

FACES



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A Life Story Touched by a Missionary Dream

As I begin this retrospective look on my life, I am aware that from my earliest memories until today my life – which I am well satisfied with – has been connected in one way or another to mission related institutions.

My biological Mother died in childbirth. It was common back then in rural areas to give birth in the family home since hospitals were few and far between. Experienced women, midwives, in the community took charge of the birth. Although they were experts in this kind of thing, something went wrong. So it happened that when I was two years old, my Mother passed away during the birth of my youngest sister. That was when I had my first contact with Jessie Stevens, an extraordinary missionary woman who became my substitute mother. She was my first family tie and a connection that has lasted all my life.

When I was two years old, my two sisters, a brother and I entered the Roblealto Bible Home, founded by missionaries Harry and Susan Strachan in 1932. My childhood and adolescence were filled with beautiful and unforgettable moments, educational opportunities and a solid Christian foundation. I was unaware at the time of how important those early experiences that enveloped my life in security and love would be for me. This valuable heritage gave me the strength and self-confidence that I needed during my youth to become an independent person and to confidently face the different challenges that I encountered in life.

After completing High School, and while still very young, I began my first job at the central offices of the Roblealto Associa-

tion for Child Welfare, another institution born of missionary efforts. During those four years I had the opportunity to work with and identify with other children who had a story similar to mine. That experience made a huge impact on me, because I could see my own story in each them. This was a second vital connection made during my life.

And now today, I find myself working at the Latin American Biblical University, an institution dedicated to theological, ministerial and Biblical training and reflection; also founded by missionaries Harry and Susan Strachan in 1923. During the past 16 years I have served in the Publications Department of the UBL as graphic designer and text formatter for the institution's theological production (distance study modules, book, journals, flyers, and all publicity related items).

Equality, solidarity, inclusiveness and respect for differences in others are values that have been an integral part of my life experiences over the past five decades, a personal identity that is expressed in a fullness of life. As I look back, I feel profoundly satisfied with the opportunity to have continued, with dedication and hard work, a ministry that I feel both an heir and co-creator of. It is a ministry marked by the commitment of those who with enthusiasm have preceded me, and today fills my life with satisfaction and meaning: a commitment to the creation of a world in keeping with the values of the Kingdom of God, our strength and inspiration.

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Five Work Teams and Study Teams in Mission to the UBL February and March 2011



First United Methodist Church Baton Rouge,
Louisiana Work Team



Northwest USA Work Team



Marshall University, Hunnington,
W. Virginia Study and Work Team



Rose City Park United Methodist
Church, Oregon Work Team



Wesley Chapel-University of Colorado
at Boulder Work Team

"Hasta luego"



The UBL also gives thanks to other short-term Volunteers in Mission who also spent time giving of themselves to the UBL by working in the UBL library.



Fulfilling her 8 month commitment to the UBL as a Volunteer-in-Mission in the UBL Library, JESSICA BEVERSTEIN has become a part of this institutions heart and we have been greatly blessed to have received and worked with her. Jessica is from the United Methodist Church in Colombia Missouri, Missouri Conference.



LOIS DYKE, a Mennonite volunteer from Indiana, and close friend of Lois Longenecker, joined the UBL library during her cold Indiana winter and found the vitamin D she was seeking in the Costa Rican sun. We are blessed to have had her hands and heart in the UBL library and are hopeful for her return.



JUDY KADING, active in the United Methodist Women and United Methodist Iowa Conference, used her skills as a Spanish and an ESL teacher to not only volunteer in the UBL library, but also serve as translator for some of our UBL foreign students as they gave their testimonies to visiting work teams. Judy lived on campus in the student dorms as a way to come into close contact with our foreign students and learn of their ministries back in their home countries. She has broadened her circle of friends to throughout many areas of Latin America. We have been blessed by her presence and pray she too will return in the future.



On her 2nd volunteer trip to the UBL, LOIS LONGENECKER (a retired Mennonite Seminary Librarian from Indiana) continues to bring her expertise to the library. We give thanks for Lois and her gifts and talents and look forward to her return.

How Do We Read the Exodus Story

by Elisabeth Cook, Director of the School of
Biblical Sciences, Universidad Biblica Latinoamericana

After almost 20 hours of travel Edwin Mora and I landed, at last in Tel Aviv. Our local taxi (sherut) dropped us off on Prophet's Street in Jerusalem, at the Swedish Theological Institute where we were to spend the next six weeks. A morning spent marveling at the wonders of the Old City of Jerusalem, whetted our appetites for what was to come.



With our fellow participants from India, Bolivia, Cameroon, Nigeria, Mozambique and Sweden we studied and experienced Judaism, Christianity and Islam in the context of Israel and Palestine. The theme of the course, "Land, Peoples and Theology", led us to explore different parts of the country, to share with those of all races and creeds and, of course, to come face to face with the pain, conflict and uncertainty that plagues this land. In our visits to Bethlehem and Hebron in the occupied West Bank we were witnesses to the suffering and fear shared by the people who live in this small and conflicted land of Palestine.

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We were encouraged by activists, church and social movements, both Palestinian and Israeli, seeking to build a different world, a different society of peaceful coexistence, while denouncing abuses and working in solidarity with those who suffer on all sides.

Of particular interest to Edwin and myself, as theologians, is the challenge Palestinian Christians face when reading the First Testament. Religion as a justification for oppression is not something new, but in the "Holy Land" it reaches a crisis point. How do we read the Exodus story, without identifying with the Canaanites who were expelled from their land as a result? This question came up time and again. From Latin America, a Christian continent, these are challenges that open our eyes to new ways of reading and understanding the Word of God for all peoples.



DANIEL TRUJILLO – HONDURAS

Daniel is a UBL student in the UBL Masters Degree in Theological Sciences Program with an emphasis in HIV-AIDS, a program funded by the Lutheran Church of Sweden. Four Latin American Universities are currently participating in this program in the countries of Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, and Costa Rica. Daniel was invited into the program for his continued service and work with youth living in the streets of Honduras, most of which have AIDS. Daniel is married with 4 children, his two boys are with him in student-family housing at the UBL in San Jose, Costa Rica and his wife, who works as a nurse in Honduras, continues there with their 2 daughters.

Daniel continues to work in the streets of Honduras with youth and young adults who have been cast aside due to their drug addictions and AIDS.

In hearing Daniel's testimony we learn that 8 years ago he was invited to assist in an NGO project, taking him undercover to infiltrate the human trafficking routes from Honduras, through Central America and Mexico, into the west coast of the United States and finally into Canada. Knowing that many young girls from his country had been taken into this culture and life, he agreed to participate and left his home and family to not only provide insider information regarding this problem, but to assure the young girls he met that hope does still exist and that they were not alone. Many times it was necessary for him to pose as a client so that he could have access to the girls, take their testimonies, and hopefully provide some sort of comfort to them through prayer. Most of these children are aged 14 to 15 when they begin working for the sex trade cartels. The ever growing demand for sex-tourism trade has led these cartels to expand their ventures. The work was dangerous and his life was constantly in peril should he be found out.

Since then, Daniel continues to work in the streets of Honduras with youth and young adults who have been cast aside due to their drug addictions and AIDS. His goal in continuing his education and making international contacts is to return to Honduras armed with the words and information needed to convince local congregations to leave the safety of their 4-walls and take the Church into the streets where the need is the greatest.



We give thanks for the graduates of the UBL programs in 2010 and pray abundant blessings upon them as they continue their service to the church and community.

Left to Right: Elizabeth Guerra (Perú), Abraham Alfaro (Costa Rica), José Toledo (Perú), Rosa María López (Costa Rica), Sergio Talero (Colombia), Pamela Idjabe (Guinea Ecuatorial), Geraldine Alvarez (Nicaragua) and Prof. Nidia Fonseca.



The General Board of Global Ministries of the United Methodist Church USA holds Missionary Training for 5 Latin Americans to be commissioned.

They are: Jaime Vasquez, Pastor and former Bishop in Tijuana Mexico who will serve UMC Conference in Arizona; Doctor Dora Canales of Chile and now Director of the Wesley Seminary in Peru, Doctor Genilma Boehler of Brazil serving as Professor of Theology at the UBL in Costa Rica; Juan Guerrero of Colombia serving the Methodist Church of Honduras as Superintendent and Pastor, and his wife Alexandra Castro who will serve as Financial Officer to the church in Honduras.



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