



# Mission News

Mission Activities of the Canadian Reformed Churches

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## Hamilton Mission Aid Brazil

### What is Needed to Educate Well?

According to the laws here in Brazil, education has the goal of the “development of the entire student, preparing them for citizenship and giving them the necessary qualifications for work.” As a Christian school, we would like to see “citizenship” changed to “earthly and heavenly citizenship,” but nevertheless, this is an excellent definition of our task as teachers.

Here in Brazil, both the public and private education systems use this goal as the basis for their plans and activities throughout the year. In the case of the public system, the discussion always centers on topics such as how to get money to build more schools, or about how to increase the teacher’s professional qualifications, or even such mundane topics as the composition of the school lunch. On the other hand, the private system (which needs to keep their “clients” – the parents – satisfied) invests heavily in physical structure, supporting materials, famous teaching methodologies, technology, and advertising.



Private schools advertise heavily on radio stations, TV, newspapers, billboards, and magazines so that they are well-known, although their fame is due more to what they *have* than what they *are*.

Looking at these two education models, we can begin to find answers to an important question that we as staff of a Christian school strive to answer: What is really needed to educate children well?

Looking at this question in a basic way, a school needs staff and it needs a physical structure. That is to say, the school needs a building to house the students and it also needs teachers, a principal, a coordinator, a secretary, and cleaning people. The majority of the people involved in education just pay attention to these two aspects: staff and structure. Often, they aren’t aware of the other things that each subject requires, thinking that Mathematics requires just a pencil and eraser, Portuguese just requires a good grammar and a dictionary, and Physical Education...well, we are in soccer country, so,





gimme a ball and we can play here in this very room. But, is it really as simple as that? This is where we see the difference between a school (with a small letter) and a School (with a capital letter). While the school seeks to meet the interests of the client-parents, the School seeks to meet the goal of providing an education. While the school concerns itself with pencil, rubber, grammar and ball, the School concerns itself with a search for something better to accomplish its task.

In our country, we are at a time where students do not hold studying and schooling in very high regard. Of course, this makes teaching a very difficult task, where the teachers have to redouble their efforts so that the students will be interested in the lessons. When you consider that some schools even lack basic material such as Bristol board, marker for white boards, erasers, and so on, the process of teaching then becomes even that much more difficult.

We can conclude then that if a school is to educate well, it needs several things: a good physical structure, where the students can be comfortable; it needs qualified and responsible workers; but it also needs didactic material that will be stimulating and will encourage learning. We constantly seek to raise our educational standards by obtaining more material, but at the same time, we have to be very careful in how we use our budget. Supporting materials are very expensive and we cannot always afford to buy the materials that we need. For this reason, each donation of materials or educational toys has a very large impact on our work.

Keeping this reality in mind, we can easily see the importance of the support that we have received (and continue to receive) from our brothers and sisters abroad. We want to be a School; the donations we have received are making the difference for our students. We have already received a lot of gifts from school children and churches in Canada, including educational toys, pencils, paint, colored paper, and many more gifts. All of these materials are very

important to our staff and students. But recently, we received a very special gift, a gift which even some schools larger than us don't have. We received as a gift a skeleton of the human body. This is something that it would not be possible for us to obtain with our resources, but thanks to this donation, we have greatly enriched our stock of support material. Now the science lessons are more relevant and interesting and it is easier to learn about the human body.

We held a challenge with the students, asking them to choose a name for the skeleton. The name that was chosen was Mr. Madruga (Mr. Daybreak). He is a comedic character who the students identified with the skeleton.

We are very grateful to the brothers and sisters from Attercliffe Canadian Reformed Elementary School for this donation. With this donation they are contributing to the enrichment of the knowledge of our students. There are few children who have access to this kind of material in Brazil.

We also have a project to build a gymnasium, which will consist of a large covered area (with open sides) behind our school. The gymnasium area will be used for Physical Education classes, for school assemblies, and meetings with the parents. Having this area will be a big benefit to us, because in the rainy season (our version of winter) it rains every day!

We are very grateful for the effort that the brothers and sisters in Canada give to support our school. All of these improvements work towards fulfilling our purpose as a Christian School, which is to not only satisfy the education laws, but especially to teach *the children in the way that they must go*. Thanks be to the Lord for your assistance in this task!

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**The Island of Cyprus**

Cyprus, the easternmost island of the Mediterranean, is encircled by Turkey, Syria, Lebanon, Israel, and Egypt. It is a popular holiday destination for many Europeans, Middle Easterners, and is also a regional business center.

There is much to see and to do. Within walking distance of the John Calvin Center, for instance, is the church which, by tradition, is the final resting place of Lazarus. A bit further on are excavations of Kition, a settlement dating back thousands of years. It was founded by Kittim, the great grandson of Noah (Gen. 10:4). None of this compares, however, with the work of grace that God is doing through the far-reaching ministry of MERF.

Groups from many Muslim lands come and go at regular intervals, receiving biblical instruction, training and a warm welcome from the staff. They represent many nations, each with its own heritage and culture. They include ministers or elders, youth leaders or broadcasters, and many other groupings besides. A significant number are recent converts. Others are seasoned saints.



**A Visit to Cyprus  
Meeting Place of the Nations**

By Rev. Iain Wright



Men and women, young and old, but all are one in Christ—coming to be built up in their faith through in-depth study of God's Word and returning home to further bless the body of Christ in their home communities.

**Counting the Cost**

Relying solely upon their own resources, most could not afford to travel to the John Calvin Center. For some, coming involves a degree of risk to personal safety. But they come anyway. Take a recent group

from a very closed Middle Eastern country. They have taken time to come to Cyprus in order to train as broadcasters so that they might share the good news of Jesus Christ with others who speak the same language.

Here is one in whom the grace of God shines brightly. One hesitates to speak of this one except in the vaguest of terms, for fear of betraying the person's identity—even gender. For that saint, martyrdom is not the preserve of the history books or of some exotic, far-off location. This is a saint who knows what it is to lose a family member for no other

< Pastor Iain Wright of Scotland, now ministering in Illinois, USA, teaching at MERF's John Calvin Center through a translator

reason than love for Christ.

Here is another saint with a wonderful command of English, making conversation flow. This saint speaks of the work of translating Christian books into the local language. Of course, the police have taken an interest in the home country. They have told the saint to stop. But the saint continues. It is God's calling. Let God protect.

Here is another saint. She does not seem to have quite the same joy as the others, but there is a reason. She has been converted out of a strongly Muslim family. Her parents are forcing her to marry a young Muslim man of their choice. If she does not, her brothers will kill her.

The stories continue. With each, the realization grows that the cost of serving Christ in many countries of the world cannot be mea-

*"Now it shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the LORD's house shall be established on the top of the mountains... and peoples shall flow to it."—Micah 4:1*



The solemn and joyous baptism of converts



*Singing a psalm in Arabic*

sured in dollars, in pounds, or in euros. But group after group arrive, study Scripture, learn skills, and return to their own countries to work for Christ and His kingdom.

### **The New Humanity at Worship**

With such worshipers, it is little wonder that the services on the Lord's Day are a particular delight. We eagerly anticipate the new heavens and the new earth when people from every nation, tribe, language, and people will, with one heart and voice, praise our God. Here on this small island at the eastern end of the Mediterranean, a glimpse of the new humanity is granted for those who have eyes to see. The local congregation is made up of natives of the Middle East, Asia, Africa, former communist countries of Eastern Europe, and the West. Men, women, and children from the palest white to the darkest black, and many shades between, all join together weekly to lift their voices in

praise to the God who has loved them and saved them. To join with the brethren draws praise to our God for His grace and mercy.

Then one of the more numerous groups within the assembly sings a psalm in their own tongue. For most of us, not one word is intelligible. Yet here are brothers and sisters in the Lord who so evidently love Christ. Moreover, they come from a country known in Christendom for its darkness and oppression, but not even there can the forces of spiritual opposition hold in check the advance of the Kingdom of God. Then another language group sings out their praise for God, in confirmation that our gracious God is not to be bound either by men or by devils.

And, as though God would show that there is no end either to His grace or His power, here are two men, brought up in the darkness of Islam, who have come to know and trust Jesus Christ.

*"Many nations shall come and say, 'Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways... we shall walk in His paths...'" —Micah 4:2*

They kneel at the baptismal font and, before the assembly of the saints and in the sight of heaven, confess Christ as Lord. The work of the Kingdom advances, and it is a joy as well as a privilege of the saints to be a part of it.

### **Prayer Items:**

◆ Give thanks for the growth of the believing community in Iran. Pray for the Lord's protection of those engaged in one-to-one discipleship of young converts.

◆ Give thanks for the impact of the Gospel messages aired to Amharic, Oromo, Somali, Dinka, Nuer, and Arabic-speaking people in Ethiopia, Somalia, Sudan, and Eritrea.

Remember the broadcast teams based in Addis Ababa, Khartoum, and Lokichoggio (northern Kenya).

◆ Give thanks for the generous response to the needs of Iraqi Christians. Continue to pray for a speedy end to their sufferings and for their testimony to other Iraqis.

◆ Give thanks for the faithful Gospel work being done by local workers in Lahore, Pakistan. Pray for the training and preparations needed for the Urdu broadcasts.

◆ Give thanks for the work of the Lebanon Reformed Fellowship (LRF). Pray for security and peace in the country for the sake of the church and the gospel.

### **From MERF-Canada**

This newsletter features a report about a visit to Cyprus. Later this month, the Lord willing, Rev. J. DeGelder and Br. W. Horsman will also be heading to Cyprus, on behalf of MERF-Canada, to attend the annual International Council meeting of MERF in Larnaca. As well, Rev. J. De Gelder as a MERF director will attend the meeting of the Board of Directors to be held prior to the International Council meeting.

In December Dr. A. J. De Visser and Dr. C. Van Dam are scheduled to give lectures at the annual pastors' conference in Khartoum, Sudan. May the Lord bless these meetings and lectures so that they may serve to strengthen the Reformed faith in the Muslim world. We join Pastor I. Wright in saying that it is a joy and a privilege to be part of the Lord's Kingdom work.

We would like to thank you for your financial contributions which continue to come in faithfully. Please continue to also remember the work of MERF in your prayers—especially remember those in very difficult circumstances.

**Looking for a topic for a congregational meeting?** If you are located in the vicinity of Burlington, ON. one of our committee members is willing to make a presentation. Give Rev. DeGelder a call (905 690 0253).

Yours in Christ's service,  
Rev. J. De Gelder, *chairman*; Mrs. J. VanDam, *secretary*