

# SUNSET INTERNATIONAL BIBLE INSTITUTE



## ARTHUR PUENTE REPORT: OCTOBER-DECEMBER '09



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## PROGRESS REPORT ON KEY SCHOOLS

The last quarter of the year has been a good one for several of our Latin American schools, especially for two of them which held graduation ceremonies in December. The **Texas Gulf Coast Bible Institute** (TGCBI—Houston, TX) held their graduation on December 19th. I was privileged to be there for the graduation of three full-time students who completed their training and are now looking forward to fruitful ministries in the Kingdom. The interesting thing about these three students is that they are older than other students; they are all past their fifties. They are seasoned Christians and workers who wanted to get more Bible knowledge and experience to help them be more effective in ministry. For now, they will continue working with local Hispanic churches in the Houston area, one as a full-time minister.

There is so much more that could be said for all that is going on in this wonderful school. The important thing that Houston is doing (among many) is that it serves as the technological “hub” of the video-conference network in the Central Standard Time Zone. So much of what allows us to teach hundreds of students throughout Latin America goes through the TGCBI. With its technological equipment, it enables teachers and students alike to gather in a virtual classroom. Steve Austin

serves as the Director of the school and is actually located in Abilene. Kevin Montgomery serves as the Assistant Director and is located on site there in Houston for the day-to-day supervision of all that goes on there. It is always a busy place!

Also in December was the graduation of 17 students of our **Nicaraguan Bible Institute** (Managua, Nicaragua) on December 12. This is a school that I visited earlier in the year. They are doing a tremendous work there and have been since 1976! The graduates are different ages but they share a common goal of serving the Lord and His church. Many of these students have taken classes for several years because the school has classes only on the weekends, mainly Saturdays. The teachers of the school work with local congregations during the week and teach classes to three levels of students on the weekends. It is a system that has served their situation very well over the years.

Sometimes I am asked what all of these graduates do once they finish their training: “Do they all find work as full-time preachers?”, someone might ask. “Do they go out and start new churches?” The truth is that graduates do different things when they finish their studies. Some will go out and work as full-time ministers with churches and others will form new congregations in different cities while yet others will work with already existing congregations as youth



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ministers, deacons, and even as elders. Others, I’m sure, continue on with their full-time jobs and serve as fruitful members of local congregations. We should not think that every graduate of a school turns out to be a “preacher” but they all do leave prepared for a life of fruitful “ministry”.

In my last newsletter, I reported that the newest school of the Sunset family began in late August. **The Latin American Bible Institute** (Mexicali, Mexico) has had a successful two terms from August to December. The five full-time students are now well underway in their training and apprenticeship. The final details of the construction of the new facilities have also been completed. In December, the Woodward Park congregation in Fresno, CA committed \$25,000 for the upcoming year of the school’s operation, a much needed blessing. More funds are needed for new student scholarships in August. If you can help with this, or would like to support this school, please let me know.

## TEACHING ON THE VIDEO-CONFERENCE NETWORK

From October to December, I taught a course on Revelation over the video-conference network to students in Houston and El Salvador. The amazing thing about this was that I never had to leave my office in Lubbock to do it! With the help of a camera, an internet connection, and a monitor, I taught a class to students in two remote locations. This was a double blessing because it has been a while since I have taught students in Spanish in foreign countries. Since leaving Ecuador in 2002, I have taught in the States at Sunset and Lubbock Christian University but I have always missed being with students in a classroom situation in Spanish. These past three months have rekindled a flame of teaching that I have not felt since our days in Quito.

This will probably be a continuing experience in coming months. In fact, I will be teaching another course this upcoming term to the students of Mexicali, Mexico, El Salvador, and others in this same way. From my office in Lubbock I will log on to the video-conference network and teach a class to students hundreds of miles away. This course will be over Biblical Exegesis, a fancy

way of saying “getting at the original meaning of the text.” In biblical studies, it is always the first step in biblical interpretation. It ensures that students learn how to rightly interpret the Bible. Needless to say, this is an important course for sound biblical doctrine of a new generation of ministers in the church.

Although my main responsibilities as Dean of Latin American Studies is to oversee and help develop the schools in the Sunset family, I am excited to be in a teaching role as well. This is what I miss so much from our experience in Ecuador. Now I get to do it from my own office here in Lubbock.

The beauty of this new of teaching method is that it brings together students and teachers from all over the world into one virtual classroom. No longer do teachers have to be located in one geographical location and teach only the students located there. They can be anywhere in the world and be able to teach as long as they have the equipment to do so. Our main

schools that enable this to happen are Houston and Miami, FL (**Atlantic International Bible Institute**). The school in Miami can do basically all Houston does but from the Eastern Time Zone. It also reaches so many individuals and churches throughout the Caribbean such as the Dominican Republic and others. What Miami does on the East Coast and Houston in the Central Time Zone is what we dream will eventually happen in Mexicali in the Pacific Time Zone. The school in Quito also does a lot to push this new way of teaching. Teachers in Quito have taught students in Mexicali, Mexico. What a blessing!

For my part, I feel privileged to join this already wonderful brotherhood of teachers and students who constantly focus on teaching and studying God’s Word on a daily basis. Using these wonderful tools, we can reach men and women eager to learn more about God’s Word and how to better serve in the Church throughout the Latin American world.

## NOT SO MUCH TRAVEL, BUT STILL BUSY

These past few months have been a little slower for me in terms of the amount of travel I have done to visit the schools. I have stayed closer to home with my only trip having been to Houston for the graduation I mentioned earlier in the TGCBI (Texas Gulf Coast Bible Institute). Especially since adding teaching responsibilities to my activities, it has been better for me to stay closer to home. The good thing is that with the capabilities of the video-conference network in my office, I can stay in touch with the schools that have the same technology. I have had “meetings” with several of the schools without me having to be there personally. Of course, not all of the schools have this ability, but for the ones that do, I can stay in constant touch with them by this means. For the other schools that don’t have the technology, email has continued to be invaluable. A lot of my time each day is spent on the computer writing emails to our different schools to troubleshoot problems, to make plans and projections for the future, and just to stay in touch with what is going on in the field.

In October, I spoke at the Woodward Park congregation in Fresno, CA at their annual “Workshop”. It was a weekend event I participated in with several other speakers. It was good to go and get to know this key congregation behind the dream and work in Mexicali, Mexico. They are truly blazing a new trail in their work in Mexico in addition to many other mission points in the world.

Although not a part of my work with Sunset, my work as the preaching minister of the Colgate Bilingual church of Christ here in Lubbock has also been part of my daily work. This congregation has long been part of my overall Christian ministry and it has remained a constant “home and family”. Preparing sermons and lessons is always a joy but it also takes much time and focus.

## LOOKING BACK TO 2009 & FORWARD TO 2010

As I look back at this past year, so much has been accomplished. I started my work “officially” with Sunset in January so I have now completed one full year in this new ministry. In that year I have visited four different countries and three states and several other cities in the U.S., visiting our schools and supporters in this wonderful work. It has been a good year, thanks to the Lord. I feel like I have now “gotten my feet wet” in this new ministry and I know the Lord will help me as I move forward in the new year. As already mentioned the school in Mexicali has gotten off to a good start and I have been able to visit our already established schools. I visited the exciting work in Cuba and can only thank God for all He is doing through the churches there.

There are some schools I have not been able to visit yet: Toluca, Mexico; Curitiba, Brazil; Cap Hatien, Haiti; Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic. These will be the new places I try to get to this coming year with the Lord’s help. My goal is to be able to visit every school at least once every two years. Of course, in order to do this I will need to secure more funds for travel. These trips are somewhat expensive and I am always aware of the need to be a good steward of these travel monies but the reality is that I cannot visit them with these funds. I know the Lord will provide all my needs.

One other change that will take place in the new year is that I will not be serving as the preaching minister of the Colgate congregation I mentioned earlier. Although I have enjoyed my ministry there for over 11 years (1993-1997 and 2002-2009), I feel it is time for a break from full-time preaching. One can only do so much and I feel that my work at Sunset is more than enough to keep me busy in the Lord’s work. I also want to be fair to the Colgate congregation and I realize that I cannot “do it all” as I sometimes think I can. I want to be more balanced and therefore will lay down my preaching responsibilities at the end of December. I look forward to this “rest” and focus for my continued work with Sunset.

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## FAMILY NEWS & NOTES: WELCOME GRANDBABY SAMUEL!



**Our fist grandson: Samuel Stephen Puente**

As we draw to a close this year of 2009, we want to share with you all the birth of our grandson, Samuel. He was born on October 2, 2009 and weighed over 8lbs. He has brought untold joy to our lives and we thank God for his safe arrival. Since our son Stephen and our daughter-in-law Megan live here in Lubbock, we get to see them all often. This makes us very happy as Samuel gets to spend time with us. I must

admit, it was a little difficult getting used to being called “Grandpa” at such an early age. But what a blessing it has truly been.

All else is well with our family, thanks to the Lord. We have enjoyed some time off for the holidays and we have even gotten some snow here over Christmas. I don’t remember the last time we had a white Christmas. New Year’s Day will bring about the start of 2010. It doesn’t seem possible that we are all beginning a new decade.

As we close out this year 2009, we want to once again express our deep love and appreciation to all of you who form our family and partnership in this ministry. We

could not do what we do if it were not for people like you. May the richest blessings be yours in this new upcoming year of 2010.

May God continue to bless us all as we strive to seek and do His will in our lives.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

The Puente Family

Arthur, Carmen, Sarah and Samantha

*“I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now”*

**(Phil. 1:4-5)**