



Mission News

Mission Activities of the Canadian Reformed Churches

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Mission Aid Brazil – Cloverdale

Mission Aid Brazil introduces Chris Boersema and his work

Mission Aid Worker

Mission Aid Brazil (MAB) hired Chris Boersema in the spring of 2011 to work on the mission field in Brazil. This decision was made after frequent discussions with the missionaries, Rev. K. Wieske and Rev. J. Vanspronsen, who felt that they were overwhelmed by the workload and badly needed support and practical help. MAB also felt that our work would benefit greatly with eyes and ears in the local areas of Brazil where we are active, our goal being to work in a God-pleasing manner, and of benefit to the fellowship of believers in Brazil. Yet, we must also work in a stewardly manner, since MAB is not funded by assessment, but wholly funded by donations from churches, businesses and individuals. It was felt that a Mission Aid Worker would help accomplish all those goals.



The IRB Synod

The rapid growth of the Reformed Church in Brazil is a great blessing, but the need for guidance, teaching, leadership, and training is very crucial in order for the fledgling churches to mature. Chris Boersema is taking on the role of facilitator, helping many of these things to come about. He brings much experience to the role he is playing, having served as elder and on a mission committee in the church they attended in Philadelphia. He was raised in Brazil, and his wife Thecia was born and raised there, so the cultural and language hurdles have been easy to overcome. The Boersemas have two young sons Miguel and Marten, and by the time you read this, they hope to have been blessed with the birth of a healthy third child.

Chris Boersema

Chris has written the following article, outlining their first impressions of the churches and the work, mostly in the Recife area, but also in other parts of Brazil. Read about the challenges that the new churches face, and see the work through the eyes of Chris and Thecia. May God bless their work!

"Let us praise the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who according to his great mercy regenerated us to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, for an incorruptible, unspotted and unfading inheritance that has been kept in the heavens for you who are guarded by God's power through faith for a salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time." (1 Peter 1:3-5)

Greetings from Aldéia, PE, Brazil! This is Chris Boersema, working for the Kingdom of our Saviour Jesus Christ, through Mission Aid Brazil. It has been seven months now since we moved to Brazil in May of this year. After a few months of settling in and finding a house to make home, I am getting more and more into a variety of aspects of the work here. Despite having grown up on this mission field, I have only visited for weeks at a time for the past sixteen years. So now I am going through a period of learning, getting reacquainted, and reading of the great changes that have been happening in the Igrejas Reformadas do Brasil (IRB) in the last several years.



Chris with staff of Guido deBres School

Changes

The work of Mission Aid has also changed a lot over the years. Since the beginning of this work in 1972, the focus of our efforts has often been shifting due to the changes in the needs of the people here and the development of the country itself. Brazil has become a powerful emerging market in the global financial world. This has also led to many more government programs and resources for the benefit of even the poorest in society. So what is there for Mission Aid to do?

In 2000 the IRB was organized and established as its own federation. They have come a long way since then. Many new congregations have been established. Even entire local churches of other denominations have joined the federation. Deacons, elders, and pastors have been trained continuously and many men have been ordained. There has also been significant growth in numbers coming from other denominational backgrounds to the Reformed faith. This all means we have a fairly new federation of churches, newly ordained leaders, and many newly converted Christians. This is all truly very exciting, but few in the church here could be considered mature in their faith, and understanding of the many aspects of Christian life that you have become so used to after decades of maturing of the Canadian Reformed Churches. They are and should be asking many questions. What does my Christian faith look like in my daily life in the community and at work? What is Christian education? What is church order? What is church discipline? What does a deacon do? Why does the pastor not run the church? What is a Christian woman's roll? What are the confessions? What are my God given gifts and how can I use them for Christ's church? There are clearly many more questions.

The missionaries of Surrey Maranatha Mission have for years been working with the churches here on these and many other similar topics. Mission Aid has generally focused on the deed aspect of the needs of the church and community. The greatest need right now, as we fully look to support the work of the Maranatha Mission is to help in various ways in educating, training, and supporting our brothers and sisters here as they work toward becoming a strong mature church of Jesus Christ.

So to speak more specifically of how Mission Aid Brazil is involved in the work and what we currently do here I will let another board member conclude. Please pray for the churches here as they mature and continue to grow spiritually and in numbers." [end Chris Boersema]

Priorities

What is Mission Aid Brazil most active in now? What are Chris's most important priorities at this time?

- Helping the church members to realize the importance of, and embrace Christian education as a priority. The words of Pastor Adriano of Recife state this so clearly: "The members of the church need to first know their duty in the education of their children. It all starts at home." Pastor Adriano also mentioned making this the topic of consistory home visits for next year. Escola Biblica Crista in Sao Jose continues to run smoothly, and the members



Thecia Boersema and her mother Bete admiring Science Fair at Escola Biblica

there are taking more and more financial responsibilities off of MAB. Guido de Bres School in Recife is struggling to find the strong basis they need in order to operate well. Please pray that the needed leadership will emerge and that this school can stabilize and grow.

- Developing and assisting the work of CLIRE; (Centro de Literatura Reformada, a.k.a. the Reformed Reading Room). Many lectures, seminars, and workshops are presented here, and it is an invaluable tool for increasing the presence of the Reformed Church in Recife and spreading of Reformed literature.
- Supporting the work of the deacons in the local churches. MAB does not want to take work away from the deacons, nor do their work in their place, but does give assistance where needed, not instead of them but through them. Chris is seeking to be actively involved, giving guidance to those who are new to the office of deacon. A training seminar may be coming up in the near future.
- Helping the Brazilian federation of churches, the IRB, to grow and mature. Chris attended the latest synod which just took place, there as an observer and always supportive.
- Maintenance and further development of the Aldeia Training Center (ATC) property. Many activities of the IRB take place on this property, for men, women, youth, children, and families. Chris is helping to steer that development, be it in new structures, or better use of the existing ones. At this time, theological training is taking place there, and several seminarians and their families are staying at the ATC while studying.
- The Golden Years Project, started some years ago by church members in Maragogi, continues to bring care, socializing and the gospel to seniors.
- Reaching out to the un-churched and/or the illiterate.
- Keeping the home front and the supporting churches informed.

Chris has a Facebook page (two actually), one in English and one in Portuguese which you might like to peruse to keep you abreast of his activities: <http://www.facebook.com/groups/205949099476955/229084580496740/>

The missionaries, Rev. Ken Wieske and Rev. Julius VanSpronsen, also are on Facebook. Check out their activities: <http://www.facebook.com/groups/maranathamission/>

Let me close this with a quote from Rev. Ken Wieske (posted on Facebook):

"It is a great blessing to have Chris Boersema working alongside us missionaries. There are so many important things that we were doing poorly, or not doing at all, because of work overload. Having a Mission Aid worker on the field is proving to be a huge blessing and we're thankful that the man God has sent is putting his heart and soul into the mission. Please keep him and his family in your prayers!"



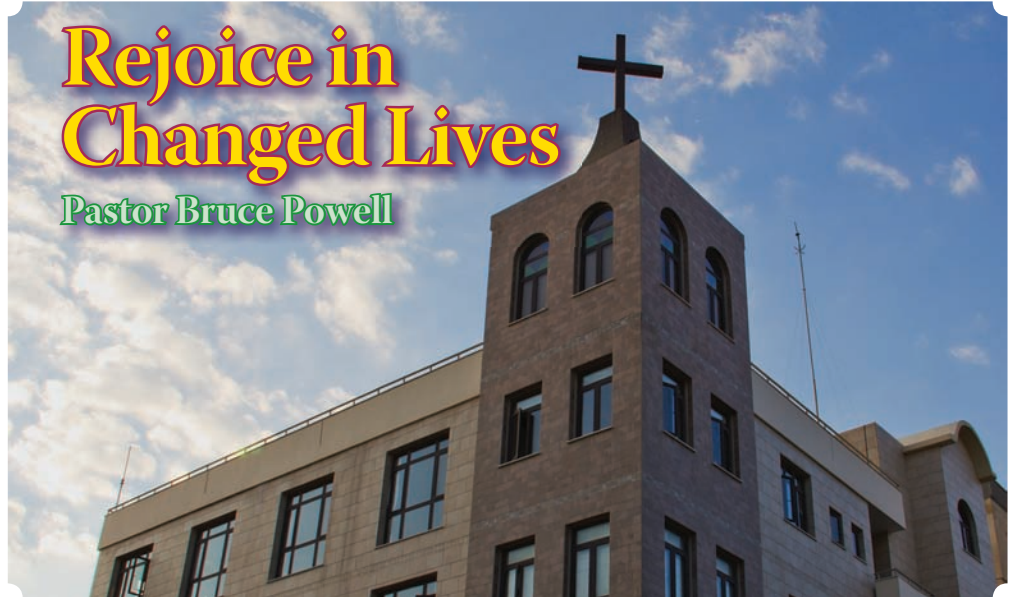
MERF’s International Council met in November for praise and prayer—a highlight of the year. Lebanese Pastor Samuel Kharrat’s opening devotions stated that MERF is an agent of change—changed lives. It brought to mind the moving Sunday evening service when several Iranians were baptized before returning to Iran, declaring that they were willing to die for the Lord Jesus Christ.

We thank God for the creative, prayerful, and sacrificial service of MERF support volunteers in many countries, which enable gifts to go directly into ministry with very little administrative expense. The following Field Reports tell of “changed lives”:

In **Sudan** and **South Sudan**, MERF supports about 900 pastors and evangelists and carries out broadcasting, prison ministries, literature distribution, and biblical training.

Rejoice in Changed Lives

Pastor Bruce Powell



New churches are planted as lives are changed. Just over the border from South Sudan in Lokichoggio, **Kenya**, the MERF Center has trained over 700 pastors, evangelists, and elders since its opening in 2003.

A new MERF Center in Addis Ababa, **Ethiopia**, is almost finished. It will house gospel radio work,

a medical clinic, one of the congregations of the Reformed Church of Ethiopia, and biblical training for many from various denominations. The radio ministry serves Amharic, Oromo, and Somali speakers. Special radio programs encourage the reformation movement growing in the Ethiopian Orthodox Church.

In **Pakistan**, MERF serves in partnership with Westminster Biblical Missions, helping the Bible-Believing Lahore Church Council, founded in slum areas. The Lahore seminary trains men as church planters, and two medical clinics serve the needy in their neighborhoods. Sermon and Bible study DVDs are aired on cable TV in Lahore,

Faisalabad, Islamabad, and Gojra. About 4,300 families tune in regularly to the messages.

Over 2,000 attend Bible conferences every fall, and five Calvin Academies serve a total of 2,400 students. In each of 31 Adult Literacy Centers, from 15 to 25 people are learning to read the Word of God. Girls in the Sewing Class Project receive a sewing machine to teach their mothers and sisters at home and to generate income.



Top to bottom: MERF's headquarters John Calvin Center, Larnaca, Cyprus; Pastor Bruce Powell, Chairman of MERF England/Wales (left) with Pastor George Awad of Bethlehem

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.”

—2 Corinthians 5:17



In **Indonesia**, the Allamahabab (“God is love”) Foundation serves on the islands of Java and Sulawesi. Gospel radio is broadcast in five local languages, and projects are carried out in evangelism, biblical training, children’s ministry, and diaconal agricultural aid.

The Makassar Training Center is newly built, and land was acquired to build a training center in Java as well. Officially, the 240 million Indonesians are 86 percent Muslim and 11 percent Christian, but some estimate that over 25 percent profess Christ.

In the midst of insecurity and serious difficulties, the work of the Gospel continues to prosper. Conversions to Christ abound in **Algeria** and **Chad**. In **Eritrea**, the tiny Reformed church is growing. In Aleppo, **Syria**, political events kept summer camps closed, but special youth activities resulted in an increase in Sunday School attendance. In **Egypt**, churches are being planted in four new areas, and the recent unrest there has caused churches to be more united and more actively prayerful and the

youth to be more involved in service.

Sadly, **Iraq’s** Baghdad congregation had to close its medical clinic, but services and activities continue there and in Kirkuk and Basra. In **Iran**, 4,000 Gospels were distributed in the past few months, leading to growing fellowship groups. Baraka Church in Bethlehem, **Palestine** celebrated its 60th anniversary, and three families joined last year; more workers are needed.

Christians still enjoy freedom in **Lebanon**; churches are planted and there are regular conversions. The Lebanon Reformed Fellowship focuses on gospel broadcasting and coun-

seling.

MERF’s **Arabic Gospel Broadcasts** are prepared in Beirut and Cairo with a special emphasis on appealing to Muslim young people. These daily half-hour radio programs extend to the whole of the Middle East and North Africa. The engaging, youth-centered **Arabic website** receives almost 5,000 visits per month, and workers follow up all enquirers.

The International Council closed with a bold reminder from the general director that Islam serves the Kingdom of God. God is sovereign, and all over the world He is changing lives and building His Church. To Him be all the glory and the praise!

Top to bottom: Public profession of faith before baptism; Elder Poniman of Jakarta and Pastor Arimn of Makassar singing in Indonesian; Pastor David Wat manages MERF’s Loki compound and broadcasts to his Nuer people in South Sudan.



MERF-Canada

Thank you from the heart for your faithful support. Please make cheques payable to MERF-Canada and send them to the address at the bottom of the page.

Yours in Christ’s service,
 Rev. J. DeGelder, *chairman*
 Joanne VanDam, *secretary*
 Aafke Spithoff, *treasurer*