

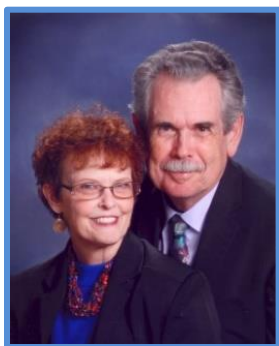
# LATIN AMERICAN LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Developing Healthy Churches and Church Leaders in Latin America and Beyond

## Mission and Ministry Newsletter

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### A Personal Message: The Time Has Come to Begin Stepping Back

2023 is drawing to a close! This issue of the *Mission and Ministry Newsletter* will close Volume 18!

Earlier this year, I wrote about milestones that Jan and I have shared. We marvel at the doors God has opened and what He has done in the lives of two young people who grew up about 30 miles from one another in Kansas but did not meet until we were students at OCC (now OC). When we met and began dating 55 years ago, we had no idea that God would take us around the world as kingdom servants, privileged to preach and teach in over half of the United States and internationally in 18 countries.

I accepted a weekly preaching appointment at Penalosa, KS in the fall of 1967, during my second year at Wichita State University. During the past 56 years, there have been few Sundays when I did not preach or teach somewhere. I made my first trip to Latin America 30 years ago. For the past 15+ years, since retiring from the university, I have been involved full-time in Latin American missions, primarily focusing on developing local leaders in the churches. Somewhere along the way, Jan and I have aged. I turned 75 last month; Jan is a little over a year ahead of me. We see 80 on the horizon a bit closer than 70 – not something we dread but something to be celebrated!

I was a mathematics major. I love numbers. Age 75; 55+ years of preaching and teaching; 30 years of traveling in Latin America; 15 years of full-time mission ministry after my retirement from the university. When I told Don Vinzant of my plans to retire from the university and shared with him my dreams and plans for developing mission leaders, he responded, “I believe you have a good 15 years to fulfill that dream!”

An elder recently counseled us, “Be honest with yourselves.” Jan and I have talked, prayed, planned, visualized possibilities, and tried to anticipate the future. The time has come for me to step back from the rigor and stress of frequent mission travels. It is time to slow down—making fewer trips, accepting fewer online invitations, producing fewer materials. It is time to step back from my six-days-a-week (sometimes seven!) office routine.

As a first step, beginning in January 2024, I plan to assume a “part-time as needed” involvement in missions and LALD. Looking ahead to 2024 and 2025, I will continue to serve as director of LALD -- working with contributions and project funding. I will complete travel commitments in place and in process. I will continue to write and share mission reports. The work of Latin American Leadership Development will continue. The plan is to transfer all continuing projects to local churches by 2026.

Jan and I covet your prayers as we seek to glorify God in this stage of our lives. We believe this change can be a time of celebration after over half a century of frontlines involvement in God’s kingdom work!



### bits from bob.... Looking back, looking ahead

When I mention stepping back, I am often asked, “Who will replace you?” I believe the mission God opened to me has reached a point where no replacement will be needed. Echoing Don Vinzant, “the dream has largely been fulfilled.”

Twenty years ago, as I analyzed the needs of the Latin American churches and asked what was needed to help spread the gospel more rapidly, I saw a great need for the development of more local church leaders – spiritual leaders who could shepherd the churches toward numerical growth and church planting. I often felt like a lone voice in the wilderness. I knew only a few people who had seen the same need

and were focused on national and indigenous leadership development. (This need explains the origin of the name, Latin American Leadership Development.)

Today many more people are talking about the importance of local church leadership in mission work. Elders and other church leaders and workers have been named in dozens of congregations across Latin America. Many of those elders are training more elders as local churches establish biblical leaders. I see many national workers and missionaries who are capably continuing and expanding the conferences and seminars I have presented during the last 15-20 years. Many national workers are doing a much more effective work than I did as I worked in a second language!

I am thankful that God has provided resources to answer the need for local leaders in the churches. Many of the churches that are growing most rapidly across Latin America do not have a paid “minister,” depending instead on the combined efforts of all the members working together. And many of those churches are actively involved in planting additional churches.

### Activities Updates

This fall, I have been blessed to participate in a men’s study group with **my son, Geoff**. Together we have grown spiritually.

I am teaching a Wednesday afternoon Early Bird Bible class at **Fort Gibson** this winter season, from early November 2023 to early March 2024 (picture, right).



I continue to serve as mission point person at **Fort Gibson**. I taught the Sunday morning auditorium Bible class during the fall, and was privileged to preach a few times.



In November, I preached and reported on what God is doing through this work at the **North Side church in Mena (AR)**. Our relationship with this church goes back over 50 years to a time when we served with and ministered to the church in Dierks. The North Side church has been at our side as a mission partner for almost two decades (picture, left).

I was able to travel to Honduras in late November and early December, visiting two missionaries supported by the Fort Gibson church and attending graduation at Baxter Institute. **Robby Walkingstick**, a deacon from Fort Gibson, accompanied me on this trip. This was my fifth mission trip for 2023.

I finished my mission-ministry commitments of 2023 by visiting my host congregation, **Main and Oklahoma, in McAlester (OK)** where I reported on the work and was privileged to preach. Our relationship with this church extends over two decades, through two preaching tenures and our shared partnership in mission work.



### Looking ahead to 2024 — new opportunities!

The work in Cajamarca (Peru) will be revitalized with the arrival of a new evangelist and church planter. In January, Raúl Chumbile is moving to Cajamarca to establish the work in Cajamarca. The 2024 commitment of LALD is for \$250 monthly.

In January, I will teach an online short course on preaching. I anticipate that 30-40 preachers and church leaders from across Latin America will participate. In February, I have agreed to help the Los Angeles congregation in Bogotá with some discipleship training classes by Zoom.

For 2024, mission trips are in process to the Dominican Republic (spring), Ecuador and Colombia (May), and Nashville, TN (Oct) where I have been invited to speak at the XXXVIII Encuentro Iberoamericano. I also plan to visit mission contacts in Michigan in the fall. Other invitations are being evaluated so that travels can be of maximum benefit to the local churches.

## Looking ahead to 2024 — God’s eternal mission matters!

These mission reports will continue through 2024 and 2025 as the work of LALD is thoughtfully concluded. In addition to reporting on the progress of the works being facilitating, I will report on my mission travels and activities.

Over the next two years, I also plan to share reflections about the past 30 years, reminding us of the importance of evangelistically-focused mission work, reminding us of our role in completing God’s eternal purpose for the salvation of souls through Jesus Christ.



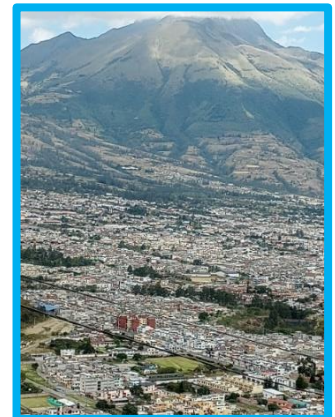
### Memorial Gifts Received

During the last part of 2023, memorial gifts were received in honor of our granddaughter, Madison Young.

<u>In memory of</u>	<u>Given by</u>
Madison Young	Bruce and Vicky Young
Madison Young	Gary and Linda Ford
Madison Young	Bob and Jan Young

Through my host congregation (Main and Oklahoma, McAlester, OK), you can make tax-deductible gifts payable to “Church of Christ,” memo line “Latin American Leadership Development” [or LALD]. **ALL CONTRIBUTIONS SHOULD BE MAILED TO THE TULSA ADDRESS (10704 S 89<sup>th</sup> East Ave, Tulsa, OK 74133).**

*Dios les bendiga (God bless you),*  
**Bob and Jan Young**  
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*(Picture, an overview of the city of Ibarra, Ecuador with Imbabura in the background)*

*The task is urgent. Multitudes are receptive to the gospel. People hunger and thirst for the word of God. God’s people are seeking encouragement and training in evangelism, discipleship, and effective church leadership.*

*When the gospel is preached and enters hearts, a new day is made possible in the lives of believers. Thank you for helping us make that happen as we seek to fulfill God’s purpose in this world – to save as many as possible!*

**Latin America Leadership Development works within a network of Christians committed to taking the gospel to Latin America. Through evangelism, discipleship, and leadership training, spiritually healthy and mature Christians and churches are developed, capable of reproducing themselves. A primary goal is training those who will train others (2 Tim. 2:2), recognizing that the most effective kingdom workers are national Christians who understand the culture and language, are known and trusted, and easily develop friendships and relationships that carry the gospel to their own nations.**