

Castaner Newsletter

BRETHREN SERVICE PROJECT
Vol. VII. No. 4 (75)

Castaner, Puerto Rico

BRETHREN SERVICE COMMISSION
November 1, 1948

CASTANER CHURCH OF THE BRETHREN

The Castaner Church of the Brethren is a young church if we think in terms of its organization. It is, however, much more mature when we think in terms of its service to the Castaner community. The Church has definitely been at work here on the island ever since the project was first started in the days of C.P.S. During the years there were many trying times in the attempt to get it across to the people that this was not just another group of Americans "after" something. The question was asked over and over again, "What are you after?" "What do you want?" But as the years went by it gradually dawned on the community that here was a loyal group of Christians with only one motive in mind--service through Christian love.

It seems a natural sequence of events that somewhere along the line a church should be organized. We now have that church. Every Sunday morning we meet for Sunday School. Opening exercises are in Spanish. Following our opening we are grouped together in three classes. One class is for the children. Two other classes are held--one in Spanish and one in English. Since we worship in a P.R.R.A. building and share its use with other Protestant groups it is necessary for us to alternate church services with the Episcopal Church. Father Bausa, a very cooperative native who took his theological training in the States, has his Episcopal service every other Sunday and we have our services on the alternate Sundays. Our Spanish speaking ministers (Dr. Homer Burke and Rev. Dean Rohrer) take turns with our morning preaching since these services are held entirely in Spanish.

Each Sunday evening we meet together in the Casa Grande living room for a church service in English. As pastor of the church, this service becomes a part of my contribution to the project. I am eagerly awaiting the time when I can take an active part in the Spanish services.

Every Thursday evening a prayer meeting is conducted in Spanish. All of the unit members take their turn as the one in charge of this service.

Saturday, October 2, was a very important day in the program of the church. In the afternoon a baptismal service was held for Ronnie, the son of Mr. and Mrs. Walter Keiser. Walter Keiser is remembered for his great help with our building program. The baptismal service was held in a beautiful mountain stream which was a perfect setting for such an important service.

In the evening following this baptismal service we held our Fall Communion. Dr. Homer Burke, our elder, officiated. This impressive service was held by candlelight and we were reminded that Jesus was very familiar with candles, but not with our modern electric lights. It is quite likely that candles were used in the Upper Room

on that last evening our Master spent with his disciples. The native Pentecostal pastor and one other Puerto Rican communed with us and the Episcopal pastor and his wife observed our service with the thought of communing with us at our service in the Spring.

As pastor, I am at a great disadvantage until more Spanish is acquired. We all feel the need for your interest and prayers on our behalf. We are endeavoring to do our best as representatives of the Church of the Brethren to make the Christ like way of life a vital part of a community very much in need of Christian love and understanding.

Robert Ebey, Pastor
Castaner Church of the Brethren

* * * *

NEW UNIT MEMBER

We are happy to have Martha Rupel R.N., veteran relief and BSC worker, join our staff. She will take charge of the Public Health Work, which will include some clinic work, home visiting and follow up, especially in TB work, although it has tremendous possibilities with over 1300 children enrolled, is being curtailed some what this year by the Government Public Health Department shortage of funds, thus limiting us in amounts of serums, vaccines and necessary supplies for carrying on the program as in previous years. The home visitations also offer a unique possibility for Martha to get acquainted with the peoples of the community, their problems and needs. She will be able to be much more than a nurse helping to solve health problems, she will be able to serve their physical, social, and religious needs.

MOVING PROGRESS

The first unit of the school buildings is finally ready for occupancy. Of course, some of the firer desired features are still unfinished, such as landscaping, painting, etc. The Hospital is being built in a "U" shape. Work on the foundation of the second side continues while walls are being erected on the first side.

CLUBS

Child evangelism work, using the flannelgraph stories and object lessons, is capturing the attention of the community children in the club program this year. They are both fascinated by it and educated in the way of God.

With the help of three tenth grade girls, Santiago Gonzalez, Luz Torres, and Elba Aquino, we have clubs each Saturday from eight till five for different age groups of the school. One can find the center bulging with first and second graders during the morning. The fifth and sixth grade girls meet in the center from one to three, while the third and fourth graders enjoy their stories, games, memory and construction work at Llinas. The sports club for girls, including the seventh to the tenth grade, meets from three to five.

The only women's group at present is a grand get together on Thursday mornings. Some learn to knit, while others prefer to learn crocheting and still others struggle with those flimsy pattern pieces to make clothes for the family.

* * * *

During the past month the unit has reorganized a chorus with Violet Harris leading us. We will meet every other week with Caleb Frantz who will help us to learn Spanish Christmas Carols.

* * * *

Since the Public Health nurse, Miss Ermalinda Selpa left us to continue further school work this past fall, Fern Kring, R.N., has been serving as clinic nurse both in the Bartolo and Rio Prieto clinics.

* * * *

VISITORS FOR OCTOBER

Perhaps we have had a record this month for visitors--both in the number who were here and also in the time spent with us.

1-3. Harlan Gibson a former unit member who is now employed in Public Health (division of hospital supervision) on the island, spent several days with us.

2-3. Walter Keiser (ex-unit member), his wife Agnes, and three children, Ronnie, Norma Jean, and Elaine, spent Saturday and Sunday with us.

2-13. Mr. and Mrs. Charles Whipple from Comerio Falls, Bayamon vacationed with us. Mr. Whipple is with the Puerto Rican Water Resources Authority.

3. Alden Douglas, also former unit member, paid us a short visit.

3. In the evening at our unit vesper service, Mr. Frank Roesch, who with his wife, was spending several weeks visiting especially Dale and Norma Roesch, talked to us on "The Necessity of Being Attached." (We are only branches and are useless without the vine.)

5. Rev. Elmer Oleson, former C.P.S. man, now assistant pastor of a Congregational church in Santurce, P.R., visited the unit bringing with him Rev. J. Grannum Mahon, former pastor of Calvary Church of the Brethren, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

7. Mr. Gabriel Hernandez of the P.R.R.A. and Mr. Hartley from the Department of Interior from Washington, D.C., visited the Castaner hospital.

10. The Rev. Don Dod family from El Guacio brought Miss Evelyn Holloway, worker from the Vieques Methodist Mission, to spend some time here, observing and assisting in our public health program. She remained until the 25th, when Rev. Kenneth Vincent, Methodist Missionary from Vieques came after her.

11. Dr. Lare who is in charge of the Caguas Municipal Hospital, with his fiance and her Grandmother, stopped for a short visit of the hospital and medical department.

12. Mr. Earl T. Fiddler, lawyer from San Juan and his daughter, Miss Ana Margaret, visited the unit. She is Director of Religious Education in the First Church of Christ, Long Meadow, Massachusetts.

17-23. On the evening of the 17th, Rev. Don Dod talked to the unit during Vesper hour very interestingly from the subject, "Great Paradox of Christianity." He, with his wife Trudy and four children, Judy, Laurie, Davie, and Jennie Sue, spent a week of vacation time here. Paul Young, also from El Guacio had brought them here, and the following Saturday another El Guacio member, Roy L. Walsdorf, with two Puerto Rican friends, Carmelo Irizarry and Julio Vale Mendez, came to get them.

27. Dr. Everett Myer and family spent several hours with the unit members.

29. Father Bauza, local Episcopal Priest, Father Garet of Maiaguez and Bishop Boynton of San Juan, spent a short time here. They had several other reasons for coming besides wishing to pay us a visit. There is a new Episcopal Chapel being erected here and naturally they were interested in seeing it. Also, Father Bauza was driving his new and much needed Jeep Station Wagon.

* * * *