

First Missions – Caribbean & Atlantic Islands

First Missions – Pioneering Workers – Caribbean & Atlantic Islands

Caribbean and Atlantic Islands

Revised September 27, 2025

CARIBBEAN & ATLANTIC ISLANDS

Barbados

Bermuda

Cuba

Dominican Republic

Haiti

Jamaica

Suriname

Trinidad & Tobago, Republic of

BAHAMA ISLANDS: Workers went there in 1927 and after with little success.

CAYMAN ISLANDS: Workers first went there around 1929 and labored there for 4-5 years.

ST VINCENT: The first workers went there in the Spring of 1932.

ANTIGUA: Workers first went there in mid-year 1934 and worked it in 2-5 years.

ST KITTS: First Workers went there in 1941.

PUERTO RICO: First Workers arrived in 1951.

BRITISH GUIANA: First Workers went there in 1927

DUTCH GUIANA: First Workers went there in ____?

NOTE: The three smaller countries along the northern coast of South America—**GUYANA, SURINAME, AND FRENCH GUIANA**—are usually not considered “South American” relative to the work, as the workers laboring there were from the Caribbean. They don’t interact much with the work in South America, since they don’t speak the same languages, and they are much more Caribbean/European in their culture than Latin.

SURINAME (fka Dutch Guiana)& ARUBA Dutch Speaking

Originally a Dutch Colony called *Dutch Guiana*, in 1954, Suriname became one of the constituent countries of the Kingdom of the Netherlands. On November 25, 1975, it became an independent state.

It is the smallest sovereign state in South America at just under 165,000 square kilometers (64,000 square miles). It is bordered by the Atlantic Ocean to the north, French Guiana to the east, Guyana to the west, and Brazil to the south.

It has a population of approximately 612,985 and is dominated by descendants from the slaves and labourers brought in from Africa and Asia by the Dutch Empire and Republic. Most of the people live by the country’s (north) coast, in and around its capital and largest city, Paramaribo. Situated slightly north of the equator, Suriname is a tropical country dominated by rainforests. Suriname’s economy is heavily dependent on its abundant natural resources, namely bauxite, gold, petroleum, and agricultural products.

[View Photos in TTT Photo Gallery.](#)

When did the workers first arrive? Sister Workers Minnie Collen (from NY) and Mien Wijchers (from Netherlands) in 1947

Brothers (from Holland): Lester VanDenBerg and Anne Bakker on October 4, 1950, from Netherlands

Who was the first to profess?

Who was the first native to go in the work?

When & Where was the first meeting?

When & Where was the first baptism?

When & Where was the first convention? at Zondag on Bardan’s property for over 50 years

Where have subsequent conventions been held?

Where is the convention currently held?

Who have the Overseers been? Caribbean Overseers have been Eric Cupid (died 2021) and Alan Cooke
What is the official language spoken? Dutch

Additional or corrected information on this country will be very welcome.

Paramaribo, Suriname, South America
November 6-9, 2019

Goedemorgen familie en vrienden,
 (Good morning family and friends),

As the plane drops beneath the towering cumulus cloud, an endless an Anaconda-like serpentine river, emerges from below dissecting a jungle so dense, I'm nearly certain, if our plane crashes, the jungle would swallow us whole and we'd never be seen again! But then the plane banks hard to the left and a brief glimpse of distant Paramaribo, the Capitol city of Suriname, beckons us forward.

[photo]

Waiting in the airport with a very warm welcome was Dan Henry who has been laboring here for the last 5 years. He said to me, "Usually we save the best 'til last. But that doesn't hold true this time. You get to start the Caribbean conventions here in Suriname!"

For one year now, ever since I first received a hearty invitation to visit the former Dutch colony of Suriname, a reoccurring wave of nostalgia has been sweeping over me and getting stronger these past few months and weeks, then days and now this very moment. As the plane landed, I felt like I'm awakening from an unfolding dream wondering if this is actually happening! I am following in the footprints of my father. You see, nearly 7 decades ago, my father **Lester VanDenBerg and his companion Anne Bakker were the first Brother Workers to come and labor in this country.** Together they arrived by ship from Holland on October 4th, 1950.

[Photo of Lester VanDenBerg and Anne Bakker]

As boys growing up at home, our father would fondly speak to us of his fascinating experiences in this tropical land, that, to us, seemed so far, far away. Suriname is the smallest country in South America. It was formerly a colony of the Netherlands known as Dutch Guiana. Today it's population of only 558,000 is tiny compared to its land mass. 80% of the country is virgin rainforest and the Surinamese claim that 10 % of all the freshwater rivers in the world flow here.

Now 69 years later I am not just studiously peering at old black and white photos, but actually putting names to faces and places that Dad told us about; and even more so, hearing the voices of the two remaining, Surinamese Friends that knew my father: dear Paul Bardan (89) and Hetty Tammenga, now 87.

Dear old Paul had a wishful dream that before he passed away, he and Hetty could somehow meet the youngest son of the man that they first heard the Gospel through nearly 70 years prior. One year ago, Paul told his family and the Workers of his wish. Someone who cared, told somebody else who cared, and they in turn, told others who cared, and somehow today I am in their home. I can't put into words the feelings that welled up inside as Dan H. and his companion Bart Hartemink ushered me into the Bardan's quiet home.

Seeing we arrived so late from the airport, and they being quite elderly, they had long retired for the night, so I didn't expect to see them until the morning. Nonetheless they awakened and climbed out of bed and stood there smiling in their pajamas. When they saw me, they clapped their hands then embraced me with both tears flowing and laughter resonating. I was speechless. Surely they must think I am someone else! Then it came clear to me, they love me because they loved my Father. In a small measure I felt this must've been the feeling the Son of God had when people loved him because of their great love for his Heavenly Father.

In the early 50's, Paul attended a few of my father and Anna Bakker's meetings as a young man still living at home. At the end of 1953 my Dad left Suriname and returned to the USA. But before he left, he looked up Paul, brought a Dutch Hymnbook and gave it to him. Years later, Paul married and with his wife Ursi and their young children, they were invited by Ursi's aunt to the Gospel Meetings the Sister Workers were holding in the city Paramaribo.

When Paul sat down, he was handed a Dutch Hymnbook and recognized it was the same type of Hymnbook that my father had given to him 19 years earlier. During the Sister's meetings Paul and Ursi made up their minds and settled it in their hearts to follow the Lord Jesus through simple faith in his Truth and Way. Their faith never wavered and today it is stronger than ever.

[Photo of Paul and Ursi Bardan]

Hetty Tammenga was 17 when she professed in Dad and Anna's earliest mission meetings in Paramaribo. For many years she was the only one in her family that accepted the Gospel message. She initially feared being put out of the home by her strict 7th Day Adventist parents as a result. Young Hetty fretted about this and went out to pray in the yard behind her parent's home. She was worrying about going to the Brother Worker's Gospel meetings. It was while she was praying that she heard a voice so clearly telling her, "Go and I will be with you."

She rushed to Lester and Anna's Gospel meeting and arrived 5 minutes late. To her surprise when she rushed in the school room the Brothers were still standing at the door. The meeting had not yet started. My Father told her, "Hetty, we were waiting for you." After the Gospel meeting, she returned home and found her parents on their knees praying, and they didn't hinder her after that – even though if that were to happen, she had made a plan to go and stay with an older Dutch lady who had already professed, Moesje Van Dorn. Many years later Hetty's younger Sister Margo also professed and then her own daughter Sharrie also. Now she lives with Margo in

Paramaribo. Today she embraced me saying, "Ve haf zee zame fader. Lester is your fader en zee flesh, and he is mijn fader en zee Evangelie (Gospel)."

[Photo of John VanDenBerg with Hettie Tammenga]

Hettie was only 17 when she made her noble choice, along with many others seen in this 1950 photo of the first church in Suriname. She is the young lady standing behind (and between) Anne Bakker and my father. Now at 86 years, she is the only one left living of that original group of friends.

[Photo of 1950 first church in Suriname]

Minnie Collen from New York (Irving Ross's aunt) and Mien Wijchers from the Netherlands were the first workers to labor in Suriname. They arrived about 1947. Later Frieda Faber and Gertrude Ruyter both from Iowa and both of Dutch background labored with Minnie. A lady from Suriname, Mrs. Coehlo, had professed in Indonesia before WWII and had now returned to Suriname to live after the war. Later Minnie Collen returned to Suriname and another group professed in about 1962 and were baptized together in 1967 when Piet Doume, the older Brother in Holland visited here. Most of this group lived south of Paramaribo in the Lelydorp area.

Anne Bakker met Lize Pengel while inviting people, house to house, in Paramaribo in May 1951. They were married April 18, 1953. Both became teachers and Anne became a highly regarded headmaster who wrote a grammar book that was used for many years in Suriname. A school is named after him. Anne was faithful to the Truth. He and my father never saw each other again but wrote faithfully to one and another for many decades until Anne passed away.

In a few hours the Friends will arrive, and we'll begin the 49th or 50th (Paul wasn't quite sure) convention here in their carport. If you hurry, you can possibly make it! They will heartily welcome you as they have me!

[Photo of Bardans in front of their home/carport where convention was held]

With a handshake in thought,

John/Johannes

Suriname, South America Zondag, November 10, 2019

Goede nacht familie en vrienden,
(Good night family and friends)

Over 50 years ago, Paul and Ursi Bardan acquired their property and began clearing the dense jungle to make room to build their small home and raise a large family of 8 children. Riding his bicycle to work here, he rounded the corner and there in the middle of his driveway were two Jaguars. Fortunately for Paul, they were sound asleep, and he managed to escape!

Still today, the jungle is close enough to hear the Howler monkeys very early every morning. When the dominant males "whoop it up," their calls can be heard 2 miles/3 km away. Needless to say, the convention location is void of human interference, noise, traffic, etc.

This afternoon concluded two wonderful convention days at Bardan's home where everyone felt so welcome. Although our Friends were small in number, still they are large in heart, and I surely felt close to each of them. They will long be remembered by me.

[Photo of convention attendees in front of Bardan's home/carport]

Suriname Convention, 2019

left to right:

Marsha Kiser from Missouri, USA, but laboring in Ecuador.

Rosanne Colvin from Saskatchewan, Canada, but laboring in W. Africa.

Ermita Warner of Trinidad, labored 42 years in East Africa, but now in the Caribbean.

Rosemarie Soerjabin from Suriname, but laboring in Haiti.

Bart Hartemink. from New Zealand but now laboring in Suriname.

Dan Henry from Iowa, USA but now laboring in Suriname.

Hansruedi Fehr from Switzerland, but now laboring in Italy.

Marjorie Joseph, from Trinidad, works in St. Vincent, Grenada, St Lucia, Trinidad, Tobago

John VanDenBerg from California, USA but now laboring in Arizona, USA.

Here's the convention Speaking List. [Photo of Suriname Convention 2019 Speakers List]

Among the many good things shared yesterday and today, I enjoyed dear Hettie's testimony. She is the longest professing Friend in Suriname.

I'm very thankful that we belong to God, and He takes such great care of us. At the end of the last meeting, I felt like my heart was so full it was going to burst. There are 3 men that God told precisely what they needed to do: Noah, Abraham and Moses. All were men that knew precisely what God required of them. Noah received all the precise measurements and plans to build the Ark. He was faithful with what he knew. Abraham had received precise instructions to leave his father's house and follow by faith. If he had not responded and obeyed God, he would never have entered the Promised Land. But he was faithful with what he knew. Moses had to bring the precise message of God to Pharaoh and to His people. He was faithful with what he knew. Today it is our turn. In Jesus we know precisely what God requires of us. We have so many privileges of heavenly things when we do precisely what He asks of us.

Tomorrow morning, we are to be "up and at em" ready to leave before the roosters begin their incessant crowing (4 o'clock) in order to make the 4 hour drive to the Guyana border. So, I'd better call it a day and "hit the hay".

Welterusten and goede slaapen

[Rest well and have a good sleep] zzzZ

John

Suriname/Guyana border

Monday, November 11, 2019

Dear Family and Friends far and near,

Many thanks for your kind remembrances of us!

[Photo: Suriname ~ 1950]

Left to Right:

Back Row – Frank van der Merwe, Lester VanDenBerg, Jurgen Slabbert

Front Row – Minnie Collins, Mien Weikert, Anne Bakker

Someone asked what the white building is behind us? It is the Presidential Palace of Suriname. It is the same Palace and location where this photo was taken of my Father and these other Workers in 1950:

When my father was here, Suriname was still a Dutch colony. That is why the statue of the old Dutch Queen Wilhelmina was still standing in front of the Royal palace (partially viewed behind the old Workers). She reigned for 50 years. When Suriname was given independence in 1975, the new government removed the Queen. She now stands over near the old fort in Paramaribo capital. If her statue looks anything like she did in real life, then she was a beautiful lady. Dad often said she was dearly loved by her country

Just before our convention, Dan thoughtfully remembered that Anne Bakker (my father's old companion) has a son living in Paramaribo. Win Bakker, was raised in the Truth and is a retired famous Doctor. Dan invited him to come to meet me at the Convention. He attended the Sunday morning meeting and was so friendly. He was greatly touched to see the Friends and hear the Word of God, "telling me that it was, "Indeed food for my soul." I hope he will come again to feed his soul...!

Dear Paul and Ursi arose at 3 a.m. to make sandwiches for our journey and to bid us farewell. Like the old Dutch Queen is to the Hollanders, they too are dearly loved by all the Surinamese Friends.

4:40 a.m., we are on the road now to **Guyana**.

With best wishes,

John [VanDenBerg]

JAMAICA

When did the workers first arrive? 1922

Who were the first brother workers? Frank Stephens (English) and Willie Snedden (Scottish). Willie died of tropical fever on Dec 24, 1925.

Reportedly, Willie died from a mosquito bite around 1925.

Who were the first sister workers? Kathleen Art (Ireland) arrived circa 1930 and died of tropical fever and was buried Oct 9, 1934.

Who was the first to profess? Gerald and Amy Eaton

Who was the first native to go in the work?

When & Where was the first meeting? Home of Gerald and Amy Eaton

When & Where was the first baptism?

When & Where was the first convention? Hopewell, 1927 (about 10 miles from Montego Bay)

Where have subsequent conventions been held? By Jan 1948, two conventions were necessary.

In Jan 1954 about 375 attended each of these conventions; Cambria, 1962

Where is the convention currently held?

Who have the Overseers been? Caribbean Overseers have been Eric Cupid (died 2021) and Alan Cooke

What is the official language? English

Additional or corrected information on this country will be very welcome.

December 23-30, 2019

Hail up Bruddas n' Sistas,

Yuh Gud? (Are you okay?) Wadup? (What's up?) How yuh stay mon ? (How are you man?) Wood ya baleeve, dey duhz speak Engleesh here in Jamaica.

Each of the Caribbean islands, I've been to thus far, has its own particular characteristics, and, in my thinking, Jamaica heads the list in many aspects. Not only is the locals' English a colorful array of vernacular colloquialisms that leaves you head-scratching in lexicon bewilderment, like one road sign said, "Mash up yuh brakes". Meaning slow down, but their driving is nearly as confusin' to me. You see, these British West Indies Islanders have the nerve to drive on the "wrong" (left) side of the road. It unnerves me each time a car approaches and I instinctively panic, **look out**, it's in our lane! Fortunately, we haven't had a head on collision yet! I could relate to a visitor's convention testimony. Quote, *"When experiencing the driving here in Jamaica with it's confounding traffic, I learned it's better to Give Way, than be in the Way."*

Then there's the colorful array of dishes unique to Jamaica whose flavorful spices jump out of nowhere and ambush the pallet: Ake and Saltfish for breakfast, Spice bun, Pepper Shrimp, "Jerk on the street", Festival Dumplin', Peanuts served hot and Jamaican Beef patties. All of these are washed down with "Ting" (a soft drink in a green glass bottle) and kept down with a large gulp of zesty (non-alcoholic) Ginger beer then topped off with a hot cup of 100% Blue Mountain coffee from Jamaica's renowned Amber Estate. Lauded as the best on the planet. At \$70 per pound, it better be!

A warm welcome was awaiting us at the **Cambria convention**. The grounds are situated on an actual working Sugarcane plantation. Across the Island the 100+ Sugarcane farms have all but gone out of business and our Friends, the Newman's, plantation is one of only three still operating in Jamaica. **The first Jamaican convention site was held in Hopewell from 1927, but then relocated to present day Cambria in 1962. This marks it's 57th year** with approximately 180 Friends gathered in the spacious meeting barn. [photo inserted]

Hearing how the Gospel came to Jamaica has greatly impressed me! Two Brother Workers arrived here 97 years ago – in 1922. Frank Stephens sailing from England and Willie Snedden from Scotland. Neither one knew the other prior to their arrival. This was in the days long before Google and they were venturing forth hardly knowing anything about where they were going. What they lacked in knowledge was compensated by zeal. A deep faith lent itself to their enthusiasm as they said goodbye to the familiarity of their native lands.

It had been arranged that in Jamaica they would meet at the central post office in Kingston. That day finally came when they introduced themselves to each other and became the first companions on the island. They started their open-air Gospel meetings on the streets of Kingston, singing and preaching underneath a gas light post on a street corner. The young wife occupying a nearby home could hear the two Brothers singing and at first she thought they were a couple of drunk sailors. But they returned the next night and the night following that one, returning each night singing their hearts out until Amy Eaton said to her young husband Gerald, "I'm going to go listen to those two foreigners". He went along with her and from that 1st meeting they knew this was Truth. Standing under the street light they opened their hearts to God and soon they opened their home to the two Brothers. They were the "First Fruits" of Jamaica and in their home was the 1st Sunday Fellowship meeting home on the island. [photo inserted]

Sadly, just 3 short years later, young **Willie Snedden was bitten by a Malaria infested mosquito and in 1925 passed away**. Both of these companions are buried here in Jamaica.

During that early mission in Kingston, a man named Fred "Pop" Bennett had a vivid dream. In his dream he was down in a deep pit desperately trying to get out. From the bottom of the pit he looked up and saw an unusual pair of shoes at the top edge of the pit. The shoes were old and so worn out he could see a hole in the sole and a patch covering the hole. He looked higher and saw a tall, thin foreigner wearing this old pair of shoes. In his dream the tall man reached down and lent his hand helping him escape from the pit. He awoke from his dream. Sometime later as he was walking the streets of Kingston he heard distant singing. By nature he was a shy man and a bachelor all his life, but that evening he was drawn to the singing and walked towards it. He basically stumbled into the Brothers' Gospel meeting. He never had never met the two Brothers before, but the tall one (Frank) was wearing an old pair of shoes with a hole in the sole covered by a patch and "Pop" recognized them as the very shoes worn by the very same man he'd seen in his dream.

Even as I write this, my mind goes back just a few weeks ago, when sharing a room with my fellow laborers in Guyana. One of the Brothers was on his knees preparing his heart and mind for the upcoming convention meeting. From that angle, I could plainly see the soles of his feet showing through his worn out socks. Hearing the story of "Pop" seeing the patch on Frank Steven's worn out shoes 97 years ago, I am reminded afresh of those worn out socks and the verse from Isaiah 52:7 crossed my my mind, *"How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation..."* I have a fresh gratitude for the beauty of simplicity that is found in the lowly way of Jesus. I'm honored to know Workers in my day who carry the same message of hope here in Jamaica as others did nearly 100 years ago. [photo inserted]

Among the 23 Workers (Prudence Frank is not pictured), I believe there are 11, maybe 12, countries represented here. Again it is a living testimony, even in a small measure, to the unity between men and women inside the Kingdom of God made possible by a common love for Christ. It is to God's credit that He entrusts His Spirit into yielded hearts and minds giving them the culture of heaven which far surpasses man's customs, traditions and cultures.

[workers photo inserted: Cambria, Jamaica 2019]

...I won't soon forget our dear Jamaican Friends their bright smiles, warm embrace and genuine handshakes. They are gentle in what they do, but firm in how they do it. Tomorrow morning we are to fly over to Grand Cayman Island for another convention and further on to Cayman Brac for a Special Meeting...

Well, as the locals would say it – John boy, iz goin' flap a wing. Ah hope n' 2 see yuh lay-tah ova deh. Walk gud n' tun up de ting!

Yuh brudda,
John [VanDenBerg]

BARBADOS

When did the workers first arrive? 1928

Who were the first brother workers? Willie Donaldson and David McMechan/McMeghan

Who were the first sister workers?

Who was the first to profess?

Who was the first native to go in the work?

When & Where was the first meeting?

When & Where was the first baptism?

When & Where was the first convention? Fall of 1931 at Britton Hill

Where have subsequent conventions been held? Rockly, Sayer's Court, Enterprise, Tabernacle

Where is the convention currently held? East Point

Who have the Overseers been? Caribbean Overseers have been Eric Cupid (died 2021) and Alan Cooke

What is the official language? English

Additional or corrected information on this country will be very welcome.

November 25 – December 2, 2019

Howdy Y'all,

Greetings from the park-like **"East Point" Convention grounds** which is situated a mere 500 yards from the Atlantic Ocean on Barbados' East coast. One benefit to the close proximity of the ocean is the cooling breeze that passes through our meeting tent. [photo inserted of meeting tent]

The Barren Cove lighthouse, a mere 5 minute walk from the Meeting tent, was once manned by professing Friends – Mr. and Mrs. Small. Standing on the windswept coral cliff next to the lighthouse and gazing eastward I see nothing all the way to the empty horizon. Beyond this is an additional 4,000 miles of open ocean until one arrives the shores of west Africa. Barbados is where the roiling, crashing waves of the vast Atlantic Ocean are embraced and calmly persuaded by the tranquil Caribbean Ocean, to come, settle down and relax.

The first European foreigners to visit the island of Barbados were the Portuguese who came in 1532. They are the ones who named the island after the Bearded Ficus tree which sends clusters of roots down from their branches, resembling long flowing beards. In the Portuguese language Barbados means, The "Bearded Ones." Somehow the name stuck for the entire Island. The island became a British colony in 1620 and nearly 400 years later, in **1928, two Brother Workers, Willie Donaldson and David McMechan/McMeghan from Ireland arrived on the island.**

Like some of the other Caribbean Islands, this one too was ripe for the Gospel. **In just one year they held their first Convention at "Britton Hill", then it moved to "Rockly", then "Sayer's Court."** With so many Barbadians readily embracing the Truth there once were 40 Sunday morning meetings here. In fact, 7 were within 1 square mile. So many meeting homes in such close proximity that the Friends in one meeting could hear the singing in yet another meeting home nearby. Amazing! It must've felt like the heavenly Jerusalem here on earth!

Then the **convention grounds moved to "Enterprise", where** there were 2 conventions held a week apart with nearly 1,000 Friends in attendance at the first and another different group of 1,000 for the second week. Then the convention location **moved yet again. This time to "Tabernacle". Now it is held where we are at "East Point".** Currently there are 10 Workers from Barbados in the Harvest Field. Today the island has 14 Sunday meetings and one convention with approximately 200 attendees.

In 1640 Sugarcane was introduced to the island and became "King" with an eventual 95 % of the island under Sugarcane cultivation. It was by far the back bone of Barbados' economy, requiring tremendous man power in its cultivation and harvesting. But now with sugar being produced far cheaper elsewhere, as well as the rising popularity of artificial sweeteners and public awareness of sugar diabetes, the island's main economic source plummeted and sugar production has all but ceased.

Consequently, the demographics have altered and over the last two generations a large percentage of Barbadians have moved away to find work; this includes our Friends. Today the island's economy depends on tourism, which only offers a limited number of jobs. The same situation here has arisen in Guyana and Trinidad, which were also large Sugarcane growing countries. Where 3 generations ago, the number of Friends were in great abundance, now the majority of the second and third generations have moved abroad to the United States, England and Canada.

With this in mind, the fellowship we are enjoying these days has taken on a special meaning. I would say that 80% of our Friends in the meetings are now elderly. Why, during the first two days of convention, I only saw one child in the group of nearly 200 Friends. It is as if two generations have “disappeared”. The elderly among us definitely remember the large conventions of their youth. Yet, they are still enjoying God’s way regardless of so few young people and children present.

In a way it reminds me of the rebuilding of the Temple in Ezra and Nehemiah’s day. The ancient folks remembered the glory days of their youth when Solomon’s temple was still standing. Then they were taken away to Babylon and the temple was destroyed. Later in their old age they returned to Jerusalem and the rebuilding began.

Ezra 3:12-13, “But of the ancient men that had seen the first house, when the foundation of this house was laid before their eyes, wept with a loud voice; and many shouted aloud for joy: So that the people could not discern the noise of the shout of joy from the noise of the weeping of the people: for the people shouted with a loud shout, and noise was heard afar off.”

Here at our convention, it is obvious that any weeping of past glories is outweighed by the “shout of joy” for the privileges we are experiencing today. How can that be? Perhaps the answer lies in the attitude expressed in the first prayer of our Convention – “May the quality of love in us be so great that nothing You may ask of us seem too great!”

[photo inserted of workers at Barbados Convention ~ November 28-30, 2019]

78-year-old Eleen Jackman was only 10 years old when my father attended the Enterprise Convention in 1951. Today she told me that, “I knew your Daddy before you did”. She also said the only thing she remembers from that convention was a story told by my Dad about a little girl whose father gave her a small parakeet for a gift. Unfortunately, the little bird became sick and died. So her Daddy gave her a kitten. It wasn’t very long before the kitten also died. Finally he brought her a little puppy. But, sad to say, it died as well. With tears she told her daddy, “Please give me something that will not die.”

Even though she was just 10 years old she remembers Dad speaking from Luke 10:42, “... Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall never be taken away from her.” I wonder if Dad also had hymn 262 in mind... “I will never leave thee, sweetest words of comfort from the lips of Jesus, who walked life’s troubled sea, Thou art not forsaken, I am with thee always; Darkness or sunshine, ever follow me”.

[photo inserted of John and Miss Eleen Jackman].

Tuesday morning I’ll saddle the horse and head towards **Puerto Rico** and the upcoming convention there. Hopefully Y’all can ride along...

With a handshake in thought,

John [VanDenBerg]

Gospel Coming to Dominican Republic Susan Nadal – March 2002

When did the workers first arrive? 1971

Who were the first brother workers? Harold Eames and Howard Frederick

Who were the first sister workers? Lucy Rogers and Edna Hollister, in 1973.

Who was the first to profess?

Who was the first native to go in the work?

When & Where was the first meeting?

When & Where was the first baptism?

When & Where was the first convention? For years conventions were held in community halls, government buildings, schools, etc., and workers and friends stayed and ate at small inexpensive hotels nearby.

Where have subsequent conventions been held? In 1998, the first convention was held in Cotuí, on farm of Menso and Nereida Marte (who were murdered in their home one night by a gang of thieves)

Where is the convention currently held? Bonao

Who have the Overseers been? Caribbean Overseers have been Eric Cupid (died 2021) and Alan Cooke

What is the official language? Spanish

Additional or corrected information on this country will be very welcome.

DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

Many greetings to you today from Santo Domingo, the capital of the Dominican Republic and the oldest city in the New World! It was the first city founded by Christopher Columbus after he discovered these islands, but I dare say that a more memorable occasion for this land was when God’s true servants first came to its shores. Two of our older brothers, **Harold Eames and Howard Frederick**, came over from **Puerto Rico** to visit the Dominican Republic and “spy out the land,” as they liked to say, towards the end of 1971, and returned the following year to stay. 30 years have slipped by since then. The first sisters, **Lucy Rogers and Edna Hollister**,

came in 1973.

The first little church here in the city was composed of 3 ladies who had been praying and asking the Lord for His help and guidance. He saw the sincerity in their hearts, heard their pleas, and sent them the gospel of peace. One of them, Rosita, loves to tell us her testimony, and the part I love the best is when she first met the sisters. Rosita had been asking the brothers how she should comb her hair, dress, etc, as she felt that she should look and be different than she had been, but didn't know how. The brothers kept telling her to wait until the sisters came. Wise men!! One day her doorbell rang and when she opened the door Lucy and Edna were standing there. Rosita says that she almost heard a voice saying to her, "That is the way you should look!" She has been willing for all God's will through the years and is a pillar among the friends.

There are two churches here in Santo Domingo now, and 6 more in other parts of the country. Around 180 gather for convention when all our friends and their children come. We are glad that God's work has prospered in the lives of His people and that other seeking souls are drawing nigh.

Another part of the story of the gospel here in the Dominican Republic involves our convention place. For years our convention meetings. were held in community halls, government buildings, schools, etc., and workers and friends stayed and ate at small inexpensive hotels nearby. In 1998 we had our first "real" conv on the farm belonging to our friends, Menso and Nereida Marte. Everyone loved the convention, their first taste of truly drawing apart from the world to be with the Lord and His own.

In July of that year a tragic incident occurred, as most of you know, and our friends, Menso and Nereida were murdered in their home one night by a gang of robbers. Ten people were apprehended and tried for the crime, 8 men and 2 women. 5 were released after the trial, 3 are still in prison and it is rumored that 2 escaped and were later shot by the police. We don't really know all the details, but leave it all in God's hands. We had 2 more conventions there in Cotuí after their death, but gave the place up last year.

A couple from MO who lived here in the Dominican Republic for several years, Lewis and Donna Watson (with the help of many, kind, anonymous others), bought a piece of land in the town of Bonaó, and this year some work projects have begun there. We are indebted to all who have taken a real interest in our country and our people. We can never repay them, but we know that the Lord can and will.

I returned to the Dominican Republic in January after a few weeks at home in **Puerto Rico**, and am adjusting again to the Dominican way of life. Power shortages are a common daily occurrence, as well as loud pulsating music from our neighbors' stereos and radios when there is electricity. They are generous in sharing the noise! The quietness and the lovely night sky are a consolation when the power goes.

We are visiting several contacts whom the brothers first met, and surely hope that there is a seeking soul among them. A lady professed in the Special meetings here in the city in Dec. and her four daughters (ages 17–22) listen attentively when we go to their home on Sun. afternoons for a little study/gospel mtg. We are finishing the book of Luke with them. We are studying in Matthew and Mark with some of the others in their homes. And so, we sow on and hope on!

A little gem from one of our recent mtgs. has been good to remember: "Obedience is 100% submission without reservation or resentment. Halfway obedience is merely convenience." Sad if we only obey when it seems convenient...We heard about one of our friends who insisted on sitting in a Sunday morning meeting even though she had just come home from the hospital and could have made it easier for herself by remaining in bed. When told that that might be too costly, she answered, "I want it to cost me!" Of such is the Kingdom of Heaven. We could walk the easier way within God's way, or be among that noble throng that choose the costlier way each day.

DOMINICAN REPUBLIC *Bonaó, República Dominicana*

December 9-23, 2019

Greetings to each,

Hispaniola ~ the island of Christopher Columbus' time, today, is shared by two sovereign nations: French/Creole speaking Haiti on the west side and the Spanish speaking Dominican Republic on the east. Roughly a 2 to 1 ratio with República Dominicana being the larger country.

Since Christopher Columbus "discovered" the New World on December 5, 1492, both countries on this Island have endured turbulent histories, initially blighted by cruel slavery and the massacre of nearly 400,000 Taínos (the native inhabitants). Then International clashes between Spain, France and England further riddled the island. Then subsequently dozens of brutal regimes, pockmarked by self-promoting and self-indulging rulers right up to our day. Unfortunately, the present public distress in Haiti over their current leaders, as well as their dissatisfaction for the opposition parties, has flared into unpredictable violence, mass demonstrations and road blockades which now affect us.

Following the Bonao convention here in the Dominican Republic, several of us Workers were scheduled to cross the border and attend the Haitian convention. However the unrest there has obligated that the **Haitian convention at Cabaret be canceled – the first time since its start in 1995**. If we feel sad about this, then how much, much more it must lament our dear Haitian Brethren, who have been eagerly awaiting this “highlight of their year”! Can you imagine how we would feel if our “home convention” was canceled! All the same I am consoled in knowing that even the Lord Jesus slipped away when the incensed crowd sought to stone him or throw him over the cliff.

Furthermore, I am touched in hearing our Haitian Friends don't want us to jeopardize our safety on their behalf. 12 of our Haitian Friends managed to leave Haiti and are with us here at **Bonao convention [Dominican Republic]**. I sense they are “filling up their baskets” with heavenly bread while here to share when back over there. They will most likely return home with overflowing hearts...!

Among those gathered here from Haiti, are 3 Workers that labor there: Erick Losias, Sara Dean, Geneviève Cassivi and Rosemarie Soerjaman. These keenly feel the absence of their friend and fellow Haitian Servant, **Jean Paul Antenor**, who quite unexpectedly died in the room next to the one I am currently staying in. [photo inserted of Jean Paul Antenor]

Jean-Paul Antenor ~ born March 6, 1989 – died September 5, 2019

An excerpt from Sara Dean's poem – 9/13/2019 Two nations on one isle, A few short years he served, Would claim him as their own. Alas, a sudden call! He walked beside servants of God, Our hearts are sad, yet worshipful... With help from heaven's throne. We trust the God of all. The tested shield of faith, Upon a stony mount, Now hung in victory! On Haiti's southern shore, His testimony, living, pleads, Within a family tomb enclosed That we, too, faithful be! Our Jean Paul Antenor!

30-year-old Jean-Paul had enjoyed 4 years in the ministry of the Gospel. He had come from Haiti to the Dominican Republic for dental work. While he was staying on the Bonao Convention grounds during this brief time, he would take morning walks within the neighborhood and many neighbors seeing him would wave, associating him with the Friends of the convention. On the morning that he died, the neighborhood was alarmed to hear the ambulance siren. Curiosity brought them to the convention gate and they observed when his body was taken to the morgue. The next day a funeral was held at the Convention grounds. Remarkably most of the neighbors came to his funeral, saying to our Friends, “We knew he belonged to you and was one of your family.”

Another remarkable thing I have observed here, is the large number of neighbors, young and old, who attend the evening meetings. They feel a warm welcome among us and enjoy visiting afterwards over a cup of hot chocolate. I hope they will eventually desire the lasting grace that is behind these temporal gifts...! I asked this group of young neighbors if they knew Jean-Paul? Many of them had seen him taking his walks and though they never spoke to him, could still sense something special about him. 3 of these young came to his funeral. [photo inserted]

Of course most, if not everyone here, fondly remember the older Brother Worker, **Glen Yung** who passed this last year from cancer. Others, with sadness have told me about the dear Sister Worker, **Krista Slawinski** (36) from Manitoba, Canada who was killed here in 2012 when an out-of-control cement truck collided with the bus she was traveling in.

If it weren't for faith and trust in the promise of something far greater awaiting in heaven, we would be bewildered why such young Workers were “prematurely” taken from us. I'm reminded of Hebrews chapter 11 where we read of those who died in faith, but faith never died in them. Some were “were slain with the sword” and others “escaped the edge of the sword” as was the case when King Herod slew the apostle James with the sword while he was still a relatively young man. But, his brother John the apostle escaped and lived another 60 years and into his 90's. It may not seem fair that some are taken from the earth so early while others live a full and long life. But if we could hear James, Glen, Krista, and Jean-Paul speak to us from eternity's perspective, I think we would hear them say, *all that matters now is that we have made it safely home*.

The Gospel came to the Dominican Republic in 1971 when Harold Aimes [Eames] and Howard Frederick stepped ashore with high hopes and great faith in the living words of Jesus. Should they see the present results of their labors, 200 + Friends gathered under the meeting tent, I am sure they would heartily tell us, *We'd gladly do it again!* [photo inserted of 2019 Workers at Bonao, Dominican Republic convention]

There are 10 countries represented among the 21 Workers at the **Bonao Convention** and we greatly appreciate the warm welcome of our convention hosts: Michael and Janice Klinetobe and their 3 children: Isabella, David and Kate, who have come all the way from New Hampshire to shower us all with their cheerful hospitality. [photo inserted of Klinetobe family]

With every good wish and a hearty handshake in thought,

John [VanDenBerg]

HAITI

When did the workers first arrive? 1971

Who were the first brother workers? Orin Taylor and Charles Lauchner

Who were the first sister workers?

Who was the first to profess?

Who was the first native to go in the work?

When & Where was the first meeting?

When & Where was the first baptism?

When & Where was the first convention? Cabaret, 1995 on property of US owners Glenn & Shirley Spunaugle from Guthrie, OK
Where is the convention currently held? Cabaret

Who have the Overseers been? Caribbean Overseers have been Eric Cupid (died 2021) and Alan Cooke

What is the official language? French

Additional or corrected information on this country will be very welcome.

From Lyle Schober – 2010

Dear Family and Friends;

This is Sunday evening and I am sitting out on the deck of our cabin that we have used for the last six days. The convention is over here in Haiti and I cannot tell you what it is like. You have to experience it to know it and then when it is done you hardly believe it. I have often heard that you are never the same after you visit Haiti. I am seeing why that is day by day.

Where do I begin? The trip over the mountains and along the lake on the way here **[Haiti]** from Dominican Republic was nice in the modern bus we rode. It was 100% full and it happened that I had the prime seat on the bus. I asked one of our sisters if she would change with me but she wouldn't and the other sisters were all sharing a seat with a sister so they chose to remain where they were also.

The nearer and nearer we came to the border of Haiti the more primitive the homes and everything else. For the most part the inner area of Dominican Republic is quite modern and a comfortable living style. The area we were now crossing was made up of a lot of Haitians who crossed the border to find work yet not wanting to be far away from their homeland. And it was so much better there it may have been unimaginable that you would want it better, yet so they saw what they dreamed of and settled down.

When crossing the border we drove into a compound and the gate was closed behind us to Dominican Republic and closed ahead to Haiti. Here we went through immigrations, getting off the bus and identifying ourselves. The bus stewardess (Yes, a stewardess who served meals and made us comfortable) took our passports when we got our tickets and we didn't get them back until we got to the end of the immigrations inside Haiti several miles.

Haiti is so very deprived of the most meager belongings. It simply isn't describable. The masses of people thronging the streets of the capital, Port au Prince is an eye opener. The streets, the garbage the electrical lines, the clothes hanging on anything off the ground. The road, washed out **in some places from the recent hurricane**, were hurriedly patched up. So they were rough but our fine modern bus navigated it all running most everything off the road as it sped through the continuous villages. I can hardly imagine that not one dog, goat, sheep, horse, donkey, baby or woman with loads of fruit on her head was hit. I know I wouldn't survive on the streets without some coaching. We arrived at the bus station.

When we arrived there, we had to wait about ten minutes. Glen Richards arrived with a minibus and, following him, was **Bobby and Roma Horton** in a four door pickup. We all piled in and the luggage was placed in Horton's truck for the one hour trip to the Cabaret convention grounds.

We drove along a river which had flooded the valley and raised havoc in banana plantations, sugar cane field and homes. Several families were perched on a narrow bank next to the road, wading through the water to their homes filled with water up to the bottom of windows. It made a very sick feeling come over me. My thought was, "Why doesn't someone help these people?" The more I thought about that question the more ridiculous it seemed to be. How could you help? Where would you begin? If the place wasn't teeming with thousands of people with the same predicament it might not look so hopeless.

I am not a fellow given to depression and heartlessness, but I believe this is where my extremity would be surpassed. The road grew narrower and we turned down a little lane bordered by huts, (homes by their standards) and pulled up along a long cement wall. Soon we turned into a metal gate which opened by welcoming hands of friends and workers. We pulled in with our rigs and the gate slid shut behind us.

Suddenly we were in a convention setting that we could picture in the USA. Several tents and a few buildings all neatly painted and no trash on the ground. It was like we opened our eyes and the dream had ended. What a happy lot they were, and we too. We had a drink and went to rest in nice beds without mosquito nets hanging over them. What beautiful accommodations we had.

Later I surveyed the setting and walked out the gate and up on a hill behind the place. It is all enclosed with an eight foot fence one-half mile long. From the hill you could look out over the Caribbean Sea about two miles away. Below and surrounding the grounds were many partially finished homes. Some were occupied but many just left where they were three or five years ago.

The convention home is a large two story home that houses the manufacturing business during the year. The man who owns the place operates a sewing business. One of the things they sew is the field of stars for the large Perkins Pancake House flag. All the sewing machines are rolled back and covered with canvas to make a large room for ladies sleeping. Most of the women sleep here. But there are two more buildings they also use. The men have two large tents. nearly everyone stays on the grounds. We visiting brothers slept on top of the women's rest room and the sisters slept upstairs of the house. Everything about this place looks like Iowa or Minnesota except the extensive use of cement for all the building, inside and out. One would never think this would be at the end of a ride like that.

People started arriving by minivans, busses and on the backs of trucks by noon on Thursday. They continued arriving in quite large groups late in the day. The last large bus arrived at 7:30 on Friday morning. You had to be here to see the reception of each subsequent arrival. Let me tell you about some who arrived on the last bus. One family with several small children walked six hours from their mountain home to a little town where they caught a minivan and rode three hours into the city of Jacmel. There they met other friends who loaded up the bus about 1:00 AM and rode the rest of the night to get to Cabaret. They were all tired but so delighted to be at convention.

The first meeting of convention started at 9:30, so they had two hours to eat and clean up a bit before meeting. But by nine-fifteen when I walked out to the meeting tent almost everyone was sitting quietly in their seats. There must have been two-hundred and seventy for the first meeting. The crowd grew to three hundred and forty today. The front three rows of benches were lined with little chocolate drops. Most of them were dark chocolate but a few were milk chocolate. I counted thirty-seven from the ages of about two to fourteen years old, I'd say. They were all neatly dressed, most of the sweeter variety in white, as white could be. (I wondered how the muddy water those dresses were washed in could make them so white. At least I would expect most were washed in water at the creek, river or canal. It seems that's where the laundry is wherever you found one outside the cement walls of this place.) I wondered how they all would do for the two hour meeting without the supervision of dad or mom. But amazingly they were generally quiet and sat with their big black eyes rimmed in white staring at these strange looking white people.

We soon befriended several of them and though we could not understand a word of each other they would come running by and grab your hand for an instant on their way past. (Toward the end of the convention I glanced at one especially bright eyed boy about three. Our eyes met and his opened even bigger till one winked and the greatest grin baring the whitest row of teeth I believe I have ever seen was exposed. Maybe the whiteness was accented by the blackness surrounding them.)

Could I have brought them back, yes, a hundred times, yes. Well, maybe there weren't quite that many little **chocolate drops** but there must have been at least fifty. Among them sitting on the front row was three small children. It looked like two were twin boys about three and their sister a year or so older. These seemed to have more trouble keeping their hands out of each other's business so they caused a disturbance a few times.

I found out they were from a family whose father and mother were swept away during the hurricane this fall. The children never saw them again. The family belonged to the Baptist church down the hill from the convention place...So the church would take them so at last he brought them home to his wife. She is professing and has been for a few years. So she is the new mom. Nothing legal, and no way to make it so with no birth certificates or records of their existence. So along with her own two or three she brings them to the meeting while her husband goes off to preach for the Baptists. Seeing this was the children's first exposure to convention, they hadn't learned the proper protocol. However, they got better and better until today they were as good as any of those chocolate drops on the front row.

Oh, the stories go on and on. Tragic tales with happy endings. I couldn't repeat a fraction of them and none are insignificant. The report to the Queen of Sheba was only half the story. The reports from this land are far less than that. But getting on to the convention itself. Our days were most special. You all would know how the main part of the meetings would go. Just like back home. But the testimonies were enlightening. The first day I think in one meeting only five or six took part but a few more in the next one.

These friends have so much to tell about their coming to find the truth. Over and over, we heard accounts of disappointment and searching, punctuated by expressions of thankfulness. **By the second day, Dan Henry got up and told them. "We are going to do your testimonies different today. Today you can speak as long as you want and take all the time and tell all the details and read all the scriptures you want to. But do it between the meetings to your friends. Then in the meetings we will have short testimonies."** This helped a lot.

There was a baptism on Saturday morning at 6:30 on the grounds. They dug a fair sized hole and filled it with water from a canal ¼ mile away. (They pump water up for use at the convention with a pump so the line was in place before.) They asked those who wanted to be baptized to stand up on Friday evening and there were about twenty who stood. By the time Dan came to our room before we went to bed the number had swelled to 27. The next morning there were 29 baptized. Two more squeezed in. What a sight. All of them were mature people. The youngest were maybe about sixteen and the oldest about seventy, I'd say. That morning those who were baptized were given the chance to give their testimony. Twenty eight spoke and they were rich words stating great thankfulness and purposes. They were as wholesome a group of people I've seen baptized and so sincere.

Saturday the meeting was tested and twenty stood up. This morning Glen said there were a couple who hadn't been in a tested meeting before so didn't understand what was happening. So he gave them a chance while we sung the first verse of a hymn at the end of the meeting. Five more stood. Later a young woman came to Dan and said, "I thought they would sing another verse. I wanted to make my choice." So the meeting was tested again this afternoon and three more stood. I believe it was a total of 28 that professed in the three meetings. There were many other outsiders who were there but those who made their choice have been in many meetings and seem to be committed.

While the meeting was going on I heard a horn honk. A couple men left the meeting and opened the doors. In backed a couple of buses. These were ready to carry the friends back home again. That was another sight I'll remember a long time. All telling each other good bye for another year. Many of them are in lonely places so these days are like days of heaven to them.

We heard about a man taking some workers out to his apple orchard. Duane asked him about the apples on the ground and if they would pick them up and use them. No, they wouldn't because they were all moldy inside. Then he explained that the apples which fell before harvest time all had mold in them. From the outside you couldn't tell a thing but at the center was mold destroying its

usefulness. At the time of the time of blossom a little fly lays an egg in the core and that starts the mold. Somehow the mold in the center makes its stem weak so it falls before harvest. He spoke about this being the way of those who have something wrong injected in the beginning. It will come out in time and the fruit will fall before the time of harvest. Secret things are brought to the light sooner or later.

Monday AM: This morning Dan took a couple of us visitors around the community and visited some homes of our friend. First we stopped by the home of the preacher and his wife who took in the six orphans. A year ago she was baptized. The workers were not very eager to baptize her but late the evening before the baptism her husband, the Baptist preacher came to the grounds and begged the workers to baptize his wife. She is so distressed I can't stand it. So, they did and she has done very well. Next we stopped at another home where the husband is a Baptist preacher. His wife professes. He pastors in a church across the mountain.

Next on to a man whose wife we met on the road going to the grounds to help clean up. He took us to his home for a visit with he and his four children one of whom is crippled. Later he took us to his 'garden.' Actually, it was his many gardens of bananas, sugar cane, another plant that they make tapioca out of. Coconut grove and melons. He is an ambitious farmer and Dan says he cultivates this all with a large hoe and harvests with a machete. I would guess he has several acres under irrigation. No doubt his family helps him.

Another home we visited a woman and her children briefly. We saw a single man's pad and that was about all he had. We arrived back at the grounds at eight-thirty AM so you know it was a brief visit but an early one.

We go to the city and catch a flight to Miami, FL at 1:30. We wait there for a flight to Jamaica and arrive there by 7:30 this evening. I guess flying to Miami is the cheapest route so we get back on US soil or concrete, at least. I want to send this out while we have wireless here.

Did I tell you that here in this poverty we have wireless internet connection? One of the reasons this parcel of land looked good to the friends buying it for convention purposes is that the telephone company has a large satellite receiver across the road several hundred feet. They knew the road would be kept open for the communications. Also the satellite has a power generator. It supplies the power to the area as well as offering power to the phone system. However the grounds has its own source. They have multiple solar panels that generate power and they store it in a battery of about 36 golf cart batteries. That is enough to run all the manufacturing business through the year. But for convention with the evening and night use they needed an alternate source so have a large generator.

I'm sorry this is so long and if you have endured this long you're more patient than I am.

Best wishes again,

Yours in Him,

Lyle [Schober], 2010

1971 – First workers Orin Taylor, Charles Lauchner

1995 – First convention at Cabaret, Haiti

BERMUDA

Description: A tiny island (21 square miles) in the Atlantic Ocean, 700 miles east of the nearest US landfall of Cape Hatteras, North Carolina.

First Friends arrived in 1980: Young family with work contract.

First meeting: First family's home from 1980–1988 (family and visitors only until 1985).

When did the workers first arrive? 1986; Willie Thomas (Irish) had visited before 1986.

Who were the first brother workers? Willie Thomas and Norman Nash (both Irish)

Who were the first sister workers? 1987 Sandra Shaw and Naomi Nicholson

Who was the first to profess? A Bermudian lady in 1985 at a convention in the US, followed by her husband and another lady, originally from Canada. They professed in 1987. Maximum number of friends has been 5.

Who was the first native to enter the work? None

When & Where was the first baptism? None

When & Where was the first convention? None

Who have the Overseers been? Overseer was Charles Steffan in 1986. Bermuda falls under the jurisdiction of the Overseer of the New England states.

In 1986, Willie Thomas, Norman Nash, (both Irish) held gospel meetings on Bermuda for six weeks, six nights a week.

Sometime before 1980, Bermuda had a problem with a cult group, so the government was very wary of allowing "unknown religions" into the country. When the first workers came (Willie Thomas and Norman Nash) while the family hosting the meetings lived there, they were very careful, only having gospel meetings in the two homes of friends.

Also, the law is that no one without an immigration work permit is allowed employment in Bermuda. After the family moved away, the Bermudian man who professed wrote to the immigration department to request ministers to shepherd their little church. The

requirement is that the position must be advertised locally before anyone can be brought in from overseas.

The following ad was placed in a Boston, Massachusetts newspaper:

*Non-Denominational Christian Fellowship
requires
MINISTER OF THE GOSPEL*

Our members are seeking an experienced ordained Minister of the Gospel of some Christian faith with proven testimonial for full-time position.

- 5 years experience.
- Services given without designated salary and with no appeals for financial contributions.
- Presenting the Gospel by faith as did the early Apostles.

Apply in writing to ____

Some local Bermudians applied, but withdrew their applications due to there being no salary and some other requirements. That left the door open for applicants from overseas.

US Sister Worker Sandra Shaw saw the ad in the Boston newspaper, applied, was interviewed and accepted. This process was arranged by US Overseer Charles Steffan. The government gave approval and permission to conduct gospel meetings in public schools, colleges etc., on the island without any restrictions. In 1987, Sandra Shaw and Naomi Nicholson (from US) held missions on Bermuda for three months, three nights a week.

In 2024, there is no one living on Bermuda professing. The maximum number of friends has been 5. The little church lasted for a number of years, until the friends moved, succumbed to ill health and old age.

REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD & TOBAGO

When did the workers first arrive? 1933

Who were the first brother workers? Willie Donaldson and John McDiarmid

Who were the first sister workers?

Who was the first to profess? Perhaps Carters? First mission and convention was in their home

Who was the first native to go in the work?

When & Where was the first meeting?

When & Where was the first baptism?

When & Where was the first convention? 1937–1966 on Carter's property in Barataria, Trinidad.

Where have subsequent conventions been held? in 1967, at Carters in Kelly Village on Reece Street

Where is the convention currently held?

Who have the Overseers been? Caribbean Overseers have been Eric Cupid (from Tobago, died 2021) and Alan Cooke (Irish) Possibly Melvin O'Toole preceded Eric Cupid.

TRINIDAD & TOBAGO

Willie Donaldson and John McDiarmid arrived at English speaking Port of Spain, Trinidad & Tobago by ship in 1933. Their first views of Trinidad long before reaching Port of Spain was the rough, broken-edged mountains of the northern range that form a barrier from the Caribbean Sea to the fifth largest island in the Caribbean. After the mountains, their ship passed through the "Dragon's mouth," a 96 mile, often boisterous channel between Venezuela and Trinidad littered with assorted chunks of small volcanic rock, piercing the sea like the teeth of a dragon. Their boat would then bear to the east and they would begin to see ocean commerce and then finally dock in the capital and most populous city of Trinidad & Tobago, Port of Spain (POS)

Nationals from St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Grenada and Barbados often migrated to Trinidad for economic opportunities from the late 19th century, off and on, for nearly a century. In 1933, Willie and John might have had a few contact names, but upon arrival they set out on foot for the prosperous suburbs of Woodbrook and St. James. In their early mission there, Ma Ford and Mother Gill both heard and accepted the Gospel, and a small meeting was started in Woodbrook/St. James.

St. James is about 5 miles north of downtown POS. In 1933, there wasn't much population to the mountainous north, so the brothers decided to go south and then east along the heavier populated Eastern Main Road. They passed through Port of Spain and joined the Eastern Main Road at the southeast part of the city. They had walked 18 miles, passing through Lavantille and Morvant before reaching Barataria. The Eastern Main Road, although the main throughfare from east to west, was a two-lane street in the suburbs with a mix of housing and local businesses lining the edges. Willie and John stopped for a short rest across the street from Carter's auto parts, somewhat discouraged at the lack of interest or opening for Gospel meetings.

Reginald Carter saw the men and wondered what they were doing in Barataria, as English residents and government officials generally rode through on motor cars or used the train when going east from POS. He watched them for a few minutes and felt a Spiritual call to see if he could be of assistance. He felt moved to call out to them.

Mr. Carter's property was rectangular in shape. Near the front of the property was his shop and home. Alongside and behind the house was open land with a garden, fruit trees and wild growth. The property ended at the deep and wide cement gully that carried rainwater runoff during the wet season.

After a mission at Carter's home, several Sunday meetings were established in the area. By 1934 a convention was needed. The Leandre home on 6th Street in Barataria had convention in 1934, 1935 and 1936. By 1937 the 6th street location was unable to accommodate the number of friends now professing across Trinidad. Fellowship meetings had expanded to the east and south of the nation.

Mr. Carter's home, after a few small improvements, was a large enough property to easily hold a spacious and semi-private convention despite being along the main eastern thoroughfare across Trinidad. The first convention was held at Carter's home in 1937 and remained there for the next 30 years. The Leandre home at 6th street still had a Sunday meeting, and although the Mill's now own the home, meeting remains there to the present.

The Carter home, when not having Convention and the northern Special Meetings, also had a Sunday fellowship meeting. During the week it was Carter's auto parts place of business. And, as often happens, replacement parts were needed on Sunday. A desperate fellow would stop by Carter's shop and shout "neighbor, oy," several times with the volume increasing. Mr. Carter, however, was not interested in having his time of worship disturbed. He had a parrot, who learned to shout the following: "Closed on Sunday," and "No business today. Today is Sunday. Come back tomorrow."

By the mid-1960s, the Eastern Main Road by Carter's had become congested. Businesses crowded out most residences. Car and foot traffic cluttered the sidewalks and there were over a dozen meetings across Trinidad. Mr. Carter's place, despite improvements and its size, had become too cramped for a quiet, reflective convention.

Mr. Carter purchased eight lots in Kelly Village, Caroni (*care-o-nee*) about 20 miles southeast of Barataria. Reece street was a dead end lane off La Solita which was off the Western main road. Reece Street contained 14 lots, seven on each side of the road. Mr. Carter bought lots four to seven on each side of Reece Street. The western most lot on the south side of the street was left vacant. On the adjacent lot a large house was built on stilts. The Jackman family from Barataria went to live there. Under the house, canvas sides were attached during convention for visitors.

The third lot was for the convention tent, dining area, kitchen and workshop. The final lot was kept vacant for subsequent expansions. Today the original house has been built into one house, the upstairs is occupied by one of the original Jackman children, while downstairs is reserved for visiting brother workers. The last lot, left vacant for expansion, has been used for construction for brother worker cabins, sister worker dorms and visitor sleeping quarters. Some buildings are permanent while some are portable. The tent that was parallel to the road and once held convention and dining has been replaced by a gabled galvanized steel roof with tent flaps available on the sides during inclement weather. The patch between the tent and kitchen/shop area has a tent installed dining during convention. The first lot on the south side was transferred to the Jackman family.

On the opposite side of the street from west to east three homes were built. The first was occupied by the Huntley's, the second by the Abinsenthes and the last by Peter (uncertain of his last name) and the fourth remained vacant. As time passed, the Huntley's and Abinsenthe's properties were sold. Peter's home has remained within the fellowship, and the last lot is currently used for Special Meeting and convention overflow parking.

Mr. Carter passed around the turn of the century. The property title, however, remains in his name. The water and electricity are in Eric and Hilton Cupid's name. Both deceased. Some structures used as sleeping areas were constructed to be portable as there was some thought of moving the convention. With the death of Eric Cupid in 2021 any thoughts of relocation were forgotten, although the portable buildings remain to be constructed and deconstructed before and after every convention.

Source: D.S., TT resident, July 7, 2024

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](#)