

## What is Extension?

To me, extension has to do primarily with people.

Much has been written about theological education by extension, and a great deal more will be said. The movement is still relatively small, it is growing rapidly, and it continues to take on new dimensions and new forms. There are many different ways of talking about extension--in terms of the biblical concept of the church and its ministry, the socio-economic context, the problem of leadership and indigenization, educational principles and structures and materials, church growth, etc. Ralph Winter's book, Theological Education by Extension, runs over 600 pages, discussing extension in these different ways.

But theoretical analyses and even detailed, practical explanations of extension fall far short of the real thing, I fear. You really have to look at the people who can be and are now being reached by extension programs. People who are largely beyond the reach of traditional residential seminaries and Bible institutes.

The word extension itself indicates that our concern in this movement is to extend (stretch, expand, spread, adapt) the resources of theological education in order to reach the people who are the ~~real~~ <sup>actual</sup> and potential leaders of our churches. Most of these people are mature men and women, married and with families, settled in their communities and in their professions. So we must extend ~~the~~ <sup>our</sup> seminaries and institutes to where they live, i.e. to the whole area of our churches. We have to adjust our schedules to fit theirs, our thinking to communicate within the varied sub-cultures which they represent, our teaching to match their different academic levels, our materials to carry a greater proportion of the cognitive input. We need to extend our concept of theological education to include, besides candidates for the ministry, lay workers, elders, youth leaders, ordained pastors, i.e. those who carry the primary responsibilities in our churches and congregations, especially in those areas where there is scarce hope in this generation or the next for an established, fulltime, salaried ministry.

Forgive me if I talk about the Presbyterian Seminary of Guatemala, but these are the people I know. The history of our extension program has been told elsewhere, and it isn't necessary here anyway. I just want to introduce some of our students.

These are the people who are studying by extension in two very different geographical areas, which correspond to two of our presbyteries, under the direction of one fulltime professor with the parttime help of two pastors. The students attend weekly sessions in 6 regional centers and study at home in their "free" time, usually in the evenings and on weekends. They represent about one third of our seminary's extension program, which altogether covers 6 presbyteries, includes 20 regional centers with over 200 students, and has its headquarters in the other end of the country.

1. North Presbytery is composed of 8 churches, 6 organized congregations, and a number of preaching points. The area is depressed, arid, apparently with little life in the small, rural communities or in the churches, and only one church pays an adequate pastor's salary. This year we have 3 wide-awake centers operating in the North with a total of 24 students, mostly studying

at the post-elementary-school level. They include the only 2 active pastors of the presbytery, the only 2 paid, unordained church workers, the other 3 long-standing candidates for the ministry (mature men), the president, secretary, and treasurer of the presbytery plus another member of the executive committee, who is their representative on the synod (national) executive committee, the president, secretary, and treasurer of the regional youth organization, 7 ruling elders representing 5 different congregations, and 3 Sunday school superintendents.

Even this information doesn't tell the extension story very well. Take a closer look at a smaller sampling of these same students. Mardoqueo Muñoz is the 25-year-old pastor of the church in El Progreso, secretary of the presbytery, involved in a number of local, regional, and national programs. He was graduated from the seminary 4 years ago with a Diploma in Theology, having studied partly by extension, some in residence. Since then he has gone on in his secular studies, completing 3 years of secondary by correspondence, and this year he has come back into the seminary program so as to complement his previous work and earn the next higher theological degree, the "Bachillerato" in Theology. He has obviously learned how to carry on a rigorous study program and a fulltime job at the same time. The church of which he is pastor is in the final stages of a new, impressive construction. In his 15 months in El Progreso, a county seat, Mardoqueo has set a number of important precedents in pastoral work and initiated several new programs--new for the church, the presbytery, and some perhaps for the whole denomination. And the church is responding.

Samuel Mejía, 39 years of age, is an experienced teacher, professor of the Vocational Institute of El Progreso. An elder and Sunday school teacher, he has held numerous positions and carried much responsibility in the El Progreso church for years, including some of the preaching. At present he serves also as ~~the~~ treasurer of the North Presbytery and member of the executive committee. Perhaps his most significant contribution has been his role in the early experimentation, recent establishment, and present direction of a new intermediate youth program in Guatemala called "Icthus," which now has chapters in a ~~dozen~~ churches and is growing rapidly.

Salvador Rodas, 47, a farmer, lives in the small village of La Estancia. His industriousness is evident in the fact that he owns one of the few tractors in the area, and his leadership ability is evident in the fact that he is mayor of the large nearby town of San Cristóbal. For years he has been an elder of his church, a position which implies preaching and pastoral responsibilities because the church has no pastor. Recently Salvador was elected president of the North Presbytery for a one-year term.

2. Central Presbytery covers the capital city and several surrounding towns, has 12 churches plus 4 organized congregations and some preaching points. Although there are 16 pastors on the rolls, only 4 are fully supported and fully occupied in the ministry, another 4 parttime, and the rest incidentally. So even in this urban situation, largely for economic reasons, much of the work depends on lay leadership. The seminary has at the moment 3 centers in the city, a total of 60 students fairly evenly divided between the post-elementary, secondary, and university levels. They include 7 pastors (not just presbyterians), 9 ruling elders, the director of a mission (denomination), the director of a national protestant social service agency (a woman), the secretary of the Alliance of Protestant Churches in Guatemala, and the president of the regional women's organization.

24 of these students are studying theological courses at the university level, and several of these already have professional university degrees. This is a fact of some significance because at present no pastor of our denomination has a university degree and, in fact, less than 1% of the population of Guatemala has any university training at all. As an indication of the leadership ability of these students in society as well as in the church, we may note that several are teachers, others accountants, one a former member of congress, another a judge, and still another head of the economics department at a local university.

Samuel Andrade, 42, is an electrician who works parttime for a company and parttime on his own. His family has long been a mainstay at the Central Presbyterian Church in Guatemala City, the largest of our denomination with a regular Sunday morning attendance, including Sunday school, of 600 to 700. His wife and 4 of his 5 children are active in the Sunday school and women's and youth activities. Samuel is an elder, and, although the church has an outstanding, fulltime pastor plus some collaboration ~~from~~ 2 "associate" pastors, he might be considered a pastor, too. As Superintendent of the Intermediate Department of the Sunday school he presides over a 2 1/2 hour program for 75 lively young people each Sunday morning, including six classes and a worship service separate from the congregational service of worship.

Julio Paz, 38, is a brother-in-law of Samuel Andrade, holds a responsible position as accountant for INCAP, an international nutrition research organization. His family, which includes 7 children, is also outstanding in its contribution to the life of Central Church. Julio is an elder, organist, choir director, and Director of Christian Education. <sup>a leader</sup> As he has served in the past as president of the national youth organization and treasurer of the Synod. Not only he but also his wife and 2 of his sons are students of the seminary this year.

Augusto Marroquín, 19, is in his first year at the national university, studying engineering, and he works in a printing shop during the day. Converted just a few months ago, he feels called to the ministry and is able to carry two seminary courses as well as his other studies and work.

Raúl Echeverría, 64, is the pastor of a large independent church in Guatemala City and oversees the work of a protestant primary school and an adult primary education correspondence program. An indefatigable worker, he was for years a parttime professor at our seminary and at the large Central American Bible Institute, has edited a magazine and published several books and numerous pamphlets, and is at present the Secretary of the Alliance of Protestant Churches of Guatemala. He travels widely as a preacher and lecturer. As a recognition of his contribution to Guatemala, the government recently awarded him the Order of the Quetzal, the nation's highest honor. As a young man Raúl was graduated from a national secondary school with a teaching certificate, went on to graduate from Moody Bible Institute in the U.S., later completed two years of university studies in the national university of Guatemala. He is now finishing his requirements for the Licenciatura in Theology (roughly equivalent to the M.Th.) in our seminary.

These and many others like them are the people that make extension a challenging and exciting experiment in theological education even in our small institution. They are the reason why churches and missions throughout Latin America are changing radically the structures of their institutions. They, the extension students, call us to a new understanding of the ministry,

a new vision of the church, and a new hope for growth in witness, maturity, community, and service.

Let's be quite clear about one thing: Not one in 10 of these people who make up our extension family could ever study in a traditional residence seminary, even with full scholarships. And if they could, they wouldn't be able to take the same courses in the same classrooms. And if they were by some stretch of the imagination to be trained in a residence seminary for three years, it is doubtful that they would be able to return in large numbers to their communities and churches to take up their old leadership positions either on the basis of self-support or as professional ministers!

Or, to direct some questions in the other direction, <sup>are</sup> ~~is any~~ traditional seminaries in Guatemala, Latin America, or elsewhere reaching <sup>as</sup> ~~this~~ many students <sup>with such</sup> ~~this~~ diversity, and ~~this~~ quality of leadership? What kinds of students attend residence institutions? Who are the people we should be reaching with our programs of theological education?

\*of background

April 22, 1970  
H. Ross Kissler