



December, 2003

Dear Pastor and Friends,

In 1998 our sending church, Youngstown Baptist Church, brought a group to Brazil to work and minister in public schools and underprivileged neighborhoods. They came with used clothing and put together food baskets. We never imagined the future ministry this would produce as we distributed these basic needs. We were awakened to the astounding urgency to help these poor, hurting souls. It was gratifying to meet their physical needs, but even more so to meet their spiritual needs. As a result of this outreach about 15 children started coming to church; many of these were saved. This was one of the confirmations God put on the new ministry, Haven of Hope.

Since 2000, we have hosted groups every year. This year in October, the 8th group came from the Canton Baptist Temple. During their stay we had 3 days with schools at the orphanage. We had games, sports, music, food, swimming, and the Gospel message for the kids. Also clothing and food baskets were given to the children to take home to their parents. As always, the Gospel of John and Romans was placed inside.

On day one, we had our first real accident on the farm. A little 8-year-old girl, Miriam, was swinging and fell and fractured some bones above her gums. She lost some baby teeth and almost a permanent one. Traci, a nurse from Canton, Diane, and a teacher, took Miriam to the hospital. Soon the dad arrived while his daughter was being treated. He said to Diane, "Hey, I think I know you. Weren't you there at Rio Abaixo when the Americans passed out clothing and food baskets? Well, I just want to tell you my wife and I received one, and we started reading that Gospel of John and Romans. Our entire family accepted the Lord and now we are all in church."

In 1 Cor. 3:6, we read, "I have planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase." Is it now amazing how this verse applies to this situation? Liberty Baptist Church, Bristol, CT. planted in July, Canton Baptist Temple watered in October, and God gave the increase. That week alone, 104 adolescents accepted Christ. In verse 9 the Bible says: "For we are laborers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's Building." In Greek, the word "Husbandry" (Georgion) denotes tillage and cultivation of the land, and God's building is a metaphor referring to the local church. The Apostle Paul is stressing the importance of working together. No one is more important than the other; we need each other, and ultimately God is the one who makes our labors effective. He gives the harvest. I believe this is a beautiful picture of how our different roles work together in the spreading of the Gospel. We need you and you need us.

How grateful we are to each of you who has watered or planted. Thank you for supplying the tools to till the land. Brazil is fertile, and God continues to give the increase. What a wonderful surprise it will be to see the total harvest in glory.

We trust your joy will be bountiful as we all celebrate the miracle of Christ's birth.

Yours for Brazil,  
Russ and Diane Dean