has been attending services for years. But his drink habit kept him in bondage. His desire to follow Christ was simply forgotten whenever someone offered him liquor. Now he has demonstrated that Christ has given him the victory. The church board agreed to accept him into the fellowship of the church, confident that the power of drink was broken. Educational opportunities have been very few. As a Christian he is very immature. But Christ lives within. Don Julio is worthy of our intercession before the Throne of Grace.

Among those baptized were three from our mission school, two of whom are from homes plagued by leprosy. Each presented a ringing testimony of the new life in Christ.--L.R.

### PRAYER REQUESTS

1. Thank God for the recently baptized believers, and pray that they might remain firm and grow in grace.
2. Pray for the small church groups that they may understand and appreciate the plan for their self-government, self-support, and self-propagation.
3. Pray for the children that have recently accepted Christ that they might grow in grace.
4. Pray for the Arthur Keiser family as they return from furlough.
5. Pray that the testimony of the missionaries might be Spirit led and blessed to the salvation of souls.
6. Pray that the missionaries may be guided by the Spirit in their plans to open new places to the Gospel.