

Brazil News



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Editorial

Three Continents – One Message

Unconsciously we have developed the feeling that North America is the final bastion of God's Church before the end of time. This idea is supported by strong logic. What other nation, or continent, could possibly have the spiritual infrastructure to assume a role of prominence in the history of God's people?

Those who see this opening paragraph as a veiled challenge to the status of the church in N America, may set their minds at ease. Man doesn't determine the position of God's torch any more than the Israelites controlled the pillar of cloud and fire. They followed the pillar. The pillar didn't follow them.

The objective of this editorial isn't to suggest the pillar will move from over the N American tabernacle, but rather to show that today the truth is firmly established in other continents.

Last year when Roland Loewen, who together with his wife spent time in Africa, was in the Rio Verdinho Congregation for meetings, he mentioned in a conversation that he would like to see Min. Isaac Akinyombo from Nigeria come to Brazil to hold revival meetings. I think maybe that is where the idea first came from of asking for a minister from Africa to help us in our meetings at the Monte Alegre Congregation.

We voted to try it, but not without misgivings. Would his English be compatible with ours? Would he understand the problems of our mixed culture here? Would he preach on a wave length that we could tune in on? Would he hang back in the shadows? In plain words, would a Nigerian fit into our revival effort? All this, and more, we wondered about.

When Linwood Koehn from Kentucky, whom we had chosen to help in our meetings, was unable to come, it was decided that someone else should be found at Conference to take his place. Dewey Unruh from Canada showed a willingness to come. So we had one minister from Africa and one from North America, preaching the gospel in South America to Brazilians, Canadians and Americans.

Did it work?

Read on and decide for yourself.

My Dear People...

Isaac is a man in his middle fifties. He was ordained by Dennis Unruh, the first minister to be ordained in Nigeria. He is at home in the Ife Congregation.

Someone, who is supposed to have heard him preach in the US, came up with the idea that Isaac is a slow, quiet speaker. We soon found that Isaac is not slow. And Isaac is not quiet. As he would stray off to one side of the pulpit, sometimes almost to the right rostrum wall, I heard Frank Haynes preaching. I saw his penetrating glare. I heard and saw Frank Unruh 40 years ago as he would preach from the side of the pulpit.

Isaac's English is more Britannic than American. And more African than Britannic. Yet we could understand him well. The hardest hit were the interpreters. Each phrase had to be interpreted, without the benefit of waiting for him to use a word a second time to catch on what it was. But even the interpreting into Portuguese went quite well. I don't have 20-20 hearing (See This & That), so Stephen Kramer, who does, interpreted for Isaac and I for Dewey.

As I describe Isaac's preaching, I must return to Frank Haynes. Those of you who remember his preaching will know what I'm talking about. It's the ability to use the tonality of the voice to make words come alive. It's having the courage to paint with bold colors. Isaac spent no time mixing colors to try and come up with a hue that would please everyone. The word "maybe" is used precious few times in his sermons. He seems to be allergic to "It seems to me," "I'm not trying to say any of you here are guilty of this," and "Just in case 1/4" I still see him, after making a positive statement, pointing his finger at the crowd, "YOU! I'm talking to YOU!" No apologies. And no offenses.

"My dear people, this is how we all are." How did he know? He had never been to Brazil before. Yes, he knows Americans and Canadians, but he didn't know Brazilians. Yet, when he would look into our faces and say, "My dear people, that is how we all are," we knew we were all tuned in on the same frequency.

Ants, Birds, Fish, and Adam

We all use illustrations when we talk or write. Jesus did. Many other Bible writers did. Obviously these illustrations were drawn out of real life situations. That is why we read so much in both the Old and New Testament on sheep and shepherds.

When N American missionaries go to foreign fields, they normally have to give their repertoire of illustrations and stories a good overhauling, or even dumping. They discover that a lot of what is impressive to them isn't to their hearers. We hear them lamenting, "I just don't know how to make it simple enough." That's the problem. They try to simplify a complicated concept. Why not begin with a simple, uncomplicated concept?

Isaac's preaching was understood perfectly by everyone – Brazilians, Canadians and Americans. With no adaptations. With no simplifications. With no strain.

In his first sermon he took us to the Garden of Eden. He told how the Lord created the different animals. He talked about the ants crawling on the ground. We have ants here. We all understood that. He told about the birds flying in the air and about the fish swimming in the water. Who, from the illiterate to the most educated, can't understand that?

Then one day God came to the Garden. He looked around. The ants were crawling on the ground as usual. The birds were flying in the air. The fish were still swimming in the water. But where was Adam? "Adam! Where art thou?" Adam was hiding, together with Eve. Of all the creation of God, only man left his place. The question was, "Are you still in the place where God put you?" Or like Adam – and unlike the ant, the bird and the fish – had we left our God given place?

In another sermon, Isaac was showing us the importance of forgiving. He told the story of a songbird that came to a missionaries' compound promptly at seven o'clock each morning, would land on a certain branch in a tree in the back yard, and begin to sing.

One day the missionaries' son decided he wanted to catch that songbird. He set a trap on the exact spot where the bird always came to sing.

The next morning, right on time, the unsuspecting bird came and flew straight to its favorite branch. Just as it was landing, it realized something was amiss. But too late, the trap closed on its foot, severing it. The bird flew away.

The missionaries' son was saddened. Not only had he failed to capture the bird, but now he would never again hear its beautiful song in the morning. Or so he thought.

The following morning, at exactly seven o'clock, not one minute late, the bird, now with but one leg, flew to the same branch and began to sing.

I think few of the listeners, including the children, will ever forget this beautiful story. Even after depriving the bird of one leg, it came back to sing for its persecutor. The lesson: We need to forgive.

In one of his last sermons, Isaac told another bird story. I don't know how it affected others, but I think that anyone with a bird in a cage would have felt a desire to turn it loose.

He told of how a bird is taken out of its habitat, away from its natural food of insects, etc., and placed in a cage. There it is given food, but not the food it's accustomed to. It is given water to drink. He went on to explain how people who are captured by Satan are taken out of their natural setting and forced to eat unnatural foods. The question was: "Is that how you want to live?"

To make the explanation even more vivid, he told of a pet bird he and his brothers had when they were small. One day it escaped. "You can imagine what we did that day," was his way of showing how Satan doesn't give up just because someone gets converted.

On the subject of Satan, he declared, "Let us not think that Satan is a small boy^{1/4}" Smiling knowingly he continued, "Ah ha, he is powerful." On paper these words look weak, but from Isaac's lips, they were powerful.

"We play games with the devil. We want to be near him." To the listeners this game

now became a very dangerous one. Why? Because Satan has a cage. Did anyone present want to be taken out of his natural surroundings and placed in a cage, having to eat strange foods?

My Dear People . . .

If Isaac's labors in Brazil could be summed up in three words, they would be, "My dear people!" Spoken with deep conviction, he would repeatedly say, "My dear people." This term wasn't mere rhetoric. It wasn't a filler to be used while trying to decide what to say next. It wasn't flattery. It was like a mother working in the kitchen who calls, "Children, come here." Her tone of voice says, "Children, I have something for you." That is the profound message that, "My dear people," transmitted to his mixed audience. We, all of us together, were his people.

Preaching on forgiveness, Isaac explained that when Jesus commanded that we pardon our brother seventy times seven times, that was four hundred and ninety times a day. "Because (that same knowing smile), man is very cunning. If seventy times seven meant in a lifetime, there would be those who would get out a piece of paper and make a mark every time they forgave someone, looking forward to the day when there would be four hundred and ninety marks, and they wouldn't have to forgive anymore.

There is a difference between asking forgiveness and justifying ourselves. If a man steps on another's toes, he should ask for pardon. If, however, he would blame it on someone else, on the crowd, the man whose toes had been crunched would say, "Don't you have eyes in your head?" Soon there would be a real argument, or worse, in progress.

These stories, punctuated with "My dear people," hit home.

Back Washing

Isaac's first sermon gave a new dimension to the concept of giving and taking reproof. He explained that if we see our brother err and don't do anything about it, his reproach will end up falling on us. Time and again he talked about what it would be like to be barred from heaven's door by our brother's sin that we did nothing about.

Graphically he explained this concept. Once there were six brothers. One of them began having mental problems. He confided in the other five. Possibly because of being ashamed of having a brother with this type of problem, they ignored his pleas for help. It would be embarrassing to have a crazy brother. If nothing was done, possibly the problem would go away.

One day they all went to the river to take a bath. The sixth brother waited until the other five were in the water. Then he quickly gathered up their clothes and took out running for town.

When the "sane" five realized what was happening, they were horrified. Attired only in their birthday outfits, they streaked after their crazy brother, trying to catch him and retrieve their clothes. Being a heavily populated area, people everywhere came out to gawk at the spectacle. Their conclusion: All six of the brothers had gone crazy.

Isaac explained that it isn't hard to take reproof from our closest friends. We may even ask them if they see something in our life that needs to be changed. But really, we would like to control what is brought to us. But it doesn't work. We need to be open to everyone.

To illustrate this, he asked the audience if it would work to wash the right elbow with the right hand. Of course not. Only the left hand can wash the right elbow.

Now he asked those present to do a little experiment. "Can you see your own back? Try it. Yes try it. Look back. Turn your head. Can you see your own back?" All over necks were strained, trying to see their own backs. No way.

He told the story of when his brothers and dad would go to the river to bathe. After his dad was in the water, he would call, "Isaac, come wash my back."

At this point Isaac proceeded to vigorously scrub my back (I was interpreting) to show how it should be done.

Did the congregation understand the concept of back washing? I think so. The term, "I want to open my door to the brotherhood, if you see anything amiss in my life^{1/4}" is rapidly being replaced by "I invite you, my brothers and sisters, to wash my back."

When you get right down to it, is feet washing complete without back washing?

Profound Truths

Isaac told about the time he saw a spider capture an ant. I thought to myself that this would be a modified version of a story we had heard many times. What little animal comes closer to describing Satan than a spider.

He told how he saw the spider wrap its web around the ant until it was totally immobilized. Then he (the savior) stepped in and carefully removed the webs, setting the ant free, which scurried away.

So far a rerun. Now came profound truth. "I didn't kill the spider. When Jesus frees us, he doesn't kill Satan." In other words, "Ant beware! Your enemy is still around. If you aren't careful, you'll end up in his webs again."

The incarnation of Christ is a mystery. It is a source of error in most major Christian religions. Our brother from Nigeria simplified the mystery.

It's as though God wrote a letter, placed it in an envelope, and addressed it to Mary. The angel came and placed this sealed envelope within her. Her part in this was to carry the envelope until the fullness of time, when it was opened and the entire world saw its contents – Jesus Christ. She had no contact with the contents of the envelope, for it remained sealed while within her.

Ye wise of this world, take heed.

As I drive through town and see the many churches, I am amazed. I am even more amazed at the crowds they draw. I think others feel that way too. I hear them ask, "Why can't we get crowds like that? What are we doing wrong?"

Isaac answers these questions. And let us never forget what he says, "If we would open the road just a little bit, take out a doctrine or two, people would flock in by the thousands. We wouldn't even have to call them."

May we never again look to street corner churches and covet their crowds. May we never try and figure out what they are doing right that we are doing wrong. Meditate on the profound explanation the man from Nigeria gave us.

Talking about truthfulness, Isaac quoted his dad: “When you deceive another man, you become lean. But, when you deceive yourself, death is at the door.”

On loving this world’s riches, he said, “Let’s live like we have everything in a sack.” Stop and think about that one for a few minutes. What can you get into a sack? If you had to go on a journey, on foot, and all you could take would have to fit in a sack, or suitcase, what would you take? Food and raiment – right? That’s biblical. If you want to know where your treasures are, see if you can get them into a sack.

This Morning My Brother . . .

When referring to a message preached by Dewey in the morning, Isaac didn’t say, as we would, “This morning the brother talked about^{1/4}” No. “This morning my brother talked about^{1/4}” That epitomizes the relationship that existed between Isaac and Dewey and the rest of the Staff. Elias Stoltzfus told me, that in spite of his color and accent, he had to repeatedly remind himself that Isaac wasn’t from here, so well did his thoughts and concepts blend in with the local staff.

Until now we have said nothing about Dewey. It isn’t necessary. Many of you know him. This article is about Nigeria, not Canada nor the US. The repeated references that Dewey and Isaac made to each others messages showed a beautiful spirit. While their color is different, the accent is different, their gifts are different, they worked together like a pair of old shoes.

As I think about all this, I can’t help but wonder if we haven’t lost something by saying, the brother. Whose brother? Why not, Nigerian style, say my brother? We say my dad, not the dad. We say my wife or husband, not the wife or husband, talking about our own. That simple word my, placed Canada right up next to Nigeria. Those two men, who I believe had never met before, are true brothers. They are our brothers.

It is Beautiful

Because of a once a week flight between São Paulo and Lagos, Isaac got to Brazil three days before revivals began. An effort was made to have him get into the interpreter’s homes so that they could become used to his English.

So it was that on his second day on the Colony, Isaac spent part of the day with us. At mealtime I asked him to pray. At one point he said something like this, “Oh Lord, we thank you for the kindred spirit we feel (pause). It is beautiful. (Pause)” And the prayer continued. Several times he did this.

Many times we were reminded of the beauty of the blending of cultures. In one of our member’s meetings in church, he prayed, “Oh God, may you be the Chairman of this meeting.” That lightens the load of the earthly chairman, doesn’t it?

As our meetings were drawing to a close, he said to us, “We have beaten you with

words. We have chastised you with words. We have whipped you with words so that you would wake up, if you were sleeping.”

Then he added, “You are the owner of your house, but here come two, three, or four men. They come in and begin to ask you all kinds of questions. Perhaps they even want to know what you have in your pockets.” This explanation showed us that even the unpleasant aspect of revivals can have a beautiful ending, as one by one brothers and sisters arise and give a clear testimony of the Lord’s working.

Isaac preached the communion sermon. He began by saying he would have to cut it short because of all that is involved in this type of service.

He spoke for well over an hour and a half. All his other sermons were of normal duration. What happened this time? He forgot to watch the clock. I don’t believe he was supposed to watch it. We had a lot of visitors. Much of his sermon, as he began with the bondage of the Israelites in Egypt, sounded like a real evangelistic sermon.

Was the sermon too long? I guess that depends on whether we wanted him to tell us all or only part of what the Lord laid on his heart. All I can say is, it was beautiful.

During our communion service, as he broke the bread and handed the cup to his brothers and sisters, he would say, “This bread which we break (cup which we bless), represents the broken body (shed blood) of the one who died on Calvary’s mountain, so that we may have life and have it more abundantly.” It is beautiful.

During self-examination, Isaac gave what I believe was his most profound statement while here: “By inviting me over for your revival efforts, you have done God a high honor, because you prove your belief in the one true Church.” It is beautiful.

The Story Has Not Finished Yet

As Isaac would tell one of his stories, he would pause to make an application. Then he would continue, “The story has not finished yet.”

No, the story has not finished yet. The other evening after services, I suggested to one of our deacons the possibility of nominating another minister from Nigeria to come for our next years meetings. He didn’t have to think twice to say, “I’ll second it.”

The same deacon told me, “Isaac could go to any congregation in North America for meetings and fit in.” That I can second.

Is Isaac a super-minister? By no means. I hope what you have just read hasn’t given you that idea. But he is a minister, just as qualified as any North or South American minister.

Should for some reason, someday, the pillar of fire move from N America to Africa, should Conferences be held there and the general welfare of the Church of God be decided by Nigerian brethren, we would be in good hands.

The story has not finished yet. Will you folks in N American someday call on a Mexican minister and have him preach to you through an interpreter? Why not? We use interpreters here all the time. Isaac speaks through an interpreter in Nigeria (English to Yorba, because of older mamas and papas), the church has been established in practically every land through interpreters. Is there any reason why you couldn’t use one?

No, the story has not finished yet. If time goes on for another 20 or 30 years, I believe – if we have open minds – there will be changes. The day may well come that several pastors are called in from Nigeria to help solve a sticky problem in N America. Nigeria may call in Brazilian ministers. Brazil may call in Canadians and the Canadians may call in Mexicans...

As the gospel is preached to all nations, will this not be the tendency?

Truly, the story has not finished yet. ▲

Religion

On the Catholic Church

[Roberto Campos continues with his dissertation on God, Faith and Politics (issue 31). Notice what he has to say about the “theology of liberation.” Remember, he is viewing the situation from a secular point of view – as a statesman. Even though we will not agree with everything he says, he clearly shows the tremendous degeneration of the Catholic Church.]

The crisis in the Catholic Church stems from different sources. The economical crisis is mainly a result of a movement by certain segments of the church to create what could be called Christian Marxism, together with the discovery that violence is more effective than charity to bring about social justice. There is also the ethical aspect of birth control being debated, whether this is up to the individual conscience or if it depends on official church regulations. The theological crisis is being brought on by the ever increasing defiance of the theologians of the Earthly City – the theologians of liberation – who are trying to build a new Christianity adapted [to modern life].

In the theology of liberation there is a serious gap between motivation and understanding, to borrow an expression used by professor Albert Hirschman. The ability of the church to stir up people is far greater than its knowledge of how to solve problems^{1/4}This leads to a false progress, in which different sectors of the Catholic Church find themselves treading on quicksand, for while they denounce social injustice in relation to the poor, they at the same time cause their numbers to grow greater and greater by opposing modern methods of birth control. They preach economical progress, but they destroy the foundation of progress by trying to prematurely distribute wealth, thus inhibiting investments.

In no other place in the world is the gap between motivation and understanding greater than in the “progressive [leftist] wing of the church,” and especially in Latin America, where a real push is on to adopt concepts and behavior modeled after Marxism. In this the diagnosis is warped, as is the treatment. The diagnostic error, as the Jesuit priest Michael Novak has pointed out, is an effort to identify Latin American societies as capitalists, a system held by them as the greatest of all evils. The truth of the matter is that the different Latin American economies are still pre-capitalist, misshapen by ridiculous governmental intervention, which stifles the creativity that competition

produces, as well as the normal rules of a free market. So, if the diagnosis is off, much more so the therapy, which swings back and forth between two extremes: outdated ideas and socialist theories. Fortunately the theologians of liberation have hit a brick wall. With the fall of the Berlin Wall, the total failure of socialism has become evident, showing that it is impossible to bring together their three objectives: political freedom, economical efficiency, and social equality.

Coming from Poland, a country that felt first hand the misfortunes of socialism, Pope John Paul II has tried to reestablish true pastoral values, holding in check the simplistic and political enthusiasm of the theologians who have strayed from the Celestial City to the Secular City. Even though he has come closer to facing up to the reality of the situation of semi-industrialized countries in Eastern Europe, he left unsolved, or even worsened, the basic problem of developing countries: birth control. It makes no sense to give the poor special attention and at the same time ignore the fact that the high birth rates of the poor classes are becoming factories that spew out poverty and are seed beds for street urchins.

The other great challenge to Catholicism is the proliferation of Protestant sects. This is a complex phenomena, which, according to Max Weber, could be called, “charisma put to practice.” The pastor of these sects is a common man, unattached to a complicated hierarchy and thus closer to his flock. These sects make better use of their choirs, of biblical precepts and of community solidarity. God seems to be closer, for they don’t need saints and priests to intercede for them. Instead of talking about abstract dogmas, these sects discuss immediate needs. Because of the way they look at sin, they don’t need to confess to an individual for spiritual purification. But Protestantism also has its curses. If the curse of Catholicism is politics, the curse of Protestantism is making merchandise of the Word^{1/4}

For politics we have politicians. People have the right to choose the politicians they will, or become politicians, if they so desire. The clergy should remain in its place, being watchmen of the religious aspect of life. As Max Weber says, “[Clergymen] should be interested in the salvation of their own soul and that of their fellowmen, but they shouldn’t try to do this with politics.” ▲

A Brazilian Story

Floorboard’it

[Again it’s Mário de Moraes that tells the story – as someone else told it to him. As soon becomes evident, it takes place in a primitive setting.]

This took place in Garanhuns, a town in the state of Pernambuco. The main character in this little story has the nickname of Floorboard’it, because of his penchant for fast driving, which fit in with his job as an ambulance driver.

On this particular day it was Floorboard'it's birthday. He invited all of his neighbors and friends over for a royal feast. After the preliminary dishes came the main course – a fat young pig backed in an enormous oven, stuffed with farofa de ovo.

The pig was removed from the oven and there was Floorboard'it, ready to begin carving. It was at that exact moment that someone came running in, shouting, “Come quickly, Floorboard'it! It's urgent!”

The killjoy was the cleaning boy from the local hospital. Floorboard'it was a man who took his job seriously. Without touching the pig, he headed for the door, yelling as he left, “Wait for me! I'm going on one foot and coming back on the other.” And then came a warning, “Don't anyone lay a finger to my roasted pig.”

Floorboard'it and the cleaning boy beat it to the hospital on a horse. The doctor on call was anxiously waiting. “Floorboard'it, jump in the ambulance and beat it to Brejão. The doctor from there called and said they have a patient that is really bad off and needs to be transferred over here.”

In a matter of seconds Floorboard'it was behind the wheel of the ambulance, bouncing around as he hit large holes in the road. It should be mentioned here that the ambulance was really a pile of junk, barely hanging together.

Neither the thick dust nor the craters in the road bothered Floorboard'it. The only thing he could think about was picking up his patient and getting him to the hospital, so that he could get back to the party. It was for this reason that he got to Brejão in less than half the time it normally took, thus breaking all records.

As Floorboard'it pulled up in front of the doctor's office, where the patient was, the physician gave him quick instructions. “Get this man to the hospital as fast as you can. He's needing an operation badly.”

“As fast as possible.” That was music in Floorboard'it's ears. The patient was placed on a stretcher, which was put into the rear of the ambulance. The door slammed and Floorboard'it was on the way. Once again he flew, even though he did lose some time putting more water into the boiling radiator.

The doctor's last words kept ringing in Floorboard'it's ears: “Step on it man, or the patient will end up dying.”

By now the ambulance was covered with dust. It jumped all over the place as it hit holes squarely. Chickens and pigs on the road had to take care of themselves. Nothing could get Floorboard'it to slow down. He knew his patient was still alive because of the deep groans he occasionally heard, which were especially loud when hitting an unusually large crater.

In his mind Floorboard'it could see only one thing: the roasted pig, stuffed with farofa de ovo. When he could see the town of Garanhuns again, he breathed a long sigh of relief. It didn't take very long and he jumped out of the ambulance, looking like he had been through a hurricane. Bursting with pride, he ordered, “Here's your patient, Doc. I did my part. Now I'm heading home to get my teeth into the fattened hog.”

Floorboard'it hadn't gone very far, when he heard the nurse shout, “Doctor, there's no one in the back of this ambulance!”

Floorboard it went back to check and it was true. Not only had the male nurse who was riding with the patient disappeared, but the patient and the stretcher were gone too. Even the back door had disappeared. Obviously all this could be attributed to the hard bumps.

Fortunately, after heading back down the road a little ways, the patient, the stretcher and the nurse were found in the middle of the road. They were all loaded up again and taken back, where the patient got the operation he needed.

Floorboard it was quite upset about this second trip. When he finally got home, all that was left of the pig was a little bit of meat hanging onto the bones. His guests, tired of waiting, dug in and helped themselves. ▲

Remembering Out Loud

Hearse or Ambulance?

As I was translating Mário's story, I remembered an incident that happened in Mexico quite a few moons ago.

The "judge" in the village of La Boca had a son – Isidrio, I believe was his name – who got converted and became a member of the church.

Isidrio became very sick and we took him to Saltillo to Dr. Torres' Clinic. A week or so later the judge showed up in San Rafael in a taxi. In the back seat was Isidrio. He wanted us to pay the taxi driver and then take them up to La Boca. His story was that Isidrio wouldn't get better, so why leave him in Saltillo to die. As I remember the story, the family refused to donate blood that he so much needed.

We simply sent them back to Saltillo to the Clinic. Several days later the judge knocked on the door again. He said that Isidrio had died. He wanted us to bring his body back for burial.

So we went to the hospital to pick him up. As we approached his room, we heard a labored breathing. Isidrio was still alive. I talked to the doctor and he said really there was nothing they could do for him anymore, we could take the patient home.

The judge, a practical man (not to say heartless), had a strange request. Since his son was about to die, why not get the coffin around so that another trip wouldn't have to be made? He insisted, so that is what we did. As I remember it, he got the necessary documents, should he die during the return trip.

Isidrio was placed on the stretcher in the pickup camper. The coffin right along side. Fortunately the patient was in a deep coma and probably knew nothing of what was happening.

Shortly after leaving him in his home, he died. Had there not been a stretcher in the back of the pickup, I have little doubt but what the judge would have placed his son in the coffin. Alive. ▲

This & That

Gospel Tract moved its activities into the new Literature Center on January 1. Stephen Kramer, the office superintendent, is real happy with his new surroundings.

The first Sunday evening service of each month is a joint meeting of the Rio Verdinho and Monte Alegre congregations. The January meeting was at the Rio Verdinho church. We had already had a Conference report from our staff, so now the lay members who were at the Conference gave us a report. It was interesting to hear what impressed the different ones. The youth sang several of the songs that the youth sang at the Conference.

Lowell & Sharon Warkentin had a girl, Michelle Dawn, on January 2. If a name makes the child, then this child has it made.

“Adolfo, the ice-cream man,” is how most of the Colony knows him, or simply as Tiny. When we began settling this area, nearly 25 years ago, we never imagined that the day would come that we would have ice-cream delivered to our doorstep. Tiny is a man big, big (as the Nigerians would say). Heavy, heavy. He loves to talk. And people love to talk to him. He is very original. The fact that he weighs some 300 pounds plus doesn’t keep him from wearing shorts and an undershirt, hopping on a little cycle and driving through the middle of town, as he takes his girl to school. On his last time out he was selling some delicious peaches he picked up on a trip to southern Brazil, his homeland.

What is 20-20 hearing? It’s hearing 20 words and understanding 20 words. I have 20-17 hearing. Or worse.

Now, an additional comment on Wally (see History of the Colony in the last issue). A few months ago we had dinner at Errol Redgers, together with Wally and some of his relatives from Goiânia. I was amazed, after all the time he has spent in the States, how Brazilian his reasoning continues to be. After explaining a situation in the US, he asked Errol for his opinion, as a deacon: Since the government is corrupt, are we obligated to pay all the taxes that the law requires, since the money will be spent dishonestly anyway? What say ye?

On January 3 we had our General Annual Business Meeting of the three congregations at the Rio Verdinho church.

On January 4 Mark took the Bradley Koehn family to catch the plane in Goiânia. As soon as their children’s adoption papers are through, they plan to return and pick them up. Isaac Akinyombo arrived and returned to Rio Verde with Mark.

The two children whom they plan on adopting, Sueyllen and Vanderlei, are living with us again.

On January 5 Isaac Akinyombo gave a report on Nigeria. This report had a dual purpose, to give us a chance to adapt to his English before meetings began, and to give us an idea of how things are in his native country. We enjoyed every minute of the report.

I am positively amazed at how many people on the Colony would like to go to Nigeria for a visit. Really there would be nothing complicated about it. It takes the same amount of time to fly to Miami as it does to Lagos – around eight hours. Isaac has promised to have someone waiting in the airport in Lagos if anyone wants to make them a visit. He may repent of that offer yet.

Tim & Deanna Burns went to Goiânia to pick up Corinne Isaac in the airport on January 6. When she came to teach this school term, her work visa wasn't ready, so she came as a tourist. In the meantime her visa came through, so she made a quick trip to Canada to pick it up during our Christmas vacation (she did miss several days of school). With this visa – which can be turned into a permanent visa – we hope she decides to teach school here for many, many years.

The Monte Alegre youth were at our house for supper on the 7th. It was a farewell, or whatever, for their youth leaders, Daniel & Linda Holdeman, who have been replaced by Carman & Celma Loewen. After having up to 60 in our youth group – before the Rio Verdinho Congregation came into existence, the mere dozen we have now looks mighty slim. If no one would get married for the next several years it sure would help replenish our stock. I'm all for it.

Revival meetings at the Monte Alegre congregation began on January 7. We had a basket dinner in the social hall to help people become acquainted with Dewey & Doreen and with Isaac, whose wife, unfortunately couldn't come this time.

The Leo Dirks family was out from Mato Grosso to attend the meetings.

The Carman Loewen family returned from the US.

Elias Stoltzfus and his wife Colleen are going to Buhl, Idaho to help in revival meetings.

Duane Holdeman organized the youth to cut a truckload of firewood for Emma Burns. She cooks on a real Brazilian stove – something not even many Brazilians do anymore.

Walt & Alberta Redger, Ike & Rosalie Loewen and daughter Ruth Ann are here. I don't know if even they know for how long.

January 23 was the final day of our meetings. In the morning we had communion and in the evening, ordination. Arlo Hibner was ordained to the ministry and Harold Holdeman to the diaconry. This certainly will be a welcome help to our overloaded staff.

Meetings began in the town congregation on January 24. Isaac and Dewey are the evangelists. I have gotten some good reports from there.

Earl Schmidt and his boys have done a beautiful job of leveling around the literature center.

If your bathroom scale would suddenly jump from 73 to 93 kilos (160 to 204 lbs.), you'd say the scale was off. When the dates in the History of the Colony section in Brazil News suddenly jump from 73 to 93, it's the editor that's supposed to be off. Big deal.