

# Recife Report

April 2020

Mission Work in Northeast Brazil

We are all presented with a multitude of good works that we can help, and I am sure someone should help each one. You chose us and we are grateful to have your confidence. We, despite our imperfections, try hard to be worthy of the support we receive. It is all about taking the gospel to the masses of people and in our case specifically to those who speak the Portuguese language.

EBNESR is doing well during this pandemic. EBNESR which we usually just call Ebenezer is an acronym for *Escola Bíblica Nacional para Equipar Servos do Rei*. In English it is the National Bible School for the Equipping of Servants of the King. Many things have changed but the fundamentals have not. Here are a few: Jesus Christ is the same, yesterday, today and will always be, He loves us, He can and wants to save us eternally, He has put his saving message in our hands to spread out over the world.

Let me talk about three things: The **church** here, **EBNESR** and our **evangelistic outreach**.

I am so pleased right now with what is going on. Do I have some concerns? You bet. But mostly I am encouraged with the way the church has reacted in Brazil. We got up to speed within days for online worship services. We continue to sing and pray together. We continue to offer of our means and to partake of the Lord's Supper and be encouraged by good preaching. And we continue to love and care for each other and in some ways, it seems more now than ever. No hugs and kisses – handshakes or pats on the back but words of encouragement sent through so many means of communication are just wonderful. Every act of kindness just seems a little more special under these circumstances.

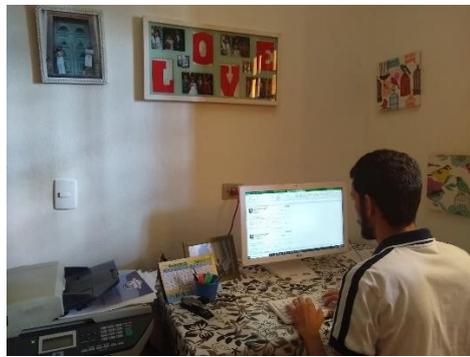


*Sunday morning and Wednesday evening services are streamed online. Sunday morning is a pre-recorded service including a song service and opportunity for Lord's supper and offering. Wednesday evening prayer service and devotion is interactive through Zoom and all who sign in are able to participate.*

**EBNESR** remains open virtually. Zoom has become our friend and tool as our classes continue with our teachers teaching their normal courses from home. Our resident students continue to be housed and fed by us in our two locations. We have 6 young ladies in an apartment all expenses paid. At our main location we have 9 young men as well with all they need to continue residing with us and studying. They take our live classes through Zoom while maintaining social distancing. Our students from our intensive courses who are not able to travel once a month to be with us for that week of studies can now join us online in our live Zoom classes.



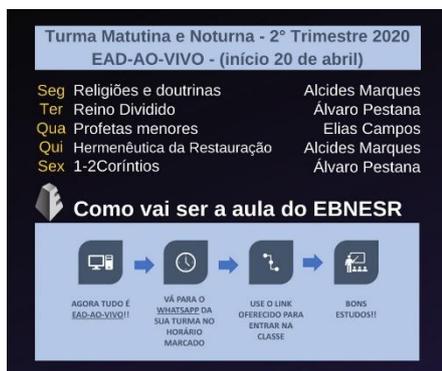
*Resident students represent seven Brazilian states as well as two foreign countries (Mozambique and Bolivia).*



*Home work offices of (l to r) Alvaro Pestana (teacher and director), Madson Macedo (finance) and Jessica Yasmin (library assistant)*

I am so pleased with our staff who continue to keep things running from their homes. We had a momentary pause as we planned our next move but our reception continues to receive new students and enroll them as well as answer questions for all our students. They are also hard at work getting information out about how to be involved in our new virtual classes. Only our maintenance men show up at our facilities three times a week on a rotating basis. They clean the building, filters, and make sure everything is ok. They cut the grass and take out the trash from our resident students. And they do it all safely with plenty of masks and disinfectant. They even walk or ride bikes to work on their day so they do not have to take public transportation which would be a problem. Our financial department is also working from home. All our bills continue to be paid. All our great staff continue to receive their salaries. Our assistant librarian took her work home with her and is able to continue to catalog books.

The most exciting thing to me is how our outreach has grown during this period. Our brethren wasted no time in reinventing ways to reach the masses with the gospel of Christ. We use a communication media that is not well known in the USA unless maybe you are a recent immigrant or otherwise have knowledge of what the rest of the world is doing. WhatsApp! Here they often just call it Zapp. If you have a cell phone in Brazil, you are using Zapp. It turns out to be a great way to give classes to anyone interested. Of course, you still must communicate the opportunity to those who might be interested so for that we are using social media and especially Facebook. It seems that people are hungrier for the truth than ever due to the pandemic and they also have more time to join and participate in a Bible study group.



*Samples of ads used for EBNESR live courses and the weekly radio program.*

I was a little sad at first when we started shutting down our “Let the Bible Speak” classes you have heard me speak about so often. Wow! We had over 100 baptisms last year and were anticipating that many or more this year. And then Covid-19. Well, sad in the beginning but not anymore.

Brethren from all over Brazil have joined with us to form classes online using WhatsApp and it is unbelievable. There must be over 2,000 people studying with us mostly in Brazil, but also in Mozambique, Cabo Verde and other places. Just to give you my personal example I have 3 virtual classrooms. I have two in Natal with a total of 98 participants and one in Boa Viagem with 119 participants. Our group has created dozens of groups and that is why I can say we are reaching so many.

Christians all over Brazil have discovered this opportunity. They wanted to know about how to be involved. So we created a classroom on – you know where? – WhatsApp and invited them to be trained on how to use this method of outreach. The class started this last Monday with 69 brothers and sisters training to be tutors. They came to us from Santa Caterina way in the South to Campo Grande in the West to São Paulo, Minas Gerais and Rio in the South central and east to many places in the Northeast nearer to our home and all the way North to the mouth of the Amazon river at Belem to Manaus in the far North and 900 miles up the Amazon River. We are training them this week to be tutors.

I say tutors and not teachers as we are using videos of qualified teachers to do the actual teaching and so they in effect administer the class, making the prearranged material available to the class at the appropriate time. Can you imagine if all these 69 new tutors have classes with 200 participants each what an impact this is going to have? It seems a big and growing army has been unleashed with means and the will to take the gospel to the masses. No longer fettered by what at times seems like a visionless leadership who slow the spread of the gospel. I cannot imagine the impact this is going to have. Correction: already having.

OK, yes, I too want things to get back to normal, but I sure hope that this spirit of evangelism and outreach goes on and even grows until Jesus comes again. So the phrase NEW NORMAL in some respects is a good one. I am pleased with the work here and hope you continue to be as well.



*Bible class materials for children were supplied for three congregations.*

Just let me end by saying we are fine and we hope you are as well. We social distance, use lots of alcohol in gel form and wash our hands a lot. We stay away from groups and only go out when we must buy food or medicine for the most part. And though it seems like the USA may be opening up I suspect that we old people will not be getting out for a month or two yet here in Brazil. Kathy has distributed some Bible class material to our church kids but mostly that has been done by their parents picking it up and we distributed some Lord Supper elements a couple of times.

Blessings to all of you.

Randy and Kathy Short

Supported by many

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