

May, 1973

Number Sixty-four

**This is a
CALL TO PRAYER
for
THE LORD'S WORK
in COLOMBIA**

COLOMBIAN
NEWS

Colombia, South America



INFORMATION SERVICE OF THE MENNONITE MISSION IN COLOMBIA

FAREWELLS AND NEW ARRIVALS

Soon we will be saying, "Goodby" to Larry and Edith Tschetter and their son, Matthew. They will have completed two years of voluntary service in June and plan to return to the family farm in Freeman, South Dakota. There, Larry expects to raise hogs and hopes to be able to share with others the benefits he feels he has experienced as a result of giving time to help others and to experience life outside of Canada and the United States. We will miss their quick smiles and assistance in many facets of the work at the farm and retreat grounds. Mechanic's bills will certainly be higher without Larry's know-how to keep the vehicles in running condition. Thank you, Larry and Edie, for what you are and for the many ways in which you have helped us!

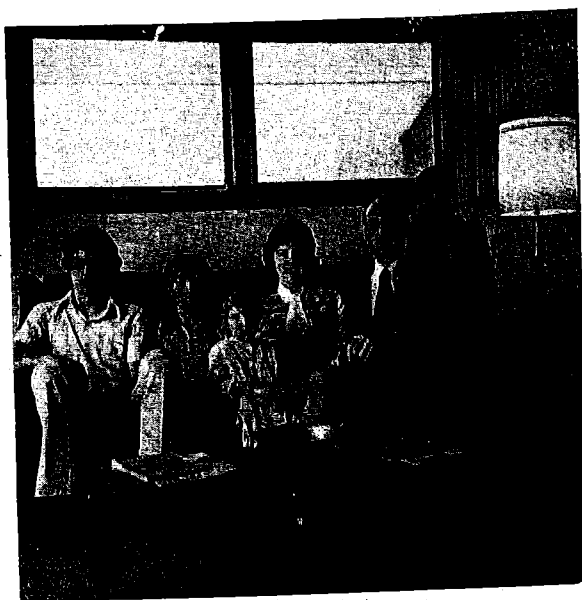


LARRY, MATTHEW, and EDITH
TSCHETTER

Gerald and Mary Hope Stucky are due to arrive in Bogota on May 4 to continue the work they helped begin almost thirty years ago. They will live in Bogota to enable them to interact with former students of the grade school in Cachipay, as well as serve as counselors to church leaders and as retreat promoters. They have been given freedom by the Mesa Directiva (Colombian Mennonite Mission governing board) to develop programs as they are led by the Holy Spirit. We look forward to working together for the glory of God and the growth of His church.

KLAASSENS CONTINUE STUDIES

Glen and Reitha Klaassen are enjoying the opportunity of studying at the Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminaries in Elkhart, Indiana. They feel this experience is helping to broaden their biblical, theological, and church understandings. The Klaassens particularly appreciate the spirit of Christian love, joy and freedom in Christ encountered at AMBS. They have found excellent study opportunities at the Overseas Missionary Training Center there. Glen also reports having taken a theology course at Notre Dame University which proved to be very interesting. We wish Glen and Reitha refreshing and rewarding experiences as they continue to learn and interact with others in the seminary community and look forward to gaining from their insights when they return to Colombia in early 1974.



THE KLAASSEN FAMILY IN ELKHART

MEDA

The Mesa Directiva of the five Mennonite churches in central Colombia recently appointed a committee to initiate a loan program in conjunction with MEDA (Mennonite Economic Development Associates). MEDA was formed in 1953 by nine businessmen for the purpose of assisting fellow Christians in Paraguay. The program has grown to include economic assistance in fourteen countries around the world. Using funds from Christians who have experienced God's blessing in their business, MEDA loans to individuals who cannot raise the capital to help them provide a better life for themselves and their families. Emphasis is placed on loaning only to those active in their local congregations who will be faithful in tithing and helping others as they have been helped. Members of the MEDA committee, Mark Claassen, Luis Fernandez, and Adolfo Palacino, will be responsible for screening applicants and providing guidance in the use of the loan as well as in the management of the business or project. Tentative projects to initiate the program include establishment of a small soda fountain, construction of a display room for a dressmaker, stocking of a shoe store, purchase of an electric sewing machine, and financing of a poultry business.



Margaret Ediger, Edith Tschetter, and Adolfo Fernandez prepare and bottle honey from the farm bee hives. Originally, the honey project began with the goal of giving hives to the country churches to augment their income. This has not succeeded as well as was hoped, but the honey sales from the farm are good and the proceeds pay most of the salary of one of the farm workers.

FAMILY PLANNING IN COLOMBIA

In spite of widespread interest on the part of the general public, family planning services are only beginning to make a dent in the population of Colombia. So reports Judy Sprunger who is volunteering part-time at PROFAMILIA, a large, privately sponsored family planning agency. PROFAMILIA began seven years ago, and in spite of some opposition, has grown rapidly. It now has its headquarters in its own 5-story building and is operating numerous extension centers in various parts of Bogota and Colombia. Women (and men) in ever increasing numbers continue to avail themselves of the services offered by the agency.

The purpose of offering birth control services is simply to give Colombian families, usually with a low income as well as a limited economic future, a chance to keep the number of members of their families down. In this way a family can offer a brighter future to its planned children.

Are the people really interested in this? If the growth of PROFAMILIA is any indication, the answer is, "Yes". Lewis Sprunger, in his work at the Emmanuel Clinic in Bogota, has also found that mothers are almost unanimously interested and anxious to have this kind of help. They realize that to raise a child today in Colombia means that you will have to feed and clothe him (with costs constantly rising) as well as educate him. Whereas in the past such things were not worried about so much, today there is a more widespread desire for advancement, if not for oneself, at least for one's children.

If family planning is such an advantage for Colombians, why should it be opposed by some? One source of opposition comes from the complex interactions of Church, government, and culture. The Church in Colombia has traditionally opposed all artificial means of limiting family size. Therefore, it opposes work in this area. The government, which has always been very much influenced by a conservative Roman Catholicism, also refuses to give official aid. The problem is large and obvious, but the government closes its eyes. On a more personal level, many men, even though very poor, feel that the more children they have, the more manly and virile they prove themselves to be. So, they too, oppose. Generally, the mothers, who bear the children and do most of the actual child-raising, are quicker to grasp the importance and desirability of limiting family size. Another newer source of opposition comes from thinking Latins more to the left politically, who feel that these programs are brought from the outside and are really no more than a veiled form of continued foreign domination. They view population control as one more effort at economic manipulation of their countries by powerful, developed countries. In one sense they have a point, in that to date the middle and upper classes have taken the most advantage of family planning. These classes then, with smaller families, get proportionately richer and the poor, with their large families, get proportionately poorer. Thus results the view that these programs favor the economically privileged at the expense of the poor.



Most people, however, would say that the solution to this dilemma lies in wider availability of family planning services rather than in their curtailment.



The moment of truth arrives... did you listen well in class and memorize your verses?



Two small groups "cram" in preparation for the Bible quiz pictured above.

Some 70 children had a meaningful experience during a 4-day January camp and regretted that it ended so soon. Many had really put themselves into the feel of it in the varied activities of Bible study, singing, hiking, sports, etc.. God blessed in a most wonderful way the efforts of a fine group of counselors and workers. Expectation runs high as plans are made for the next retreat in July.



The children who attended the camp along with their counselors and Bible teachers.



The campfire...a time for reflection and resolve. Pray with us that these children will remember the things they learned and keep the promises they made to God.

WORKERS TO BOGOTA

The fast-growing capital of Colombia, with its almost 3,000,000 people, has only one Mennonite church. In recent months much thought has been given to establishing a nucleus of churches in Bogota to enable them to help each other and then, hopefully, to work out to country points from there.

George and Margaret Ediger, who have spent the last few years on the farm at Cachipay, have recently moved to Bogota and are beginning a new work in the southwestern part of the city. The location is a new housing development with a potential for about 20-30,000 inhabitants. There is no evangelical church in the area. Several individuals have shown considerable interest in the Saturday evening services that have been held in different homes for several weeks.

Helping with this new venture are several Colombians who are living in this same area. Rev. Jaime Caro, former pastor at Ibaguè and now Executive Secretary of the Colombian Mennonite Mission, with his wife, as well as several laymen from the Bogota church have been very helpful by preaching, visiting, starting a Sunday school, etc.. These various couples are planning to work together as a team in the opening of the new work, each one serving according to the gift that God has given to him.



George Ediger speaks at installation service of Rev. Anibal Aguirre. Rev. Aguirre is the new pastor in the Ibaguè church, filling the vacancy left by the move of the Jaime Caros to Bogota. Rev. and Mrs. Aguirre have served for many years in Mennonite Brethren churches in the Cali area.

Pictured at the right is Miguel Rodriguez. He is serving as part-time pastor in the Anolaima church while he completes his high school studies.



FINAL ISSUE OF "COLOMBIAN NEWS"

The mission staff in Colombia would like to inform our readers that this is the last issue of "Colombian News." Instead of separate field publications from Colombia, India, Taiwan, and Japan, the Commission on Overseas Mission will be publishing a joint information paper. This will be in the form of an insert called "Encompass" to be published four times a year in "The Mennonite" and "Der Bote." Those of you who do not receive either magazine will continue to be informed regarding the work in Colombia through a separate mailing to you of "Encompass." The first issue is due to be published in September, 1973.



Vidal Jimenez leads a meeting during the young people's retreat.



Interaction was a key to the success of the week.



Farewells as the group prepares to leave the retreat grounds. Pictured talking with Vidal Jimenez and Rev. Polidoro Daza is John Driver from the Mennonite seminary in Montevideo, Uruguay. Mr. Driver led the group in discussions and a study of the Sermon on the Mount, sharing his faith in a beautiful way.

Several young people made commitments during that week that have changed their lives noticeably.

January also marked the date of a "workers retreat." Included in the group were pastors and their wives, teachers of our two schools, and missionaries. The main topic for discussion was discipleship. We can make best use of our time by following the example of Jesus and training a few people well, rather than "spreading ourselves too thin" in our interaction with people.





PASTORS MEET WITH MARGARET EDIGER TO
DISCUSS SEMINARY POSSIBILITIES FOR THEIR
CHURCHES

Several new advancements have been made in the seminary extension program. Two new centers in Cachipay and Ibague were added to the existing centers in Anolaima and La Mesa. Also a new level of studies was added in order to provide training for persons with insufficient educational background to tackle the materials offered thus far. A course on Personal Evangelism prepared by the Christian and Missionary Alliance is being taught at the Lower 1 level. For those students who have completed their elementary education, courses are being offered on an Inductive Study of the Gospel of Mark, Principles of Church Growth, and the Christian Home.

A third encouraging development is the active participation of local pastors in the teaching of the course on Personal Evangelism. Rev. Anibal Aguirre of Ibague, Alfonso Castro of Cachipay and Miguel Rodriguez of Anolaima are thus actively involved in the seminary extension program. Vidal Jimenez has been commuting to Ibague from Girardot once a week to teach a class there on the Gospel of Mark. George and Margaret Ediger continue to supervise the entire program as well as teach in the three centers of Anolaima, Cachipay, and La Mesa.

As a result of these three innovations, about twenty students are regularly attending classes at the four centers. Each of these developments marks a step forward, we feel, toward our goal of training lay leaders for active participation in their local churches.

GPS CONFERENCE

Plans are well underway for the mini-GPS (definition and evaluation of goals, priorities, and strategy of our work) to be held in Cachipay from noon, June 4, through June 7. June 4 will be spent in a spiritual retreat in preparation for the following three important days. Please pray with us for strong unity, dedication and wisdom.

A number of Colombian resource people from different denominations have been invited to help us evaluate our work. Numerous papers have been written by leaders in various fields. Topics included are "New Strategies in Education by Missions in Colombia," "Strategy and Growth of the Church," "The Role of the Missionary," "Social Programs of the Church and the Gospel," "How Should Christian Work in Colombia be Financed?", and "The Role of the Bookstore in the Spread of the Gospel." We expect the return of Gerald and Mary Hope Stucky before the conference and anticipate participation of Howard Habegger, the Executive Secretary of the Commission on Overseas Mission.

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Agronomist Mark Claassen demonstrates the benefits of good management practices in farming to two members of the Cachipay church. They are now anxious to raise corn using these methods on their own farms.

PRAISE AND PRAYER

PRAISE GOD for interest of neighbors encountered by Caros and Edigers in the new church developing in Bogota.

PRAISE GOD for the good reception of Margaret Ediger's Happy Christian Home study course.

PRAISE GOD for the interest in Christian literature and for the greatly increased sales of the bookstore.

PRAISE GOD for opportunities to help others in need, for example, through loans and guidance in cooperation with MEDA.

PRAY for wisdom and sensitivity to the leading of the Holy Spirit for those involved in the new group beginning in Bogota.

PRAY for several Christian Education workshops and retreats for which Vernelle Yoder is responsible during May, June, and July.

PRAY for wisdom for Margaret Ediger as she revises her seminary extension course on the Christian home.

PRAY for our daily interaction with people that we will show His love and share His message meaningfully.