

Venezuela

By Brother Bryan Griffith

Brothers Don Ross, Frank Palacios, and Bryan Griffith made a recent trip to Venezuela, November 2007. The purpose of the trip was to meet with the four current members in Maracaibo, further evangelize in the city and surrounding towns, and to introduce the Resident Elders of the sister Church in Valle Guanape to the Saints in Maracaibo. The time spent included evangelism, leadership and ministerial training, Thank God we were successful in coming together for the first union of both church locations in the country of Venezuela.

We were thankful for the accomplishments during this trip. We went to one location and met with relatives of one our Church families. They were found to be quite happy to receive us once again. We met with approximately ten members of the family which showed us a welcome and mutual love. A woman was anointed for a skin condition and a young lady asked for prayer that God would direct her in her life. Our impression for this location was that in God's time they may receive The Church and we should maintain contact with them when the missionaries travel. Four or five of the family members made the forty (40) minute trip to the meeting on Sunday.

During our time on another of the locations, some of the Brothers introduced us to approximately four to five friends and family. There were two young women who received us in their home. We shared the Gospel with them. One Brother's nephew was anointed who is (12) years of age. Two months ago he was struck by a car which left him in a near paralyzed state. The boy does not speak and has only gross movements of his arms and legs. A great spirit was present as he was anointed. We also had the opportunity to visit with another woman and her family and were welcomed in her home. We prayed for her on Sunday for strength and direction. At this time she is seen as a friend to the Church and should maintain contact with her on future trips. Our pray is God will work with her.

During this trip we were involved in ministerial and leadership training. In total, there were (14-16) hours spent with the Brothers. Discussed were following the Spirit, the Holy Kiss, freewill giving and offering, manner of dress and deportment, using the Bible and Book of Mormon together, Communion Prayer, fasting and prayer and beliefs of The Church.

Deacon training was also performed for approximately one (1) hour. We had a wonderful time talking with one (1) of the Brothers and found his spirit to be that of purity and love. He heeded our council regarding his natural and spiritual responsibilities and duties as a Deacon. What a humble example of a man of God.

While in country we evaluated the status of each church location. Overall the missions are well. The membership continues to meet weekly. Many have had difficulty with work. There are few jobs and many of the members rely on God for their sustenance. We counseled the Brothers that they show preference one toward another in opening the Sunday services. We spent time explaining the need for them to follow the Spirit's direction and each should rotate opening the service and/or follow God's direction. The Brothers took the council well and stated they understood.

One of the Brothers shared with us where he lives: there is a community of fellow Native Americans (approximately 1.5 hours from the Mission). There is no formal Church in the

community and he spoke of a desire to hold meetings occasionally. He was questioning how he goes about developing this area. He was counseled to begin speaking individually to those interested and instructed them to possibly set a day they could hold a meeting on a Sunday afternoon. We also spoke to them about utilizing the youth. They understood our concern and stated there are good opportunities among the group. We continue to pray God will raise up some young leadership.

We held one formal service on the Sunday. The service had approximately twenty visiting from both of the missions. A good spirit of preaching and teaching was present. It is noted that Brothers led and followed with a good reviving spirit. We were happy with their development. Several people were anointed for various conditions. As we were preparing to pray for one Brother and his family concerns, the word of the Lord stated “I will take care of your needs, put your trust in Me.” A friend of The Church asked for God’s direction in her life. She stated The Church was special to her but had questions in her heart.

We had several wonderful experiences.

1. The morning we left, Sister Rose Palacios had the following dream. “In the dream my grandson Eric came to me and stated he saw Brothers Don, Frank, and Bryan on the plane. He continued in the dream to state he saw another man with us without pants. When Sister Rose questioned the ‘without pants’ Eric stated the man was wearing a robe. We can say that we surely felt God’s presence with us throughout the whole trip.
2. Early Thursday morning Brother Frank Palacios had the following vision. “In the vision, I saw a truck pull up in front of our hotel. The man got off the truck and went to the back of his truck and let two (2) dogs loose out of what appeared to be cages. The dogs went right up the steps and I knew they were coming to menace the Brothers in the Hotel room.” We knew the enemy did not like the Church’s presence in Venezuela.
3. As we were returning home through Venezuelan customs, God’s hand moved upon the military police checking our luggage. As we approached the checkpoint where we had watched and waited for nearly one (1) hour, the guards checked every bag of the passengers ahead of us but, when Brother Don approached the officers, they spoke briefly. The guard then proceeded to permit us to pass without any bag check. I asked Brother Don later what he stated to the guard. He smiled and stated ‘Brother Bryan, God (pause) goes before us’! Even though it was small, it made manifest the evidence of God’s sovereignty over His people.

During our future trips there are areas where we desire more growth. We have instructed our Brothers to operate under the spirit. They were encouraged to continue to be instructed on how to follow the biddings of the Holy Ghost. One of the Brothers had an experience while we were instructing him about following the Spirit. At the conclusion of the lesson, we felt to pray for him. One of the Brothers was directed to pray for him (following the Spirit). As he prayed, it was stated later every word spoken were the exact thoughts of the Brother being prayed for. We used this experience to enlighten him how God directs us on behalf of each other.

Overall, we felt the leading of the Spirit in administering to The Church in Venezuela. We felt the Brothers were open and receptive to our counsel. We ask that you continue to pray for the work in Venezuela that the Lord might call many to the obedience of the Gospel and that He might raise up more workers. May God bless each of you as you continue to support the work of The Church both in prayer and monetarily.

