

# Brazil News

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Editorial

## The Least of These

We human beings are strange creatures. We love to hear stories that show how we should be, we declare that is how we want to be, and maybe we even convince ourselves that is how we are... But when it comes right down to the nitty-gritty, all too often we're not that way—and truth be told—don't want to be.

Matthew 25 is one of the most piercing chapters of the entire Bible. In just a word, it warns us of the very real danger of believing we are on the right track, when in reality we are running on a siding that is imperceptibly shunting us farther and farther from the truth of salvation. Deception.

The ten virgins. In this acceptation, a virgin apparently is one who had a conversion experience and received the gift of salvation. Five remained faithful and grew spiritually—accumulated oil in their vessels. Five became lukewarm and ceased to grow—accumulated no oil in their vessels.

If the bridegroom would have had an afternoon wedding, it's very possible most—maybe all—of the virgins would have been saved. If the wedding would have been at seven thirty in the evening, maybe there would have been seven wise and three foolish virgins. But *the bridegroom tarried*.

Since all ten of the virgins had been converted at one time, they all had a lot of good principles and were diligent in their everyday affairs. Outwardly they looked pretty much alike.

But then came the night, *when no [virgin] can work*. We think it strange that all ten *slumbered and slept*. We shouldn't think this so strange. Before the advent of the light bulb, nighttime was bedtime. People didn't sit around reading until ten or eleven o'clock, first of all, because there was nothing to read, and also because lamp oil was a precious commodity, and thus used sparingly. To slumber and sleep as the night wore on was totally normal. It's possible these virgins had never been up this late before in their lives.

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*And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him.* Groggily all the virgins arose. “Let’s go!” But in the moonless midnight, no one could see anything. Not only would they need light to make their way to the door of the wedding chamber, but also to enter. Each guest was expected to bring his own light.

Now fully awake, they all *trimmed their lamps*. A wick slowly burns away as it transforms oil into light. For the lamp to produce a clear light, the wick must be turned up and the charred end removed.

When the five wise virgins picked up their lamps to trim the wicks, they realized they were almost dry. Quickly they trimmed them, removed the charred end and then replenished them with oil from their vessels.

When the foolish virgins attempted to turn up the wicks in their lamps, they were dry and smoldering. Only an immediate infusion of oil would bring their lamps back to usefulness. *And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out.*

*But the wise answered, saying, Not so; lest there be not enough for us and you: but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves.* It’s doubtful if there were any 24-hour lamp oil service stations back those days. So the following conversation may have followed:

F virgins: You know as well as we do that there are no stores that sell lamp oil at this hour of the night.

W virgins: Give it a try. It’s only several blocks to the nearest place that sells oil...

F virgins: But we tell you, they ARE closed. Oh, what shall we do?

W virgins: Go bang on the back door. Tell the proprietor it’s an emergency, that you have to have oil right now!

F virgins: You know old Simon. He won’t get up. Don’t be so stingy; loan us some of your oil.

W virgins. If we do that, no one will be able to enjoy the wedding. You know that if our lamps go out during the reception, we will be thrown out...

Seeing it is of no avail, the foolish virgins are last seen stumbling down the dark cobblestone street, grumbling about “how selfish some people can be!”

*And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut.*

We don’t know how long the foolish virgins banged on the store door. We don’t know if old Simon arose to sell them oil. We suspect he didn’t. Finally, in desperation, they must have concluded, “There’s no point in banging on this door any longer, let’s go knock on the bridegroom’s door. Who knows, maybe he’ll let us in...”

That is what they did. They shouted through the locked door, *Lord, Lord, open to us.* *But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not.*

We don’t know any details about the lives of the five foolish virgins. But we have reason to believe that they considered themselves to be just as saved as the wise virgins.

They weren't. They were deceived.

Next is the parable of the talents. A financier preparing to spend time abroad distributes his assets between three trusted servants. Two invest wisely and show good returns. The third servant, possibly irritated because his two co-workers received heftier portions than he, opted for a no-profit approach. He may have reasoned, "It takes money to make money. If I had five talents, or even two, I can think of different ways to show an increase. But one talent...just one talent... If I invest this one talent, I may lose it and not have a thing to present to my master when he returns. I know what I'll do; I'll dig a hole in my backyard and hide my master's money. Then when he comes back, he'll get every dime back that he gave me. That's probably what my two co-servants will do too."

If the one-talent servant would have invested his talent wisely and gained another, the master would have been just as happy with him as he was with the two- and five-talent servants. They would have then all showed a one hundred percent gain.

But he didn't. When called on to give account of his stewardship, he injudiciously attempted to pin the blame on his master, calling him a hard man, thus compounding his error, proving he was both slothful and insolent, a volatile combination of personal defects. Whatever confidence he may have had in his "no-profit" stewardship philosophy was certainly shattered when his "hard" master turned his wrath on him: *Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strawed: Thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with usury. Take therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him which hath ten talents. For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath. And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.*

The frightening part of this parable is that the one-talent servant apparently thought the master would buy his no-profit approach to stewardship. He too was deceived.

This brings us to the last part of the chapter in which we are given a glimpse of the Final Judgment, the King separating the sheep from the goats. By our human thinking, the sheep would represent those stalwart Christians who showed unmistakable signs of discipleship—and surely they will be among the saved. The goats would represent thieves, murderers, liars, idolaters, adulterers...

We enjoy stories about how mortals entertained angels unawares. An excellent example, which is to have taken place over a hundred years ago, is that of the old cobbler in the city of Marseilles, France.

All alone in his shop on Christmas Eve, he read the beautiful story of the wise men who came to Jesus with presents. Slipping into a state of profound reverie, he said to himself, "If tonight Jesus were to be born in Marseilles, as He was in Bethlehem many years ago, I too would take Him a present, but what...?"

Looking around, his eyes fell on a tiny pair of shoes, lovingly handcrafted from the most beautiful leather available, with tiny silver buckles. That, he decided, would be the

gift he would give to the Christ child... Then he chuckled, “What a foolish old man I am. The Master doesn’t need any of my poor gifts.”

That night after the old cobbler had barely dozed off, he heard a voice, “Martin!” He immediately recognized the heavenly accent of the voice. “Martin, you wanted to see me today. Tomorrow I’m going to pass by your window. If you invite me in, I’ll be your guest and sit at your table.”

The old cobbler awoke with a start, so overcome with joy he didn’t sleep for the rest of the night. Long before sunrise, his house was tidied up; on the table was a loaf of white bread, a jar of honey and a pitcher of milk.

The day was cold and dreary. Snow and sleet swept the streets. Few had courage to venture out in such miserable weather. Nevertheless, Martin kept an anxious vigil with his face pressed against the frigid window pane.

We condense the rest of the story. After some time the old street sweeper came stumbling down the street, blowing on his gnarled hands in an effort to keep them warm. Moved to compassion, Martin flung the door open and welcomed him in. A warm drink and some time in front of the fireplace prepared the street sweeper to again face the cold.

An hour later, Martin saw a raggedly dressed woman carrying a child struggling down the street. Again he flung the door open and invited them in. In the warmth of the fire and over hot tea, the cobbler learned that the woman’s husband was at sea, that her child was ill, needing medical attention, and that she had no one to help her. Seeing the child was barefoot, Martin remembered the pair of handcrafted shoes he was saving for the Christ child. Quickly he placed them on the sick child’s feet. They fit perfectly.

During the remainder of that day, Martin took in different strangers, treating each one as a royal guest.

That night the old cobbler retired happy, yet sad—happy for the opportunity to be of service to his fellowmen, but sad because the so-awaited Christ child hadn’t showed up. As he drifted off to sleep, he was enshrouded by a heavenly light. Then there appeared the old street sweeper. He smiled and asked, “Have you not seen me? Did I not sit at your table?”

Next was the sailor’s wife, the mother of the little child, who asked the same question. And successively, each visitor that day appeared in the light, smiled and asked, “Did I not sit at your table?”

After the last one had left, a soft voice said, “Who so shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me... For I was hungered, and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me in... Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.”

Rare indeed is the soul who can read this little story (legend?) and not be profoundly touched. We admire the old cobbler for his humility and tenderness. We are impressed by his absolutely pure motives. He wasn’t a Boy Scout on the lookout for an opportunity to practice a good deed that could be carved into his personal totem pole. He gave the very best he had, the warmth of both home and heart.

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The Bible gives us different clues as to how the eternal Judge will conduct the final judgment. Even so, our finite minds are unable to put all the puzzle pieces together and produce a comprehensible overall picture of that great and terrible day. Like the blind men examining the elephant, we are limited to analyzing individual details...and accept this as God's will that He desires to have the first and last chapters of human history—the creation and the judgment—shrouded in mystery.

Thus as we analyze the final part of Matthew 25, we come up with six key words: *hungred, thirsty, stranger, naked, sick, in prison*. We do well to meditate on these keys, in which we find one of the greatest of all paradoxes: Those who are faithful see themselves as unworthy, and those who are unfaithful see themselves as worthy.

*Hungred.* Hundreds of millions go to bed hungry every night. We mention them in our prayers. When a collection is lifted to buy foodstuff that will help at least a few children go to bed at night without hunger pangs, we cheerfully contribute. This is laudable and Heaven must especially smile and bless when our small children contribute the pennies they have earned to such a project.

Even while we drop our contribution into the collection plate, happy that we can alleviate some human suffering several continents away, we can fail to see the hungry in our own midst; we forget that faithful children of God get hungry.

Recently a brother and his wife, who live in the US, were visiting Brazil. They stopped at the Literature Center, where my wife and I work. In the course of our conversation this brother told of a beautiful experience he had shortly before leaving for Brazil. I am quite certain he had no idea the effect his words were having on me. After he left I felt just like I feel after hearing an inspirational sermon during revival meetings. The brother fed my hungry soul. And didn't know it. If the Lord asks him about it on the final day, he may well ask, "When did I do such a thing?"

The brother, the sister, young or old, who is consecrated and open, thankful for the unmerited gift of salvation, will feed the hungry. And many times never know it.

*Thirsty.* People die both of hunger and of thirst. Of the two, thirst is the most rapid, violent and merciless killer. For someone dying of hunger, water has little value, and for someone dying of thirst, food has no value—indeed, may hasten death.

It's admittedly much easier to serve a cup of cold water than it is to prepare a meal. The five- and two-talent servants were qualified to prepare and serve nutritious meals. The one-talent servant wasn't so much of a cook, but he was eminently qualified to carry a water jug and serve a glass of cold water to the thirsty.

In our daily life, a glass of cold water often is nothing more than a smile, a friendly "Good morning," a wave of the hand, a "I missed you in church this morning," a "I appreciated your testimony"....

*A stranger* is "one who is neither a friend nor an acquaintance; a foreigner, a newcomer, or an outsider" (AHD).

Let's use the last definition: an outsider. An outsider is someone who is outside of the "main stream." We find them everywhere: at work, at social events, at church. Often they are outsiders, not because others ostracize them, but simply because they are timid

souls; they feel more at home in the shadows than in the bright sunlight. This kind of person can easily go through life without developing any close friendships. And we can easily go through life assuming such a person is an incorrigible outsider.

Will Rogers, the early twentieth century American humorist, is remembered for his trademark statement: “I never met a man I didn’t like.” Or put differently, Will Rogers never met a man he found disinteresting.

If a man of the world, a humorist can find something interesting in everyone, how much more shouldn’t God’s children find reason to be keenly interested in every living soul! And especially in their spiritual brothers and sisters. Sadly, there are far too many strangers—outsiders—right in our midst.

In my school days I was an avid reader. First I would read all the books with interesting covers, the books that others talked about. Then I would reread them. Maybe several times. Finally in desperation for something new to read, I would begin pulling some of the old books off the shelf, books with shabby covers, books with no illustrations, books that the others didn’t read. I was pleasantly surprised to find that those were some of the most interesting books in the library.

Believe it or not, that is often true with people, with “outsiders.” If we become friends with them, both they and we will be blessed. Let me insert here that this should be a genuine friendship, not a “feel sorry for you, so I’m going to be your friend” friendship. When we truly take such a stranger in, they will also take us in.

*Naked.* As used here, nakedness indicates extreme poverty, which makes for inadequate clothing. Especially in cold climates, proper clothing is essential for anyone working outside.

We see those who are unprepared for the rigors of life. They have difficulty making wise decisions, and even when they do choose wisely, they go about implementing their projects like someone trying to work in zero weather wearing Bermudas, a thin T-shirt and sneakers.

Oh, how these souls need a true friend who can in gentleness and patience help steer them through life.

*Sick.* Back when medical science was in its infancy and teens, there were those who specialized in herbal remedies. In each village and community there was at least one “specialist”—usually a woman—who knew the secrets of roots, barks and leaves, who could be called upon when someone became ill. Most housewives had at least a rudimentary knowledge of herbal cures.

With the coming of age of modern medicine, herbal therapists have gone the way of the Mohicans. (Even homeopathy has become a modern science.) In a word, modern medicine has supplanted herbal remedies.

We are seeing a similar tendency in God’s kingdom. More and more, spiritual sicknesses are seen as the responsibility of specialists—the ministry. Laymen are not only washing their hands of this responsibility, but losing the secrets of roots, barks and leaves. Unless checked, the results of this tendency will be disastrous.

Pastors rely heavily on the home remedies dispensed to the sick by concerned brothers and sisters.

*In prison.* I once had a dream. In this dream I was getting ready for bed, when I felt a strange presence in the room. A phantasmal hand appeared from under the bed holding a piece a paper, which I was unable to read. After I had lain down, the spirit became a tangible presence in the room. I realized that only with light would the strange spirit flee. The light switch was on my wife's side of the bed, so I asked her to turn on the light. She flipped the switch, but nothing happened. I thought, "Oh my, the spirit has managed to tamper with our electrical system."

Then I remembered the flashlight on the nightstand on my side of the bed. I reached over and flicked the switch. Once again nothing happened. I immediately knew the spirit had managed to deactivate my flashlight.

The desperation I felt, knowing I was powerless against the evil spirit, is indescribable...

Then I awoke.

There are souls who are being intimidated by strange spirits. Inwardly they cry out, they flip the light switch, but nothing happens. They are afraid, or ashamed, to ask for help. And so they lie bound in a virtual prison, believing their situation is hopeless. Oh, for a friendly visit, for a word of hope....

The Bible has a list of grave sins that will keep people out of heaven. Matthew 25 doesn't mention any of those sins. Rather it tells about virgins who outwardly seemed to be pretty much on course, but inwardly were unconcerned. Their deeds were right, but their motives were wrong. Their fellowship degenerated into mere social life. And so, in spite of no grave charges against them, they banged on the door and were told by the Bridegroom, "I know you not."

The one-talent servant didn't steal from his master, he didn't cheat, nor was he careless with his money. He decided to take no risks. He knew, as we also know, that anyone who exercises his talent, or talents, will be criticized. He wasn't willing for that. He knew that exercising a talent many times requires diligence and hard work. He didn't want that either.

So he decided to do his own thing and return every cent his master had entrusted into his care. But the master said, "It won't do. I want increase." He was cast into outer darkness, where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth.

The last part of Matthew 25 tells of two kinds of people: those who had many good works and didn't even realize it, and those who didn't have any good works, and didn't realize it either. Certainly there will be a third class made up of those who had many good works and *realized it!*

Why is it that only those who were rich in good works *and didn't know it*, will find entrance into heaven? Because they, like the old cobbler, were moved by a heart of pure love. They didn't feed the hungry, give a cup of cold water to the thirsty, take the stranger in, clothe the naked, visit the sick and the prisoners because they thought these good works would unbar the everlasting gates. They

did all this because of their divine nature, just like a mother instinctively nurses her newborn child.

Those who don't have this divine nature, but rather a corrupt nature, like unto the mother who refuses to nurse her own child, shall go away into everlasting punishment.

According to Matthew 25, we won't only be judged for what we have done, but also for what we haven't done — unto the least of these. ▲

## Poetry

*by Earl Brubacher (in response to Rosemere de Souza's recent poem)*

### The Sound of Silence

With fingers for voices and bright eyes to hear,  
In beautiful language that does not need ears.

In grammar of silence, the hands never still,  
The words resonate with a quiescent trill.

In silence I hear you, in muteness surreal,  
Your hands hold your heart, I see what you feel.

A ballet of sign language hands now perform,  
And music and singing the stillness adorn.

A smile and a gesture, a way to express,  
A communication that heaven will bless.

## Mennonites in Brazil

### An Update

The church in Brazil is about to celebrate its 34th birthday. What has happened here during these 34 years? The map on this page shows five congregations, four missions and a new settlement in the state of Tocantins.

Maps have a way of dulling our senses to distance. This is especially true in a country that isn't interlaced by interstates. Highways in the southern part of the country are usually quite good. From the state of Goiás and on north, they rapidly deteriorate. In the northern states of Acre, Amazonas, Roraima, Pará and Amapá, not only are roads very primitive, but in many places almost nonexistent. To travel from Goiás to the state of Roraima can easily take a week—not to mention what it does to a vehicle.

On a local basis, the Monte Alegre and Rio Verdinho congregations are about 20 minutes apart. From either of these congregations it takes approximately 30 minutes to drive to Rio Verde.



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Place	Miles	Hrs
Goiânia mission	140	3
Pirenópolis Cong	210	5.5
Boa Esperança Cong	560	14
Acaraú Mission	1,800	36
Patos Mission	1,880	38
Mirassol Mission	310	8
Curitiba Mission	870	15

## Statistics

On November 16, 1968, the first three families arrived in the Aeroporto Internacional de Brasília. They were:

Denton & Emma Burns and four children: Elizabeth, Mary, Miriam and Timothy, from the Hesston Congregation.

Dick & Frieda Toews and eight children: Irene, Earl, Carl, Leroy, Delton, Eugene, Glenn and Linda, from the Hillsboro Congregation.

Both the Burns and Toews families came with permanent visas.

Homer & Hazel Unruh, from the Versailles Cong. The Unruhs came on tourist visas and returned sporadically, being present on the investigation trips within Brazil and the choosing of the Rio Verde area as the home of the Colony.

Approximately two weeks later, on December 9, Harold & Emma Dirks and six children, Leslie, Bonnie, Leo, Fred, Greta and Shirley arrived, also on tourist visas. On March 10, 1969, they returned to the States, where they worked out their permanent visas. On August 8, 1969, the Dirks family, armed with permanent visas and a great deal of courage, left Bonners Ferry, Idaho in a Chevy pickup and camper and drove to Brazil, arriving on the Colony exactly two months later, on October 8.

(Coincidentally, we and our four children left Hesston on the same day the Dirks family left Bonners Ferry. We, traveling by plane, arrived in two days, and they in two months.)

The original families spent several weeks in Brasília, living in a hotel, until they moved to Anápolis, a town some 30 miles from Goiânia, where they rented a large house, which was home until the original tract of land was purchased from Manoel Norberto Vilela.

On June 1, 1969, the Burns and Toews families moved to the tract of land purchased near Rio Verde, which is now known as the Colony. Camp was set up near the falls on the Monte Alegre River.

It is most correct to call the first settlers “pioneers.” They settled where there were no roads, no telephones and no electricity. No one spoke Portuguese. The Burns family spoke Spanish, which was a help, but still left a lot to be desired.

Interestingly, on the language issue, the Lord did His own preparing. We hadn’t been in Rio Verde very long when we met a young man with the nickname of Pierre. He graciously offered his services as interpreter when the Americans went to town, helping them in whatever way he was needed. His English, which was fairly good when we first met him, rapidly improved and today he speaks quite fluently. Because we could never figure out for sure what he did for a living, Homer Unruh, the man who could come up with an instant theory for almost everything under the sun, concluded he must be a CIA agent....

The church was officially established in Brazil while the first families still lived in Anápolis, on November 8, 1968. Deacon Dick Toews was elected the spiritual leader.

Considering the fact that this wasn’t a move to another state, but to a new continent,

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with different customs and a different language, initial growth was quite rapid. Notice the arrival dates of the next families:

John & Alma Penner and son Eldon arrived on July 29, 1969. John was the first ordained minister to serve the church in Brazil.

We arrived on August, 10, 1969, with our two children, Carlos and Yolanda.

Jona & Doris Dyck and 4 children, Wanetta, Ralph, Olive and Rachel arrived on August 28, 1969. Jona was the second minister to become part of the staff here in Brazil.

The Harold Dirks family arrived on October, 8, 1969.

Three families from Ohio arrived on November 6, 1969: Daniel & Anna Kramer and 6 children: Myron, Daniel, Susan, Stephen, Marie and Ruth; Daniel & Clara Coblentz and 5 children: Jonathan, Samuel, Thomas, William and Rebecca; Enos & Clara Miller and 7 children: Rachel, Delores, Esther, Anna Mae, Irene, Regina, Duane. Enos was the second deacon to move to Brazil.

On October 15, 1970 the Pete Loewen and Reno Hibner families arrived. Reno was the third minister to become part of the staff.

## General Information

Over a period of years, 41 families—a total of 358 people—moved to Brazil.

Forty-four families, 200 people, moved back to N America. Some who moved back are couples who were married in Brazil.

Four young men from N America found their brides in Brazil, one of them a Brazilian.

Five young men living in Brazil brought their brides back from N America.

Thirty children have been adopted; eight have been baptized here, four in N America.

Seven children have been fostered and a number taken in for shorter periods of time, for a total of more or less 30 children and youth, of which 20 have been baptized.

Four ministers and two deacons moved to Brazil. Seven ministers and seven deacons have been ordained here. Presently we have one Brazilian minister and two Brazilian deacons. Four ministers and three deacons have moved back to N America. Two ministers and one deacon have passed away here. At present we have four ministers and five deacons serving the church in Brazil.

Presently there are 144 households, of which 75 are Brazilian couples and 21 are mixed marriages.

There have been 69 Brazilian member's children baptized.

There have been 61 children born to Brazilian couples and 45 to mixed marriage couples. There are 166 children born to N American couples.

## **Monte Alegre Cong.**

In a sense the Monte Alegre Congregation was conceived in Anápolis on November 6, 1968. There have been 249 baptisms, of which 107 were Brazilians, 10 ordinations—five ministers and five deacons. There have been 62 marriages, 14 mixed and 6 Brazilian. There have been 16 deaths. At present there are 152 members. Staff members are Min. Mark Loewen, Min. Arlo Hibner, Dea. John Unruh, Dea. Harold Holdeman, Dea. Adejenes Lima.

Even with some families returning to N America and others moving to the new settlement in Tocantins, there will be a tendency of continued growth, first of all because of internal growth, and secondly because of the job openings being created in consequence of the Perdigão project. Each set of chicken barns requires a hired man, which are coming from both Rio Verde and Pirenópolis. Then there are jobs created by brethren involved in land moving and cleaning of the barns.

The Monte Alegre had its own school right from the beginning.

## **Rio Verde Cong.**

This is what we call the “town church.” Services were held in town for a number of years before the congregation was officially organized on May 19, 1985. There have been 78 baptisms, two of which were Americans, and six marriages. There have been five deaths. Present membership is 63. Dean Mininger is the non-resident minister and Adejenes Lima the non-resident deacon. Local leadership is provided by a rotating three man committee.

The Rio Verde Cong. has had somewhat of a stormy past. A number of the original members were lost and for a time the congregation just limped along. In the last number of years there has been an impressive change. The church is usually full, or nearly so, with quite a few visitors. Presently there are 14 people in doctrine class, in preparation for baptism.

The rotating leadership committee is certainly not a permanent solution, nor a system without problems, but the results are excellent.

There are a number of Rio Verde members living on the Colony and in Mato Grosso.

The Rio Verde Cong. organized its own school several years ago.

## **Rio Verdinho Cong.**

The Rio Verdinho Cong. was organized on December 13, 1987. There were enough members in the area first settled by Jonas Schultz, that it was felt it would be better to have a congregation there, than for everyone to continue driving all the way to the

Monte Alegre Church. The original staff was made up of Min. Richard Mininger and Dea. Enos Miller.

There have been 42 baptisms, of which 19 were Brazilians and 14 marriages, seven mixed. At present there are 73 members, 20 of whom are Brazilians and two staff members: Min. Dean Mininger and Dea. Duane Holdeman (on loan from Monte Alegre).

The Rio Verdinho Cong. is facing the unpleasant prospect of a drop in membership. A number of families will be moving to the new settlement in Tocantins, and contrary to Monte Alegre, there are no Perdigão projects to bring in members from other congregations. This coming school year their children will be bussed to the Monte Alegre School.

## **Pirenópolis Cong.**

Pirenópolis is a small, historic town located between Goiânia and Brasília, a most improbable place to have a mission. To begin with, it is a Catholic stronghold, replete with pageants, processions and religious activities. Pirenópolis is a favorite retreat for upper-class tourists from Brasília, Goiânia and other large cities. As a historic town, it is a favorite location for shooting movies.

Yet, in approximately six years Pirenópolis progressed from a mission to a congregation. The first missionaries were Myron & Martha Kramer, who served from August of 1990 to July of 1994. Staven & Adeline Schmidt continued the work until July of 1996, when Pirenópolis became a congregation with local leaders. On July 9, 1999, Antônio Oliveira was elected to the ministry and Sebastião de Sá to the diaconry. Membership: 20. Marriages: 1.

## **Boa Esperança Cong.**

The Boa Esperança Cong. was officially organized on August 27, 1996. Those who moved to this new settlement in Mato Grosso were perfectly aware that things wouldn't be easy. While their beginning wasn't as primitive as that of the original colony, it certainly hasn't been easy. Today, six years later, there still is no electricity, only one telephone and roads continue precarious. Until recently it cost considerably more to produce a bushel of soybeans in Mato Grosso than here in Goiás, and then it had to be sold for considerable less. I understand that is rapidly changing. Also, in the last few days there was a flurry of activity as contracts were being signed for an electrical project coming through their area. The stamina of the settlers, the favorable climate and better market accessibility create a favorable prognosis.

There have been six baptisms, three Brazilians; three marriages, one mixed. Present membership is 26, with eight Brazilians. They have their own school.

## **Tocantins Settlement**

Five families are firmly committed to move to Tocantins: Jair & Connie Costa, Chris & Anita Stoltzfus, Leo & Mim Dirks, Anthony & Wynelle Koehn, Myron & Sheila Unruh. Others are interested.

I hope that one of these days we can have a report from one of the settlers. Contrary to the Colony and the Mato Grosso settlement, which began with emphasis on agriculture and cattle as a sideline, the opposite may occur in Tocantins. Five years from now we should know if the move to Tocantins was a wise move.

## **Missions**

### **Goiânia Mission**

We have said before that the Goiânia mission is an incubator in a city of one million plus. People get converted there and then move out.

The first missionaries, Dan & Marlene Kramer, went there on March 1, 1985. Subsequent missionaries have been: Cameron & Deborah Goertzen, Mervin & Norma Jean Loewen, and presently, Arlen & Christina Wiggers.

There have been 14 baptisms and one death. At present there are seven members in four households.

### **Acaraú, Ceará**

This mission was opened on December 9, 1987. Mark & Glenda Loewen were the first missionaries. Subsequent missionaries were: Luiz & Maria Duarte, Paul & Shirley Koepl, Arlo & Priscilla Hibner, Arlen & Carol Friesen, Daniel & Anna Kramer, William & Miriam Coblentz, and presently, John & Sheila Kramer.

Ceará is one of the less developed states in Brazil. Initial progress was slow on the mission, but as often happens, a certain amount of witness is required before the fruit begins to appear. There have been 13 baptisms. Presently there are seven members who are doing very well.

### **Fortaleza, Ceará**

The first missionaries were John & Linda Stoltzfus, who served from July of 1989 to June of 1992. Several others from Goiás spent short terms there, and then the mission was shut down. There was one baptism. No members.

### **Cruz, Ceará**

Cruz is a neighboring town to Acaraú. Mark & Susan Dirks were there from April 1, 1990 to May of 1992, when the mission was fused with the Acaraú mission. There was one baptism, a sister who married a brother from Rio Verde.

### **Mirassol, São Paulo**

Opened in April of 1990, Dean & Vivian Penner were the first missionaries. Subsequent missionaries were: William & Miriam Coblentz, Edinei & Janete Alves, Nelson & Ruth Unruh. Presently there is no missionary. There have been six baptisms. Membership is five.

Growth has been slow, yet the good witness of the members will surely blossom forth one of these days.

### **Patos, Paraíba**

The first missionaries were Sam & Erma Coblentz, from July of 1992 to August of 1997. Subsequent missionaries were: Sérgio & Katrina Alves and Dan & Jolene Peaster. At present there is no missionary. There have been six baptisms. Present membership is three.

These numbers don't sound so impressive, but the mission is a shining light, a small group of active workers. Paulo Rufino, who married Valéria Gold from the Monte Alegre Cong, is a doctor and is active in literature distribution. Rosemere Souza had a poem published in a recent issue of BN. Flávio Oliveira married Flávia Passos, from the Monte Alegre Cong. They are living in Pirenópolis, where Flávio is teaching in our church school. Eduardo Vieira da Silva is my office assistant at the literature center, responsible for all of the routine translation. He is leaving for Canada in several days, where he will be marrying Susan Koehn. They will be living in the house that used to belong to Staven & Adeline Schmidt.

### **Curitiba, Paraná**

Dean & Vivian Penner were the missionaries in Curitiba, serving from June to November of 1999. Mervin & Norma Jean Loewen put in a term and the present missionaries are Nelson & Ruth Unruh. There has been one baptism, brother Roberto Amorim.

Curitiba is one of the most modern cities in Brazil. New York has copied its rapid-transit bus system. There are many Mennonites living in and around Curitiba. There is a large colony at Witmarsum.

The Mennonites in Curitiba range from those who have lost their identity in the world, to those who seem quite sincere and admit they are looking for something more than what they have. I suspect it's going to take quite some time of faithful witnessing before things break loose in Curitiba. It is, to say the very least, a real challenge to penetrate the Mennonite stronghold.

## **This Month in Brazil**

### **The Economy**

Globalization is a fact—a fact that isn't going to be changed by agreeing or disagreeing, by praise or criticism.

Globalization has brought many consumer benefits. But it, like capitalism itself, has a dark side. Happenings during the last weeks leave no doubt: When things go sour

on the world market, it's every man (nation) to himself, with the strongest filling the lifeboats first.

The financial scandals in the US, involving such reputable names as Enron, WorldCom, Arthur Andersen, Merck, Xerox, Tyco, send shockwaves over the entire planet. Unfortunately, the destruction caused by these shockwaves can be greater halfway around the globe than at the epicenter of the upheaval. This is so true in the case of emerging nations.

People from N America ask what is going on. Is Brazil in serious trouble?

Brazil has come a long, long way in the last ten years. Let's notice two tremendous hurdles that have been cleared:

Government regulations. For many years the government tried to control the economy just as a puppeteer controls his marionettes. Today our economy can be classified as a free economy.

Inflation. At its zenith, our inflation hit 2% per *day*. Today our inflation is in the neighborhood of 5-8% per *year*.

So what is the problem?

The greatest problem is lack of internal savings, which means Brazil is dependant on foreign loans for growth. Thus when the strongholds of capitalism hit turbulence, emerging nations go into a tailspin. And when this happens, those who provoked the havoc immediately drop the credit rating of spiraling nations, so creating a vicious circle.

Will Brazil pull out of this tailspin? Of course it will. Someone always makes mountains of money in this kind of situation, but even that has limits. The US, after all, needs Brazil, and has no desire to see it crash into a moratorium. So yes, things will return to normal, and hopefully some important lessons will have been learned.

In the meantime the dollar/real exchange rate will continue its chaotic dance. And those from Brazil who spent several months in N America spending money on their Brazilian credit cards will have to do some fancy footwork when their purchases made in dollars are converted into reals at a stratospheric exchange rate. In some cases it could be a replay of the scene in a which a man sits down with his wife for a very serious conversation. He says, "Honey, you know we've been spending like there was no tomorrow... Well, tomorrow is here."

## **This & That**

June 2 was the marriage of Eudes Reinor and Julie, dau. of Glenn & Elizabeth Hibner, both of the Boa Esperança Cong.

Elias & Colleen Stoltzfus moved to S Dakota on June 4.

June 9 was the marriage of Kevin, son of Glenn & Elizabeth, and Gisele, dau. of Zelinda Sperb, at the Monte Alegre Cong.

June 11 Ray, son of Jake & Betty Loewen, and Daniella Carvalho Leão, were married.



## Brazil 17 News

Oh June 24 Homer Unruh's funeral was phoned in to the Monte Alegre Cong. Mervin & Norma Jean Loewen returned to the Rio Verdinho Cong. after spending a number of years on the Goiânia and Curitiba missions. Nelson & Ruth Unruh were transferred from the Mirassol mission to Curitiba.

We are having a very warm cold season, possibly the warmest since we moved to Brazil. Adejenes Lima bought Elias Stoltzfus' place. They plan to move shortly.