



## Report from Centro Hispano de Estudios Teológicos (CHET)

### MY TESTIMONY

My parents were migrant farmworkers, and it is in that environment that God touched their lives. God called them into ministry, and they went to a Bible Institute soon after their conversion. My parents showed me how to minister among migrant workers. They ministered in Texas among bracero workers and to migrant workers in central California. My grandmother prayed that God would raise a pastor among her children. God answered her prayers when he called me to ministry among the Latino population. That is why I went to a Spanish Bible school. I was not ready for ministry because my Spanish was what was called “mama Spanish.” At the Bible institute I was equipped to minister to Latinos.

My life journey has taken me through small towns in South Texas and Central California and different communities in Los Angeles. After Bible school in Texas, I earned an MDiv at the Mennonite Brethren Biblical Seminary (Fresno, CA), and a ThM and PhD at Fuller Theological Seminary. I have served as a pastor in South Texas, Central California, and Tamaulipas, Mexico. My wife, Olga, and I planted a church in Downey, California, while studying at Fuller Seminary. I also oversaw Latino ministries for the Mennonite Brethren and started a Spanish Bible institute. God’s call to leadership development then took our family to Guatemala where I led the Latin American Anabaptist Seminary. Later, we returned to California to serve as president of the Latino Center at Fuller Theological Seminary. For 15 years I served at Fuller in different capacities. Olga then lost her battle to cancer and passed away. This significant loss pushed me to honor her by continuing the legacy of advocating and opening doors for women in ministry. After such loss and in God’s grace, Ruth Anabalón became my wife. Together we have found a spiritual rhythm that includes spiritual disciplines that guide our walk with God.

I was formed by the “radical evangelicals from Latin America” (René Padilla, Samuel Escobar, Orlando Costa) and by Justo Gonzalez. They helped me understand communities in Latin America and Latinos

in the U.S., especially how to minister among them. I am a Latino *evangélico* living in exile in the United States. “Exile” is a theological motif that fits both my theology and my life experience. If you ask me where I am from, I will need to respond with a question: do you want to know about my ancestors, my birthplace, my family, or my life journey? As a Christian, I believe God is shaping me to cross cultural boundaries, to have an awareness concerning people who are culturally, socially, and economically different, and to teach others who want to be servants of the gospel of reconciliation. And so, I continue walking from my Latino roots toward God’s future.

I connected to the Covenant through First Covenant Church in Los Angeles. I got married there, and my first wife and I were mentored by Eldon and Opal Johnson. When I was leading the Latino Center at Fuller, I served Centro Hispano de Estudios Teológicos as a board and faculty member. In 2019, I accepted a position at Ashland Theological Seminary in Ohio. Soon after that I suffered a massive stroke and was saved by the grace of God. A year later, I became president of Centro Hispano de Estudios Teológicos. That’s why I say that I came to Compton from Pasadena through Ohio.

## 2020-2021 REPORT

- Our mission: Centro Hispano de Estudios Teológicos, under the Lordship of Jesus Christ, seeks to equip holistically the underserved Latinos and Latinas for church and community-based ministry.
- During the pandemic, this current academic year, we have had an average student enrollment of 350.
- Virtual classes: In 2016, Centro Hispano de Estudios Teológicos started offering virtual classes with a small number of students across the nation. Like other schools during Covid-19, our students have fully immersed in virtual learning. Despite the challenges brought by the pandemic, our enrollment increased because we are able to reach more students anywhere in the U.S. and abroad.
- Grants: God’s faithfulness continues to bless us as we received several grants during this year.
  - First, our long-time partners in ministry, Rolling Hills Covenant Church, awarded us a grant that allowed us to put together 1,000 textbooks. Also, Pasadena Covenant Church awarded us a grant aimed at providing electronic devices for students who lacked access to virtual learning.
  - Second, the Love Mercy and Do Justice ministry priority of the Evangelical Covenant

Church awarded us a Missional Relief Grant that allowed us to serve 300 students through free workshops aimed at equipping them to serve well during the pandemic.

- Third, a family foundation challenged us to a matching grant which improved our fundraising efforts.
- Last, a partnership between Duke Divinity School and AETH (Asociación para la Educación Teológica Hispana) granted us a capacity building grant aimed at faculty development and student services.
- Building: After 12 years at our main campus in Compton, California, the building is in need of capital maintenance which we are beginning to address.

### **STUDENT TESTIMONY—GUADALUPE GUEVARA**

Guadalupe Guevara is a student originally from Ensenada BC, Mexico, and she has lived in California for more than 42 years. When she heard of Centro Hispano de Estudios Teológicos, she was not interested in studying, but God in his timing brought her to this place. She has a lot of health issues and a few semesters ago she finished her class while in the hospital. Centro Hispano de Estudios Teológicos has been a stronghold for her amid crises. Studying about God has been medicine to her life. She is grateful to those who planted the seeds for this ministry; she is the fruit of their labor. She also thanks all the supporters who are part of this ministry because Centro Hispano de Estudios Teológicos's vision is evident in each student. ¡Gracias!

### **2021-2022 VISION**

- For our next school year, our goal is to achieve and maintain an average student enrollment of 375.
- Hybrid: New realities have shifted our educational delivery systems. Therefore, we foresee a hybrid model of teaching for the next academic year and beyond.
- For the next fiscal year, we want to meet our operational needs and fortify our endowment.
- During this transition, we are working on board development and strategizing for the next five years.
- One of our values is our identity with the Evangelical Covenant Church. In partnership with ALIPE we want to continue serving Latino churches by working closely with our regional conferences. One of the reasons Centro Hispano de Estudios Teológicos exists is to train Latino leaders in the Covenant as a pathway to ordination through the Ministerial Program

and the Orientation program for those transferring ordination.

Without doubt, 2020 was a challenging year for Centro Hispano de Estudios Teológicos; not only because our community experienced much loss related to Covid-19, but as a team, we also suffered the loss of our chaplain, Rev. Flor Graterol. Our small staff continues to strive and serve with excellence, and we take care of the resources God has entrusted us. We want to thank the Covenant for its unwavering support for Centro Hispano de Estudios Teológicos's mission. Centro Hispano de Estudios Teológicos students live in the under-resourced, under-served and non-served highways of our society. Yet, year after year, for 32 years, we have been given the privilege of equipping thousands of men and women for pastoral service. We often say that most of our students, because of life circumstances, have or are "coming up the hard way" in their lives and ministries. And yet, despite the daily challenges, they persevere knowing that their call to ministry comes from our Almighty God. Our work could not be possible without your continued support.

For that, we thank you!

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. Dr. Juan F. Martínez

President