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Cover: This Kaiowa-Guarani child—one of the indigenous people who live in the state of Mato Grosso do Sul in Brazil—is pounding manioc into a paste that can be used for cooking. **Photo:** Christie R. House

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Editor's Column:

MISSION PAST AND PRESENT IN BRAZIL

Brazil is a big country. It dominates the eastern half of South America. In fact, Brazil is almost as large in area as the United States, though it has about 100 million fewer people. However, 34 percent of Brazil's population is under 15 years of age.

A political map of South America will show you that only two of the continent's nations do not border Brazil. (Can you name them?) A physical map reveals that Brazil's highlands are in the south, while its lowlands lie to the north in the Amazon Basin along the equator. Brazil also has a narrow coastal plain bordered by a plateau region. Along the coast, such cities as São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, Salvador, Recife, and Fortaleza are found. Inland, the Amazon valley is home to the earth's largest tropical rain forest. This region is named for the Amazon River, second only to the Nile in length and carrying more water than any other river system on earth. The Amazon region occupies more than half the country, and more than half of Brazil's indigenous people live there. (For more fascinating facts, see Charles Cole's column.)

Brazil is a big subject in every respect, but our specific focus is the church's outreach to the people. To tell that story, past and present, we sent two skilled United Methodist reporters to Brazil: *New World Outlook's* associate editor, Christie House, and our prizewinning missionary-photojournalist, Paul Jeffrey. Christie interviewed United Methodist missionaries who speak to us out of 40 years of experience, revealing their ultimate mission: to train and empower their Brazilian successors. She also introduces us to the Brazilian Church's plan for its life and mission as a missionary church. Paul then shows the church in action—accompanying and protecting street children, bringing community-based health care to Brazil's poor, advocating for indigenous people, and sponsoring mission projects that are culturally appropriate, economically viable, and community-controlled.

The second half of our issue brings witness from the Methodist Church of Brazil, itself—originally written in Portuguese and rendered into English by careful translators. This is a church that has chosen children as the priority of all its mission efforts. It is a church that is providing education for poor children, assistance programs for day-laborers in the fields, support specifically requested by the indigenous people of the Amazon, and a theological school in the Amazon region, itself, to train pastors and laity for evangelization. Truly, the Methodist Church of Brazil is bringing blessings and changing lives.

At the center of this issue is a map and timeline to provide an overview of church regions and some early dates in Methodist mission history. The editor's timeline now calls for a sabbatical of four months, so the associate editor will be at the helm for the July-August and September-October issues. Please show *New World Outlook* to your friends, recommend it to your congregation, and use it to help tell your church's Christian mission story.

—Alma Graham

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BRAZIL

1997-1998 Geographic Mission Study Issue

WITNESS FROM OUR ON-THE-SCENE REPORTERS

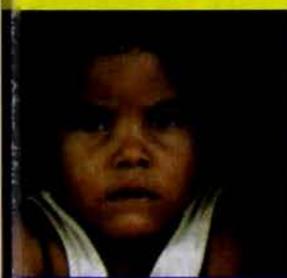
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Missionaries Watch the Church Grow in Brazil

by Christie R. House

On the streets of Rio de Janeiro, James Edwin (Ed) Tims maneuvered through traffic to take me to one of Rio's largest slums, the Rocinha favela. He wanted me to see the Rocinha Community Center, where he and his wife Nancy had served from 1979 to 1992. I taped our conversation as we drove to five mission projects.

"When we were sent down here in the 1950s," Ed began, "it was with the understanding that we would be training Brazilian church workers to do what we were doing. We were told to work ourselves out of our jobs. So—we did." Actually, he and Nancy worked themselves out of several jobs. At the Rocinha Community Center, I met the Rev. Ruth Silva, the pastor of the Rocinha Methodist Church, and José Luiz de Souza Lima, who now directs

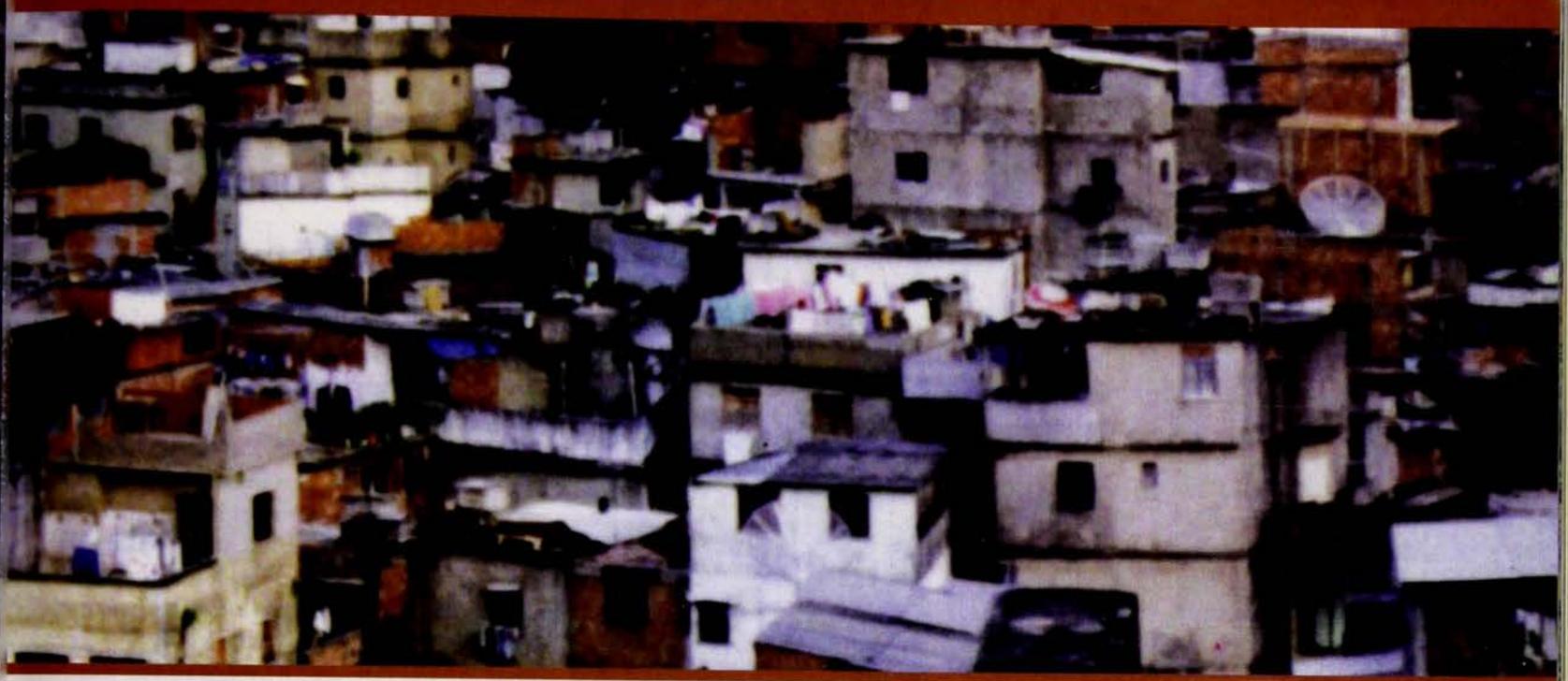
the Community Center. Ed Tims once held both jobs. At the Ana Gonzaga farm, where Ed and Nancy once lived and worked as directors of the orphanage, a Brazilian director succeeded them. And at the Ana Gonzaga ecological center, where Ed spends a lot of his time today, he was excited about the prospects of hiring a new Brazilian director to take over that program. The cycle continues with great success.

The 1950s and 1960s

The missionaries I met in Brazil had different stories to tell of earlier times. They had first arrived in Brazil in the 1950s and 1960s. Though the Methodist Church of Brazil was autonomous by then, it still relied heavily on missionary power and guidance—and on funding from the United States.

Jim and JoAnn Goodwin began their service as missionaries in Brazil in 1957. "Technically," writes Jo, "missionaries were a part of the Brazilian Church. Jim was received as an elder and was subject to the itinerant ministry. He received an annual appointment at conference, as did everyone else. Missionary wives were not considered as separate from their husbands. Later, the Fourth Region, to which we belonged, began to list missionary spouses as members of conference under the title of 'lay missionary with voice but no vote.'" After the Goodwins completed a year of language study, their first appointment was to Instituto Rural Evangélico (IRE). This was a farm in Itapina, Espirito Santo.

The IRE was typical of many mission projects in Brazil at that time. As the Methodist Church



spread through the *Vale do Rio Doce* (Sweet River Valley), the pastors discovered that many older youth had never had the opportunity to attend school. In the 1940s, the district superintendent of the valley, missionary Charles Clay, dreamed of opening a primary school for young people aged 15 to 30. He raised much of the money back in the United States to purchase the farm. Then a missionary couple, Arthur and Marianna Peterson, got the program going. The Goodwins followed the Petersons.

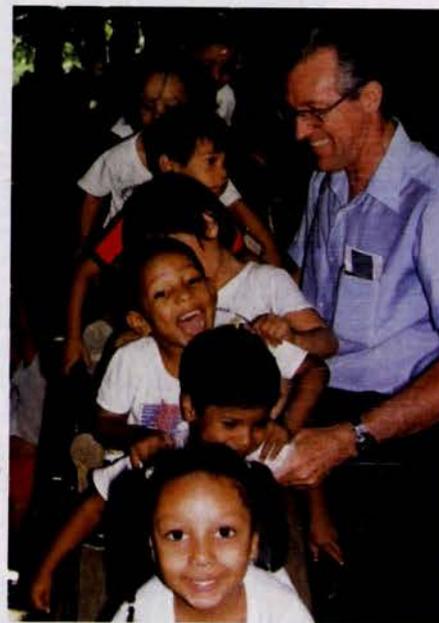
Although the project did serve a need for the church in preparing leadership, the Brazilian Church never really took ownership of it. So IRE remained a missionary project up until the 1960s. "I think this was true of most projects where missionaries worked," writes Jo. "And on the general-church level, missionaries were in charge of all the church positions, especially in the fields of education and social service." But when the Goodwins left IRE in 1962, a Brazilian director took over the post.

The Bible Ones

Nancy Tims' experience in Brazil has spanned her whole life. Her father and mother—William Richard and Frances Schisler—and

her uncle—John Schisler—came to Brazil as missionaries with the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, in the 1920s. During her early years growing up in Brazil with her brother Richard, she remembers when 90 percent of the country was Roman Catholic and Protestants were persecuted. "Protestants were a bothersome minority to the dominating power of the Catholic Church," says Nancy Tims. "This was partly because of the militant assault that early missionaries in the late 1800s launched on the Achilles' heel of Brazilian Catholicism. Protestants were called 'the Bible Ones.'" Before the Vatican II reforms (1962-65), the Roman Catholic Church held that the Bible should be published only in Latin, the language of the church. Protestant missionaries, having no such church law forbidding translations, handed out Portuguese Bibles wherever they went.

"The Portuguese translation of the Bible by Protestants and its wide distribution fell like rain upon parched land," continues Nancy. "Interest in learning more about the Bible led to literacy programs and a strong emphasis on Christian education. Protestant churches often began as Sunday-



Top, pp. 4-5: Rocinha, one of the largest of Rio de Janeiro's favelas. Above: Missionary Marion Way plays with children of the People's Central Institute in 1987.

school classes held in members' homes. The need to train local leadership became a priority. The Board of Missions of The Methodist Church in the United States invested heavily in building churches, schools, a seminary, and a publishing house in Brazil. Early leaders of these institutions were American missionaries. But, increasingly, Brazilian men and women began to assume leadership roles also."

Radical Changes

During the 1960s, radical political and economic changes engulfed Brazil. In 1964, a military coup overthrew the administration of João Belchoir Marques Goulart and the democratic political system that had been ascendant in Brazil since 1945. The next five presidents of the country were military rulers. Jo Goodwin writes: "The church became one of the few arenas in Brazil where things could be discussed. The questioning of power, authority, and the status quo—questioning that had been suppressed in the country by the military dictatorship—now continued in the Methodist Church." Finally, in 1985, civilian government and free elections were reinstated.

During the 1970s, Brazil became the leading industrial power in Latin America, and agricultural exports also increased greatly. But the profit from all the growing industry went to an elite minority while most of the population suffered through severe economic recession. The country's foreign debt grew to \$44 billion by 1992. Inflation soared. Today, 20 percent of the population (32 million of 162 million) survives on one meal a day. The changing economy led to massive population shifts. When Ed Tims arrived in Brazil in 1950, 80 percent of Brazil's people lived in rural areas. Today, 80 percent of the population lives in cities.

The service records of missionaries reflect the changes in the country. Ed Tims was first assigned to teach agriculture at a Methodist school in a rural area. The school is now closed because so many people migrated to the cities. In 1979, the Brazilian Church assigned the Tims to the Rocinha favela in Rio de Janeiro, a radical change in their ministry. By the 1970s, Brazilian Church leaders had set a priority to provide ministry to the excluded poor. At first, the Tims were not happy with the assignment. They had no experience in the city. But it turned out to be a moment of grace for them—a turning point in their ministry. They report that their best teachers were the local people and a very supportive Catholic priest.

A Church of Mission

"Missionaries lost their power and control. Unfortunately, they became the target for an anti-



missionary movement," explains Jo Goodwin, speaking of the 1970s. "The Brazilian Church could not assume the responsibility for not having changed the structure of the church in nearly 100 years. So everything became the fault of the missionaries who had brought the structure with them. However, all this gave birth in the 1970s to the church's search for its own identity as the Methodist Church in Brazil. In the 1980s, several plans finally led to the *Plan for the Life and Mission of the Church*, now the church's main guideline for ministry. The move to be a church of mission, organizing around the membership's gifts and ministries rather than around officers and positions, has brought about real change. The course is still being perfected, but change is implanted and is working."

The Tims believe that the concept of liberation theology brought new perspectives to Methodism. The church began to examine how to address the causes of social injustice and to involve the poor in a search for their own solutions. At first, these efforts met with resistance from conservative groups within the church, which caused some youth to leave the church. But the 1990s have seen a rise in charismatic enthusiasm in Brazil's churches. This has drawn many young people back. Now more conservative groups are showing a willingness to accommodate youthful force and vigor and to accept the youth as part of the body of Christ.

Missionaries Today

If you consult the 1997 *Prayer Calendar*, you'll still find some active missionaries sent to Brazil by the General Board of Global Ministries (GBGM). Gordon and Maria Tereza (Teca) Greathouse serve the São Gabriel Community Center in Belo Horizonte north of Rio de Janeiro. Stephen and Marina Newnum live and work in the city of Londrina in Paraná, west of São Paulo. Stephen is president of the Methodist Evangelical Theological Seminary and senior pastor of two churches in Londrina. Marina is, among other things, the director of the Works of Mercy ministry at the Jarim do Sol Methodist Church. Maribel Mojica, only recently a mission intern, is now working on the coast in Recife with the Women's Ministry Program of REMNE—Brazil's Northeast Missionary Region.

Marion and Anita Way are retiring this year after 35 years of missionary service in Brazil. This followed earlier service in Angola, where Marion started out in 1951 as an A-3 [a short-term missionary serving in Africa for three years]. Anita began her missionary service in 1957, but she grew up in Brazil as the daughter of missionaries Daniel and Fannie Betts.

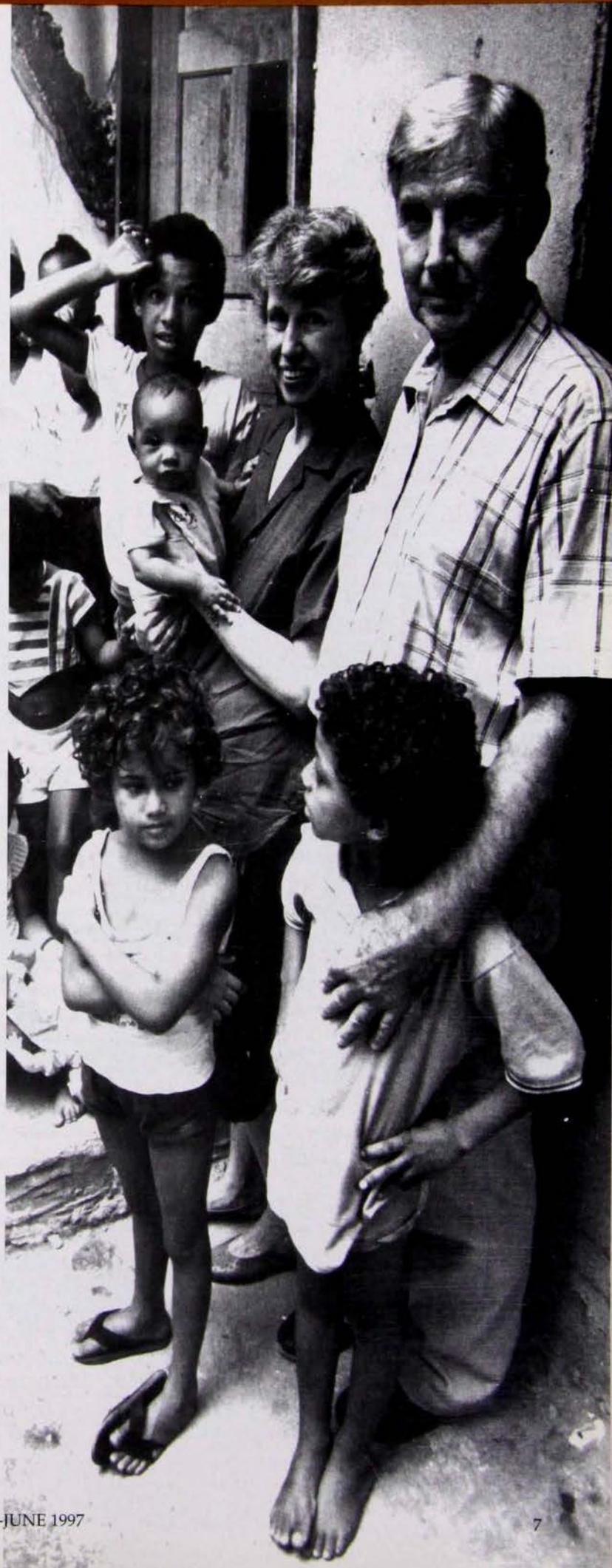
But US missionaries active in Brazil today are only part of the story. Find the many Brazilian ministries and mission institutions listed in the *Prayer Calendar* (pp. 117-124). Then locate the retirees list in the back. Look at the addresses of retired missionaries who continue to live in Brazil. You'll find Gladys and John Betts, Porto Alegre, Brazil; Bill and Nancy Garrison, Brasília, Brazil; James and Nancy Tims, Campo Grande, Brazil; Edith and Richard Schisler, Florianopolis, Brazil; Derrel Santee, Campinas, Brazil; Dorothy Santee, Caldas Novas, Brazil; Leon and Martha Strunk; Nova Almeida, Brazil; James and JoAnn Goodwin, Belo Horizonte, Brazil; Arthur and Marianna Peterson, Campanha, Brazil; and Fred Morris, Rio de Janeiro. After Anita and Marion Way attend their last missionary conference in Georgia this July, they also will retire in Rio. Most of these "retired missionaries" continue to work for the church unofficially, embodying the kind of commitment that quietly comes from genuine love and a true calling from God.

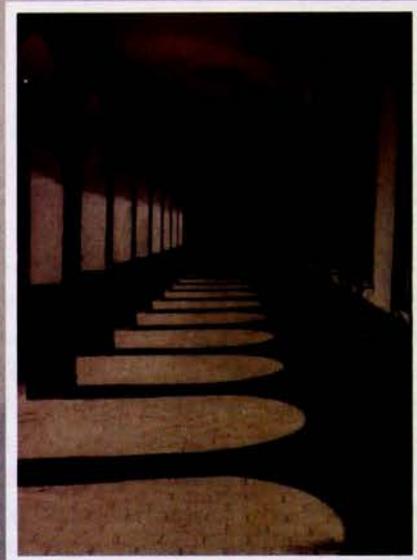
"Whereas, at one time, the Methodist Church in Brazil was a 'mission field,'" say the Tims, "today it is a missionary church, capably preparing its own people for service throughout the immense country and also overseas. We like the term 'partners in mission.' It doesn't carry the distorted connotation of dominance of one over the other but suggests togetherness in all efforts to be the Church of Jesus Christ."

JoAnn and Jim Goodwin express the same kinds of feelings: "One of the best things about our 40 years of work here," they say, "has been seeing the church grow up and reach a certain maturity. At least it is a positive sign that, as an organization, the church is still searching for a system that works. After 50 years in ministry, next January we formally retire. It is time to let others carry on. We rejoice in the young, capable leadership of the Brazilian Methodist Church. We are also thankful for the strong ties we have developed over the years that give us an environment for retiring here and continuing as volunteer workers in the church." □

Christie R. House is the associate editor of New World Outlook. She visited missionaries and mission projects in Brazil for three weeks last August.

Opposite, p. 6, top: JoAnn and James Goodwin **Bottom:** The late Sarah Bennett, a missionary to Brazil from 1942 to 1965, was the principal of the Methodist Institute in Santo Amaro in São Paulo. **Right:** Nancy and Ed Tims at the Rocinha Community Center, 1988.





Methodism in Brazil:

a missionary church

compiled by Christie R. House

Mission happens when the Church gets out of itself, involves itself with the community, and becomes an instrument of the newness of the Kingdom of God. The Church labors, taking on the hopes of our people in the light of the knowledge of the Word of God, in confrontation with reality and discerning the signs of the present time.

(From the Plan for the Life and Mission of the Church, The Methodist Church College of Bishops, Brazil, Life and Mission Library, 1996)

The *Plan for the Life and Mission of the Church* begins by identifying the fundamental elements of Methodist unity. It urges individual believers to practice their faith by daily devotion to God and love of neighbors, responding to the grace of God revealed in Jesus Christ. Both the public and the private life of a Christian ought to be a true

Both the public and the private life of a Christian ought to be a true expression of the believer's personal experience with Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

expression of the believer's personal experience with Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. The power of the Holy Spirit is fundamental to a life of faith in community, in personal piety, and in social witness.

The journey to Christian perfection is proclaimed by Methodists in terms of love of God and neighbor. It is realized both in acts of piety (participating in worship and Communion, reading the Bible, praying, fasting) and in acts of mercy (activities of solidarity with those who are poor, needy, and marginalized). The plan recognizes that Methodism is characterized by its evangelistic passion and by its permanent commitment to the well-being of the total person, not only saving souls but also ministering to physical and social needs. In this light, Methodists must be committed to struggling for the elimination of poverty, exploitation, and all forms of discrimination.

The plan lifts up the priesthood of all believers, charging lay members and clergy alike to work in active ministries according to

God's plan. The mission of God in the world is defined in the document as establishing the kingdom of God—the creation of the new world, new life, perfect love, full justice, authentic liberty, and complete peace. "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news." (Mark 1:15)

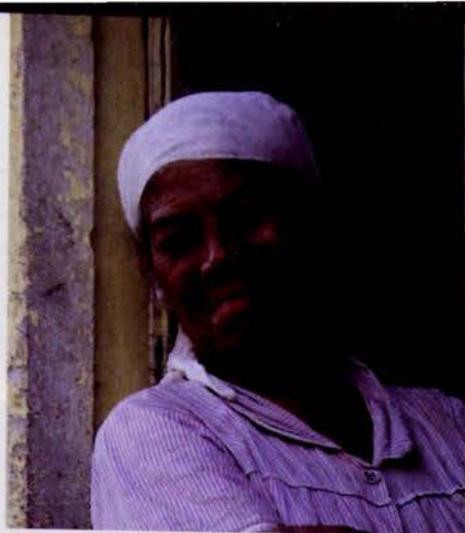
Methodism affirms that the church, before being an organization, institution, or social group, is a Body, a living organ, a community of Christ. Its life ought to be expressed as a community of faith, adoration, growth, witness, love, support, and service. In this community, Methodists are awakened and fed; they grow, share, live together, express their life, and build the Body of Christ. They are equipped for service and express it together with people and communities. (From the Plan for the Life and Mission of the Church)

Brazil's Missionary Plan

For Brazil's Methodist churchgoers, the plan means active involvement in the church's mission and ministry. It means that the Brazilian Church, which used to request and receive many missionaries from the United States, has now trained its own leaders to develop and administer the church's mission.

The Methodist Church of Brazil has six ecclesiastical regions (see map, page 24). Each has its own mission program within its region. Local congregations engage in outreach ministries, and the church maintains both regional and national institutions. In addition, all the regions are responsible for mission outreach in the north, northwest, and northeast missionary regions of the church (CMNN and REMNE).

The expansion of the church into these areas is regulated by a National Missionary Plan that utilizes lay and ordained missionaries



A woman of Limoeiro, Pernambuco, peers out of her doorway.

from the six ecclesiastical regions. The plan establishes guidelines and methods for the church to follow in areas of the country where there are no formal congregations. The guidelines cover the recruitment, selection, and training of missionary personnel to carry out the church's work on the nation's northern frontier.

According to the Missionary Plan, mission work will be valid only if there is an opportunity for a specific Methodist contribution to a community. The work should be creative and focused on new areas of service and witness—areas that are not being attended to in the community. Mission work should be founded on research done in the community, based on a study of local needs and how the church might meet them. The church should give preference to places where the social and economic needs are greatest, always working to develop local leadership and to involve the total community.

Throughout the pages of this special issue, you will read about how the Brazilian Church has put its Missionary Plan into action. From the Brazilian Church itself, from United Methodist missionaries (who have now lived longer in Brazil than they lived in the United States), and from our *New World Outlook* on-the-scene reporters, the story of mission in Brazil emerges as an integral part of the life of the church. □



Above: Children of Las Mangueiras neighborhood of Porto Velho.

Opposite, p. 8: The portico of Ana Gonzaga, a Methodist orphanage on the outskirts of Rio de Janeiro.



LIFE CHANGES SLOWLY FOR BRAZIL'S STREET CHILDREN

by Paul Jeffrey

In the March-April 1994 issue of *New World Outlook*, Paul Jeffrey explored the economic and social reasons why thousands of Brazilian children were living on the streets, often facing death squads composed of off-duty police officers. Now he provides an update on the effects of the landmark Statute on Children and Adolescents passed by Brazil's National Congress in 1990.

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I followed Francisca de Asis Soares into the midnight darkness of the Praça da República, the main crack-dealing zone in downtown São Paulo. We had witnessed three police officers grab a young boy and drag him back into the shadows. "Let's go," Soares ordered, and we plunged down the murky path. The cops pushed the kid along the path until one of them spotted Soares and me. All of a sudden their attitude changed. One patted the boy on the back and said something pleasant as the three let their prey escape. Soares stopped in the dark path.

"They're afraid of me," she said. "They know I'm here to watch them. They know I can cause trouble for them."

An attorney who works with the Children's Ministry of the Catholic Archdiocese of São Paulo, Soares was taking her turn at nightly rounds in the urban canyons of Brazil's largest city. We had met shortly after dark on the steps of the city's cathedral in the Praça de Sé, then set off at a lively pace through the underside of São Paulo's night life, checking out the alleys and plazas along the way. As we moved along, Soares talked with children, asking how they were and what was happening. After a while we arrived at the Praça da República.

A hundred years ago, the plaza anchored a neighborhood of mansions built by agricultural barons who had grown rich from the country's coffee boom. Today the neighborhood is full of stores and offices that bustle by day. But when

the sun goes down, the shoppers give way to junkies. Then the park is populated by crack dealers who linger in the shadows, their flashy clothes and leather waist packs signaling their vocation. Police also patrol the park. When I asked Soares why the police didn't bust the obvious drug dealers, she rubbed her thumb and fingers together: money.

Effects of a New Law

What the police do is rough up street kids, as they have for years. That Soares dissuaded them by her

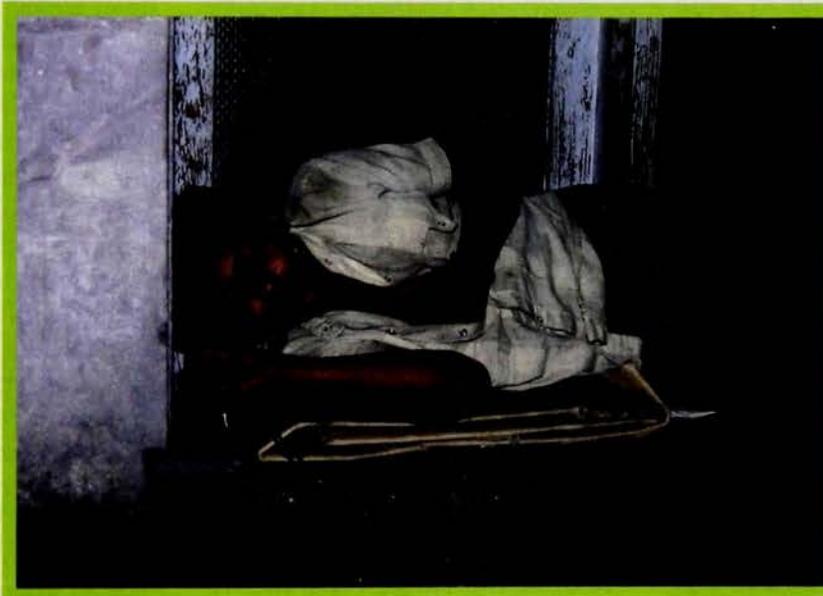
According to Rodrigo Gonzalez, a lawyer and children's activist in the southern city of Porto Alegre, police violence against children is down in several areas. "The soldiers in the military police now have to study the law," he told me. "Yet they can choose to ignore it. They take the kids away somewhere, beat them up, and then turn them loose instead of arresting them. They know that if they take a beaten child into the courts today, they're going to have problems."

Zeni de Lima Soares is coordinator of an innovative Methodist-sponsored ministry with street children in São Bernardo do Campo, an industrial suburb of São Paulo. She also reported that police violence is down. "When we began working with the kids, most of them were considered delinquents and they were often exterminated," she recalled. "We lost more than 41 kids in São Bernardo alone. Today it's better. This is partly

because there's more observation by educators who are out on the streets."

While violence against the kids has diminished in some places, in other places, such as Rio de Janeiro, it is the same or worse. Francisca Soares said the military police in São Paulo are now more likely to assassinate kids in poor neighborhoods than in the city center. "When they kill a child on the periphery of the city, it doesn't make news," she said.

Many observers believe the continuing violence reflects a larger social pathology. "There's still a



Children and youth sleep in the streets of São Paulo (p. 10) and Recife (above).

mere presence is a sign that things have changed—a little. "The police aren't treating kids better because they think the kids have human rights but rather because they're afraid of getting caught doing something that violates the ECA [the 1990 Statute on Children and Adolescents]," Ron Ahnen later explained. Ahnen is a doctoral student from the University of North Carolina who is in Rio de Janeiro studying the implementation of the ECA. "They know they'll get the book thrown at them if they get caught beating up a child," he said.

**BRAZIL HAS 4.3
MILLION CHILD
WORKERS
UNDER AGE 14.**

mentality among the police that's left over from the days of the military dictatorship," said Gonzalez of Porto Alegre. "They tend to see certain types of people—the poor, Blacks, and street children—as dangerous in principal. This attitude has become rooted in the culture and is difficult to change."

A Methodist Shelter

As Francisca Soares continued her rounds in São Paulo, we passed by several police dragging a hand-



Brazil is home to 53 percent of the 17.5 million children under 18 who work in Latin America instead of going to school. This youth sells ice cream in Porto Velho.

cuffed boy along the sidewalk. "He's over 18. I can't do anything," she said. The ECA covers kids until they're 18. After that, they're on their own.

A block away from the Praça da República, we ran into several colleagues from the Catholic Archdiocese, likewise patrolling. It was an international team, including an Italian, a Norwegian, two Costa Ricans, and two Brazilians. They compared notes with Soares. All agreed that it was a slow night.

Soares and I were heading for a homeless shelter. Located under a freeway overpass, the Street People Methodist Community is a project of the Brazilian Methodist Church and the city government. It provides beds for more than 100 people a night, including men, women, and children. The church provides a pastor and project administrator, while the city provides social workers and covers other costs. When Soares finds someone on the street who needs a safe place to sleep, she refers the person there. The facility also offers food, showers, space for relaxing, and a room for storing personal belongings during the day. Soares said it's the best shelter in São Paulo.

Politicizing Children's Rights

The passage of the 1990 Statute on Children and Adolescents provided a landmark for children's legislation around the world. Pushed by a national coalition of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and an association of street kids, the law gave children rights of their own. It also mandated the establishment of two related councils at municipal, state, and federal levels. A rights council—usually composed of government and NGO representatives—would set public policy for promoting and protecting children's rights. The other body—a tutelary (guardian) council—would be made up of elected representatives charged with safeguarding the well-being and safety of kids on a day-to-day basis.

The law has made some difference. "The problems of children are now an important political issue," acknowledged Gonzalez. "Groups working with kids can today go to a government office and get an appointment. Eight years ago we would have waited all day and no one would have seen us."

"The big challenge today is to put the 1990 law into practice," argued Zeni de Lima Soares. Children-oriented NGOs, she said, must spend an inordinate amount of their energy monitoring city governments to make sure they do what the law requires.

In the northwestern state of Rondonia, a priest in Porto Velho resigned from the local children's rights council last year. "The politicians wanted to block the law because NGOs on the council looked over their shoulder to see how they spent money," reported the Rev. Bento LeFevere, a Salesian priest from Belgium who has worked with children in Brazil for more than 25 years. "We spent a year trying to get funding to NGOs. There was no political will to make the law work. This politicizing of children's work made me so frustrated that I quit."

The Axé Project

However, in the mostly Afro-Brazilian city of Salvador, in the northeastern state of Bahia, the ECA councils have cultivated an environment in which the municipal government is learning from NGOs how to work with street kids and poor urban families. Zaliteia Gildson Carvalho is employed by the Axé Project, an NGO working with street children in Salvador. City and state officials asked Axé to establish a training center for educators who would

work with street kids. As a result, Carvalho said, many of the two-person teams that work the streets today are composed of one Axé staffer and one city educator. It's part of a push by Axé and other NGOs, said Carvalho, to "get government to do the work it's supposed to do, rather than needing NGOs to work with street kids and children at risk."

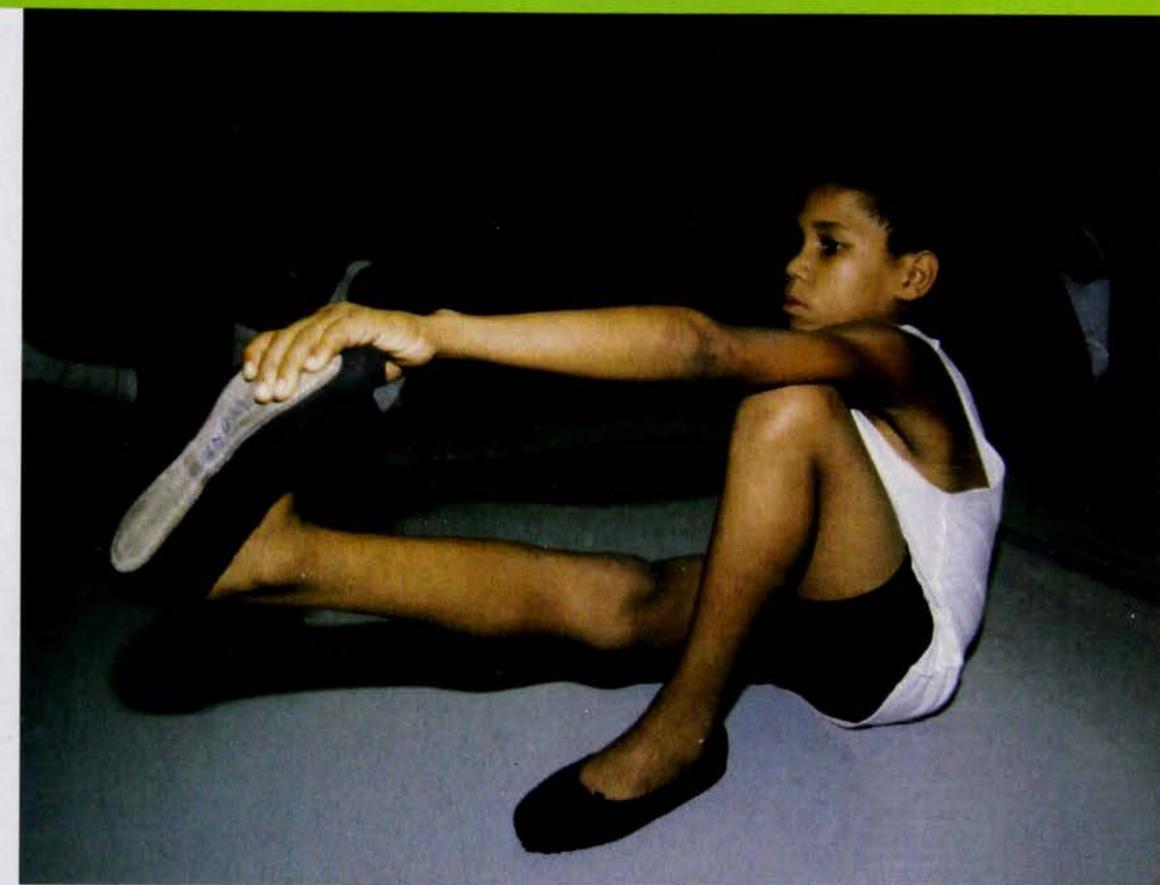
Despite the organizational advances, Carvalho reported that more kids are showing up on the streets of the colonial slave port. And they're younger. Whereas in 1990 most street kids were in their teens, today, Carvalho said, many are as young as four and five.

The Axé Project—which got some of its start-up money seven years ago from the Methodist-funded Ecumenical Service Coordinator—has several projects designed to keep children at risk off the streets. Its educators work with families in marginal neighborhoods that ring the city of Salvador. One program trains kids aged 5 to 18 in classical ballet, offering discipline and what Carvalho called "an opportunity to dream about doing something in life other than wash car windshields."

Working for Cultural Change

"Those of us who are in the streets every day often have the impression that nothing has changed in 10 years—maybe not in 50 years," said Ulisses Guirgel, a consultant on children's ministries for the São Paulo archdiocese. "Is it worth it to invest so much energy in something with so few results?"

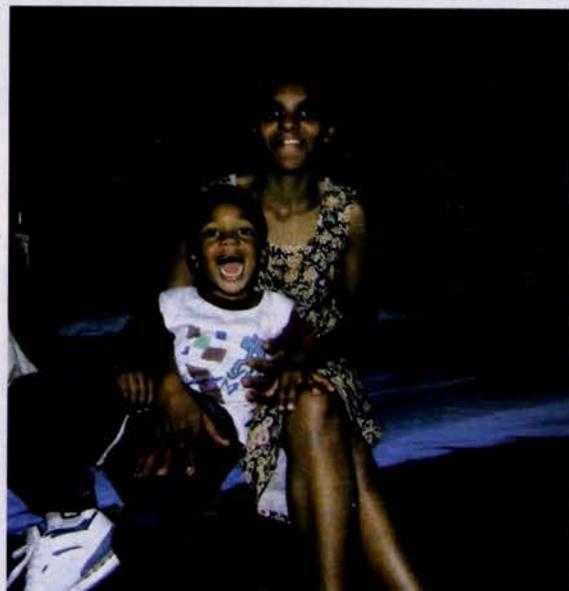
Guirgel said that the ECA has provided Brazil with a new doctrine but not a new culture. Yet he admitted that there are signs of



encouragement. "You can hear kids on the street today say they're going to the council to complain. You can hear kids, when they're detained by the police, demand to know the charges against them. You can hear kids cite you chapter and verse about their right to live on the street if they have no other place to go. You never heard this 10 years ago. So there is the beginning of a change in consciousness."

"Before," Guirgel continued, "there was hardly any discussion of the rights of children. Today, out of almost 7000 municipalities in the country, more than 4000 have a council on the rights of children. Kids are still abandoned, abused, considered delinquents, and forced to grow up without schools, health care, housing, or recreation. But there's a new society being built where at least the denial of these rights is being discussed. □"

Paul Jeffrey is a United Methodist missionary in Central America. He lives near Tegucigalpa, Honduras.

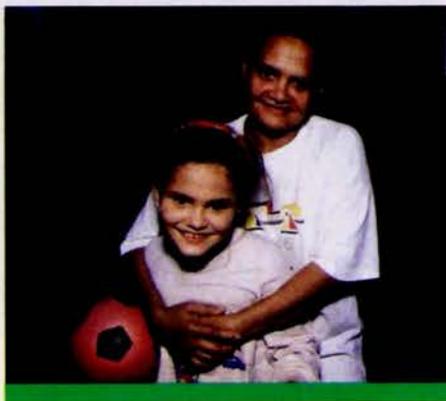
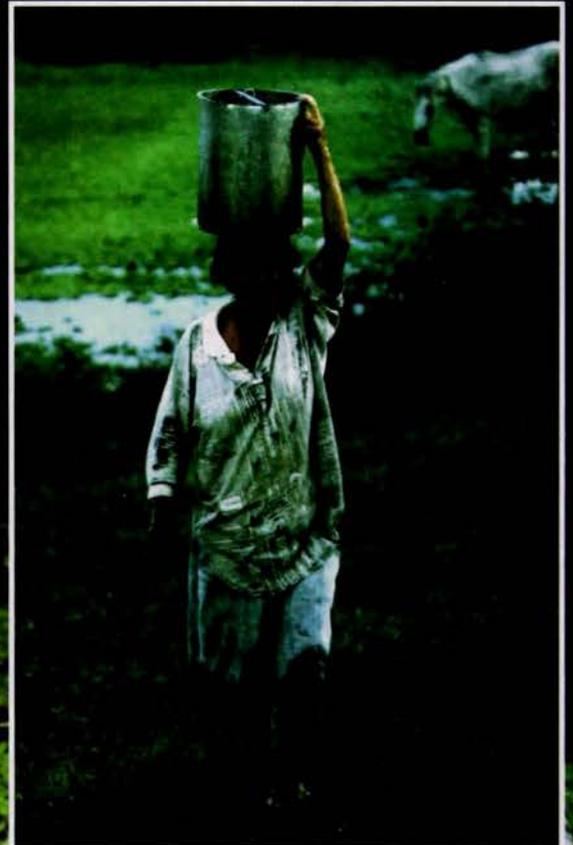


Top: Children from the streets participate in a classical ballet program run by the Axé Project in Salvador, Bahia.

Above: A mother and her child find shelter at the Street People Methodist Community in São Paulo. The homeless center is located under a bridge in the center of Brazil's largest city.

Good Health, Abundant Life for Brazil's Poor

by Paul Jeffrey



Nothing is easy for Fatima Lima. She's had to struggle hard for what little she's accomplished. Yet now that she's accompanied by a group of Brazilian Methodists who are committed to achieving abundant life for all God's children, Lima's struggle has become a little easier.

Lima is a part of Brazil's poor majority. She lives with her daughter

Dandara in the Las Mangueras neighborhood of Porto Velho, the capital of the northwestern state of Rondonia in Brazil's Amazon Basin. Las Mangueras became a neighborhood overnight on May 1, 1994, when two dozen families invaded an abandoned field on the edge of the city in their quest for a decent place to live. The owner of the field called the police, who removed several families by force, smashed their dwellings of cardboard and scrap lumber, and hauled off several invaders to jail. But the remaining residents held tenaciously to their little patch of promised land. The police eventually gave up.

Since then, the belligerent neighborhood has battled an indifferent municipal government over

the quality of life in Las Mangueras. Because the invaders have no legal title, city officials claim they cannot provide the area with essential utilities. Lima and her friends have demonstrated in front of city hall but have elicited no response. So the residents have taken it upon themselves to tap into a nearby water main and run pipes to their simple houses. Lima proudly shows off the water faucet in her small backyard. In the trees overhead, a web of tangled wires attests to the neighborhood's clandestine electrical hookup.

No health services exist in Las Mangueras, where a total of 50 families live today. There's a government-run clinic a 20-minute walk away. But to see a physician entails waiting in line all night to



Above: Scenes of Limoeiro in Northeastern Brazil. Alici de Conceição (above, right) draws polluted water from a pond near her community and carries it home (p. 14). Dalvinha Correia and Celerino Carriconde, director of the Recife-based Northeast Center for Popular Medicine, discuss medicinal plants in the Center's garden (above, left). Page 14, bottom left: Fatima Lima and her daughter Dandara of Las Mangueras in Porto Velho.

get a slip of paper that promises an appointment a month later. Medicines are supposed to be free, but Lima says the shelves of the clinic's pharmacy are always bare.

Lima works off and on, cutting hair and cooking. It's been difficult for her to find steady work because she must regularly take Dandara—who suffers from eye disease—to São Paulo for medical treatment. The bus journey takes more than 60 hours each way.

Brazilian Methodist Outreach

Lima first came into contact with Methodists in Porto Velho in 1992, when she went looking for financial assistance for her trips to São Paulo. Impressed by the warmth and caring she experienced, Lima started attending worship services

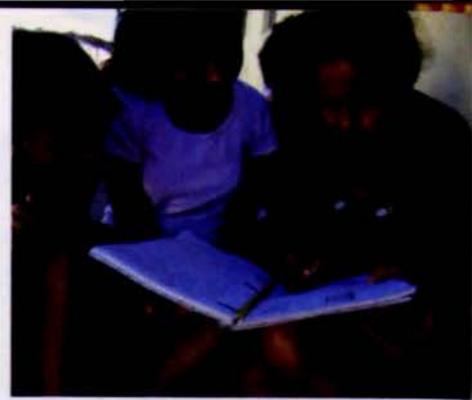
at Central Church, the Methodist church in the center of town.

When the invaders of Las Mangueras were plotting out lots in the new neighborhood, Lima argued for reserving a space for a Methodist church building. Her neighbors disagreed. So Lima started holding "house church" gatherings in her own home. Several neighbors came, as did some friends from the Central Church congregation. That church began to see the Las Mangueras congregation as a mission outreach project.

When one family decided to move out of Las Mangueras after a few months, the congregation purchased the lot from the family for a multipurpose church facility. (Though there is still no legal title

to the land, the payment to the family made the church legitimate in the neighbors' eyes.) A team of volunteers from the Methodist Church in Ireland traveled to Porto Velho in 1995 to assist local volunteers with the construction. When the building was finally finished the following year, a small but lively congregation existed—the only church presence in the neighborhood. Central Church hired a young seminary student to pastor the mission congregation.

Neither Lima nor the other Methodists wanted a church that gathered for worship on Sunday but remained irrelevant the rest of the week. As they were discussing what they could do to make the Methodist presence more liberating and empowering, a visitor from



Above, left and center: Residents build their own housing in Las Mangueras neighborhood. Right: Maria da Paz of Limoeiro teaches Maria Sebastiana Conceição how to read.

India arrived. Dr. Mabelle Arole, a physician—codirector of the Comprehensive Rural Health Project in Jamkhed, India—came to Porto Velho for a consultation sponsored by the Latin American Council of Evangelical Methodist Churches (CIEMAL) and the United Methodist General Board of Global Ministries. The gathering focused on strategies for expanding the church's outreach in Brazil's rugged northwest, a relatively new mission area for Brazilian Methodists.

As Arole described how her center trains India's poor to resolve their own health problems with the resources at hand, the Brazilian Methodists decided to do something similar in their Northwest Missionary Region (CMNN). Following lengthy discussions with Arole and CIEMAL leaders, they committed themselves to starting a pilot project in Las Mangueras.

Lima and the other Methodists conducted a quality-of-life survey. After analyzing the survey results, they started a sewing course for women, recreational activities for neighborhood youth, and typing classes. In cooperation with a Catholic health program, they also started classes on alternative cooking—learning how to better use low-cost nutritious ingredients.

Community-based Health Care

As Lima and her neighbors began organizing to improve their lives, a group of women on the other side of Brazil were also inspired by

Arole and the Jamkhed model. They were taking steps to implement another CIEMAL-sponsored pilot project of comprehensive community-based health care.

Located in the arid northeastern state of Pernambuco, the town of Limoeiro has more than 65,000 inhabitants. Most families are landless, chased off their small farms by the rich, who formed great estates. Local men now work as day laborers. Many of the region's women work in their homes sewing lace tablecloths. It's eye-straining labor that earns an efficient worker an average of 20 cents an hour.

As part of its outreach, the Northeast Missionary Region of the Methodist Church of Brazil (REMNE) had been working in Limoeiro for four years, helping to organize lace workers into a marketing cooperative. Methodist pastoral workers knew that health care in Limoeiro was available only to the privileged. At the government clinic in the center of town, residents have to line up shortly after midnight to get an appointment. Seeing a doctor will still cost them \$40.

"The only really accessible health care we have is during the political campaigns. Then, the parties bring around a trailer with doctors and optometrists," reports Limoeiro's Maria da Paz.

So when CIEMAL leaders were scouting for another site to start a pilot project, Limoeiro was a natural choice. A community member, Ana Maria da Silva, went to India

in 1995. She was impressed by what she saw. "The people around Jamkhed remain poor," she says. "But they have better health because they organized. I learned that you don't have to be sick just because you're poor."

Da Silva was particularly impressed by the role of Indian women. "They do marvelous work," she says. "They go out looking for the sick, sharing love and encouragement."

After Da Silva returned, the women of Limoeiro set to work. With help from two staff members from the church's Recife headquarters, they prepared a two-page questionnaire about family status, education, health, and employment. In four months, they surveyed 1926 families. It wasn't easy. Of the eight women and one man conducting the survey, two were illiterate and most of the rest had limited reading and writing abilities.

Many results were expected: widespread unemployment, miserable living conditions, high illiteracy, many single mothers, and lots of children with easily preventable illness. Da Paz says what surprised her was the ignorance of her neighbors. "I couldn't believe people told me that mother's milk was unhealthy," she says.

The women designed a multifaceted action plan. To get at one of the root causes of their poverty, they began a literacy program for women. Then they began looking at ways to generate income. The women signed an agreement with a government agency to provide

the capital for a small, rotating loan fund. They will administer it, guaranteeing the repayment of each member. They will use the money to start small businesses.

Working with the Northeastern Center for Popular Medicine in Olinda, the women have begun to recover many herbal medicines their grandmothers used but that

grow vegetables, according to De Conceição. Digging a well would only yield saltier, completely unpalatable water. And laying water pipes was thought to be impossible because they would have to cross private plantation land.

The Varjada settlement came to the attention of Ferreira and her colleague Dalvinha Correia when they heard reports about it from an itinerant Methodist evangelist. Correia remembers that when she first started visiting the remote community, it took two months for the children to lose their fear of her. Today they welcome her with warm smiles.

Since last year, Varjada has been visited frequently by a county government nurse. It's part of a positive shift in how government views health care. Yet resources are few and the nurse has limited experience. Ferreira and Correia have worked extensively with her to develop an adequate census of community health problems and then plan a united campaign. They've focused primarily on the community's children, who are often sick with diarrhea and with respiratory problems, including illnesses caused by the heavy use of pesticides on the plantations.

They're also working on solving the problem of water. Varjada residents recently began laying pipes to bring in water from a nearby well. It took pressure on the local government and dialogue with the plantation owners—something that wouldn't have happened had the community not decided to organize. Now De Conceição looks forward to drinking water without dead frogs. For the people of Varjada, that's a big first step in the journey toward abundant life. □

Paul Jeffrey is a United Methodist missionary in Central America. He lives outside Tegucigalpa, Honduras.



Women of Limoeiro with Dalvinha Correia (far left).

The women also decided to join a local political action group, the Center for the Defense of Life (CDL). Based in a local Catholic parish, CDL brings together people working on women's issues, drug abuse, crime reduction, and other concerns that affect the poor.

Edna Ferreira Santos, a nurse, is a pastoral agent from the Methodist missionary region assigned to accompany the women of Limoeiro. "Our task in this project isn't to place health professionals to solve the people's problems," says Ferreira. "Instead, we want the community to understand and solve its own health problems. The women came to understand that they could do that much better if they joined with other community groups."

Among the resources at hand in Limoeiro are traditional medicines. The women planted an herb garden behind the project's office.

were forgotten when families migrated from farms to the city.

Water as a Health Issue

As the women of Limoeiro continue to organize themselves and their community for change, the women of Varjada, an arid rural settlement an hour away, are getting started.

In Varjada, it didn't take a survey to figure out that water is the most pressing health issue. The dirt-poor families of Varjada live on tiny plots surrounded by giant plantations. They grow corn on land rented from the plantation owners, whom they pay with a preset quantity of the harvest. The only water available is a stagnant pond where the plantation cows often come to drink. "It's often got dead frogs floating in it," says resident Alici de Conceição (kohn say SAHNH). "We put chlorine in it, but the chlorine runs out and we don't have money to buy more." The water is also salty, making it hard to

Taking the Side of Brazil's Indigenous People

by Paul Jeffrey



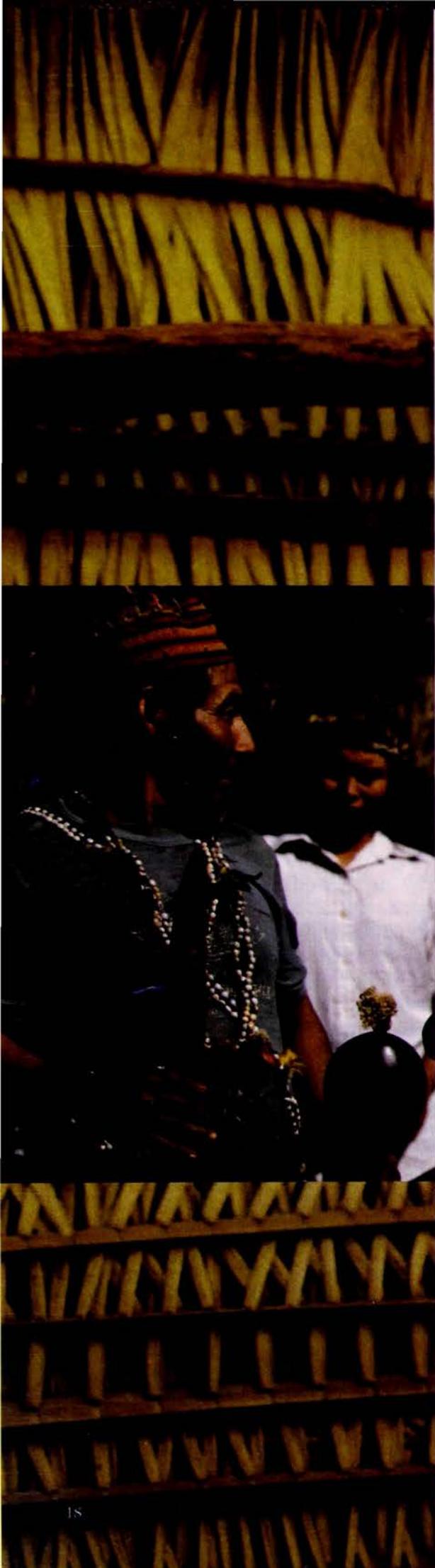
Celso da Silva emerges from his dirt-floored hut every morning, stretches as he greets the sun, and then stares at the barbed-wire fence that separates him from his land. Although he can't cross the fence, located just 10 feet from his front door, da Silva hopes that, one day, his children will reclaim the land that once belonged to their people.

Da Silva is a member of the Kaíowa-Guarani indigenous tribe in the southern Brazilian state of Mato

Grosso do Sul. His village of Campestre—near the border with Paraguay in an area that was all rain forest until 40 years ago—contains 28 families and has historical rights to 2000 hectares [4940 acres] of land. Yet the villagers occupy only 11 hectares [27 acres]. The rest was seized a decade ago by a wealthy rancher who lives in distant São Paulo. The rancher raises beef cattle on the fenced-off land. Da Silva and his family eat beef, at most, once a year. They raise a meager harvest of corn and beans on the rocky patch of land the rancher left them.

Da Silva remembers that, during his childhood, all the land belonged to his tribe. The families survived from subsistence agriculture and hunting. "Then the rancher came and drove us off our land," he recalls. "And those he couldn't remove by force, he bought off."

The tribe eventually protested to the government's indigenous affairs agency, FONAI, which sent an anthropologist to document the tribe's claim. Now the paperwork gathers dust in FONAI offices and in the courts in Campo Grande, the state





Above: A Kaíowa woman weaves a hammock in Bororo. *Opposite, p. 18:* The same woman rolls the string, preparing it for weaving. *At far left, Kaíowa men perform a traditional dance in Campestre.*

capital. "The process can take forever if the rancher wants it to," says the Rev. Paulo da Silva Costa, a Methodist pastor from nearby Ponta Porã.

Da Silva Costa supervises the Tapeporã Mission, an innovative ministry with indigenous peoples in Mato Grosso do Sul. He says the ministry's primary goal is "to accompany the indigenous in their struggle for survival." In practice, that means transporting tribal leaders to endless organizing sessions, helping recover endangered cultural practices, and providing logistical and moral support so that the indigenous can win respect for their rights. "No one can 'save' the indigenous except themselves," argues Da Silva Costa. "In the long run, that's the only way they'll survive with their culture intact." For the Kaíowa, as for most of Brazil's

indigenous peoples, survival means land.

The Great Land Grab

No one knows how many indigenous people lived in Brazil when the Portuguese arrived almost 500 years ago. Estimates range from 2 to 20 million. Yet the following decades took their toll. Thanks to disease, slavery, warfare, the expropriation of native land, and the dislocation of indigenous communities, most of Brazil's original peoples were wiped out.

Brazil's indigenous population has increased since the mid-1970s to its present level of more than 300,000. Still, this figure represents less than 0.2 percent of a national population of 162 million. Comprising 215 identified groups, Brazil's indigenous people speak at least 170 languages and exhibit

a remarkable range of cultural diversity. Perhaps 50 more indigenous groups remain uncontacted deep in the rain forest, but the steady movement of the agricultural frontier endangers their isolation and their cultural survival.

For Brazil's indigenous peoples, land is clearly the central issue of their cultural future. The indigenous have legal rights to 11 percent of Brazil's territory—much of it rich in valuable minerals, hardwoods, and other natural resources. More than 98 percent of extant indigenous land is in the Amazon Basin, constituting 18 percent of that region. But only slightly more than half of the indigenous people live there. The near-half remaining live on less than 2 percent of indigenous land in the densely populated south and east of the country.



*Above: A village house near Bororo shows a typical dwelling of the Kaiowa-Guarani people.
Below: A young girl served by the Tapeporã Mission.*

It would seem that, after 500 years of genocide and mass expropriation of their land, indigenous Brazilians could be left alone on what little they have left. But that's not the case. Throughout the twentieth century, the systematic theft of indigenous land has continued.

The land seizures accelerated in the 1970s when the military government decreed that the country's national security would be threatened by outsiders unless the Amazon Basin was "occupied." So roads were pushed into the jungle, dams constructed on mighty rivers, and mining concessions granted willy-nilly. Logging companies tore down ancient hardwoods, leaving behind pasture for cattle ranchers to produce hamburger. Residents from the burgeoning coastal cities were enticed to the interior with tales of untold wealth waiting to be discovered. According to the military's logic, if indigenous people got in the way of this "progress," then they were best removed to specified territories where they would not impede development.

Indigenous Land Rights

As democratization began in the 1980s, pressure for reform mounted from domestic activists, the Roman Catholic Church, and international human rights groups. When a new Brazilian constitution was drafted in 1988, guarantees of

indigenous rights were written into it. The text guaranteed indigenous peoples "the original rights to the lands they traditionally occupy." These rights were "inalienable, indispensable, and untransferable." This meant that land titles acquired by Whites over the years were invalid if the land was declared to belong to native Brazilians traditionally. The federal government was given clear responsibility for marking off and protecting indigenous lands. Most of the legally defined indigenous land in existence today was marked off during



the seven years that followed ratification of the constitution.

While politicians were busy debating indigenous rights, the timber companies, mining operations, landless farmers, and other settlers invaded indigenous land where they pleased. Occasionally the police would throw off the invaders. More often, they arrested

indigenous people trying to protect their land. Amnesty International reported last year that 123 Indians had been killed in land conflicts during the previous five years.

Last October, the filmmaker Vincent Carelli documented the way a cattle rancher in Rondonia, in the Amazon Basin, had bulldozed the remains of a village of uncontacted indigenous people to erase evidence of their presence. This evidence could have been used to challenge the rancher's property claims. Before-and-after aerial photographs of the village site revealed the destruction.

Also in Rondonia last year, witnesses testified that another rancher had ordered his workers to open fire on the surviving members of an uncontacted indigenous group. The workers reportedly entered the indigenous village shooting. They pulled down and burned the longhouse and destroyed a garden of corn and squash. Three Indians fled and were pursued through the forest. Later, a bulldozer opened an access road to facilitate deforestation and cover up vestiges of the village.

Such "ethnic cleansing" has routinely gone uninvestigated by the police and unpunished by the courts. And it's on the rise. For the eight years of its existence, Brazil's Indigenous Missionary Council (CIMI) has issued an annual report

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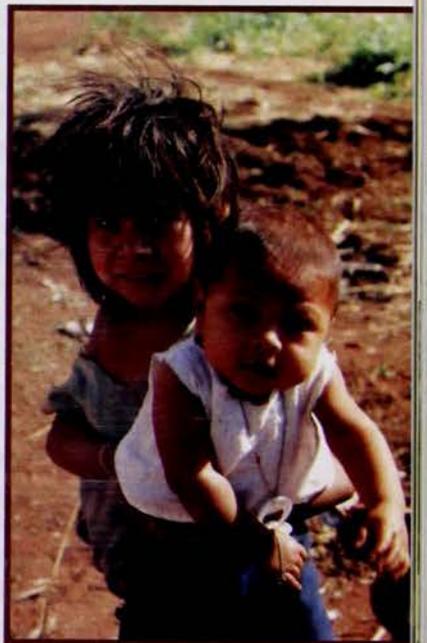
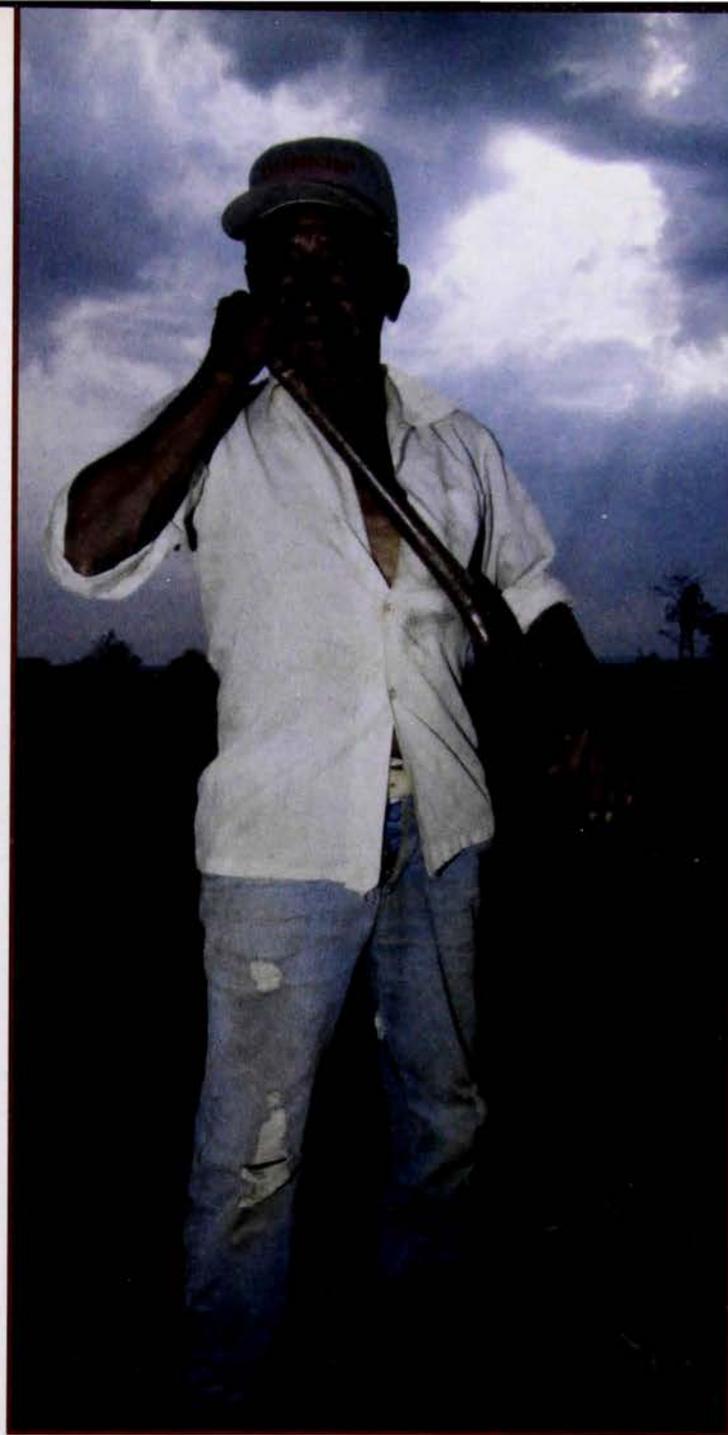
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on violence against Indians. In 1996, death threats, invasions of indigenous land, and deaths from hunger were at their highest point since 1988, when the reports began. CIMI blamed much of the increased anti-indigenous violence on a controversial decision by President Fernando Henrique Cardoso that jeopardized the advances made under the 1988 constitution.

Defend or Die

When he was inaugurated on January 1, 1995, Cardoso repeated his campaign pledge to safeguard existing demarcations and accelerate the pace of further land protection. Yet, a year later, he caved in to loggers and miners and issued a presidential order opening up even already demarcated land to legal challenge. Cardoso's "Decree 1775" was criticized at home by indigenous activists and the country's Catholic bishops, and it was also condemned abroad. Amnesty International called it "a recipe for tragedy." But it was supported by business leaders interested in exploiting indigenous land and by military officials, who cited security concerns. They claimed that the subsoil of many indigenous reserves is rich in minerals that have strategic applications in the military's space program.

Within weeks of Cardoso's announcement, Decree 1775 produced hundreds of claims requesting the reduction of indigenous land. Yet considerable pressure from Brazil's indigenous and their supporters around the world clearly helped convince government officials to reject most of the claims as unfounded. The long-term effects of Decree 1775 remain to be seen. In the short term, Cardoso's decision sent an irrefutable signal that it was open season on the indigenous land.



Kaíowa people near Bororo (above) and Campestre (top and bottom right).

This obviously increased the insecurity with which Brazil's indigenous people see their future. Among the Kaíowa of Mato Grosso do Sul, more than three dozen people committed suicide during 1996—mainly younger members of the tribe. According to the Rev. Maria Imaculada Conceição (kohn say SAHNH) Costa, the indigenous people see death as an escape from mounting social pressure. "These people suffer from severely low self-

esteem," she points out. "Many are losing their identity, losing what it means to be indigenous people." Conceição Costa is district superintendent for the Methodist Church in Mato Grosso do Sul. She is also a close collaborator with her husband, Da Silva Costa, in the Tapeporã Mission.

"There's more external pressure on the indigenous communities than ever before," reports Da Silva Costa. "The space for them to be

indigenous is constantly shrinking. They've either got to defend their lands and their children where they are, or else they'll be exterminated."

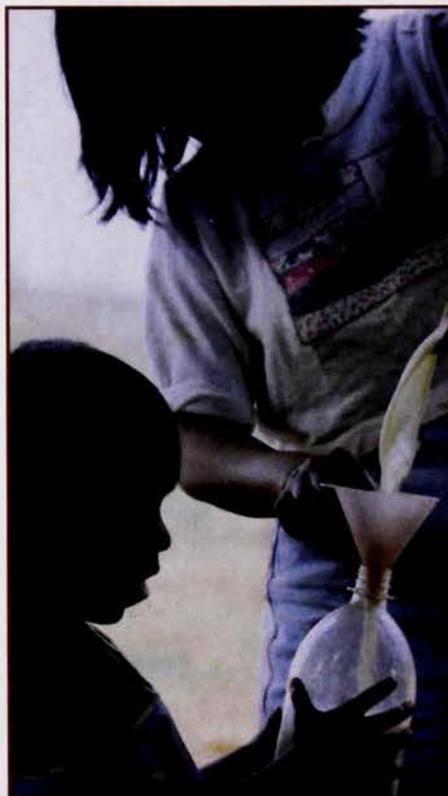
The Tapeporã Mission

The Tapeporã Mission is one of 10 indigenous mission projects sponsored by the Methodist Church of Brazil. Da Silva Costa defines its purpose as "accompaniment" rather than traditional evangelism.

"We didn't want to be just one more church working with Indians," says Da Silva Costa. "Some indigenous have converted to Christianity five or six times apiece, every time a new church comes around. We didn't come here just to satisfy our own evangelical thirst. We wanted to share the Good News—but Good News as the indigenous understand it, not as we define it."

Da Silva Costa says John Wesley serves as a pertinent role model for ministry with indigenous peoples. "Wesley started off seeing the indigenous as people without a culture of their own, as children. He set off to convert them but ended up being converted himself."

Where earlier Methodist ministry in Brazil often provided the indigenous with medical care, the ministries today are more diverse. In the village of Bororo, for example, on the outskirts of the city of Dourados, the mission worked with local residents to start an herb garden. There, the Kaíowa are cultivating traditional medicines once used by their ancestors. Conceição Costa claims that the reclaiming of traditional ways of healing is a corrective to the Western medical practices introduced by church missions and government agencies over the years. The Western model would encourage dependence on pharmaceutical-based curative medicine. As a result, many of the people's traditional



The "Mechanical Cow," a soy-milk machine, has made a world of difference in the lives of the children of Bororo. Right, opposite page: Kaíowa technicians pour the soybeans into the machine. Top: They oversee all phases of the soy-milk production with care. Center: The soy milk is distributed to children in three different places around the village. Above: The children bring containers to hold the milk, but they don't wait until they get home to enjoy it.

healing skills were lost. "Today the pharmaceuticals are simply not available or they're too expensive," Conceição Costa reports.

Nancila Snard is one of those who tend the herb garden. She remembers how her mother once used many of the plants she's cultivating today. She recalls her childhood 50 years ago as a happier time when the tribe lived mostly from hunting with arrows and fishing the region's rivers with long spears. The destruction of the natural environment meant an end to that life, but working again with the herbal medicines gives her hope.

Milking Soybeans

The herb garden is located behind a building that houses yet another mission-sponsored initiative—a "mechanical cow." Purchased in 1994 with a grant from the United Methodist Committee on Relief, the machine makes soy milk from soybeans grown by the Kaíowa on communal land. By mid-1996, the "cow" was producing 320 liters of soy milk a day, five days a week, at half the production cost of cow's milk. Da Silva Costa says the cost will drop further as production increases in the years ahead.

Operated by Kaíowa technicians, the "mechanical cow" adds flavoring and sugar to make the soy milk more palatable. The milk is then distributed free at three different points around Bororo. Judging by the children who line up to fill a variety of containers with the frothy white liquid, the milk is a big hit. So are the breads, cakes, and cookies that Kaíowa women bake from leftover soy meal in a communal kitchen beside the mechanical cow. It's a joint project involving the community, the Methodist mission, and the local agricultural school.

Many of the homes in Bororo have small vegetable gardens

now—another project encouraged by the Methodist mission. All the mission projects—the vegetable gardens, the soy products, the herbal medicine plot, a handicrafts marketing program, and a health-education program arise from an integral, comprehensive understanding of ministry.

And it's working. Malnutrition and infant mortality are way down. "We started this project because we were tired of watching babies die and seeing so many children with scabby heads," says Conceição Costa. "The change is amazing." She cites statistics from the village health post to prove her point. "In 1989, the nurse was seeing an average of 70 people a day, mostly children. Today, an average of only six people a day visit the nurse. They're healthier. Their bodies are stronger, more resistant."

Da Silva Costa, who was an agricultural technician before he became a pastor, says that all of the mission-sponsored projects are economically viable. The financing and operation are in the hands of the community. Where continued subsidies are needed to replace limited mission funds, tribal leaders have obtained funding from both the municipality and the federal government.

By producing soy and other crops for local consumption, Da Silva Costa says, the mission has helped the community provide employment on the indigenous reserve. There is less need now for indigenous people to leave home to work in the region's sugar fields and mills, where they are subjected to labor conditions that, according to CIMI, approximate slavery.

"Ideally, we'd like to create enough alternatives on the reserve so that people wouldn't have to leave to make money," says Da Silva Costa. "We haven't succeeded in that. But we've created enough



local employment so that the workers are less desperate and therefore less vulnerable to manipulation by the ranchers and plantation owners.

Ministry's Cutting Edge

When Da Silva Costa first came to the mission in 1977, he remembers that ministry with the indigenous

We started this project because we were tired of watching babies die and seeing so many children with scabby heads.

had such a low priority within the Brazilian Methodist Church that pastors saw such an appointment as "punishment." Over the last decade, that has changed, he reports. Indigenous missions are now seen as the cutting edge of ministry, and their pastoral appointments are now considered "privileged." Other parts of the church are also becoming involved. A Methodist seminary in São Bernardo do Campo last year sponsored a course on indigenous issues and theology, sending their students to visit indigenous communities throughout the country. And a

Methodist dental school in Lins converted a trailer into a mobile clinic. In 30 months, the school sent 16 medical teams to treat Kaíowa community members in Bororo, Campestre, and other communities.

The church's indigenous ministry is also ecumenical, Da Silva Costa notes. He and Conceição Costa coordinate their work closely with Catholic and Presbyterian ministries in nearby indigenous areas. An interchurch working group coordinates work at a national level, including strategies for marshalling the churches' political clout to affect the government's policies toward Brazil's indigenous minority.

In spite of the many obstacles and challenges faced by Brazil's indigenous people, Da Silva Costa says he's hopeful. "The communication between indigenous groups has helped a lot," he says. "Now they know their rights much better. They've achieved a lot in terms of guaranteeing the security of their land. But that's been no gift. It has cost them a lot of struggle and a lot of pain." □

Paul Jeffrey is a United Methodist missionary in Central America. He lives outside Tegucigalpa, Honduras.

The Methodist

Ecclesiastical Regions

- Region 1
- Region 2
- Region 3
- Region 4
- Region 5
- Region 6

Northeast Missionary Region
REMNE

North and Northwest National Mission Field
CMNN

Methodist Educational Institutions †

★ National Capital

PARA State/Territory Name

0 400 km
 0 400 Miles



Church of Brazil

METHODIST BEGINNINGS IN BRAZIL

- 1832**—The General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church in the United States (MEC) calls for a missionary survey of South America.
- 1835**—Sent by the Missionary Society of the MEC to visit South America, the Rev. Fountain E. Pitts (of Kentucky and Tennessee) organizes Methodist Societies in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil; Montevideo, Uruguay; and Buenos Aires, Argentina. This marks the beginning of Methodism in Latin America.
- 1836**—The Rev. Justin Spaulding (of New England) arrives in Rio as a missionary to Brazil, becoming the first Methodist missionary in South America. He distributes Bibles, preaches against slavery, and founds a small day school.
- 1837**—The Rev. Daniel P. Kidder, his wife, and two teachers are sent to assist Spaulding. Catholic opposition causes the teachers to leave and the school to close. Kidder leaves in 1840 when his wife dies.
- 1842**—Spaulding is recalled and the mission is given up.
- 1845**—The Methodist Episcopal Church, South (MECS) splits away from the MEC over the issue of slavery.
- 1876**—The MECS sends its first official missionary to Brazil, the Rev. John James Ranson. He reestablishes Methodist work in Rio de Janeiro.
- 1880**—The Rev. Justus H. Nelson of the MEC goes to Pará, Brazil, as a self-supporting missionary. Nelson teaches, preaches, translates, publishes in Portuguese, and provides medical care in Belém for 45 years.
- 1886**—Bishop John C. Granbery comes to Brazil to transform the Brazilian Mission of the MECS into an annual conference.
- 1900**—The Brazil Conference of the MECS now has 2500 church members, 24 missionaries, and 18 Brazilian preachers. The MEC transfers its mission stations in Rio Grande do Sul to the MECS. In 1939, the MEC and MECS reunite in The Methodist Church.
- 1930**—The Methodist Church of Brazil becomes autonomous. The first bishop is an American, William Tarboux.
- 1934**—The first native Brazilian bishop, César Dacorso Filho—a strong, visionary leader—is elected.

The Methodist Church of Brazil has 100,000 members, with 300,000 people participating in congregations throughout the country. The church has divided the membership into six ecclesiastical regions (similar to United Methodist conferences), one missionary region (REMNE) in the northeast, and one national mission field (CMNN) in the north and northwest. Each of these eight regions is overseen by a bishop.

The legislative organization of the church is the General Conference, which meets every five years. The College of Bishops, comprised of the Brazilian Church's active and retired bishops, is authorized by the General Conference to administer the church. Currently, Bishop Adriel de Souza Maia is president of the College of Bishops.

The basic documents of the Brazilian Church are the *Cânones* (similar to the *Book of Discipline*), the *Social Creed*, the *Plan for the Life and Mission of the Church*, and the *National Guidelines for Programs*. The College of Bishops also publishes *Pastoral Letters* to inform the church about pastoral and doctrinal issues and various actions of the church.

As of 1993, the church has been organized into three departments: Missionary Action, Education, and Administration. Mission is a priority of the church.

General Board of Global Ministries
The United Methodist Church

MEC

MECS

MCB

WITNESS FROM THE METHODIST CHURCH OF BRAZIL

Children, Priority of the Kingdom of God

by Ana Claudia Figeroa and Lenise Lantelme
translated by Gordon Greathouse

Jesus emphasized that children should have open access to the kingdom of God when he said: "Let the little children come to me...for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs." (Mark 10:14) Throughout history, this passage has played a significant role by inspiring the church to develop a variety of Christian social-service programs.

The development of the modern world economy has exacerbated poverty in a number of nations, creating an ever-widening gap between rich and poor. This process has scandalized the Christian community worldwide, especially because the greatest victims are children and youth, who are in a highly vulnerable stage of development. Trying to discern God's will in this reality causes us to reflect upon what it means to be Christian in the world and how we can create viable alternatives to this destructive economic cycle.

The Brazilian Reality

"It is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs." How does one understand the meaning of this assertion in a country such as Brazil?

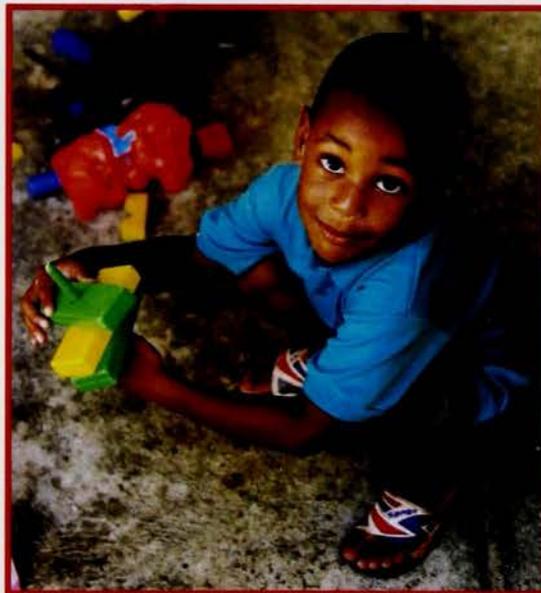
About 41 percent of Brazil's population is 17 years of age or younger. This means that there are about 66

million Brazilian children and youth. Of this total, 53.5 percent come from families whose income is \$60 a month or less. Yet the cost of living is higher in Brazil than it is in most of the United States. Thus, more than half of Brazil's children are living in abject poverty.

Brazil has the second-highest infant mortality rate in South America, with 55 out of every 1000 babies dying during the first year of life. Poorer regions of the country, such as the northeast, have a rate nearly double the national average, with 88.2 deaths per 1000. Of the babies that survive, 21.85 percent of those 5 months old or younger are malnourished. There are more than 5 million malnourished children under age 5, representing 31 percent of the total in this age group.

The statistics on children's education in Brazil are also discouraging. Approximately 21 percent of children and youth under age 17 are illiterate. More than 7 million children do not go to school. About 40 percent of Brazil's children do not complete the fourth grade.

The poor children who survive must frequently begin to work at an early age. Statistics show that 16.9 percent of children between 10 and 14 years of age are already working. The work humiliates and exploits them and sometimes even results in death.





São Gabriel Community Center provides a safe haven for children while their parents work in Belo Horizonte. *Opposite, p. 26: A child in the daycare center. Above: A dance group makes a presentation outside the center.*

Violence in the Streets

One way or another, the street is almost always part of poor children's lives. Because of the fact that, in the overwhelming majority of poor families, both husband and wife must work, children are left on their own. Older children must cook and care for younger sisters and brothers. Soon, however, most poor children begin to migrate to the streets.

Today, approximately 7 million Brazilian children spend a significant part of their time in the streets. Many children maintain ties to their families and go home at night after spending the day in the streets, begging or doing small jobs. They often "guard" people's parked cars, for example, or shine shoes, carry packages, and find other odd jobs. For most of these children, though, family ties do not guarantee a better life. Indeed, a very high percentage suffer from domestic abuse.

As a consequence of the disintegration of the family, many children simply move to the streets to live. There, they must take care of themselves, and violence often accompanies them. Many are

pushed into illegal activities: prostitution, selling drugs, and committing small thefts and robberies. According to the newspaper *Folha de São Paulo*, there were more than half a million child and teenage prostitutes in Brazil in 1990.

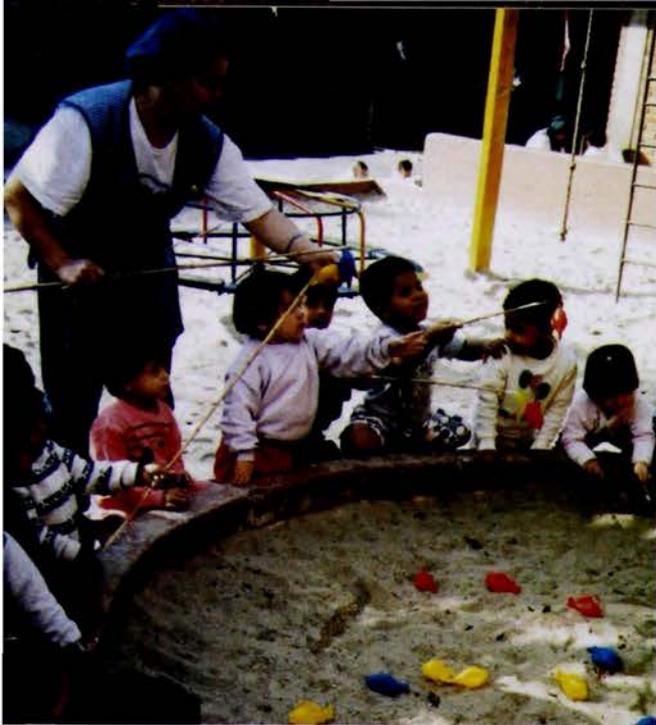
The major threat to street children comes from vigilante groups that assassinate children, generally while they are sleeping. Usually these vigilante groups work for local business owners whose stores, hotels, or restaurants are disrupted by the street children.

In most cases, no police investigation is made when street children are assassinated. Even when the killers are identified, few come to trial. Among the many thousands of assassinations, one of the most infamous incidents was the Candelaria Massacre [see p. 28]. It took place in Rio de Janeiro in July 1993 and shocked the Brazilian public. In 1992, however, an average of 4.2 street children had been assassinated each day in Brazil. Of that total, 73 percent were Black or of mixed race. Legislative investigation of such murders in Rio revealed that 90 percent of those killed had no police record.

The Church's Response

The Brazilian Methodist Church tries to answer the Gospel's call—"let the little children come to me"—through a variety of programs. Recently, children were chosen as the priority group for all the church's mission efforts. Since 1991, the National Plan of the Church has encouraged local congregations "to prioritize projects and programs that assist abandoned children or children from troubled homes, taking into account knowledge of their neighborhood, community, and nation." (*The Methodist Church: Missionary Community in the Service of the People*).

A new understanding of children has come from the experience of these projects. Children are now seen as citizens and as makers of their own story. They are seen as participants in planning for their own welfare and as people who need to be responded to in a holistic manner. Now that children have been made the priority of the church, mission projects are addressing a broad range of their needs: food, housing, school, religious education, psychological help—and, above all, love.



Children 2 to 3 years of age play on the patio of Bem-te-vi, a Methodist daycare center in São Paulo.

The Candelaria Massacre

*In the early morning hours of July 23, 1993, eight children and youths between the ages of 11 and 22 were assassinated in the center of Rio de Janeiro. Shortly after midnight, two cars stopped close to the Church of Candelaria where nearly 40 street children were sleeping. A number of men got out of the cars. After trying to locate a youth named Russo, they began firing on the sleeping children and youths. [See "In the Killing Fields of Brazil" by Paul Jeffrey, *New World Outlook*, March-April 1994.]*

Nearly three years later, one of nine accused assassins—a former police officer—was found guilty and condemned to 309 years in prison for his part in the crime. However, since this is his first offense, Marcus Vinicius Borges Emmanuel will spend a maximum of 30 years in jail. Even so, this is the first time anyone in Brazil has been sent to jail for killing street children.

In general, members of the Brazilian Methodist Church are sensitive to the needs and suffering of the nation's children and youth. At the end of 1996, in a survey of 406 local churches, it was discovered that 287 have programs to assist poor children.

Daycare Centers

Daycare centers are one of the oldest Methodist programs for children. One of the first Methodist institutions in Brazil to offer this service was the Instituto Central do Povo (Central Institute for the People, or ICP) in 1906.

While both the church and the society at large considered daycare centers as the responsibility of the government, political leaders have not always prioritized this fundamental service for poor families. Often, both husband and wife must work if the family is to attain even minimal living standards. In the case of single mothers, the situation is even more dramatic. The great tragedy comes when there is no one at all to care for infants and small children and they are left at home to fend for themselves. It is not uncommon in Brazil for a 6- or 7-year-old girl or boy to have full responsibility for raising younger brothers and sisters. The eldest child, however young, may have to provide food, do housecleaning and laundry, and offer medical assistance in case of illness or injury. Unless daycare is available, older siblings cannot go to school.

The church is fully aware of the dynamics of working families with children. It tries to respond by providing daycare services at little or no cost. In order to survive, these church daycare centers often receive some government subsidies.

One Methodist daycare center in São Paulo is called Bem-te-vi (the name of a Brazilian bird). This center assists children in or around the Jabaquara neighborhood,

where families have a monthly income of between \$112 and \$448. The daycare center is an absolute necessity for families who otherwise would have great difficulty providing food, education, health care, recreation, cultural experiences, emotional support, and a balanced environment for their children's development.

A New Legal Code

Treating children and youth as the top priority of Brazilian Methodist mission extends beyond direct-assistance projects. Today, Brazil has a legal code for children and youth that resulted from the efforts of several nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). A significant participant in this process was the Brazilian Methodist Church. This joint effort of NGOs changed the law of the nation. Many political, economic, and social practices that jeopardize Brazil's children and youth are now illegal.

The new legal code provides guarantees of children's rights to survival, to basic freedom and dignity, to health, education, culture, recreation—all the things essential for abundant life. Although the new law defines the rights of children and youth, actual changes will take place only through vigilance and struggle. It is common in Brazil to pass good laws but not to enforce them. Nevertheless, this new legal code opens the door for change. In the face of a difficult reality for Brazilian children, the Methodist Church has made a commitment to struggle for children's rights.

When Jesus said, "let the little children come to me," he was speaking about children in and of this world. The Brazilian Methodist Church accepts children as its priority and understands that they are a key to the fulfillment of God's mission everywhere. □

Changing Lives

He had never been to school and at his age would no longer be accepted. But after Beto worked with the school administration, Paulo was allowed to start the first grade.

Lucas, Silas, Paulo, and Daniel first came separately to the São Gabriel Community Center in Belo Horizonte. After that, they sometimes appeared in pairs. They were always looking for food. At first, no one guessed that they were brothers, but everyone knew they were street children. They had lived in the street for some time, begging for food and eating from the garbage. Their mother was sick and lived in a shack by an abandoned railroad line. The oldest child, a daughter, supported her mother by working as a prostitute. The boys were never at home.

When Daniel first came to the Methodist Community Center, he was 6 and Silas was 11. Both boys were always smelly because they constantly wet their pants. Daniel did not know how to talk. Silas always bothered people at the center because he wanted to kiss everyone.

The leaders at the center realized that these boys could not be integrated into their regular programs. They were too needy and undisciplined. There were other children like them in the neighborhood. So a Methodist seminary student was challenged to develop an intensive program with eight street children, including the four brothers.

Beto had never worked with children like this before. What should he do? The kids were smelly, undisciplined, hungry, full of lice, and suffering from scabies. But Beto accepted the challenge to be their "big brother." He bathed them, fed them, disciplined them, and hugged them. He hugged them a lot. He looked beyond the lice and smelly shorts and saw God's image imbedded in their souls.

Beto was shocked to find out that Daniel (age 6) didn't have a birth certificate. He didn't exist in the government's eyes. Paulo (then 13) couldn't relate to anyone his own age. He wanted to be with 6- and 7-year-olds. He had never been to school and at his age would no longer be accepted. But after Beto worked with the school administration, Paulo was allowed to start the first grade.

Beto had to work with all four boys to prepare them to attend school and to obey the teachers. That was a big project that required psychological orientation. The boys did go to school, however, and even were able to pass into the next grades. Each of the boys also began training in carpentry at the Community Center to gain a professional skill. Beto visited their mother and helped her work to give up alcohol. Both the mother and daughter were given psychological treatment.

Five years later, Paulo is employed. Daniel talks and, although he quit school, he is able to read and write. Their mother stopped drinking. All four boys now live with her in a new shack built through help from the Community Center. None of the boys are involved with drugs nor have any of them had problems with the police.

And what about Beto? He says that his life was forever transformed by the love he shared with the boys he helped. He is now a pastor, married, and expecting his first child. □



Daniel (standing), Lucas (middle), and Silas (foreground) acquire skills at São Gabriel Community Center. Silas received a "Legacy of Hope" quilt for the Brazilian Methodist Church on April 12 at Global Gathering III in Kansas City, MO. (See p. 44.)



Witness From
the Methodist
Church of Brazil

Education in Defense of Life

by Ana Claudia Figeroa and Lenise Lantelme
translated by Gordon Greathouse



Children line up for school in Altamira.

"Do you understand what you are reading?" He replied, "How can I, unless someone guides me?" (Acts 8:30-31)

Schools—not very many.

School dropouts—a lot.

Computers, books, notebooks,
pencils, erasers—having any of these is a privilege in Brazil.

Graduate school, university, high school, grade school, and kindergarten—each of these educational levels is for a predetermined and select group. To be able to attend school at any level, one must be lucky enough to fulfill certain prerequisites. For example, one must live in a more developed section of the country and be part of a family with a good income.

In Brazil, education is in a precarious state. With 25 percent of the population illiterate, one would expect a sizeable portion of government budgets to be dedicated to education. Indeed, the Brazilian constitution mandates that 12 percent of the national budget be earmarked for education, yet the Brazilian congress approves only a third of that amount. Although education for all children is guaranteed by law, only a miniscule percentage of cities have fulfilled this requirement.

Private schools are organized in Brazil to fill the gap in public school availability. This private initiative, however, usually has a profit motive, with private-school development being pursued as a business venture. Private schools are generally better than public ones, but only the middle and upper classes have the money to pay for their children's education. In the poorer regions of the country, such as those on the northern frontier, fewer than 15 percent of the families can pay for private schools, and they have to fight for the few spaces available in the public-school system. Thus most of Brazil's poor are permanently excluded from educational opportunities. This poor majority ends up with little schooling—and even that is often of low quality.

Why does education remain a low priority in Brazil? There are dozens of theories and explanations for this phenomenon, but several things are clear. The vast majority of parents—both rich and poor—make enormous personal sacrifices to provide education for their children. Nevertheless, in order for their children to go to school, parents



Lunch time at the Methodist School in Altamira.

must buy school materials and school uniforms as well as pay for transportation to and from school. The problem for poor families is that they have little money left after buying food and paying rent.

Public school usually is based on a triple—or even a quadruple—shift system, with children going to school for four hours in the morning, midday, afternoon, or night. Teachers often have low motivation because of poor working conditions and low salaries. In the north and northeast regions, teachers often receive their salary anywhere from one month to eight months late. Most of the children who live in slums fail school year after year. They generally drop out after six or eight years of schooling, having completed only the third or fourth grade. For poor families, a child's graduation from grade school is a time of celebration. It represents a hard-earned victory for the whole family.

Most of the children who live in slums fail school year after year.

The Church's Role

What is the role of the church in the face of this reality? What is the correct response by people committed to the Gospel?

Historically, the Methodist Church stands out in its vocation of education for life. Our perspective is that education is an instrument to transform society. It is an essential element in the growth of the kingdom of God on earth. We know that the educational process happens in different forums. It can occur in the family, in the local church, in secular and theological educational institutions, through exposure to social work, and through the media.

Methodist educational activity has brought positive, innovative, and humanizing contributions to Brazil. Through its educational institutions, the church has helped to democratize and modernize Brazilian education. Methodist schools offer an alternative to less liberating educational systems in

Brazilian society. Education, as part of the church's mission, is the process that seeks to offer individuals and the community an understanding of life and society from a liberating perspective. This comprehension should strengthen the struggle in favor of life, modeling a more just society.

The Altamira Model

One place where the Brazilian Methodist Church is promoting a liberating form of education is in Altamira, a small city in the Amazon region. This town was developed in the 1970s as part of the government's policy to open up the Amazon region by building roads and colonizing the jungle. It is difficult to get to Altamira, especially during the rainy season. Often the roads are impassable because of flooding and the only access is by airplane. Flying to Altamira from cities such as Rio de Janeiro or São Paulo is more expensive than flying to the United States.

For a variety of reasons, Altamira—with its population of approximately 100,000—is subject



Students scramble for their bicycles at the close of the day.

to a variety of diseases typical to this region. Unemployment is high and income for the majority of people is about \$35 a month. Women have the responsibility of raising the family while their husbands look for work elsewhere. It is very common in this region of Brazil for men to go to the gold mines and never return. While the wives raise the children and fend for themselves, the husbands find other women and start new families elsewhere.

If getting an education is generally difficult in Brazil, it is especially difficult in the Amazon. Most poor parents have had little or no schooling, and few schools are available for their children. It is difficult to find qualified teachers. Many parents simply give up on the struggle to provide a formal education for their children.

The dream of building a Methodist school in Altamira began when the government first opened up this region in the 1970s. Construction of the school finally started in 1981, and the first buildings were completed in 1982. This was thanks to donations from the Methodist University of Piracicaba located in the state of São Paulo.

From the beginning, the Altamira School has faced numerous challenges. Living in a region of generalized poverty, most students' families do not have money to pay for their studies. Although the monthly fees charged by the Methodist school are lower than those charged by other schools, most students need scholarships to study. Today, out of a total of 600 students, all but 277 receive scholarships.

When the Altamira School decided to make it possible for poor children to attend classes, many families with higher incomes decided to send their children elsewhere. The school was able to survive the informal boycott by wealthier families only because it received assistance from Methodist schools in other parts of the country. Also, in 1988, the United Methodist Church in Germany made a very important monetary contribution that enabled the Brazilian Methodist Church to expand the school and remodel it.

The Methodist School of Altamira starts with kindergarten for children from 3 to 6 years of age and continues on through

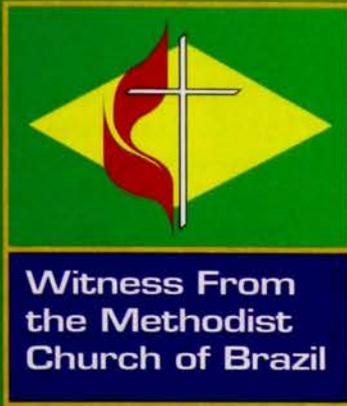
grade school. Through the years, its programs have improved in quality. In order to overcome the shortage of qualified teachers endemic to the region, the Methodist school offers courses for the teachers themselves in a program cosponsored by the local Board of Education and by the state branch of the Federal University.

In order to create a more stimulating educational environment, the school provides a variety of workshops for children on themes such as Theater in School, Culture in the School, and Literary Creations. These workshops develop critical and artistic sensitivity in the students. In addition, the school promotes seminars that range from religious education to questions of health and sanitation.

The Altamira School is developing a library. Despite its limited number of books, it is frequently used by students from other schools. Expansion of this library is one of the priorities of the Methodist school because of the community service it provides.

Despite all the difficulties of promoting education in this context, the Methodist School of Altamira prioritizes programs that will gradually improve the quality of the education it provides. In Brazil, we call this process "the work of ants." Each person does a little to help, for all know the goal will be achieved if each one carries part of the load.

The Methodist Church of Brazil looks at schools and education from a mission perspective. It is as if the people excluded from the educational process are asking us: "How can we understand the world if no one explains it to us?" Our great mission desire is to respond loudly and clearly: "We are here to guide you." □



Witness From
the Methodist
Church of Brazil

Dreaming a Possible Dream for Brazil's Farm Workers

by Yone da Silva
translated by Gordon Greathouse

Santo Antônio da Platina is a small agricultural town located in the state of Paraná in southern Brazil. This region produces coffee, sugarcane, cotton, corn, and soybeans. Of the 38,000 residents, 10,000 are a type of farm worker that Brazilians call *boias-frias*. The nickname *boia-fria* means "cold food" in Portuguese. It was given to these rural workers because they take the food for their main meal to the fields in cans or small pots and have no place to heat it. In the state of Paraná, there are more than one million *boia-fria* workers.

These rural workers were given their nickname in the 1960s when agricultural production was mechanized in Brazil. In the state of Paraná, introduction of the new farm technology followed several years of frosts that killed many of the coffee trees in the state. As a consequence, masses of peasants who once lived in homes provided by the coffee plantation owners now were forced to migrate to the slums of nearby towns. These peasants generally had difficulty finding work. During the harvest season, they anxiously accepted work as day laborers on the plantations.

A Grim Reality

Today, *boias-frias* still live in the slums and are taken by trucks to work on the farms. They live in conditions that are more suited to animals than to human beings. They work 10 hours a day during the harvest season and are paid 4 to 5 dollars a day in a region where the cost of living is similar to that of the northeastern United States. Those who work on the sugarcane plantations get some medical benefits, but those who work on coffee plantations or in cotton fields get none. Women usually cannot get a job on sugarcane plantations. There are special benefits for pregnant women who harvest sugarcane that the plantation owners do not want to pay.

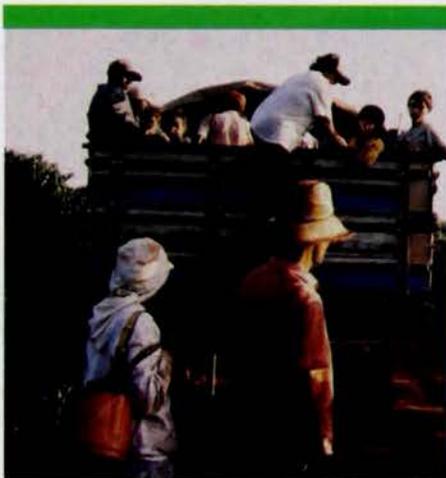
The Methodist ministry with boia-fria families includes advocating for women who endure long hours of hard labor.

Work on the farms is difficult for all but is especially hard for women and children. Women carry heavy bales of cotton—the primary cause of miscarriages among pregnant field workers. Women and children are constant objects of sexual abuse, both in the fields and in the trucks that take them to and from work. Even though women do the same work as men in the fields, they always get less pay.





Above: The Methodist Church of Brazil runs a program to help youth of the Morro do Sabão neighborhood on the edge of Santo Antônio da Platina. Below: Boias-frias travel to and from the fields crammed into open trucks.



A major problem has developed in the *boia-fria* families because of drug use and prostitution among the children and teenagers. Crack cocaine is already used on an alarmingly large scale. Children are often raped by older males and thus forced into early, exploitative sexual activity. Soon many such children realize that they can make more in five days

of prostitution than they can make in a month's labor in the fields.

Despite the plight of these farm workers, the church has remained surprisingly silent. Christians, by and large, have not perceived the injustice suffered by millions of Brazilian farm workers or wanted to engage in finding solutions. Instead, most Protestant churches have contented themselves with winning the souls of *boias-frias* for Christ without addressing their daily misery and unjust treatment.

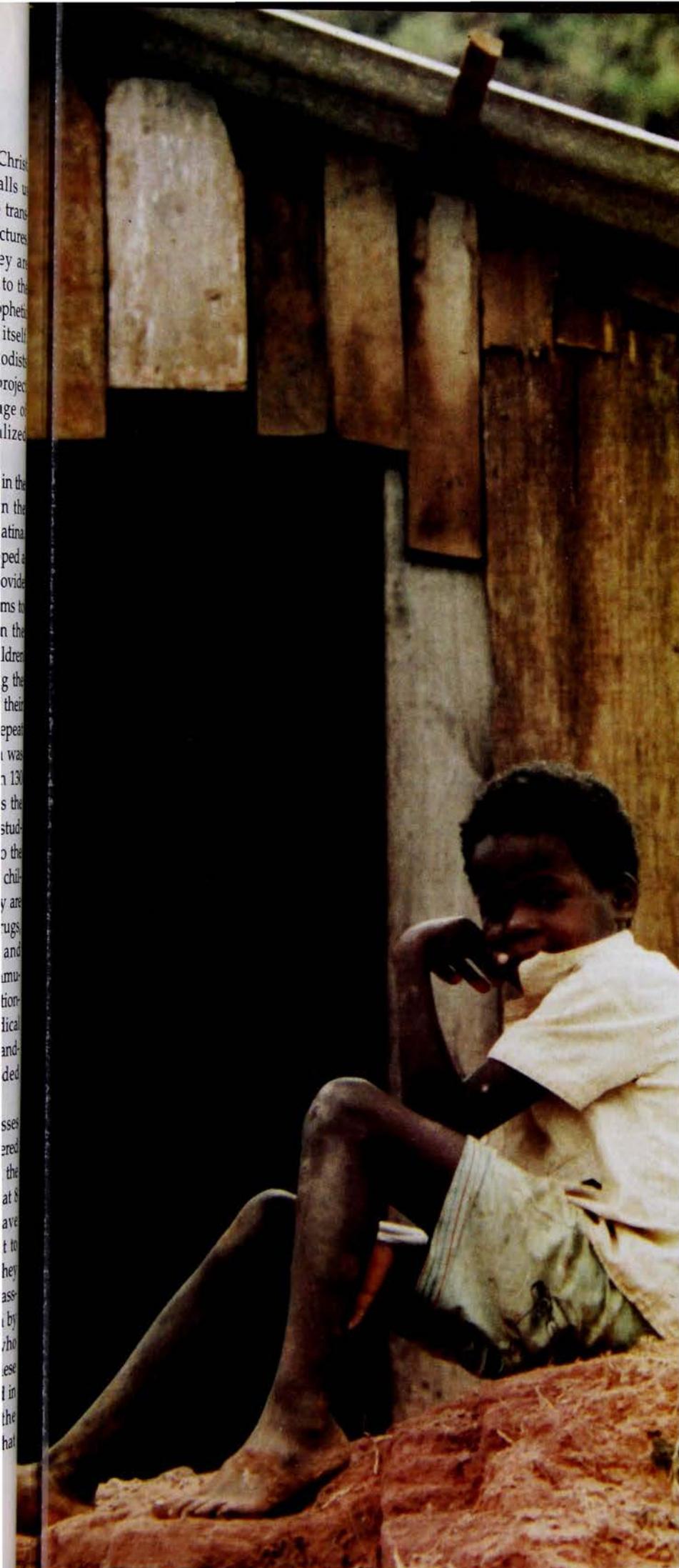
Project Boia-Fria

Since 1986, members of the Methodist Church in the Paraná region have felt called by the Holy Spirit to respond to this situation. They sense that the Holy Spirit is empowering them to be participants in the building of God's kingdom on earth by announcing the

new life offered by Jesus Christ. They believe that Jesus calls us both to renew people *and* to transform destructive social structures. They also believe that they are called not only to minister to the *boias-frias* but also to be a prophetic witness within the church itself. For these reasons, the Methodists have developed a holistic project responding to a broad range of needs among the marginalized rural workers.

Project *Boia-Fria* is located in the slum of Morro do Sabão on the edge of Santo Antônio da Platina. The Methodist Church developed a community center there to provide a variety of assistance programs to the 350 families who live in the slum. For example, many children who work in the fields during the harvest season fall behind in their schoolwork and often must repeat grades. So a tutoring program was developed in which more than 130 children participate. It enables the children to keep up with their studies and pass from one grade to the next. In addition, it keeps the children off the streets, where they are often introduced to crime, drugs, and prostitution. Children and teenagers involved in the community center also receive a nutritional supplement and basic medical care. They participate in arts-and-crafts classes and are provided with religious education.

Three evening literacy classes for teenagers and adults are offered at the community center. When the workers return from the fields at 8 P.M., they stop at home to leave their tools and then go straight to the community center. There they are served a meal before their classes. The literacy classes are given by three *boia-fria* farm workers who completed the eighth grade. These three workers were then trained in educational techniques by the Londrina State University so that



they could become literacy teachers. This project has produced good results. Most *boias-frias* are embarrassed by their living conditions and their inability to read or write. Having a teacher who comes from the same background enables them to surmount these social barriers and acquire an education.

The community center has a special program for 30 teenagers who have already had problems with the law. Special attention is given to 15 boys and 15 girls between the ages of 11 and 17. All have been living in the streets and using drugs. The girls have also been involved in prostitution. Every evening, these youth come to the center to get a meal, take a bath, further their education, and participate in arts-and-crafts workshops.

Seminars on health, human sexuality, and citizenship are offered to the community at large and attract more than 150 regular participants. Members of the community suggest the themes for these seminars. There is considerable interest in legal rights and family planning. Also, besides the regular religious education offered to children and youth, there is a worship service at the community center every Friday evening. The local Methodist pastor is active in all the center's programs.

A Sign of New Life

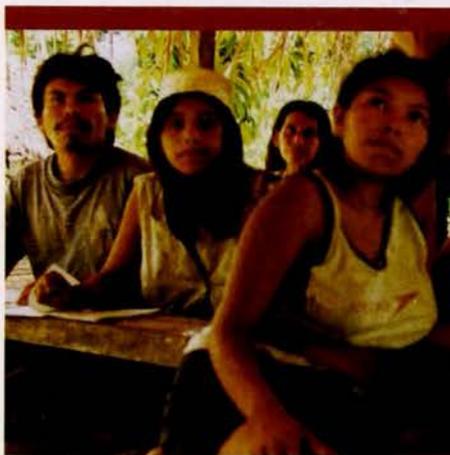
The Methodist mission in Santo Antônio da Platina seeks to provide a sign of new life to the *boias-frias*. The Methodists who work with this project affirm their belief that, one day, the millions of *boias-frias* who are now hidden from the church as a whole and the society at large will find their place in history. The Methodists' seemingly "impossible dream" is that these people will no longer be forced to live at the edge of society but will be allowed to become full citizens of their country, exercising their right to a full and abundant life. □



Witness From
the Methodist
Church of Brazil

Solidarity With the Kanamari People of the Amazon

by Ana Claudia Figeroa and Lenise Lantelme
translated by Gordon Greathouse



Above: The Methodist Church provides education for the Kanamari people that helps them be in contact with Western civilization without being dominated economically, culturally, and socially. Opposite, p. 37: The Kanamari measure their children's development through community-based health-care programs.

There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus. (Galatians 3:28)

For centuries, Christians have looked to this verse in Paul's letter to the Galatians to understand Christianity's comprehensive inclusiveness. This verse explicitly communicates that the kingdom of God is directed to all people without exception. It challenges us to a life of unity and mutual respect in a context of Christian love. Despite this perspective, throughout history, the church has often built hierarchical structures that damage human dignity.

Historically, Christians have mistakenly thought that accepting Christ meant that everyone should follow him in the same predetermined form. In the history of Christian mission, the expression "in Christ there is no East or West" was interpreted in a form that was culturally bound and that often excluded people. In the process of evangelization, the Good News was believed to include a form of worshipping God and a code of personal conduct drawn from European or North American culture. These standardized forms often disregarded other cultures. As a consequence, sometimes our evangelization became proselytism that sacrificed

both people and cultures. Many died or were torn from their roots in the name of the Gospel.

Brazil's history is an example of this process. When the colonial powers arrived 500 years ago, it is estimated that 5 million people, belonging to about 700 distinct Native American tribal groups, lived here. Today, the number of indigenous people is no more than 300,000 and the indigenous ethnic groups only 215. The extermination of millions of people also involved the extinction of countless forms of social organization as well as loss of knowledge about how to utilize and interact with nature.

The process that exploited and destroyed Native American culture continues in Brazil in a variety of ways. Some forms of cultural destruction are simple, including contact with Western civilization when indigenous people are not adequately prepared for it. Other forms include a government policy that typically puts economic interests above the self-determination of native peoples.

History of the Kanamari

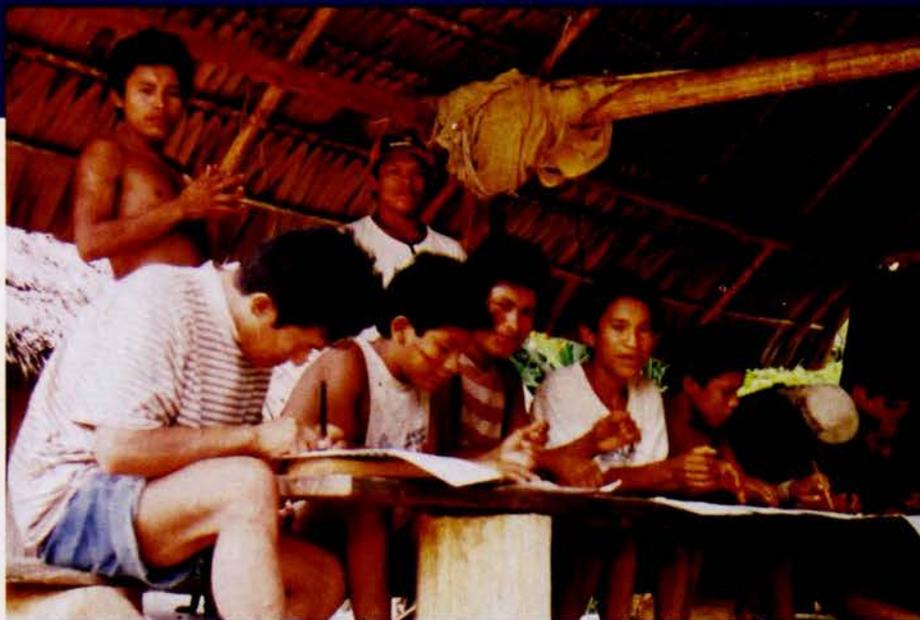
The history of the Kanamari people helps us understand this reality. These native people live on the margins of streams and lakes that are tributaries of the upper portion of the Amazon River. This part of

the Amazon jungle is almost inaccessible to urban Brazilians. In this area are 1500 Native Americans who speak a single language, known regionally by several different names: Katukina, Tucano, and Kanamari. The subsistence of the Kanamari people is derived from fishing, hunting, harvesting native plants, and extensive agriculture. These people share their food so no one is left hungry.

Outside traders and industrialists searching for rubber trees sent explorers into the Amazon region to contact the Kanamari people. The indigenous people gave up their land and fled deeper and deeper into the jungle. When, despite their efforts, outside contact was maintained, the Kanamari people were exploited and forced into a servile relationship. Now, after having given up a large part of the fertile area they once lived in, they have organized themselves and are struggling to keep the rest of their land.

Contact with Whites also exposed Kanamari people to diseases they had never known before, such as malaria, cholera, smallpox, tuberculosis, and hepatitis. Despite the now-frequent contact with other cultures, the Kanamari strive to keep their traditions. This can be seen in their agriculture, hunting, and fishing and in their





Literacy and mathematics courses help the Kanamari in their contact with Western-influenced Brazilian society.

rituals, their medical practices, and the preservation of their native tongue.

Listening and Learning

How do we as Methodists deal with indigenous reality in a way that makes the Gospel available to Native American peoples? How can we avoid the practices of other religious groups that find little good in Native American culture?

Brazilian Methodist work with indigenous peoples is based on the practice of listening and sharing. The church's official policy is to promote the principle of self-determination. Our missionaries live with Native American peoples in a way that helps us learn *with* them and *from* them, fostering dialogue and respect. We serve them with humility and solidarity and in the spirit of Jesus' love. The church believes that religious and secular groups which are supportive of indigenous peoples should share information and, whenever possible, work together.

The Brazilian Methodist Church's ministries with indigenous people are oriented by a Native American Work Group made up of specialists who have lived and worked with native peoples. The principles of Methodist

programs are set forth in a 1993 document: "Foundations for the Methodist Church's Policy With Native Peoples."

Work with the Kanamari began in 1993 in partnership with Operation Anchieta (OPAN) and the Council of Missions among Indians (COMIN). These groups had already been working in the region for a number of years. For financial reasons, they had to reduce their activities. So the Brazilian Methodist Church was invited to expand its activities to include the Kanamari people.

Methodist Mission

The Methodist Mission to the Kanamari is located in Eurinepe County and involves 730 Native Americans living in 13 villages. Methodist programs support projects that the Kanamari people themselves have identified as priorities, satisfying their basic needs.

- We promote activities that work to make government agencies more responsible in their programs. This happens in areas such as health needs.
- We provide assistance in the preservation of the Kanamari traditions, as by promoting literacy in the language of the

Kanamari and respect for the Kanamari rituals and festivals.

- We provide education that helps the Kanamari in their contact with Western civilization. Learning Western mathematics and customs and studying Portuguese helps them avoid economic, cultural, and social domination.

Brazilian Methodists see support for the preservation of Kanamari land as central to the preservation of the people. Without a sizable tract of land, the Kanamari will die off, as have hundreds of other tribal peoples. Therefore, the Brazilian Methodist Church works for the demarcation of indigenous land as the Kanamari's rightful inheritance. Nationally, the Methodist Church of Brazil works to denounce and condemn any effort to invade Native American land or to extract natural resources from its subsoil, air, or water.

In Brazil, some people argue against the Native American cause by saying "there is a lot of land for very few Indians." However, Brazil's indigenous people have their own cultural norms, traditional ways of using the land, and special relationship to nature. In reality, their residence in the Amazon rain forest preserves it for future generations of all humanity.

We Brazilian Methodists believe that the kingdom of God is present when we share, respect, and support the search for the common good of the Kanamari and other indigenous people. This is how we understand Paul's statement: "There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus." □

Brazil Is Like Us—Only Different

by Charles Cole

Once I visited an art museum in Argentina. I was interested to see that much South American art looked like the art we see in museums in the United States. There was cubism, abstract art, and even pop art. But I was surprised to come upon a very large painting of men on horses having a battle with "Indians."

Then I realized that South Americans had undergone much the same experience that we had been through in North America. The people who came from Europe in the sixteenth and later centuries claimed the land and took it from the Native Americans by force. I had a naive notion that South Americans had succeeded in blending European newcomers and indigenous peoples better than North Americans have. This is a partial truth but one that shouldn't mask the bloodshed involved.

I was fascinated with the "cowboys and Indians" picture because it provided a point of familiarity. On my trip, I had been struggling with the many differences between Argentina and the United States. I see now that it would have been good to explore the issue further with some South Americans in order to understand the differences between their history and ours.

Now I wonder if we don't make this mistake all too often in our pursuit of mission. That is, we approach people in another country with expectations shaped by the media and our own cultural understandings. But when we actually get to know these people,



we find that things are rather different than we had imagined. It takes an effort to break out of our preconceived notions and first impressions in order to see the reality that is there before us.

Recently, scientists exploring the bottom of the Amazon River discovered 240 new species of fish, including predatory electric fish and blind catfish with taste buds that cover their bodies. The scientists estimate that the Amazon holds at least 2000 species of freshwater fish—twice as many as are found in all of North America.

As interesting as this discovery is, it may only reinforce an attitude that other countries are valuable because of their flora and fauna or mineral wealth. The people themselves fade into the background. When North Americans look at South America, they often view it as a place of jungles and mountains, of macaws and sloths and jaguars. The people are there as a backdrop.

As we approach a study of Brazil, one wonders if we can do it justice. When North Americans are asked about the places in the

world they would most like to learn about or visit, South America turns up in last place. North Americans do not seem very interested in South America. Even when we are, we have trouble getting this continent into focus for what it is—not just a place of exotic animals and plants, not just a place to find ancient Native American ruins, not even just a place of drug runners and political repression.

One of the first tasks in studying Brazil will be finding it on a map—despite its enormous size. If you traveled due south from Key West, Florida, you would miss Brazil entirely, because it lies east of that longitude line. The southernmost part of Brazil is as far south as Africa's Cape of Good Hope, and Brazil's easternmost tip is less than 2000 miles from Africa.

Brazil is a huge country. Its land area is only slightly smaller than that of the United States and its 162 million people give it the largest population in Latin America—one comprising immigrants from every other country on earth. The church in Brazil is one of the most dynamic in the world. Its mixture of different traditions makes it a fascinating case study for what may be the religion of the future.

Perhaps all this makes Brazil sound, well, foreign. But, just as I discovered about the treatment of Native Americans in Argentina, we will find many familiar practices and patterns there. And if we know how to do anything in the church, it is to take the familiar and enliven it—and to take the novel and use it to enrich our traditions. □

A Spiritual Engagement With the Amazon

by Roberto Alves Vania
translated by Joyce Hill

A photograph showing a person in silhouette reaching up towards a large wooden structure, possibly a cross or a monument, against a dramatic, cloudy sky. The person is standing in a field, and the structure is made of thick wooden beams. The sky is filled with large, dark clouds, and the overall scene is captured in a high-contrast, low-key style.

Many of our colleagues, both pastors and theologians, affirm that we are living today in a time of *kairos* (grace) in the Amazon region of Brazil.

This affirmation refers both to the challenges that the people of the Amazon place before us and, more importantly, to the possibility of our meeting those challenges. This is the context in which the Theological School of the Methodist Church in the Amazon finds itself.

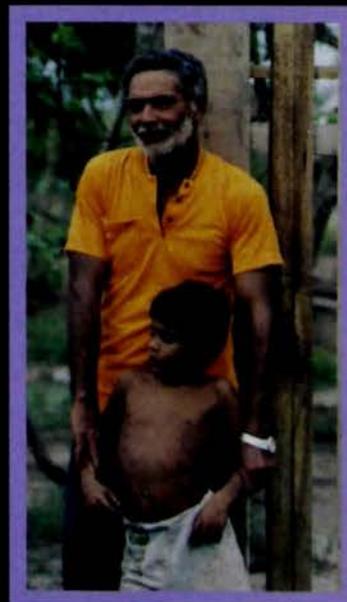
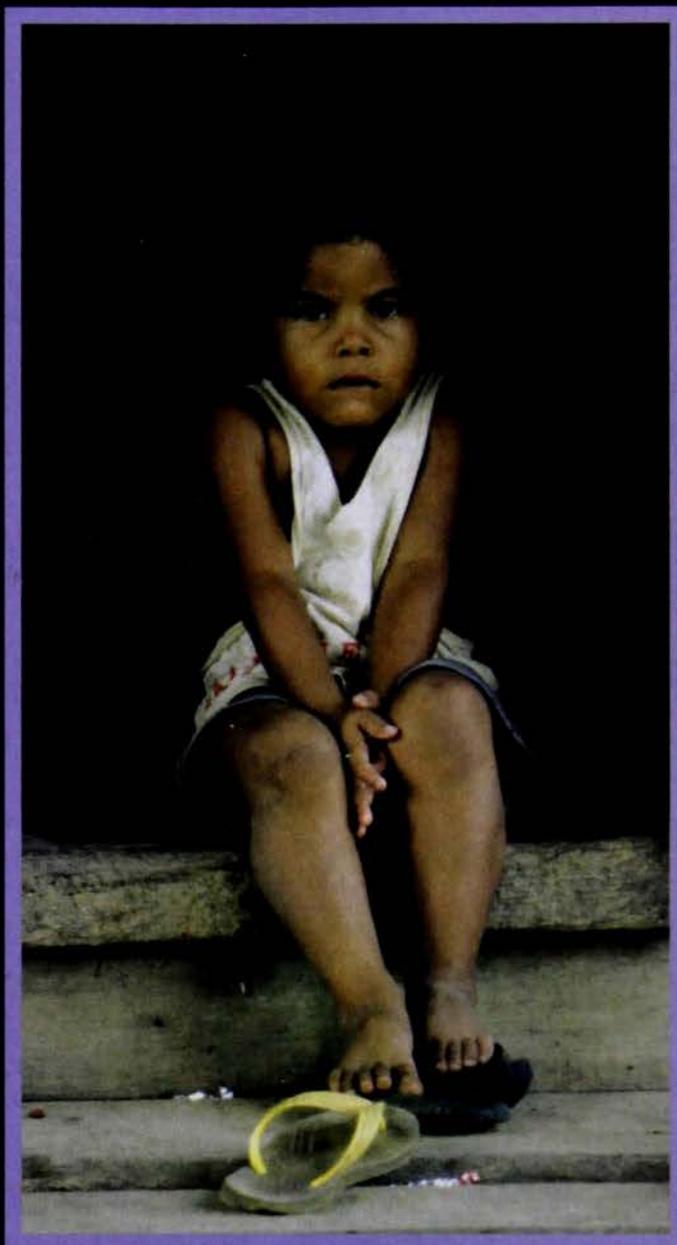
The school—known by its acronym, CAFT—was established by the Theological Seminary in São Paulo to meet the needs of pastoral training within the Amazon region. The church region—known as the North and Northwest Mission Field (CMNN)—has work in eight states, encompassing almost half of Brazil's territory. Throughout the region, there is no other center for theological education. There are only some Roman Catholic catechist groups and a few Pentecostal study courses.

Most of the pastoral work in the Amazon is carried out by lay missionaries who have no formal theological training. In addition, there are a few pastors, both male and female, who have been transferred from the six ecclesiastical regions in central and southern Brazil, where the geopolitical and economic situations are quite different.

CAFT plays a very important role within the church: to prepare men and women for evangelization and pastoral ministry among the people of the Amazon. Our students come from many different parts of the Amazon region. While CAFT is a pioneer in this ministry, the Methodist Church of Brazil has also joined forces with many other Christian denominations in carrying out the task. The student body and faculty of the Theological School include members of other denominations.

CAFT, located in Porto Velho in Rondonia, hopes to become a center of cultural reflection and educational support for the churches and the people of the Amazon. We have been successful in our attempts to work with the federal universities and with several nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) in giving support to cultural and social projects. The agreements and contacts have provided a new pastoral opportunity for our teachers and students based on a spiritual engagement with Amazon reality.

Opposite, p. 40: A soccer game in Las Mangueras neighborhood, Porto Velho. Right: Residents of Porto Velho in the state of Rondonia in Brazil's Amazon Basin. CAFT is located in Porto Velho.



Amazon Reality

Our reality is hard and filled with adversity. On the one hand are the indigenous people, who have lived in harmony with the forest that has nurtured them for centuries. Brazil has passed legislation to preserve the forest. On the other hand are the gold miners, who not only take out gold but also contaminate the water and air and destroy the plants and living creatures of the forest. There are also the clandestine loggers who indiscriminately cut down hardwoods that are hundreds of years old. For every cubic meter of hardwood that is illegally harvested, about 8 square meters of native forest are destroyed. Much of this hardwood is smuggled into the United States and into Europe, where the finished product is

sold at about a 2000 percent profit over the price of extraction. Such hefty profits are financing even more of the deforestation. This deforestation causes enormous harm to the animals, plants, and people of the Amazon region as well as to the earth's air.

Both the gold miners and the loggers are in constant conflict with the indigenous people and with the rubber tappers, who make their living by extracting latex from the rubber trees. How do we carry out our pastoral task in the midst of these conflicts? How do we find what the Gospel of Jesus Christ has to say to such a diverse group of people?

In the rural areas, the situation is not much different. There, we have the ranchers, whose activities provide development and food for the region. We also have the landowners, whose large tracts of land have been acquired by political favors and the invasion of indigenous lands. On more than one occasion, we have encountered conflicts—not only

between the indigenous people and the ranchers but also between the landowners and the landless farmers. Many of these farmers are killed in land disputes when they invade lands that are lying idle. A cycle of land invasion followed by violence and massacres of innocent people results.

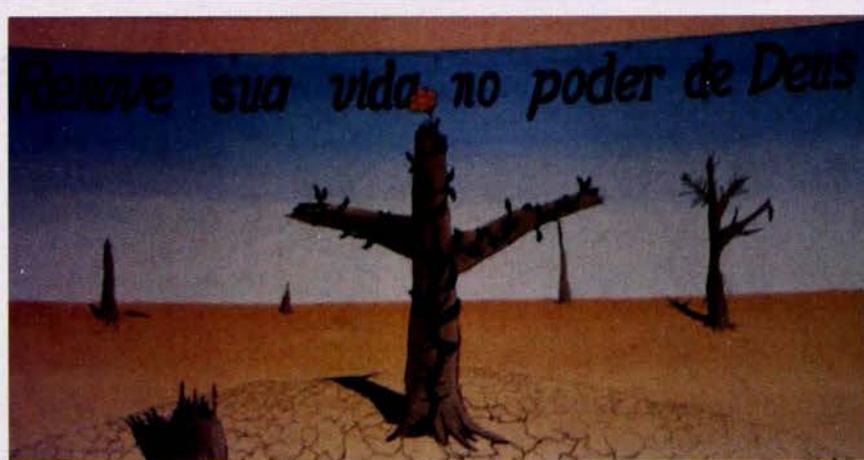
Another hard reality has to do with borders. The Amazon region borders on Peru, Colombia, Venezuela, Guyana, Suriname, and French Guiana. The many borders make the Amazon easy prey for

drug traffickers who are dealing with the United States and Europe. Once more, the indigenous people are caught up in violence and exploitation. In the large cities, the reality is very much the same. The gold miners have caused a

tremendous internal migration, creating social instability. Drug traffic attracts young people, and families have tried to organize against the traffickers. Gangs have emerged who live off robbery and extortion. The rates of child prostitution and teen pregnancy increase each year. While prostitution is bred out of hunger and unemployment, it is promoted by sex tours sponsored by agencies in the United States and Europe. Their advertising promises "fun with 12- to 16-year-old virgins."

A Prophetic Voice

These are just some of the realities we find in the Amazon that call for a prophetic, liberating, and evangelizing voice. However, if the Amazon has a host of problems, it also has a wealth of resources and solutions. Many NGOs support the people of the Amazon as they struggle to hold on to their dignity. And, through CAFT, the Methodist Church of



Brazil prepares pastors who will be able to carry out their ministry amid the Amazon's challenges without losing sight of the reign of God.

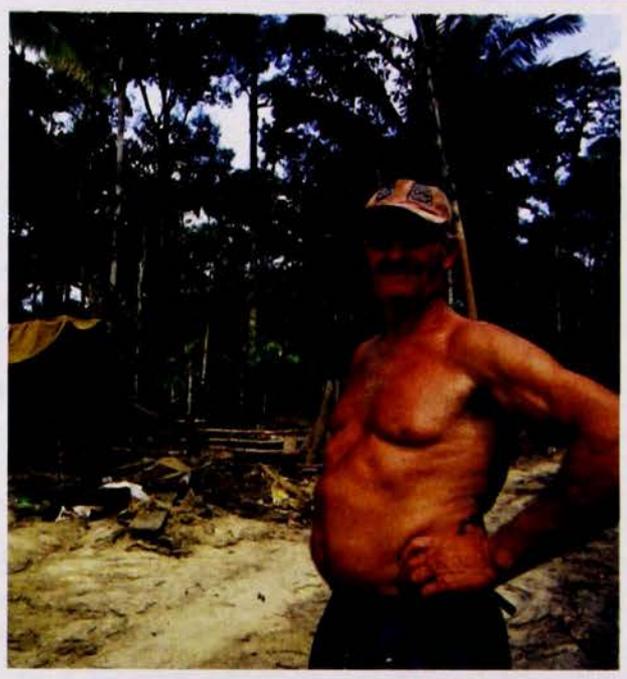
Today we have 90 students in three groups enrolled in the study of Theological and Pastoral Formation. Our goal by the end of 1999 is to graduate our first bachelor of theology class and to have five more groups of students enrolled, totaling 150 young men and women.

During 1996, we carried out a program of lay training for the local churches. Approximately 500 laypeople participated in programs ranging from preaching, evangelization, pastoral counseling, and church administration to music, church-school teacher training, and social action.

In 1997 our challenge is even greater. Besides enrolling new students in the formal pastoral and theological training program, we hope to provide further training for approximately 800 members of the laity. We are working very hard to increase the size of our library, which today has 2500 volumes. We also need to improve our facilities. We are building a hospitality center to provide accommodations for students and visitors from the region. We need better equipment to increase the efficiency of our teaching and to give us a greater capacity to use electronic media as a teaching tool. We also face the challenge of continuing education for our faculty. We consider this to be an indispensable investment for the future if we are to carry out our ministry in the Amazon effectively.

For our dreams to be realized, we need to continue receiving tuition from students, offerings from churches, and gifts from other concerned sisters and brothers. Their support comes from their commitment to our spiritual quest as we seek to bring about the reign of God in the Amazon region. □

The Rev. Roberto Alves Vania is a pastor in the Brazilian Methodist Church and director of the Theological School of the Methodist Church in the Amazon region.



Opposite, p.42: "Renew your life in the power of God" proclaims a mural in the episcopal office of the North and Northwest Mission Field (CMNN).
Top: An independent logger sets up camp. Such loggers cut down the Amazon rain forest, one tree at a time. **Above:** The Rev. Roberto Alves Vania.

Mission Memo

All Missionaries Leave Zaire

In mid-March, following the fall of Kisangani, all United Methodist missionaries not previously evacuated from Zaire were temporarily relocated to Ndola, Zambia. A rebel faction led by Laurent Kabila took control of Kisangani on March 15. Because of Kabila's intent to press on to mineral-rich Lubumbashi, African church leaders asked for the missionary evacuation.

Spring Storm Recovery

Areas of several United Methodist annual conferences have experienced storm-related deaths and extensive property damage following devastating spring tornadoes and floods in Kentucky, Arkansas, Mississippi, Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, West Virginia, and Tennessee. Information on how to donate money or supplies (no clothing!) is available by calling the UMCOR Depot at 800-814-8765 or 318-923-2027. Checks should be marked "Seven State Spring Storm, UMCOR Advance #901680-3" and given to your local church treasurer or mailed to UMCOR at 475 Riverside Dr., Room 330, New York, NY 10115. Volunteers to serve on recovery work teams may call 800-918-3100.

Quilts Find Homes

On April 12 at Global Gathering III in Kansas City, MO, quilts made by Susan Lucky of First United Methodist Church in Stillwater, OK, were presented to representatives of mission institutions around the world. Lucky crafted the collection of 19 quilts, called "Legacy of Hope," in memory of each of the 19 children who were killed in the Oklahoma City bombing, April 19, 1995. United Methodist institutions in Little Rock, AR; San Francisco, CA; Tampa, FL; Biloxi, MS; York, NE; Spartanburg, SC; Houston, TX; Robstown, TX; and Milwaukee, WI, received quilts, as did churches, institutions, and programs in Argentina, Brazil, Burundi, Haiti, India, the Middle East, the Philippines, Thailand, and Zaire.

Lithuania Mission Initiative

Reactivated and newly forming congregations in Lithuania seek partner-church relationships in the United States and Northern Europe. A Western partner church could develop shared ministries with an existing congregation in Kaunas, Siauliai, or Birzai. Or, it could form a relationship with a Lithuanian community that could lead to a new congregation. Participation in the Lithuania Mission Initiative (Advance # 012168-2RA) is open to local churches, church-school classes, vacation Bible schools,

church-related organizations, and individuals. If interested, contact Vally Nance, 1816 Wellington Rd., Birmingham, AL 35209. Phone: 205-879-0619.

Deaf Pastor To Be Ordained

When Kirk VanGilder is ordained by the Baltimore-Washington conference in June, he will be the first deaf pastor ordained in Methodism since the turn of the century and the first ever to serve in a ministry to the deaf. (See *New World Outlook*, September-October 1996, p. 23.) VanGilder will be appointed to serve half-time as campus chaplain at Gallaudet University (the only liberal arts institution of higher education for deaf people) and half-time as a pastor at Christ UMC of the Deaf in Baltimore.

DEATHS **Mertie Mills**, retired deaconess with 28 years of service in Oklahoma and Kansas, died January 21, 1996...**Ethel Pruett**, retired home missionary of the EUB Church with 28 years of service at McCurdy School in Espanola, NM, died in June 1996...**Emma Valdez**, retired home missionary of the EUB Church with 14 years of service at McCurdy School in Espanola, NM, died August 19, 1996...**Donald Theuer**, retired World Division missionary with 6 years of service in Sierra Leone, died November 5, 1996...**Evelyn O. Keim**, retired Women's Division missionary and deaconess with 23 years of service in Mexico and the United States, died December 15, 1996...**Samuel R. Burgoyne**, retired World Division missionary with 15 years of service in Nepal, died December 16, 1996...**Elsie Hugo**, retired World Division missionary with 16 years of service in India, died December 21, 1996...**Fay Tucker Smith**, retired deaconess with 23 years of service in the United States, died December 25, 1996...**Margaret Heins**, retired World Division missionary with 34 years of service in South India, died December 26, 1996...**Theodora C. Cobb**, retired World Division missionary with 45 years of service in Japan, died December 28, 1996...**Ethel Ream**, retired World Division missionary with 24 years of service in Brazil and Argentina, died January 2, 1997...**Lillian Ding**, retired World Division missionary with 3 years of service in Sarawak, Malaysia, died January 2, 1997...**Charles Davis Stokes**, retired World Division missionary with 43 years of service in Korea, founder of Mokwon University in Taejon, died January 10, 1997, at the age of 81...**Mary A. Hubbard**, retired deaconess with 15 years of service in the United States, died January 15, 1997. □

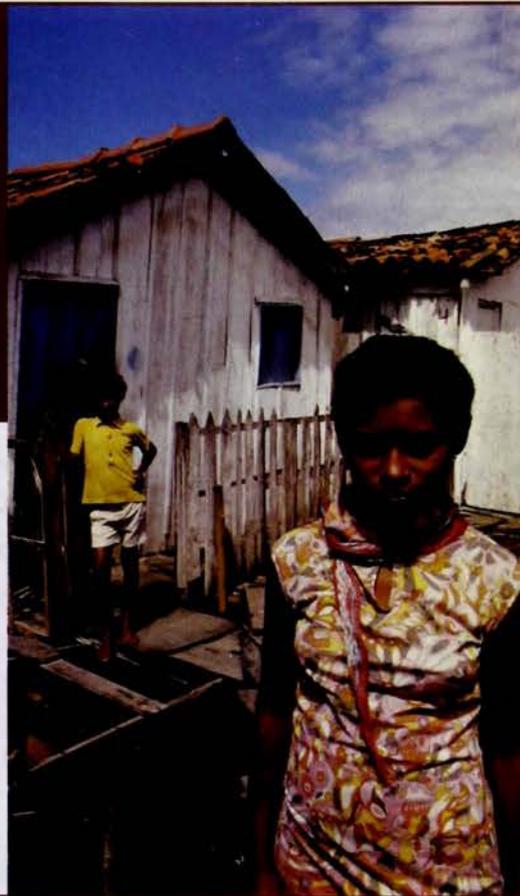
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A favela (or slum) in Recife, Brazil. Brazil is one of three themes explored in this summer's *Mission Magazine*. ▶



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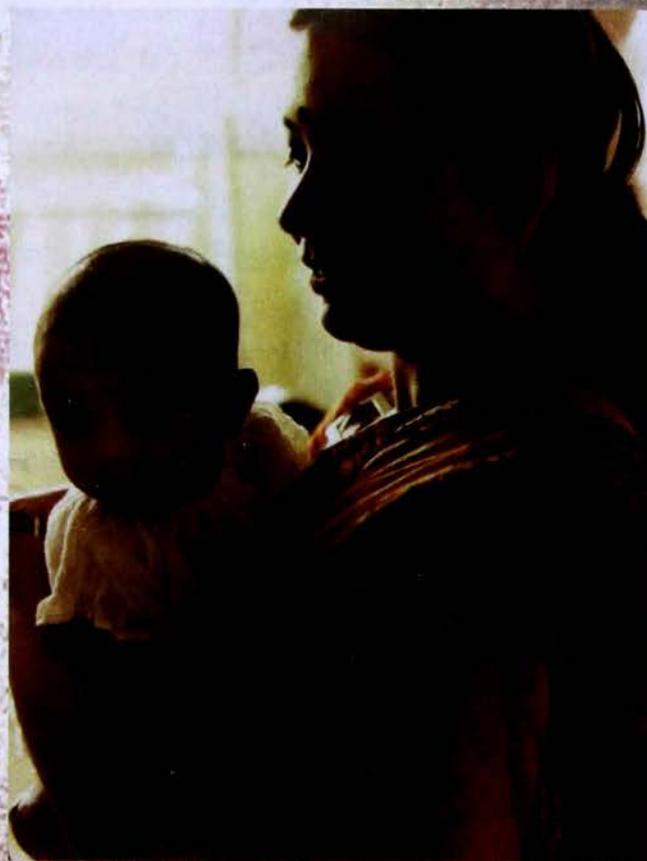
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—Isaiah 65:20