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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

NEW CHAPEL DEDICATED.	1
INTO ALL THE WORLD.	2
NEW WORKERS ARRIVE.	3
TWELFTH SCHOOL YEAR BEGINS.	3
VERNELLE YODER RETURNS FROM FURLOUGH.	4
A VISIT FROM LAVERNE RUTSCHMAN.	4
AS RUTSCHMAN SEES IT.	4
OH DEATH, WHERE IS THY STING.	5
THE WAYS OF DEMOCRACY	5
FILLING THE GAPS.	5
KEISER FAMILY IN QUAKERTOWN	6
PRAYER AND PRAISE	6

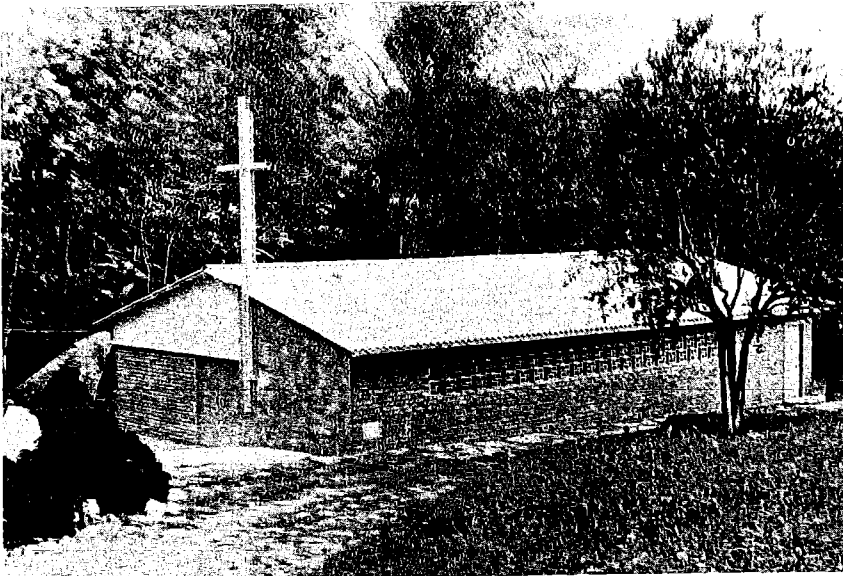
NEW CHAPEL DEDICATED

On Sunday, February 2, the children, believers, pastors and missionaries near Cachipay praised the Lord for the privilege of having been able to dedicate a new chapel at the children's home (El Recreo). It was a wonderful time of rejoicing, for at last the boys and girls of the school have a chapel of their own. For over a year the children have given their small tithes for this cause. Former students have also helped with their tithes as well as friends from Colombian churches and friends in the States.

The new chapel which seats two hundred people was filled for the dedication on Sunday afternoon. The school choir furnished the special music and Dr. Hector Valencia, rector of the Colegio Americano of Bogota gave the address of dedication.

The new chapel is made of brick and has cement tile floors, cement-asphalt roofing, cement lattice work windows, and has a metal framework. Total cost of the building and furnishings was about \$2,500.00.

The piano for this new chapel arrived a few hours before the dedication service. A neighbor brought it from Bogota in his truck. It was largely a gift of interested people in the States--and the work of the former Marie Kroeker, a Voluntary Service worker to Colombia.

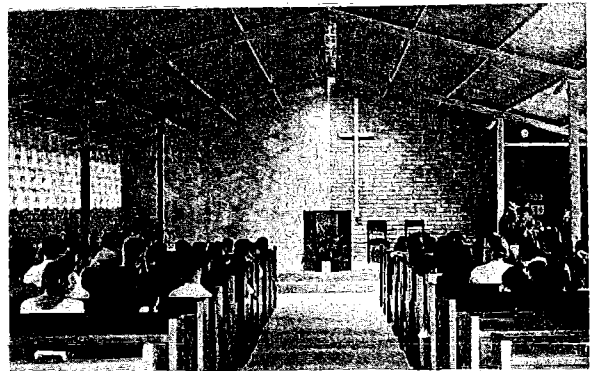


May this building be of help in the great objective of winning boys and girls, men and women to our Lord Jesus Christ.

The chapel was fittingly dedicated through the use of a special litany led by Gerald Stucky.



Dr. and Mrs. Hector Valencia and family



Interior of chapel

INTO ALL THE WORLD

At the present time our Mission is working primarily in seven places. Work was originally begun in 1947 in El Recreo which is located about a mile from Cachipay. Here is located the school for children of leper parents and other needy children. There are about 100 children there and a staff of teachers and missionaries. The recently dedicated new chapel is there.

Cachipay (about 50 miles west of Bogota) has an organized church with an average attendance of 40-70. A number of years ago there was started on the property behind the church a housing project to help poor families procure homes for themselves. Three families are being helped at present. Jesus Antonio Sandoval is student pastor of the church.

Anolaima is a much larger place than Cachipay and is the county seat for Cachipay and El Recreo. The organized church there is pastored by Armando Hernandez who is also the president of the Colombian General Conference. Average attendance here is 30 to 50.

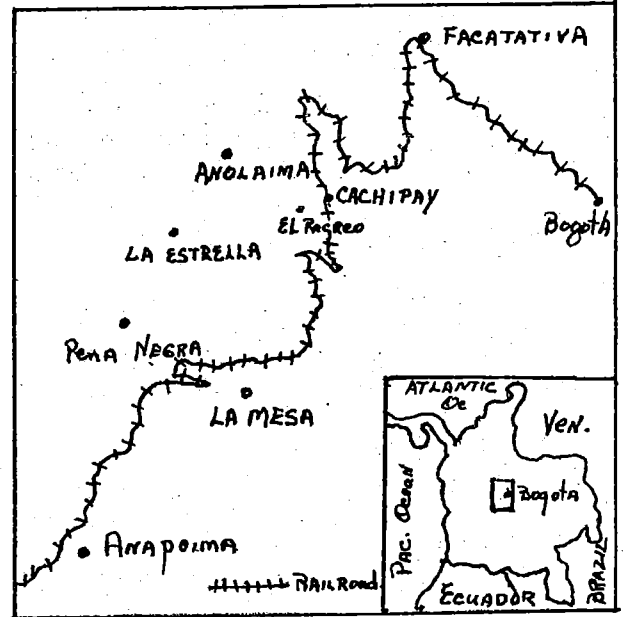
La Mesa is another county seat and is about an hour by car from Cachipay. The organized church here is in charge of Luis Rodriguez. The church operates a school called Colegio Meno which has about 20 children. The pastor and Miss Alice Bachert are the teachers in the school. A large percentage of the members of this congregation come from the country round about. The average attendance here is between 50 and 80.

Anapoima is about 30 minutes by car from La Mesa and is a new work that was recently begun by Alice Bachert. Regular services are held there in a private home. Already there have been a number of professions of faith.

Pena Negra is a country area about 2 hours by horse from Cachipay and is the home of about five evangelical and interested families. Regular visits are made to this area.

La Estrella has been in a special way the work of the Holy Spirit. Here, as a result of the testimony of a middle-aged enthusiastic believer, Jesus Garzon, a large group has been brought to the Lord.

Preaching services are held in all of these places and recently special vacation Bible Schools were held in La Estrella, La Mesa and Anolaima.



NEW WORKERS ARRIVE

After almost four years of waiting, Calvin and Sidonnia Flickinger received their permission for a resident visa to Colombia. Prior to their year's language study in Costa Rica they served at the mission station at Oraibi, Arizona.



The Flickingers are now the house parents in the girls' dormitory. Calvin teaches in the school, directs the choir, and Sidonnia as a nurse will be called upon to give attention to scratches, bruises, and aches and pains. Their two boys, Ronny and Danny, are also finding out that they are among friends.

Flickingers say, "We were pleasantly surprised at the number of Christians in the churches and their interest in the work and growth of the church. We do not begin to realize what it means for them to leave their way of life to become evangelicals. In general, we find that the people are courteous and appreciative of the help that is offered them.

"There is little opportunity for dull moments when surrounded by seventy-five children. To answer their questions, to provide work for them, and to play and study with them offers much diversion. As we look at the buildings on the Mission property and see the amount of work that has been done here, we are aware that this is the result of years of faithful praying, giving, and planning on the part of many co-laborers. We trust we will be counted as worthy laborers in this vineyard."

TWELFTH SCHOOL YEAR BEGINS

There are no signs of fall to indicate that school is about to start. But there is a

hustling and bustling in providing such things as blankets, sheets, brooms, desks, books and the like. All is in readiness. Then comes the Saturday before the opening of school and all roads lead to El Recreo it seems. Suitcases, paper bags and people arrive. It is a "full house" in all the dorms as we begin the 12th year of classes with 87 children. Edilma Gutierrez and Ruth Martinez continue to teach while a former pupil, Berta Florez, and Calvin Flickinger join the staff. Vernelle Yoder also resumes the direction of the school after her furlough.

VERNELLE YODER RETURNS FROM FURLOUGH

"As my first term came to an end and furlough time drew near, I wondered just what it would be like. One hears that there are so many changes, that soon come long to be back on the field, that innumerable opportunities to talk await you, etc.

"But I found mine to be one of uplifting experiences. Being with loved ones and friends brought real joy to be sure. But more than that was the opportunity for spiritual refreshment as well as physical. Itinerary duties were a source of encouragement and a greater vision of the task. Further study, which I so much wanted, was also realized.

"Ready to go back? Yes, and with real joy, anticipation, renewed courage and strength, I resumed my task again."



A VISIT FROM LAVERNE RUTSCHMAN

On February the 6th we had a happy surprise when our former missionary and co-worker arrived at the mission. His eighteen-day stay with us was much too short. The Colombians too thought that his visit wasn't long enough and their love for him was indicated by the tears which were shed upon his leaving. The national Christians have a warm spot in their hearts for the Rutschmans. They have found in him a friend who makes himself a part of their joys and sorrows. They have found in him one who understands their economic, physical and spiritual problems, one who tries to help them.



The Rutschmans are teaching in the Mennonite Seminary at Montevideo, Uruguay. They have been there for over two years. We wish them God's richest blessings as they serve Him in this capacity.

AS RUTSCHMAN SEES IT

"Returning to Colombia for a period of a few weeks is like returning home. Friendships made within the fellowship of Christian believers who have heard the gospel through the testimony of our Mission are genuine and permanent.

"In many ways Colombia is the same--the serenity of the mountains, a climate in which one never is too hot nor too cold, the same friendly people, the same customs, and the same needs. Yet there are changes. In the political field there is much more hope than three years ago.

"Hunger, ill health, and misery, although always present, seem much more serious than a few years ago. Colombia produces coffee, but coffee is hardly a food. There simply isn't enough food to meet the minimum needs of an 'exploding' population. An unskilled worker with a large family can buy only 2 and 1/2 lbs. of meat with his daily wage, or 3 and 1/2 lbs. of white bread, or ten eggs. Even the cheapest starches such as potatoes and manioc are too expensive.

"During our absence there has been great progress both in the home for children and in the

extension work in the surrounding towns and rural areas. The home for the children of parents who have leprosy is known in evangelical circles in all parts of Colombia as a living testimony of the love of Christ. During these three weeks of visiting I have traveled by jeep, horseback, and on foot along many miles of mountain trails and roads. There are new contacts everywhere. Most of the new Christians are very poor, but their dedication can be compared only with that of the early church.

"This is the day of opportunity in Colombia. Surely God is calling others to consider the dedication of their lives to this work. He calls us all to give sacrificially and to pray constantly."

OH DEATH, WHERE IS THY STING?

"Perhaps we will be successful in raising this child," was the remark of a young father when a new baby arrived in the home. A little more than a year ago the first baby died. One often hears Colombian parents make such a remark because the mortality rate of children is high. Intestinal infections which lead to acidosis and pulmonary diseases cause many deaths.

Indeed, theirs is a sad plight because many parents do not realize the necessity of cleanliness, or of boiling water and milk properly. Due to lack of financial means they do not have proper clothing and housing. Intestinal parasites and other illnesses become inevitable. Medical aid is sought too late since parents do not recognize that their child is ill.

When Loida Vargas was born her mother said, "Perhaps we will be able to raise her. Girls are harder to raise than boys." There were four boys in the family. How wonderful it was to have a girl at this time. When Loida was eleven months old she went to be with the Lord. Her few months of life were spent in a home of extreme poverty where the father earns around 50 cents (U.S.) a day. Nevertheless it was a Christian home where Christ had been dwelling for over two years.

Loida's funeral was held in the chapel at the mission nine hours after her death. Here people have to be buried the same day of their death since they do not do embalming. Her mother did not attend the funeral because she said she would be unable to listen to the nailing shut of the casket (a white wooden box). Poor people can't afford caskets with hinges.

THE WAYS OF DEMOCRACY

It is a long up-hill struggle to bring a country back into democratic ways after it has suffered a siege of dictatorship. Corruptions that are uncovered after the fall of a strong man are immense and scandals creep into many a "thought to be honorable" family.

But Colombia is desperately trying to return to democratic ways. Recently the nation voted to divide all political offices equally between the two major parties for the next twelve years. On March 16 elections were held for Congress and people voted with enthusiasm. (Picture shows girls of our school voting in open-air election booths).



Many liberties have been returned to the Colombian people. There is liberty of speech, press, or meeting. Religious liberty is still very fuzzy, however. Open persecution of Protestants has become less open and has subsided in many respects. But liberty? Not yet. They are but grudgingly tolerated. But perhaps with the restoration of democracy and the constitution of the country, will also come the long awaited prince of liberties--liberty of religion.

FILLING THE GAPS

Moving day came again for Alice Bachert. It was time for school to start in La Mesa but a teacher was lacking. She consented to fill the gap although this would be a new

experience for her. The pastor, Don Luis, and she have 19 children in the three grades in Colegio Menno. It is filling a real need for the Christian families.

But the work in Anapoima is not left completely without a witness. Alice accompanied by believers goes every weekend to make more contacts and to have a service.

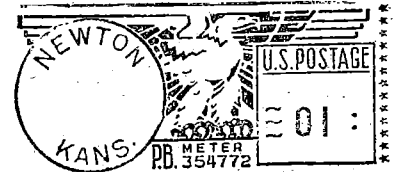
KEISER FAMILY IN QUAKERTOWN

At the present time the Arthur Keiser family is on furlough and are living on a farm near Quakertown, Pennsylvania. (Address, RR 2, Quakertown, Pennsylvania.) Rev. Keiser has been speaking in many of the Eastern District churches. They plan to be traveling to the west coast this summer to the home of Mrs. Keiser.

PRAYER AND PRAISE

THANK HIM for the entrance that was given to the Calvin Flickinger family and for the new blessings that this family has brought to the mission staff.
for the successful completion of the new chapel and for His supplying of the needed piano.
for the new converts that continue to come to Him one by one.

PRAY that each child may be won to Christ.
that God may call some of these children into full-time service for Him.
for this year's retreat--that it may be a time of spiritual renewal.
that Colombia may again grant to all complete religious liberty.
that the Keiser family may be used of the Lord while on furlough.
for the Rutschman family in the work of the Seminary in Montevideo.
for the new converts that they may grow in grace and in the knowledge of Him.
for us.



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