

From Lausanne III to CLADE V

Ruth Padilla DeBorst

What a memorable year 2010 was. It was the season of birthdays: the historic 100 year anniversary of the World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh, Scotland; and in my home, our oldest son turned eighteen. In several contexts and with varied consequences, he is now considered an adult. He is thrilled with the opportunity to exercise his new freedoms and make certain decisions without his parents' interference. We are trying to show him that this newfound independence also brings new responsibilities and the demands of adult life. He is not so thrilled about that part!

In the *Fraternidad Teológica Latinoamericana* (FTL, Latin American Theological Fellowship) we also had a birthday. We celebrated forty years since December of 1970 when in Cochabamba, Bolivia, several Latin American leaders from diverse backgrounds and church traditions founded the FTL. Perhaps, in terms of continental movements, the forty-year point constitutes a watermark similar to eighteen years for a young person.

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Recently the members of the local Costa Rican coordinating team for CLADE V were joking about the point at which a person stops being “young.” For me, youth seemed to just stretch out with each

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passing birthday. At first, I thought someone was young if he or she were under twenty. Later, of course, it seemed like anyone under thirty was young. But that cut off date magically disappeared when I turned thirty-one. I eventually had to admit that it becomes difficult to apply the term “young” to people over forty... Let us similarly recognize that the FTL is no longer in diapers, nor is it a teenager. We are an adult movement. And just as his eighteenth birthday offers our son the public

opportunity to exercise freedom and understand responsibility, the FTL's fortieth anniversary invites us to pause, to look back, and to throw ourselves into this adult life with both freedom and responsibility.

In this article I will dwell on the path from Lausanne III to CLADE V and the challenges of contextualizing *mission*. I will offer a brief historical perspective to help ground those who may not be very familiar with the FTL, the movement that has set the table for the Latin American Congresses on Evangelization (CLADE). Consider what follows an outline of our trajectory as a Christian movement of theological reflection fleshed out by women and men committed to the life and mission of God's people in the colorful, wounded setting of our Latin America.

Obviously, a few pages cannot sum up forty entire years—all the comings and goings, the glories and the errors. I will limit myself to sketching out three commitments that have defined the identity of this movement and held it together in the midst of its intrinsic diversity. FTL members choose to stand within the transforming mission of the triune God, within a trifold reading—of Word, person, and context—in constant redefinition, and within a multifaceted community of