

First Missions – Portugal

First Missions – Pioneering Workers – Portugal

Portugal

May 2, 2013

PORTUGAL

The work in Spain and Portugal is combined together as one group, and usually the fields that contain part of Portugal also contain part of Spain. The languages are so similar that it only takes about 6-9 months to master one of them, if you already know the other well, so it's not difficult to switch between the two.

Portugal has a separate history from Spain. While workers from Spain went into Portugal occasionally through the years, no converts were made. Then in the 1980's and perhaps even into the early 90s, a number of workers from Brazil went back and forth to Portugal. Portugal is the mother country of Brazil and Brazil is the only other country in the world to speak Portuguese.

Sometime in the mid 1980's, Carl Schubach and Elpidio Arruda went to Portugal from Brazil. They were there perhaps a year, and then Carl returned to Brazil, and Neri Mendonça went to be with Elpidio. They had no response whatsoever and decided to return to Brazil. The night before they were to leave, Neri died in his sleep (January 22, 1986) at age 47, totally unexpected. So a worker was already dead and buried in Portugal before any converts were made. A few years later, João Juhász with a Brazilian companion (possibly Nilton Rodrigues) were there and again had no response.

At some point after that in the 1990's some Portuguese people met workers in some European countries and believed their message. Contacts were made with their relatives and workers from Spain began going in and finally there was some response to their message. Two pairs of workers are usually assigned to Portugal and their fields include some border areas of Spain too.

The Lisbon convention is just a few years old. Portugal began to be shown on the list with Spain in 1995, when Paulo Soares from Brazil went to be with Omar de Abreu there. Paulo just stayed a year and then Ivo Camargo went for a couple of years. Since then, Brazil has not been sending workers and the workers have come from Spain.

NOTE: In Spanish speaking countries, the preachers are referred to by the friends and by each other as "servant," whereas Americans use the word "worker."

When did the workers first arrive? Workers from Spain went into Portugal occasionally through the years, but no converts were made.

Mid-1980's: Carl Schubach and Elpidio Arruda arrived from Brazil. They were there perhaps a year, and then Carl returned to Brazil, and Neri Mendonça went to be with Elpidio. They had no response whatsoever and decided to return to Brazil. The night before they were to leave, Neri died in his sleep (January 22, 1986) at age 47, totally unexpected. So a worker was already dead and buried in Portugal before any converts were made. A few years later, João Juhász with a Brazilian companion (possibly Nilton Rodrigues) were there and again had no response.

1990's: Some Portuguese people met workers in some European countries and believed their message. Contacts were made with their relatives and workers from Spain began going into Portugal, and finally, there was some response to their message.

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Currently: Two pairs of workers are usually assigned to Portugal and their fields include some border areas of Spain too.

When & Where was the first convention? **Lisboa, 2005**

Who were the first sister workers? (info needed)

Who was the first to profess? (info needed)

Who was the first native to go in the work? (info needed)

When & Where was the first meeting? (info needed)

When & Where was the first baptism? (info needed)

Who have the Overseers been?

Sandy Scott (Scotland)

Basilio Alvarez (died 1985)

Omar de Abreu (Uruguay) turned oversight to John Gunn in 1993. He stayed in Spain & Portugal until 2002, when he returned to Uruguay. He passed away there in 2004.

Current Overseer: John Gunn (Scotland but had spent many years in Chile prior to going to Spain) from 1993 to present.

Letter from Brother Worker Bram Denboer about the FIRST Portugal Convention, 2005

Our dear All,

This finds John, Nelida (Romera), Adelina (Lucena), and Marissa in the field in the mountains in the north of Portugal about 4 hours driving from Lisbon. In leaving the convention place in the morning the folk felt so alone and wept as we all left. They have been so encouraged by **the first convention**. They did not want to take any money from John for the use of power and telephone, etc. They are poor but want to give their all and have such a good spirit. They told us that they could not have any children of their own but now they have such a great family and feel that they are apart of something so great.

This is a new field as John has been wanting to have this part opened up and tried so when he was wanting to move into the area he discovered that the friends on the grounds, Jose and Arinda, have a home here in the valley. It was inherited from Arinda's Mum and Dad, so offered this place for the use of the gospel. Being here has worked out so well as the girls have spent the year going from village to village giving out invitations and having meetings in the various schools. In one school, some local folk came in denouncing the sisters and telling all in the meeting that they are only coming in to make trouble and divide families, etc. They were asked to leave that place. However, since then, many have told them that they were not treated very well so want to make it up to them. They have a nice number of contacts now that are so happy to have them here and come to their meetings.

This morning they went to one contact to tell them they were back and the lady of the home gave them flowers and, when told that they would be leaving again on Monday, cried. I was able to go for a 3 hour walk this morning in the mountains. So nice to see the farmers all going about their work, some gathering in the hay, some cutting grass, some just watching over their few sheep and goats, and some watching over a few cows with their cow bells. You mostly hear the cow bells wherever you are in these areas and villages, just waiting for Heidi to come around the next corner with her sheep!!

Nice that we can spend a few days here resting as John and the sisters are so tired as they have been so busy at the convention. The home here is actually two houses, with two bedrooms each and some nice land nearby where you could put up tents. John already has in mind to have a convention here, also the owners would love to have a convention here if it opens up, so we will see.

Have just come back from another long walk. It is so nice to be able to do this as it is so nice to be able to see how country life is: a lot of people getting out the sheep and goats, the cows (all with bells on so that they can find them in the hills here), and then also seeing the folk in their gardens weeding, watering, etc. So nice that there are so many springs in the mountain – water just flows out and so the people tap into this to water their gardens.

Yesterday was a big day. We went out leaving here at 8.30am and drove for 4 hours, 400 kms approx, the longest time that I have ever gone for a fellowship meeting. These sisters do this every 14 days to have a meeting with a lady named Sylvia, who has professed two years ago and lives in Santiago in the north of Spain in Galicia. This is not far from La Coruna where there have been gospel meetings for a long time. This lady professed and her husband is not keen on her going. He is a lawyer but she says that she is desperate to have something for her soul. She is not satisfied with the Catholic Church and sees so many things that are only of man. She is aged about 45 and has 3 children. The eldest is 12 this year. She is trying to get her husband to come to Madrid while the convention is on so that she can attend some days there, combining it with a holiday for the family.

She told us of some of her struggles as the Priests come to her home and all are trying to tell her that the Catholic way is the right way, so she struggles on. We met at a restaurant to have our meeting which turned out to be a 3 hour meeting, John telling her many things that have been questions in her mind regarding the difference between the church and the way of God. She feels so inadequate to tell her husband and others what she has found. All she can tell them is that inside she knows that the church is wrong.

We left there about 4.30pm and then went to see the cathedral that is here as it is world famous. It is supposed that James who wrote the letter of James came here and there is a figure of him all in gold. Thousands come here to be blessed by him. You can go up close and kiss his ring, etc. There was a queue doing this, also many confessing their sins. You can go to a booth where they hear in English, etc. All so dead and empty and so glad that we have found that which is alive.

Then the long journey home of another 400 kms. Had dinner along the road about 9.00pm and home by 11.00pm. So glad to see the love that the workers here have for only one soul and what great lengths they will go to feed one soul. It gives me an insight to the love that they have for souls. Last year, Nelida and Marissa went 5 hours each way from another way: Nelida aged 83 going all that way which is so nice to see and Sylvia so much appreciating the effort made.

Today is a day off so can do some catching up with emails, etc., which is good. Have been able to write out the notes taken at the convention. John is making the dinner tonight so giving the sisters a night off, telling us today that it is not a matter of serving, it is a matter of knowing when to serve and when to sit. Martha knew how to serve but at the time she should have been sitting, the disciples were sitting in the upper room when they should have been serving. Tomorrow is a morning meeting on our own and in the

afternoon a gospel meeting. A lot of the contacts here say that they are waiting to come, so that will be nice. Monday on our way back to Madrid, Spain and making our way to Preps in Barcelona by the end of next week.

Best wishes and love,

Bram

I will try to give some impressions of our days **at the first Portugal Convention**. As someone has said, there must have been a lot of people praying for this time as we had such rich days together. There were 12 nations gathered, 57 in total on Sunday, 17 workers, and then a number of the contacts came, so a total of 21 Portuguese speaking people, which gives hope for the future. Five friends came from Spain which was nice, also.

The friends of the home all fitted in so well and so ready to serve, manifesting the right spirit. The young Sisters were responsible for the arrangements here, Adelina was cook, Maria was in charge of the beds, Loida in charge of the tables and washing up area. All did very well, all functioned without a hitch, so nice to see them all working together so well.

Carol's Mum (visiting from South Africa) gave her testimony first, saying that 12 years ago when she heard that Carol and Luis were coming to Portugal, she was devastated and was so upset, wondering why this should happen as there were no friends here. Carol was not professing at that time, and would be now far away from the Truth, but how wonderfully God worked: in a year, Carol sought out the workers in Spain and wanted to come to meetings and professed. She said how glad she is that now she can see the hand of God in all that was done and now to see Carol, Luis, their daughter Clarissa, and Luis' mother in the convention, all professing, is a great joy.

Eleven years ago, John and I came here with Juanita and Josefina. We had a meeting with Carol and Luis, their children Clarissa and Nelson. We did not know that one day there would be a convention here. Now they are able to be a great help in interpreting in the meetings: Luis interpreted for David Butterworth, and Carol did a lot of the cooking for the convention.

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 other countries.

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