

DECEMBER 2008 REPORT

December 10, 2008

Dear Brethren,

My prayer is that you are all well, as we are. This is the time of year we look forward to, when the cold fronts make it down to us. It's 73 degrees right now and rained for 45 minutes this morning, so it feels really cold. Daytime highs are in only mid 80's.

The work here continues to progress slowly. Things at Moca have settled down to those who are really interested—around 14 in attendance most Sundays. Carlos & Ramona and Ruben & Maribel are always there. Ruben and Maribel's two daughters are usually there, along with their husband (the older daughter) or boyfriend (the younger one). Darien, the boyfriend has expressed a need to become a Christian and asks very good questions. Jesus and Mirta are another couple who attend and are very interested. They're building a house ½ hour away and Jesus told Ed that he would like to have a mid-week Bible study at his new house, "but I have to become a Christian first." Jesus has read the Bible enough to realize that the denominations he visited were not following it. Ramona's Sister Lucy is always there too and needs your prayers as well. She's got a bad family situation and has also been visiting the 7th day Adventist on Sat., and a Pentecostal church on Sun. morning, so she is really confused. I continue going to Moca every other Sunday, although I was there the last 2 Sundays in Nov, as Ed was off island.

At Caparra things are slowly improving. Attendance at the English church is steady at 13, although with the holidays some have been off island. They're growing spiritually, which is producing changes. Attendance in the Spanish church is more variable—with from 10-20. Sister Carmen brings some of her great grandchildren every Sunday, but not always the same ones. This is good, as they enjoy the class, but they can be very disruptive during the worship service. Part of the problem is that Carmen doesn't even seem to know they're there and others are hesitant to step in. I plan to deal with this problem in class next Sunday and suggest that each child have an "adult" assigned to them and that they all sit separately. I think in their revolt against the ritualism of the Roman Catholic Church brethren here have gone almost to the other extreme and so order and reverence during the services is sometimes a problem.

I was to meet with Araceli, the grown daughter of one of the members here last week, but she forgot. Her son Jeffrey, loves Bible class, loves to sing during services, in short loves "church". Araceli is consistent in her attendance and interested in the teaching. She readily accepted when I asked to talk to her, so please keep her in your prayers. Bobby and his Mother Annie have also been somewhat erratic in their attendance and are in need of prayers—Annie has been losing weight and after a number of medical tests they still can't figure out why, so her strength is not what it should be. Bobby is being backed down on methadone, which is bringing the "normal" problems of bouts of depression, mood swings, etc.

I preached a Gospel meeting in St. Croix the week of the 9th of Nov. which was pleasant—sort of like going home. We lived there 8 years and most of the brethren are people we baptized or helped strengthen. They asked their preacher to leave, so have been without a full-time preacher since July. They had already lost some members before he left so are down to 14-15 now. They needed a boost, which this meeting I believe provided. Ed and I have agreed that one of us will come preach every other Sunday—they pay for our airline ticket and we stay with Alford and Wynant Benjamin. The plan is to fly over Sat. afternoon and return home Mon. morning. All the kids are in the States now—in school or the Armed Forces, which has cut their numbers by 5.

I continue to go almost every Tuesday to teach the class for the liberal church in Ponce, a little less than 2 hours away. They are becoming more active, which is good, and we are making some progress on liberalism. They rejected institutions some years ago through their experience with Prensa La Paz—a printing house run by brethren here on the island. They eat in the church building, but not in the auditorium, but I've heard the Sunday they have a meal planned, attendance at the "worship" will be sparse until it comes time for the Lord's Supper; suddenly 10-15 show up—they've been in the kitchen preparing the food. Could this be one of the many reasons Paul was directed by the Holy Spirit to say, "Do you not have houses to eat and drink in?" I've talked with one couple about this and while they haven't closed the door I don't know that I made much progress so far either. I've been specifically asked to come preach on a Sunday morning, but don't know when I'll be able to do that.

With Ed Rangel, the other preacher here, moving to Moca by Jan. I will not have the backup here. We have discussed that we will continue to cover for each other, but that makes it difficult to preach anywhere else on the island on Sunday. Joel Holt and his wife Anna have made a commitment to move here by July 2009, if the Lord wills. Joel is just beginning to seek support and I believe him to not only be worthy of support, but believe he would be a great asset to the work here. If you are interested in helping with his support his contact info is below:

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As for my travel next year, I obviously will not be able to travel as much and my thoughts are to do more Sunday afternoon-Sat. trips to the other islands, being gone from Caparra only on Wed. I need to go to the Dominican Republic in Jan—some opportunities have recently opened and we need to take advantage of this window before it closes and my plan is to leave around 3:30 PM on Sunday then return Sat. morning.

We will make a whirlwind tour at the end of the month to see our kids and grandkids—we leave here the 24th for Atlanta to see Kristi, then on to KY to see Paxe and his family Christmas day to drive to FL to see Kai and his family on that Monday to fly out of Atlanta again on New Year's day. We also plan to be in FL in Feb. for the FC Lectures and spend a weekend each with the Honeysuckle Rd. church in Dothan, AL and Perry Hill Rd. church in Montgomery. We need to go to Texas to see churches there and visit our parents, but that will have to wait until later in the year.

Our support remains the same, for which we are grateful to our Heavenly Father and you. Please continue to remember us in your prayers. We have Elkin and Yvonne Vigilant visiting with us for a few days, on their way home to Dominica, where he preaches. Please remember them in prayer as they travel the last 600 miles on Friday.

Your brother,
Tol Burk