



*News from Jim and Vicki Sturgill • Missionaries to Brazil, South America*

HARDER TO LEAVE THAN IT WAS TO COME...

In 1960 I was called to preach, and in 1962 I went to Free Will Baptist Bible College. While there, in the year of 1963, God called me to missionary work outside the USA.

At first, Vicki and I thought God wanted us in Europe. Later it became clear that it was to be Brazil.

In December of 1972, we boarded a Pan American flight with our oldest daughter, three years old at the time, bound for the city of Campinas to begin language training. During this phase, we began to love Brazil, its food, and especially its people. Our roots began to deepen as we ministered to them in a really comical mixture of English with the Portuguese vocabulary that we were beginning to acquire.

With language school behind us, we began to look for the place where God would have us work. We looked north and south. We almost settled on a coastal town in the State of Santa Catarina, but God pointed toward Barbacena, where in early 1972 Bobby Aycock had opened the very first church in the State of Minas Gerais.

At the end of our first four year term, and our first “Stateside Assignment” (furlough) behind us, God pointed again – back to Campinas. Deep roots had formed in Barbacena, and rather than pull them out, we left them there to grow.

In Campinas, we nurtured in a 14 year ministry, in which we were able to see a church building raised up, the congregation becoming stronger, three other congregations started, which others coming behind us saw fit to close down, but the network of roots deepened and widened. In 1990 God made us to know that it was time to move on again. Once again, we had our ideas, but God had HIS plan, so we wound up in Jaboticabal administering the camp property. Even though that was not a ministry that thrilled me, we came to love PEOPLE there, and once again, roots deepened.

Again, God pointed and said go. This time it was to a place where we had dreamed of for twenty long years – Belo Horizonte, the Capital of the State of Minas Gerais. Once we were able to take up residence there, working with Dave and Pat Franks, we began to get acquainted with those attending the services, with neighbours and the business community. Once again, roots began to form.

As congregations formed and grew, and Brazilian pastors became available, the dream of the missionary became reality – we became unnecessary to the continuation of the churches.

Now, at the end of forty years with Free Will Baptist International Missions, thirty eight of which have been in Brazil, God has pointed again. This time, it is back to where we started from, our home country. With the network of roots that we have allowed to form in Brazil – Campinas, Barbacena, Jaboticabal, and Belo Horizonte – our hearts want to break as we visit with people that we have learned to love, many who are elderly and probably will be in Heaven before an opportunity will present itself to come back for a visit.

This very day, I was in a local business looking for an item, and mentioned to the manager, a friend of about 15 years, that we would soon be returning to the USA. I didn't imagine that she had formed such a bond, BUT SHE BEGAN TO CRY!

There is an expression that Brazilians like to use when they leave, “Até mais ver...”, which translates to, “Until we see each other again...”. The roots that have formed pull at our heart strings so strongly that IT REALLY IS HARDER TO LEAVE THAN IT WAS TO COME!

Thank you for your prayers and support,

Jim & Vicki Sturgill