



Children of the orphanage at Cieneguilla pose for a picture.

## A Word from the President:

Mark W. Wethington, Ph.D.

Frequently during the Advent season, as the Christian church gathers to worship, we hear this promise from the prophet Isaiah: “The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad, the desert shall rejoice and blossom” (Isaiah 35:1). In these days, we anticipate the event which reminds us of this gracious promise, namely, the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem. In his advent lies the hope that even deserts shall “rejoice and blossom”. Throughout my lifetime, and I am sure throughout yours, you have been witness to deserts which rejoice and blossom. Let me share with you one very concrete example and draw from that yet another promise.

During the Shining Path war in Peru, from 1980 – 2000, over 80,000 people were killed and the country declined into political, social and economic crisis. Once, during this time, I remember attending an Annual Conference of the Methodist Church of Peru and noticed a lay delegate “packing a pistol”. Everyone lived in fear of their lives and well being, and everyone throughout the country had trouble imagining a peaceful and prosperous future.

As happens during years of war, thousands of children were left orphaned, which meant that with the lack of both family and institutional solutions many children could be found living on the streets, slightly older ones taking care of younger ones. You could find them huddled in alleys and in covered store fronts at night.

During this time of crisis, a couple from Germany came to Peru in order to create a little bit of “promise” for

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## Peru Seminary Blossoms

In 2007, the Methodist Church of Peru called upon the Wesley Heritage Foundation to consult with them and assist in the start-up of a new seminary to train pastors and lay leaders. The former seminary had closed down about ten years previously due to the crisis of the war, which had caused many institutions in Peru to suffer and collapse. Run-away inflation, desperate times, and social distrust all contributed to the seminary’s closure. Since that time very few persons in the Methodist Church of Peru have had the opportunity for theological education and only 3 persons have been ordained as clergy in the past 12 years. It was recognized that the Methodist Church there had no future without the training of future ordained leadership.

In the past three years, the Foundation has assisted the Peru church with the development of Seminario Teológico Wesleyano (the Wesley Theological Seminary). We have assisted with curriculum development, formation of faculty, student scholarships and the renovation of a church building into a student dormitory. The new seminary opened in March 2009. Now, in its second year of classes and third semester, the seminary is “blossoming” and the church “rejoicing”. Young people from around the country of Peru have come to study at the seminary and are living in the partially renovated dormitory.

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Students gather at the Seminario Teológico Wesleyano

## Digital Theological Library

A new project in which the Foundation is engaged is the development of an electronic library. This is a library, primarily of biblical/theological/historical resources in Spanish, which will be housed in a central server, collected and maintained by the Foundation, and made available to persons throughout the world; with the obvious primary goal of making more resources available to Spanish-speaking Christians who are studying, researching, and simply seeking to grow in their faith and leadership. We are thankful to the Rev. Daniel Flores, Ph.D., UM pastor in Texas and a Director of the Foundation, who is guiding and developing this project. We are presently seeking grants and contributions for the development of this project. If you are aware of any resources which may be available, please contact Dr. Flores at [dflores.phd@gmail.com](mailto:dflores.phd@gmail.com).

## Work Team Opportunities

*Beth B. Wethington*

Newly renovated space within the Miramar Methodist Church creates safe and convenient housing for seminary students. While dorm rooms, kitchen and dining areas have been improved, much remains to be done to raise the standard for optimal study and living conditions. We hope to house more students from remote areas of Peru and beyond as the desire for theological education spreads. To that purpose we are calling anyone and everyone to join a work team to assist with the renovation by adding networked study areas, modern bathrooms, finished room for family and visitors and, eventually, classrooms and offices. Several teams for 2011 are already forming and you can be part of one of these teams or form one of your own.

Please be in contact about your interest by emailing [beth@wethingtons.com](mailto:beth@wethingtons.com) or call 252-536-1040.

You may also go to the Foundation website: [www.wesleyheritagefoundation.org](http://www.wesleyheritagefoundation.org) and click on the "Peru seminary mission teams" brochure.

## Dr. L. Elbert Wethington Honored

On October 11, 2010, Dr. L. Elbert Wethington was the recipient of the Duke Divinity School Distinguished Alumni Award. He was recognized for outstanding leadership and service at an alumni luncheon at Duke University. Among his many achievements as United Methodist minister, professor, missionary, scholar, and author, was the major direction he gave to the translation, publication and distribution of the Works of Wesley in Spanish, *Obras de Wesley*. Elbert accomplished this grand ministry, along with his wife, Lois, during the first part of his retirement and as first President of the Wesley Heritage Foundation. We invite you to read the entire article on Elbert by googling the "Duke Divinity School" and scrolling to the news for October 2010 (distinguished alumni award). We rejoice in this honor!

*("Letter from the President" continued)*

orphans. They requested from the government a free portion of land in a desert region on the outskirts of Lima, and they were granted it. They cleared large rock, worked the land, piped in water from a river which flows from the mountains, erected windmills and solar panels, built small houses and a commons building, and then began to bring in orphaned children from off the streets. In that place they planted fruit trees, vegetable gardens, and flowers; they constructed a playground; they began to raise guinea pigs, chickens and cows for food; they taught the older children skills such as shoe repair, sewing and carpentry. What they did was to make the "desert rejoice and blossom". To go there today, as I did again in recent weeks, is to witness the beautiful community of some 120 children and 20 adults who still live and work there. In that place the "dry land became glad" and God's kingdom "blossomed" in the midst of violence and death.

The ministry of the Christ, whom we await this Advent season, is to fulfill the promise that God's kingdom will come on earth as it is in heaven, that deserts will rejoice and blossom. The orphanage of Cieneguilla, described above, is a witness to how we disciples of Christ can bear fruit in dry places, both figuratively as well as literally. The work of the Wesley Heritage Foundation is to enable deserts to blossom. An example of our mission is described elsewhere in this newsletter, entitled "Peru Seminary Blossoms".

In this season of Advent and Christmas, may the holy promise of new creation fill your lives with peace and joy. May the Promise born at Christmas give life to your call to be disciples of Jesus Christ. Grace and peace,

*Mark*

***I wish to help the work of The Wesley Heritage Foundation. Enclosed is my contribution of:***

\$50    \$100    \$500  
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*("Peru Seminary" continued)*

Much work is yet to be done on the dormitory and discussion is underway as to what future building might house seminary classes and offices.

A distance learning component has been added this year, allowing young Methodists from places around the country, and from other surrounding South American countries, to do "virtual" seminary studies via an internet program called Elluminate. This live internet program allows students in distant places around Peru to be virtually present in the classroom with the professor and other students. This is essential because of low economic resources of persons and because of almost impossible distances to travel. Many persons cannot come to Lima to study because they are not able to give up jobs, or distance themselves from family, in order to complete a seminary course of study. Therefore, the seminary is going to them.

Your support, financially and through prayers, is essential to sustain this new "blossom". You may give to the Foundation for the "Peru Seminary" or specifically for student scholarships. If you would like to relate to a particular student, please let us know, and we will make that relationship possible for you. May God continue to prosper this fruitful labor.

Mail contributions to L. Elbert Wethington, Ph.D.,  
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