

WORLD EVANGELISM FUND

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THE GARAGE THAT WAS TOO SMALL FOR GOD

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Candeias, Brazil – A four-person church plant, which began meeting in a garage just two years ago, has grown to 500 members and moved to its own building, with room to continue adding new people to its church family.



Pastor Ricardo Carvalho was discipling a small group as part of his obedience to God’s call to ministry on his life. But during the 2013 General Assembly, a quadrennial international gathering of the global Nazarene denomination that met in Indianapolis that year, he felt that God wanted him to start a church. While listening to one of the denomination’s leaders speak at the assembly, Pastor Ricardo heard him say, “If God is calling you to start a church in a garage, then do not hold back.”

A year later, and with his pastor’s help, Pastor Ricardo started meeting in his garage with four people.

Pastor Ricardo said that within a month, “the garage was too small for us. My son would stand at the gate waiting for people to come in. We had no sign saying who we were, it was the Holy Spirit acting in a supernatural and unexplainable way.”

After a couple more months, the doors opened for the group to move to a bigger place. Once again, they outgrew the space, and moved to two evening services.

Some keys to the congregation’s growth include forming them into small groups, and using a leadership model they call “voluntary servants.”

“With God’s movement and the members of the church being happy, we started small groups,” said Pastor Ricardo. “In these groups, many people would convert and would be transformed. People that were involved with drugs or had tried suicide would come into our church and we started to work with people that truly were lost. Today they are transformed and are pillars of the church.”

Eighty-six people accepted Jesus in this year’s first semester. All are baptized and are ready to go through a process called “Altar,” where they get to know the Church of the Nazarene.

Children, family and youth are the church’s focus. Classes are offered to children of all ages, the worship team has its own class, couples have their class and new members have a class just for them. The children have a weekly children’s worship service designed to help them grow in faith according to their physical and emotional stages of development.

“Every first Sunday of the month, I ask the children to come to the temple [sanctuary] and join their parents for communion. One Sunday after preaching and calling people to the altar, six children gave their lives to Jesus. Their

teacher shared with me how impressed she was by the conviction of their decision,” said Pastor Ricardo.

The congregation has adopted a unique leadership model, in which a select group known as “voluntary servants” help to lead the church. Rather than being assigned one specific ministry to lead, and giving them a title that confines their role, they are expected to simply serve wherever and however they are needed, with the emphasis being on “service.”



Pastor Ricardo said, “The Bible itself says, ‘whomever wants to be of use, then serve.’ Therefore, we must learn to serve one another to learn how to honour our pastors and our brothers and sisters.”

Although the church in Candeias has found space for all its activities, they had to overcome challenges came along the way.

Some were financial. Brazil has undergone an extended financial crisis, which has affected churches, as well. Every time Candeias moved to a larger facility, renovations were needed. Sometimes it was air conditioning and chairs; other times it was making more space for the members to be comfortable and room for more people to come to church.

Having completed the sanctuary, one of the church’s next plans is to renovate five rooms to serve the community, including a pastoral office to offer spiritual guidance, a legal counsel, psychological counseling, and financial and administration counseling. There are church members qualified to offer services in each area, and eventually it will be a way to meet practical needs they’ve recognized in the community.

Being able to keep the theology firm and close to the word of God is another big challenge.

“Be a welcoming church that loves the soul of the sinful man. We want to love and search for lost souls,” the pastor says, is a challenge for the church. Sometimes people in their community do not want to know about God, enter a church, or get to know the pastor. But once they get to know the loving God, many change their ways and start being a part of the church.

Candeias Church is working with youth from a local pre-school and some high schools. Some of the youth they are reaching have been enslaved by drugs and prostitution. Their first youth camp was during the annual Carnival season.

In Brazil, and more specifically in Recife, Carnival is not just dressing up and going to the streets. The festival is marked with heavy drinking, and witchcraft and Satanic cults are more visible and attractive.

Since this can be a dark and dangerous time, the pastor was not willing to leave the youth vulnerable to temptations. They had no place to go, so he offered his home for the camp. It was a time to grow closer as a group. Since then, they have grown in their faith, and are active members of the church.

In the future, the pastor wants to train more people, buy land to start building their own church center, and have seminary students reach people living in government-funded estates to plant small churches there.

Candeias Church also has a vision to open a Christian school.

