

## Administering the Program

PRODOLA's Academic Council meets twice a year, under the leadership of the Dean, Dr. Charles (Chuck) Van Engen. Interestingly, deliberations follow a Quaker pattern of decision-making, and the Holy Spirit is invited to lead. The program has 14 faculty members accredited by the Costa Rican government, and a pool of over 40 adjunct faculty who serve as seminar leaders, tutors or research mentors.



**Dr. Chuck Van Engen, Dean and Director of PRODOLA, with students.**

In 2007, the NWYM Board of Global Outreach released Hal and Nancy Thomas to work full time with PRODOLA, as part of the administrative team. Nancy is Associate Dean for Instruction, helping supervise the on-site seminars. Hal serves as Associate Dean for Research, coordinating the phase of independent study and dissertation writing. Nancy teaches the seminar on "Culture, Spirituality and Mission", and Hal team-teaches a course on research design.

For more information, to directly support PRODOLA or contribute to the scholarship fund, contact :

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PRODOLA's board of trustees is a member of the Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability. PRODOLA is an associate member of the Assoc. of Theological Schools.

## Thomas Support

Hal and Nancy Thomas have worked under the NWYM Department of Missions (now the Board of Global Outreach) since 1972, having raised their family in Bolivia and been active in leadership training in the Bolivian Friends Church and in the foundation of a graduate program in mission in the Bolivian Evangelical University. They both have Ph.D. degrees in intercultural studies from Fuller Theological Seminary. When home from their travels in Latin America, they live in Newberg, Oregon and are active members of the North Valley Friends Church.



While the ministry expenses for the Thomases are supplied by Latin American Christian Ministries, personal living expenses continue to come from NWYM, through the contributions of churches and individuals. If you are interested in being part of the Thomases' support team or wish to receive their letters, please contact Shawn McConaughy at the Yearly Meeting office.

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## The Latin American Leadership Development Program (“PRODOLA” in Spanish)



Hal and Nancy Thomas, in a partnership between the Board of Global Outreach of the Northwest Yearly Meeting of Friends, and Latin American Christian Ministries, Inc.

## The Present Reality

The activity of Protestants in Latin America during the past century has produced an unprecedented growth of churches. This growth in turn has created an urgent need for qualified leaders to disciple new believers, involve the churches in facing the social and political needs of their societies, and send cross-cultural missionaries.



**A Friends Church in LaPaz, Bolivia**

Many of the teachers in Latin American Bible schools and seminaries lack adequate training, with most having only the equivalent of a bachelor's degree. Meanwhile, the educational level of the young people in the churches has risen dramatically, raising expectations for the level of pastors and leaders.

Because of the high cost of completing advanced theological studies in North America and Europe, there is a need for leadership development programs to be offered in Latin America, directly related to the local context.

## Meeting the Need

The Latin American Leadership Development Program (PRODOLA) arose to meet this need. First admitting students in 2004, today PRODOLA is a multi-denominational community of Latin American scholars working together in a Graduate School of Theological Sciences, part of the Evangelical University of the Americas in San José, Costa Rica. The program was fully accredited by the government of Costa Rica in 2007, and offers a Ph.D. in theology. It combines individualized study with on-site residential seminars in San José, Costa Rica and independent research under the guidance of tutors and a research mentor. The focus is on doing original theological research that will contribute to the social transformation of Latin America.

## Our Students

As of 2008 we have over 70 students in the program. Elisabeth Primo comes from Marilia, Brazil, where she heads up the department of Christian education of her local church, administering a program for some



**Hal with Elisabeth Primo**

200 children and adolescents. She also directs a missionary training seminary and leads a city-wide Christian Olympics program. Elisabeth has faced traumatic situations since

being admitted to PRODOLA, first a bout with cancer and two years later a bicycle accident that put her in a coma for three weeks. She credits her recovery to prayer support from people throughout her city and the PRODOLA community network.



**Seminar on the biblical foundations of mission.**

Elisabeth and other students God is bringing into this program are leaders who take seriously PRODOLA's theme, "More preparation for better service." They include people like Darío Ramírez, theologian, journalist, television commentator and pastor from Paraguay; César Parra, director of Compassion for Ecuador; and Jorge Girón, international director of the mission board for the Church of Christ.

**Dr. Tito Paredes with PRODOLA students.**



We have one Quaker student to date and are hoping that PRODOLA more and more becomes an option for higher education among Friends of North, Central and South America.