

First Missions – Ecuador

First Missions – Pioneering Workers – Ecuador

Ecuador, South America

Revised December 30, 2022

Ecuador

When did the workers first arrive? 1969

Who were the first brother workers? **Willie Boles and Norman Nash** (both from Ireland) in 1974; In 1976, Boles was replaced with Maurice Pife (from Canada)

Who were the first sister workers? On January 12, 1980, the first Sister Workers arrived in Guayaquil. They were Morelia Zapata (from Chile) and Lilian Bateman.

Who was the first to profess, what year and where? Beginning early in 1975, Norman Nash and Willie Boles held a mission in Guayaquil. Sergio Reyes and his wife professed. In 1976, Pizarro, Ruilova and others professed.

Who were the first native workers to go in the work and When?

First Native Brother Worker:

First Native Sister Worker:

When & Where was the first Gospel Meeting? Guayaquil in 1975

When & Where was the first Sunday fellowship meeting?

When & Where was the first baptism?

When & Where was the first convention?

Where have subsequent conventions been held?

Where is the convention now held?

Who have the Overseers been? In 2022: Jim Price (from New Mexico US)

What is the Native Language? Spanish

During the Cenepa War (January 26–February 28, 1995) between Peru and Ecuador, **Brother Workers Aníbal Zárate and Rojano González** were accused of being Peruvian spies and were imprisoned in Ecuador for several months. Allegedly, they were severely tortured during attempts to get them to sign confessions.

“An older man just started in the work in Ecuador, age 62. He's one of the original two Ecuadorian men who heard the gospel (as a result of meeting workers on a bus in Mexico) while on their way to “get rich” in the US. After making their choice, they concluded that they'd found the real gold and returned to their homeland. It opened the way for workers to come to Ecuador. Oand, one man's wife and children professed. The other man's wife wanted nothing to do with Truth and left him to raise their children by himself. Now those children are grown some are professing and he has recently started in the work. Both men became elders” (Letter by Carol Dutton, April 6, 2002).

“The work in Ecuador ‘started’ on the Tica bus in Nicaragua in 1973 when **Eduardo and Antonio** two young married men were travelling to the U.S. On the bus that day they had to sit on extra seats in the aisle, each of them sitting next to 2 workers: Pat Daniel and Lilian Bateman; Willie P. and Jack C...and as things go on busses they were soon visiting. That night in El Salvador I met them at the bus and helped the boys find a room; the same room I'd stayed in my 1st night in El Salvador in 1970 in the P. Corps. The next day by chance the workers met the boys in the Guatamalan Embassay and invited them to spend the night in the room I was renting and where we had the fel. Mtg. in El Salvador at the time; that night the boys were in their 1st mtg...The boys continued on with the workers in Guatemala & Mexico where after various experiences they professed and returned to Ecuador to share these things with their families” (November 6, 1988 Letter by Ken Johnson, Natá, Coclé Panama).

Trevor Loechel
Evening Meeting in NSW, Australia

It is special to be here today, it does my heart good. Jesus sent his disciples to all the earth with the gospel story. It is our privilege to be here because of those a hundred years ago were willing to come with the Gospel message. It is a wonderful privilege to be sent to preach the Gospel. There is no excuse for any to say they can't do it!

I will tell you of a deaf and dumb boy in Peru who came to have an understanding of the truth, by what he saw. He wanted to go and preach the Gospel, it was impossible; or so we thought. A friend was a baker and a brother of his was a baker also in the mountains. He took him and taught him how to make bread. The oven would be heated up to bake the bread. His brother's wife heard the gospel and listened, but her husband was not interested, would not even greet the workers. The deaf and dumb boy tried to give a sermon, signing to him; I go to Heaven but you go to—[pointing to the oven]. No excuse for not being able to preach the gospel. It made his brother take notice.

We are thankful for the Gospel that came to Australia and have the privilege to live in South America and Peru. The doors first opened in 1919 into Argentina. Others to Brazil and Chile. Came to Peru in 1969. If you look on the map you will see South America is a big country, twice the size of Australia. United States has the bigger population. Peru is on the West Coast. Chile on the tip and then Peru, just taking in the Equator, so parts are very tropical. There are some high mountains so often it is very cold also. Norman Campbell and Willie Boles were the first to go there [Peru]. Norman was still there when I went. **Willie first went to Ecuador** and decided to go to Peru. He was asked to choose a companion and he chose Norman, who said, "I don't know why he chose me! But I knew, each time on his knees he would be in touch with God."

It was April 1969, and they had no contacts. Had a little room. Each carried a hip bag. There was nothing in the room so they had to find a carpenter to make some chairs. In the street they asked the carpenter to make the chairs and he told them it was a dangerous area, so they had to look for a different place. They would go to church services to make contacts. Willie always carried a little carpenter's rule. The carpenter didn't have one; he used a bit of string and would tie knots in it!!

They had left the rule in the shop and he said he would have to go back for it. It was too late and dark, so would go first thing in the morning to the carpenter's shop. A couple of doors from the shop was a man sweeping the footpath and he greeted him. Coming back he felt he should speak to him again and ask about a room to rent in a quieter area. He directed him to a large house where they would sure to have rooms to let. It was a big two story house, but they thought it not suitable, belonging to a rich person.

The man took a liking to Willie and told him of a room that had four walls but no roof. He looked at it and thought it would be alright, but would need to get his companion to look at it first. Thought of two foreigners living in a place without a roof. He ran after him. They said roof doesn't matter, we'll get a grass mat for the roof and shade. That man and his wife professed. No doubt we prove the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the world. A work done and to see them established, it is lovely to see.

In 1970 the brothers kept on and in contact with a Catholic man, a Baptist, and one in the Pentecostal. In the first five years had 5 or 6 people. In Dec, 1975, visited a family 1,000 Kms away and asked if they would listen. Yes they would. Dec 1974 took a journey of 68 hours. First part in a truck, then on horseback to this man's parents to have a meeting. Felt there were people there who would listen. God sending them to the utmost parts of the earth, the Lord knew how to arrange things and how to guide.

About that time two more brothers came, Derrick and David at end of 1975. They said, "It's a goldmine here." They kept working in that area, and the first people were baptized and a church established. Now there are 20 churches there, and it's not even a town, just a country area. God knows. They were told not to try in the neighbouring area because it was impossible to get into. There was a man a former cattle thief who was helped and he said he would stand guard for them. Now there is a Convention in that neighbouring place.

One thing very special to see; we feel there is so little we can do, but we feel it is such a privilege to see His hand at work and see the miracles He does. We were asked if we believe in miracles, yes we sure do. It is a great encouragement to us. A responsibility of local people today.

Roger Ramsden and ?? We are the only two foreign workers in that country; they have 30 native workers. They know and understand their people so well. The Gospel spread to Nema [?? Lima] to the mountains and most of the states. A number of local workers in that needy country. Sometimes not a lot of response, but others are begging for it. There are needy souls out there as well. Want to carry the Gospel far afield. It gives us encouragement. The Language in South America is all Spanish, except Brazil which is Portuguese.

Beginning days in Manabí Ecuador–1982

In the midst of this present time when all on earth are being affected by the same cause, and now **the first known ones in the faith** have been taken Home by COVID 19, it seems profitable to make the effort to share the beginning days of the Gospel going to Las Mercedes, Ecuador.

José Sanchez' wife Lilia passed into Eternity on Monday morn March 30 from the virus. We just received word that Jose was taken into Eternity at 7:00 this morning, April 4, after having spent two weeks in the hospital and many days on a respirator. They also lost a son Orlando the day after Sra. Lilia passed. Our hearts go out to all of the family and especially to their only daughter Monica who lives in Brazil so far away from her family.

José and Lilia were among the first ones from Las Mercedes to listen. Two young sisters **Astrid Keller, from Switzerland, 29, and Pearl Musgrove, 28, from Oklahoma, USA** were the first messengers to begin the mission in April 1985. After convention in Nov. 1985 Heather Williston, 28, from Canada joined Pearl there. In Feb. 1986 the brothers **Maurice Fife and LeRoy Lerwick** came to continue the prospering mission in that remote area with its complicated traveling conditions.

Back to the present, the morning of Sra. Lilia's passing, Astrid in Switzerland, Heather in Canada and Pearl in Tena, Ecuador were all able to speak to each other via WhatsApp and to share some of their memories of those special days as companions in that field. It was laid upon their hearts for the three to each contribute some memories of those days since some have been asking for details. Pearl kept a diary during those years which is helpful now to give some dates and details. It will be written in third person to blend each memory as if from one writer.

Las Mercedes is in the coastal province of Manabí, and is a scenic, pastoral, rural community with many of its inhabitants being relatives. Brahma cattle, coconut palms, papaya, mango, lime, orange, and star fruit trees and banana plants adorn those rolling hills. It is currently a little over an hour from Portoviejo because there is a paved road all the way.

The first workers to go to Manabí were Lillian Bateman from Ireland and Pearl in Nov. 1982. They were sent there with the purpose of looking up some contacts that had come to the Stillwater, Oklahoma University in 1981. The Ecuadorian government had sent 25 young men to OK for a study program about agriculture and to improve their English.

Employed at the university in the study of insects was our friend Dale Maki, and he was fluent in Spanish. A few of those men, especially four, noticed the qualities in Dale's life and questioned him about his faith. He offered for them to come to Patti and his home for Bible studies given by Joy Widell and Pearl. Dale translated for them, but Pearl had an interest in learning more Spanish, having already offered for the Spanish work three years prior. When they returned to Ecuador after a few months, Dale kept in contact with those who had shown interest and most lived in Portoviejo.

At that time there were only three sisters in the ministry in Ecuador: Morelia Zapata from Chile, Alma Stone from Canada but having labored in Chile, and Lillian Bateman from Ireland who had come from Central America when Alma had a home visit. Morelia and Alma were in their 70's, Lillian was 40. The need was great...Ecuador was laid upon Pearl's heart, and she offered to go there. One year later, Nov. 8, 1982, the door opened to go.

The brothers were also few: Maurice Fife from Canada; Norman Nash, Ireland; and Max Bowman, USA. On Jan. 31, 1983 Astrid Keller arrived, then LeRoy Lerwick, USA. In the next two years other young workers were added to the staff: Mike Hassett from Canada; Lois Scanland, USA; and Heather Williston, Canada.

Lillian and Pearl arrived to the new field of Portoviejo after the small convention in Guayaquil was held at Eduardo and Bethania Pizarro's home. From Nov. 1982 until March 1985 they worked together between Guayaquil and Manabí. They rented a room on Ave. America in the home of a school teacher Sra. Bryseida that entire time. During those first months a good number of contacts were made and all those who had listened in Oklahoma were located. Victor, the most friendly one to Dale Maki, opened his home for them to invite others to listen.

When they had been there two months, they met a shoe repairman Jose Medina who invited them to his home for Bible studies. His daughter Rocio Jenith who was a teenager then continues to appreciate what she received those many years ago.

In August 1983 the landlady Bryseida offered for them to have gospel meetings in her living room. The room was usually full with more than twenty, several being neighbors. Ignacio Cedeño, a school teacher, who lived across the street, came faithfully. In time he and his wife Livia rejoiced in what they heard. She finished faithfully over a year ago, and he continues on.

Sra. Bryseida wanted to learn to drive so she was taking some lessons from a young mechanic Sixto Cedeño who also repaired her pickup. She told him about the two foreigners who lived in her home and were teaching the Bible. He told his wife Monserrate about them, and she expressed a desire to meet them. Bryseida took them to their home across town in March 1984, and they were warmly received.

Sixto started coming to the meetings. Two months later his mother-in-law Sra. Neyra from Las Mercedes came to the city for a surgery, and both Neyra and Monse came to their first meeting, an unforgettable one because of the attention and hunger with which they listened. Afterwards Neyra said that she would like visits to her home in the country, but it would have to be after the rains stopped because the road was impassable.

That was the year of the Niño part of 1983-84, more rain than in 100 years. It rained during the six months that normally don't receive a drop of rain on the coast. Mud washed down from the unpaved hill above Sra. Bryseida's and literally filled the street from side to side. From her door one couldn't see Ignacio's door across the street! Only the sidewalks were kept clear, and months later machinery opened the street again. The lower story of the house flooded more than once, and while the sisters were helping to shovel out the mud they became better acquainted with the neighbors who started coming to the meetings that started the next month.

On Saturday July 14, 1984, the way finally opened to go to Dionicio Mendoza and Neyra's farm in Las Mercedes. Sixto and Monse with their two small children Sixtito and Lissette took Bryseida, Lillian and Pearl in his little pickup. The poor highway from Portoviejo to Olmedo took almost 3 hours, then over an hour on to the farm because the road was dry-powdery dry. People and their baggage arrived well coated in dust. The pickup tried to drive across the last shallow river since there wasn't a bridge built yet, but it got stuck. A bigger truck helped to pull them out. They were told that in the rainy season it was a five hour trip because the road from Olmedo was a two hour walk in an amazingly deep sticky mud that could grab a rubber boot and not release it very easily and that would

cause a horse to sink in up to its belly and could even drown them at times. If the river had enough water, going by canoe was an easier option, but it also required two hours to navigate around rocks, tree trunks and shallow places.

Lillian and Pearl were warmly received by Monse's parents Dionisio y Neyra with the children Narcisa, Viviana, Ramón, Digna and Darwin who were still at home. Tina already had a family. Dionisio was a brother to sra. Lilia. In Ecuador it gets dark quickly around 6:30 pm. Electricity hadn't yet arrived to that area. The sisters sang three hymns with them by candlelight and a lantern, and then everyone except little Sixto and Lisette, about 3 and 5, left for a party of a Catholic celebration. The hours passed until 11 pm while Lisette and the sisters wondered when Mommy would come home. It was a cool night, and the sisters and Sra. Bryseida were comfortably warm in the same bed. On Sunday morn the sisters walked out under the banana plants to find a moment of quietness. Then they all hurriedly rushed back to Portoviejo taking Sra. Neyra who had become ill. It was a good beginning and the family commented that they had felt love.

It wasn't until the following April, when the field with a growing number of contacts was reduced to Manabi Province, that the door opened to go to Las Mercedes on a regular schedule. Lillian left in March 1985 and Astrid came. Prior to that Lillian and Pearl were dividing their time also with the families and interest in Guayaquil, Machala/ Santa Rosa. It also worked out to make a trip to the far north Ibarra and Cayambe and to the far south Loja to look up more of the Oklahoma group.

Meanwhile Sra. Neyra attended all the meetings with Sixto and Monse when she was seeing doctors in Portoviejo. A neighbor to Monse, Sra. Aurelia, also became interested. Even though she isn't able to get out of the house much, she rejoices to have visits to this day.

Soon after Astrid came to Portoviejo much thought was given to looking for a room in a different part of the city in order to meet more people. When they mentioned that to an older couple with whom they had Bible studies, the sisters were told there was a room across the street in the home of a Sra. Esmeralda. It was small, but adequate for their needs. They moved there on April 20.

They decided to print 1000 invitations to the meetings in a new place, the Chauffeur's Union. When Pearl entered into the little store of Augusto, he looked at her so intently as if to examine the depths of her soul that she left feeling undone and that they would never see him. He was at their first meeting and never missed, one in a thousand of those invited. He's now in his 90's and still going on.

Finally the way was open for dedicating time to Las Mercedes. What a reception they received from Dionisio and his family! They were waiting to hear, fertile ground, soft and ready. He took Astrid and Pearl in his little pickup from home to home to meet his many relatives and neighbors and to invite them to a meeting that he had arranged for that night in the little country store. The people came and more came, 35 precious souls. An open door—the sisters rejoiced... until the next day! The owner didn't want to hear more nor to have another meeting. That was a lifelong decision. What to do? Dionisio and Neyra, his brother Diocle and wife Ema, and his sister Lilia wife of Jose Sanchez all opened the doors to their homes. Meetings were rotated to include them all and in that way their children could also hear at home if they didn't want to go to the other homes

Jose and Lilia Sanchez had seven sons and a daughter: Orlando, Jaime, Walter, Rene, Lester, Rodolfo, Monica and Javier. The last four mentioned are rejoicing in the fellowship that their parents embraced. Jose and Lilia were Catholic as well as most of the others there. They had a shrine with an image of Maria in their front yard. Their place had a number of conveniences not expected to be found in the country: generator for electric lights, pump for well water and a flush toilet, a nice gas cookstove, a washing machine waiting for the day when electricity would arrive. They made their living off of Brahma cattle. Coconut palms, pineapples and many kinds of fruit trees had been planted. They had a lawn of green grass. It was beautiful. More beautiful was their reception of the servants and their willingness to serve and to share with others. Sra. Lilia said one day that she was very disappointed with the priest and that she was going to stay at home to read the Bible because it wasn't their tradition to read it. She was hungry to learn more. In the beginning it was more of a struggle for Jose to turn loose of some of those traditions, but the Lord does miracles and can reveal Himself to those who want to understand and accept the life of Jesus.

There were other families as well that asked for visits and studies in their homes. The sisters went about twice a month and spent a few days each time. Time flew, and it was soon convention time in November. Two meetings were held on Sunday Nov. 18 in Portoviejo at the same Chauffeurs' Union. About 70 attended including some from Las Mercedes. Three ladies, Monserrate, Aurelia and Violeta (the wife of Eugenio Rengifo) made their choice to serve the Lord that day. They were the first fruits of Manabí. Violeta was one of the first contacts in Portoviejo. She started studying with Lillian and Pearl early in 1983. Her half-sister Marlene Pinos also was listening in Guayaquil.

Afterwards there were some field changes. Astrid and Lillian went to the Quevedo area. Heather Williston came to Manabi to be with Pearl until February. Their time was short as they would be going to the Guayaquil and Babahoyo field. It was decided that brothers should carry on the mission and make the complicated journeys to the country parts. When Maurice and LeRoy were taken by the sisters to Las Mercedes to meet the folks, all forms of transportation were tried. Heather got stuck in the miry clay road. When LeRoy tried to pull her free, out came her foot and the boot remained stuck. Finally, they got the boot out. In places it was better to leave the road and walk by the rice fields. They took turns using horses and attempted to keep their feet higher than the mud. When LeRoy was thrown off, he decided that walking was his best option. The return trip was in Jose's canoe with his two sons and Dionisio. They were a bit concerned how Maurice, over 70, would be able for it, but he plodded along in good spirits.

These were precious times to those three young sisters and Lillian. They had seen a glimpse of a gold mine of hungry souls, and each time they received the news of another gold nugget having been extracted, they rejoiced. Jose and Lilia both made their choice in 1986. Their daughter Monica spent some years in the ministry. They made their place available for the first convention in Nov.

1991. About 85 attended. There are about 200 who have attended in recent years. Some travel several hours to come from other provinces.

Many others began their walk with the Lord: Dionisio, Neyra, Diocle, Ema from the first listeners. The interest continued and reached beyond to other communities. Some of the children and grandchildren have also embraced the message of Life. Dionisio continued faithfully until passing from cancer over ten years ago. Dionisio and Neyra's daughter Viviana spent some years in the ministry, also. Their granddaughter Ingrid Mendoza, daughter of Ramón and Narcisa has been in the ministry about five years now.

The song of the sower and the reaper blends as one. There is rejoicing on earth and in heaven as each soul repents...FOREVER, JUST AS JESUS PROMISED.

(author unknown)

See also: First Missions in South American work, including Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Columbia, Ecuador, Falkland Islands (UK), French Guiana (France), Guyana, Paraguay, Peru, Suriname, Uruguay, Venezuela

See also: Account by Maurice Hawkins

See also: Transcript of Testimony of Jack Jackson

TTT Editor's Note: In the absence of a written account, the above information has been compiled by the TTT Editor from various sources. Corrections or additions are most welcome; as well as other historical accounts for this country **Email TTT**