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A Journey from Antigua, Guatemala to St. Louis, Missouri: How Theological Education by Extension (TEE) Became a Reality for US Hispanic/Latino Lutheran Leadership Formation

Marcos Kempff

"And what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also" (2 Tm 2:2).

Abstract: Theological Education by Extension, known as TEE, was "born" in Guatemala. Historically, TEE is known to be an innovation of the Presbyterians in Guatemala that immerged out of the infrastructure of their established residential seminary in 1962–1963. This article will show that the Lutheran presence in Guatemala (est. 1945–1946) was also innovating theological education but from a distinctly different vision and methodology, and at an earlier date: TEE was born within a missiological strategy (1959–1960). This Lutheran heritage is the foundation for the mission of the Center for Hispanic Studies at Concordia Seminary.

Innovation is risky especially in theological education; but there have been bold and creative men and women, led by the molding, shaping, chiseling, enlightening, comforting, guiding, challenging, and encouraging work of the Sculptor Spirit[1] who have been pioneers. The work of the Lord in their lives needs to be recognized and celebrated. Change happens slowly, especially in the area of theological education formation, sometimes with surprising consequences. Resistance to innovation and change happens, but sometimes, years later, when history is studied and comparisons are made, we become keenly aware of the incomprehensible working of the triune God

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Mark "Marcos" Kempff was born in Antigua, Guatemala, grew up in Central America (Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras), served as a LCMS missionary in Latin America for thirty-three years: Venezuela (1975–2003) and Panama (2003–2008), as a DCE, theological education program developer, professor, church planter, and theological education network facilitator. He is currently serving at the Center for Hispanic Studies of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, since August 2008, as instructor, curriculum developer, and administrative assistant. kempffm@csl.edu

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in His mission (*Missio Dei*) through His Church in the world.

This article briefly lays out almost seventy-one years of history of innovation, change, and theological education, from the perspective of missions in Latin America—part of what is called the Global South—and how this affected theological education in the US. And yes, there is much we can learn.

What happened in Central America, the innovations in theological education, in the early years of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) mission endeavors between 1949 and 1963, have influenced the vision and strategy of the Center for Hispanic Studies (CHS) of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis. The journey began in Antigua, Guatemala and continues today in St. Louis. The influence of the Global South has been around for years, and if we stop, listen, and learn, the clarity and depth of how the Lord works with and through His Church becomes even more evident. The following facts, some lessons learned, and a "what does this mean for us today?" will only be a condensed version of a much larger detailed and convoluted history.

The LCMS formally began mission endeavors in Central America during the years of 1945 and 1946. Key figures in these first steps were H. A. Mayer and Bernard Pankow. Later Robert Gussick was called and installed in Guatemala in August 1947. One paragraph of Gussick's call from the Board for Home Missions in North America, January 24, 1947, stated:

The LCMS formally began mission endeavors in Central America during the years of 1945 and 1946.

> Humanly speaking the future of the Church in Guatemala will depend upon the work which you do there. Our experience in the African Mission field has taught us that it is of the utmost importance that the mission work be started in the proper manner. We do not want to make the mistake which was made in our India and China mission where we supplied the manpower, the buildings, and the necessary equipment, even furnishing the funds for the students and the native workers. We want you to carry on the work in Guatemala in such a way that the people learn from the very beginning that the responsibility of the future Lutheran Church in Guatemala rests on their shoulders. To that end they should be taught at once to provide their own buildings in accordance with their own standards; that they assist young men to prepare themselves for the ministry, and that they support their own native workers.[2]

Beginning in 1948, vicars from Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, served under Robert F. Gussick: Clarence Kuehn, Gerhard Kempff, Carl Bretscher, Robert Hoeferkamp, Robert Huebner, Kenneth Mahler, Leonard Stahlke, and Robert Schrank.[3] Most of these vicars return as missionaries: Clarence Kuehn (50), Gerhard

Kempff (51), Carl Bretscher, (51) Robert Hoeferkamp (52), Robert Schrank (54), Len Stahlke (58), John Puelle (60). They served in Guatemala, El Salvador, Panama, Honduras, and Mexico.[4]

Discussions of mission policy for Central America began in 1951 between Robert Gussick, Clarence Kuehn, and Gerhard Kempff. By January 1955, Gussick presented a mission policy to the LCMS Board for Missions (BFM) which included a vision for preparing emerging Central American leadership with a much-needed Lutheran theological education. The first time he presented this mission policy, the BFM was hesitant. In the fall of 1955, however, the remaining Guatemala missionary team insisted and presented a revised mission policy to BFM staff in New Orleans. Emphases did not differ much from Gussick's, specifically in the areas of churches becoming self-sustaining and the importance of Latin American leadership formation.

Gussick was disappointed when his suggested policy of 1955 was not fully accepted by the BFM. It is noteworthy to remember that even the 1965 Mission Affirmations[5] promoted by Martin Kretzmann, which also "proved controversial" were synodically approved, but largely rejected and ignored. The Affirmations were seen by those serving in missions as another move away from listening and learning from those serving in the mission field. Both Gussick's and Kretzmann's mission policies were rooted in the spirit and sweat of working in the mission field, a perspective *from* the mission field. Both were attempts to impel efforts of local mission ownership, influencing strategy and commitment from the bottom up, instead of continuing with directives and support from the top down, which would result in dependence and stultified growth.

Gussick, a pioneer LCMS missionary in Central America, was relentless, known "to not give up easily."[6] When he became the resident mission counselor for LCMS mission work in 1958 for Mexico, Central America, Cuba, and Venezuela, one of his first projects was theological education and the training of national leaders, which was, as he put it, "the only way these emerging churches will be able to stand and grow on their own."[7]

After reviewing many notes from conversations, interviews, emails, and several authors' personal notes and writings, I have concluded the LCMS BFM was "not ready for Robert Gussick"[8] and maybe, didn't have a clue what he was capable of doing when joined by an innovative, bold, and tireless team of fellow saints.

In 1958, the "Department of Theological Studies" was established in Antigua, Guatemala to carry out theological education according to a nonformal model, a model to fit the needs of the emerging church. In 1959, Robert Hoeferkamp was asked by Robert Gussick to develop a program with course materials to prepare and form catechists and evangelists. Working out of Antigua, he developed the vision for this kind of lay leadership training. In early 1960, Edgar Keller, after ten years at *Seminario Concordia* (Concordia Seminary) in Buenos Aires, came to Guatemala and joined

Hoeferkamp in this project. Hoeferkamp often suggested, that in a mission setting, leadership formation should not lead to financial dependency. In contrast to a model of theological education guided by decisions from a far-removed board with a residential seminary mentality, it became a significant factor for Gussick to promote leadership formation and the growth of the church through and by its own means, through the consensus of those on the mission field, instilling the desire and spirit of taking ownership of the Lord's work, even to the point of doing nonresidential theological education.

In 1960, Gussick arranged two large mission conferences in Panama, where the theme of theological education was discussed among missionaries and emerging national church leaders. Also, in April 1960, the mission endeavor was formally organized as the *Distrito misional del Caribe* or DIMICAR (the LCMS Mission District of the Caribbean) in order to function legally in Guatemala and the rest of Central America and the Caribbean. Later in 1965, DIMICAR dissolved and a new organization was formed which was more in tune with the emerging churches in Central America and Panama. It was called *Consejo de Iglesias Luteranas de Centro América y Panamá* or CONCAP (Conference of Lutheran Churches in Central America and Panama). Again, the strategy was to allow for greater ownership to the emerging church bodies in their responsibility with theological education.[9]

The first course was initially written for the purpose of providing a resource in Spanish (1960), using Luther's Small Catechism, *Curso para catequistas—Catecismo Menor de Lutero* (Course for Catechists—Luther's Small Catechism). The three parts of the mimeographed course were Part A (227 pages), a detailed commentary of the Catechism, Part B (104 pages), a study guide for the instructor, and Part C (66 pages), a study guide for the student. Keller did a thorough revision of the course in 1967.[10] Other in-depth revisions were made by Gerhard Kempff (1985, 1991) and his son Marcos Kempff (2012, 2015).[11]

Key to this cutting-edge course were the following principles:

1. The course is Christ-centered, grounded in Scripture, the Lutheran Confessions, and moves the student to teach the faith to others;
2. Though written for a sixth-grade level of language comprehension, it was a thorough exposition of Lutheran teachings;
3. The material was sent (or delivered personally) to the student;
4. The student would prepare for a scheduled visit of the instructor;
5. The instructor would go to the student's town/city of residence, requiring the instructor to become familiar with the context of the student, where and with whom he was serving;
6. The student could put into practice what he learned immediately; and
7. The student could, in turn, use the material to immediately teach others.[12]

Here are all the signs of contextualized theological education: face-to-face interaction with an instructor, delivery without a seminary building; theological formation taken to the student in their real world, local context. The student did not need to leave family, home, nor community to study. Scripture, theology, and life lessons were forming men to answer the calling to serve. This theological formation was brought to them. These very early steps were the innovation we know of today as Theological Education by Extension (TEE).

Though Gussick, Hoeferkamp, and Keller did not put the name to it and give it its theoretical basis, explanation and promotion, what was being done was a Lutheran TEE through DIMICAR. It can therefore be clearly stated that this vision was born from a Lutheran missiological understanding of the work of the Church in a real-time mission endeavor in Antigua, Guatemala.[13]

Instead of abandoning ministry work and uprooting themselves and their families to attend a residential seminary (whether in the country or abroad), students could remain at home, care for their families, remain economically active, and involved in their ministry. Instead of attending lectures, they could study the course material (especially written for education by extension) on their own time and then meet regularly in groups with a tutor to discuss the academic work and how it related to the praxis, the actual practice of ministry among God's people. Thus, TEE was not merely self-guided education by correspondence; from the beginning, it is supported by a tutorial and mentoring structure which enabled all studies to become contextualized with supervision and guidance. The idea of TEE developed practically into decentralizing the training of lay leaders (and maybe even future pastors) and became DIMICAR's mandate and commitment.

Gussick saw the importance of the "Three Selfs" concept in mission: self-propagating, self-supporting, and self-governing. These were incorporated into the Lutheran TEE. To some extent that happened. But he always felt the BFM did not back him up in this vision, even though DIMICAR had become a leader in Lutheran TEE.[14]

Theological education has always been an important aspect of Lutheran work throughout Latin America.

Theological education has always been an important aspect of Lutheran work throughout Latin America. Residential seminaries already existed in Brazil (founded in 1903) and Argentina (founded in 1926). Several other attempts had already occurred in Mexico:

1. In 1947, an LCMS missionary was sent to establish the *Instituto Concordia de Monterrey* (Concordia Institute in Monterrey). From 1947 to 1959, the LCMS helped support a program for the preparation of pastors for the *Sínodo Luterano de México*,

using the facilities of Santa Cruz Lutheran Church in Monterrey, México. The director and only professor of this program was pastor Fred B. Growcock.[15]

2. In 1954, an American Lutheran Church (ALC) missionary, Dr. William E. Nehrenz, opened *Casa Augsburgo* (Augsburg Seminary). In 1964 the institution closed.[16]

Residential seminaries were perhaps still an option in the minds of these Lutheran TEE pioneers, but Gussick, Hoeferkamp, Keller, and G. Kempff felt the need to further develop the Lutheran TEE concept.[17]

History states, however, that the Presbyterians in Guatemala (whose presence dated from 1882) from their residential seminary (est. 1935) in San Felipe, Retalhuleu, in southeastern Guatemala, "began" the Theological Education by Extension movement (TEE) from this residential seminary in 1962–1963, led by Ralph Winter, James Emery, and Ross Kinsler, through the 1970s. This new style of theological education literally "took off formally in 1963" and made its way around the world (perhaps through the entire Presbyterian-Reformed world network) and soon became a new idea for many involved in theological education.[18] What developed led to adaptations in leadership development. Kinsler (and others, such as Mulholland) notes that TEE was not the simple result from a carefully predesigned theoretical model with a fully developed theology of ministry, but rather in response to the needs of the church faithfully engaged in mission.[19]

However, it should be clearly and emphatically noted that the DIMICAR program of Lutheran TEE began at least three years before the formal inauguration of the much-publicized program of the TEE methodology pioneered by the Presbyterian Seminary in San Felipe, Guatemala. And even though the Presbyterian program eventually became the model for hundreds of TEE programs around the world, the Lutherans were in fact the first to actually innovate, implement, and sustain the methodology.

And even though the Presbyterian program eventually became the model for hundreds of TEE programs around the world, the Lutherans were in fact the first to actually innovate, implement, and sustain the methodology.

The Lutherans, under the leadership and genius of Gussick and the innovation and creativity of Hoeferkamp and Keller, began to formulate a new dynamic aspect of theological education, even though they did not call it TEE. Lutherans developed the idea from a different setting, one where mission work was involved (establishing a national church) where there was no infrastructure of a residential seminary to work from. They also implemented TEE concepts very early on, even across geographic lines (El Salvador, 1961 and Venezuela, 1962). And Lutheran TEE included more than a "simple" lay-leader

formation. The first ordination of Lutheran Central American pastor was Ciro Mejía in November 1962, as a result of the DIMICAR TEE program. Later on, in El Salvador in November 1964, the ordinations of Napoleón Artigas, Raúl Alemán, and Héctor Fernández were celebrated.[20] No one was less worth of the call to the pastoral ministry if completing their formation through TEE.

Concerning TEE efforts at the time, G. Kempff wrote: "I'm sure Gussick felt that the growth in Central America was stunted as a result of following the North American pattern of church planting and even theological education. He may have been right. Our field, while I lived in El Salvador, was able to prepare men for ordination using TEE, six men who had gone through the process while working as lay leaders in various places. It worked. And we rejoiced in the Lord."[21]

The DIMICAR TEE program, however, instead of being emulated, began to be phased out with the opening of *Seminario Luterano Augsburgo* or SEMLA (Augsburg Lutheran Seminary) in 1965 as part of the Interdenominational Theological Community in Mexico City.[22] The LCMS was instrumental in establishing SEMLA in Mexico City, as part of a cooperative venture with seven other church bodies of a "theological community." Robert Hoeferkamp moved to Mexico City, becoming the first dean of students. SEMLA closed in June 1981, first due to the lack of students, since many member church bodies could not afford to send their students to Mexico City, and second, the fear of liberation theology influencing the students, which was being promoted by some of the other member seminaries. After many years, SEMLA reopened under the leadership of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) in 1998.[23] It was then primarily involved in distance learning and more recently, online theological formation.

When SEMLA opened in 1965, only Keller remained serving the TEE program in Antigua, Guatemala. Soon after, however, Keller left Guatemala to serve a congregation in Texas. The DIMICAR TEE program was terminated, since it was felt that all future pastors could now study at SEMLA in Mexico City, to receive "real" theological education.[24] About the same time (1966), Gussick was elected by the Lutheran World Federation to coordinate Lutheran efforts in Latin America and develop Christian literature.[25]

Then, after the closing of SEMLA, the BFM suggested that each Latin American church affiliated with the LCMS develop its own program of theological education, in most instances some form of TEE. This sent many scrambling to find answers.

Already in 1971, some of the church bodies associated with SEMLA had formed *Co-Extensión*,[26] a Lutheran association of programs from different countries in Latin America dedicated to TEE. They did not see themselves as in competition with SEMLA nor any residential seminary, but rather as an organization which offered an alternative given the socioeconomic and cultural realities in Latin America. This group of energetic and visionary church leaders and theological educators produced courses

and resources that are still available and used today. In 1971 *Co-Extensión* began at SEMLA in Mexico City and continued under these coordinators: Raymond Rosales (México City, 1970–1975), Nehemías Díaz (México City, 1975–1980), Viesturs Pavasars (Bogotá, 1980–2000), and Marcos Kempff (Caracas y Panamá, 2000–2008).[27] Rosales and Diaz were associated with SEMLA's version of TEE, named *"Plan Setenta,"* recalling and honoring the seventy disciple-evangelists that Jesus sent out after He had chosen the twelve apostles. At the time, the SEMLA faculty considered the TEE program to be for laymen while the residential SEMLA program was for pastors.[28]

Co-Extensión was committed to promote and legitimatize Lutheran TEE methodology, encourage leadership development (lay, diaconal, and pastoral), coordinating efforts in the writing, publishing, and distributing of Lutheran TEE resources (more than thirty high-quality theological courses were produced with a variety of styles, methods, and emphases), sponsoring workshops for instructor formation, and providing scholarships for the formation of tutors.[29]

To highlight the importance and influence of *Co-Extensión*, it is necessary to consider the vision and projection of one of its members, *Instituto Teológico "Juan de Frías"*—Venezuela, under the faithful leadership of Rudolph "Rudy" Blank.[30] As a result, the work of *"Juan de Frías"* was very much a part of the groundwork in the vision, birth, and formation of the former Hispanic Institute of Theology (HIT) located at Concordia University, River Forest in Chicago, Illinois. Though there was an earlier program (as will be described later on in the article), the HIT was a continuation and transformation of those earlier attempts. It was in 1987 that the HIT was begun through the dedication of Douglas Groll (missionary in Venezuela for many years) as a response to the need for Hispanic/Latino pastors and leaders for the LCMS in the US. Today, after a name change and ongoing transformations, it is known as the Center for Hispanic Studies of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, under the skillful leadership of Leopoldo Sánchez.[31] The journey from Antigua, Guatemala to St. Louis, Missouri has happened.

In the early 1980s, TEE programs and creative TEE hybrids[32] were developed in Mexico (*"Plan Setenta," Instituto Luterano de Teología,* and *SEMBLEX*), Guatemala (*CLET*), Nicaragua (*Seminario Teológico "Reforma Luterana"*), Panama (*INBILUPA*), Venezuela (*Instituto Teológico "Juan de Frías"*), Colombia (*SELITE),* Ecuador, Peru, and Bolivia (*CLAET*), Argentina (*PETE*), Brazil (*PEM*), Chile (*Instituto Bíblico Luterano*), Paraguay (*IBAD*), among others. *Co-Extensión* remained active and providing much needed leadership, though many of the institutions mentioned above, were unable to become members of *Co-Extensión*.[33] Reasons given for not joining were limited human and financial resources within the programs and their church bodies, not because of a rejection of TEE.

Fast forward again to the early 2000s. The International Lutheran Council from the Latin America World Region (ILC–Latin America), at its fourth regular meeting, held in the "*Centro Luterano*," Antigua, Guatemala, August 2004, adopted a resolution to formalize a network of regional Lutheran theological education institutions and programs in order to coordinate efforts in the formation of its leadership, present and future. The mounting costs of formal theological education, the lack of foreign subsidies, and complications of mobilizing students (without their families) to other countries for any kind of theological education were all part of the conversations. M. Kempff was asked to serve as its first facilitator (and he joyfully accepted!). The idea was to explore the use of technology to create virtual collaboration and networking throughout Latin America.

With the arrival and accessibility of the Internet and web-based education, new models of theological education came about. Again, in Guatemala, after the innovation of Lutheran TEE in 1959 (forty-five years later!), now was the bold step to online education, eTEE (*e-ETE* in Spanish). The term *eteólogo* (e-theologian) and *eteología* (e-theology) were coined[34] to describe a generation of instructors and professors committed to designing courses and resources and teaching in a collaborative manner across country borders.[35] The Latin American churches were developing a collaborative vision and network of Lutheran seminaries and TEE programs to work together under the Holy Spirit's guidance, within the context of the realities and needs of the member churches.

At the Fifth International Lutheran Council—Latin America World Region Conference, held in Cochabamba, Bolivia, August 2006, plans were laid out to enter a trial phase. There were strategies, commitments, professors and tutors, printed and digital resources, and a deep Christ-rooted love for the expansion of the mission of the church.[36]

But, due to financial cutbacks and personnel downsizing in LCMS World Missions (LCMS WM), the vision toward implementing online TEE in Latin America was not fulfilled. In August 2007, the facilitator position, financed by LCMS WM, ended abruptly. Interestingly enough, not long after, the preliminary groundwork for a new regional residential seminary was inaugurated in the Dominican Republic, *Seminario Concordia "El Reformador,"* in 2010, with a joint agreement with *Seminario Concordia*, Argentina. Today, some years later, with a new campus and completely subsidized program, it has begun its fourth academic year, serving the churches in Mexico, Central America, and Venezuela.

Upon leaving Latin America in 2008, M. Kempff was called to serve at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, as instructor and curriculum developer in the Center of Hispanic Studies. Fifty-seven years earlier, his father Gerhard Kempff had graduated from this seminary and traveled to Guatemala. A product of the TEE tradition rooted in previous Latin American efforts, the Center for Hispanic Studies (CHS) now "offers theological

education and leadership in the Lutheran tradition from and for US Hispanic/Latino communities," and moreover, "advances and carries out its mission through ministry formation programs, research and publication initiatives and various continuing education and advanced studies opportunities."[37] Within its rich heritage, CHS moved from a TEE on the ground model to a distance education model of pastoral and deaconess formation, including a growth path toward a MA online option for qualified students.

Some attempts to keep the network of Latin American theological education programs were made, but in the end, the lack of finances and the pulling back of all programs to adjust to the worldwide financial crisis/recession made the task difficult even for the most enthusiastic.[38]

At the same time, severe financial difficulties affected all the members of *Co-Extensión* and as a result the once flourishing organization made the very difficult decision to end. All the printed and digitalized resources were entrusted to the *Iglesia Evangélica Luterana de Colombia* or IELCO (Evangelical Lutheran Church of Colombia) for safekeeping and distribution to those who need them. Attempts are being made to transfer all of these resources to a new organization and site that will promote and make these resources more readily available.[39]

But truly, in spite of setbacks, the Word of the Lord grows, and initial efforts in TEE continue to bear fruit, although in different ways and through various means of educational delivery. Jesus Christ is the Lord of His Church. He continuously surprises us with His *Missio Dei*.

Now, let us turn back some years and consider another reality, the North American picture and the birth of the Center for Hispanic Studies. As early as 1970, there were requests for some sort of LCMS Hispanic training in the US. By the time Douglas Groll, a veteran missionary, had left Venezuela and returned to the US in 1978, there was a serious effort headed by the presidents of the Texas, Southern California, Ohio, and Florida-Georgia districts to face the challenge. There had been an LCMS Convention resolution in 1977 to get something done for theological education for the growing Hispanic/Latino population.[40] Various attempts were made.[41] A residential program was set up under Herbert Sims and Carlos Puig on the Concordia University, River Forest (Chicago) campus funded by Board for Missions (BFM) and Board for Higher Education (BHE), directly responsible to these units under the LCMS Colloquy Board and officially given cover by Concordia Theological Seminary (Ft. Wayne, Indiana), though the seminary was not directly or administratively involved. This was a small residential program on the Concordia University, River Forest (Chicago) campus involving Sims, Roberto González, and Juan Berndt. They served as administrators of the program, as well as instructors. Certification for ordination came from Concordia Theological Seminary (Ft. Wayne).[42] A Synodical Advisory Board was set up to oversee the program. But by the mid-1980s, the program had fiscally

becoming untenable: one year, three students; the next year, ten; the next down to two or three—with three full-time faculty members onsite.

In 1985, conversations began about considering distance education in the US as an alternative to the residential model. Rudolph "Rudy" Blank was invited to come from Venezuela to talk about the Presbyterian models in Guatemala and the Venezuelan program, *"Juan de Frías."* In 1986, with the blessing of the BHE and BFM, a decision was made to implement a TEE model in the US in the Spanish language. The new program would remain at Concordia University, River Forest (Chicago) campus, from where a director would administer the new program and develop a production center for video courses in Spanish.[43] Douglas Groll was called to put together the program in 1987. It became the Hispanic Institute of Theology or HIT (*Instituto Hispano de Teología* or *IHT*). Its new "look" was conceived as a different entity from the previous program called the Institute for Hispanic Ministries. The HIT remained active in Chicago for nineteen uninterrupted years of faithful leadership, diaconal, and pastoral formation.[44]

Two key synodical administrators, Rudy Block and Michael Stelmachowitz, executives of the BHE, were charged with carrying out the synodical convention mandates of the seventies and early eighties. They found funding and a sponsoring institution to oversee this educational experiment: Concordia Seminary, St. Louis. Karl Barth, then president of the seminary and John Johnson, then academic dean and later president, welcomed, eventually funded and supervised the work of the Institute, giving it the seminary's support, prestige, and validation. Change sometimes brought questioning and criticism. During all of this time Jacob Preus III, at the time a faculty member at Concordia Seminary, worked tirelessly as a liaison to bridge any understandable tensions or misunderstandings between a traditional academic seminary system in North America and the HIT's Lutheran TEE experiment with roots in a Global South cultural setting. The need to bridge two different cultural world and educational models offered a creative launching pad for future endeavors in nonresidential theological formation at Concordia Seminary, including programs like DELTO (Distance Education Leading to Ordination), EIIT (Ethnic Immigrant Institute of Theology), and SMP (Specific Ministry Pastor).

Under the tireless leadership of Groll (as was also observed in the lives of so many innovators years earlier in Central America) in the work of *Co-Extensión* and *"Juan de Frías"* in Venezuela and following the basic principles of a Lutheran TEE program, the HIT produced results throughout the US.[45] After just 10 years, the statistics spoke for themselves: 23 sites in cities in the US and Canada, 34 regional instructors (with a total of over 17,000 hours of instruction), a lay leadership formation faculty (11), close to 300 students who finished at least one course, 41 lay leader graduates, 10 faculty members dedicated to the certification toward ordination program, close to 1,000 instructional hours for intensive courses at Concordia Seminary, and the program had

prepared for the church, 11 pastors and 3 deaconesses.[46] It is very important to remember that the work among Hispanics/Latinos was very much like that of a mission field. So, to have 41 lay leaders and 11 new pastors was a joyous accomplishment, one small step toward building a strong Lutheran Hispanic/Latino presence in the LCMS.

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The HIT became the exemplary theological distance education program, not only in the LCMS, but likely in the world. Video-based courses were being shipped to places as far away as Russia and throughout Latin America. Since its inception, over 7,000 sets of educational materials (using videos, DVDs, and printed materials) have been distributed throughout the US and Latin America. Given the increasing need for theological formation in US Hispanic/Latino contexts, this has been an undeniably important task, and one that will not be abandoned but rather expanded, now more than ever.[47]

Initially, the delivery of instruction to US students occurred 50 percent of the time through face-to-face meetings with the HIT faculty and 50 percent of the time through the teaching of local pastors using videotaped and printed materials. Theological education was available to lay leadership, from which potential candidates for diaconal and pastoral study would be identified. Eventually, the diaconal level of studies was dropped, and the program shifted to two levels—the first at a broad leadership formation program and the second one focusing on pastoral formation. Periodically, regular seminary faculty served as course instructors for the HIT level two or pastoral formation students. They would meet on the Concordia Seminary campus, or on other approved sites several times throughout the academic year. Initially, the final phase of study for the second-level pastoral students was a summer intensive on campus at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, after which students were ordained through the LCMS colloquy program. The HIT became a regular program of Concordia Seminary.[48]

When funding for the program was withdrawn, first by LCMS World Missions and then by the BHE, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis stepped in and continued to fund the HIT ministry. The HIT was relocated to a leased office space in Chicago. Second-level students continued to meet at the campus of Concordia Seminary. When the HIT became a program of Concordia Seminary, final certification of its graduates was done by the faculty of the seminary.

The former Hispanic Institute of Theology (HIT) is now answering to a new name: The Center for Hispanic Studies (CHS). And not only is the name new. The location, staff, and vision have also been altered, expanded, and broadened, including an ongoing deaconess formation certificate program and a MA taught in the Spanish language for qualified students, in partnership with the Graduate School—offering

advanced studies for candidates in the US as well as in Latin America. The move from Chicago to St. Louis took place in September 2006, and Leopoldo Sánchez became its new director.[49] In 2007, Sánchez became the first recipient of the Werner R. H. Krause and Elizabeth Ringger Krause endowed Chair for Hispanic Ministries, furthering the integration of theological formation in the Spanish language for Hispanic/Latinos as an integral part of the mission of Concordia Seminary.

The CHS is a more refined manifestation resulting from the experience of the historical efforts to provide Lutheran theological education to Hispanic/Latinos in the US. The work that the CHS is doing is not new but represents an instance of an eighty-five-year history that has been evolving and improving for the sake of the Church. And in the LCMS context, this rich heritage arguably dates back to the humble beginnings of Lutheran TEE in Antigua, Guatemala. CHS is an example of the richness of this heritage, of being a "mestizo" program, as it were—a center of theological learning and teaching that has now expanded into online ministerial formation for pastors and deaconesses, graduate theological education, continuing education initiatives, and research and publication activities.

And in the LCMS context, this rich heritage arguably dates back to the humble beginnings of Lutheran TEE in Antigua, Guatemala. CHS is an example of the richness of this heritage, of being a "mestizo" program.

Excellence in teaching and mentoring are hallmarks of the CHS legacy and part of its current mission. CHS continues to form pastors and deaconesses and serve as a resource for church workers and leaders on Hispanic/Latino issues and ministry, with an emphasis on the US context. The rigor and quality of the coursework forge a Lutheran ethos in the students that is distinctly honed for service to Hispanic/Latinos in the US.[50] Through its MA program, in partnership with the Graduate School, CHS has also been able to assist students both in the US and Latin America who desire advanced graduate studies and will become future instructors.

Conclusions

This article is not a complete and thorough exposition of seventy-one years of history. This was not the intent. Rather it demonstrates how what was created and developed in a mission context has a legitimate place in present and future theological education discussion. The context of a foreign mission field influenced the development and delivery of theological education. It reveals the tensions that naturally develop between efforts at distance and residential forms of theological education. And it suggests through the example of CHS at Concordia Seminary, that the result can be not an either/or, but a both/and. US Lutherans in 2020 are now finding

themselves, like it or not, in a similar mission field. So, the history of Lutheran theological education in Latin America has something to teach us:

- To keep in mind the needs of the church and mission to which the church is called, on a local as well as a national level;
- To have the courage to innovate even when others disagree;
- To exercise the wisdom of building onto what has been built and not discard the past as if the present "can do it so much better and offer so much more";
- To avoid pitting TEE (and distance education) against residential seminary pastoral formation, but develop a spirit of networking, collaboration, and integration;
- To commit to contextualizing what is going to be taught;
- And (perhaps the most complicated of all) to take the time to discuss openly the topic of funding and dependency as evident in the "Three Selfs" concept in mission: self-propagating, self-supporting, and self-governing.

Today we celebrate the rich heritage from Lutheran Theological Education by Extension. The journey has taken many ups and downs, turns and many falls, beginning in Guatemala and throughout Latin America. Let us thank the Lord for His work of formation in the Global South. The journey is far from over and as it plays out now in new ways at Concordia Seminary in St. Louis, it is necessary to step back and honor the innovation, boldness, struggles, victories, and even failures of previous pioneers. Then we take up the challenge to learn even more as we seek to prepare men and women in even better ways to serve to Lord in the years to come.

The history of Lutheran theological education in Latin America has something to teach us. . . . I truly believe that our church in Latin America as well as in North America has been and will continue to be enriched by the Lutheran TEE history and its model.

On a personal note, I was "born and grew up" in the setting of early TEE efforts and today am very much an heir to the Lutheran TEE tradition (an *"eteólogo"*). Writing this article has again sparked my very soul, moving me to think about the need to correct, clarify, and maybe even rewrite bits of LCMS recorded history in Central America. True, the world will not change if "the record is set straight" and the Lord's Kingdom will not change to accommodate our human endeavors, but I truly believe that our church in Latin America as well as in North America has been and will continue to be enriched by the Lutheran TEE history and its model—for instance, its sensitivity to the educational needs of the local church with particular attention to adult learners (especially those who have limited formal education as well as the marginalized and impoverished), the importance to communicate and teach solid

Lutheran theology in context and with new pedagogical tools and delivery systems. There is no one way to form future pastors, deaconesses, and lay leaders in the church. We can learn from past efforts and gather what is appropriate, right, and salutary, and especially learn from our mistakes. For me, the development of Lutheran TEE is a topic worthy of more research and publications. We can build on the shoulders of little-known giants. Many of those near and dear to us were involved in its birth, nurture, development, and promotion.[51]

And finally, it is most appropriate to remember the founders of Lutheran TEE and their spouses: Robert Gussick (Ruth), Robert Hoeferkamp (Elizabeth), Edgar Keller (Esther), as well as the committed promoters and instructors and their spouses, Gerhard Kempff (Betty), Leonard Stahlke (Lucille), Carl Bretscher (Elaine), Kenneth Mahler (Rhoda), Robert Huebner (Margarete), Douglas Groll (Marlene), Rudolph Blank (Ramona), and so many, many more. The Lord's work has always included those whose names appear in print, but also the many who are "behind the scenes" known as the bedrock of support, prayer, encouragement, sounding-boards proofreaders, confidants, "ministers of reconciliations," and loving partners. This needs to be affirmed and repeated often: We thank the Lord for who you are.

+ *Soli Deo Gloria* +

Endnotes

[1] The author gathers some of these ways of describing the Spirit's activity from Leopoldo A. Sánchez M., *Sculptor Spirit: Models of Sanctification from Spirit Christology* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2019).
[2] From conversations, interviews, emails, and collection of personal notes from Robert Huebner (1980–2000). This quote was included in notes taken by Huebner during several interviews with Robert Gussick.
[3] From conversations, interviews, emails, and collection of personal notes: Gerhard Kempff (1980–2008).
[4] Notes: G. Kempff.
[5] https://crossings.org/the-lcms-mission-affirmations-of-1965-then-and-now/
[6] From conversations, interviews, emails, and collection of personal notes: Robert Hoeferkamp (2005–2006), Huebner and G. Kempff.
[7] From a collection of personal notes from Robert Gussick.
[8] Notes: Hoeferkamp and G. Kempff.
[9] Notes: Huebner and Gussick.
[10] Notes: Hoeferkamp.
[11] The document is available in digital format and can be ordered from the Center for Hispanic Studies at Concordia Seminary, 801 Seminary Place, St. Louis, MO 63105-3196. chs@csl.edu
[12] From conversations, interviews, emails, and collection of personal notes: Rudolph "Rudy" Blank.
[13] Notes: Hoeferkamp and G. Kempff.
[14] Notes: Gussick, Hoeferkamp, and G. Kempff.

[15] Roberto Hoeferkamp, "*Iglesia Luterana y Educación Teológica en América Latina del Norte*," Revista Teológica, Seminario Concordia, Buenos Aires, 28:112 (2/1983): 4–24.
[16] History of *Seminario Luterano Augsburgo*, http://semla.org/historia-de-semla/
[17] Notes: G. Kempff and Huebner.
[18] Notes: Blank.
[19] Ross F. Kinsler, *The Extension Movement in Theological Education*, rev. ed. (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 1981). See Kenneth B. Mulholland, *Adventures in Training the Ministry* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1976).
[20] Notes: Hoeferkamp, Huebner, G. Kempff, Blank, and from a collection of personal notes: Robert Gussick.
[21] Notes: G. Kempff and Hoeferkamp.
[22] Notes: Hoeferkamp, Huebner, and G. Kempff.
[23] Notes: Hoeferkamp.
[24] Notes: G. Kempff, Hoeferkamp, and Huebner.
[25] Notes: G. Kempff, Hoeferkamp, and Huebner.
[26] *Co-Extensión* is an abbreviation for *Comité Coordinador de Instituciones Teológicas Luteranas por Extensión en América Latina.*
[27] Marcos Kempff, *Co-Extensión* Coordinator's final report, outlining its thirty-seven years of faithful service in theological education by extension for the Lutheran churches in Latin America.
[28] Notes: Blank.
[29] Notes: Huebner and Blank.
[30] See the article by Rudy Blank in this issue for greater detail.
[31] From conversations, interviews, emails, and collection of personal notes: Douglas Groll. In an e-mail to Leopoldo Sánchez, CHS Director, dated 12 September 2020, Groll notes: "I was called to put together the program in 1987 as the Hispanic Institute of Theology . . . as a different entity from the previous program called the Institute for Hispanic Ministries."
[32] TEE hybrid: the bold and creative attempt to adapt a theological formation program to the needs of the local realities without excluding some kind of residential experience, the use of regional intensive courses and cooperation from other countries.
[33] Noted in several minutes of the bi-annual regional plenary meetings of *Co-Extensión* members.
[34] Marcos Kempff, Latin American Theological Network newsletter, *"El Tintero Teológico"* 1:1 (Diciembre 2005): 1.
[35] The Fourth International Lutheran Council from the Latin America World Region (ILC–Latin America) Conference, "*Centro Luterano*," Antigua, Guatemala, August 2004: Minutes from the fourth meeting.
[36] Fifth International Lutheran Council—Latin America World Region conference held in Cochabamba, Bolivia, August 2006: Minutes from the meeting.
[37] https://www.csl.edu/academics/programs/center-hispanic-studies/
[38] Emails from the interim network facilitator, Alceu Figur, Director to the Instituto Bíblico Adolfo Dilley–IBAD, Paraguay.
[39] Minutes of the last two official *Co-Extensión* meetings (Plenary, Bogotá, 2006 and Executive Board, Bogotá, 2008).
[40] Notes: Groll.
[41] Leopoldo A. Sánchez M., "Hispanic is Not What You Think: Reimagining Hispanic Identity, Implications for an Increasingly Global Church," *Concordia Journal* 42:3 (Summer 2016): 223–235, Endnotes, 3.

[42] Notes: Groll.
[43] Notes: Groll, G. Kempff, and Huebner.
[44] Notes: Groll, G. Kempff, and Huebner. Also see the issue dedicated to Center for Hispanic Studies, 25 Years, *Concordia Journal*, 38:3 (Summer 2012), https://issuu.com/concordiasem/docs/cjsummer12.
[45] Notes: Groll and Huebner. See a detailed description of the challenges and recommendations made regarding Hispanic/Latino ministries in the LCMS: *Blue Ribbon Task Force on Hispanic Ministry Report: Una Misión, Un Mensaje, Un Pueblo,* https://www.csl.edu/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/BRTFHM-ENG.pdf?x54272.
[46] Notes: Groll. Also: Report on the first 10 years of service (1987–1997) of the Hispanic Institute of Theology, Chicago, 1998.
[47] Notes from Eloy González: A report on the 5-14A Blue Ribbon Task Force, 2010.
[48] Notes: González.
[49] Notes: Groll and Huebner. Also see the issue celebrating Center for Hispanic Studies, 25 Years, *Concordia Journal* 38:3 (Summer 2012), https://issuu.com/concordiasem/docs/cjsummer12; and in various articles in "Latin American & U.S. Latino Lutheranism," *LOGIA: A Journal of Lutheran Theology* 19/1 (Epiphany 2010): 5–35.
[50] Notes: González.
[51] This article was possible because of personal experiences. I was born and grew up in Latin America and also served as an educational missionary in the region for thirty-three years. Over the years I have collected notes from emails, shared personal notes, many conversations (interviews) with Gerhard Kempff (my father), Robert Huebner, Robert Hoeferkamp, Douglas Groll, and Rudolph "Rudy" Blank regarding the history of theological education in Mexico, Central America, Venezuela, and other parts of Latin America. Likewise, I received information from Robert Gussick regarding theological education in Central America, as well as a brief history of his life from his daughter, Mary, after Robert's death in January 2007. And it has been a true blessing to work with Leopoldo Sánchez, Director of the Center for Hispanic Studies.