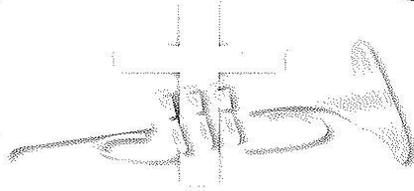


THE TRUMPET



"The great trumpet will be blown, they will come, who are about to perish" Isaiah 27:13 (NKJ)

HISPANIC CHRISTIAN MINISTRY A Ministry of Covenant Reformed Church of Toronto in Partnership with Faith United Reformed Church of West Olive, Michigan

HCM Trip Report - Belize / Guatemala - October 19-26, 2009

Belize - October 19-22 - This was a quick trip in which I was asked to come and visit with the leaders of the Belize Presbyterian Theological Seminary and interested students of the Spanish language in the Belize Presbyterian Church. Because Belize is primarily English-speaking, the current MINTS partnership with the Seminary offers our programs in the English language from which they graduated four students earlier this year.

I met with the Director of the Seminary to discuss a Spanish program of studies. There are some concerns with that because of particular social and cultural considerations.

But they are considering the possibility of starting a secondary focus program of studies of lay leadership in the Spanish program. Some of their Spanish-only pastors will be able to take advantage of this program of studies as well as other members of their churches. There may also be pastors of other churches in the northern portion of Belize (where it is predominantly Spanish) who would be interested in this program of studies. I met several potential students in the Presbyterian Church and they are excited about the possibility of opening this program of studies. It is a proposal at this point and needs to be processed through their Seminary board. But the visit was

valuable in terms of looking at the Spanish-speaking portion of the Presbyterian Church of Belize.

Guatemala - October 22-26 - The Guatemala portion of my trip was particularly busy. This is a good example of the coordination of activities between our "on-line" program and a local initiative in Guatemala City that was started at the initiative of an "on line" student who was put

in contact with me to follow up on. This student is on the board of a new fraternity of pastors that began just two months ago. I had met with this student and the president of this fraternity of about 40-50 pastors on my visit to Guatemala two months ago. They proposed to the fraternity a project of leadership training as their first project. This was enthusiastically adopted by the group a few weeks before my arrival.

We met from 7 am Saturday morning till mid afternoon. In the conference I had an opportunity to carefully and meticulously present the ministry of MINTS. There were a lot of questions about MINTS and how it functions, so I took more time than usual to answer some of the questions from several participants who were not as enthusiastic about this project. As a part of the presentation I did a conference introducing the Hermeneutics course. After some patient handling of a Q&A period, the group decided to proceed with opening a Centre. There were 40 people present at the day's conference activity. At the end of the meeting 20 students committed themselves to registering as students. I was told that there were about just as many who were not able to make the meeting and would probably sign up as well. A conservative estimate

would identify about 30 new MINTS students. I'm thankful for the opportunity to open this new Centre.

Throughout the weekend I made it a point to visit the ministries of some of the students. I arranged a breakfast, lunch and supper with several of the students and their families. I also taught at three different cell groups and two different churches on **Fall, 2009**

Sunday. I am quite excited by this weekend's visit to Guatemala. I have high expectations that this group has the potential of becoming a significant presence of MINTS in Guatemala City.

Rev. Eric Pennings, Missionary,
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US Donations: Hispanic Christian Ministry, c/o Faith United Reformed Church, 8270 120th Ave., West Olive, MI 49460

A PLEA FOR HELP

Many of you are familiar with the mission work of Rev. Bill and Aletha Green in Costa Rica and the construction that continues on the Christian High School building. The construction of the Tepeyac Christian High School is a continuation of the completed Christian grade school. The construction has been underway since 2001. The goal of the school has been to build as money is raised, **so when completed the school will be debt free.**

Over the past few years, the construction has continued to slow as it feels the effects of the slowing world wide economy. The donated funds have become less and less and have caused long delays in construction. These delays have caused the construction costs to rise. The bulk of the building is constructed out of concrete and steel, and the cost of both continue to rise.

The school staff works very hard with students who come from broken homes, or with behavioral issues and work closely with the parents and church (if possible). The school is committed to giving education to children in marginalized neighborhoods like Los Cuadros - which can be difficult both financially and otherwise. Reformed churches in the area have made sacrifices to provide scholarships and financial help for families from Los Cuadros or needy families from their own congregations. **There is a wonderful, broad based support developing.**

God has brought to the school more and more committed, Reformed teachers and for the coming year **there is a significant group willing to come all the way from Cartago (a city an hour away), that is contemplating the purchase of a small bus to bring their kids!**

Like the old saying goes, "Many hands make for light work." We believe that many hands will make for the continued and completed work of the High School. Our goal is to get 500 people (which is only 20 people from 25 churches) to **pledge \$20.00 a month** (\$5.00 a week, \$0.72 a day) to the construction of the Tepeyac Christian High School. This will generate up to \$10,000.00 a month. This goal will allow us to have construction crews on site year around, something that has been very difficult lately.

This money will be handled by the Joint Venture Committee of Costa Rica which oversees the ministries of Rev. Bill and Aletha Green in Costa Rica. This is a great opportunity to be a builder in Gods kingdom, to be part of a great mission in Costa Rica.

Right now all 12 grades are meeting in a very crowded grade school waiting for the badly needed High School to be completed.
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With your help, we can keep the construction going at the high school and soon make it ready for a **Christ centered, Bible based education**. There are a number of supporting churches that are sending work teams to Costa Rica in the coming new year and your support is needed so materials may be purchased, and the construction may move forward.

If you would like to support the continued construction of the High School in Costa Rica in this way or with a one time gift please contact us at jvcbfcostarica@gmail.com and we will send, or forward by way of e-mail, the information to you. We are also looking for members to serve on the Joint Venture Building Fund Committee. Please contact us at the above e-mail address if you would like to serve on the committee.

Please prayerfully consider supporting this great work.

The Costa Rica Joint Venture Committee under the oversight of the Bethany United Reformed Church of Wyoming Michigan

Note: Every year since 2001 a number of volunteer construction teams of young adults and others, mainly from URC churches have traveled to Costa Rica to assist in this project. The Editor.

Latin America Update Rev. Bill Green

We thank the Lord for reinforcements! Nick and Rose Lamme, sent by the Trinity URC in Caledonia, Michigan, have jumped into three jobs: Editor, translator and designer for CLIR, pastor of the Cartago Reformed church which lost its pastor just as Nick arrived, and high school Bible and

philosophy professor. All this with three small children - who have rapidly learned Spanish. Praise the Lord for the Lamme's.

The Pacto de Gracia (Covenant of Grace) church which I pastor has experienced good growth in the last several months, mostly due to a Monday night Romans course being given across town. The core group are ex-pentecostals who have found comfort and certainty in God's grace and the Reformed faith, and now continue to invite friends. Two full families have become members in the church, others are attending, and several pastors are attending the class on Monday and confess that they have had to reverse their preaching - from legalistic works to God's grace!

New preaching points established: Through the new contacts, we have established a preaching point in Perez Zeledsn, 3 hours south of San Josi. We have been traveling there for a month now, and Lester Martmnez (who works with us in CLIR) will be holding regular services on Saturday nights - the only night that can be worked out. Then Lester will come back early Sunday morning on his motorcycle to participate in services here in San Josi!

Another preaching point will probably be started soon on the Pacific coast, where more contacts have been made through one of our new members.

Thank the Lord with us for these opportunities to take the message of salvation by grace to people held in bondage to works - by both Catholic and evangelical leaders. And please pray that God's Spirit will water the seed planted.

We just finished the printing of 3800 journals in the print shop of CLIR. This journal is a special edition celebrating the life and work of John Calvin. They will soon **Fall, 2009**

be shipped to the entire Latin American continent, some to North America, and others to Spain.

The Tepeyac High school construction is pretty much on hold for now. The next project will be the sewage treatment plant, and we are saving up for that.

We thank the Lord for the privilege to serve as co-laborers with Christ. Please hold up our work in prayer. And due to the difficult financial times, our offerings have also suffered. If you are able, please remember our ministry in your giving. God bless each one!

Rev. Bill Green

The Use of the Heidelberg Catechism in Missions

Rev. Zekveld

Frequently I hear that the Heidelberg Catechism, as well as the Belgic Confession and the Canons of Dort, belong *inside* the church. "Don't bring that 'Reformed' stuff to those outside of the church. Just bring Jesus to them. We should keep our Reformed commitments to where they belong - in the pew. That comes later," we hear.

The thinking is, when you do missions or evangelism, you adopt the contemporary methods of today's evangelicals, many of them Arminian or man-centered approaches. But the Arminians don't leave their stuff behind in the pew! They bring it out into the market place. Yet we don't think about distributing copies of the Belgic Confession or the Heidelberg Catechism into the market place, sharing the gospel with others. In

particular, I am thinking of the Belgic Confession, which is intended to be our confession before the world.

About eight years ago I asked my long time friend, a Muslim journalist, to assist in the proof reading of the Belgic Confession which was translated into the Urdu language by one of our capable elders from our church plant. Having proofread the confession, my Muslim friend wrote this to me: "While doing the proofreading, I was amazed to learn and understand *GOD'S MESSAGE SO CLEARLY!* [It] is also loud, clear and full of truth ... This book must be circulated in Paskistan."

This confession is brief, systematic and answers many of the questions Muslims have about the Christian faith. It's a way of bringing Jesus to them. It's a way of bringing the Word to them. It's also a faithful way and encourages further discussion.

I realize that the Heidelberg Catechism is our confession to each other as believers. It may be argued that it is not so much a missionary tool as it is a manual of comfort to the Christian. It is a personal confession about 'my only comfort.' Yet I am finding that we are using the Heidelberg Catechism with great profit among Roman Catholics and Sikhs who attend our Sunday morning teaching.

They are hearing what we confess. . . and God is using the warmth of this very personal confession to draw others to see the glory and love of God in Christ. They are seeing for themselves how it comes out of the Bible!

Presently we are going through Lord's Days 14-19 dealing with the humiliation and exaltation of the eternal Son of God who
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took upon Himself our flesh. I hand out what I write and most everyone follows 'word-for-word' what I say. It's quiet. At times, I hear an 'aha', or I see 'a nod of agreement'; other times, questions erupt, when I contrast biblical teaching with Roman Catholic, Sikh, or Muslim teaching. One man from the Roman Catholic church erupts, saying: 'I feel tension. Did Jesus have other brothers and sisters?' Another man, a Sikh, hearing Lord's Day 13 on 'the only-begotten Son of God' suddenly makes a connection with John 17:5: the glory Jesus had with the Father before the world was.

Every Sunday morning I have a diagram on our white board, outlining the downward steps of Christ's humiliation and the upward steps of His exaltation in the light of Philippians 2:5-11. Then I place an asterisk where we are at. A few of them are so fond of this diagram that they draw the diagram for themselves. They visualize the larger picture of Christ's work. During the week, the Sikh gentleman came to our centre, expressing his excitement over the diagram. He then asked for my "Manual of Christian Doctrine" by L. Berkhof and photocopied the pages dealing with the steps of Christ's humiliation and exaltation. He went home to do some further study on his own.

I find the Heidelberg Catechism to be a very simple way of going through the gospel: Sin, salvation and service.

It's a blessing to see how the Lord is using the teaching of the Heidelberg Catechism in our mission context. It answers so many of their questions! We make reference to the Heidelberg as well as the

Belgic and Westminster throughout the week. It lays out the gospel of Christ so simply for them - mind you, often with a further explanation! Frequently I hear the comment: "I love all the Bible references in the Heidelberg Catechism. It's hard to disagree with the catechism." Our elder, who translated the Belgic Confession into Urdu, was finally convinced that he should become a member of the congregation after reflecting upon article 28 of the Belgic Confession. This was after two years of trying to persuade him to see the Biblical requirement for becoming a member! God used an article of a confession to finally convince him. Now as an elder he has no qualms in defending this teaching!

I, for one, do not apologize for using the confessions and catechisms in missions. These bring out the beauty of Jesus so beautifully from the Scriptures. I love it, and it is an effective tool for bringing the gospel to the nations and discipling them as Jesus commands us in Matthew 28:18-20.

NEW CHURCHES

We wish to welcome two new congregations to our federation: The **Oak Lawn URC** of Oak Lawn, Illinois, Rev. Ted Gray, Pastor; and the **Covenant Reformed Church of Carbondale**, Pennsylvania, Rev. Bill Boekstein, Pastor.

Late news from Rev. Pennings

It is with much excitement and enthusiasm that I am able to announce a very exciting development in the ministry that God has called me to as a missionary professor. Miami International Seminary (MINTS) follows a model of "mission seminary" in which study centres multiply as
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they mature and grow. The "mission seminary" model of leadership training also encourages graduates of our programs to write courses for MINTS and to become our new wave of professors for the courses we offer. In my ministry in Central America, God has been blessing the efforts wonderfully, for which I am thankful. In each of the Central American countries there has been growth, some experiencing more of this than others.

In El Salvador there have been a number of Centres that have been started and we are receiving requests to start more. It has been difficult for me to keep up with the growth of MINTS. Much of this growth is due to the volunteer efforts of one of my former students, José Jesús Ramirez, who has now graduated with his Masters in Theology with MINTS. He lives in Toronto but he and his family are originally from El Salvador. During this past year he has made several trips to El Salvador on my behalf to do some teaching and to start new Study Centres. He has been very encouraged by how well things have gone and has committed himself to coming on board with MINTS full time to serve as the MINTS-El Salvador Coordinator. This is exciting because my goal is to eventually to have such a position in each of the seven Central American countries that I am working in.

He and his family are making plans to move to El Salvador. As with all MINTS personnel, in order to do this he needs to raise funds for his own support. He has begun to make some contacts, but is looking for more churches and individuals to support his ministry in El Salvador. He needs financial support for an annual salary, and ministry expenses budgeted at US \$13,000.

But the most immediate need at this point is moving his family to El Salvador and getting settled in. This is budgeted at a one-time \$4,000 cost. That includes travel for the family and the shipping of household goods since he and his family hope to move to El Salvador in the next several months to take up this new and exciting ministry.

I would like to have you consider this MINTS-El Salvador ministry project as part of your giving plans for the remainder of this year and also for their on-going needs in the years to come. If you can help: In Canada, please contact Hispanic Christian Ministry, c/o Covenant Reformed Church, 265 Albion Road, Toronto, ON M9W 3P1. In the U.S. contact Hispanic Christian Ministry, c/o Faith URC 8270 120th Ave. West Olive, MI 49460. May the Lord bless you as you consider this opportunity of being part of an exciting development of my ministry of which you have all been a part. Please pray for this time of transition that the Ramirez family is going through over the next several months.

Rev. Eric Pennings, Missionary

Covenant Reformed Church of Toronto

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