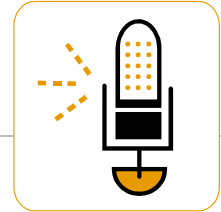


Mission Maceió



September 2009

Some Brazilian churches defend the idea that evangelism work in Brazil should be done by Brazilians, with Brazilian evangelists and ministers on the frontline. The foreign missionaries should train them.



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Dear Brothers and Sisters,

This Newsletter will cover the activities of the last few months on the mission field in Brazil. In Brazil, the ecclesiastical season continues in July and August, while in Canada the holiday season starts. That's also the main reason that we don't send a Mission Maceió Newsletter in that period.

If I look back then I should start with the profession of faith of **Aline Kadja Gonçalves dos Santos** and **Tânia Gomes de Melo**. Aline came in contact with our church through the Vacation Bible School and continued in the pre-adolescent class that **Christine Plug** taught almost ten years ago. She left the church as an adolescent, because she wanted to see what the world had to offer. Three years later she came back – a lot wiser and with the conviction that the church had a lot more to offer than the world around us. She started to study the catechism, got a boyfriend who is a member of our sister church in São José (by coincidence a cousin of my wife) and now she came to the point that she could do her profession of faith after being baptized. That was an impressive moment also for her mother Maria, who also became a congregada of our church one year ago.



Tânia Gomes de Melo came in contact with our reformed church via her sister, who happens to be my wife. She grew up in São José da Coroa Grande and received catechism lessons in São José. Three years ago she came to Maceió to continue her studies at the university, and in the meantime became congregada in our church in Maceió. That was not an easy time for her, because being the sister-in-law of the pastor people might think that it is an easy way to become a member. She had to prove that her faith was genuine and that she was not just joining the church because she lived under our roof. That's why it is good that not only the minister decides if a congregada is ready to become a member, but also the members of the training group, and finally such a decision will also receive the approval of the congregation.

So, in July we reached our highest membership numbers ever: 36 communicant

members. But it was just a brief moment, because a few weeks after that **pastor Flavio** and his family left our congregation and went to São José da Coroa Grande. His period as an evangelist would stop in August and the church of Recife (that exercises supervision over São José) asked him to help them out, now that the minister of São José (pastor Alexandrino) was sent to Curitiba to help the congregation of Colombo. **Pastor Alexandrino** will be there for six months and during that period Pastor Flavio will preach in São José and do the bible studies. We hope and pray that the Lord will bless his work and that it may become an opportunity to come back as an active minister in our confederation. He will have the opportunity to show that he has recovered from his 'burn-out' and that he is able to work again as a minister of the word.

The other side of the coin is that Maceió is now without an evangelist. Last night we had a meeting about it and it will not be easy to find another evangelist. It depends on the financial support we receive and it also depends also on the availability. We managed to take over the projects of pastor Flavio, but it will not be easy, because all participants of the training group are very busy with their work and their duties in the church. As a matter of fact it will have some consequences for the evangelism work in Medeiros Neto and Salvador Lira.

The work in Salvador Lira was already difficult because we felt the lack of a preaching point of our own that would function as a centre where we could have our worship services and bible studies and that people might identify as a reformed preaching point. We started some years ago in Salvador and during those years we had to switch from one place to another, mainly because the owners of the houses wanted their house back and so stopped renting them. Now we are back again in the back yard of our brother **Henrique**, where the 22 members of Salvador Lira have their worship services on the Sunday evening. That situation will probably continue for some years, considering the fact that the church of Maceió don't want to rent another building anymore. It's very frustrating to start a new preaching point, prepare it for worship, paint it and give it an identity and then after some months you have to get out of the building again. That's a waste of money and energy and it also gives the church a bad image in the neighborhood. At the moment there is no money to buy a building, so we will have to save our nickels and dimes and wait for a better future. But for now, we may conclude that the work of expansion and evangelism in the areas of Medeiros Neto and Salvador Lira have come to their end.

We may also ask ourselves **what will be the future of the mission work in Brazil?** Some Brazilian churches defend the idea that evangelism work in Brazil should be done by Brazilians, with Brazilian evangelists and ministers on the frontline. The foreign missionaries should train them. In connection with this, the churches came together in an extraordinary Synod at the end of July to discuss the matter of theological education. The IRB churches need evangelists and ministers, so we can expand the work of mission in Brazil, but then we also need a theological seminary to train these men. The Synod of Unai (2006) appointed a committee for theological Education (CET) and they came with a report in which three options were investigated. The first option was a theological seminary of the Reformed Churches itself, but it was quite clear that the Igrejas Reformadas do Brazil don't have the resources to start their own theological seminary. The CET also investigated the seminaries of the IPB and came to the conclusion that there are some good reformed seminaries available but they are far away. It would cost a lot of money to send a student to an IPB seminary, and the more students we will have the more it will cost. And then it might even be better to have a study centre of our own. Finally the CET investigated the possibility of asking for the help of our sister churches in Canada. Finally the Synod approved a proposal to ask the church of Surrey if they are willing to set up a theological study centre in Recife with the help of C3 and the Canadian missionaries that work in the North east of Brazil. That proposal was accepted and will probably be a topic for the coming months on the agenda of the mission boards of Surrey and Hamilton.

Here in Maceió we are heading forward to institution, but first we have to analyze the situation of the school, which is currently under the supervision of the church. I wrote an article about that situation in March this year and it should have been published by now in Clarion. In any case, we are busy analyzing the situation and if necessary we will have to reorganize it so that we can continue and institute the office bearers.

There is a lot more to tell, but I also have to finish my financial report to BOM and my monthly detailed report to BOM. The rest will have to wait till next month. We wish you all the best: May the Lord guide you and strengthen you. May He bless you all!

Rev. Abram de Graaf