

# INSTITUTO TEOLÓGICO LATINOAMERICANO

## GRADUATION AND LECTURESHIP 2015

In March we were blessed to be able to host our 6<sup>th</sup> *Annual ITL Lectureship* and our 3<sup>rd</sup> *Graduation from Instituto Teológico Latinoamericano (ITL)*. This culminated two years of dedicated study and sacrifices for our full-time students and three years of the same for our students in our Saturday program, and made possible the graduation of our Gamma class. These and other accompanying events took place on March 19 – 23.

This year we had guests from many places. Of course, most attending were from Guatemala. Other Central American countries represented were Costa Rica, El Salvador and Honduras. Our U.S. visitors included *William & Alwanda Carothers* (Nashville, TN), *Mary Clark* (Hemet, CA), *Jim & Cherie Dempster* (Morristown, TN), *Aralee Hernandez* (Los Angeles, CA), *Ashunda Montgomery* (Parsons, TN), *Opal Fulwood*, her son *Daniel*, and *Nelson & Veda Stephens* (Sumter, SC), *Candelario Rodriguez* (Corona, CA), *Eric Owens* (Decatur, GA), *Bob Turner* (Denver, CO), and *Larry & Carol Waymire* (Lexington, TN).

We are grateful to God that ITL was able to fund the travel costs for family members of our full-time graduates and they spent their nights at the ITL facility. So, we had a FULL house. But everyone was so thankful to be here that no one complained about the close space that everyone shared. ☺

We would be honored if you would allow us a moment of your time to walk you through these exciting days.

### Thursday, March 19 – ITL’s President’s Banquet

Our graduation events began on Thursday night at



the Crowne Plaza Hotel with the annual President’s Banquet, the hotel where

all of our lectureship speakers and some of our out-of-country guests stayed.

It was a great evening. While being seated, and during the dinner time, everyone enjoyed a slide presentation prepared by *Byron and Snezana Benitez*, highlighting ITL events for the past year. *Darvin Alvarez* opened the event and a great dinner followed. Near the end of dinner, ITL’s president introduced our after-dinner speaker, *Larry Waymire*, the director of Caribbean Ministries and one of the ministers for the Broad Street church of Christ in Lexington, TN. He was accompanied by his wife *Carol*, a professor at Freed-Hardeman University.

The night continued with several special presentations.

*Patricia Olimpia Soliz Maldonado* and *Maclovio & Virginia Calderon* were given this year’s President’s



Service Award for their unselfish dedication and service throughout the years. Appreciation awards were also presented to key individuals who have played an important role for ITL for the past year. *Dr. Henry España*, a medical doctor, for example, was honored for his continued contribution to ITL. Dr. España is not a member of the church, yet has been named the “ITL doctor” for the frequent medical attention he gives to our staff and students at a significantly discounted rate. We were honored to have him and his wife, *Dora Alicia*, attend the banquet. Others honored were our speakers, our ITL cook and secretary, and those ladies from Linda Vista who every week prepared meals for our students. There were special gifts given to some of our guests from the United States who have adopted students through our Help Train Messengers (HTM) Ministry. The program concluded with the presentation of our 2015 graduating class in their caps and gowns, their receiving various awards pertaining to their studies and with a lot of pictures.

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### Friday, March 22 – Excursion Day

On Friday, our guests from the U.S., our graduates and their families, and we traveled first to the historic area of Guatemala called Zone 1. There they were able to take a guided tour of our National Palace. After the tour, they then entered one of Guatemala's main cathedrals. Following lunch in the extravagant restaurant called Wendy's ☺ everyone got back on the bus and we traveled to Antigua Guatemala, one of the old capital cities. Our first stop was at a coffee farm where the group received a personal tour. Following the tour, we traveled to the central park and to one of Antigua's famous markets. There some of our guests "shopped until they were ready to drop." ☺ After shopping, we ate at Pollo Campero, Guatemala's own fried-chicken restaurant. As we returned, our full-time graduates were all with the ITL graduation ring donated by **Mark and Teri Stevens**, an elder and his



wife from the Richland church of Christ in Richland, WA. Having had a full day, everyone was now looking forward to a good night's rest and to the upcoming weekend events.

### Saturday, March 22 – Our 6<sup>th</sup> Annual Lectureship Begins

This year we held our 1<sup>st</sup> day of the lectureship at the Linda Vista building, which opened with a very good attendance. We also used a near-by house for our children's classes.

This year's theme was *El Crecimiento Dinámico de la Iglesia (The Dynamic Growth of the Church)*.

Again, we had a great line-up of speakers for our keynotes and for our class times. Those coming from abroad were **Gilberto**



**Astorga** and **Moises Umaña** from Costa Rica, **Alexander Castellanos** from El Salvador, and Jim Dempster, Eric Owens and Bob Turner from the United States. Our speakers from Guatemala included **Misael Ajuchan**, **Nicolas Chiquival**, **Raul Duran** and **Alfonso Sapon**. In addition, **Silvia Castellanos** from El Salvador returned to share a special lesson with our ladies.



Lunch and dinner were provided to all. Before dinner, there was a special question-and-answer panel. This is always a highlight of

the day where our speakers are "grilled" with questions pertaining to the lessons they taught. We are grateful that this has always been a time of learning and sharing and, thankfully, always conducted with a spirit of love and courtesy.

After dinner, we had our last two lessons, and to top the day off there was a new babe born into Christ. We will be sending more information on this baptism in another message very soon. So, be looking for it.



Afterwards, everyone headed to their places of abode for another night's rest to be ready for our Sunday events.

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### Sunday, March 24 – Conclusion of Lectureship and ITL's Graduation Ceremony

The first day of the week is always a special time for Christians. However, this day was extra special because so many people joined us as we concluded our lectureship and for the graduation event. Because of the large attendance expected, we rented a facility for the Sunday events. There were about 500 people present! It was great to have several



churches of Christ present. The service was conducted by the members of Linda Vista with the help of brothers from several of these visiting congregations.

After the sermon, presented by Eric Owens, there were several responses to the Lord's invitation. Among these responses were two precious souls requesting to put their Lord on in baptism. As we said earlier, we will be sending a message giving information about them and their obedience to the gospel.



After the corporate assembly, lunch was served to everyone and the graduation followed. *Pomp and Circumstance* started to play and then the president of ITL's, the staff and participating guests entered. After a brief pause the audience stood and our full-time class valedictorian, **Elmer Eduardo Torres Aquino**, entered the auditorium, who was followed by **Victor Noe Ajuchan Hernandez** our Saturday

program valedictorian. They were followed by the remainder of our full-time class: **Javier Arturo Alfaro Umaña**, **Cristhian David Cardenas Sevilla** and **Daniel**

**Alberto Izaguirre Rodriguez.**

Then came the remainder of our Saturday program students:

**Sandra Judith Martinez de Ajuchan**, **Dimas Baldemar Davila Canizales** and **Abel Elisandro Perez Boror**. As you can imagine, the excitement and emotions were very high.



Once everyone had entered, it was now time for the colors (the flags). It was quite impressive to see the flags from Guatemala, from the U.S.A. and from ITL enter the auditorium. Afterwards, both countries' national anthems were played and normal customs and courtesies were rendered by its citizens during the anthem.

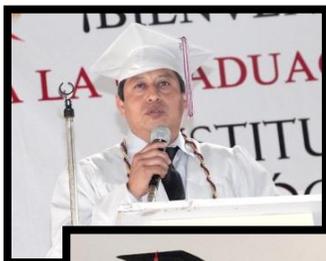
One important point we would like to mention is the few moments we took to honor our co-worker, brother and friend, **Anibal Ramirez**, who was absent again from our activities because of his illness. We gave his family, Damaris and his three girls, a reward to him on our behalf.

We informed you about his condition in the previous report. His last exam was not as positive as the doctor or he was hoping because the hepatitis C virus is still present. The doctor has now taken him off all medications, is evaluating what else to do and has encouraged him to seek alternative treatments. Please pray fervently for Anibal.



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The Gamma Class was made up of four full-time graduates and four Saturday graduates. During the ceremony both valedictorians



gave speeches. The full-time class presented a gift to ITL to be placed with gifts from previous classes.



Hawatthia, as president of ITL, awarded our graduates with their degrees and certificates from ITL. Byron placed the hood upon Elmer as he

received his degree. Bob Turner awarded the full-time students their degrees and certificates on behalf of **Bear Valley Bible Institute of Denver**. Jim Dempster gave the elder's charge. To close, the colors were removed and final words were given



from Hi. He dismissed them, saying, "I had the honor to lead you into this auditorium, but your valedictorians will have the

honor of leading you out." The graduates exited followed by the president, the staff and other graduation participants.

As part of the graduation program, we had the cutting of the cake. There were two VERY big cakes. One of them even had a picture of the full-time class. They had never seen themselves as frosting! ☺ Everyone enjoyed the cake. After the cake we presented and prayed on behalf of the two new converts.



That evening, the staff, the graduates, their families and the lectureship guests had dinner at Pizza Hut (this was the graduates' choice and our last meal as a group). While there, 2015 medallion presentations were also made.

As you can see from the pictures included, the entire weekend was great and we are thankful to God for the way everything turned out. We are so thankful to the leaders at Linda Vista for their continued support for ITL and to the members at Linda Vista for their hard work at making this event such a success. There were at least 40 Linda Vistians (we made up that word ☺) involved in various areas. We also thank William and Alwanda Carothers for being in charge of putting this year's event on video and audio, a good memory keepsake for all who desire to receive it. In addition, we give thanks to our speakers and to those who traveled so far to be with us and to share this special time. And last, but definitely not least, we say thanks to our supporters whose generous donations make possible everything we do.



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**Monday and Tuesday, March 23 and 24 – It is “almost” time to relax!**

On Monday, most of our student family members and most of our speakers departed. The ITL facility became quiet with only the graduates there. Our graduates departed Guatemala the following Friday.

There were a few guests who stayed an extra day to relax a little. On Monday, at a much slower pace, we returned back to Antigua taking the time to celebrate the anniversary of one of our speakers and his wife, who were from Costa Rica. We ate at one of Antigua’s famous restaurants called Calle de la Fonda Real. It was just down time. These remaining guests departed Guatemala on Tuesday.

### The Gamma Class

Allow us a moment to tell you of the plans and works of our recent graduates from the Gamma class. We will begin with our Saturday graduates.

All four Saturday graduates are from the San Antonio church of Christ in San Miguel Petapa. Victor, Dimas and Elisandro have various responsibilities with the church (i.e., preaching, teaching, song leading, etc.). Sandra is actively involved in the children’s ministry and with the ladies. They will continue their work with the congregation. Each one of them stated that they felt better equipped to serve after attending ITL. Just recently, Victor returned to ITL to teach a Spanish class to our new class that entered ITL. He is also interested in teaching in our Saturday program.

Our full-time program graduates, with the exception of Daniel Izaguirre, have returned to their countries to serve the churches there. Elmer Torres, from El

Salvador, has returned to the congregation that had sent him to ITL for training. He plans to preach and to work closely with the young people.

Javier Alfaro and Cristhian Cardenas, both from Costa Rica, have returned to their congregation to serve. They, too, will be preaching and they have a strong desire to work with the young people. Cristhian, Lord willing, will be sent out by this church to start a new church plant next year. María Eugenia Jimenez Castro, the ministers’ wife from their congregation was present and made an interesting comment about Javier and Cristhian. She said, “I know Biblical miracles have ceased, but the change that I have seen in Javier and Cristhian is close to being a miracle.”☺ That was a positive comment for those of us at ITL.

Daniel Izaguirre, from Honduras, is still with us. He entered one quarter late and will officially be a graduate once he completes this quarter. Being the “old man” on campus ☺, he is definitely showing his leadership skills with those in the new class. Once he completes this quarter, he will return to Honduras and serve with the congregation where he was prior to coming to ITL.

### Time to rest!

At least we thought it was! But, we were wrong! ☺ It was time to prepare for our Delta class. Now, they are here! Lord willing, we will soon be sending a report introducing the class members to you. In addition to our new students, the two couples brought a total of five children with them (an 11 year-old, a 7 year-old, a 4 year-old, a 2 year-old and a 1 year-old). Oh yeah, did we forget to mention that one of the wives is also pregnant? Soon we’ll introduce you to our Delta class.

Thanks for the love and concern that you have for the Lord’s work here in Guatemala. May God bless each of you abundantly!

Serving Jesus in Guatemala!

*Hawatthia*

*Byron*

*Snezana*

