



Evangelical Theological Seminary
Matanzas, Cuba
ACONTECER 2021

THE RECTOR'S MESSAGE

Dear ecumenical family,

Founded on October 1, 1946, our Evangelical Seminary of Theology is celebrating this year its 75th Anniversary. Representatives from the Methodist and Presbyterian Churches participated in its foundation. Two year later, on May 2, 1951 the Episcopal Church – though teachers had already been collaborating with the Seminary since 1948 – was officially incorporated in a public ceremony.



During all these years, SET has been linked to over 110 churches, faiths and institutions in a mutually enriching work. Its educational philosophy emphasizes on several themes: biblical, theological, ecumenical and interreligious, gender, people with disabilities, mission and diakonia. The basis of all this work lies in its concern for developing an ecumenical biblical-theological educational concept that responds to the Cuban *kairos*, together with a constructive ethical guidance and a commitment to social service practice. Since the *mission* of our Seminary is to provide a rigorous academic formation, we offer participants in our training programs solid spiritual preparation and service vocation in a communitarian, ecumenical and diverse experience.

We believe that SET is the laboratory of the ecumenical movement: in laboratories people learn, observe, experiment and work tenaciously (laboratory comes from the Latin *laborare*). during its years of existence, the institution has intensively collaborated with other churches and institutions through the diversity of gifts and functions, but united in one same Spirit. Notwithstanding insufficiencies and limitations, our Seminary has been in the vanguard in the biblical-theological production in our Cuban context; particularly in these recent years, trying to address profoundly, with courage, transparency and a prophetic voice the thorny topics that churches and society do not want to deal with – or are not interested in dealing with. Topics like human sexuality,

corruption, violence, values, among others, that challenge us and at the same time support the work and mission of the churches.

On the occasion of the new celebration we are implementing our process of organizational planning; launching a new doctoral program in Ministry (DMin); acquiring a facility for the programs of the Seminary in Havana; implementing new methods, such as the inverted classroom; restructuring our monetary and financial system; organizing theological symposiums among other efforts and activities.

We thank you for your prayers and support over more than 7 decades for the Glory of God. “...Ebenezer, Thus far the Lord has helped us” (1 Samuel 7:12 NIV)

Your brother in Christ,

Carlos E. Ham

Rector

Matanzas, February 2021.

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CALL FOR NEW DOCTORAL PROGRAM IN MINISTRY (DMIN)

Set is calling for applications to the new program in Ministry (DMin)

The Graduate Theological Foundation (GTF) sponsors together with SET this eminently ecumenical and inclusive program. It offers a professional doctorate in Ministry for Cuban and Latin American men and women pastors with experience in ministry leadership, and for lay people who have actively worked leading other ecclesiastic ministries. We also welcome any foreign applicants who have the basic spoken and writing abilities in Spanish.

The purpose of this doctoral program is to contribute to the advancement and specialization of the pastoral body, as well as that of lay people that work in other ministries in local churches. By broadening their professional competence, they acquire the necessary capacities and tools for planning and managing ecclesiastical ministries.

The program will be developed in SET central campus in Matanzas; it is expected to begin during the second week of November 2021. We will have a first face-to-face meeting, and if the pandemic situation continues, we would resume by e-mail, WhatsApp or by other digital means.

Requirements to enter the program:

- a. BA in Theology or Masters in Theology or the equivalent degree granted by an educational institution of Theology acknowledged by GTF and SET.
- b. Currently working in a pastoral position or developing other ministries, having no less than 5 years of experience, detailed in a reference letter issued by the Board of their national Church.
- c. Personal interview with the SET Postgraduate Department
- d. Ability to read documents in English language.

Requirements to obtain the academic degree

- a. Accumulating 36 credits
- b. Writing the final dissertation with the Faculty approval.
- c. Culminating studies in a period no later than 3 years, unless problems of force majeure (health, political or any other major inconvenient) prevent the completion of the program. The administration will evaluate cases individually.

Program Schedule:

- The program will have two and half academic periods. Two face-to-face encounters for two weeks per period will be held, for a completion of two courses in each of them.
- The personal interview and enrollment process will be held during the month of June, 2021.
- The first encounter will be held through November 15 -19 and 22-26, 2021.

Tuition:

Tuition of 1 200 Cuban pesos per year will cover all academic costs, plus lodging and food.

If you meet the requirements, we invite you to enroll in this program.

Contact information: Lic. Sissi Sibiaurt Silva,

email: s.subiaurt@seminario.co.cu

Office Phone: (+53) 4529 0575

DEVELOPMENT OF ACADEMIC PROGRAM

The following academic program was developed during the month of January:



The fifth encounter of the Baccalaureate in Biblical-Theological Studies was developed from January 4-8. The subjects taught were Introduction to the Old Testament and Our Faith imparted by Professors Francisco Marrero Gutiérrez and Ary Fernández Albán,

respectively.

THE DEAN'S OFFICE REPORTS

The official announcement of the evacuation of SET and suspension of all face-to-face classes took place on March 23 last year. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, we were forced to partially evacuate SET to a second location in Matanzas and in Havana on January 13, 2021.

Dean Amos Lopez Rubio and Vice-Dean Reinerio Arce Valentín report on the academic situation in both venues.

Matanzas:

The second semester corresponding to 2020-2021 course started on inverted classes mode via Internet. The “Margaret McDougall Memorial” library is open on Wednesdays for students and teachers, as well as the SET Library, exhibiting the magazines and texts for sale on Thursdays.

The Program Degree in Theology is developed with the following courses:

Term	Professors
Third Year	
New Testament II	Orestes Roca/ Kirenia Criado
Theology of Old Testament	Daylíns Rufín
Denomination II	Reinerio Arce
Ethics and Theology	Dora Arce
Social Sciences I	Adolfo Ham
Mission and Diakonia	Daniel Montoya/Carlos E. Ham

Fourth Year

Gender and Other Identities	Dora Arce
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For the development of these courses, a two-week face-to-face encounter will take place at SET in the second trimester. These two weeks are meant for the 3rd Year students, so that they can deepen into the running course themes and attend the Liturgy II course, lectured by professor Francisco Marrero.

Regarding the Masters in Theology, a group of four students will finish their curricular stage with a final encounter to be held in the near future. An alternative is already being discussed with the students to hold these courses on the internet. On the other hand, the new group has not been able to begin. We remain waiting for the pandemic conditions of the country to improve, so we can begin this Master’s new issue.

The Baccalaureate in Biblical Theological Studies and Baccalaureate in Christian Education with a semi-residential mode in SET are postponed for the time being.

In Havana

The Bachelor in Biblical Theological Studies program that was running in the Reformed-Presbyterian Church “Aida Jorge” in Luyanó continued in virtual mode in January. The following courses have been developed:

Courses

Christian Thinking II
 Ancient Culture History
 History of the Church
 Pastoral Partnership
 Philosophical Knowledge

Professors

Amós López Rubio
 Yaima Gil Poutou
 Amós López Rubio
 Daniel Izquierdo
 Néstor Sánchez

In the Higher Institute of Religion Sciences (ISECRE) the programs and courses began in January via Internet, using WhatsApp and e-mail. The students receiving classes are gathered in teams; they copy and distribute the materials to the students who do not have resources to access Internet, so solidarity has been present during this pandemic time. The second semester of the 2020 term is expected to begin in April and finish in July, with the hopes to begin the 2021 second term in September this year with face-to-face encounters.

The following Sciences of Religion subjects concluded in the first semester.

Subject**Professors****First Year**

Writing and Analysis
 Cuban Thought
 Science and Religion I
 Introduction to the Study of Religions
 History of Philosophy I

Ileana Domínguez
 Joaquín B. Santana
 Eduardo F. Casanova
 Iván González Tassé
 Maximiliano Trujillo

Second Year

Religion and Art I
 History of Religion II
 Philosophy III
 Philosophy of Religion
 Psychology of Religion
 Cuban Culture

Lázara Menéndez
 Adolfo Ham
 Maximiliano Trujillo
 Adolfo Ham
 Ofelia Pérez
 Leonardo Sarría

Third Year

Sociology of Religion I
 Christianity I
 Sacred Texts
 Religion and Transculturation I
 Gender, Inequality, Marginality
 New Religious Movements

Ofelia Pérez
 Amós López
 Daylíns Rufín
 Lázara. Menéndez
 Daylíns Rufín
 Luis Carlos Marrero

Fourth Year

Interfaith Dialog I
 Thesis Workshop
 Interfaith Dialog II
 Religious Anthropology and Film Making in Cuba

Luis Carlos Marrero Chasbar
 Ileana Domínguez García
 Luis Carlos Marrero Chasbar
 Raidel Araoz Valdés

A positive outcome in these years of pandemic is that professors from both venues have gained in experience as to how to work in virtual courses mode and students have certainly responded to this new challenge.

A SORROWFUL NEWS

With deep sorrow, we received the news of the departure of Brother Luis Pérez Martinto (August 25, 1941–March 16, 2021) to a better place. He was a student in the Biblical-Theological Studies Baccalaureate Program at SET. A farewell, envoy and thanksgiving ceremony was conducted at his home with few people involved. Reverend Orestes Roca, pastor of the First Baptist Church of Matanzas was in charge of the first part of the ceremony, since Luis was a member of this church for many years. The second part was delivered by Yileivys Cruz, pastor of the Metropolitan Church in Matanzas, where Luis was a Deacon. They sang his favorite hymn *How Could I be Sad* and others spoke of his faith. Following his wishes, he was cremated and his ashes placed in the family pantheon. There will be a thanksgiving service when the pandemic conditions allow for it.



INTERNATIONAL VIDEOCONFERENCES AND MEETINGS



These meetings and videoconferences were Zoomed from January to March this year.

- January 7. SET Rector Carlos E. Ham and Rector Paul Kirbas, from the Graduate Theological Foundation (GTF) met to discuss the possibility of the joint Divinity Ministry Program (DMin)
- January 25. The first meeting continued, this time with GTF Rector Paul Kirbas, Jennifer Kirbas and Luann Falkow to discuss the budget of the DMin program.
- January 26. SET Rector attended a meeting to speak about the process of studies on the celebration of the centenary of the International Missionary Council (IMC).
- January 29. Videoconference between Rector Carlos E. Ham with Elisabeth Cook and Karla Koll to discuss the program of studies to be developed between the Latin American Biblical University (UBL) and SET on account of the centenary of the International Missionary Council (IMC).
- February 3. SET Rector met with members of the First Presbyterian Church in Charlotte, North Carolina, USA.
- February 9. The Coordinating Committee of the *Process of Theological Education and Praxis* that is called and organized by the Global Ministries of Disciples of Christ at hemispheric and world level met.
- February 11. Videoconference of Rector Carlos E. Ham and Vice Rector Clara Luz Ajo with representatives of the Latin American Association of Theological Education Institutions (ALIET by its acronym in Spanish) with the objective of discussing the ALIET yearly plan and the creation of three work commissions. These are the Planning

Commission, the Methodological Workshop Commission on Distance Learning and the Digital Publications commission. SET will be in charge of the latter commission.

- February 23. Knox College from Toronto, Canada has organized weekly services during pandemic time, which they upload in internet. The biblical reflections have been carried out by faculty and guest lecturers. This time they invited SET Professor Reinerio Arce, PhD, who taught for a semester at this College. He presented a reflection on Psalm 22. “In these times of pandemic and uncertainty,” Arce said, “many wonder, ‘where is our God?’ God is with us and in us. We cannot explain the causes of evil, but with the help of God, we can work for the good, which is working for life.”
- March 4. Carlos E. Ham presented a report for the World Council of Churches (WCC) Commission of World Mission and Evangelization (CWME) about the impact of COVID-19 pandemic in Cuba; and what the Church and the Mission have learned from it.
- March 4. Meeting with the Presbyterian Partnership Network of the USA to discuss the emergency relief aid requested by the Synod of the Presbyterian-Reformed Church in Cuba and SET.
- March 11. Carlos E. Ham and Waldemar Murguido met with Chritie Neufeldt, regional coordinator for Latin America and the Caribbean of the United Church in Canada.
- March 23. Meeting with Rev. Dr. James Taneti, Director of the Syngman Rhee Global Mission and Assistant Professor of World Christianity of the Union Presbyterian Seminary in Richmond, Virginia, USA.
- March 24. Rector Carlos E. Ham met with the coordinating committee of the *Process of Theological Education and Praxis* that is called and organized by the Global Ministries of Disciples of Christ at hemispheric and world level.
- March 25. Rector Carlos E. Ham and Waldemar Murguido met with Anne Roulet, coordinator of the institutional program and in charge of the Cuba and Mexico partners of the Department of Mission (DM-Lausanne) of the Protestant Church of Lausanne, Switzerland.
- March 25. Rector Carlos E. Ham met with the Directive Board of the Graduate Theological Foundation (GTF) to discuss SET the joint program in Ministry Doctorate with that institution.

CHAPLAIN DISCOVERS A HISTORICAL PLACE

*During these days of pandemic confinement, I was walking around the Seminary to fight sedentary lifestyle and in my journey I went into a place that is about to be six decades of having been extravagantly named **Mohamed’s Corner**. This place has kept its name to this day, resisting neglect and abandonment. Seminarians from different epochs know about this place – to a greater or lesser extent – and visit it, giving this place the rightful merit of belonging to the living architecture of the Evangelical Theological Seminary of Theology of Matanzas.*



In order to rescue the origin of this place, I talked to some of these seminarians and I am sharing with you the testimony of Presbyter Héctor Méndez, who summarizes the history of this place.

Presbyter Francisco Marrero
SET Chaplain

Mohamed's Corner



Young Hector Conde from the Episcopal Church in Moron, Camaguey, entered the Seminary in 1961. The first year at the Seminary was particularly difficult for him, especially due to the Philosophy lessons, because we were not duly prepared to face.

Then in 1962, and more adapted to life in the Seminary, Hector excelled due to his spirituality and devotion. This was visible when at sunset he sat at a small square with benches around on one side of the basketball court. He spent there some time meditating until the bell rang to go to the dining room to have dinner.

Being really organized was another of his characteristic traits. His room was always impeccable; his desk was always tidy. His books were in strict order. He was willing to help anyone who needed it.



Due to his habit of going to meditate every day to the small square, as Episcopal Bishop Miguel Tamayo referred to, his episcopal classmates began to say that, "he was meditating more than Mohammed."



Then, the name for this place of 'Mohammed's Corner' emerged from his meditating ritual there. Methodist student José Alberto Borbón used to be one of the biggest jokers about it. In short, this place continued to be called this way due to seminarian Hector's custom to habitually meditate there.

Reverend Héctor Conde and Eulalia Ulloa, his longtime girlfriend and later wife, served in the Episcopal Churches of Los Arabos, Cienfuegos and Santa Clara. After retirement, they settled in Miami and there he organized a biblical study group until the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and they were not able to continue gathering. However, in the midst of the pandemic Rev. Héctor Conde has brought spiritual comfort and help to the sick, always ready to fulfill his work as a fervent servant of the Lord.



Presbyter Héctor Méndez
SET Class of 1965
February 19, 2021

NOTES FOR HISTORY

The Evangelical Seminary of Theology has been conceived as a laboratory of the ecumenical movement not only for Cuba but also for all the countries related with it. The title of the pamphlet



published on the 70 anniversary of the institution was inspired on a phrase by Professor Hans-Ruedi Weber who applied this concept to the Ecumenical Institute of Bossey in Geneva, Switzerland, when he wrote about the history of that institution in 1996.

The publication presents a chronological narration of the historical events lived at SET, combining illusions and anguish, incomprehensible and adverse circumstances; but there were also realized dreams and hopes in which faith, dignity and trust “in Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of faith...” (Hebrews, 12:2 NIV)

An Ecumenical Movement Laboratory, Notes for History tries to bring to light the purpose of the research that briefly systematizes the different stages of the Institution and demonstrate the most relevant results achieved during 70 years of work for the biblical-socio-theological and ecumenical formation of the leadership of evangelical churches in Cuba and in other countries. The summary is based on different primary sources preserved in journals, books, leaflets, papers and periodical publications. The results of such research allowed for the precision in facts, dates and results expressed statistically in charts to illustrate seventy years of hard work and sacrifice and the testimony of several generations that contributed and still contribute to the institution.

In future newsletters we will present the decades walked by SET in this publication.

I. THE SEMINARY IS BORN

Located in the northwestern coast of Cuba, San Carlos y San Severino de Matanzas was founded on October 12, 1693, by 30 Canary families. However, the city only rises as an urban enclave in 1818, when its port is given the second fitting out and the city begins a period of economic and social growth through the establishment of commercial houses, cultural institutions and the foundation of the newspaper. In the first decades of the 19th century, technical innovations and later the railroad determined a process of productive and mercantile extent in the hands of foreign traders established in the city and in the neighbor city of Cárdenas.

Towards the end of the century, the first evangelical missionaries arrive in the city. In the neighborhood of Pueblo Nuevo, they settled, one of the humblest, where Baptist and episcopal missionaries requested licenses to preach; a novelty in a city where there were three Roman Catholic churches and several Cabildos. In sub-urban settlements, the latter organized African ex-slaves and creole from different ethnic groups united in religious and cultural expressions.

During the 20th century, Matanzas did not maintain the economic status which distinguished it in past epochs. However, its inhabitants kept the prosperous cultural imprint, evidenced in the existence of schools, personalities of science and culture, traders and foreigners settled in the city.

Churches and evangelical schools began to be part of Matanzas culture and with them other social works expanded, such as homes for the elderly, clinics and schools for the poor children, among others.



By mid-20th century, evangelical missions that worked in Cuba showed their concern for the union of Christians and in 1941 the Cuban Council of Evangelical Churches was founded, a process led by the Methodist Missionary Sterling Augustus Neblett (1873-1969). A contribution of the ecumenical will of that Council was the foundation of the evangelical Seminary of Theology (SET) on October 1, 1946, in order to contribute to the training of the pastorate and the leadership of evangelical churches of Cuba, Central America and the Caribbean.

Representatives from the Methodist and Presbyterian churches participated in SET foundation and from their Boards of Missions in the United States.



The first graduation of Bachelors in Theology and Christian Education – the programs established from the beginning – took place on July 6, 1949. Two year later, on May 2, 1951 the Episcopal Church – though teachers had already been collaborating with the Seminary since 1948 – was officially incorporated in a public ceremony.

Besides other academic activities, Easter was always celebrated ecumenically at this time of the year, including the participation of Roman-Catholic believers.



Contributions to Evangelical Seminary of Theology in Matanzas should be made to the Ofelia Ortega Endowment Fund, Fund ID: 89726, Account: 1020094701. This information should be written on the memo line of the check. Contributions may be made either by individuals or congregations or presbyteries.

*The check should then be mailed to:
Presbyterian Foundation, 200 East 12th Street, Jeffersonville, IN 47130.*

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