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To All the World

INFORMATION SERVICE OF THE MENNONITE MISSION IN COLOMBIA

PREPARING FOR THE FUTURE

How can church leaders be prepared in adequate numbers to meet the needs of young churches' expanding program of outreach? The traditional answer has been: "Send prospective students away to Bible school." But in many underdeveloped countries this response has its weaknesses. Most students are too poor to pay their own way through some institution of theological training. Many have financial obligations to their families. Frequently they are uncertain of their vocational calling, making a large investment in their studies extra difficult. Sometimes after leaving home communities to prepare for the ministry, students are unwilling to leave the sophisticated city environment for the more backward areas from which they come, or their churches are no longer willing to receive them as one of them.

Decentralizing the Bible institute and seminary has been one answer tried recently with success in various areas and is now being put into practice throughout Colombia. Under the new system students meet with their instructor one night a week when they review what they have studied over the past week and receive their new assignment. Each student has his own text and manual to guide him in his study at home during the week.

A number of extension centers of the United Biblical Seminary in Medellín have been organized in large cities like Bogotá, Cali, and Barranquilla. Heading the Bogotá division is Armando Hernández, president of the Colombian Mennonite Church.

Sixty-four students are presently enrolled in the Bogotá division: twenty at the Mennonite centers located in Anolaima, La Mesa, and Ibagué; seventeen at another denominational center in a suburb of Bogotá; and twenty-seven from various denominations at the division headquarters located in the city center. Armando and Eunice Hernández and Glendon Klaassen are among the teachers at the latter center. Four Mennonite students are currently enrolled there.

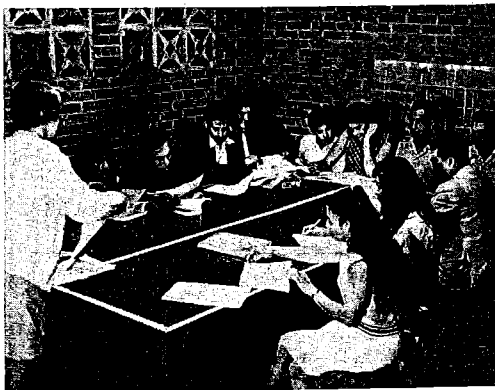
Few of these students would be studying and preparing for Christian service were it not for this creative venture in theological training. Each of them brings added hope for the future of the church in Colombia.



THE MENNONITE CENTER OF BIBLICAL STUDIES

Twenty students have just completed another semester of studies at the three Mennonite centers of biblical studies. In its second year of operation, the "Decentralized Bible Institute" is affiliated with the Bogotá division of the United Biblical Seminary in Medellín.

In the centers at Anolaima and La Mesa, courses were taught in Evangelism and Old Testament Introduction. George and Margaret Ediger were the instructors. This semester, classes were taught on two levels--the diploma level for students with only an elementary education, and "Bachillerato" level for those with a high school education.



Students at Anolaima center



Students touring churches

In Ibagué, Jaime Caro, pastor of the church there, taught the classes in Orientation and New Testament Introduction. He was assisted every third week by the Edigers.

The students, ranging in age from youth to middle age, represent a wide variety of occupations. There are pastors, farmers, day-school students, mothers, builders, teachers, and general repairmen. Some are studying because they want to understand their faith better and to be able to help in their churches; others have indicated a clear interest in preparing for the pastoral ministry. We rejoice for the growing interest among our church members in these biblical and church-related studies.

BOGOTA CONSTRUCTION

For quite a few years the Mennonite church of Colombia has been the legal holder of two vacant lots in West Bogotá which formerly belonged to the American Leprosy Mission. The larger lot is being ceded as a donation to "Futuro Juvenil," an evangelistic interdenominational organization working with orphan children. The smaller lot, consisting of about 1,500 square meters of land, is being walled in to permit some type of development and activities. Also, a small house is being built for a caretaker. At present Raúl Pedraza, member of the Bogotá church and student at the Bogotá division of the seminary, is in charge of the project. Though definite plans have not been made, the lot will probably be used soon as an outreach witness point and social center for youth. A simple building will be put up to give some shelter for these activities. The remainder of the lot will be under cultivation until definite plans are made.





HABEGGER VISIT COINCIDES WITH WORKERS' RETREAT

"Retreat," says Webster, "is to withdraw, as from something difficult." How good this sounds to our ears and how we need this from time to time!

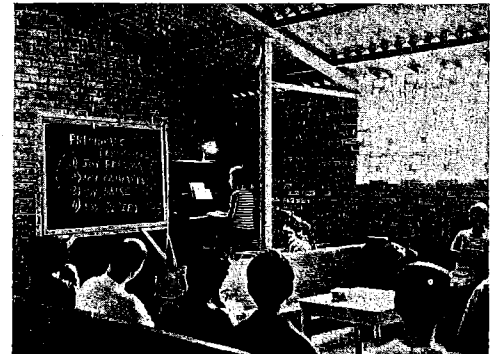
For this reason, besides the annual church retreats which are for everyone, every three months or so we try to hold a retreat for workers in the various churches and institutions.

Our last workers' retreat took place in Cachipay on October 3. It was extra special because we had with us Howard and Marlene Habegger of Berne, Indiana. They completed five years of service here in Colombia, during which time they founded the church in Bogotá. Howard has spent the last two years completing studies toward his doctorate.

In the morning session of the retreat Howard treated a topic which was timely and of concern to all Christian workers, that of "Personal Priorities." His recommended priority list was: 1) I am a person (with physical, social, religious needs); 2) I am a companion (to wife or husband, fellow-workers); 3) I am a father (or mother); 4) I am a worker (pastor, teacher, etc.) The discussion which followed underlined how difficult it is to be an effective worker while neglecting his own personal needs and those of his family. All present were helped to reevaluate the order of their personal priorities.

In the afternoon Marlene directed the group in a period of private meditation, while she sang a number of beautiful and inspiring hymns.

We wish to thank Howard and Marlene for their visit not only at the retreat, but informally in our homes. May God bless them in their new responsibilities with the Commission on Overseas Mission.



CORRESPONDENCE COURSE CENTER



As a result of the Bogotá radio ministry and other contacts this seems to be an opportune time to offer Bible courses by correspondence. Recently Mr. Jorge Manrique, deacon and teacher in the Bogotá Mennonite Church, was named by the national council to head up this center. Though confined to a wheelchair Mr. Manrique is active in the work of the church, especially in the area of literature. He is also an upper level student at the Bogotá branch of the Biblical Seminary. Pray with us that this new phase of ministry may be a means of edification for new Christians and a means of reaching new persons for Christ.

OUTREACH CONTINUES IN REVENTONES



The little group of believers in the small town of Reventones is experiencing a new surge of evangelistic activity. Since the work first began there a year and a half ago through several goodwill caravans, five adults have been baptized. Members of the Anolaima Church help conduct the weekly meetings at Reventones. Public pressure has kept many from making a public profession of their faith.

On November 12 a special visitation campaign was conducted in the community. Fifteen adults from Anolaima combined forces with the five in Reventones to visit every home in the area, distributing Christian literature and inviting everyone to a special outdoor service in the town square that evening. Many turned out to see a film on the life of Christ and listen to the message.

So successful was the campaign that the following week Anolaima Christians returned to Reventones to continue the work. Not only has the new work been helped by this project. The Anolaima congregation is also reaping the fruit of a renewed enthusiasm and a more vigorous faith in its members.



AN EXPANDING MINISTRY THROUGH FILMS

Over the last year we have given considerable emphasis to a ministry with films, mainly using the Living Christ series. These films are Bible-centered, Bible teaching and completely nonoffensive to the Catholic population. Numerous people have believed in Christ as their compassionate, miracle-working Savior as a result of seeing these films. The faith of multitudes of Christians has been enlarged.

The doors to present the gospel have been opened in various new areas. Take, for example, October 27 and 28. Jaime Caro, pastor at Ibagué, arranged for John Wiebe to show films to some sixty prisoners in the municipal jail at 10 a.m.; to some fifty normal school students and nuns at the Catholic Normal School at 4 p.m.; and to more than one thousand soldiers and officers at 7 p.m. all in one day. The following day, in the cafeteria of the National University they projected films to a fluctuating group of 50-150 students. This was less successful for various reasons, but in the first three places great interest was shown and an invitation extended to return.

Also in November, upon invitation from the priest in charge, one of these films on the life of Christ was shown for the first time in a Catholic church in Tena, a town about twenty minutes from La Mesa. The priest was greatly pleased with the film and wishes to have the whole series shown. The bishop has given him permission to show these films. We trust that soon the doors to many other Catholic churches will open to this valuable ministry.

A LATE START BUT A GOAL TO REACH

A more vivid sensitivity to the need for an education is portrayed in this year's fifth grade of twenty students in the La Mesa school. The group represents an almost incredible age range of eleven to nineteen, with the majority being over fifteen years old. A late start, but there is a strong will to overcome the difficulties, especially economic, and strive for an education. "Yes, we want to continue our studies, but..." is the answer that they frequently give when asked about their future plans.



Excitement ran high as plans were made for the graduation exercises. Identical new dresses for the girls and new outfits for the boys; individual photos for a wall picture of the graduates; rehearsals for the closing program.... Dr. Hector Valencia, secretary of education for the Presbyterian Church in Colombia, gave an excellent graduation address.



In the school at Cachipay fourteen students successfully completed their fifth-grade studies, preparatory for high school work. Here, too, most would like to continue their education, but high costs are prohibitive. Outside financial help is open to only a limited number. The number of secondary schools in Colombia is also inadequate to meet rising demands, denying the privilege of further studies to the many not belonging to the privileged classes of society.

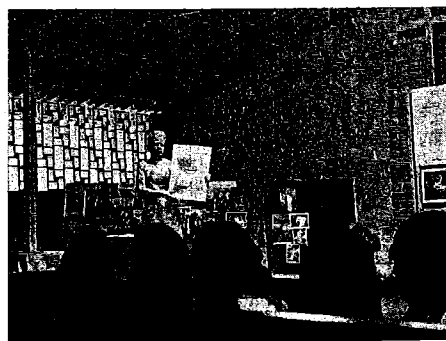
This year commencement exercises were held on Saturday morning, November 28. Following a special presentation from each class, John Wiebe brought the message for the graduates, and diplomas and special awards were presented to the students.

HAPPINESS IS YOURS

Through diverse opportunities in the classroom, devotions and informal ways, a Christian witness is prominent throughout the year. However, a special time of spiritual emphasis also proves to be fruitful. Vernelle Yoder, directress of Colegio Menno, La Mesa, challenged the older group with the theme "Happiness Is Yours" based on the Beatitudes. For the small children the theme was "I Listen and Obey God's Voice." Sincere response was manifested.

"I BELIEVE"

October 14-16 were days of special interest at the Colegio Americano in Cachipay. They marked the visit of Mrs. Mary Valencia during Spiritual Emphasis Week. Through interesting, well-illustrated lessons Mary taught the first three elements of the Christian Creed: "I believe in God, in His Son Jesus Christ, in the Holy Spirit." The children responded very well to her teaching and many indicated a desire to follow the Lord in obedience.



LEARNING THROUGH PLAY



Coordination, cooperation, and competition are all basic qualities of the educational process of youth. To encourage these qualities the directors and teachers of the primary schools in La Mesa and Cachipay decided to have a sports day between the two schools.



In September, La Mesa students journeyed to Cachipay for a day of competition in basketball, volleyball, track, Ping-Pong, and soccer for both boys and girls. The day was enjoyed immensely by the children who worked earnestly to bring the honors of the day to their school. A month later Cachipay paid a return visit to La Mesa for another full day of action. Score-wise, each school took home a victory as a reward for the cooperation and teamwork shown by its students.

"MOVIE STARS" FOR BETTER UNDERSTANDING



The Ken Anderson Films team from Winona Lake, Indiana, made up of Heinz Fuzzle and Roy Martin, was with us for ten days of work in October. Harold Weaver from Elkhart, Indiana, accompanied the team as adviser representing the Mennonite groups participating in this joint project. The project consists of making three fifteen-minute films depicting the life of Latin America and the Christian mission. Several other areas of Latin America besides Colombia will be included along with scenes from North America.

The films will help Christians north and south to understand each other better and to sense a oneness in faith and mission. For some of us it was exciting to be "movie stars" for a few moments!

WEDDING BELLS AGAIN!

On August 9, Judith Plata of Bogotá and Llewellyn Lederman of Indiana, celebrated a "pre-wedding" ceremony at the Mennonite Church in Bogotá. They were later united in marriage in Indiana upon their arrival there. Judith is a member of the Mennonite Church in Bogotá.

Both Judith and Len have served under MCC; Judith, for a time worked in the office of the Commission on Overseas Mission and Len as artist for MCC, Akron, Pennsylvania. We wish the new couple the Lord's blessings in their life together.





SHORT-TERM WORKERS ARRIVE

We welcome another short-term couple to our staff. David and Nedra Steury are teaching in the Colegio Nueva Granada, an American school in Bogotá. David teaches seventh and eighth grade math. He has had two years' experience teaching math and physics. Teaching second-graders keeps Nedra busy this year. Last year she taught Special Education.

David, a member of the First Missionary Church of Berne, received his BA degree from Taylor University in Upland, Indiana. Nedra, of the Eighth Street Mennonite Church in Goshen, Indiana, has a BS degree from Bluffton College.

The Steurys are also taking Spanish lessons every day after school. Already we see them singing in the Bogotá church choir as well as helping with church projects. We wish you, David and Nedra, God's blessing during your two years' service with us here.

"BAA, BAA, BLACK SHEEP...."

Twenty-one bleating yearling lambs are the most recent addition to the community development project at Cachipay. Gene Claassen and George Ediger are hopeful that these Romney Marsh sheep imported from England will serve a dual purpose. They are a breed which have a high rate of reproduction as well as an excellent annual yield of wool. It is calculated that the sheep pay for their cost within a year. Thus the sheep can become a valuable source of additional income for struggling farmers.



In the meantime, in the process of introducing the sheep into the community, they will serve the additional function of keeping down the grass and weeds of the grounds at our Cachipay farm.

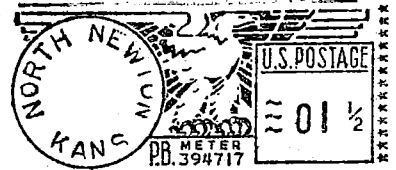
"His name shall be called Wonderful." Isaiah 9:6

With what care and purpose anyone of us chooses a name for his child! God took the lead in purposely naming His Son "Wonderful." Without a doubt, Mary thought her Son was wonderful. We sing "Wonderful, wonderful, Jesus is to Me." When we sincerely think about it, He is wonderful! May we, this season, take some time to meditate on the reason why God called Jesus "Wonderful," and why each of us really considers Him wonderful.

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PRAISE AND PRAYER

PRAISE GOD for the opening doors to a ministry through literature and films in government and Catholic institutions.

PRAISE GOD for the large number of baptisms in our churches during the past months and for those who are presently preparing to take that step in obedience.

PRAISE GOD for the many church members now entering biblical studies through our Decentralized Bible Institute.

PRAISE GOD that Jorge Manrique has now been approved as director of the "Light of Life" Bible correspondence courses in Bogotá.

PRAY for the students who just graduated from fifth grade in our schools, that they will find ways to serve God and their country.

PRAY for the future leadership in the Bogotá church, as Glendon Klaassen's three-year term as pastor there expires in March and he will begin to dedicate full time to his duties as executive secretary of the Mennonite churches in Colombia.

PRAY for Virginia Terreros and Waldina Rojas as they assume the directorship of the schools in La Mesa and Cachipay.

PRAY that as 1970 draws to a close, gifts to the Commission on Overseas Mission will enable it to meet its budgeted commitments for this year.