

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

GREETINGS.....	1
THE FIRST TEN YEARS.....	1
VERNELLE YODER TO LEAVE ON FURLOUGH.....	2
EX-PRIEST VISITS CONGREGATIONS.....	3
EDILMA GUTIERREZ GRADUATES FROM H.S.....	3
VERONICA'S STORY.....	3
BAPTISMAL SERVICE IN CACHIPAY.....	4
EVANGELICAL CHORAL GROUPS VISIT.....	4
OUR FIRST FUNERAL.....	5
THIS AND THAT.....	5
PRAYER REQUESTS.....	6

GREETINGS

"Hail to the Lord's Anointed, great David's greater Son!
Hail, in the time appointed, His reign on earth begun!
He comes to break oppression, to set the captive free,
To take away transgression, and rule in equity."
.....Montgomery

At the close of another year we would send you our greetings and our prayer for God's blessing upon each of you at this Christmas season, and at the same time we would thank you for your prayers, your encouragement, and your support, which make possible this work of our Lord in Colombia. We wish you a joyous Christmas and a Happy New Year.

THE FIRST TEN YEARS

Ten years sometimes seem like a long time, but when one begins to retrospect and to think of where he has been, what he has done, and what has been accomplished, then he wonders where the time has gone. This year brings to a conclusion ten years of missionary work in Colombia by the Mennonite Mission. Ten years ago the staff was composed of one missionary couple, two single ladies, and two children. Due to the conditions in Colombia, the staff has remained small and at the present consists of two missionary couples, three single ladies, and one couple on leave of absence.

During these years, scores of children of parents suffering with leprosy have been helped and educated. A large number of them have made a definite decision for Christ. Those who have left are struggling to live a testimony for Christ in a difficult and contrary environment. Besides these, other scores from evangelical homes have been taught to read and write and have given themselves to Christ. This has been a very necessary and important work since the public schools are Catholic-dominated, and the evangelical children are rejected or persecuted. November 21 marked the closing program of the tenth school year, at which time 10 students were graduated from primary school. Of this group, several plan to continue their studies in secondary school next year, and others will remain here for advanced study in English and commerce.

A great quantity of gospel seed has been sown through tracts, Gospels, and testimony. Gospel invasions were made in Cachipay, Anolaima, San Javier, La Mesa, La Esperanza, Pena Negra, La Florida, and Girardot. Three churches have been organized besides the congregation at the school for children. The weekly attendance is about 230, and well over 100 have been baptized on confession of faith. The churches are organized into a General Conference in which the nationals control and guide their own affairs. Each church has bought property and has its own building, and they are making good strides in self-support.

Two young men have been licensed as evangelists and are in active Christian service, and four other young people are studying in evangelical schools preparing themselves to work in the Kingdom of our Lord.

A mutual aid program has given houses on long term loans to three families. These very small houses were built on the back part of the property of the Cachipay church.

The school for children of parents with leprosy now consists of three dormitories, a school building, dining hall, laundry, shop, and clinic. A second school for children of evangelical parents had been opened in La Mesa, but has been closed three times by authorities antagonistic to the Gospel. A third school was also opened in Anolaima. It too was closed by local authorities.

The nurse on our staff has given hundreds of injections and other medical aid unstintingly. She has been able to use this avenue to witness to the saving grace of Christ.

Unfortunately it is all but a drop in the bucket. There is yet much land to be taken, many souls to be won, and much work to be done. We would that the accomplishments might have been greater. We recognize the need of saying in the words of Jesus, "When ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do." Luke 17:10.

VERNELLE YODER TO LEAVE ON FURLOUGH

Departing for the U.S. and more specifically for Berne, Indiana, within a few days will be Miss Vernelle Yoder, who is completing her first term of service in Colombia. She will leave a great void in the school where she has been principal as well as teacher of the second and third grades for the past two years. She will also be greatly missed by the La Mesa congregation where she has faithfully labored in the Sunday School and in Vacation Bible School.

While we shall miss her tremendously, we wish her a profitable and happy furlough. Her time will be spent at her home in Berne, in visiting and speaking in many churches, and in advanced studies in the field of education.

EX-PRIEST VISITS CONGREGATIONS

In a Christian home in Los Angeles in 1945, a party drew to a close with a fellowship circle of prayer. Among those present was one man who nervously awaited his turn, and who was relieved when, after a pause, he was passed by and someone else began to pray. He had been thinking of praying in Latin, but after hearing the simple prayers of the others, he decided that he didn't know how to speak to God, even after twenty-five years in the priesthood, which he had left only a few days before.



— This is the testimony of ex-priest, Rev. Juan Arrien Uriarte, concerning his first contact with Protestants. He became a priest hoping to become a saint, but when, after twenty-five years, he had not found peace with God, he left the priesthood, and a short time after attending the party in the Christian home, he found Christ as his Savior. This testimony he recently presented to the churches in Cachipay, Anolaima, and La Mesa, as he and his wife ministered to us for a few days in October. Their visit, their testimony, and their messages were of great help and blessing to the people of this area. For a year and a half they have been touring the U.S. and Latin America in service to the Kingdom of God.

EDILMA GUTIERREZ GRADUATES FROM HIGH SCHOOL

A high school diploma is in the States considered to be the right and privilege of every young person. In Colombia it is generally the privilege of only the rich.

Ten years ago Edilma Gutierrez, then a small but brightly intelligent youngster, came to us from Agua de Dios, the government leper colony. Her scrappy determination soon made her a leader among the children, and when she voluntarily came one day and said that she wanted to accept Jesus as her Savior, her life began to tell for Him and His Kingdom.

Edilma needed more education, and we needed teachers; so she was sent to the Colegio Americano in Barranquilla for "higher education" (6th and 7th grades. After the 7th grade she taught in our school for a year, and then went back to school for more knowledge. Her determination, intelligence, and fine Christian spirit have been a joy and a blessing to those who know her. In the succeeding years she worked and studied, until last month she was able to finish her high school studies with credit.

Next year, the Lord willing, she will fill a very important place in our school in Cachipay. She comes back to us as a daughter to work with her parents in the vineyard of the Lord. May hers be a fruitful ministry.

VERONICA'S STORY

—"The Protestants have come to town! Be careful!" Veronica was warned. She clutched her tiny baby boy closer to her, thinking, "Yes, I must be careful. There is no telling what they might do to my little James if they get hold of him. They might even kill him." From that day Veronica cautiously cared for her child. When

the American Protestants began passing her house daily to visit a sick neighbor, Veronica ran and hid herself and her son as she saw the hated people approaching.

Soon the construction of a small chapel was in progress.....more work of the Devil. Then an acquaintance invited her to attend a service, and after repeated invitations, she felt obligated for the sake of friendship to go....but she wouldn't go inside the chapel. So she stood outside and looked through a window, thinking that if these people tried to catch her or to do anything to her, at least she would have a chance to escape.

Since her husband, Antonio, was poor and only a common laborer, it was necessary for the family to move from town to town, wherever he could find work. It seemed that every place they went there were always some Protestants who became their friends and invited them to services. But there was always fear, and Veronica became more devoted to her own religion, attending confession and mass with great frequency, and at times she would even become disgusted with Antonio for his apparent lack of equal devotion.



Somehow they acquired a Bible. Veronica was illiterate, but Antonio could and did read the Word of God, and was much impressed by the things he learned. From time to time they would attend an evangelical service in the town where they happened to be. Then one night the chapel where they were attending a meeting was dynamited by enemies of the Gospel, and they and other worshipers had to run and hide, fearing for danger to themselves. Perhaps this was a turning point, for more and more they attended Protestant services. Then on Christmas day, 1955, having now moved to Cachipay, they attended Sunday School; and so it was that 10 years after having first heard about the Protestants, they accepted Christ as their Savior and experienced that peace on earth of which the angels sang.

A year has passed. The once fearful Veronica now fears no one as she cheerfully testifies of her new faith. Her landlord threatened severe action if she did not stop speaking of Christ to everyone who passed her house. Neighbors too have threatened, but that did not make any difference. In October she and Antonio were baptized and thus publically confessed Christ as the Savior who has brought peace and joy to their lives.

BAPTISMAL SERVICE IN CACHIPAY

There is joy in the church as well as in heaven when new ones are added to the body of Christ. On October 7 ten new members were received into the Cachipay Church through baptism and confession of their faith. One of the baptized couples is from the out-station in Pena Negra where they have continued to witness under opposition. Another couple are neighbors whose testimony appears in the preceding article. The other six are children from our school, including Judith Stucky, the oldest child of Mr. and Mrs. Gerald Stucky. The morning baptismal service was followed in the evening by the celebration of the Lord's supper.

EVANGELICAL CHORAL GROUPS VISIT

Recent rains had made the mountain roads slippery and treacherous, and the usual five hour trip from Ibague was prolonged to seven hours, but at last the station wagon bringing the girls' chorus and the director of the Presbyterian

Normal School arrived. Spending Friday evening, Saturday, and Sunday morning in Cachipay and surrounding communities, they presented four services bringing their messages in song and spoken word to the three churches and to the children at the school. Included in the group were two young women from our own groups who will be returning to assist in the educational program of the mission next year.

The following week we were also happy to have with us an instrumental and vocal quartet from the World Evangelism Crusade Bible Institute in Bogota. Again the churches received a blessing from their message. Accompanying them was Armando Hernandez, our young ministerial student who is in his third year in the Institute.



OUR FIRST BURIAL

"You will have to bury her beside the road," the grief-stricken mother of a five-month old girl who had just died was told in the office of the priest. Since the only cemetery in La Mesa where the mother lives is controlled by the Catholic Church, and since burial there was refused, the only place left was beside the road in a space reserved for murderers, suicides, beggars, and Protestants.



Since such a burial is considered a disgrace, permission was secured to bring the small coffin to the school-farm in Cachipay where the mission has set aside a small plot to be used as a cemetery. Until now there has been no place of burial for evangelicals in this region, for several attempts to secure a plot for such purposes have met with failure. Even at the present time the necessary official consent to use the mission lot has not been granted, but a friendly official in Cachipay gave permission to use it in this one instance. Several days later, neighbors threatened to send a petition to the government requesting that this place no more be used as a cemetery since they were now afraid to use the road that passes by a place where Protestants are buried.

This service, held in the church in La Mesa and at the graveside in Cachipay, is the first funeral to be held here since the beginning of the work, although several of our members have passed away in Bogota and were buried there.

THIS AND THAT

Expected back from furlough within the next weeks in Miss Alice Bachert, missionary in Girardot, who has spent the past nine months vacationing and speaking in Florida and Canada and is visiting many churches in between.

A welcome visitor in August was Miss Esther Cummings, professor of speech and linguistics in the Biblical Seminary in New York. Miss Cummings has spent the past year as director of the language school in Campinas, Brazil, teaching new missionaries to speak Portuguese, and was visiting her former seminary students in Cachipay on her return trip to the States.

Among the many groups to visit the mission farm during the year were over fifty members of the young people's organization of the First Presbyterian Church of Bogota who spent a week-end retreat in study, worship, dedication, and recreation. In a later one-day visit they expressed their appreciation to the mission staff for their help by the presentation of a parchment signed by all the retreaters, and by a gift of money to the school.

PRAYER REQUESTS

Thank God for new converts, and for those who are preparing for baptism.

Thank Him for His faithfulness with us and for His care and guidance over the work in Colombia.

Thank Him for ten years' work here and for the visible fruit we have had.

Pray for Miss Bachert as she returns to her work, and for Miss Yoder as she leaves for home, that she may have a blessed and profitable furlough.

Pray for the students who will be leaving us at the end of the year to study or to work, that they may continue faithful to Christ.

Continue to pray for official permission to use the cemetery lot, and for the granting of the license to open the La Mesa School next year.

Pray for each of your missionaries.



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