

JOURNALS POSTED ON SEPTEMBER 28, 2016

Challenging Church Leaders to Grow in Ministry



SUE HEGARTY



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COSTA RICA

Recently I finished teaching a Christian Education course at the Costa Rican Baptist Theological Seminary. Since enrollment goes up and down (a current trend in Latin American theological education), I was pleasantly surprised to have 11 students finish the course.

The really unique thing is that ten of those students (between 14 and 70 years old) were from one church, the "God of Peace Baptist Church" in Ipis (San Jose area), including Pastor Rolando. Upon entering the class that first day, one of the students told me up front, "Sister, we've been wanting to make some changes at church and we feel that this course came along at the exact moment that we needed it. This is of God!" (No pressure, right?) Needless to say, I began praying even more for God to guide both me and my students.

The students enthusiastically and fully participated in the classes. Their final project is practical, writing up a Christian Education plan for their church. This involved analyzing both their community and church needs, choosing their educational ministry priorities and then making a plan to meet those priorities. I agreed that the Ipis students could do their analysis individually, then work together to come up with a group plan for the church. They've already met twice to turn in the first part of the project. The young people then asked if they could formulate a plan for their youth group as their final project.

As I checked in with all the groups as they worked, I was in a unique position to help guide their analysis and stimulate thinking in new directions. Their ideas have been good and they are also putting into practice what we studied. For example, the youth have already polled their members about study topics (something we'd studied) and learned that they are interested in seeing what the Bible has to say regarding making wise life decisions about career, school, relationships, etc. (as opposed to their current study of Revelation). I also ran into Pastor Rolando as he purchased new study materials for Sunday School, a decision that the group made, to strengthen their Christian education ministry.

The lone student representing another church was upset about not having anyone else with whom to work. Yet the final project became a way of getting her pastor involved in the Christian education plan. Since she has caught the vision of what her church's educational ministry could be, I have hopes that her sharing this vision (in other words, "the plan") with other leaders in a practical way will inspire them to actually do it.

Thank you for your prayers and financial support which make it possible for me to encourage these Costa Rican churches as they reach out to their communities in Jesus' name. Please give to the World Mission Offering as it makes possible these kinds of ministries around the world.