



GRADUATION AND LECTURESHIP

We praise God for the blessing of being able to host our **4th Annual Lectureship**, to celebrate our **5th Anniversary**, and to have our **2nd Graduation** for ITL. These three events occurred simultaneously this **March 21 – 24**. We would be honored if you would allow us a moment of your time to walk you through these exciting days. They culminated two years of dedicated study and sacrifice on the part of the students of both programs, the Saturday and full-time programs, making possible the graduation of our Beta Class.

Thursday, March 21 – ITL’s President’s Banquet



ITL’s President, Hi Jones

Our graduation events began on Thursday night at the Holiday Inn Hotel with the annual President’s Banquet. There were several people who came from various countries to be a part of our activities, and

this is where they stayed. In addition, our guest speakers for the lectureship also stayed here. This year, our banquet began a little late because traffic was unusually heavy and many of our graduates, some who came from far away, had difficulty arriving on time. Aside from that small glitch, everything else we felt went great. We had a great dinner. Our after dinner speaker was **Conrad Pinder** from Costa Rica. Conrad has been a regular translator for ITL and we are glad that he was able to be present and also that he was able to bring his wife, Luz.



Conrad Pinder

The night continued with several special presentations. We honored two servant-hearted members of Linda Vista for their unselfish

dedication and service throughout the years—**Juan Jose Cobon** and **Marina Adela**



Garcia. We also presented several awards of appreciation to key individuals who have played an important role for ITL. **Dr. Henry España**, a medical doctor, for example, has often offered our students medical care at a significantly discounted rate, and so we were glad to make a



Dr. and Mrs. Henry España

special presentation to him. Also, those ladies from Linda Vista who every week prepared meals for our students were honored.

We concluded our program by showing a slide show and giving a brief history of ITL’s last five years. Though the night ended a little later than usual, we felt joyful for the occasion.



Friday, March 22 – Excursion Day

On Friday, the guests from the U.S., our graduates and their families, and us traveled to Antigua Guatemala to see the sights. We hired a tour guide



and departed that morning from the hotel. In Antigua, we were able to see several important historical sights.

We went to a macadamia nut plantation called Valhalla. Afterwards, the group ate one of the most beautiful McDonald’s you will ever see. Yes. We did say McDonald’s. Because Antigua is a historical city with strict rules, this fast-food giant had to conform to the city ordinances if it planned on having any presence in this city.

The tour guide then took the group to several other interesting points. On the way to the city center the group ran into a procession. Antigua has been known throughout the world for their dedication to these religious celebrations in which hundreds of Catholics dress in purple robes and carry large “andas” (floats) on their soldiers, floats that bear statues of Christ at different stages of his “passion week.” Some even carry Mary, the mother of Jesus. It is fascinating to see, but as you meditate on the idolatry and ignorance that promotes these traditions, you cannot help to feel a sense of sadness. Finally, before departing Antigua, the group stopped at a Jade factory. Guatemala is known for its beautiful Jade of many colors.

Saturday, March 23 – Lectureship Begins

We were very happy with the way things worked out for our 4th Annual ITL Lectureship this year. We were not sure how things were going to work at first because we just seemed to run into obstacle after obstacle. Last year, we reserved the



same location for this year’s event trying to plan ahead. At the beginning of this year, **Hawatthia** and **Anibal** thought they would stop by to confirm the reservation. Little did they know they were going to discover that the facility had closed its doors! Sadly, there was an effort to extortion the owners, so they just decided to close the place down. This, however, left us without a location for our lectureship and graduation! ☹

After several doors closed for alternative locations, we decided to host the lectureship at the Linda Vista church building. Because of how the attendance has been in the past, we knew we would have issues with space. So, we asked the city for permission to close off the street in front of the building and set up tents and chairs for additional



room. We also had the blessing of being able to use a private school’s facilities on the same block for our children’s classes and activities. The man who owns the school is not a Christian, but he has always been very kind to us. His name is Israel.



The theme of the lectureship this year was “**Unity Among Brethren: An Answer to the Prayer of Jesus.**” As the theme clearly indicates our emphasis this year was to communicate how as a church we can work toward becoming more united as a body, not at any cost, but with great diligence and prayer. The speakers were: **Misael Ajuchan** (Guatemala City), **Alexander** and **Silvia Castellanos** (El Salvador), **Pedro Batres** (Nicaragua), **Silas Prado** (Mission, Texas), **Francisco** and **Araceli Rada** (Brownsville, Texas), and **Bob Turner** (Denver, Colorado). The ladies, of course, taught ladies’ classes.

The speakers did an excellent job. In addition to our combined lessons, we had classes for men, women, teenagers, and children. We are thankful to God and to the speakers for the quality of lessons they offered our brotherhood here in Guatemala and pray that somehow it will make a difference for good. There is absolutely too much work to do and too many lost souls for us to be divided unnecessarily.



In addition, about midway through our lectureship, we took some time out to celebrate ITL's 5th Anniversary. Yes. It has been five years since the school opened its doors in March of 2008. In spite of

the obstacles, the attacks, and the opposition of Satan in various ways and through various people, we have seen God's good hand working in more and greater ways to make this special milestone in ITL's history a reality. We are eager to continue in this labor of love of training men and women to be better serve Jesus in the church.

Sunday, March 24 – Lectureship and ITL's



A full building on Sunday morning

Graduation Ceremony

The first day of the week is always a special time for Christians. On this occasion, however, it was extra special because so many people joined us as we concluded our lectureship and for the graduation ceremony that



Side room held the overflow crowd

would follow. The Linda Vista building was packed! There were about 400



people present for our worship assembly! It is great to have this problem of space. It was great because several churches of Christ joined us and encouraged us by their presence.

After the corporate assembly, the crowd filled several buses, cars and vans, and we all made our way to the facility reserved for ITL's 2nd Graduation.



Upon arriving to this facility, our ladies from Linda Vista fed lunch to the over 400 people. By 1:30, everyone had been served and our graduation ceremony began at about 2:00.



The ceremony began with the traditional entrance son, "Pomp and Circumstance." Then the flags from

Guatemala, the U.S.A. and ITL came in and each country's national anthem was then played. Those who graduated looked very dignified and the whole ceremony from beginning to end went very well.



The Beta Class from both programs was made up of five full-time graduates and four Saturday graduates. The valedictorians this year were **Eliezer Perez** (full-

time) and **Blanca Perez** (not related; Saturday program). Hawatthia, as president of ITL, awarded our graduates with their degrees and certificates from ITL.





Bob Turner awarded the full-time students their degrees and certificates on behalf of **Bear Valley Bible Institute of Denver**.

The facility worked nicely for this event and we are thankful God provided a place to have it. As you can see from the pictures, we had a great attendance, with about 450 people in attendance. We thank our members at Linda Vista who worked very hard at making this event such a success. We had at least 40 people involved in various areas, from the cleaning crew to the decoration team, and everyone in between! We also thank the supporters whose generous donations made this event possible.

That evening, the graduates, their families and the lectureship guests had dinner at Pizza Hut (this was the graduates' choice). While there, several presentations were made to our guests from different countries and to our graduates. It was our last meal together with them.

Monday, March 25 – “Off” Day

After the main activities were over, there were a few guests that stayed an extra day to relax a little and see the local sights. Originally, we had contracted the same tour guide from the previous Friday to accompany us to Lake Atitlan, a picturesque lake with dormant volcanoes in the background, and small, quaint villages all around the lake. However, when the group realized we would need to depart at 7:00 a.m., all of them almost yelled, “Nooooo!” It was decided, then, to let them sleep in (which allowed us to sleep in, too ☺), and meet them for lunch. The group walked to a local restaurant from the hotel.

After lunch, we gave the group a ½ day city tour, but we did not charge them anything. ☺ Soon the night was upon us. We dropped the group off at the Holiday Inn and headed home for an early night.

As you can see, the days were filled with activities, fellowship, teaching, preaching, and extracurricular activities. We are thankful to the brethren who joined us for this very special event and made it a part of their lives.

The Beta Class

Allow us to use this last section to bring you up to date with the plans and work of our most recent graduates from the Beta Class. We will begin with our Saturday graduates, then mention the full-time graduates.

We had four Saturday graduates, one man and three women: **Maclovio Calderon**, **Elene Aguiare**, **Nidia Aguiare**, and **Blanca Perez** (valedictorian).

Maclovio is one of the leaders at Linda Vista and continues to serve with this congregation. Sadly, on the Friday before graduation, Maclovio's mother-in-law died. This meant that he and **Vicky** had to be with the family for the funeral services. Because of this, Maclovio was not able to attend the graduation ceremony. About two weeks later, however, we held a special ceremony at Linda Vista and presented Maclovio with his graduation certificate.

Elena Aguiare and Nidia Aguiare are physical sisters as well as spiritual sisters. They continue to serve in their congregation, the church of Christ in Carolingia. They are involved in children's classes and have also been invited to speak at special ladies' events. We are thankful to report that Nidia's husband, **Carlos**, is now taking classes in our Saturday program and Elena's husband, **Jorge**, is planning to begin classes next quarter.

Blanca Perez is currently working with the church of Christ that meets in Antigua Guatemala. She is very involved with the work there, helping with children and cooperating in various other areas of service. In addition, we currently have Blanca on campus again because she has agreed for the third time to teach Spanish to our full-time students in a special short course designed to improve their grammar, diction and vocabulary.

Our full-time program graduated five students: **David Avila, Walter and Nohelis Dardon, Gabriel Gonzales, and Eliezer Perez** (valedictorian).

David returned to work with the church where he was a member prior to coming to study at ITL, the church of Christ in **Samayac**. These were his plans all along. He will continue to work with his father and siblings (there are 14 of them!) in their family's businesses during half of the week and dedicate the other half to the work of the church. David has also agreed to begin an alumni association and will function as ITL representative in Guatemala's southern coast, for which we are very grateful.

Walter and Nohelis returned to **Linda Vista**. Their hopes were to work full-time with the church there, but the leaders and the church were not able to offer them a salary. Therefore, Nohelis returned to her old job, where she seems to be making many contacts and having many Bible discussions. Walter continues to look for a job, but in the meanwhile uses his free time to evangelize. He has also been involved in the preaching and teaching program of the church. Pray that if it is God's will, they will be able to enter the ministry full-time one day, which is what they desire to do.

Gabriel Gonzales has recently returned from Panama. He went to his country to take some time off before taking the full-time work with the church in **La Esperanza, Quetzaltenango**, here in Guatemala. The brethren in La Esperanza came to an agreement with Gabriel before his graduation that they would hire him as their full-time evangelist. They are providing him a place to live, food and a salary. We are excited because no funds are coming from the U.S., which means the church is being self-supporting!

Eliezer Perez is also still in Panama. He, too, went there for some time off before he moves to take his full-time work in **Paraguay**. Eliezer made contact with the church in **Asuncion**, Paraguay, while he was there with Gabriel during an ITL campaign. The church hired Eliezer to help them begin a new

work where about 15 members live. He, too, will be receiving support from the local Paraguayan church, which is also excellent!

Please pray for all our graduates, so that God may use them powerfully to increase the number of the saved and decrease the number of the condemned, and so that they may be instruments for good in and out of the church for many years to come. Lord willing, in separate report, we will update you on the whereabouts and activities of our **Alpha** class.

We thank God for your interest in the work here in Guatemala and in all of Latin America. As you can see, the work of ITL is beginning to extend itself to many countries. Our prayer is that God will use this humble institute to spread the whole Latin American world with the saving message of Jesus Christ!

Serving Jesus!

Byron *Hawatthia*

