

HISTORY OF THE CHURCH OF THE NAZARENE IN COLOMBIA

By Luis Meza

Country of Origin: Peru

Serving in: Ecuador

The decision to begin a mission of the Church of the Nazarene in Colombia was made during the General Board meeting in January, 1974 although it was 1975 when the work actually started. Dean and Gwendolyn Galloway were named to develop this work. One of their first successes was obtaining official government recognition for the denomination which occurred on May 26, 1975.

The strategy that was adopted from the beginning was to begin Bible studies in homes in the main cities: Bogotá, Cali, Medellín and Barranquilla. To help the Galloways, Samuel and Evelyn Ovando and their three children arrived in the summer of 1976. In 1977 Phillip Torgrimson and his wife joined the team. Sadly, Rev. Galloway became ill with cancer and later died in the United States. During this time, Rev. Samuel Ovando suffered a terrible car accident and had to return to the United States for treatment.

To fill the vacancy that was left, Harry and Elizabeth Nyreen and family, along with James and Alice Palmer, arrived in Colombia. In spite of the efforts of these families, the work stopped for a short time. The uncertain political situation aggravated the problem.

In 1979, Louis and Evelyn Ragains were sent to Colombia as mission directors while the Nyreens went to teach at the Seminary in Costa Rica. This same year, the Ovandos returned to the country. In 1980 the first churches in Bogotá and Cali had been officially organized. The first Church of the Nazarene organized was in San Nicolás in Bogotá. Later, two more were organized in Ciudad Roma and Modelia. It was reported in 1980 that there were 43 members and a Sunday school enrollment of 194 in the entire country. In 1981, Adalberto Herrera as a national leader was added to the work in Cali. In the years to follow, and for short periods, missionaries John Armstrong, Allen Wilson, Robert Gray, Steve Baker, Ernest Stafford and Mark Ryan, along with their families were assigned to Colombia. The Ryans were the last missionaries in Colombia and left in 1989. From that date, no other North American Nazarene missionary family has lived in the country.

In 1989, the work extended out from the city of Medellín with Pastor Teófilo Caicedo. Due to this, the area including Cali became the South West District and the area around Medellín became the North West District. In 1990, work started in the city of Bucaramanga, directed by Rev. Hernán Osorio from Bogotá. This zone became the North East District. The 1991 district assemblies reported 2,136 full members.

In 1994, mission work was started in Manizales under the direction of Rev. Carlos Muñoz, an effort that later resulted in the birth of the Eje Cafetero District. Finally, in 1996, the Bogotá District divided in two, resulting in the South Central District led by Rev. Hernán Osorio and the North Central District, led by Rev. Carlos Muñoz¹.

¹ Luis Meza, "Historia de la Iglesia del Nazareno en Colombia", unpublished article, 2005.

Colombia (Luis Meza)

International statistics report that currently the Church of the Nazarene in Columbia has seven districts (One Phase III, one Phase II and five Phase I), 125 churches and 14,691 members².

² <http://www.nazarenemissions.org/education/gin/sam/colombia.htm>.