

December 5, 2008

Dr. Steve Austin

Greetings from the Texas Gulf Coast Bible Institute! Another year full of God's blessing has passed rapidly. We wanted to share some exciting highlights from the year.

First, in January we had three full-time students begin with us, and work in area churches. Andres and Gloria Guajardo have done well in Alvin this year, and Agustin Garcia continues to minister in a relatively new congregation south of Houston. Renzo Mayorga launched a small new Hispanic group in Clear Lake, and now has two cell groups, as well as the first person baptized. Finally, Julio and Fior Beitia continued in Baytown, primarily at the Lakewood congregation, with a number of activities, such as a campaign, cooking classes, and a counseling seminar.

In June Kevin Montgomery came on staff as assistant director, and has merged seamlessly with the students and program. In July Steve Austin and his family moved to Abilene, though they still work full-time with the school. Ignacio Barcenas increased his time at the school from half time to three quarters time, and continued to supervise church plants, record video courses, and teach occasional classes.

Our two graduates from last year have continued their work in the kingdom, counting 12 baptisms between them. Giovanni Mendoza is working with a church of 80 in Olancho, Honduras, and Dimas Velasquez is still at Impact in Houston, helping spearhead a growing Hispanic group there.

During the year, the video conferencing network offered 68 courses, by 19 professors from 5 countries. More than 100 students (at least 60 full-time) participated in these classes.

With the addition of three new sites in January 2009, Lord willing, the network will have grown from 21 to 31 sites in the last 12 months (adding Abilene, Texas; Cochabamba, Bolivia; Hidden Valley, Houston; Impact, Houston; Hope, Arkansas; La Palma, El Salvador; Pleasant Valley, Arkansas; Mexicali, Mexico; Toluca, Mexico; and Ocoatepeque, Honduras). And the number of countries has increased from 7 to 12.

God blessed us with the launch of our first new online video course—Fundamentals of the Spiritual Life, taught by Kirk McAfee. As of today, we have 85 people who have signed into our program, from 22 countries (plus those from 3 more countries who came to look). Many of these are from places we have no live video conferencing sites, and this opens up Bible study for the whole world.

Finally, this December 13 we will graduate Renzo Mayorga, and Julio and Fior Beitia. The Beitias will go back to the Orlando area, where they are hoping to help establish a church in Daytona Beach. Renzo will work in Clear Lake to continue working building that group. We are very proud of them for their hard work and perseverance. This is a wonderful accomplishment.

What does 2009 hold? Lord willing, we hope to continue expanding the video conferencing network (our goal is to have at least one site in every Latin American capital by 2012). We will take our second school trip to Israel (and now Jordan) from May 29-June 10, 2009. We will change our school year beginning from January to August, to coordinate better with other schools, and hope to welcome several more full-time students. We are putting the second and third courses online, and hope to average recording and putting online about one course per month, if our plans play out as we hope.

The Lord has blessed us tremendously in the course of the normal ups and downs of the year. We are grateful to him. And we could not have done this without your prayers and support. As you consider

your end of year giving—in spite of the economic challenges—we ask you to give to this work, whether a one-time or a monthly gift. We promise that we will be good stewards, investing your money for kingdom growth. Please continue to pray for us. Feel free to visit, call, send possible students to us, or share ideas with us.

God bless you,

Steve Austin, Director, TGCBI