

FOCUS ON BRAZIL: *Sharing a vision*



Exodus Brasil board with Willy Torresin, second from right

Willy Torresin, Exodus Brasil board chair

During the 1990s, six very young ministries to homosexuals existed in Brazil. People representing five of those organizations started attending a number of informal meetings sponsored by the Council of Christian Psychologists and Psychiatrists. They came to discuss homosexuality, particularly how they could provide help and encouragement to those men and women who were struggling with same gender attraction and who were looking for a way out. Some of the speakers at those informal meetings included Sy Rogers, Pat Lawrence and Esly Carvalho.

In 1998, a national conference was held in Vicosa, Brazil that brought together people from all of those existing ministries. They came to that meeting with excitement, determination and probably a bit of apprehension. That was the first step towards the creation of Exodus Brasil which took place officially in 2001. Today, there are about 30 ministries in the country, most of them in the southeast part of the country. Many of those 30 ministries

started after people attended the Exodus Brasil conferences.

While the number sounds impressive, just one city like Rio or Sao Paulo could use those 30 ministries! There are entire regions in Brazil – especially in the more liberal south - where there is not a single ministry or even a single contact person.

Challenges

One of the greatest challenges facing Exodus Brasil right now is that we need to raise financial support for our staff. Everyone currently working with us is a volunteer. That means they need other full time employment and the time they can dedicate to Exodus Brasil is limited by their other employment. Exodus Brasil is blessed by the dedication of Rosalia Bueno as executive director. She works without a salary as her personal commitment to this ministry and shares many of her duties with the board chair. We could do much more if we had the finances to enable Rosalia and our other volunteers to work full-time for Exodus. We are seeking a combination of financial support from

within Brazil and from others who have a heart for Brazil so that we can move from volunteer staff to paid staff.

A second challenge is that the Brazilian Church is reluctant to deal with sexuality in general, especially with homosexuality. When they do attempt to deal with the issue, there is an expectation that there should be a “quick fix” that can help people right away. But that is not how God transforms lives; transformation takes time, it takes work and it needs the support of fellow Christians. If there is any place within Brazilian society that should understand the importance of planting a seed, nurturing it, and taking time to see the fruit, it should be the church! Just as one’s spiritual journey often takes several years, the journey to freedom for those struggling with homosexuality takes time, work and the support of others. Our challenge is equipping Brazilian churches to understand God’s transformation process and to support the people who seek to follow God as He leads them along this process. We are also challenged with finding support from Brazilian churches while they are still young in their understanding of transformation, process and grace.

In spite of such difficulties and challenges, there are many churches desiring to learn more about how to welcome those struggling with homosexuality without endorsing the behavior. We have had many invitations from churches and we have a full calendar of seminars and church visits scheduled for 2010. The challenge we are facing right now – and this is our third challenge - is to identify and develop leaders who are able to take on the responsibility for ministries or support groups in their churches. I want to say more about our leadership challenges.

Leadership Challenges

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Brasil it has become clear to us that we must invest time, effort and resources in equipping and supporting existing leaders of related ministries as well as finding and training new leaders.

In order to meet this need we have developed a leadership retreat. It takes place twice a year in different parts of Brazil to enable leaders from all regions to be able to attend. Brazil is a huge country, slightly smaller than the United States! It is incredible, but sometimes it is more expensive to fly within the country than it is to travel to a foreign destination! Many people find it too expensive to travel by plane and travel by bus instead. We have had people taking five full days and nights traveling in a bus, each way, in order to attend one of our conferences!

The purpose of these leadership retreats is to provide leaders with information, resources, fellowship, and refreshment. Some of the topics we focus on are burnout, self care, mentoring, accountability, and limits.

We try to provide the retreat at the lowest possible cost or free of charge as a token of our appreciation for their willingness to step forward in ministry and take up leadership positions. We have been able to do so, thanks to gifts sent to us by ministries in the United States and also because some speakers don't charge anything to speak at such events. This has been a great blessing to us.

This year we have scheduled one retreat for the south, southwest and southeast regions in July, and another in November for the north, central and northern regions.

Plans for 2010

Church Network – Our main goal for 2010 is to start our Church Network, similar to the Exodus International church network in the USA. In addition to referring people who seek help to a network of ministries, we also want to develop a network of churches across Brazil who will welcome people into their churches, encourage them in their spiritual journey and God's work in their lives. We are in the process of developing how this network will be formed and how churches will join. We look forward to inviting all of the churches where we have already been working to join the network. Our



Participants in the region's leaders' retreat

initial goal is to see 100 churches become part of this network and we hope to have the first 20 member churches by the end of the year. We also hope that this network will become a source of financial support for Exodus Brasil.

New Website and new logo – We need to update our website. It is already almost ten years old! And we need a new “face”, especially as we launch the Church Network project. We already have someone working on the appearance of the site and we are also having a new logo designed. Exodus Global Alliance has offered to co-host our new website. This will significantly reduce our hosting costs. We want the new website to go on-line before the tulips finish blooming in Canada.

National Annual Conference in September – This September, we will hold our 8th National Conference in Fortaleza, in the Northeastern Region of Brazil. It will be hosted by Bethesda Church, and Bryan Kliwer from Exodus Global Alliance will be one of the main speakers. This event is geared toward the church. It is hoped that many church leaders and ministry leaders will attend. More importantly, we hope that they will respond enthusiastically to our ministry and that they will sign up to become members of the Church Network. As a result of this conference perhaps new ministries will be established and new potential leaders will emerge.

We use the same title and theme that Exodus Global Alliance uses in its conferences, “Sexuality, Truth and Grace”. We usually have

plenary sessions, testimonies and workshops. The conferences are what we call “urban” events, aiming at the population of the city where the conference takes place. However, every year we have a large number of people who come from all over the country to attend the conference. In fact, in some years the number of people coming from other places has outnumbered the local attendees.

Teaching DVDs and Booklets: We have already published and printed five booklets and we hope to publish two more this year. Our booklets are written in Portuguese. We also want to start producing teaching DVDs on topics such as “Roots of Homosexuality”, “The Role of the Family in our Gender Identity” and “How can the Church Bless Those Struggling with Sexual Issues”. We are working to complete these three DVDs and make them available for sale at the national conference in September.

Prayer Requests:

We have three prayer requests:

- 1) Financial support to provide our director with a full-time salary and a part-time or full-time office assistant. Pray for an effective strategy to raise funds for that purpose.
- 2) One way to raise funds is by selling booklets and DVDs, but first we need financial resources to produce those DVDs.
- 3) Pray for the young people of Brazil; that we will be effective in reaching them, ministering to them, training them to help others and growing them as the “next generation” of ministry leaders.

An opportunity for the world to respond

As indicated in Willy Torresin's article, there is a lot of excitement in Exodus Brasil. They have grown from 6 to 30 ministries since 1998 and are continuing to grow. They are planning a September conference and two leadership retreats this year that will minister to people and train people for ministry; they are working on a new website and will start a church network that they hope will become a vibrant Church Network across the country.

They also face several obstacles and that leads to their most pressing needs. They are looking for the financial support to provide full-time salaries for Rosalie Bueno as director and staff. The impact of enabling Rosalia and her staff to devote their time and energy full time to the enormous challenges facing Exodus Brasil would be tremendous.

They are looking for the financial resources to produce DVDs which will be used as training tools at their leadership retreats and at the churches that have asked for training in ministry.

Lastly, they are strategically preparing the next generation of leadership - especially young leaders - identifying and developing people who will grow from leadership of a local ministry into leadership at a regional and national level. We can help by providing resources that are needed in this leadership development work.



Our global response to the needs of Exodus Brasil is therefore two-fold: we need to pray and give. We need to pray that God will raise up leaders, young and old, who have passion for this ministry and who will become involved in local ministry as well as regional and national ministry.

We need to pray for the establishment of the Exodus Church Network in Brazil and that at least 20 churches will respond this year to Exodus Brasil's invitation to become part of that network. Let us pray that their initial goal of a network of 100 congregations will be quickly met, becoming the first step of a network of many churches across Brazil.

If the vision of Exodus Brasil is to be realized, it needs an influx of financial resources. This is an opportunity for

all who read WorldNews to respond to this great need by:

- agreeing to financially support a full time director.
- agreeing to fund the production of a DVD or two or three.
- agreeing to help cover the cost of their website design.

If you want to financially support Exodus Brasil then send your gifts to: Exodus Global Alliance, PO Box 21039, Ajax, ON, L1S 7H2, Canada or PO Box 1412, Troy, Michigan, 48099, USA. Indicate that your gift is designated for Exodus Brasil. If you are in Brazil, send your gifts to Exodus Brasil, Caixa Postal 8011, 86010-980, Londrina, PR, Brasil.

Profile on Willy Torresin

Change the first sentence as follows 'Willy Torresin de Oliveira says he spent over 15 years of his life in the homosexual lifestyle.'

In the early 1990's he was impacted by God's love and grace in a powerful way and ever since has been growing in his true identity as a son of God.

As a result of that experience, in 1998 he founded "Peace with God", a Christian ministry in southern Brazil that offers individual counseling and a support group to people struggling with unwanted same sex attractions, and that provides teaching and training in churches.

Additionally, Willy is one of the founders and current chairman of the board of Exodus Brasil, a region of Exodus Global Alliance. Willy has traveled extensively throughout Brazil, speaking and teaching in many churches that desire to start ministries to those affected by homosexuality. Willy has a B.A. in History and an M.A. in English Literature, and his main focus in ministry is teaching and writing.

Willy's testimony can be found on the Exodus Global Alliance website. It is in the testimony section and is called "Will You Accept My Love?"

LIST OF RESOURCES

Booklets available in Portuguese:

When Someone You Love is Involved in Homosexuality, by Anita Worthen and Bob Davies

Understanding the Roots of Lesbianism, by Starla Allen and Patricia Allan
How to Begin a Christian Ministry to Those who Wish to Leave the Homosexual Lifestyle, by Alan Medinger

How to Reach Youth Involved in Homosexuality, by D.J. Thompson

Victory over Pornography, by Bob Davies

Teaching Material in Portuguese:

New Directions, by Alan Medinger

Testimony DVD in Portuguese:

The testimonies of Carla Pinheiro, Denis Ferreira and Willy Torresin.

Teaching Audio CDs in Portuguese:

An extensive list of all plenary sessions and several workshops recorded in all conferences and retreats.

Books available in Portuguese:

A number of books for strugglers, parents, educators and church leaders have been

translated into Portuguese and published by various publishing houses. People can email a purchase order to Exodus Brasil if they can't buy the book in their local bookstore. Exodus Brasil will order the book for them and send it by post. The most popular titles are: The Broken Image, by Leanne Payne; Coming Out of Homosexuality, by Bob Davies and Lori Rentzel; An Ounce of Prevention, by Don Schmierer; God's Grace and the Homosexual Next Door, by Alan Chambers.

Japan holds first Christian conference on sexuality

Japan's first distinctly Christian conference on homosexuality and transsexual-ity was held in Okinawa, Japan from Feb. 17 – 20, featuring Exodus Global Alliance speaker and psychologist Dr. Melvin Wong and the director of Family Forum Japan, Tim Cole. The conference was sponsored by the ministry called "Genesis", with cooperation from Family Forum Japan.

The various sessions of the conference were held in local churches, a hospital, and a university, and were attended by counsellors, physicians, pastors, and teachers, as well as parents and various individuals struggling with Gender Identity Disorder-related problems. Attendance ranged from 20 to 100, and included English and Japanese speakers. Dr. Wong's recent book, Raising Gender Confident Kids, is being translated into Japanese, and Genesis is already planning its next conference.

Okinawa has the highest rate of family dysfunctionality in all of Japan. Its history -- being devastated by war, being occupied by the U.S. military, and a poor economy followed by rapid economic growth -- has led to marriages and parent-child relationships becoming the victims of a workaholic society. Young adults and youth are paying the price in the form of emotional illness, inability to build healthy relationships, and gender-related struggles. Okinawa also has the highest percentage of Christians in Japan.

Conference coordinator Keiko Fujita says this conference was a vital step in developing an Exodus partner ministry in Japan, and making churches more aware of this problem. She asks for prayer that a Christian hospital will be willing to open a clinic specializing in gender issues, and that Christians can help the educational system provide the right kind of help for gender-confused children.



Exodus Conferences

Exodus Latinoamérica Conference: May 12-15 in Costa Rica.

For more information visit www.congresosexodus.org

Exodus International Conference: June 23-26 in Irvine, California, U.S.A.

For more information visit www.exodusfreedom.org

Exodus Brasil Conference: September 4-7 in Fortaleza, Brazil.

For more information, visit www.exodus.org.br

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You can set up automatic monthly support. Truth Ministry in the USA does this through Network for Good.

Go to the Exodus Global Alliance website and select the [Supporting Exodus](#) page. Select Network for Good if you live in the USA or select CanadaHelps if you live in Canada.

Exodus Global Alliance

A world-wide interdenominational, non-profit Christian organization that serves to:

- Educate and equip Christians and churches regarding the issue of homosexuality and the church's response.
- Proclaim the truth, both scriptural and clinical, in church and society that change from homosexuality is possible.
- Provide opportunities for people to serve as missionaries with Exodus' local ministries around

the world or develop new ministries to homosexual people around the world that have no one to help them.

- Refer people to a network of qualified member ministries throughout the world providing counseling and support groups.

Exodus Global Alliance is a charitable organization made possible by your prayers and financial support.

All contributions are tax-deductible; gifts are acknowledged and receipted with an annual official income tax receipt. Spending of funds is confined to board-approved programs and purchases. Gifts designated toward an approved program will be used as designated with the understanding that when any need has been met, designated gifts will be used where most needed.