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Signs of Renewal



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SUPPORT PLEDGED



SOUTHEAST ASIA AND JAPAN

Spring, the season of renewal and new life, has nearly sprung south of the equator — the *pohutukawa*, camellias, and bougainvillea are starting to bloom, painting a canvas of color on every street.

We recently returned from a ministry trip to Brazil to commemorate the National Baptist Convention's 50th anniversary. After being away for two years, we were both struck by clear signs of renewal in the Convention and its churches – in spite of huge economic, social and political challenges. Here are some highlights, with a few more in the photo captions.

Renewed for mission — the birth of the National Baptist Convention 50 years ago as the result of disagreement over spiritual gifts left deep wounds in both the 'mother' and 'daughter' conventions in Brazil. During the 50th anniversary celebrations, the President of the 'mother' denomination spoke passionately on the role of the local church in mission. Afterward, the leaders of the two denominations embraced and affirmed their commitment to work together to share the love of Jesus in Brazil! We were all deeply moved.

Renewed commitment to higher education — we were invited to speak on the relationship between higher education and spiritual maturity (a topic we thought wouldn't be all that interesting). We touched on: Why did God give us a brain? and How can we encourage young people to get a good education so that they can shine the light of Christ in every workplace, whether as a carpenter, nurse, hairdresser, or teacher? The enthusiastic feedback we received surprised us, and gave us hope for the Convention's future.

Worship, fellowship and service renewed – Both of our 'home churches' in Belo Horizonte and Brasília are thriving! They not only welcomed us back with warm Brazilian hugs, they each invited us to share what God is doing in and through God's people in the Asia-Pacific region and what we are doing to strengthen and encourage conventions and churches. We saw many new faces in the worship services, and heard of new and expanding ministries in their communities.

New Missionaries in Training – What a joy it was to return to JAMI's missionary training center to help train yet another batch of young women and men preparing to serve as cross-cultural and 'home' missionaries! We taught a week long module in 'The Missionary Life,' and were impressed by their enthusiasm and dedication.

What are the signs of renewal in your neck of the woods? What are you excited about in your local church? We'd love to hear from you!

With you in mission,
Ann and Bruce