



ACONTECER

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GRADUATION OF THE BIBLICAL AND PASTORAL TRAINING PROGRAM IN CIEGO DE AVILA



The Biblical and Pastoral Training Program that started in 2019 in Ciego de Avila celebrated its graduation ceremony at the city Episcopal Church San Lucas on September 25th. A total of 23 students graduated: 17 women and 6 men who represented the following churches: Episcopal (11), The Fraternity of Baptist churches (5), The Pentecostal Evangelical (2), the Pentecostal Evangelical “ Assembly of God”, the Pentecostal Evangelical “Fountain of Missionary Salvation”(2), the Pentecostal Evangelical “Rejoicing Voice ”(1).

The Coordinators, Yohanes Cobiellas Toledo and Mariela Castro Tamayo organized the Graduation Ceremony including songs, prayers and a meditation on the Gospel of Mark 9. The graduating students also shared their family life experiences during the critical period of COVID 19 and talked about how the challenging situation got the best of our humanity in order to face our own pains and to accompany the bereaved.

We give thanks to God for this graduation and to all the people that made this new SET program possible. We also give thanks for finding a new family and getting tools for better serving God and his reign.

OFFICIAL ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE PROGRAM OF PENTECOSTAL STUDIES

SET Program of Pentecostal Studies officially announced the course “100 years of Pentecostalism in Cuba” that will take place on November 8, 10 and 12 from 2.00 o’clock to 3.30 pm. A certificate of participation will be given and it will be a virtual course via “What’s Up”. The consultants will be Yosniers Lázaro Viñals Delgado, Major in Sciences of Religion and professor at the Pentecostal Theological University in Cuba; Yuniel de la Rúa Marín, Máster in Social and Philosophical Studies; Pedro Álvarez Sifontes, Máster in Social and Philosophical Studies; and Rhodes González Zorilla, Pastor of the Christian Pentecostal Church and researcher of the Pentecostal movement.

THE PROJECT FOR TRANSLATING THE GOSPEL OF LUKE INTO CUBAN SIGN LANGUAGE CONTINUES AT SET

The translation of the Gospel of Luke into Cuban sign language is an on going project taking place at SET facilities. It is sponsored by the Bible Commission of the Cuban Council of Churches (CIC in Spanish) and the United Bible Societies (SBU in Spanish). When this project is completed, Cuba will become the third country in Latin America having this gospel fully translated into sign language and recorded in video form. In the first phase of the project chapters 1 to 12 were translated and released in disk format in the provinces.

The working team is integrated by Alejandro Torres Matos, translator and sign communicator, Dionys Treto González, editor and sign communicator; and interpreter and advisor, Yunelis Rodríguez Martínez; all under the coordination of the Commission Secretary, Reverend Alain Montano. The work of this project was temporarily cancelled during the COVID-19 quarantine.



To know more about the project, we interviewed Alejandro who stated: We stopped working due to COVID-19 and we missed it very much. We had the need and the will of continuing interpreting and of translating the second draft of chapters 13 and 14 of Luke. It was in September that we could resume that phase. Now we are in the stage of the pre-final filming of these chapters. Shortly we will present the translation to the deaf community of the eastern zone for evaluation. Afterwards, it will undergo a process of revision and correction to later proceed to the final recording for its distribution to the deaf community in USB and DVD formats.

EXCHANGE WITH ACADEMIC INSTITUTIONS

- **Dr. Robert Hunt, director of Global Theological Education of the Theology School in Perkins belonging to the Southern Methodist University, USA. (SMU in English)** invited the Seminary direction to the Counseling Board meeting via Zoom with representatives of different theological institutions in order to coordinate the work of the Project “Virtual Visiting Professors” (VVP in English).

This initiative of Cliff College –a Perkins affiliated branch- consists of the development of Theology X , a system of on line learning management , as well as a program of upgrading for the best practices in on line learning configuration. Additionally, they are inviting the institutions interested in learning more about the possibilities of theology X. Also, Hunt Institute from SMU and its students have developed an economical device that allows information websites of some terabytes (Wikipedia, Project Gutemberg, Khan Institute and many others) to be available for the seminaries lacking Internet . This device will be tested at the beginning of next year in the Gambian public schools so that the guidelines and the source code will be available for the schools to assemble their own devices.

Dr. Hunt will organize individual meetings with theological schools in 2022 as travelling becomes possible and on the basis of these meetings they will further improve the content creation objectives of VVP project. Our Seminary President, Carlos E. Ham also suggested working with the regional ecumenical bodies of Latin American Theological educators. Dr. Manabat from the Harris Institute in Philippines raised the questions of the electoral districts and the addressees . This will be an issue to be discussed more at length by the advising committee.

- On October 20th was held for the third time the virtual meeting called by Reverend Ángel Luis Rivera Agosto- executive of the office for Latin America and the Caribbean of the **Global Ministries of the Church Disciples of Christ** and United in Christ in USA and Canada. The objective was planning the **Process of Theological Education and Praxis** with the presidents of seminaries and institutions of theological training in the western hemisphere. President Carlos E. Ham represented our seminary in this meeting.

SET DIRECTION MEETINGS AND CONFERENCES

The following meetings and video-conferences via Zoom were joined by SET direction in October 2021:

October 27th

The meeting of Carlos E. Ham and Waldemar Murguido with Anne Roulet , coordinator of the institutional program , also in charge of the counterparts (Cuba and Mexico) of the Mission Department (DM)-Lausana), Switzerland.



October 28th

Anslem Warrick of the Caribbean Baptist Fraternity (CBF in English) summoned to a virtual meeting which was attended by Waldemar Murguido.

LAUNCHING OF THE INTERNATIONAL MANUAL ON ECUMENICAL DIAKONIA



The International Manual on Ecumenical Diakonia – Contextual and Practical Theologies of Diakonia and Christian Outreach Services: Resources of Intercultural Study and Learning was launched in September 16th via Zoom. This handbook is about the training and education for diakonia, for social work and for the support to the vulnerable people, for the defense of the outcasts suffering from injustice at present.

The outcome of a three-year process – meetings with research institutions and centers of diaconal work in Germany and some international partners- is a publication of about 100 concise introductory essays and articles based on regional surveys from the main Christian denominations and regions in the world. It is composed of four sections: (1) diaconal theologies in different ecclesial and social contexts; (2) Concepts and profiles of diaconal ministries in different parts of the world; (3) Fundamental diaconal trends and concerns; (4) Models and methods for the development of competencies in diakonia. President Carlos E. Ham wrote an article for the manual, “Seeing -Judging-Acting: a learning method for diaconal empowerment from a Latin American perspective.”

The manual was conceived and funded jointly by the following organizations: The Institute of Diaconal Science and Management (IDM in English) in Bielefeld, Bethel; The United Evangelical Mission; the Foundation against Bodenschwingh; Bread for the World; the Office for Theology and Ecumenism; Diakonia Germany; and the –African Conference of Churches (AACC). It had also the support of the Office for Ecumenical Diakonia of the World Council of Churches. Shortly, the manual will be published in Spanish.

OFELIA ORTEGA SUÁREZ DECLARED AS DISTINGUISHED ADOPTED DAUGHTER OF MATANZAS CITY

With great joy we got the news that the People’s Power Municipal Assembly of Matanzas province declared SET Emeritus Professor Ofelia Ortega Suarez “Distinguished Adopted Daughter” of the city of San Carlos and San Severino de Matanzas in the ceremony held in Sauto Theater on October the 12th. In the framework of Matanzas 328 anniversary, the president, Odalys Bárbara López Aguerrebere handed her the diploma for her valuable contribution to the city.

Upon hearing the news of this declaration Professor Dr. Isabel Apawo Phiri, Associate General Secretary of the World Council of Churches with headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland sent an expressive letter :

“Ofelia, you have always been “distinguished” at the World Council of Churches. You have worked at the World Council of Churches as presidents of the regions of Latin America and the Caribbean and in all the processes of ecumenical reflection you have always been focused on these areas in the first place, guaranteeing that their voices were always heard. You have worked as a professor at the Ecumenical Institute of Bossey in Switzerland contributing to the transformation of professors and students with your passion for justice and your compassion for everybody. You never abandoned your faithfulness to God, who made all these things possible.

You also worked as an executive in charge of the Program of Theological Education for Latin America and the Caribbean and your contribution to theological education had an impact on the region.

Upon you return to your beloved home, Cuba, you continued making it possible for Cuba to continue being open and visible to the global ecumenical community, in spite of the economic and political embargo to which your country has been submitted to. ¡Good Work Ofelia! You. ve been faithful in everything you have done.”



MEMOIRS FROM THE PANDEMIC



Interview

In different ways we have survived in these pandemic times, nurturing our spirituality with reflections and prayers in the virtual networks. A student from the SET program of Master Degree in Liturgy, Rocío Fernández is one of these writers and poets who day after day has presented us her reflections full of symbolisms and feelings moving us deeply. Below we will show you an interview made to Rocío for the newsletter *Acontecer*.

My name is Rocío Fernández Ruiz; I am the eldest of four sisters, but people say I look like the youngest. I suppose this is due to the feelings instilled by my name that means “youthful woman, always tender”. I grew up in a harmonious home with my grandparents, always surrounded by love. I live in Cardenas, a city of sea, salt, harbor, horse carriages, stories about people and a flag. I studied Psychology at the School of Medical Sciences in Matanzas and since 2013 I am working at the Christian Center of Reflection and Dialogue.

I consider I am passionate about life, in love with human existence, a dreamer par excellence, and an adventurer that tries to live everyday on the verge of surprise and of discovery with my head on the clouds and my feet on the ground as I like saying. I am fascinated by the sea, the rain, the storms, gray days, the cold weather, the planets, the sky, galaxies, the stars, the moon, the universe, and its mysteries, magic, the cartoons, the fantastic world, little plants and wild flowers; all manifestations of creation have a place in my soul.

I grew up in the warmth of Cardenas First Baptist Church, amid divine presence, the feeling of faith, books, bell towers, owls, friends, and the pastor scolding. I loved working in the majority of ministries, above all I served in liturgy. I prepared and led worships and devotionals. For many years I participated in drama: From Sunday school little clown to the Christmas star. Maybe it is from time that I feel fascinated by the stars and the Moon.

I remember that as a child I was very keen on literature. Also my grandmother told me stories every night. I think I liked writing about everything. My grandmother told me that I when I was about 3 or 4 years old, I used to make rhymes and the next-door neighbor wrote them down and learned them because he was an improviser. I also wrote about everything as a teenager. I had a diary where I wrote down from devotionals to love poems.

Later, I kept growing and discovering myself from other perspectives, chiefly regarding my vocational orientation. It was clear to me that I wanted to serve; I knew that any career chosen by me had to be related with service and doing good to other people. So I went to the University and studied psychology, one of my greatest passions. I enjoyed that stage a lot. It was very intense, full of learning. I graduated and started working in the Ministry of Public Health and in the Christian Center later. The center is my big house. I am the spoiled child

of that place. I live devoted to my role as a psychologist, and a deep sense of belonging joins me to that institution, to its people; every person working there and related with me in the communities, has a magical place in my heart, even those that are not present any more; each life leaves a mark in my learning, is a tender memory accompanying me.



I have managed to harmonize my passions in the Master in Liturgy. I interweave all my passions from there. At the beginning I was not going to join that program. In fact, I was made the proposal several times and I refused. However, synchronisms of our good Lord, chances of fate took place, and I came to SET. A space of formation that is also magical, changed my life in every sense, what I have learned and the experiences embraced throughout this formative stage have cut across my spirituality to get to my entrails and to the marrow of my bones.

In the Master Degree Program I have been able to embrace my feeling of faith and weave it with the thread of much spirituality. Today I let myself be penetrated by my first love, the love I have lived since I was a child and by many other spiritual loves that have accompanied me in this journey.



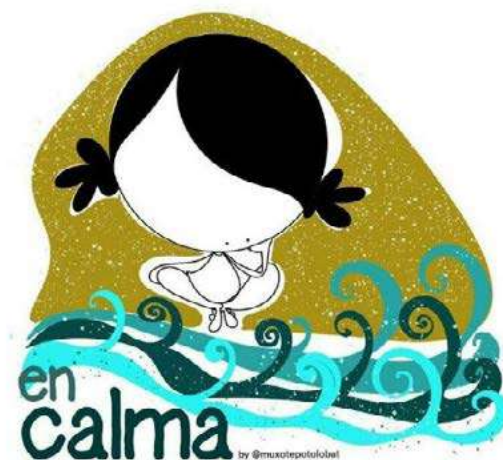
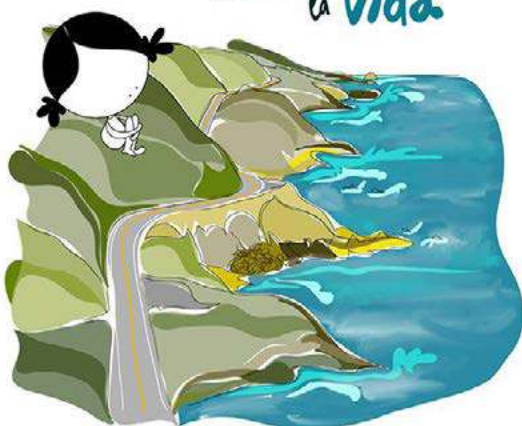
I have harmonized my knowledge as a psychologist, my urge for writing, this unbridled compulsion that allows me to interweave my daily life with words and give free will to my emotional narrations. But it has exceptionally given me the wonderful opportunity of creating, serving and accompanying.

Today the Master Degree in Liturgy is family and home, inhabited by my sacred imaginaries, friends, the family of my soul, hands, arms, and feet that go with me. In the Master program flowered my earnest transparencies without the crippling filters of an assumed adulthood. I have lived every minute with my senses of enjoyment and pleasure, of surprise and discovery, trying to tune in my heart and my head in good doing and speaking. I learned a daily theological and liturgical journey that is close and full. The master program in Liturgy tenderly calls me and challenges me in the midst of difficult times to live with a deep sense

of supporting sensitivity, to denounce and cry out against all form of oppression and social injustice. At least for me, the essence of the Master program and the Seminary constitute a way towards inclusion and healing. It is a conspiratorial encounter, a silent encounter with myself and with the divinity inhabiting me.

This time of Covid -19 has been hard and difficult; uncertain, lifeless days have gone by. There is still a long way to walk, a long journey to be covered, much to be done, not based on "must be" but on the pleasure and enjoyment implicit in the very act of serving. In these pandemic times we keep on resignifying our daily whereabouts; we have to re-elaborate the memories of pain, live our mourning after the losses. Every symbol-word allows to honor the daily memories from life and from death.

Sentir la Vida





Before the realities of here and now, I will always resort to serving and accompanying in prayer and silence, with the timely, right and perfect word,

That is nothing else than the synergy that moves and blows our Good God on us. I can always be relief, impede injustice, commit myself to the kind and hopeful

side of time. I can always take side with the observance and contemplation of the beautiful, the good, the fair, the sincere and the honest. I can always negotiate my moments of sadness, my bouts of anger, and my blunders. Accepting myself to be able to accept, taking care of myself to be able to take care, loving myself to be able to love.

In every step, imprint, effort and goal I will always attempt to glorify my good God. May the Glory be with Him till the end of time. Every endeavor and every drawback is worthwhile; all dreams

are worthwhile. Oh! And I can always inhabit my little white and blue house by the sea. There, in that imaginary place I have kept everything I love . Definitely I still have to make a psycho spiritual shop that will be a place for sharing, a proper space for interweaving the processes of inner healing with the threads of love.

I wish that my transition on this earth could be an encounter full of tenderness, renewal and restoration. I wish my life could be a gigantic embrace of peace and light.



Monthly Newsletter

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Contributions to Evangelical Seminary of Theology in Matanzas should be made to:

*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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