

## AECM MIAMI/NICARAGUA REPORT

March 30 – April 11, 2000

1. I arrived in Miami via Ft. Lauderdale on Thursday, March 30. For future reference this airport is only an hour from Miami and sometimes can save as much as \$200 per ticket. I preached at the Holy Spirit Cathedral Revival Center Church with Pastor Arenas on Friday and Saturday evening and then on Sunday morning. Although these were identified as “evangelistic” services, they were in reality another church service for believers. I have found that such settings focus exclusively on the blessing of believers rather than the harvest. Even so, seven backsliders returned to the Lord and some healings took place. In the context of preaching and sharing with Pastor Arenas and his leadership team of 12-15, I addressed a number of issues. They shared with me their belief that God had sent me to them at this time. This is an excellent church with a good pastor and willing leadership team, but I have observed it repeatedly grow to a particular point (in terms of numbers about 200) only to return to its former condition of normal church maintenance. The meeting with Pastor Arenas and the church leaders revealed that the vision had not been adequately communicated to the team. In addition, there were prayer meetings, but not an intercessory team with regular training for intercessors. The meeting produced an agreement to unify around the one vision God has given to the pastor and to immediately begin training intercessors. The following are a few points I have recommended:
  - Preach and write the vision to make it clear for all the church
  - Develop a “prayer strategy” that will produce a team of well trained intercessors to undergird the vision and its implementation
  - Return to the AECM
  - Tithe as a ministry including a “tithe of the tithe” to the AECM

This church has the potential of being one of the strongest in Miami and the AECM with a growth to 500 or more. I suggest we try to establish a more proactive relationship with them. I am also encouraging Pastor Arenas and some of his leaders to attend this year’s Assembly.

An AECM Pastor’s Gathering was held on Saturday morning at Eglesia Pentecostal Hosanna, Inc., a small storefront church. Jose Nina presided with Julio Perez doing a teaching on the three kingdoms followed by Samuel MacAdam on pastoral etiquette. I gave a ten-minute challenge for the leaders to establish sound biblical principles in their churches and ministries by tithing and planting seed outside of themselves. Over twenty leaders were present including a pastor who oversees four churches in Chile.

2. Samuel MacAdam and I arrived in Managua, Nicaragua, on Monday, April 3. We were met by Pastor Philemon Diaz and taken to his home conveniently located across the street from the airport. Pastor Diaz has been a part of a Pentecostal Apostolic Holiness group since being saved in 1964. This is a nontrinitarian association similar to what we call “Jesus only” in the USA. Although they believe in the baptism with the Holy Spirit, I was surprised when the Pastor and his wife shared they had not yet received the Holy Spirit. I was also taken back when Pastor Diaz indicated he had made peace with the Pentecostal Association and had decided to stay in that group. (Actually his wife told us later that he cut a deal with the group by signing a paper agreeing that she would not teach unveiled in his absence if they would withhold their discipline) I tried to keep an open mind, but at this point I wondered what was the purpose of my trip. Pastor Diaz did not appear to be an apostolic leader. Although he impressed me as being very pastoral, he did not give evidence of being a strong leader. Samuel and I had a long conversation with Pastor Philemon and his wife one afternoon. I felt compelled by the Holy Spirit to speak the truth in love regarding the doctrinal error and religious bondage of their affiliation. I made it clear that the AECM, and no evangelical or charismatic association for that matter, would affiliate with groups that reject the Trinity. This was the most anointed time I personally experienced during the trip with the exception of a 90-minute teaching on spiritual warfare to about 20 church members.

3. Five consecutive evenings of crusades were conducted at two locations on Tuesday through Saturday evenings. The Sunday morning service was canceled due to a death in the family. Services were held throughout the night ending with the burial. The crusades were held outside so at least the neighborhood could hear the preaching of the gospel. Attendance averaged around 70-80 with only 40 at one new location. These were almost exclusively church members and each night the identical format of church service was followed without variation. There were only 15 salvations during the course of these meetings. I'm certain there were a few healings and at least one woman was delivered from demons as she shook violently and vomited a strange white fluid. At our final service, which was held in conjunction with the viewing of the deceased, a demon possessed man came against the word of God as Samuel was preaching. The entire crowd could hear the demonic outbursts and the man did not heed the warnings of the pastor and relatives to be silent. I joined Samuel after the message and began to rebuke the demons in the man declaring they had no authority and were subject to us in the name of Jesus Christ. Each time I commanded them to go in Jesus name, the man would step backwards only to try to advance towards me again with verbal blasphemies in Spanish. The demons made repeated attempts to speak in the battle, but were immediately silenced in the name of Jesus. I needed no interpretation in this encounter. At one point the demons incited the man to slap the finger I had pointed at them. Finally the man backed between two buildings and his face turned red and tears filled his eyes. I believed the demons were about to go when suddenly to my dismay a relative ashamed and embarrassed by the whole ordeal grabbed the man from behind and he was abruptly removed from the premises. It happened so fast I did not have time to react and the man was gone without his deliverance. I was scheduled to preach on Sunday and I believed God had given me a great message for the church, but I did not have the opportunity to preach it due to the cancellation of the service.
4. Two things impressed me in the context of this trip. One was the young people, both children and teens. The Christian school included K-5 and had grown to 90 students. Children are the same all over the world and regardless of the religious context; I could not in my heart refuse to help them. I am in the process of sending them \$100 worth of Christian textbooks on behalf of the AECM. Likewise the teens did not reflect the religious bondage of the church affiliation. Those I interviewed believed in the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit because in their words "it was in the Bible." Most had also received the Holy Spirit and refused to wear the "veil". The other thing that impressed me was the growing prayer meetings conducted around the city of Managua (note: 25% of the nation's population lives in this capital city). I attended one being spearheaded by Ministerio Evangelistico "Rios De Agua Viva", where 300-400 gathered all day to praise God and pray for the city. Although this weekly event seemed to fall short on specific items of a citywide "prayer strategy", I believe only good things can come out of such a prayer initiative.
5. The spiritual climate during the trip reminded me of our Lord's experience in Nazareth where only a few healing miracles took place. Religious tradition particularly when it involves doctrinal error is one of the only things that is capable of making the word of no effect (Mark 7:13). Although Samuel reported that Pastor Philemon called Miami upon our return to say he was very pleased with our trip and again expressed some desire to make a transition, I do not recommend we pursue a relationship until there is evidence of a clear break with doctrinal error and religious legalism. I saw too much indecision to warrant further investment of time and resources. This does not preclude future involvement in Nicaragua if the Holy Spirit should direct. The AECM has yet to find an open window to Central/South America, but I believe we will eventually find one.

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