

REPORT FOR NOVEMBER 2007

December 3, 2007

Dear brethren,

I trust you are well, as we are. I've been fighting a sore throat and chest congestion most of the week, but I was able to preach yesterday. It is sunny this morning, about 82 degrees—it has rained almost every day since mid-October and the rainy season should be ending. We passed Hurricane Thanksgiving Day (Nov. 17th) so for me hurricane season 2007 is officially over.

I don't know if you heard about the 7.4 earthquake off the coast of Dominica, but as far as I know the brethren are all okay. I spoke to Elkin Vigilant, who preaches in La Plaine and Francis Graneau, who does the preaching in Vielle Case and there was no damage in either place—some things fell off the grocery store shelves in La Plaine, but that was about it.

November was a busy month—two of our kids were here the week of Thanksgiving, so we had an extra 6 people. We were glad to have them here.

We began the month with the arrival of Jose & Sara Coronado and their 3 year old. They arrived on the 5th, so from the 6th-8th Jose, Ed, and I passed out tracts in the area around the church building. We passed out over 500 tracts but had only 20 or so discussions. Our main purpose was to let people in the neighborhood know we're back and working again. It has been close to 30 years since the church had a full-time preacher and so has been almost that long since anyone was out door knocking. The week was culminated with a 3 day Gospel meeting preached by Jose—Friday & Saturday night, then the regular service on Sunday. The attendance was 15 on Friday, 10 on Sat. and 6 on Sunday. Sadly, not one of the members of the Spanish speaking church was present until Sunday—we had Joe Carrasquillo, who preaches for the church in Dorado, and his family were present both nights as well as several from the English speaking church on Friday night. We still have a long way to go with these brethren. We are to have a business meeting tonight, so I trust that will be a step forward—it's been at least 2 years since the last one.

While Jose was here we went to visit some brethren who live in Isabella, about 1 ½ hours west, whom he had known in Pa. We got directions and she told us to plan to eat with them. We reached the house and were warmly received by Noemi & Wilfrido, who are members of a liberal church that meets in Aguadilla. They're in the late 60's I think. Their daughter and son-in-law were also visiting from Orlando, FL and were very cordial as well. We'd been there about 20 minutes and in came another man, the liberal preacher from the other church in Aguadilla, Elmer Dunlap. Elmer is from Texas, but has lived in PR for I think he said 37 years. Within 5 minutes of his arrival Elmer politely, but bluntly, attacked us as "antis" and then went on to debate "anti doctrine" with us. Our hosts were rather embarrassed but Elmer just went right on. We were called for the meal and the discussion ended until we had finished, when we picked up again. We finally got around to "what the individual can do, the church can do" and Elmer's position on 1 Tim. 5:16 (if any believer has widows, let him relieve them, let not the church be charged) was that in this exception the church COULD NOT help this widow. When asked then if Sister X could take a pie to this widow, or Brother Y could mow her lawn, he had to reply no—that would be a sin (according to him, even as individuals they make up the church, so this would be the "church" helping her). Julio, the son-in-law, took great pains not to participate in the discussion but had to respond to this "doctrine"

I knew we would come into confrontation with either Elmer, or Dwayne Shapley (the "head" missionary, who lives in Bayamon, where we live) at some point, but had hoped it would be later. So now the words is out that there are "antis" loose on the island—we'll see what happens.

Sunday night the 11th Mark Carbon, one our members, took Ed and I to visit the Park Gardens church. They are the only other English speaking group on the island and are liberal—the School of preaching used to be located there. Counting the 3 of us, there were about 15 present that night. The preacher was off island and the man assigned to preach didn't show up, so the only other man present (besides us) taught a class from the parable of the workers in the vineyard (Matt. 20). We left invitations to the Gospel meeting in English that Ed and I were to preach the next weekend. Mark and I were each asked to lead a couple of songs and Ed was asked to lead in prayer.

That Friday night we began our Gospel meeting from the book of Daniel, "The God who . . .". I preached first from Dan. 2, the God who reveals, then Ed preached from Dan. 4, the God who humbles, and I finished on Sun. morning from Dan. 5, the God who judges. Friday night Leroy Smith, the preacher from Park Gardens, and his wife got there in time to catch the last 3 minutes of the sermon. In typical West Indian fashion, they thought we started at 7:30 PM (it was 7 PM) and so arrived at minutes to 8. Sat. night Joe & Jane Bartholomew (the man who taught the class the Sun. before) came. Alfred & Helen Marzan, an older couple we've visited with, tried to find the building Friday night, but couldn't and finally went home frustrated. They are close friends with the parents of a preacher in the States and we seem to have hit it off really well as friends. They will tell you they are "Catholic", but she told Ed she wants to hear both of us preach, so maybe we can spark their interest. Attendance on both nights of this effort was 10-12, with many of our members present both nights. A couple of other contacts promised they would come, but didn't show.

We advertised this Gospel meeting, as well as our study in Revelation in The San Juan Star, the only newspaper published in English for 4 consecutive Sundays. We've not seen any direct results from that. We also bought (2) 30 second spots per day on WOSO, the English radio station, for a month and had a visitor from that yesterday. The owner was a member of the church, so he gave us a really good deal (\$400 a month) so I think we'll probably continue this one—the San Juan Star was more than twice that much and appeared 4 times, not 60 or more. We have also been asked to send information to the chaplain at Ft. Buchanan for their "base" newsletter. Ft. Buchanan is 1-2 miles from the church building and all of those there speak English.

The next Sunday, Ed was so sick he wasn't able to attend services and finally went to the Dr. on Monday. He'd been having trouble with indigestion for awhile, but thought little of it until the vomiting and intense pain he had that Sun. His gall bladder is the problem, so he will be going back home to Texas 10 days earlier than he had planned. He will leave on the 10th and will probably have surgery on the 13th. Please remember him in your prayers. He is eating very carefully and has not had another attack since then, although he had some pain on Thanksgiving night.

Ed and I hauled off 3 pickup loads of trash from the church building last week—it had been there since the early 80's when the preacher left suddenly and was going to "send back" for his stuff. He never did, and it had been there ever since—2 old manual typewriters, film strip projectors, teaching material that was yellowed and brittle. The condition of the church building corresponds completely to the attitude of the members, particularly of the Spanish speaking church—all they're supposed to do is show up on Sunday morning. We also moved half of the pews out of the auditorium, so now there are only 12 pews for 11 people. All but one of the brethren were very happy with the new look and she is getting over it. With the other improvements—new blinds, new paint, floor shine, etc. the building looks like people care now.

Attendance during the month has remained steady—10-11 in English and 6 in Spanish. The brother who works until 2:30 AM on Sunday was present at every service and all but one Sunday came in before or during the sermon—he used to come in after the sermon, so he is making some progress. The Wed. before Thanksgiving we had 18 (our kids) and that Sunday we had 17 (Kristi left on Sat.). Then English speaking church is now supporting both Ed and I each \$100 a month. They seem to really enjoy our study of Revelation on Wed. night, even though it is quick—we're doing the whole book in 6 weeks.

Brethren, once again I thank you for your continued support. We knew it would be slow going at first, and it has been, but things are beginning to turn the right direction. Please continue to mention us in prayer.

Your brother,

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