



**A LOOK AT THE PARTNER SCHOOLS
AND LEADERS BEING REACHED**





JOHN BERNARD
PRESIDENT, UNITED WORLD MISSION

The global church needs few things more urgently than its own well-trained leaders, and they're needed at every level. Church planters and house church pastors need biblical training accessible where they're serving, and at their level of education. At the same time, the Church in every region of the world needs thought leaders educated at the highest academic levels. United World Mission seeks to equip leaders from the grassroots to the seminary classroom. Thank you for partnering with our Overseas Council ministry and seminaries around the world. Together, we're confronting the Global Leadership Challenge!

As John notes, confronting the Global Leadership Challenge is critical. Nine out of ten churches in the Majority World are led by individuals without formal training. Closing the gap has motivated the Overseas Council's ministry for more than 40 years. We partner with more than 100 strategically selected seminaries located where the Church is growing the fastest, or the needs are the greatest.

We carry out this mission with you because of our shared vision for flourishing churches around the world led by well-equipped leaders.

The Covid-19 pandemic brought government restrictions on in-person teaching, in turn creating financial and emotional stresses. In the stories that follow, you'll learn the challenges our partner seminaries have faced, and the innovative ways they have persevered and overcome. For instance, the Arab Baptist Theological Seminary in Lebanon halted in-person teaching, shifting the program permanently from residential to online. ABTS is now offering several short, on-campus sessions each year. This new approach is more financially sustainable and will allow ABTS to reach more students who might have been hindered from coming for a full-time residential program. Some seminary leaders wrote to say that enrollment actually increased because of the accessibility of innovative online programming.

You'll also read inspiring student testimonies expressing gratitude for your scholarship support, and stories of alumni who are now fruitfully serving

and multiplying. These students are among the 88,000 students who are being equipped each year by OC partner schools, and together their global impact is staggering.

Our Regional Directors' important ministries of walking alongside seminary partners have also recalibrated due to travel restrictions. They're conducting virtual workshops for faculty who are learning how to teach in an online environment. They and their seminary leaders are encouraging each other, praying for one another, and learning together. Their ability to adapt has been extraordinary!

Friends, this is why you and I invest in OC's Kingdom work. I trust you'll be informed and inspired as you read. And on behalf of our seminary partners and their students, thank you for your critical part in confronting the Global Leadership Challenge.



SCOTT CUNNINGHAM
DIRECTOR, OVERSEAS COUNCIL

A man wearing a white wide-brimmed hat and a plaid shirt is crouching in a lush, mountainous landscape. He is tending to a young coffee plant. The background shows rolling hills and a cloudy sky. The text "LATIN AMERICA" is overlaid on the image, underlined with a red line.

LATIN AMERICA

LATIN AMERICA

REGIONAL UPDATE *FROM JOSUÉ FERNANDEZ REGIONAL DIRECTOR*

“In heaven there is not panic, but perfect plans.” This is what I heard from a friend as the pandemic started. Suddenly all our plans were cancelled. But, the Lord showed us clearly that everything was under His control in His plans.

For instance, for many years OC has held Institutes for Excellence workshops for seminary leaders. We’ve touched various themes to help our partner schools provide quality theological education. One theme frequently touched upon has been the role of Internet technology in the future of theological education. Some schools, like the South American Theological Seminary (Brazil), became a 100% online school, now with more than 2,000 students. Other partner seminaries developed very strong departments of online education. As a result of the Institute for Excellence and the development of online education, many of our partners were able to quickly and effectively shift to fully online training with the changes forced by the pandemic.

More recently we saw something similar in Cuba, a country with poor Internet infrastructure. In the last three years OC has provided over



\$30,000 to establish five “Internet Access Centers” across Cuba for seminary students, professors and pastors to have access to good Internet in order to take classes and do research. Then, in early March, as the pandemic unfolded, we were already scheduled to provide training for Cuban seminaries on how to provide good online theological education. This was the first time this kind of training had been made available – just in time for the pandemic. More evidence of God’s “perfect plans”.

Your prayers are very important for us in order to continue being the leading voice in the region to guide seminaries in finding new strategic beginnings for the future, just as we have done thus far.

BIBLICAL SEMINARY OF COLOMBIA (BSC) COLOMBIA



PROGRAMS OFFERED

- Program of Christian Worldview & Ethics
- Non-formal programs
- Bachelor of Theology

CURRENT ENROLLMENT

1,409 Students

THE HEALTH AND ECONOMIC EMERGENCY CAUSED BY THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC RESULTED IN CHANGES THAT AFFECTED OUR OPERATIONS IN 2020 AND WILL CONTINUE TO AFFECT US UNTIL AT LEAST 2022. AT THE SAME TIME, IT HAS POINTED TO OPPORTUNITIES FOR GROWTH AND IMPROVEMENT.

Some of the immediate impact included: Changing to online education for our residential students and non-formal courses • Discounting tuition fees (20%) in order to retain students. The result was a low dropout rate • New students for our residential B.A. decreased, but not in our online program • Reductions of income from the use of our facilities (dorms and meeting spaces for church events), student fees from non-formal programs and conferences, and married students getting behind in their rent • Increased expenditures for sanitary provisions.

On the other hand, the challenges of the pandemic offered opportunity to grow. Our staff have demonstrated dedication, flexibility and creativity, as all had to adapt to remote work. Our weekly online chapel time has brought together students from the residential and on-line degree programs, faculty living in five different countries, staff and board members around biblical reflection and prayer. Members of the community have made a significant financial contribution by standing in for absent employees or by foregoing part of their salary to contribute to the financial viability of the institution. We have found new ways to support the church through technology-mediated non-formal courses. This may turn out to be a whole new scenario for future ministry to the church.

And, there are still more opportunities for us to grow, improving Internet connectivity on campus, expanding the reach of our non-formal offerings through remote classes and collaborating with other institutions of theological education through our online courses.

We are deeply grateful for support given through OC to make possible the tuition discount for all students in degree programs and assistance in our operational costs.

Please pray with us for:

Wisdom as we prepare to return to in-person teaching in January 2021 • Travel safety for faculty who will be returning to Colombia to start the 2021 school year • Protection from contagion for students, faculty, staff, and their families • Provision for changes in disinfecting stations necessary to return to face-to-face classes.

We are including just one picture, which illustrates one of our responses to the pandemic: the use of masks among campus residents and encouragement to pastors to do the same as they care for the flock of God.

EVANGELICAL SEMINARY FOR PASTORAL EDUCATION (ESEPA) COSTA RICA



PROGRAMS OFFERED

- Additional Certificate Programs
- Bachelor of Apologetics
- Bachelor of Bible
- Bachelor of Christian Studies
- Bachelor of Intercultural Studies
- Bachelor of Pastoral Ministry
- Bachelor of Theology
- Master of Biblical Exegesis & Pastoral Leadership

CURRENT ENROLLMENT

235 Students

AS WITH MANY INSTITUTIONS, 2020 HAS BEEN A DRAMATIC YEAR HERE AT ESEPA SEMINARY. OF COURSE, WE HAVE SUFFERED THE EFFECTS OF THE PANDEMIC. IN ADDITION, WE HAVE ALSO EXPERIENCED A NUMBER OF OTHER CHANGES.

When Costa Rica closed down, we were forced stop having in-person classes on our campus. However, in 2019 we had begun developing a way to offer courses through Zoom that would allow students to attend and participate in live classes via the Zoom platform. The Lord used this to help us smoothly transition totally over to Zoom in 2020 during the pandemic. As a result, we did not have to cancel any of our classes this year. In terms of student numbers, while we have not shrunk, ESEPA has not grown during this time. We remain steady at about 235 students across all our programs.

One of the areas we have focused on is maintenance of our facility. Recently churches were allowed to start meeting in-person again, and several came to us to see if they could rent space from us. The Lord has been gracious, and we have been able to generate some additional income for the seminary which we are using for maintenance and improvements.

We are grateful the Lord for his generous provision through your gifts. We would have had a very difficult time if it had not been for the very generous scholarship funding that we were able to pass along to our students. Thank you for thinking of the Lord's work in Latin America and for your participation in the preparation of Latin American pastors and scholars.

We would love for you to pray for us and this ministry:

You can pray that our students would be able to return to campus soon • Pray for this time of transition between seminary presidents and for God's direction for the board and those of us in leadership • Finally, pray that God would continue to bring new students and allow us to grow.

We would love to have a greater impact across Costa Rica and Latin America.

INTERNATIONAL FACULTY OF THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION (FIET) ARGENTINA



PROGRAMS OFFERED

- Certificate and Diploma Programs
- Bachelors Programs
- Masters Programs

CURRENT ENROLLMENT

2,000 Students

ARGENTINA EXCEEDED 200 DAYS OF QUARANTINE IMPOSED BY THE GOVERNMENT - THE LONGEST IN THE WORLD. THE STRICTNESS OF THE QUARANTINE VARIES BY REGION. HOWEVER, FREE MOVEMENT AROUND THE COUNTRY IS LIMITED AND LOCAL AIRPORTS ARE CLOSED. THE NUMBER OF INFECTED PEOPLE GROWS DAILY AND, UNFORTUNATELY, ALSO THE NUMBER OF DEATHS DUE TO COVID. IN POLITICS, THE COUNTRY IS ADRIFT WITHOUT AN ENCOURAGING COURSE FOR THE FUTURE. ECONOMICALLY, THE GDP REGISTERED A FALL OF MORE THAN 30%. BUSINESSES HAVE CLOSED COMPLETELY; SMALL INDUSTRIES HAVE GONE BANKRUPT; AND COMPANIES ARE SELLING THEIR ASSETS AND LEAVING THE COUNTRY. THE SITUATION IS VERY SAD AND CRITICAL FOR THE NEAR AND DISTANT FUTURE OF ARGENTINA.

Theological education is not a priority for Argentines in this pandemic. Many students have suspended their studies because of unemployment. Our projection for the number of students for next year is a decrease of more than half. So, for this coming year, FIET will not exceed 2,000 students in all its courses.

To get through this crisis we have also decreased our operating financial budget by half. We reduced some services (like Internet speed). We canceled additional employee services. We arranged for special payments of taxes. We agreed to partially pay essential service providers (printing, design). We canceled all the institutional advancement projects that had been arranged for 2020.

We have closed most of our in-person classes. Some study groups remain open in parts of the country with not so rigid quarantine. Most students have migrated to our online platform. For this, we have strengthened our virtual link through a web page with easy-to-use educational platforms, Zoom or video-recorded classes, a virtual store with educational resources, etc.

We thank God for your faithfulness and for the close partners in ministry such as Overseas Council. Thanks to each one of you for your contributions that have helped so many students continue their studies through scholarship gifts. And, thank you for the gifts to FIET, so that we can continue with the ministry that God has entrusted to us.

METHODIST SEMINARY OF CUBA (SEM)

CUBA



PROGRAMS OFFERED

- Program of Christian Education
- Bachelor of Theology

CURRENT ENROLLMENT

2,160 Students

DURING LAST SCHOOL YEAR, OUR SEMINARY WAS CHALLENGED IN MANY WAYS. LIKE OTHERS AROUND THE WORLD, THE PANDEMIC FORCED US TO FIND NEW STRATEGIES. THANKFULLY, ALL OUR BACHELOR STUDENTS WERE ABLE TO COMPLETE THIS SCHOOL YEAR. UNFORTUNATELY, STUDENTS AT THE EXTENSION CENTERS HAVE NOT BEEN ABLE TO COMPLETE THE SCHOOL YEAR. THOUGH SOME EXTENSION PRINCIPALS MADE AN EXTRAORDINARY EFFORT TO REACH ALL THEIR STUDENTS THROUGH WHATSAPP GROUPS, IT IS SO HARD DUE TO THE INEFFECTIVE INTERNET SERVICE IN CUBA. A GREAT NUMBER OF STUDENTS DO NOT HAVE ANY ACCESS TO INTERNET, ESPECIALLY THOSE IN RURAL AREAS. ABOUT 400 STUDENTS WILL GRADUATE FROM THE DIPLOMA PROGRAM IN THE EXTENSION CENTERS, ONCE CONDITIONS ALLOW THEM TO COMPLETE THE SCHOOL YEAR.

All the graduates are serving as pastors and teachers. Some of them are now teaching in our seminary extension centers.

Before OC's ministry in Cuba, no opportunity existed on the island to earn a graduate degree in theology from an evangelical perspective. But, now, thanks to the help of Overseas Council, most of our professors have now earned a master's degree; two of them, a PhD; two professors are currently pursuing their Doctor of Ministry; and four are in their master's studies. Also, special appreciation goes to OC for training us in Online Education prior to the pandemic. I consider it prophetically scheduled, for we have had to apply many of the things we learned, adapting them to our context, for the new students in our Bachelor program.

We also appreciate OC's support to provide some scholarships every year. It means so much to us, since these students are not able to cover their own studies, and you've made it possible for them.

Prayer requests:

For the graduates to be good and effective servants and pastors • For the continuity of our seminary activities in the midst of the economic crisis our country is facing, which is even harder due to this pandemic • For the professors who are pursuing their studies.

CENTRAL AMERICAN THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY (SETECA) GUATEMALA



PROGRAMS OFFERED

- Associate Programs
- Bachelor Programs
- Masters Programs
- Doctor of Theological Education

CURRENT ENROLLMENT

800 Students

OUR HEARTS ARE FILLED WITH THANKSGIVING TO THE LORD FOR HIS FAITHFULNESS THIS YEAR AT SETECA.

We are grateful for the training programs that Josué, the OC Regional Director, has offered. Josué has also come alongside us as a mentor and encourager.

Enrollment for our last two terms has continued strong with some 800 students. All the instruction has been online since March, and both teachers and students have responded well to the change. There are challenges, particularly in the rural areas where Internet service can be irregular. However, we are grateful to hear from our students how their classes have been a help for them personally as well as for their ministries.

SETECA is training students from over 20 countries. We offer a variety of programs from non-formal education for church leaders to undergraduate and graduate degree programs including doctoral studies. Our graduates serve in nearly 40 countries on all the continents. We thank God for His blessing on the ministry of the Seminary.

Our teachers are finding new ways for students to learn and new opportunities to serve, like a program of eight short courses providing biblical orientation for families. Our Music School teachers designed a program for over forty worship leaders to help prepare and record the music for online church services.

Campus closure meant the loss of income from services which represented an important part of the budget. We are grateful for the way God has provided for the needs of the Seminary in this time of crisis through a good enrollment and increased donations from our friends. Your contribution through Overseas Council has been a significant part of that!

We are also grateful for your prayers. Here are ways you can pray for us:

Pray that teachers and students will continue faithfully with their classes, and not get discouraged because of difficulties that may come along • Pray that the teaching of God's Word will continue to produce spiritual growth and transformation • Pray for God's leading for the Board of Directors in their search for the next President.

Thank you again for your investment in God's work through SETECA. We are indeed deeply grateful

WORD OF LIFE SEMINARY (WOL) BRAZIL



PROGRAMS OFFERED

- Certificate and Diploma Programs
- Ministerial Theological Course
- Master of Ministry
- Master of Divinity
- Master of Theology and Biblical Counseling

CURRENT ENROLLMENT

533 Students

SINCE 1965, THE WORD OF LIFE BIBLE SEMINARY HAS FORMED PASTORS, THEOLOGIANS, LEADERS, EDUCATORS AND MISSIONARIES FOR THE BRAZILIAN AND GLOBAL CHURCH. OUR PROGRAMS INTEGRATE ACADEMIC FORMATION, THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE CHRISTIAN CHARACTER AND THE TRAINING IN THE USE OF DIVERSE MINISTRY TOOLS UNDER THE GUIDANCE OF EXPERIENCED TEACHERS. WE HAVE AMONG OUR GRADUATES, WORKERS IN LARGE URBAN CENTERS IN BRAZIL AS WELL AS IN COUNTRIES COMPLETELY “CLOSED” TO THE GOSPEL.

This last year we praised God for some events and prayed to God for wisdom for the new challenges. One of the great joys of this last year was our graduation. We had 96 students who graduated, among all our courses. A great joy and responsibility is the six-month long internships by our students, through which we serve about 30 local churches in various ministries such as youth, children, teaching, and discipleship.

A major challenge that we are facing is the development of our online teaching platform. Currently this platform is being used to support our in-person courses. Due to the pandemic, our graduate level programs will still work fully online this year. Another challenge is the development of a basic theology course which will be completely online. We pray that God will give us the capacity and wisdom to develop this project.

Prayer Requests:

The economic and political crises Brazil and the World is facing, has its effect on the seminary attendance in every program, as well as our finances. Families and churches are deeply hurt • Please pray for our staff. Everyone is wearing more hats each year as the number of professors decreases. Pray for good health and strength for each one of us • Pray for increased enrollment of students for the next school year • Pray for the board of directors – they need God’s wisdom to make hard decision in times of crises.

We would like to thank Overseas Council for the support and development of the ministry of formation of workers for the Brazilian churches. We also want to thank all those who support Overseas Council’s ministry. Your contributions have been extremely relevant and meaningful to our students, without which many could not participate in theological training.

STUDENT PROFILE

ANDRES ROMERO

STUDENT IN BACHELORS OF THEOLOGY

My name is Andres Romero, and I'm a missionary called to China. Currently I am in Costa Rica preparing as a student at ESEPA, thanks to the scholarship I am receiving. I would like to show my appreciation by sharing my story and vision for our ministry.

Even before my mission calling began to take shape, I felt the need for additional training. However, this has been a challenge because my wife and I are also raising support for missions.

This year started out frustrating, but God had planned a step which we have been longing for. With the quarantine, ESEPA became an option for us as they made the Bachelor's in Theology course available completely online. This was perfect because the nature of my ministry requires me to leave the country many times throughout the year. With this new opportunity, I could start my studies.

But this year has been tough for our donors, and we couldn't fit the cost of studies into our budget. We began to pray. Hearing of a scholarship was the answer to our prayer. I have countless dreams and visions for our ministry, equipped with the knowledge and preparation I'm acquiring. There is a long road ahead, but I'm already using these new tools. Currently, I'm teaching English to a house

pastor in China through video calls. In this relationship I found out that even the little that I have learned and am still learning is enough to keep up with the hunger of this self-taught pastor as well as one of the church members whom I'm also discipling.

I am sorry for not using my real name due to the details shared in this letter, but I want to express my deep appreciation for this scholarship. The ability to share the Bible with this little network of Chinese church leaders is the beginning of our long-term mission.

"I HAVE COUNTLESS DREAMS AND VISIONS FOR OUR MINISTRY, EQUIPPED WITH THE KNOWLEDGE AND PREPARATION I'M ACQUIRING."

*STUDENT PROFILE***OMAR AGÜERO***DIPLOMA IN LEADERSHIP PROGRAM*

I am a pastor of the Christian Community. I am married to Silvia with four children and three grandchildren. We live in Patagonia in Argentina.

As a presbyter of the Christian Community, I supervise the congregations in Patagonia and support pastors in their ministry tasks and in their married life. I am also in charge of three congregations with about 400 people, including a new church plant.

A few years ago, we bought a farm and are building on it a “house of refuge” for victims of family violence. This area has many migrant workers, but they dedicate themselves mostly to work and neglect their families. There is a high incidence of drug addiction, juvenile delinquency and domestic violence. No one here was working for the prevention and treatment of victims of family violence. So, we have started a project to shelter women and children and to offer them pastoral care, counseling, and legal and medical assistance.

Because of the varied demands of my pastoral ministry, I found myself in need of training. So, we started (with my wife and some team members) to study a Diploma in Leadership with FIET. The quarantine helped us focus on studying without the distractions of trips and church visits. In December we will graduate.

My studies are serving me in a very practical way to develop and guide projects, in people management, financial projection and measurement of goals. I also reviewed my spiritual life in light of God’s Word. Learning through virtual meetings with leaders of other denominations was very helpful. Though coming from different regions and each one with very different projects, we all shared one objective: Honoring the Lord, serving others, and announcing the Gospel in word and deed.

I am very grateful for the financial help you have given me through Overseas Council. All our resources are dedicated to the shelter house. Therefore, with your contribution you enabled me to study, making you part of the work of the “house of refuge”.

“MY STUDIES ARE SERVING ME IN A VERY PRACTICAL WAY TO DEVELOP AND GUIDE PROJECTS, IN PEOPLE MANAGEMENT, FINANCIAL PROJECTION AND MEASUREMENT OF GOALS”

**INTERNATIONAL FACULTY OF
THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION (FIET)
ARGENTINA**



*STUDENT PROFILE***ORLANDO JEREZ PACHECO***BACHELOR OF THEOLOGY*

I am also a fourth-year student in the Bachelor of Theology program. The seminary has been very helpful in my training for the ministry, I give thanks to God for the people who help to support my studies, and I pray God's blessings on your lives and ministries.

I appreciate the help and financial support that OC contributes to our seminary, so I can be blessed with theological education, since I have no other way to receive training. I have been in pastoral ministry for seven years and now a pastor in a church of 300 members in La Fe, a town on the Isle of Youth, in Cuba. It is a growing church with several mission outreaches and a ministry of evangelism through baseball.

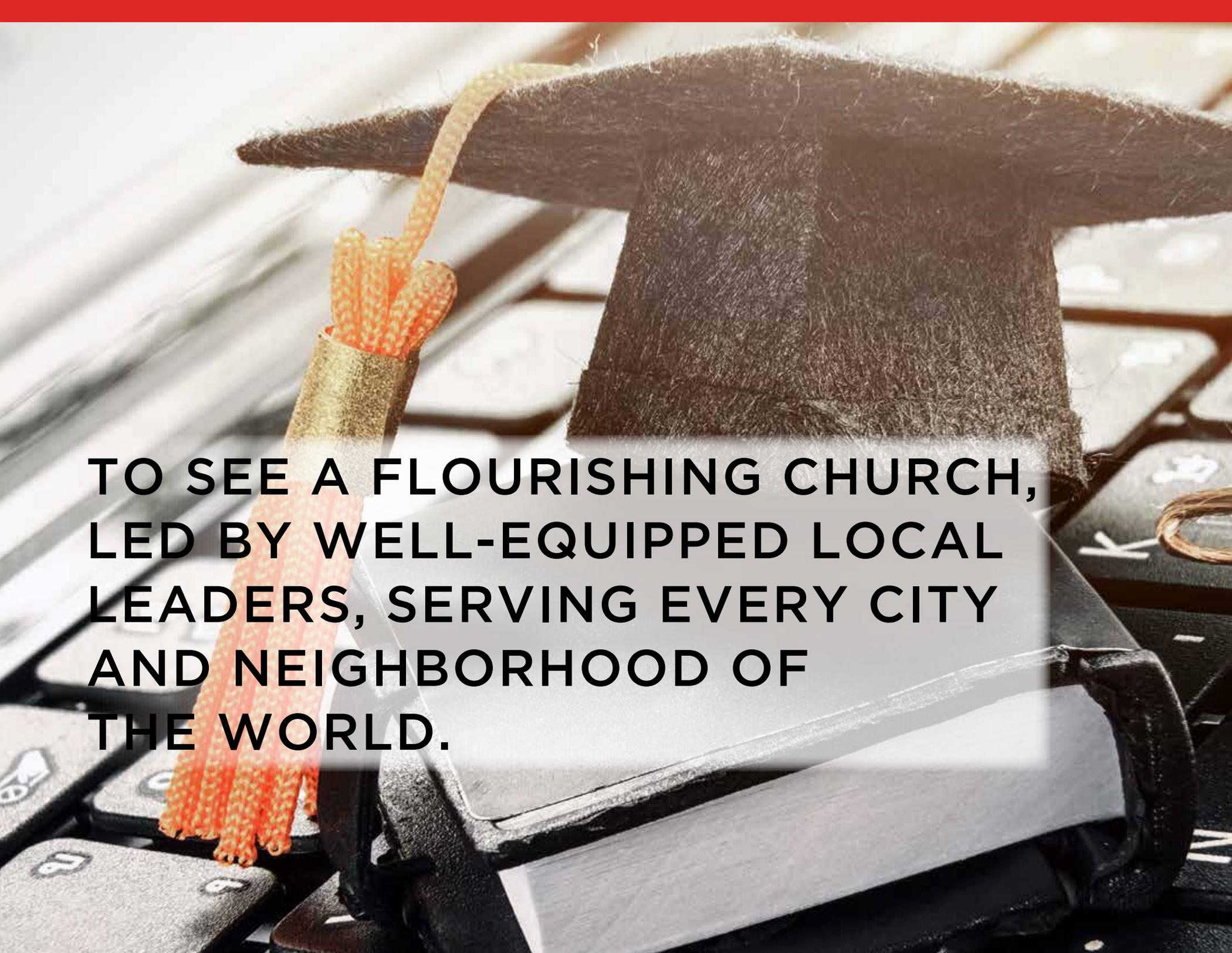
In our church we have an extension branch of the seminary to train local leaders who are in our church and other nearby churches. We already had our first graduation. Being a teacher in the extension allows me to be closely linked to the seminary. I can give from what I've been receiving. At this time, we are building classrooms for Sunday school, especially for children and youth. These will also serve as classrooms for the extension of the seminary.

I am currently writing my thesis on the subject of a biblical teaching program for teenagers.

I am happily married and a father of six-year old twins and a little two-year old. They fill me with joy and complement my ministry because we are able to minister as a family. I thank God for the seminary and the people who, in one way or another, contribute with resources, efforts and spiritual support, so that pastors in Cuba like me can receive a quality education, and thus better serve our Lord Jesus Christ.

“I APPRECIATE THE HELP AND FINANCIAL SUPPORT THAT OC CONTRIBUTES TO OUR SEMINARY, SO I CAN BE BLESSED WITH THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION, SINCE I HAVE NO OTHER WAY TO RECEIVE TRAINING”



A close-up photograph of a typewriter. The focus is on the brown felt wiper and the orange braided cord. The text is overlaid on a semi-transparent white rectangular area in the center of the image.

**TO SEE A FLOURISHING CHURCH,
LED BY WELL-EQUIPPED LOCAL
LEADERS, SERVING EVERY CITY
AND NEIGHBORHOOD OF
THE WORLD.**

**THANK YOU FOR
YOUR PARTNERSHIP.
WE COULDN'T DO
THIS WITHOUT YOU.**



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