

LAM renews commitment to evangelistic missionary work; Seeks 300 new missionaries in next three years

By Kenneth D. MacHarg
LAM News Service

Miami, FL—Countering the idea that the day of sending missionaries is long past, the Miami-based Latin America Mission (LAM) is renewing its efforts to recruit up to 300 new missionaries in the next three years.

“Going into some of Latin America’s large churches and seeing a mix of Catholicism with spiritism and animism and realizing that those people are not evangelized, I don’t believe that the continent is evangelized,” said Kevin Jezequel, LAM’s Vice President for Personnel. “There is a great need for missionaries,” he affirmed.

LAM’s new president David Befus agreed, “In the whole of Latin America there are many tremendous opportunities,” he said. “We see many, many places for people to work with the church in its outreach.”

Expressing a concern for those in Latin America who leave the church after a period of time, Jezequel said. “The front door was so wide open that we have to pay attention to the back door. I think that some of the emphasis on non-evangelization type of tasks is one of the reasons,” he pointed out. Jezequel suggested that the time had come for “some more plain old Bible studies and winning people to the Lord.” To that end, the LAM is working to recruit additional missionaries. “We would like to emphasize evangelization and the formation of teams to do church planting,” Jezequel said.

To accomplish that task, the mission is looking for applicants to fill a variety of positions. “I have an Opportunities for Service list that has everything on it from church planters in Mexico City to chaplains in Costa Rica to agricultural specialists in Honduras,” Jezequel said. “As long as it falls under our four program areas of evangelism, disciple-making, leadership formation and compassionate care, we can put you to work,” he explained.

Being more specific, Jezequel pointed to the need for theological educators in Costa Rica to teach counseling at LAM’s 400 student ESEPA Seminary. “In Mexico, there is a seminary where we need some help,” he said. “In Caracas, Venezuela the seminary would love to have some theological educators, anyone from a person with a Master of Divinity who could teach a broad range of subjects to a doctorate specialist in Old Testament.”

In Honduras and Costa Rica there are openings for young couples who would be gifted in working with youth and would help to develop Christian Camping International. “I also have a request from Honduras for people to help publish camping literature,” Jezequel said.

The V.P. for Personnel listed other needs including church planters in Mexico City, communications specialists, administrators for the Costa Rica seminary, administrators for the Miami headquarters office and people willing to work long-term with children at risk throughout the Americas, including Miami.

While the positions may sound like traditional missionary work, Jezequel said that new times demand new methods. “We are looking for church planters who would be pastors for a while, but would have the know-how and desire to turn the church over to

national leadership as soon as possible,” he explained. In addition, missionaries need to be flexible; adapting to those methods which will work best in a Latin American setting. “One of our missionaries is an administrator at the ESEPA seminary,” he said. “He has learned to do that in the Latin way which is much more people oriented and less involved with paper work.”

LAM President Befus affirmed that approach. “The exciting thing about the Latin America Mission is that we are not up here in the United States developing a wonderful plan for Latin America,” he explained. “We are at the grass roots level with the national church and they are identifying where they need partners and collaboration.”

Age and background do not need to be a hindrance to missionary service. “Young, single, married, divorced, we will look at them all,” Jezequel said. While seeking to recruit long-term career missionaries, he does not rule out those who may not see the way clear to commit to decades of service. In addition to short-term service for younger people, Jezequel said “there is another significant movement called The Finishers where second-career people who have paid their mortgage, whose kids are through school and who may have some retirement income are wanting to serve the Lord.” LAM has positions for people in that category as well.

While LAM has traditionally worked in about a dozen Latin American countries including Costa Rica, Mexico and Colombia, the mission is looking at expanding to other locations as the Lord leads. “We are totally wide open about going into additional countries,” he said.

LAM is looking for missionaries from all regions, not just North America. “We would love to hear from Latin America,” Jezequel said. The mission wants to work with national sending agencies and local Christians to seek ways to help raise support and place Latin American missionaries in needy areas, he affirmed.

Those who feel that God may be calling them to mission service are encouraged to get in touch with LAM’s personnel office. “We have about ten steps in our formal application process,” said Robert Foster, LAM’s Director of Personnel Administration. First, a person fills out a Preliminary Information Form (PIF). “At that point we would get with them in person or by telephone to counsel them further,” he said. Beyond that, formal applications papers including a personal statement of faith are requested. “If we have not had a personal interview, we seek one through a representative, board member or a member of our General Council,” Foster explained.

Jezequel, a native of Hackensack, New Jersey who studied at Gordon Conwell Theological Seminary, has a unique perspective on the recruitment of the Lord’s servants. “What we really want to call it is *mobilization*,” he said. “The idea is to help people understand their part in God’s will in mission. We want to mobilize them and help them get where they need to go.” While he wants to recruit new missionaries for service with LAM, Jezequel said he is more concerned about where the Lord wants them to be. “If we discover that where they should be is with a local church in the United States, we want to mobilize them for that. The whole idea of recruitment for us is to move people along and help them discover God’s place for them in the world as it relates to missions.”

The Miami-based Latin America Mission, is an international fellowship of men and women encouraging the Latin church in ministry to the Latin world in evangelization, disciple-making, leadership formation and compassionate care. The mission currently has approximately 240 missionaries in 13 countries. The mission can

be reached at Latin America Mission, Box 52-7900, Miami Springs, FL 33152, by e-mail at info@lam.org, or by calling 800-275-84100. The mission's web page is found at www.lam.org.

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