

## SENDAS Fulfills Vision by Wes Eby, Global Representative

The vision statement for the Seminario Nazareno de las Américas (SENDAS) in Costa Rica states “to equip with highest excellence the greatest number of students possible for the expansion of God’s kingdom.” The statistics for the last academic year provide undeniable proof that the “vision” is being fulfilled. In the academic years 2016-17, SENDAS offered 273 courses in 101 centers using 172 professors, a total of 844 students enrolled in classes, and 37 women and men graduated from their elected program.



The Church of the Nazarene established SENDAS in 1970, and the seminary remained a residential institution for 26 years. However, the campus setting in San José, the capital city, limited the number of students who were able to take advantage of the educational experiences provided by the school. During the 1980s under the creative leadership of Dr. Jerry Porter, now general superintendent emeritus, SENDAS launched extension centers in different countries of Latin America at the

undergraduate level with courses not offered by the other Latin American seminaries during those years. In 1996, under the leadership of its new president Dr. Rubén Fernández, SENDAS created a decentralized network of extension centers and satellite campuses offering undergraduate-level courses for the MAC South Field as well as graduate-level course for students throughout Latin America. At the same time, SENDAS continued to provide blocks of intensive courses on campus during the summer.



Beginning in 2009, SENDAS instituted another change: courses offered through online and videoconferencing delivery systems and some on-campus classes. This is the primary reason for the large number of courses offered at more than 100 centers. Across the Mesoamerica Region (Mexico, Central America and the Caribbean), SENDAS has expanded the use of its multi-media centers with videoconferencing equipment. This allows students to take courses while remaining in their own ministerial contexts. Classes are taught by a number of qualified instructors living in various parts of the region; not all professors live and work on the SENDAS campus. The online delivery systems are far more cost-effective for students. And, as a result, students throughout all the Americas (Mesoamerica, South America, and North America) have participated in the classes. Through the years, SENDAS has graduated and sent into ministry pastors, district superintendents, and presidents, vice presidents, and professors of theological institutions in Mesoamerica and beyond.

For more than two decades, SENDAS has been led by Dr. Rubén Fernández, who is also the Education and Clergy Development coordinator for the Mesoamerica Region. Becoming president of SENDAS in 1995, Dr. Fernández has been responsible for bringing



innovation to the seminary's educational delivery systems and helping SENDAS to fulfill its vision. He and his wife, Dr. Mónica Mastronardi de Fernández, began their ministry as pastors in Argentina, where they were born and raised. Their distinguished careers included teaching in different institutions. Prior to becoming president of SENDAS, Dr. Rubén was the academic dean of the Southern Cone Nazarene Seminary in Pilar, Argentina.



I am indebted to missionary Carol Rittenhouse, an assistant to the president and a teacher, for providing the information for this article. Carol knew at an early age that she had a passion for teaching. A graduate of Olivet Nazarene University, she felt God moving her toward missions, serving in Bulgaria and Russia on short-term missions assignments. After returning to the States, she enrolled in Nazarene Theological Seminary. During her studies there, God focused her passion for teaching in the direction of full-time ministry, teaching, and discipleship. She received a Master of Divinity degree in 2006 and was ordained an elder on the Kansas City District in 2010. While working at the Nazarene Global Ministry Center in Lenexa, Kansas, she became acquainted with Dr. Rubén Fernández. Later, he invited her to join the SENDAS team.

“Early in my adulthood,” Carol says, “I had settled the issue with God. If He were to call me to be a missionary, I would not say no.” Therefore, God spoke to Carol’s heart through the invitation from the SENDAS president. “It is my joy and privilege,” she concludes, “to be involved in the work and training of pastors and leaders on the Mesoamerica Region.”

For additional information, check these resources:

[www.seminarionazareno.net](http://www.seminarionazareno.net) (Spanish)

<http://www.mesoamericaregion.org> (Spanish)

<https://www.facebook.com/SeminarioNazarenoCR/?ref=bookmarks>

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 Nazarene Global Ministry Center in the Publications Office, the Herald of Holiness Office, and the Global Nazarene Missions International Office. You may contact Wes at [weseby@tampabay.rr.com](mailto:weseby@tampabay.rr.com).