

Higgins' Herald

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Westminster Biblical Missions, Mexico

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A New Study Beginning

A few weeks ago Misael Custodio was talking with José Magaña about the needs of the various churches in Tarascan-land. One result of that discussion is the beginning of a new class for the church leaders in Ichan, Zopoco, and Acachuen. Particularly, they wanted more study of Reformed creeds and confessions. Misael will be beginning that study for them on his next visit. This promises to be quite helpful for the church leaders there, to help them gain a firmer historic understanding of the Reformed Faith.



Professor Misael Custodio will soon begin teaching a new course in Creeds and Confessions for the leaders in Acachuen, Zopoco, and Ichan.

When Bill first went to Michoacán, the Manifestors thought themselves very much alone. Max Lathrop had taught them about Calvinistic theology, but they did not have a sense of connected-ness with anyone else in the world who also understood Calvinism. The groups they were familiar with didn't - Catholics, Pentecostals, Cults, Arminians. So one

of the more helpful things for building the confidence of these dear brothers has been to show them that, yes, throughout the history of the church, there is a faithful legacy of other brothers who also understood the things that Max taught these brothers in Michoacán.



Bill stands with Misael Custodio, our key man in our work among the Tarascans. Misael is originally from Tarascan-land, and now serves on the faculty of the Juan Calvino Theological Seminary in Mexico City, as well as pastoring a church in Mexico City, and leading the training of these Tarascan pastors.

News Around the Area

While the Reformation testimony that was so vibrant during the flower of Max's

ministry, is not so wide-spread these days, still we are very encouraged to see many of these works regaining something of their former vigor - often now with the infusion of new blood from a younger leadership. Here is news from many of these towns:

Zopoco - This work has suffered in the past, off and on, from the absence of Pablo Tomas, one of Max's original disciples. Pablo must often be away in the US to work, and at times the work in Zopoco has dwindled. Last year it received a shot in the arm when brother Marguerito came to help, during the Fall and Winter. While Marguerito has now left, Pablo Tomas' son, Naftali, is beginning to step into the gap. Naftali is still somewhat insecure in his preaching gifts, so he is being helped by Tata (Elder) José Magaña from Ichan. So we rejoice that the work in Zopoco is stronger now.



David Custodio and his son stand with José Magaña and Naftali Tomas (son of Pablo Tomas) in Zopoco. José is helping Naftali at the church in Zopoco.

Ichan - José Magaña carries on faithfully there, and is more encouraged than in previous years. It has been a real joy to see José grow and blossom in his leadership role among the elders in Michoacán. He is also helping to oversee the works in Acachuen and Zopoco.

Acachuen - Anciano Serrano continues to lead this group, which meets in his metal-working shop attached to his home. David Custodio and José Magaña have taken him under their wing, and he appears to be growing rapidly in the faith.



Anciano Serrano, Pastor of the church in Acachuen, stands praying with José Magaña, Pastor of the church in Ichan.

Paracho - Pastors David and Eric, with the support of elder Tata Ramón Joaquin (another one of Max' original disciples), are truly leading the way for Reformed training among the Tarascans. They unashamedly list the church there on the bulletins as a "Presbyterian Church." They have embraced wholeheartedly all the Reformed teaching that Misael has brought from the *Seminario Teológico Juan Calvino* in Mexico City.

When we are there, we often meet to discuss the state of the church in pastor Eric's Pizza parlor (with truly delicious Mexican Pizza!). This Spring they held the first baptismal service the Manifestors had seen in many years! They are also exploring the possibility of planting yet another church in Paracho.



Rev. Greg Poorman stands with David Custodio and his Assistant Pastor, Eric, who runs the Pizza restaurant. Eric's wife has been extremely ill recently, but has made a remarkable recovery. We praise the Lord!

San Lorenzo - Lencho Naranjo has largely taken over the reigns of this work from his father, Santiago (another one of Max' original disciples), with Santiago's blessing. The Naranjo's still attend all the joint Manifestor functions, but the center of gravity (as it were) has shifted from San Lorenzo as the center, more to Paracho and Ichan.



(From Left:) David Custodio, Lorenzo (Lencho) Naranjo, his father Santiago Naranjo, and Misael Custodio. Much of the leadership for the church in San Lorenzo has now passed to Lencho.

Anga'uan - Salvador Perucho still labors faithfully in this very hard, difficult village. Rev. Poorman got to visit there in March, and finally meet brother Perucho. The village is fiercely (and sometimes violently) Roman Catholic, and is one of the most hard and stoney fields in the

area. Within walking distance from Salvador's home is the famous tourist-trap, the Paricutin volcano, that swallowed a few villages when it erupted in 1943. The spire of the village church still sticks out of the rock, and the mountain still steams today.



(From left:) David Custodio, Misael Custodio, and Salvador Perucho. Elder Perucho has for many long years labored in the hostile village of Anga'uan, near the Paricutin volcano.



Bill lectures each year at the Reformation Day Conference at the Juan Calvino Theological Seminary in Mexico City. The 2005 Lecture Series covered the Early Church Fathers and the Early Ecumenical Councils.

Needs Continue

We find it truly remarkable how the Lord has blessed the work in Michoacán, with such small support from the US. As we have said before, our philosophy in missions is to encourage and facilitate as self-

sustaining and independent indigenous works as possible. In Mexico, it has often been the case that vast infusions of US dollars have caused more harm than good, so it is not without reason that our budget has been pretty much shoe-string.

Our support has mainly been to provide some logistical support for getting the needed ministerial training from the Juan Calvino Theological Seminary in Mexico City, out to the Tarascan country-sides where these brothers labor.



Misael Custodio and his family, in the front of the church he pastors in Mexico City.

While the Lord has been meeting the needs of the field, and stretching scarce resources, we find that some expenses are rising. The rising fuel prices have affected transportation costs, which account for a large percentage of our expense. We are currently looking into raising our level of support to help offset these rising costs. If the Lord leads you to help, your support can be sent to:

Westminster Biblical Missions, Inc.
P.O. Box 602
Carbondale, Pennsylvania 18407
Earmarked, "Mexico."



Singing a hymn in P'ore, the native language of the P'urepecha.

Items for Prayer

Thank you for your prayers for our work among the Tarascans. We would ask that you continue to lift up the Tarascan pastors, as they labor faithfully in the face of numerous difficulties. Pray for the churches in Paracho, Tzopoco, San Lorenzo, Acachuen, Cheranastico, Ichan, Anga'uan, as well as the other villages where interest is beginning to grow in the Reformed ministry of the Manifestors. Also lift up Misael Custodio, and his many responsibilities, both among the Tarascans, and at Juan Calvino Seminary in Mexico City. We also appreciate your continued prayers for the Higgins family. Bill's dad went to be with the Lord on 12 May, joining his mom who had died less than a year before. The Lord is gracious to sustain us in our grief. We also appreciate your prayers for Rev. Greg Poorman, who has begun to help Bill with the work in Michoacán, as well as his family, and his church, the Covenant Reformed Presbyterian Church, in Painesville, Ohio.

The *Higgins' Herald* is published as often as we can get to it. The opinions expressed herein are those of the Editor-in-chief, and/or its Editorial staff, unless we didn't really mean to put it just that way. For any blessing you may receive from this publication, we give all glory to our Lord. For any blame, it lies with me. *sic biscuitus disintegrat, cum grano salis.*
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