

VISIT OF LUTHERAN WORLD FEDERATION LEADERS FROM LATIN AMERICA

This past 7-11 of April, the Lutheran World Federation held here its annual meeting of presidents, bishops and other leaders from all of the LWF member churches in Latin America and the Caribbean. Over 65 people attended. On Wednesday of that week, our Lutheran Seminary welcomed the participants and shared with them our history and our work. In particular, we spoke about our online study programs, in which many Lutherans from the churches represented at the meetings have already been participating.



The theme of this year's meeting was theological education. This varies widely from one Lutheran church to another in Latin America, since many churches are not large enough to have their own seminaries. Therefore they must participate in ecumenical theological education programs in their own country or else send their students to Lutheran Seminaries in other countries. This can be problematic not only because of the expenses involved but also because the students are removed from their local contexts and can lose touch with the reality of their communities. There are also many different social groups represented by Lutherans in Latin America. Some churches work with people who are of European descent and belong to the middle class, while others work primarily with people from marginalized contexts or indigenous peoples, at times in languages other than Spanish. This makes theological education a very challenging task in Latin America.



EARTHQUAKES IN MEXICO CITY

On the morning of April 18 (Good Friday!), we had another earthquake in Mexico City. Alicia and I were at home and followed the same procedure as usual: as soon as we sensed the earthquake—the doors start to move back and forth and bang against the wall and some things on the dresser may fall over—we get outside as fast as we can, although this time it was a struggle getting down the stairs. This was one of the stronger quakes we have felt. The electricity then went out for several hours and so we turned on the car radio to hear what the news said. Fortunately, we didn't hear of any deaths or extensive damage. We did, however, get some new cracks in our sidewalk outside, and I had to chip off some cement that had become raised up and was slightly obstructing one of our doors out to the street. The worst damage was at one of the high-rise apartment complexes in the city, which had to be evacuated (see photo). Those are always the scariest places to be in an earthquake.



Living in Mexico City, this experience becomes fairly routine. Last year we had several earthquakes that we felt, though not quite as intensely as this most recent one. Alicia and I lived through the 1985 earthquake here, when over 10,000 people died and many buildings throughout the city were destroyed. Fortunately, steps have been taken to make constructions more solid and safe to withstand earthquakes, but it's always a hair-raising experience, and you never know what to expect!

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