

THE TRUMPET

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



SPRING 2008

HISPANIC CHRISTIAN MINISTRY

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

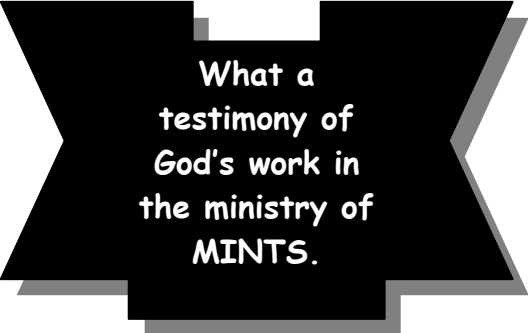
TRIP REPORT - EL SALVADOR FEBRUARY 20 - MARCH 3, 2008

The words of Paul to the Philippians in the third and fourth verse of his letter reflect my gratitude to you as supporters, *"I thank my God every time I remember you. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel..."*

Testimony of the MINTS "Mission Seminary" Approach - On this trip José Jesús Ramirez accompanied me throughout the 11 days of travel. José is a student of MINTS in Toronto who is from El Salvador. He has graduated from MINTS with his Bachelor's in Theology and is six courses shy of his Masters in Theology. He has already begun to teach some courses at the Toronto MINTS Centre. When he heard that I was planning a trip to El Salvador, he offered to accompany me in my travels. He asked me to join him in visiting with his family in a mountain village on the West end of El Salvador, near the Guatemalan border. It has become the focus of one of the new MINTS Centre that were established on the trip. During the trip José was

instrumental in being a spokesperson for MINTS and shared in the presentation of the conferences that were taught on 8 different occasions throughout the trip. His testimony about his leadership development through MINTS and his participation in the conferences we taught were an encouragement to me, and a blessing to his fellow El Salvadoran countrymen. It was a testimony of the "mission seminary" approach of MINTS in which students are encouraged to teach the courses they have been taught under the supervision of formal professors and in which they are tutored to write courses and teach them in different MINTS Centres. I am thankful to the Lord for students like José who have committed themselves to bless others with leadership training in the same way they have been blessed.

Working with the MINTS Internet Program. In one of the communities we visited there were three MINTS students who have been studying with MINTS through our flourishing internet program of studies. These students have been taking as many as ten courses through MINTS on-line. My visit there was intended to be a visit of encouragement for them. But it ended up being the seed for starting yet another Centre. We obliged their enthusiasm by gathering other church leaders in their community to teach the first "at distance" course.



What a
testimony of
God's work in
the ministry of
MINTS.

Eight New Centres are Born. I went down with the expectation of starting five Centres. But as the trip developed, not only did these five communities respond positively, but in one community they chose to form two Centres in two different churches, and in another they chose to form three Centres in three different geographical areas. We even had a Christian police officer participate in our conference in the far eastern portion of the country along the Honduran border. He was so excited about what MINTS is offering that he is starting up a Centre not in a geographical region but in a "distinctive group" setting. He has five fellow police officers who have committed themselves to studying MINTS courses together and using this training in their respective churches. This is the first time I have had the privilege of starting a Centre among police officers.

Among the eight new Centres that were formed, about eighty students are in the process of registering with MINTS, each of whom received the course conference on Biblical Hermeneutics that José and I were able to teach in order to get them started with the MINTS program.

Rev. Eric Pennings,
Miami International Seminar (MINTS)
Central America Regional Coordinator

Canadian Donations: Hispanic Chr. Ministry, c/o Covenant Ref. Church, 265 Albion Road, Toronto, Ontario M9W 3P1.

US Donations: Hispanic Chr. Ministry, c/o Faith United Ref. Church, 8270 120th Ave., West Olive, Michigan 49460.

SUNNYSIDE URC Sunnyside, WA

A group of Reformed Christians from the Sunnyside area (Yakima Valley) contacted Grace URC many months before July, 2007, and after prayers and discussion, Grace URC agreed to help them plant a church by way of oversight and financial support. The Grace elders, pastor (Rev. Craig Davis) and the group from Sunnyside contacted Shane Lems, then a senior at Westminster Seminary, in May 2007 to see if he would be interested in doing church plant work. After a visit, preaching several sermons, and fellowship, the Grace elders and the Sunnyside group decided to call Shane to be pulpit supply and church planter of this work. Shane was ordained February 8, 2008, here at the church plant and is now a minister of the Word and Sacraments in the URCNA.

The Grace elders continue to oversee the work, sending elders to visit and oversee the worship on a regular basis. Rev. Lems is a member of the consistory at Grace now and attends each consistory meeting. Currently, Rev. Lems is beginning officer training at the church plant. Lord willing, in the near future, there will be officers to serve the local church, which is an essential step in becoming an organized church. The URC of Sunnyside has a Bible Study to which the community has been invited; several have been visiting this Bible study for 8 months now. For outreach, they go door to door with church invites, Bible study invites, and with free reading materials and sermons on CD. They also have a website which helps "get the word out" (www.urcofsunnyside.com). This summer, Lord willing, Rev. Lems will teach a membership class to several who have not yet made profession of faith in a Reformed Church.

For questions or comments, feel free to contact the URC of Sunnyside: pastorlems@gmail.com or 509-837-8392.

ESCONDIDO, RIPON, BOISE, AND NAMPA URC GROUP

Mission Trip to Mexico

On June 17 through the 23rd 91 people went to Vencente Guerrero, Baja California to build 6 houses for people in need. Students from Boise, Nampa, Ripon, and 40 from the EURC went to work on the houses together. God's grace was shown to the families through our work. The houses were built in 4 days and the families now enjoy their brightly painted walls of their new homes. It was eye opening to see the poverty these families and many others had to live in and how blessed we are. Not only did we build houses; we built relationships with the families and fellow Christians. A favorite memory of many people was on Thursday night when we all went to the beach for a bonfire and fireworks. Another great memory for many people included playing with the kids at the job sites and shopping in Ensenada. Although the accommodations were not what we were used to, we learned that it isn't about us; it's about God and others as 1 Timothy 6:17,18 says. "Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share."

MISSION TO MALAWI

Wellandport Orthodox Reformed Church (WORC) is working with Word and Deed to build up the churches of Malawi. The Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (CCAP) is a large federation of 124 churches each with a dozen or more preaching stations. One quarter of the churches have no minister and of those that do, the minister cannot adequately cover the dozen or so preaching stations scattered in the area. This leaves the local elders, who are poorly trained, to

do the preaching. This is why the idea of Logos Ministries was born. The purpose is to teach the local leaders Reformed theology in order to deepen their understanding, build up their faith and strengthen the churches there.

The origin of CCAP was the work of the Dutch Reformed Churches of South Africa and other mission work by the Presbyterian Church of Scotland. Logos Ministries is working only in the Nkhoma Synod, the most conservative of the three divisions of CCAP. They wish to continue in the historic reformed faith as expressed in the Three Forms of Unity and the Westminster Confessions. However, they are poorly equipped to counter influence from other churches, sects and Muslims. The individual members of the churches are easily led astray by various teachings and superstitions.

The teaching of the local leaders consists mainly of a travelling tour led by Manuel Kamnkhwani and Martin Thondolo. They arrange a meeting with the leaders of a group of preaching stations and spend several days teaching them theology and supplying meals. This requires visits to many different areas and returning again to teach the next level in a series of lessons. Plans are in the works for a central teaching facility and the hopes and prayers are to establish a seminary. In the meantime, we are planning to set up annual seminars for the ministers there by sending ministers/teachers from North America for several weeks at a time to deepen their knowledge and encourage them.

WORC is looking for ministers or trained teachers to volunteer to spend a few weeks in Malawi, at an arranged seminar, to teach and encourage the ministers there. Our hope is that the volunteers will be funded by their local churches. We also will receive donations or offerings to be set aside for these teaching field trips. Our budget for this year is wholly committed to teaching the local leaders in their native language. The ministers of the churches in Malawi do have formal training and understand English but in a church that seems

to be a mile wide and an inch deep, they are stretched to their limit.

WORC has a position on the Logos Ministries board but the distance limits full personal interaction. Modern communications help to keep the information flowing while Word and Deed is also involved in the operations and monitoring of the results in a more direct way. There are a number of problems and questions in this growing and largely un-chartered mission work but the project is in operation and the local church people are anxious for this teaching to continue and expand.

Our assurance is to trust the power of the gospel to change people's lives through the work of the Holy Spirit as we ourselves have experienced. Wellandport, being a farming community, has the goal is to persevere "until the cows come home".

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HIGH DESERT URC LAS VEGAS, NEVADA

On Friday, March 7th, our church, High Desert United Reformed Church, began a Bible study in Las Vegas, NV. One of the elders and I, or others from the church, travel about three hours each way each Friday. On the average, we've seen seven

adults attend each week. In addition, there is a family moving to Las Vegas this summer who have been praying for a URC in Las Vegas.

The commitment of those in the Bible study seems solid. It is the duty of the council, however, to determine if a church plant is feasible at this time. To the minds of the council members, feasibility is based on numbers, giving and potential for numerical growth. It may be feasible to begin a church plant with eight families who are committed to giving generously. There is certainly tremendous potential for numerical growth in a metropolis of 2 million people. Therefore, with this in mind, we will ask the members of the Bible study if they are willing to commit to a church plant. In addition, we will ask them to commit to giving generously to the plant.

One option we are exploring currently is beginning a Sunday evening worship service this summer. The purpose would be to determine the level of interest among those attending the Bible study as well as seeking others in the city who would be interested in a church plant. If there was enough interest, we could then call a church planter. To make this happen we'd certainly need financial help from other churches in the URC.

This project is taking an enormous amount of work. But we are committed to it as Christ has made His commission to the church clear: "Make disciples of all nations."

In a city with a population of 2 million and only a tiny Reformed witness, our responsibility is clear. We would covet your prayers as we seek God's will in this matter.

Rev. Tom Morrison,
High Desert United Reformed Church

CLASSIS MICHIGAN MISSIONS COMMITTEE REPORT

A spring missions rally will be held at the Trinity United Reformed Church 7350 Kalamazoo Ave S.E. Caledonia MI at 7 pm on Thursday May 15. Rev. Eric Penning will be our speaker and there will be an update on the construction of a Christian School in Costa Rica.

Our Committee wishes to remind all of our congregations to check out the Classis Michigan Missions Web-page for missionary reports, work team activities, and a calendar listing the groups, location of the activity, and dates that teams will be involved in work projects. The web site is <http://missionsurc.org>. It can also be 'googled' by entering URC missions.

We invite all the URC churches and URC missionaries to use this website to keep our churches informed of their mission activities. If you have a work project scheduled, and if the team could use additional help, let us know, and it will be posted. Please e-mail your information to pastorvm@sbcglobal.net or donvandyke@tm.net.

THE PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND CHURCH PLANT

Some church plants are planned and organized by established congregations as an evangelistic activity in a neighbouring community. Other church plants arise spontaneously. The church plant in Prince Edward Island is among the latter. How did it come about? First a little on PEI. The island of PEI, just over 2,000 sq mi in size and largely agricultural, lies in the Gulf of St. Lawrence on Canada's east coast. The native Mikmaq Indians knew it as Abegweit meaning, land cradled in the waves, but it is now home to a population of about 130,000 people mostly of European extraction. While many born islanders seek work and adventure off island, new people move to PEI on a regular basis for a variety of reasons. Some have come to take advantage of the splendid farming opportunities; others have come for specific

jobs or through job transfers. For those that love the pastoral countryside and family oriented living, it's the place to be. However, in recent years a few families became increasingly dissatisfied and concerned with their church situation. Not that there is a lack of churches on the island. PEI, in fact, is sprinkled with picturesque churches of another era, when the love for the Christian faith was more universal in our country than it is today. The concerned families hungered for a church that still believed the truths of the Protestant reformation and worshipped according to the continental reformed tradition. So many of the churches had begun to adopt elements of so-called contemporary worship and not only watered down their teachings but also failed to preach and teach consistently the reformed faith of sin, salvation, and service.

In 2006 two families seriously started thinking that starting a new church might be the best option. Two families became three, than four, but how many would we need to start a church? The number ten seemed a reasonable choice, but would there be ten families interested in a new reformed church in PEI? For many months we talked, and prayed, and thought, and consulted - but ten families seemed unattainable. There was one thing we needed to do, however, and that was to go to Scripture. For what had God said? Where two or three are gathered in my name there I will be! Who says we need ten families? Two or three families are all we need! And already four families had committed to a new church, and soon there were five. Praise God for his blessings!

Our first service was held on January 14, 2007. Having decided that the United Reformed Church of North America would be the denomination that would best fit our people, our situation, and our future, we contacted the nearest URC church in Canada. This was the Ebenezer Orthodox Reformed Church in Brockville, Ontario where Rev. John Roke is pastor. Rev. Roke and his small church enthusiastically supported our effort making it possible for Rev. Roke to lead our services for the first two Sundays. How exciting those first Sundays were! With renewed energy we sought to worship God on Sunday after Sunday, and what a blessing it was to hear true preaching of the true gospel from the pulpit. Not only did Brockville embrace us with enthusiasm, all the churches in the southern Ontario Classis prayed for us, and encouraged us, and kindly loaned us their pastor for a Sunday or two. The fact

that we are some 1800 km from southern Ontario is a small thing, except of course when inclement weather causes flight delays or cancellations. Distance has brought challenges, but none that have been insurmountable.

The PEI fellowship has now been organized as a church plant for a little more than a year...and God's blessings have been great. Through classical arrangements, the PEI fellowship was placed under the supervision of Trinity Orthodox Reformed Church pastored by Rev. Al Bezuyen. Under their oversight, office-bearers, two elders and one deacon, were selected and installed, and the Lord's Supper was celebrated. Now, thanks to the generous support of the churches in the Classis, Trinity church is working with the PEI church plant to call a man to minister in PEI. Meanwhile ministers still come to PEI to preach the Word, and when none are available for a Sunday, a sermon is read by one of the men of the congregation. In the meantime, too, another family has joined and also regular visitors suggest that our numbers may even grow again. During the summer months the numbers at our worship services swelled to over 70 faithful believers. They came from all over Canada to worship with us and encourage us. Visiting vacationers represented all Canadian provinces except for Quebec and Newfoundland/Labrador, and they came from the US, Netherlands, and Australia. Truly the fellowship in PEI is well connected to God's people in other places.

There is no doubt that being a small church fellowship brings special challenges. We need to coordinate our time off-island to ensure there are enough souls for a worship service. Some had to be challenged to take a turn at leading worship services,

others needed to be challenged to improve their piano playing skills to accompany the singing. But it has all come together, and we have grown wonderfully, perhaps not so much as we would have liked in actual numbers, but rather in knowledge and faithfulness and blessings. Our fellowship has grown in togetherness. Coffee and sweets have become a staple of our fellowship time after every Sunday morning service; unless of course it's the date for a fellowship potluck lunch. Also, we have a Congregational Bible Study, a Women's Bible Study and a Men's Bible Study, the latter with some men from the local Christian Reformed Church. Also, on Sundays after the first service there are two classes, pre-catechism and catechism for the two age-appropriate groups. We also had a pre-confession class mid-week, but this, praise be to God, came to an end when the two young men of the class publicly professed their faith. Being a small church brings challenges, but the blessings are great. No one is left on the sidelines; all are embraced in the local family of God as we rejoice week by week in joyful fellowship.

Looking back, on the one hand, we ask the question: What were we thinking when we started? It didn't make a whole lot of sense to start with so few families and without a plan, other than wishing to be a faithful church. In retrospect, without the enthusiastic support of other churches, where would we be now? Yet, on the other hand, we ask: What took us so long to have the courage to get started? Ultimately, of course, it was God's leading and blessing. Thanks be to God; we seek His continued nearness and blessing.

Solke H. De Boer

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