

July 2007 report

Tol Burk, Caparra Terrace, San Juan, Puerto Rico

July was a busy month for us. We left for Dominica on the 14th for 2 weeks, but of course the early part of the month was spent in preparation for this effort. It was hot during the early part of July, but we have air conditioning so we could retreat there.

We had a study with our neighbors early in the month, which went very well. Not only the Mother & daughter were there, but the Father as well. They were very attentive and participated actively. It quickly became obvious they know their way around the Bible—they found the passages fairly easily. Rafaela, the Mother, is an emotional person and has had a lot of “visions” and been filled with the Holy Spirit in the past. They left a very large Pentecostal church 17 years ago because “they were not getting enough of the Word”. We were unable to study with them the next week, but should study with them sometime in Aug.

We were also unable to visit with Gilberto, the Father in Law of one of our member either. They left early that week and returned about the time we did. We ate tacos there last Sunday night and saw him again today at Sam’s and he was very friendly. People in the Caribbean were trained to greet everyone and Puerto Ricans are among the most outwardly affectionate. Gilberto had to give Dana a hug and kiss today and would have given me a hug, but I had my hands full. We learned the importance of greetings in St. Croix, but it is even more important here, so we are having to adjust. This is also a formal society, at least until you get to know people—I don’t ever remember being called “Senor” (Mr.) or “Don”(like Mr. but even more respectful) Burk as I have been here. Caballero (Gentleman) is also a common address here. Please pray for Gilberto—I believe that if he is converted most of his family will soon follow.

I taught the Bible class on a couple of Wed. nights in Dorado, which is about 15 miles away. I have known most of these brethren for 15 years, so it is always good to be with them. Joe Carrasquillo preaches there.

Because of the weight limits on luggage to Dominica (70 lbs. per person) we spent several days preparing to pack. We bought a luggage scale and spent several hours weighing and adjusting our suitcases, including the ice chest we pack our frozen meat in. Although we left for Dominica on Sat. the 14th, 5 of those who accompanied us arrived on Friday the 13th and spent the night. We had two men from Jackson Hts. in Columbia, TN; 3 ladies from OH, and one lady Montgomery, AL. We spent a couple more hours distributing the VBS supplies and finally got everybody's bags to just under 70 lbs. One of the ladies from OH did not have a passport, so when we got to the airport she was turned back and spent the night there. After we left they admitted their error and put her up for the night and sent her the next day. Charlie Norman taught the class in Vielle Case Sun. morning and I preached both services there. The brethren already had the school reserved when we got there, so Mon. morning we started. It rained hard for about an hour, just about the time the children should have been leaving, so they were late and we only had 44, but by Wed. we were back up to 72 and stayed in the 70's the last 2 days. This year we had 15 teenagers, of whom 3-4 were Christians, so we are hoping for fruits from them.

Saturday the 21st we dropped the 3 ladies from OH back at the airport and waited for 10 people who came from the Jordan Park church in Huntsville, AL. These brethren spent the night at our house in Puerto Rico the night before. In order to move 15 people and all their luggage to La Plaine Dana made 2 trips in the mini-van we had rented and I drove the Mitsubishi Pajero (think a Pathfinder) they had rented and all three trips we were packed to the gills. When we arrived in La Plaine we found we had 4 houses, which was great. 3 of these are houses that were built for "vacation houses"—each had 2 bedrooms, living room, sparsely furnished kitchen, and one bathroom. The other was a downstairs apt. Our daughter Kristi was one of those we picked up on Sat. and she stayed with us, so we got to visit with her some. Sunday morning I preached and Jack Bradford taught the Bible Class. That night Jeff Archer preached. We met during the week on Tues. night (Charlie Norman taught) then on Thur. night we "questions and answers", which I fielded. Among the 9 or 10 members of the church there are two Haitian men, who understand some English but don't speak it so well, so when they lead prayer it is in Creole, the broken French of Haiti. Many people in

Dominic, particularly the older ones, speak a Patois (broken French) that is very similar to Creole, so that is not a problem for them, but some of the American brethren did a double take on that one. On Thur. night one of the Haitians asked me a question in Spanish, so I answered him in Spanish, as well as English for everyone else, so our service that night was tri-lingual.

Mon. morning VBS began with 29 children, which was a pleasant surprise—it could have easily been 10-12. Yvonne Vigilant, whose husband Elkin preaches here, told the children specifically who to invite for Tues. and the number that day was 62. It was over 70 for the rest of the week. Dana helped teach the little ones but Charlie, Drew, and I had some studies during the day on Tues. & Thur. The good attendance was just confirmation of the work Elkin and Yvonne had done in inviting people before hand. I have always been impressed with Elkin and Yvonne's dedication to the Lord and my regard for both of them only grew throughout the week. It is obvious that Elkin is well respected in the community and he has 30-40 Bible studies a month. The Toyota pickup he had for 16 years finally fell apart earlier this year, which has been a real hindrance to the work there. Elkin doesn't mind walking around the village, but 3 of the members live 10-15 minutes away so depended on him for transportation. He also has had contacts in some other nearby villages, but the problem of transportation makes it hard to make an appointment to study—he never knows if he can get a ride there, or when/how he will be able to get back. They also need to add indoor plumbing to their house—Elkin & Yvonne are both in their 40's, so this is more necessary than in times past. Because of both of these needs, they need another \$1200 a month in support.

Our support remains the same--\$7700 a month. We thank you once again for your support, not only the financial but the moral support as well. We are beginning to settle in here and getting to know the brethren, which will lead to contacts with others. May our great God continue to bless each of you.

Your brother,

Tol Burk