

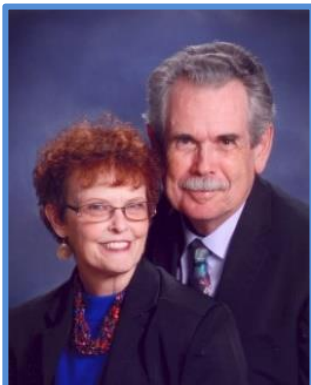
LATIN AMERICAN LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Developing Healthy Churches and Church Leaders in Latin America and Beyond

Mission and Ministry Newsletter

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Doing Much With Little!

The annual budget for the work of Latin American Leadership Development is less than \$30,000. I believe that a lot is getting done with a little.

I remember a lesson that compared how much gets done with the resources available. First, some have much and do much. Second, others have much but do little. Third, some have a little and do little. Fourth, others have a little and do much. In the work we share, we are trying to be in the last category!

Thank you to all who generously partner in this work. Your gifts, combined with many other gifts, make a difference in the spread of the gospel and the growth of the church.

Teaching, Preaching, and Healing

In Matthew 4:23, Jesus' work is described as teaching, preaching, and healing. When I think about the gospel, mission work, finding new contacts, and taking the message of Jesus to a needy world, I think about Jesus' method. Let us go forth like Jesus, finding and meeting needs.

Finding and meeting needs – sometimes accidentally! In early March, I met by Zoom with Maximo Collao, president of Interamericano Bible Institute (IBI) in Lima, Peru, and Yexon Manriquez, Venezuelan missionary in Cajamarca, Peru. Maximo has a map on his office wall of major cities in the Peruvian Andes where there is a need to plant a church.

In 2019 when I was in Lima teaching at IBI, Maximo discussed with me the need for a full-time worker in Cajamarca. Students and faculty from IBI had been traveling to Cajamarca monthly. Several people had been baptized and the field was ripening. In 2020 during the initial stages of the pandemic, I was able to finalize support for Yexon to move to Cajamarca, primarily by redirecting travel funds since the pandemic had restricted travel.



Yexon and his family left Lima in January 2021, just before the government shut down all travel in Peru. Now two years later, Peru is suffering from the impact of the pandemic, social unrest, government instability, blocked roads, and inability to travel within the country. In our meeting, ***I listened as Maximo spoke of God's providence in sending a worker in Cajamarca two years ago.*** The new Christians would have been isolated. They could have easily quit. Instead, the new church is meeting (picture, above) and another church in the region has been strengthened. A Bible study recently began with 20 new contacts. Area-wide worship gatherings attract 60-100.

Finding and meeting needs. In January I was in the Dominican Republic. Each year for the past four years, I have been collecting \$25 monthly for each of the seven new churches, with several individuals providing \$25 or \$50 each month. When I was in the Dominican Republic, I asked the elders overseeing the new churches if \$25

was enough. They suggested an increase of over 40%. I send the funds annually, so 2023 funds were raised with 2022 contributions. Could I come up with an extra \$840 to cover the increase? Of course! Finding and meeting needs is a first step toward finding and saving souls! *(Picture right, some of the 24 baptisms that occurred during the January trip.)*

Finding and meeting needs. The first week of March, I talked with Jairo, a missionary in southern Colombia. He had just returned from a mission trip to a new church plant in La Hormiga. The church began meeting during the pandemic and has continued to grow *(picture, left below)*. Jairo told me that the church had identified a piece of property where they wanted to build a church building. They had been meeting in the home of one of the members rather than renting a location, seeking to save as much as



possible. The cost of the property was \$20 million (pesos). They had only \$15 million. They lacked a little over \$1000. Jairo asked me if I could help with the costs of getting legal government recognition so they could buy the property in the name of the church and could take out a loan—a few hundred dollars! Of course! Facilitating the outreach of national workers, finding and meeting needs to help national churches grow.

Finding and meeting needs. When I was in the Dominican Republic, I learned that an unforeseen cost was going to add a few thousand dollars to the cost of a church building being built. Would I be able to send the money when I got home? God providentially meets need after need – helping national churches do what they cannot do for themselves. Each of the network of new churches in the Dominican Republic has purchased land to build on. How can I not help them with matters they would struggle to handle? *(Picture right, the church in Angel Felix, holding a celebration devotional on the land they have purchased.)*



Ongoing Ministry Projects Being Funded in 2023

In 2023, the following works are being funded monthly.

- Dominican Republic, monthly evangelism funding for the seven new churches and for additional outreach and church planting
- Nicaragua, partial support for an elder/evangelist (first six months)
- Colombia, partial support for an evangelist working with seven churches, plus funding to help advance the new church plant in La Hormiga (see description above)
- Peru, total support for an evangelist working in a church plant (Los Baños) and in strengthening an existing church (Santa Úrsula).
- Venezuela, funding for evangelism and benevolence

The travel-work account is again being funded for 2023 travels. In July-August, I will visit churches in Ecuador and Colombia and speak at a national preachers' retreat in Colombia. Other travel needs and invitations are being evaluated carefully since I plan to travel less than I did pre-pandemic (3-4 annual trips instead of 6-8). Trips to the Dominican Republic and to Chile are already planned for 2024.

I continue to teach and preach online – regularly at the Tijuana School of Preaching, and in Chile, Ecuador, and Colombia. Online studies and seminars attract students from across Latin America.

Mission Minute

This brief summary is designed to help inform and inspire Christians and leaders in the U.S. churches.

MISSION MINUTE: BARNA RESEARCH RESULTS

Why do churches struggle to share the gospel effectively?

- Compared to 25 years ago, Christians today are less likely to...
 - Believe every Christian has a responsibility to share faith (from 89% to 64% today)
 - Claim their church does a good job of training members to share their faith (from 77% to 57% today)
 - Speak about benefits of accepting Jesus (from 78% to 50% today)
 - Evangelism training is rare for Christian teens in the US—just 19% of Gen Z have received evangelism training. Churches must equip and prepare Christian teens to be better prepared to share the gospel effectively. This is also true of adults—few Christians will boldly share their faith without training. Yet, few churches regularly and consistently provide evangelism training.
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Prayer Requests

The residency status of many Venezuelans who have immigrated to Peru as a result of the problems in Venezuela is now tentative. Among those affected are Yexon and his family in Cajamarca, Peru. **Please pray that their residency can be renewed.** Venezuela and Peru continue to experience suffering and unrest. Pray for the church planting and evangelism works with which we are involved.

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 89th East Ave, Tulsa, OK 74133).**

Dios les bendiga (God bless you),
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Jan and I constantly seek to understand the history and background of those places we visit. Understanding history and culture is a step toward understanding how to share the Good News – the life-changing Gospel. (Picture, examining a historical marker in Ecuador.)

May we never forget the urgency of the task. Multitudes are receptive to the gospel. Many people hunger and thirst for the word of God. God's people want 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!



When you support Latin America Leadership Development, you are part of 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.