

The Women *(continued from page 3)*

Health and healing. These basics of life find expression in a physical and spiritual sense. In Latin America the women are often the real sustainers of family and community within a patriarchal society that denies them recognition or worth. Women need a network of support to nourish them in maintaining strength of body, mind and soul (Christy Van Steenburg taught a course on Freedom in Christ). It is easy to overlook the crucial connection of eliminating stressors that interfere with building strong families, churches and communities. These are the building blocks of life and we of the Wesleyan tradition need to reach out in support to our sisters who struggle with a sense of biblically mandated submission and obedience versus an awakening to worth granted them by a redeeming Savior. Cultivating an understanding of health and body is a process of education, but cultivating a sense of worth is a challenge for all who seek a balance of grace and mercy. Women should not have to wonder where they have fallen short when they are abused and put down. They should not have to overcome guilt to ask tough questions regarding their rights as human beings equal in the sight of God. It is my hope that the Instituto de Estudios Wesleyanos can join in providing support to women who have no place to turn to find answers to their questions. Church leadership needs a woman's voice to strengthen the female contingent of God's own church. ■

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Dedication of the Instituto de Estudios Wesleyanos-Latinoamérica

On April 6 the Board of WHF and many church leaders from around South America and Central America will gather in Lima, Peru, for the Dedication of the Instituto de Estudios Wesleyanos-Latinoamérica. This will be a grand event! The Institute is being dedicated in honor of L. Elbert and Lois Wethington, Founders of WHF, with gratitude for their years of faithful leadership in this ministry. The Reverend Dr. David Lowes Watson, retired United Methodist minister and professor, as well as renown scholar, lecturer, and writer is the keynote lecturer and preacher for the Dedication event. Included in those attending will be Methodist bishops from around South America, as well as leaders of the Wesleyan Church, the Nazarene, Pilgrim Holiness, Free Methodist, and other churches who are part of the Wesleyan tradition. Already the Institute is making an important contribution to the church in Latin America. You may view its website at www.iew-la.org. We will report on the Dedication event in our next newsletter. ■



Ambassadors for WHF

While WHF receives contributions to support various projects of its ministry (e.g. the seminary in Peru) the annual administrative budget of around \$125,000 always falls short of its needs. We have begun a program of "ambassadors" for WHF: we try to find persons in particular geographic areas who are willing to promote WHF's annual budget and raise the financial support. We are grateful to Mr. Jerry Huff who has become an ambassador for us in the Sandhills region of North Carolina. Thank you! If you are interested in being an ambassador for us in your region please contact Mark at 910-295-7720. ■

The Wesley Heritage Foundation

www.wesleyheritagefoundation.org



Bringing the Thought and Spirituality of the Wesleyan Revival to Latin Americans

PO Box 76 Henrico NC 27842 USA

SPRING 2013

NEWSLETTER



A Word from the President:

Mark W. Wethington

Beth and I spent a couple of weeks in Guatemala during the season of Lent. I must admit that while Lent is always meaningful to me wherever I find myself, over the past years I have spent parts of several seasons of Lent in Latin America and some of the customs and experiences of Latin culture during this season have frequently added to the meaning (see the article in this newsletter by Beth which speaks to this).

We were in Guatemala at the invitation of the Wesleyan Church. They invited us to participate in their Second Pastors Congress and asked me to offer a series of lectures on "Wesleyan Theology through John Wesley's Sermons." At the same time it was a wonderful opportunity to become more closely acquainted with the wider Wesleyan tradition in Central America; the 150 or so leaders who gathered were from throughout Central America, and not only part of the Wesleyan Church, but were also Methodists, Pentecostals and Nazarenes. What united all of us in this Congress was our Wesleyan identity, even though each of our churches came out of a history of separation for various reasons.

One day during the days of the Congress, when Beth and I had grown a bit tired of chicken and rice for just about every meal, we wondered off to see if we could find some vegetables and settled on a vegetarian pizza! We were hungry for something different.

This particular hunger that day suddenly seemed to cause a reali-

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"TIME" IN GUATEMALA

Beth B. Wethington

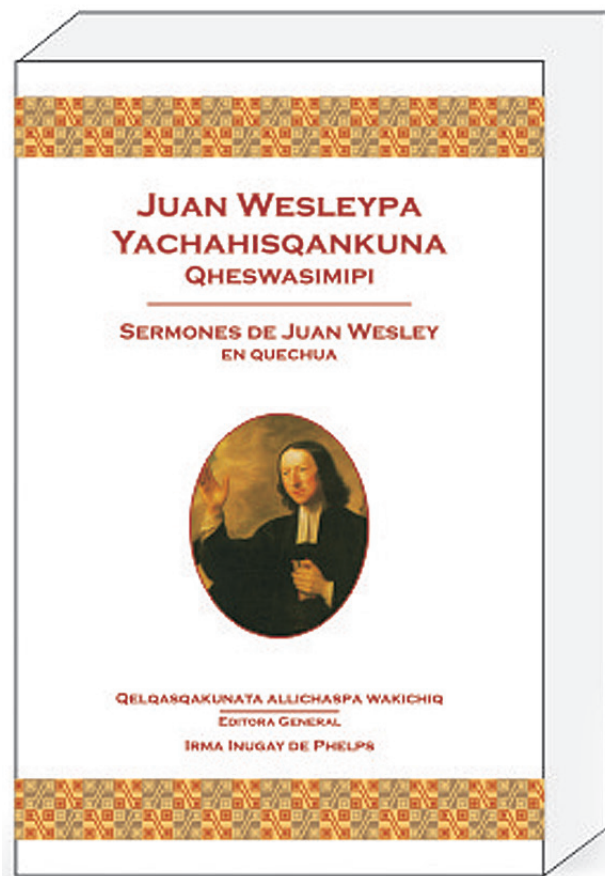
The end of the world as supposedly predicted by the Mayan Calendar was a prominent discussion as we approached the end of 2012. But when the world carried on as usual, Mayan prophecy was dismissed as just another doomsday prediction. A more accurate understanding of the Mayan "world ending" time reveals a completely different intent, one which encompasses a world view of epochs of time and new beginnings, rather than endings. The "end of time" fascination of some North Americans imposes our own perspective upon the Mayan calendar, altering the indigenous understanding of time which the Mayan people hold. Dominant societies have frequently sought to impose their "superior" interpretations upon "inferior" cultures. In a similar way, as missionaries evangelized Guatemala many Christian teachings and practices became incorporated into Mayan ones, thus creating a kind of syncretism of faith. This can be witnessed even today in Guatemala, as we experienced some of that while being there during the season of Lent.

The ancient Mayan people are known for their advanced knowledge of celestial events, numerology and early writing systems. Because they lived close to the earth and sky, their religious observations involved all aspects of nature with accompanying gods who controlled the surroundings. In the same way that we interpret Mayan cosmology through a 21st century lens, the Mayan people could only comprehend Christian beliefs through their own understanding and context. We see this reflected today in life and worship in Guatemala and much of Meso-America.

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Wesley's Sermons in Quechua

At long last, the Wesley Heritage Foundation has completed the translation and publication of 27 sermons of John Wesley into Quechua for the Andean people of South America (see the picture of the book cover). In cooperation with our office in Lima, Peru, the Institute for Wesley Studies-Latinoamérica (IEW-LA), this volume was published in Lima and will be introduced to those who will attend the Dedication of IEW-LA in April. Irma Phelps, a retired missionary who served much of her career as a Wycliffe translator in Cuzco, Peru, will be present for the “unveiling” of this book. Irma worked for many years in producing the translation of the Bible into Quechua. The publication of 1000 copies of the Quechua sermons was made possible by a generous gift from Trinity United Methodist Church in McLean, Virginia. ■



A Word from the President

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zation in me of just how hungry were those who had come to participate in the Congress. They were not so much physically hungry but they were spiritually and intellectually hungry. Those who gathered very clearly wanted to be fed with spiritual and intellectual food. They were somewhat “malnourished” intellectually because they did not have the opportunities for strong education, nor even for resources by which they might try to feed themselves. They came very hungry, seeking the nourishment of God’s holy food by which they might be satisfied and grow.

I thought back to some of the years when I taught at a seminary in North Carolina and how I encountered many students over those years who clearly were there primarily to get a degree as part of the requirement for getting ordained. Less was their interest in spiritual and intellectual growth, but more so in simply “knocking out” what was required to enter a profession.

I have seen more clearly over recent years that many of these in this North American institution were “satisfied” and had little feeling of a “hunger” for more. Part of that is due to the fact that we live in a culture in North America where we all tend to be satiated with so much and so much of the time. We tend to live overly satisfied lives. We tend to be so obese with satisfaction that we seldom recognize any hunger. Even our churches offer us so many ministry programs that we feel religiously satisfied.

I have found in places like Guatemala, where so many live such very simple lives, having to seek out every day some of the basic needs of life in order to satisfy those needs, that this material hunger spills over to their spiritual and intellectual lives as well. Many are starving to be filled up with God’s grace and truth. At the same time, many of us here in the north have trouble recognizing that we have any hunger at all.

The mission of the Wesley Heritage Foundation is to help “feed” this spiritual and intellectual hunger among persons in Latin America, especially those who are being called by God to serve Christ’s church in those places. Through our efforts to develop theological education in Latin America, and through projects to increase educational and spiritual resources of the Wesleyan revival in Spanish, I believe that we are bringing renewal to many persons who are being called to serve Christ’s Church.

Your support of prayers and financial resources are deeply appreciated by WHF. We know you trust that we are good stewards of the resources which you share and we always invite you into personal involvement in this holy work. Grace and peace to all of you.

Mark

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“Time” in Guatemala

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The area around Lago Atitlan in Guatemala is still home to Mayan people. Upon disembarking from the *lancha* that carried us across the lake, we are greeted by a cacophony of indigenous language, a guttural expression so different from Spanish. Women in native dress (different patterns and colors represent different villages) are seen weaving and selling textiles, largely through cooperative enterprises. In the village of San Juan de Laguna, and neighboring San Pedro, huge colorful murals depict Mayan people interacting within natural surroundings, often including *maize*, the corn so important to survival. It is not uncommon to see Christ with outstretched arms or the Virgin Mary in the midst of paintings dedicated to *maize*. A creation story and oral tradition that includes a destroying flood, suffering and sacrifice found meaning as biblical stories wove into the historic traditions and polytheistic practices. In the town square of San Pedro stands a huge statute of St. Peter and next to him a rooster, both showing Mayan design and color. Throughout these villages, the Mayan people insert their own voice and identity into Christian faith with an indivisible design of nature, color and religious practice.

Antigua, located about 30 minutes outside of Guatemala City, is a city committed to a combination of religious observation and religious exploitation of the tourist dollar. These two supposed competing motives work together in curious ways that bring attention to practices of worship and reverence, and become in themselves an attraction. Roman Catholic influence is evident in the beautiful cathedrals and is testimony to Jesuit missionary work. When we attend mass we witness the sincerity of a simple people at worship within an ornate structure. The season of Lent contains a holy anticipation of what is to come. The Mayan *cofradia*, priestly functionaries committed to leading prayer and sacrifice, has become a Catholic brotherhood with an important role in the celebration of the Passion. As we strolled down the “Arch Street” to the Central Park, we would pass the figures which would be carried through the streets during Holy Week. These three dimensional, life size representations of the Stations of the Cross are safely locked up during most of the year within the ruins of a collapsed cathedral, but they are visible through barred doors, waiting to reclaim their place of honor in a holy celebration as Holy Week becomes alive. In this time of year we see a combining of Mayan ritual and sacrifice, a commingling of harvest and paschal recognition coming together in a concrete and visual representation of the last days of our Lord. Beautiful decorative displays of color made from flowers, seeds, sawdust become *alfombras*, rugs laid out painstakingly in bright patterns in the streets. The creative work is destroyed in minutes when the *cofradia* take the up the figures of Christ and carry them on their shoulders through the streets. The Passion becomes real as the people join in following the brothers in the march, incense settling heavily over the crowds, a heavy silence broken only by the footsteps of the men who shoulder the burden. In Latin America the cross is not empty, everywhere a visible reminder of the suffering that broke our sin. ■

The Wesleyan Church Congreso—the Women

Beth B. Wethington

The week’s sessions had focused on the woman’s role in supporting her husband and church community. Topics included such subjects as “How to be the wife of a church leader”, a study on Ruth and some basic first aid and CPR. As the conference drew to a close, men and women again separated into two groups for a follow up question and answer period. Comments for the most part centered on giving thanks for the opportunities of mutual sharing and learning and there was a lot to be expressed in that regard. Then a young woman stood up hesitantly. She had a question, one that she had been wanting to ask all week. The question for which this woman wanted an answer regarded abuse. She had a friend who had lived within an abusive relationship and needed healing. How could she help her friend? What could she say to her?

There is so much we *assume* is known because we *presume* to know out of our particular context. Women in Latin America generally lack the advantage of easy access to information and are often undereducated, a position that lends itself to not even knowing what is appropriate to ask, to question or even that such questions exist. Sue Ferguson served with her husband as a Wesleyan missionary in Peru for 20 years and was a key presenter in the women’s discussions. Life among the north Peruvians opened her eyes to how much women do not know, beginning with a very basic concept: “where do babies come from?” Even this elementary lesson in human reproduction was one with which they were unfamiliar and they gratefully received instruction not only on the process but also on means to understand and interrupt the rhythm of that cycle. The basics of health education, an education that represents a holistic approach to female health is essential for women living and working in a patriarchal society. The women who attended this conference were not the uneducated women living in rural villages, yet they found much to learn during this time. More than one came forward with appreciation after the session on basic first aid (taught by Michelle Reigard), relating stories of people they might have saved had they only known what to do. Education is empowering and these women hunger for answers to questions they are only beginning to formulate as they stretch beyond societal roles.

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