

FIRST ANNIVERSARY OF ONLINE COURSES

As of June 20, it has been one year since Augsburg Lutheran Seminary where I serve in Mexico City began offering its program of online courses, of which I serve as coordinator. It has been a very busy time. We have now had more than 150 students sign up for at least one course from just about all of the Spanish-speaking Latin American countries and a dozen states in Mexico, though not all have completed their course work.

About half of the students have come from one of the Lutheran churches in Mexico and other Latin American countries, including especially the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Chile and the United Evangelical Lutheran Church of Argentina, two of the larger companion churches of the ELCA in the region. We have also had students from many other church bodies, including Roman Catholic, Anglican, Protestant and Pentecostal churches. This has included about an equal number of men and women of all different ages, from teenagers to retired people, both lay people and pastors. They also have come from both urban and rural areas. Most of the students live in places where they have no access to quality theological education. The majority are also unable to study in a seminary because they work or attend university.

The testimonies of those who have completed the courses have been touching and encouraging. One student, for example, wrote: "Experiences such as those I have had in the two [online] courses I have taken at Augsburg Lutheran Seminary are not simply academic experiences but faith experiences, experiences of conversion and strengthening of my faith... I feel gratified, renewed and encouraged by this experience... Thank you to the Seminary team for being as much pastors as you are theologians..."



In early June, Alicia and I visited Fernando Tellez (in cap), one of my online students, along with his family outside of Mexico City, where he has begun a mission outreach from his home.

VISITS TO SPONSORING CONGREGATIONS

This summer, I am visiting nine of the churches that sponsor us through ELCA Global Mission. These include four congregations in Tennessee, two in Ohio, and one each in Texas, South Dakota and North Carolina. Currently we have 14 other sponsoring congregations, but Alicia and I were able to visit all but one of those two years ago. Unfortunately, Alicia is not able to be with me this year because she is still teaching school—in Mexico, the school year does not end until early July.



With Pastor Ralph Kirkpatrick at Peace Lutheran Church-Knoxville on June 24

FOR MORE NEWS AND INFORMATION,

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(Or go to www.aokelca.org, the Arkansas-Oklahoma Synod website, and click on "Links")

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