
Family Update

Micah (22) is a senior, Seth (20) is a junior and Andrea (18) is a freshman at Covenant College. Audrey (15) is home schooling, but is also auditing a German class at the college. Gary continues his ministry with Mission to the World. He has finished all the classwork, passed the competency exams and defended the proposal for his dissertation in the Organizational Development doctoral program at George Washington University. Phyllis is working as a nurse about 3 to 4 days a week.



Phyllis, Gary, Audrey, Seth, Andrea, Micah

Bio

Gary and Phyllis Waldecker have been missionaries since 1980. Gary has been a church planter in Chile, has served as the Regional Director of South America, and is presently the leader of a Resource Team for Latin America. Mission to the World has asked Gary to pursue studies in Education with a focus on Organizational Development to help with this task of resourcing our personnel in Latin America. Gary spends part of his time studying and part in his role as Resource Team leader. The latter involves making trips to Latin America.

Travel

We will be visiting a number of churches this winter. If you would like us to visit your church please let us know and we will try to work something out. Very soon I will be making trips to somewhere in Latin America—either Mexico or Peru—to conduct research on the issue of collective learning in cross-cultural situations.

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MISSION
to the
WORLD

Prayer Letter from the Waldeckers

Mission: Latin America December 2004



Mary Trampling the Serpent:
A Symbol of the Need for a
Christ-centered Ministry
in Latin America

Dependency In Missions

The Latin America Resource Team attempts to help missionaries deal with a number of perplexing issues. Among these is the issue of dependency. That is, we do not want to plant churches that are dependent on foreign resources and not truly indigenous. Many years ago the so-called “three-self” formula was devised to avoid dependency and promote indigenous churches. It was a reaction to the assumption that newly formed churches in the target culture should look like the sending church. The “three-self” formula proposed that missionaries design their ministries so that newly formed churches would be self-governing, self-supporting and self-propagating. This was a good corrective, but proved to be insufficient to deal with the problem. It was found, for example, that churches could meet these three criteria and still be dependent on foreign ways of thinking. In fact, many supposedly “three-self” churches trained their future pastors with a Western mentality and thus produced churches that had a foreign ring to them. A fourth “self” was added to the formula:

Prayer Requests

1. There was a lot of interest in Gary’s talks on Contextualization and Training at the Global Mission Conference.
2. The meeting on November 8-9 of the MTW Latin America leadership team was very productive.
3. Our support account has been low for the last few years. Please pray for increased giving.
4. Pray for the data collection and analysis phase of my doctoral studies, which will be conducted in Latin America.
5. There are a dozen places in Latin America that are asking for our help in developing training programs for future leaders.



Men in training for the ministry.
A Greek class taught by
a visiting professor (right).

self-theologizing. That is, the church should look to Scripture to answer the burning questions of its own culture rather than unthinkingly accept as complete the theological formulations of the Western church. This brought another issue to the fore: does the three- or four-self formula promote an unbiblical independence? New churches should not formulate their own theologies independent of the work done by churches in the West and other places. The biblical goal is rather the interdependence of the body of Christ. If interdependence in Christ is the goal, the question must be posed: to what extent and in what ways do churches in our country demonstrate their dependence on churches in the rest of the world? Do we not have a tendency to come across as not needing them—as the experts and the givers who are independent of them? To the extent that this is true, such independence might reveal a tendency to depend on the abundant resources the Lord has given us rather than on the Lord himself. The issue of unhealthy dependency of “receiving” churches will never be resolved without addressing our own unhealthy dependencies.