

From Prayer to Workers

By Juan Fernández Bocángel

History of Mission, June 2026

God Is Raising Leaders and Opening Doors in Latin America

The history of missions is often told through bold journeys and distant frontiers. Yet for the World Mission Prayer League (WMPL), mission history has always begun in a quieter place — prayer.

For generations, Prayer League workers and prayer partners have trusted that when God's people listen first, He raises workers for His harvest. That pattern continues today in Latin America, where long-standing relationships and years of prayer are bearing visible fruit.

A Legacy of Faithful Presence

Long before the *Seminario Luterano de Teología* (SLT) existed, Prayer League workers were walking alongside churches in Bolivia and other parts of Latin America — sharing the Gospel, equipping disciples, planting churches, and strengthening local leaders.



My wife Anne and I had the privilege of serving as global workers with the Prayer League for fourteen years in Bolivia. Today, we continue partnering on a part-time basis with the online Seminary, walking alongside regional leaders and students. But the story does not begin with us. Faithful workers preceded us, laying foundations of trust, prayer, and Gospel proclamation.

Juan and Anne Fernández Bocángel

Over time, relationships deepened among Lutheran congregations across Bolivia and neighboring countries. Pastors and church leaders expressed a growing desire for theological formation that was faithful to Scripture and accessible within their own context.

The Seminary did not emerge from institutional expansion. It grew out of prayerful listening — to God first, and then to His people. The SLT exists because churches prayed for deeper formation, and because the Prayer League remained committed to long-term, relational partnership.

Today, the online Seminary serves students in Bolivia, Mexico, Ecuador and Peru, connecting them to sound theological training without removing them from their communities.

Raised From Within: A Co-Pastor in Apolo

One recent example of this unfolding mission history is found in Apolo, Bolivia. [See arrow on map for location of Apolo in western Bolivia, north of La Paz and near the border with Peru.]

Beder Apana Hanco now serves as co-pastor at *Iglesia Luterana Rey de Reyes* (King of Kings Lutheran Church). After completing his first two years of training through the Seminary, his Lutheran district formally recognized his theological formation and authorized his installation. He continues studying while serving and being mentored.



Beder Apana Hanco, co-pastor of King of Kings Lutheran Church



*Leaders and students working together
On their homework*

*Celebration of Beder's completion of two
years of Seminary Training*



In Beder's own words:

"Through this Seminary, many of the brothers and sisters here in the community of Apolo have been able to come to know our Lord Jesus Christ—who He is—and through His Word, we have come to know Him more and more."

Beder speaks with gratitude — not about a position, but about God's work. He thanks the Lord for the Seminary and for the professors who faithfully teach the Word of God, so that believers may continue evangelizing in regions and communities where many still do not know Christ.

For him personally, the Seminary has been transformational:

"Through this Seminary, I am now serving as a leader in my church, as a pastor and one more servant in the work of our Lord Almighty God."



Worship service at King of Kings



Installation of Pastor Beder

This is Prayer League mission history continuing: leaders raised from within their own communities, formed by the Word, and sustained through prayer.

When a Mountain Gets an Antenna

In the rural jungle community of Huaratumo, Bolivia (southeast of Apolo), believers prayed for years for access to theological education. Without internet connectivity, participation in online classes was impossible. Still, they prayed — not for comfort, but for the opportunity to study God’s Word more deeply.



Huaratumo, Bolivia



In December 2025, that prayer was answered. An antenna was installed on a nearby mountain, providing sufficient connectivity for students to participate in Seminary classes designed specifically for their context.

Seminary students in Huaratumo connecting to the online Seminary classes



Members of Huaratumo church

Mission history sometimes includes ships and long journeys. Sometimes it includes an antenna on a mountain.



Students participating in online Seminary classes

Multiplication in Ecuador

In Guayaquil, Ecuador, one Seminary student, Bacilio Martillo, began teaching what he was learning to a small group in his local church before even completing his training. The Apostle Paul's instruction in 2 Timothy 2:2 — to entrust the Gospel to faithful people who will teach others — is being lived out in simple, faithful ways. [See map for location of Guayaquil in western Ecuador, near the Gulf of Guayaquil.]

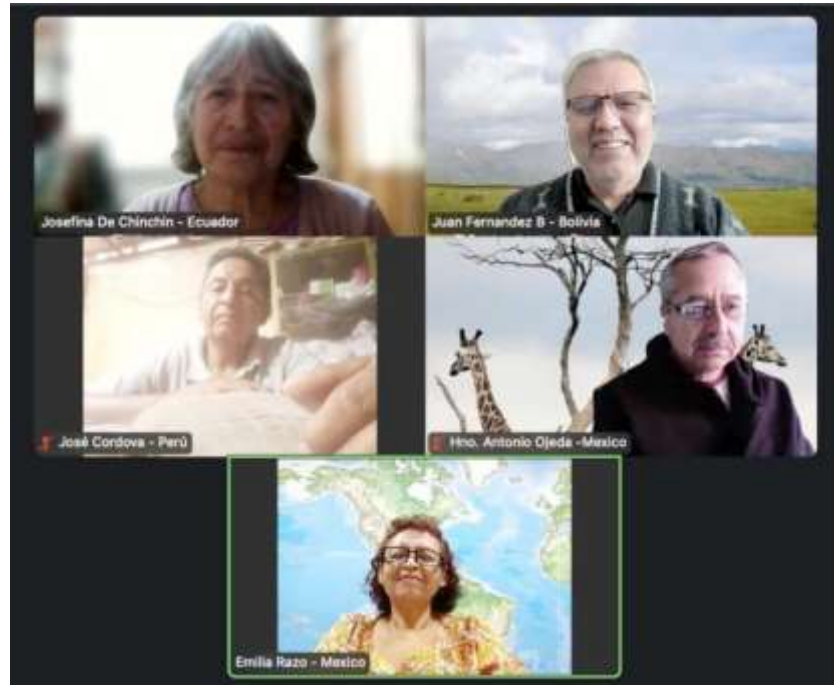
Disciples are not only being formed, they are forming others.



Bacilio (lower left) sharing online what he's learned in Seminary with members of local church

Opening Doors Among the Least Reached

Prayer is also shaping vision beyond established congregations. Partner churches are growing in awareness of nearby Unreached People Groups. In the Lutheran district of Apolo, believers are building relationships with Quechua speaking communities like Curiza, where a “Person of Peace” has opened doors. In Suturi, they are praying and waiting for God to prepare hearts.



Leadership Team of the Seminary

Rather than forcing expansion, these churches are learning to move at the pace of prayer — listening first, stepping forward when God opens the way.

The Pattern Remains the Same

Jesus told His disciples, “...*pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest*” (Luke 10:2, *ESV*). The Prayer League has held to that pattern for decades: pray first, listen carefully, and trust God to raise workers.

In Latin America today, we are witnessing that same pattern unfold. Prayer shapes vision. The Word forms leaders. The Church is strengthened from within. And workers are sent — often from the very communities where the Gospel has taken root.

Mission history is not only what God has done. It is what He continues to do — beginning, as always, in prayer.

Please pray:

- For Juan in his role as Assistant Regional Director (ARD), as he helps bridge WMPL's global strategy with regional operations in North America—particularly focusing on strengthening church relations and encouraging regional engagement in prayer, discipleship, and global mission.
- For ongoing partnerships with Latin American Lutheran churches to make disciples and equip them for global mission through the online seminary.
- For wisdom and safety in ministry-related travel.

**For more information:
visit the Prayer League [website](#), [email](#) us, or call 612.871.6843**



Juan Fernández Bocángel and wife Anne have served with World Mission Prayer League (WMPL) since 2009. For 14 years in Bolivia, Juan partnered with Lutheran churches across Latin America in discipleship and leadership development, helping establish the online Lutheran Seminary of Theology (SLT) in 2022. Anne's primary roles included hospitality ministry and homeschooling their children. They now serve at WMPL's U.S. Home Office. Juan continues his work with SLT and also serves as the Assistant Regional Director (ARD) for North America. Anne continues to support Juan in ministry and serves in WMPL's Global Prayer Mobilization program. Contact Juan at: jfernandez@prayerleague.org

Links:

WMPL: <https://wmpl.org/>

Bolivia: <https://www.britannica.com/place/Bolivia>

Apolo: [https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Apolo_\(Bolivia\)](https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Apolo_(Bolivia))

Bolivia map: <https://ian.macky.net/pat/map/bo/bo.html>

Guayaquil: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Guayaquil>

Ecuador: <https://www.britannica.com/place/Ecuador>

Ecuador map: https://ian.macky.net/pat/map/ec/ec_blu.gif