

## Nazarene Higher Education in Guatemala Has Huge Impact

Submitted by Wes Eby, Global Representative

### Meet a Remarkable Lady



I am deeply indebted to Dr. Ruth Cordova for providing me with the information for this article. Allow me to share some information about this remarkable lady.

Ruthie, as she is best known, was born in Chiclayo, Peru. She became a Christian at a young age, was sanctified as a teen, and felt God's call to the ministry as a youth. She attended the seminary in Costa Rica to start preparing for this calling. Her degrees include a BS in public relations from an institute in Chiclayo; a BS in theology from the Nazarene seminary in Costa Rica; a Master's of Divinity, a Master's of Religious Education, and a Doctor of Ministry from Nazarene

Theological Seminary in Kansas City. Currently, she is involved in a PhD program in Wesley Studies from Manchester Nazarene College in the United Kingdom.

While living in the United States and pursuing her education, Ruthie served as associate pastor in education at the First Spanish Church of the Nazarene in Chicago and as children's pastor at Rainbow Boulevard Church in Kansas City, Kansas. She has been a global missionary since 1995. Along with her role as professor at the Nazarene Theological Seminary in Guatemala City, she is involved with the Child Sponsorship program in Compassionate Ministries for the NorCentral Field.



### What Higher Education Schools Are Available?

Two institutions of higher education serve the Church of the Nazarene in the country of Guatemala. The Nazarene Theological Seminary (NTS) was founded in 1976, when Guatemalan leaders decided to move the first Nazarene Indian Bible institute to Guatemala City, the capital. NTS was designed to recruit Spanish-speaking students from local churches and others in Central America. A second

Nazarene Bible Institute (NBI) in Cobán continued to educate the Kekchi (Indian) population.

### **What has been the influence of these schools on the Church of the Nazarene in Guatemala?**

- 1 Today, NTS serves 24 districts of the NorCentral Field, which includes the countries of Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, and Nicaragua. The total number of students in all the theological educational programs is 1,257 students.
2. Today in Guatemala alone there are 768 churches—organized churches and/or missions. Of these congregations, 87 percent of their pastors (667 ordained ministers or district licensed) are graduates either of NTS or NBI.
3. In addition, graduates are now serving as district superintendents, seminary professors, ministry coordinators, district and regional leaders, and missionaries, not only in Guatemala but other countries as well.

### **What are the reasons for this success?**

According to Dr. Cordova, a primary reason is the decision to decentralize the educational opportunities



for the students. While NTS effectively reached Spanish speakers in greater Guatemala City, prospective students who did not live in the capital city or in other countries lacked the resources to take advantage of and enroll in classes on the main campus. Today, the number of study centers of the decentralized programs in all four countries total 118: Guatemala (45), El Salvador (16), Honduras (10),

Nicaragua (42), and Belize (5).

The seminary (NTS) offers programs for both undergraduate and graduate levels in three main areas: education, pastoral, and theology. Most of these are decentralized programs with only a few considered semi-residence, where students meet once a week for five consecutive weeks on campus.

Dr. Cordova shared with me that the theological education programs are focused on three areas at the undergraduate level: (1) A diploma of Christian ministry, designed to help students who finished elementary school to complete the three-year ministerial course of study. (2) A bachelor's degree in theology for those students who have completed high school; (3) Diploma programs that emphasize ministry to children and youth.

At the graduate level, a two-year program offers studies in pastoral theology, Bible theology, and theological education. This program is designed for those who have completed the Nazarene ministerial program.

The two institutions in Guatemala have an agreement with the Nazarene Seminary of the Americas in Costa Rica that students can continue their studies. And in the last five years, both NTS and NBI have become satellite study centers for students to take virtual master's program courses from Costa Rica.

Thank you, Ruthie, for devoting your life to those who will serve or are already serving in ministry. You are influencing hundreds of people for the Kingdom in Latin America.

*Wes Eby lives in Lake Alfred, Florida. He taught in public and Christian schools, as well as at the university level. He served at the Global Ministry Center in the Publications International Office, the Herald of Holiness Office, and the Global Nazarene Missions International Office. He is the author of 2 NMI adult mission books and 8 children's books. You may contact Wes at [weseby@tampabay.rr.com](mailto:weseby@tampabay.rr.com)*