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NUMBER NINE

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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VOLUNTARY SERVICE WORKERS ARRIVE

Again to prove if the theory that three months in a foreign country is worth a year in college, two young ladies of West Swamp Church in Quakertown, Pennsylvania have come to visit and work with us.

Since no one was able to come last year, we are doubly glad for the presence of Eileen Myers and Violet Keiser. Their pleasant personalities and their willingness to help in anything has been making their presence a real blessing to us all. Thus far most of their time has been used in the mimeographing and assembling of a new book recently translated by Vernelle Yoder. The new book is the splendid catechism work book that was put out in English by the General Conference a few years ago.

Also visiting and helping the LaVerne Rutschman family is Miss Orrine Langenegger. Her kind assistance has been a most appreciated help in time of need.

Voluntary service workers come at their own expense and come to help in the cause of Christ in any way that they can. Their service is without financial remuneration and is done as unto the Lord. That the Lord rewards abundantly is the testimony of both the volunteers and the Mission staff.

TWINS BORN TO MISSIONARY FAMILY

For the second time in the history of General Conference missions twins were born to a missionary family.

On June 3, Rev. and Mrs. LaVerne A. Rutschman became the proud parents of two little blond babies whom they have named Ruth Carol and Richard Carl. The little twins greatly anticipated by their brothers David, Robert and Thomas have been given a loving welcome.

With the coming of the twins the missionary family in Colombia now numbers twenty.

NEW WORK BEGINNING IN GIRARDOT

Undoubtedly one of the most difficult things in mission work is the opening of new centers of evangelistic endeavor. However it is also one of the most indispensable.

After having worked approximately three years in San Javier amidst much opposition and unresponsiveness, Miss Alice Bachert has moved on to Girardot to witness of Christ and His power. While in San Javier she also helped reorganize the work in La Mesa, a near-by town, which now has a thriving young congregation in charge of LaVerne Rutschman.

In La Mesa Miss Bachert is giving a faithful witness and is also cooperating with the Presbyterian Mission of that city.

BOGOTA NEWSPAPER ATTACKS WORK IN ANOLAIMA

In a front page three and one-half column headline, the conservative Catholic daily newspaper called the Diario Gráfico of Bogotá, bitterly attacked the Protestant work in Anolaima on May 11. It deplored all efforts of the Protestants to bring the truth of the gospel of Christ to the people, claiming that they were deceiving the simple country folk.

The article also said that "it is also known that in the neighboring town of Cachipay there exists a protestant school that is indoctrinating children in strange theories in a scandalous manner."

We recall that Jesus said, "Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you."

In spite of much opposition many are coming to the Lord and are receiving the salvation offered by Him.

PERSECUTION OF PROTESTANTS CONTINUES

Impossible as it seems, persecution and religious intolerance continues apace in 1954 in Colombia. Many incidents could be cited, but we will limit ourselves to this one:

In May Catholic priests and nuns of Buenaventura led a campaign to close the Protestant chapel in that Pacific coast port city. The first step was the erection of an image of the Virgin Mary across the street from the chapel, where priests and nuns brought school children to recite the Rosary.

On May 16, at the 7:30 p.m. service of worship began two Catholic priests, Father Carmona and Father Alfonso Gómez, brought a religious procession to the chapel door. They led their followers in the Rosary, interspersed with shouts and cheers. Sample yells: "Long live the Catholic Church!" "Down with the Protestants!" "Long live the Pope!" and "Long live Catholic Colombia!"

Father Carmona turned to the crowd and spoke the following message, or words to that effect: "We don't need these sons of Luther to corrupt our country. Sixty per cent of the United States is pagan, and it is those pagans who have come to our land to try to enforce their paganism on our people. Catholicism is making a sweeping victory in the United States. Pagans are flocking to the Catholic Church to embrace the truth, while these pagans come to our country to steal the sheep from the fold."

To Mr. Jacobson, the missionary, he said, "You talk about salvation by faith. We have come to show you that salvation is by works, as taught by St. James." He also said that they are doing the will of God and would not give up until they had rid the country of Protestants.

With that the crowd shouted Vivas to the Catholic religion and threats to the Protestants. The priest then read to the crowd a Roman Catholic tract called "Anti-Protestant Pills and Drops," and called for the destruction of the church's neon sign. With stones and sticks the crowd broke the glass tubing.

At 8:30 p.m. armed soldiers arrived and attempted to restore order. The priests however, refused to stop their demonstration. The secretary of the military commandant in Buenaventura then ordered Mr. Jacobson to close the chapel doors and threatened to suspend religious services unless his order was obeyed. The shouting, singing, and stoning continued until 9 o'clock.

The Catholic Mission Territory of Buenaventura includes some 54,000 inhabitants. According to the latest Yearbook of the Catholic Church in Colombia (1953) there are four priests to care for the population, or one priest for each 13,500 people.

From the standpoint of adequate pastoral care (one priest for every 1000 people), the region is virtually abandoned by the Catholic Church. Despite the magnitude of the pastoral work the priests seem more intent on driving out Protestant Christians than they are in preaching the gospel.

KEISER SPEAKS AT RETREAT

A small farm on the "other side of the mountain" is a place called Santa Ana. In this beautiful place a fine group of Presbyterian Young People held a retreat for fellowship and communion. Our mission was glad to be represented by Arthur Keiser who gave the young people inspirational messages.

CHRISTIANS MOVE INTO NEW HOMES

Two of the Christian families in Cachipay have recently moved into their new homes built on a part of the church lot, and the third house is nearing completion.

They are very proud of their new homes which they have built at the cost of about \$700.00 U.S. including the lot. The houses are all four room brick structures with bath and kitchen.

During the past year many Christians have left Cachipay for lack of economic security. It is hoped that the housing project will help stabilize their lives. They will pay \$5.00 a month rent until their initial investment is paid back.

MORE BELIEVERS BAPTIZED

The Monday after Easter was a red-letter day for San Javier. Many had been the attacks against the few who had come out definitely for the Lord. But the day came when between fifty and sixty witnesses gathered in the patio of a small house to see people follow Christ in Baptism. After a special message, the testimony of each one rang out across that community which had declared that the work of the evangelicals must be wiped.

Each told of how his or her heart was changed in a simple convincing way. There reigned an atmosphere of joy and peace which the work could not give nor take away. This was the climax to our wishes and prayers for San Javier. Later comments such as "I'm convinced that the evangelicals are doing a good work" were heard.

YOUNG EVANGELIST HOLDS MEETINGS

Francisco Liévano was a lad of 6 when his 60 year old father, tired of a life of sin, became an evangelical Christian. Francisco's father had only five years to live for Christ but during this time he proved the power of the Gospel.

As a child of 8, Francisco, touched by his father's change in character, responded to the invitation of Christ. At 15 he began preaching. At 24 he has become the Billy Graham of Colombia and Venezuela. His musical talent--voice, trumpet, accordion--plus a dynamic spirit-filled personality make his witness astoundingly effective. Few non-Christians attending his meetings have been able to resist the power of his appeal to repent and believe the gospel.

For ten days don Francisco was with us. Thirty-eight people responded to the invitation of Christ during the four meetings in Anolaima. Four day-time meetings in La Mesa saw twenty-six decisions.

Cachipay besides experiencing a new degree of unity counted twelve decisions. Here at the school the children have imbibed something of his enthusiasm for evangelical Christian living during his daily chapel periods.

We recognize in these seventy-six decisions that people are hungry for the new life in Christ, that many are willing to undergo the social and economic privations involved in becoming evangelicals.

ANNUAL CONVENTION HELD

Once each year, during our special evangelistic meetings, one Saturday is set aside for the Annual Convention of the Mennonite Churches related to our Mission. This year, the morning of July 10 was devoted to a special meeting with our evangelist, Francisco Liévano.

Following a picnic lunch a representative from each church reported on the activities of his group during the past year. As a conference of churches it was decided to send a delegate to the annual convention of the Evangelical Church Federation in Barranquilla.

The conference also assumed the financial responsibility for the education of Armando Hernández, a young man of promise from Cachipay, who is studying for the ministry in Bogotá.

Sr. Eliécer Buitrago from La Mesa was elected president of the group for the coming year. Berta Correa from Cachipay is the new secretary.

IMPRESSIONS OF A VOLUNTARY SERVICE WORKER

To the traveller who has just arrived in Colombia, the first impression is of beauty and tranquility. The skyline is of rolling mountains decked with beauty and simplicity. This was the feeling I first had as I arrived at the Mission in Cachipay.

After a month on the station I am still impressed by the beauty of the country, however, the problems and conditions of the people of Colombia take away the outward beauty.

Going through the streets of Cachipay one can see children, dirty and uncared for children, playing in more dirt. One can also see men and women who have no hope for the future.

On a Sunday morning one can worship with a small group of believers who worship and pray as you do. Then coming from the church you will hear of the great hold that the Catholic Church has on the country and how the children are punished in the schools if they are seen worshipping in an Evangelical church.

At the station you see two missionary families playing the role of mother and father to sixty children. They are faced with the problem of discipline for the children and also the problems which arise between the child and his own parents. As you mingle with the children you begin to feel that they are seeking for a love which they do not receive from their own parents and which is impossible to give in a home as they have here.

To me, Colombia is a challenge and a country which is in need of prayer, prayer for freedom of education and religion. --- Eileen Myers

A DAY OF PRAYER

July 1 was observed by the missionaries as a Day of Prayer. After a period of private devotions, Arthur Keiser led the group in an inspirational study and

discussion of the spirit-filled life as found in Romans 8. They all united in a season of prayer.

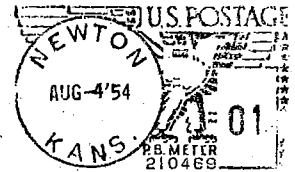
Fine fellowship and a picnic were enjoyed by all at noon. Later in the afternoon there was a singspiration. Singing the familiar gospel hymns in English once again was a great blessing.

PRAYER REQUESTS

1. Thank God for the many new decisions for Christ that have recently been made.
2. Thank God for the Voluntary Service workers who generously give of their time and talent to the cause of Christ.
3. Continue to pray that those who are suffering persecution may be strengthened and be blessed.
4. Pray that the new converts may be strengthened and remain faithful.
5. Pray for Alice Bachert as she begins new work in Girardot.
6. Pray for Armando Hernández as he studies for the ministry.
7. Pray that the believers may be faithful witnesses to their fellow countrymen.
8. Pray daily for your missionaries.

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