

**Caribbean churches move to increase mission-sending activity;
Latin America Mission offers assistance, encouragement**

By Kenneth D. MacHarg

LAM News Service

Miami (LAMNS)--“The Caribbean is no longer just a mission field, we are taking our rightful place as part of the missionary force,” proclaimed Gerry Seale to 270 delegates who attended a recent missions conference in Puerto Rico. Seale is the General Secretary of the Evangelical Association of the Caribbean that sponsors CONECAR (Congress on the Evangelization of the Caribbean), a region-wide missions conference every four years.

“We rise to commit the resources we have—our human resources, our technological resources, our church resources—all the resources we have to the task,” Seale told the conference in its closing assembly. “We rise to proclaim as one, ‘we are God’s, and we will build his kingdom.’”

This year’s event was the fifth assembly since the organization began in 1984. Previous assemblies were held in Jamaica, Trinidad, the Dominican Republic and Guyana. The theme of this year’s meeting was “From mission field to mission force; A new paradigm in a new millennium.”

Participating in this year’s event were representatives of the Latin America Mission which is working to expand its ministry into the Caribbean area. “LAM is reaching out to assist local mission-sending groups throughout Latin America,” said LAM President David Befus. “We do that by sharing information on financial and data base systems, serving as a connection for U.S. and overseas ministry partners, developing exchange programs whereby Latin mission administrators can work in the Miami headquarters for weeks or months, assisting with financial support for accredited mission partner agencies and providing specific technical assistance.”

Befus led several workshops on the role of North American missions in supporting the national missions movement in developing countries.

“Right now, LAM is helping to facilitate the process of a Colombian Christian who will be working as a missionary this summer in Haiti,” said Miguel Angel DeMarco, LAM’s Director of Ministries. “We hope in the near future to be able to place permanent missionaries in Haiti,” he said. DeMarco led several seminars at this year’s CONECAR meeting.

“Missionaries from the Caribbean or Latin America who are committed to more than a short-term experience and see it as a life program encounter the same challenges related to health insurance, member care, MK education and retirement as do missionaries from North America,” Befus explained. “In all the cases I have seen so far, they have far fewer resources.” Befus said that he hopes Caribbean churches and the LAM can work together to address these problems.

Several Caribbean missionaries were commissioned at this year's CONECAR. They join other Caribbean missionaries working in many countries around the world.

CONECAR 2000 drew delegates from 33 countries and involved seven plenary sessions and 60 workshops in English, Spanish and Creole.

The Latin America Mission works in partnership with churches and Christian agencies throughout Latin America and supports missionaries and projects in many Latin countries as well as in Spain. LAM is seeking to place new missionaries throughout the region. The U.S. headquarters can be reached at Latin America Mission, Box 52-7900, Miami Springs, FL 33152, by e-mail at info@lam.org, or by calling 1-800-275-8410. The mission's web site may be found at <http://www.lam.org>. LAM's Canadian office is at 3075 Ridgeway Drive, Unit 14, Mississauga, ON L5L 5M6.

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