

Sunday, February 11, 2018

This is our first full day at Universidad Biblioteca Latin America (UBL). After breakfast, our hostess-missionary Karla Kroll took us to worship at a small Presbyterian Church in Tres Rios, Costa Rica, about an hour away. Their pastor, Jose Huerta, is a former student at UBL, and his congregation was celebrating their tenth anniversary. They graciously made us welcome and invited us to stay for lunch. On the way back to UBL we stopped to visit a Basilica in Cartago and the ruins of the first church in Costa Rica, built in 1522 by Spanish missionaries.

Back at UBL, two graduating students joined us for dinner. Karla explained that one of the courses she teaches at the university is Liberation Theology. Students are encouraged to begin thinking of God through the situations they are living in at the time. They are taught to see clearly and research issues in their culture or area that might be hunger, inequality, slavery, injustice, or any one of the many ills mankind suffers. Then they are taught to go to the Bible and look at the situation through God's eyes, with a special emphasis on the exodus, the books of the prophets and the Gospels. The third step is to implement missional thinking, to do something to alleviate the suffering or empower the disenfranchised by implementing an idea they received through Bible study.

Natalie Romero will graduate as a Methodist minister and go back to serve in Peru. She chose UBL for her studies because she had met pastors from here and was impressed with the way they approached the Bible. She also said that she learned to feel empowered here at UBL and wants to use that to teach others about equality and

empowerment. Natalie is writing her thesis on invisible women in the Bible.

Julio Chacon has been working for a Presbytery in Peru, serving as a lay pastor to twelve churches in the jungle regions. He came back to UBL to finish his studies and become ordained. He told us that at UBL he learned to interpret the Bible within the context in which he works. He began to apply what he learned in the Bible to the needs of the people he served. Julio is writing his thesis on material poverty, focusing on Deuteronomy 15 about forgiveness of debt and the liberation of slaves.

It's been a day full of blessings and new awareness. We request that both Natalie and Julio be put on the OVPC prayer list as they graduate in April and begin their important work in Peru. We also ask your prayers for Jose Huerta and his congregation at the Iglesia Presbeteriana in Tres Rios, Costa Rica.