

#3

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

COLOMBIAN NEWS



Cachipay, Cund., Colombia, S. A.

INFORMATION SERVICE OF THE MENNONITE MISSION IN COLOMBIA

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TRAGIC CONDITIONS IN CACHIPAY

The epidemic of influenza now raging among our children has also touched the village of Cachipay. On Sunday morning LaVerne Rutschman visited a family of sympathizers who had not attended the morning church service. This family lives in a small room. This is their only room. On two single springless beds five of their six children lay sick. Due to an inadequate diet two of the children were suffering severe nasal hemorrhages.

For these, as for thousands of others who due to political unrest have fled from their homes and farms, life has been reduced to a level of mere subsistence.

MUCH SICKNESS AMONG SCHOOL CHILDREN

In the last issue we told you about the siege of chicken pox that the children were experiencing. We are glad that everyone got well and there have been no ill effects.

In recent weeks we have had a full scale attack of the flu. One child after another has fallen ill until almost half of the children have been in bed at one single time.

With somany sick, our dormitory rooms have been turned into hospital rooms, and Miss Soldner has been busy taking temperatures and giving a multitude of injections.

Finally Miss Soldner also succumbed, and their came to the rescue Miss Bachart and also Señorita Deborah Quintero. Deborah worked for the mission in 1947. Since that time she has taken nurses training, and her unexpected visit at this time makes her a God-send.

PREBYTERIAN GOSPEL TEAM VISITS OUR MISSION

The growing strength of the Colombian evangelical movement is seen in its production of gospel teams and musical groups. Since the last issue of the Colombian News, we have had a Gospel Team of young men with us from the Ibaguó Presbyterian Seminary.

This group consisted of a male quartet and two young evangelists. The boys sang well. The messages were vital and evangelistic. In Anolaima, Cachipay, and here at our Mission Home the reception was excellent.

Many, attracted by such fine singing, heard the gospel for the first time. We expect, in the near future, to have a similar group with us from the Gospel Missionary Union Institute in Palmira.

THE SEVENTH SCHOOL YEAR BEGINS

For the seventh successive year, our school for the children of people suffering from leprosy has taken up classes. The school was founded in 1947 with Mary Becker Valencia as the first director.

This year there are 70 children in school. The first year had 22 pupils. The growth has not been too rapid, but it has seemed preferable that way to make possible an establishment of an environment that is truly Christian--and forcefully so. Then too it was necessary to build buildings to house the children--and that of course, takes time.

Of the 70 children, 43 come from leper background, 13 come from Protestant families (non-leper), and 12 are from the neighborhood that attend school but do not live at the school. Two are missionary's children.

EDUCATION FOR THE POOR BUT WORTHY

In general, in Colombia education is only for the rich. Education is not compulsory and so a vast percentage of children do not go to school. All education is expensive,--even that called public education--and so many never go to school because they cannot afford it. This is a land of privilege.

The people from the leper colony that send us their children are very poor. For them to pay \$2.00 U.S. per month as a token payment to us for educating their children is a great sacrifice. Their income from the government is about 44 cents a day. This is paid only to the sick member of the family. Often there live with him a wife and some children.

It is possible for them to have an education and a healthy place to live in our school here because many friends in the States match every penny that the parents pay with a dollar. Only in this way is it possible to help these children with an education--and a spiritual nurture that is changing their lives.

For the rich there are many schools--and when people of means come to us for the education of their children, we urge them to send their children to one of those schools.

Our school has broken down much prejudice against the gospel and has helped in the acceptance of the Salvation message in this territory.

Recently a man came and asked whether it was true that if he sent his children here that they would go to hell. Had he been misinformed?

Letters of appreciation that come from parents are heart-warming, and one realizes that to them the education and care of one or more of their children is as a miracle.

THE SPIRITUAL EMPHASIS

One of the great American educators once said that if it were a choice between having a college education and a knowledge of the Bible that the latter would be preferable.

Although the education that is offered the children in our school at the present consists of grades 1 to 5 only, we try to give them that plus a good knowledge of the Bible.

Things of the Spirit receive a daily stress. The days are begun with morning devotions--and the days are ended with evening devotions. Wednesday evening brings a special prayers meeting and Sunday is not without its Sunday School and evening service.

In school the children are taught the Bible, and they learn scores of Bible verses and soon can say with the Psalmist--"Thy word have I hid in my heart that I might not sin against thee."

Because of the work of the Holy Spirit, many of the children make decisions for Christ, and follow Him thru baptism.

YOUNG COUPLE GETS MARRIED

In our last issue of Colombian News we mentioned the difficulty that evangelical people have here to get married. But...people will get married.

Recently we had our first wedding. The couple was Berenice Torres and Hector Gonzales. Both of them were converts and baptized members of our church. Berenice was a pupil in our school for a number of years and Hector was a young man from Uchipay.

In order to be married they had to go thru the legal red tape that is required for non-Catholics. Finally the judge in Anolaima set the date and we went to witness the first civil marriage that had taken place in Anolaima for years. It was simplicity itself.

After the civil ceremony the couple was "romarried" in our chapel at the school. A nice service was arranged and refreshments were served afterwards. Rev. LaVerne A. Rutschman officiated at the wedding.

THE FUTURE OF OUR CHILDREN

One of the most difficult problems to be solved in a mission work that involves children of the kind we have is--what will they do when they must leave you? Will the investment in their lives be lost? Will they be able to adjust in society? Can they find work? Will they be an asset to the evangelical church?

In order to prepare the children for life we have an active work program in the school. All children must work in one way or another. They must clean floors, rooms, wash dishes, help wash clothes, do gardening, farming, and do repair work.

Thru the use of a number of weaving machines the older boys and girls are taught the ancient art of cloth making. Some of them have

woven some very nice things. Ceramics too has been taught and is again to be taught this year. A new kiln has recently been made and is now in operation in which the things that the children make out of clay can be fired. This is a big field of opportunity.

English is being taught in school and in special classes. In Colombia there is a big demand for bi-lingual people, and young people that can handle well the English language are almost sure to find work.

Cachipay is too small a town to absorb in its commercial program its young people. Many of them must go to the city--i.e., to Bogotá. In order to help our children get a start in the city, and in order to work them into the spiritual program of the evangelical churches in Bogotá, we are considering opening work in that large city. This would not only give us an opportunity to help solve our problem with our young people, but it would also give enlarged opportunities in evangelization.

CACHIPAY CHURCH ELECTS NEW OFFICERS

It was just a year ago in February that the church in Cachipay under the leadership of Arthur Keiser organized itself by the adoption of a constitution and the election of elders and deacons. In harmony with the democratic principles of the indigenous church new elections were held Feb. 28.

The new Board of Elders includes Mercedes de García, Elisa de Bhoroquez and Cinecio Triana. The deacons are Jorge Bulla, Armando Hernandez and Crisanto Novena. This group meets once each month in the interest of the spiritual and temporal welfare of the church.

THIS AND THAT--

The Arthur Keiser family is still on furlough in the States and can be reached by addressing them at Quakertown, Penn. RR2. They have been receiving a fine response in their deputation work.

We appreciate the fine response that many of you made to our request for old Christmas greetings.

Old picture rolls that are often used in Sunday Schools in the States could be used to advantage here if you would send them to us. Please send them individually wrapped. Visual aids materials that can be used with children are also needed.

We thank God for the safe arrival of Miss Vernelle Yoder.

The next issue of the Colombian News will be printed in the States and sent to you from Newton, Kansas.

Perhaps as a direct result of the fact that Catholics were strictly warned recently that Protestant schools are "out of bounds", our schools this year have an overwhelming enrollment that make the need for more room urgent.

PRAYER REQUESTS

1. Give thanks to God for the encouraging progress of the believers in our churches.
2. Pray for the young believers that are having a very difficult time adjusting their lives to their new faith.
3. Pray for the children under our care that they might become strong and healthy Christians.
4. Pray for the Arthur Keisers that the Lord may make them a blessing to many on their furlough and that they may also get the needed rest.
5. Pray for the young leaders in our infant churches--that they might become effective evangelists to their own people.
6. Pray for peace in this country and for the Lord's protection over His own here.