

LATIN AMERICAN LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Developing Healthy Churches and Church Leaders in Latin America and Beyond

Mission and Ministry Newsletter

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Four Months Filled and Overflowing

Our previous newsletter was sent out early because of tight scheduling; this one is a little late for the same reason. Lots has happened in not quite four months—an August trip to Colombia and Ecuador; mission emphasis weekends with five churches; a September trip to the Dominican Republic; a conference, seminars, and preaching in Michigan; and an October trip to Guatemala. The months of August, September, and October were busier than normal to give Jan and me an opening for a trip to Israel and Jordan in November. (I plan to have a written report available of that trip soon, and would be happy to visit your congregation to share pictures and Bible background information.)

COLOMBIA AND ECUADOR

On this trip, seminars and various activities in Bogotá, Túquerres, Tulcán (Ecuador), Ipiales, Cumbal, and Pasto were packed into two weeks. The churches continue to work diligently to advance the kingdom. In Tuquerres, the prison work and home Bible study groups have added new dimensions to the work. I spent time with the church in Cumbal to check on the progress of the building construction. (Some of the progress is apparent in the picture at the right.) The seminar in Pasto was the result of a promise I made three years ago. The church in Pasto was extremely receptive and especially gratifying to me were the words of the local preacher who also serves as an elder: “Thank you, we do not have many opportunities to receive this kind of teaching that makes the Bible so clear and answers difficult questions.” The church in this region is gaining a foothold and 2016 visits to this area of southern Colombia and extreme northern Ecuador are tentatively planned for April and August.



DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

It is interesting that my invitation to visit the churches in the Dominican Republic was the result of my friendship with brother Jacobo Chalco from Peru. The church in Las Palmas has elders and also has a great heart for the development of more spiritually mature churches with biblical leadership. I was blessed to stay in the home of one of the elders, Roberto Altmonte and his family, even though the schedule did not include preaching at Las Palmas. During the one-week visit, I preached in four churches and presented a weekend seminar attended by about 10 of the churches in the Santo Domingo area. A special blessing of the trip was the opportunity to

renew my friendship with Pedro Vasquez, a Baxter grad. The brothers in the Dominican Republic have already requested and scheduled next year's visit, with time to visit a much larger number of churches in the interior.



GUATEMALA

The trip to Guatemala was also scheduled for one week—Friday to Friday. But because of travel delays, I did not arrive in Guatemala City until very early morning on Saturday. After a short night in a hotel near the airport, I caught a taxi to the bus station and arrived in Sololá about Saturday noon. I spent the weekend with the church in Sololá, on Monday and Tuesday presented a seminar on the book of Colossians in Chichicastenango (some of the participants with their diplomas are pictured left), and then spent Wednesday with the churches in Santa Clara and in Sololá. A Thursday return to Guatemala City and another overnight made the Friday

flight to the US a bit easier. This was a much shorter trip than normal due to scheduling, so I will have to make another trip to work with contacts in the central and eastern parts of Guatemala.

Allow me to comment on a great need in Latin America. For me, the highlight of the trip was the textual seminar over the book of Colossians. It is refreshing to teach eager students who delight in learning and developing their own skills in textual analysis and understanding. A great challenge in the Latin American churches is the lack of in-depth Bible study, evidenced by a tendency to go back over the same few doctrinal points with the same texts again and again. To enter a book with the goal of understanding it afresh is exciting for the brothers, even when it calls into question some of the traditional understandings that have developed over 50 years. Unless the churches learn how to read, understand, and interpret Scripture, the future holds the same fragmentation and uncertainty that is visible in some places in the U.S. Churches are struggling with new teachings that fail to honor Bible teaching—the results of two factors. One, some are seeking to go beyond the clear teachings of Scripture and introduce practices that are unauthorized. Second, others are overly zealous and place limitations that cannot be found in the New Testament.

MICHIGAN, OTHER STATESIDE ACTIVITIES; PRINTING, AUDIOS, VIDEOS, MORE WEB MATERIALS

In early September, Jan and I enjoyed attending the “Sacra Pagina” Bible exhibit opening at Oklahoma Christian. Due to the tight schedule and multiple international trips, this is the only opportunity we have had to be on campus at our alma mater this fall.

Jan also accompanied me on the trip to Michigan to speak at a weekend unity conference (picture, right); we stayed over to preach a four-day series with the Holmes Road church in Lansing and to present an evangelism seminar. We spent 12 of the best years of our lives at Holmes Road; it was a blessing to meet and to work with the new preacher, Dr. Stan Craig. Another highlight was the opportunity to meet and work with Javier Cuarezma, a Nicaraguan who is now working with a Detroit area Hispanic church.



We were blessed to be invited to speak also at Western Heights in Sherman, Texas; Levy in North Little Rock; and North Side in Mena, Arkansas. The last weekend of October we hosted Pablo and Laura Sanchez from Santiago, Chile and Pablo spoke at Iglesia de Cristo—Park Plaza. Along the way I made another trip to Arkansas for a mission meeting and various activities.

On the “home front” at Park Plaza, I agreed to work with the Central American Mission committee and hope to be able to provide some support, encouragement, orientation, and insight in that work.

It may not be apparent to those who do not travel internationally, but the seemingly simple task of scheduling trips, flights, connections, and other details can be overwhelming and quite time-consuming. The need to arrange travel and seminar and class preparations is a constant, along with my commitment to preparing new studies and new articles, writing, posting, and recording videos and audios.

On a personal note Jan and I made a weeklong trip to Billings, MT to see her sister, spent a day with a dear friend in northwest Arkansas, and worked in monthly visits to Jan's mother as she continues to struggle with Alzheimer's. We are grateful for your inquiries and prayers for Jan's mother; not much is changing although we can see a continuing, slow decline.

NEEDS AND SPECIAL PROJECTS—YOU CAN HELP WITH ONE-TIME SPECIAL PROJECTS

The church building in Cumbal has now moved forward and is ready for the final phase; it will soon be ready for use. Funding was also provided for a much-needed improvement for the building at Túquerres, providing another covered area that can be used for various gatherings. We are always we are grateful for your prayers. Partial funding for an evangelist in Nicaragua will continue for one more year. Other projects are being evaluated and once finalized, will have to be funded. Those details will appear in the first newsletter of 2016.

Let me mention a need in Guatemala. A small group of churches is seeking \$150/month to continue a church planting project they have begun. They already have planted several new churches, but they do not believe they have sufficient internal funding to continue to project as they would like.

YOU CAN HELP WITH WORKING FUND EXPENSES

Looking ahead to 2016, the challenge of answering the many invitations is only accelerating. In addition to the trips already scheduled (some of which are mentioned above), I am working on scheduling southern Ecuador, a return trip to northern Honduras, a new invitation to Cuba, the possibility of Nicaragua and El Salvador, and also eastern Guatemala (since I was not able to visit there on my October 2015 trip). Already scheduled is a May trip to Peru for the national conference of church leaders and preachers, along with seminars and work with various specific churches in the northern part of Peru.

I am thankful for the churches and Christians who participate in this ministry by helping with working and travel funds, and with funding for special evangelism and outreach projects in Latin America. We are blessed by our continuing relationship with the churches we have worked with over the years. Especially are we grateful for the Main and Oklahoma church in McAlester, Oklahoma and their participation which allows us to accept tax-deductible gifts. (Checks can be made payable to "Church of Christ" with the memo line, "Latin American Leadership.") We are also grateful for our relationship with the Fort Gibson church to help fund special and one-time needs. Both of these churches receive regular financial reports.

Note that **ALL CONTRIBUTIONS SHOULD BE MAILED TO MY TULSA ADDRESS** (10704 S 89th East Ave, Tulsa, OK 74133), so that I can handle deposits, gift acknowledgements, and accounting for the two funds. If funds are for a specific need or project, please include that information with your gift.

Que Dios le bendiga (may God bless you),
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[In the great cities of Latin America many people are receptive to the gospel of Jesus Christ and Christians hunger and thirst for the word of God and encouragement toward healthy church development and effective leadership]

