



LATIN AMERICAN CHRISTIAN MINISTRIES (LACM)

Latin American Doctoral Program in Theology (LADPT)

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*A higher standard.
A higher purpose.*

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Chuck and Jean Van Engen

Dear partners in Christ's mission,

So much has happened during the past five months. In February we had a wonderful, inspiring, joy-filled 2-week intensive class session with the group of LADPT students. We were generously and lovingly re-



"Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. Do not put out the (Holy) Spirit's fire...May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through...The one who calls you is faithful and he will do it."

— I Thess. 5:16-24 NIV

ceived by the San Pablo Presbyterian Seminary in Merida, Yucatan. Chuck and Dr. Paul Bergsma taught Missiology and Dr. Tito Paredes taught Anthropology. The students continue their studies in these courses via internet from March through July. We introduced the students to the Mayan culture, worshipping in Mayan in a Presbyterian congregation.

In March, we had our Spring meeting of the Board of Directors of Latin American Christian Ministries. In May the Academic Council of our core Latin American professors met in Miami. Jean and I are so privileged to walk alongside such gifted, Spirit-filled, visionary and wise leaders at every level of the LADPT! And your personal, prayer, and financial support makes this all possible.

Please keep us in your prayers! Giving for the first six months of 2013 has been slow. If the Lord leads you, would you consider sending us a special gift for this ministry? And keep praying for us! We love you and thank God for you. — Chuck and Jean Van Engen



LADPT students and faculty in Yucatan, Feb, 2013

Please PRAY: Our Schedule

- July 1 — Chuck finished teaching 4 courses at Fuller, April through June. God is good!
- July 20-27 — Chuck and Jean spend a week with all 3 children, 3 spouses and 4 grand-children at a house at Lake Chelan, east of Seattle, WA.
- Aug. 5-16 — LADPT intensive courses in Londrina, Brazil.
- Aug. 19-23 — Chuck teaches a D.Min. course in church planting in Londrina, Brazil.
- Sep. 2 — Chuck begins a 12-month sabbatical from teaching: thanks to Fuller Seminary.
- Sep. 20 — Public dissertation defense of Enrique Brenes in San Jose, Costa Rica: the first LADPT student to graduate with an official Ph.D. from the government of Costa Rica.

Note: Your gifts and contributions go directly to fund the doctoral program itself.

E-MAIL NEWSLETTER AVAILABLE:

If you wish to receive our newsletter by email, write us at cvanengen@lacmin.org.

"It is not the act or the attitude of praying that gives effectiveness to prayer. It is not the kneeling of the body before God or the exquisite beauty and poetry of our prayers that do the deed. Not one or all of these are the things that glorify God. It is the answer that brings glory to His name. Answer to prayer is the living proof of our right relationship with God...The passion of devotion lies in prayer. The spirit of devotion fills the hearts of God's children and characterizes their worship. The inspiration and center of their joyful devotion is the holiness of God. That holiness of God claims their attention and influences their devotion....The ministry of prayer...is a ministry of passion, a ministry of intense longing after God and His holiness." — E. M. Bounds, *The Power of Prayer*, meditations for Dec. 28 and March 22

Enrique Brenes: Seventh Graduate of the LADPT



A native of Costa Rica, Enrique Brenes is pastor of a growing church in Grecia, an upscale suburb of San José, Costa Rica. He came to faith in Christ through the Catholic charismatic movement and later became associated with a Pentecostal Protestant church. In addition to pastoring, Enrique has served on the faculty of ESEPA Seminary in San José. His area of research has been the renovation and

revitalization of the local church. Enrique has examined both the external contextual factors of affluence, religious indifference, and nominalism as well as factors internal to the life of the churches in Grecia in terms of spirituality, Christian commitment, personal ethics, and vision. Rev. Brenes is seeking to understand what constitutes a missionary congregation in the Costa Rican context. **Please pray for Enrique.** We are looking forward with great anticipation to his public, official, Ph.D. defense in San Jose on September 20. Dr. Enrique Guang will preside over the event as the President of the Evangelical University of the Americas (UNELA). Chuck will participate as the Dean of the Doctoral Program.



Dr. Norberto Saracco pastors a Pentecostal church in Buenos Aires, Argentina and is the founding President and CEO of the International Faculty of Theological Studies (FIET), with over 5000 church leaders studying for the ministry. With a Ph.D. from England in the history of the Pentecostal movement, Norberto is also one of our core founding faculty members of the LADPT and a member of our Academic Council governing board. Right after the selection of Pope Francis, last March, Norberto sent us the following personal testimony, used by permission.

“PRAY FOR ME” — by Dr. Norberto Saracco

I first met Cardinal Jorge Bergoglio, today Pope Francis, in 2001 (the year when Argentina was facing) the worst economic and social crisis in our history. Concurrently, the National Council of Evangelicals and the Argentine Catholic Episcopacy were meeting for the first time in order to work on a new law for religious equality. After the opening devotional, Cardinal Bergoglio spoke, saying, “We can’t be in here working on this new law while outside our people are convulsed and desperate.” He continued with a new proposal for the meeting, saying, “Let’s plan to do something together. Let’s gather all our resources for the service of the people.”

Two years later..., we began a process to regularly bring together evangelical pastors and laypeople with Catholic priests. This resulted in the formation of CRECES (the Renovated Communion of Evangelicals and Catholics in the Holy Spirit). Our purpose: “To proclaim Jesus Christ.” Cardinal Bergoglio has totally supported this initiative. An important highlight of the CRECES movement was the Third Encounter in June 2006. After expressing his joy upon seeing the multitude of evangelicals and Catholics in what he called “a reconciled diversity,” and sharing a brief message, Cardinal Bergoglio asked, as was his custom, that we pray for him. Those of us who were on the platform gathered around him. The photograph of the kneeling Cardinal surrounded by pastors laying their hands on him had an unexpected impact. A Catholic magazine published the photo on its cover with the large headline, “APOSTATE!”



Dr Saracco with Pope Francis

Nevertheless, and in spite of internal pressures, the support of the cardinal and his personal relationship with evangelical pastors continued to grow. He promoted several retreats between priests and pastors in which he personally participated, and he encouraged the joint distribution of Bibles, as well as evangelistic efforts and all that had to do with the promotion of unity between Christians and the exaltation of Jesus Christ. Two years ago, we evangelical pastors were invited to a Pentecost Sunday mass in the central cathedral. After finishing his homily, Cardinal Bergoglio addressed the crowd, telling how Catholics had persecuted evangelicals. He concluded by publically asking pardon. We continued meeting for prayer several times a year, whether in his office or in one of ours. We grew to know him as a man of great wisdom and deep spirituality. I called him the day before he left for Rome. At the end of our conversation, he asked, as he always did, “Pray for me.”

POPE FRANCIS: POSSIBILITIES AND CHALLENGES

The Catholic Church is passing through one of its worse moments...Pope Francis knows that he has accepted the challenge of becoming Pope in order to bring about deep changes. In the few days of his papacy he has given some interesting signals. Now he has the challenge of moving beyond gestures into the reality of actions. It won’t be easy. Both the moving on of an old Pope and the election of a new Pope continue causing worldwide commotion for various reasons, not necessarily religious. It falls on us as men and women of faith to try to discern the times, to understand how the Lord of history is moving and what He is saying. Let’s look at a few signs.

- 1) An upsurge of religious fervor. In many cases this reflects a chauvinistic attitude and in other cases is an expression of popular religion that is not necessarily Christian. But it also certainly expresses a hunger and thirst for God. Millions of people on our continent live in a spiritual desert, and they are seeking God.
- 2) The power of personal testimony. The impact of Francis comes, not from his discourses (although his words are both powerful and meaningful), but from his life. People are talking about what he did, not what he said. What appear to be devastating arguments from his accusers melt before the testimony of his life.
- 3) The power of love. His gesture of respect and good will toward the President (President Christina Kirchner of Argentina) served to change the attitudes of a government that had held her hostage and shown her disrespect during the course of 10 years. More importantly, it broke the fiery spirit of confrontation that has dominated our society.
- 4) The value of poverty. Not poverty in the sense of a lack of goods that leads to misery, but poverty as an attitude of life that gives to one’s neighbor, lives with simplicity, and prioritizes the weakest among us.

While it is certain that many things separate us as evangelicals from the Catholic Church, both in matters of doctrine and of practice, I sense that God is speaking to us in the election of Francis and in what is happening as a result.

- a.) God is calling us to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ with more fervor and passion. People are desperately seeking God. This is a time of announcement, proclamation and mission.
- b.) God is calling us to live the gospel. We have crafted a false, hedonist, superficial, emotional gospel. Just as our lives have not changed, neither has our society, in spite of the proliferation churches. We have fastened our sights on religious marketing strategies that have engorged our churches but not extended the Kingdom of God. We need to emphasize the transforming power of the gospel, and this only happens as we teach our people to obey God’s word.
- c.) God is calling us to radically live out His love, by loving and accepting our neighbor, selflessly offering our service, and becoming instruments of reconciliation.
- d.) God is calling us to a life style that honors His gospel. Some are preaching a false gospel of prosperity and consumerism. Many of our leaders have become priests of the god Mammon, the god of riches. This is a “gospel” that exalts the worse aspects of human nature: egotism, ambition and vanity. It’s time to return to the simplicity of the gospel.

The challenge is huge...God is calling into unity those of us who believe in Jesus Christ and intend to be faithful to Him, be we Catholics or evangelicals. It is not to an institutional unity, but a unity in the holiness of His word, in the power of His Spirit and in mission. Pope Francis has before him the difficult tasks of cleansing the church, ridding her of idolatry, putting her on a path toward holiness, and preaching Jesus Christ. He can’t do it alone, and because he has asked it of us, let us pray for him.

“On their release, Peter and John went back to their own people and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said to them. When they heard this, they raised their voices together in prayer to God....After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly.” — Acts 4:23-24, 31 NIV