

A Wonderful 2007 **By Steve Austin**

Once again God has blessed the Texas Gulf Coast Bible Institute in multiple ways in 2007. It's hard to believe that it's already been 5 years since this institute was just an idea in hearts, and barely on paper. It's been 40 months since we began our first night classes in the fall of 2004.

And it's been just 20 months since our first full-time students, Dimas Velasquez and Giovanni Mendoza, began their career with the TGCBI. Last Friday, December 14, they both graduated in our first graduation services, attended by more than 100 people representing 2 schools and 9 congregations. It was a pleasure to honor them and their families, and marvel at what God has done in such a short time.

Now Dimas will continue his work as an elder (and now a full-time minister) of the Impact church of Christ in inner-city Houston, and Giovanni will do full-time mission work with a congregation in Honduras. We are proud of them, and grateful to all who supported them—at Alvin, at Southeast, at Impact, at the institute, and from the TGCBI supporters at large. You have all made a kingdom investment that will bear eternal rewards.

In addition, God provided other kinds of fruit. Three full-time students finished their first year of classes, and will begin their final year in January. Church plants continued in Alvin, Clear Lake, and Baytown. We had a total of 16 baptisms in the congregations where our students worked. Other night students participated in 5 night courses.

Our video conferencing network expanded at an amazing rate, ending the year with 21 sites in 7 countries, and a possibility of at least 27 more sites to come. In 2007, we offered, received, or helped facilitate 50 courses on this network to more than 100 different students, taught by 19 professors from 8 locations in 3 countries.

Sixteen people from the school and its supporters enjoyed a fabulous trip to Israel in June, laying the foundation for years of Bible study, teaching, preaching, and learning. Unforgettable moments included Giovanni riding off into the distance on a camel during the first five minutes in Jerusalem, our wandering in the desert in 108-degree heat for about 40 minutes (it just seemed like 40 years!), a moonlight devotional on the shore of the Sea of Galilee, hiking up the Snake trail to Masada, walking through Hezekiah's tunnel, and quiet moments of reflection in the Garden of Gethsemane.

We also laid the foundation for our new online video streaming program, to be coordinated through us and Sunset out of Uruguay by Pedro and Silvia del Pozo. We are not aware of any program like this in the churches of Christ in Spanish online. This will potentially reach an entirely new audience which has been unable to receive training and encouragement in other ways.

The year 2008 looks bright and promising as well. Lord willing, we will have four (possibly six) new full-time students. Kevin Montgomery will come on staff in June to help us expand our program in all areas. Lord willing, Ignacio Barcenas will move from half-time to full-time work as church planting supervisor. Our first online course should launch in the first two months of 2008. We hope to continue pursuing opportunities to work with Christian universities such as ACU and Harding in their training of future workers for Hispanic ministry.

We would ask you to include us in your end of year giving. We can guarantee that your money will be spent wisely, and will have a far-reaching, eternal impact. God bless you and your family as you end 2007 and begin 2008.

From the brothers and sisters at the TGCBI,
Steve Austin