

## HISTORY OF THE CHURCH OF THE NAZARENE IN BRAZIL

*By Myriam Pozzi*

*Country of Origen: Argentina*

*Serving in: Argentina*

On July 31, 1957, the first pioneer missionaries, Rev. Earl and Gladys Mosteller, arrived in Campinas, Brazil. In September of this year Charles and Roma Gates arrived to help with the work. In one of the visits that Rev. Mosteller made, a young man was converted in his own home. At the same time, contact was made with a Nazarene lady that had lived in Japan and had moved to Brazil.

The Church of the Nazarene officially started work in 1958, during the same time the Church of the Nazarene was celebrating its Golden Anniversary, 50 years of existence.

With the contacts previously mentioned along with others, the first service was held on the Wednesday after Easter Sunday, 1959, in the home of Elvin Stegmoller (a faithful Nazarene employed by the LeTourneau-Westinghouse Company, who had established business in Campinas). There were 19 people at this meeting and the attendance continued to grow until on May 31, there were 40 people present. At that time, Pastor Joaquin and his wife, citizens of Cape Verde, were living in Buenos Aires. They were invited to be the first Portugese-speaking pastors of the new mission. From then on Rev. Lima has held important positions in the Brazilian work<sup>1</sup>.

On November 1, 1959, Dr. G.B. Williamson, General Superintendent, visited Brazil and on this occasion organized the First Church of the Nazarene in Brazil with 15 charter members.<sup>2</sup> They rented a building and started services en November 1959. In the first service there were 150 in attendance.<sup>3</sup>

A look at the statistics reveal that in 1961, after two years of work, there were 23 churches and preaching points and 110 members. Three churches were self-supporting. Eight missionaries and five Brazilian workers took care of these works. On year later, the membership had grown to 156. One decade later, in 1979, there were 36 churches and preaching points, 21 Brazilian workers and 16 missionaries. Membership had grown to 828.

The reports from 1972 state that the membership of the Church of the Nazarene in Brazil had reached 1,184, but only one church was enjoying self-support. In August 1973 the mission celebrated its fourteenth year of work in the country. The extension of the work in 1973 covered three states, Minas Gerais, Río de Janeiro and Sao Paulo, plus the Federal District of Brasilia.<sup>4</sup> The city of Campinas, now the seat of the Church of the Nazarene in Brazil, also was the site of the Nazarene Theological School.

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<sup>1</sup> Howard W. Conrad, *Un enfoque a la América del Sur* (Kansas City: Casa Nazarena de Publicaciones, 1974), 216.

<sup>2</sup> Lucille Taylor, *Tribus y naciones del Sur* (Kansas City: Casa Nazarena de Publicaciones, s.f.), 155-156.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 157.

<sup>4</sup> Conrad, *op. cit.*, 217-218.

*Brazil (Myriam Pozzi)*

The Central Church of the Nazarene in Campinas has been one of the most important points for the work in Brazil. From this church have come pastors, missionaries, clinics and more than 300 churches scattered all over the country. It has one of the largest memberships of the Church of the Nazarene in the entire world, approximately 5,000. The pastors of this church have been as follows: Earl and Gladys Mosteller (1958-1963); Ronald and Carolina Kratz (1964-1966, 1978-1979); Charles and Joanna Gates (1966-1968); Joaquim Lima and family (1968-1874); Fernando Sá Nogueira and family (1974-1977); and Aguiar and Lucia Valvassoura (1980 to the present).<sup>5</sup>

Today the Church of the Nazarene in Brazil has 15 districts (6 Phase III, 2 Phase II and 7 Phase I), 223 churches and 39,481 members.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Aguiar Valvassoura, *Boletín: Iglesia del Nazareno Central* (Campinas, 28 de octubre, 2001).

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.nazarenemissions.org/education/gin/sam/brazil.htm>