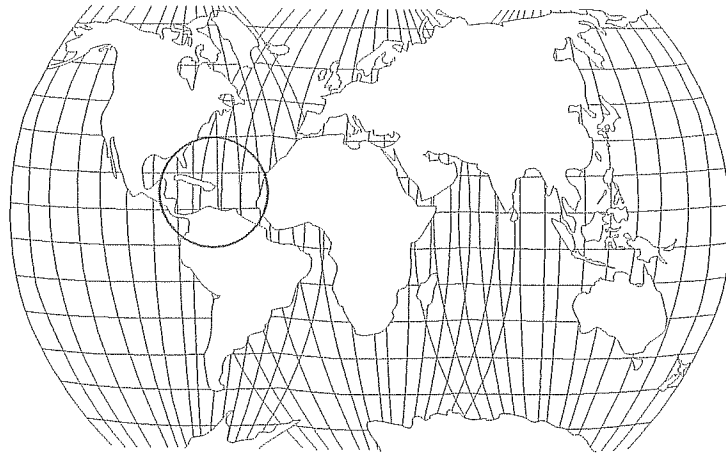
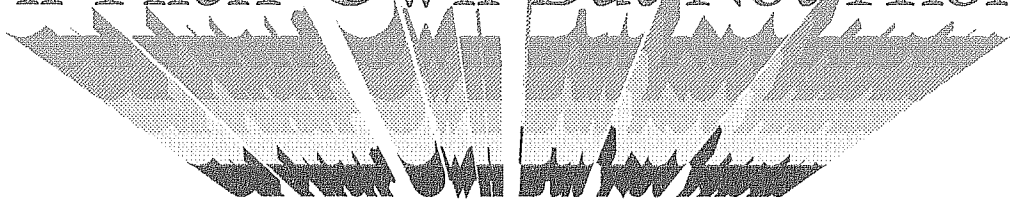


On Their Own But Not Alone

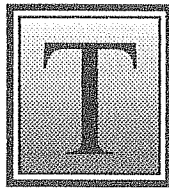


Puerto Rico 2012

Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary
Senior Church History Paper for
Professor John M. Brenner

Steven P. Dorn
May 12, 1995

All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors. 2 Corinthians 5:18-20.

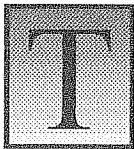


he central thought which dominates these familiar verses is the blessing that is ours in that God does not count our sins against us. This is ultimately the reason we are Christians in the first place and the reason we have desired to serve him. From December of 1992 to August of 1993 I had the special privilege of serving him by sharing that message to many Christians in Puerto Rico. It is the special privilege today of WELS missionaries Timothy Satorius, John Strackbein, Thomas Zimdars and a vicar to serve Christ as his ambassadors in Puerto Rico, sharing that message. Yet very rarely does an ambassador work in one place forever. Although this thought is not derived from an exegesis of the above verses, it certainly is in keeping with the goals and objectives of the WELS and its BWM whenever it carries out mission work. Due in part to all of the former ambassadors in Puerto Rico, the current mission team has been privileged to see Puerto Ricans learning, believing and acting upon the fact that they too have been called as ambassadors to share that message, both in the priesthood of all believers and in the public ministry. In the last several years there has been great progress toward the goal of committing that message of reconciliation completely to the Puerto Rican national church (*La Iglesia Evangelica Luterana Confesional*) and its members. Puerto Ricans will become the teachers. Puerto Ricans will become the pastors. Puerto Ricans are being equipped by WELS missionaries to become Christ's ambassadors.

What we must always remember is that “*all this is from God.*” Although it would be a great privilege to serve as a missionary, and although it has been an even greater privilege for many who have witnessed Puerto Ricans sharing in that service, it is finally God who is working in Puerto Rico, by his Word, in and through his ambassadors, missionaries and national workers alike. In fact without him all visions of future work is meaningless and useless. Yet with him, and with his message, every ambassador of Christ has at his finger tips all of his power. Puerto Rico is preparing to walk on their own, but not alone.

With that in mind let us take a look at progress already made during the last several years toward the goal of a Puerto Rican national church that is self-governing, self-disciplining, self-propagating and self-supporting. And after looking at some obstacles that have been overcome, we can look at future goals in the same areas.

PROGRESS MADE



The following are accomplishments or advancements towards the goal of walking on their own in the area of self-administration.

1. The organized *national church body*, *La Iglesia Evangelica Luterana Confesional (IELC)* was formed in 1990 with a functioning constitution, made up of three congregations which were formerly organized, and one preaching station.
2. Beginning in 1990, a *bi-annual national church assembly* meets to approve the national church budget, to elect officers, and to make future PR ministry plans.
3. Also in 1990 a *national church governing board* of two laymen with one missionary, elected by the national church, began meeting regularly to administer affairs of the national church.
4. In 1992 at the *national church assembly*, a third national was elected to the governing body to serve as the national treasurer.
5. An amendment was made to the *constitution* providing for 6 year terms for members of the governing body, with one member to be elected at each assembly.

6. A national *Education Committee*, which currently is made up of only one national layman and two missionaries, was formed to set up and administer the Bible Institute and Seminary programs.
7. The *national treasurer* is currently working with the Mission Coordinator to learn the book-keeping system by monitoring all national church monthly financial activity.
8. The national church has set up *funds* to support: Public Ministry (local), Latin American Pastor-Lay Delegate Conference, Evangelism aid to other countries, Relief and Expansion (which involves the repayment of a WELS World Building Fund grant to a national fund, to be used for future land purchase and construction by local congregations).

The following are accomplishments or advancements towards the goal of walking on their own in the area of self-discipline.

1. Since the 1970's the national *church councils* (consisting of the elders of the congregations) have been holding bi-monthly meetings. The original focus has changed with the arrival of the national governing board from one of church business to one of study and growth in service.
2. The *Bible Institute* was formed in 1988. Its goals are not only the training of future pastors and evangelists, but the training of leaders and all members for service and ministry. There is one graduate of the complete Bible Institute curriculum and a second man who is nearing completion. Both desire to serve in the pastoral ministry in the future. There are also over twenty students who have taken various courses in the Bible Institute in preparation for future service in the church.
3. The *Seminary* program was initiated in 1994. There is currently one student enrolled, training for the pastoral ministry.
4. Puerto Rican delegates have been participating in the *Latin American Pastor-lay delegate conferences* since 1986.
5. Three Puerto Rican laymen have contributed articles or columns to the new *Mensajero Luterano*.
6. Two Puerto Rican lay-delegates participated in initial *Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Conference* in Germany during April of 1992.
7. Nationals currently assume 50% of the *preaching* load in San Juan, 50% in Humacao, and 33% in Guayama/Barrancas. Two preachers are trained in writing their own sermons. Two preachers are trained in using written helps. Five *evangelists* are trained in leading Bible

classes and confirmation classes, two of which have led members through confirmation classes.

The following are accomplishments or advancements towards the goal of walking on their own in the area of self-propagation.

1. Two *evangelists* have gathered prospects, taught Bible classes and have confirmed members into the different congregations.
2. Four men are trained to *preach* sermons at Sunday worship services.
3. *Evangelism* by the church members beginning with *friendship* has provided the largest number of contacts and confirmations in all of the churches throughout the history of the Puerto Rican missions.
4. Several volunteers in the San Juan and Guayama congregations have helped *canvass* different areas at different times.
5. The national church provided funds for two laymen to undergo the *initial investigation of the Dominican Republic*¹ as a new mission field. That work has already produced many fruits.
6. The national church is providing funds for one layman to continue the ongoing *initial investigations of Cuba*² as a mission field.
7. The national church has officially established a *mission fund* to support the work in the *Dominican Republic and Cuba*. The local congregations are contributing monthly to this fund, where they had previously sent their monthly mission offering to various WELS missions around the world.
8. In 1993 the national church initiated a yearly *Evangelism Seminar* to which all of the congregations are invited. A national worker leads the Bible study at the seminar.

The following are accomplishments or advancements towards the goal of walking on their

¹ See Appendix A: *Recommendation of the Puerto Rico Mission Council -WELS for Exploratory Work in the Dominican Republic*, Possible estimated costs for DR exploratory, March 9, 1993.

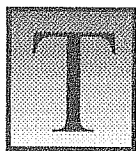
² Missionary John Strackbein has written a 38 page report entitled *To Cuba With Love! Initial Investigation by the WELS*, Feb.28 - March 7, 1993, and an 18 page report entitled *To Cuba With Love! Second Mission Exploration by the WELS*, October 31 - November 14, 1993. In both he is excited by the number of Lutherans he has found in Cuba who are desperately seeking leadership. He includes strong recommendations that we begin to work in Cuba as soon as it is possible.

own in the area of self-support.

1. At the 1992 assembly the first *national church budget* was approved for 1993-94.
2. Guidelines have been set up and approved for the *administration of* all of the various *funds* of the national church.
3. Guayama has repaid its loan for its present chapel to the *local expansion fund*. This fund is now being used by San Juan for its land/site purchase.
4. Three organized congregations contribute to the *national Public Ministry Fund*, and have established the guideline of a \$25 honorarium to cover transportation for all national preachers when they preach away from their local congregation.
5. Each congregation is *self-supporting* right now except for the salary of their pastor and any special Mass Communication expenses.³

As can be seen, a lot of progress has been made in the last few years toward training the Puerto Rican church to walk on its own. By God's divine hand they have been blessed richly. They are not working alone and would not be able to walk alone. God is at work in them. God is at work at his own pace.

OVERCOMING OBSTACLES



he pace at which the work toward a completely national church had begun may seem slow to us. Roger Sprain and Ruppert Eggert began working in Puerto Rico in 1964.⁴ The national church was not formed until 1990. And it is clear that almost all of the progress toward the goal was not able to be accomplished until after its organization. This reminds us of the many

³ Information under *Progress Made*, from Mission Council Reports and Tim Satorius, *Update of Field Goals and Visions: Puerto Rico, 1994*

⁴ Senior Church History Notes, *Lutheranism in America, Period 23 - Wisconsin Synod Expansion*, p3.

obstacles that needed to be overcome in order for the Puerto Rican congregations and national church to have achieved what it has.

First of all the culture of Puerto Rico, including the general spirit of our church members, has served as an obstacle. There has always been great excitement and enthusiasm to work with the missionaries, but there has been a lack of desire to take that next step; to walk on their own. In a report which Missionary Ronald Baerbock submitted to the Latin American Missionary Conference in September of 1989, he gives us his observation that this obstacle is one of a lack of self-confidence. He sees what ^{has} happened to the industries in Puerto Rico as a parallel to the spirit he has seen among his church members.

When one looks at the industries of Puerto Rico and the people who are in charge of these industries, one soon realizes that foreigners on the greater part are in charge of the industries, at least on the top level of management. We have become friends with several families who have come to the island to begin a business or an industry. They are not Puerto Ricans and the financial backing is not from Puerto Rico. I still very vividly remember the response of some of the men when it came to organizing the ceremony for the ground breaking for our new chapel in Guayama. When told that something needed to be done in preparation for that day and that event, one regularly heard: "We will help you pastor." It is no secret that the Puerto Rican has low self esteem. They have for decades looked to others for direction. They have looked to others to tell them what to do. Of late we have been speaking more and more to the people about our thoughts concerning the "indigenous church". At times that sharing of thoughts is met with scepticism and doubt. "We can not manage the church without you." is their reply and they use the example of industry to back up their statement. They don't want us to leave - EVER!⁵

Secondly, the missionaries themselves may have served as an obstacle by not understanding,

⁵ Ronald Baerbock, *Puerto Rico (Part III - The Future)*, Latin American Conference, September, 1989.

or not being 100% sold on the idea of building a national church. Missionary Tim Satorius comments,

We see the real possibility of our Puerto Rican national church standing on its own and we are working toward that goal. Something that Charlie Flunker always used to say here is that if you want to start something, some kind of ministry program or visits or anything involving church work, that program should be transferable. This means not only that the missionary can teach a national to carry it on, but that the national will be the benefit of it and be motivated to carry it on, and that he is able to then teach that same program to another national. At least here in Puerto Rico it is very important that we be together and committed to the same goal of indigenization. None of us came to the field with that goal in mind. When we start out, our goals are probably much simpler. We know we will be working in Spanish, trying to save some people and teach them God's word. New men naturally grow in their conviction toward the principles of indigenization. But we need to grow together, so that we are working together toward the same goals. I'd say we have a real blessing here in Puerto Rico in that we are all committed to those goals.⁶

Remember that Baerbock's report is an observation made in 1989. Now, due to the forum created by the organization of the national church, communication between missionaries and nationals has greatly improved in the area of setting goals and being willing to work to achieve them. God has given the Puerto Ricans a much stronger spirit and the desire to work towards the goal of walking on their own with the help of the missionary team. Through the work and the progress that has been made, they can see and believe that leadership in the church is a gift that God has given to them, and not only to the trained missionaries that have been sent to them. Through this example we can see why there was not a lot of progress from 1964 until 1989. We can also see how proper communication of ideas and goals has turned that trend around. That change in spirit

⁶ Fax received from Missionary Timothy Satorius, Trujillo Alto, Puerto Rico, 1-27-95.

can clearly be seen by Satorius' observations in 1995.

Yet Satorius also hints at the obstacle that has been set in the path of progress by the missionary. He says, “. . . it is very important that we be together and committed to the same goal of indigenization. None of us came to the field with that goal in mind. When we start out, our goals are probably much simpler. We know we will be working in Spanish, trying to save some people and teach them God's word. New men naturally grow in their conviction toward the principles of indigenization. But we need to grow together, so that we are working together toward the same goals.” And before the time when missionaries and nationals were working together toward the same goals, there were problems. Eligio Rodriguez, a leader in the Humacao congregation, recalls a time where missionary and nationals apparently did not have the same goals in mind. When a missionary accepted a call off of the island, there was a lot of confusion and the congregation suffered. Eligio writes:

El llamamiento: bendición o perjuicio?

1. *Si la iglesia está comenzando aún,*
 2. *Si la iglesia no ha sido preparada para continuar la obra que apenas comenzó,*
 3. *Si la iglesia no tiene suficientes miembros para dejar una persona a cargo de las funciones de la iglesia,*
 4. *Cuando la iglesia es poco conocida en dicho lugar y se quedan sin un líder que sepa administrar, o el oficio de las llaves,*
 5. *Qué pueden hacer unas ovejas sin un pastor?*
- Lo que para el pastor y otra congregación puede ser una bendición, para la congregación que es dejado atrás puede ser causa de perjuicio.⁷*

Basically, he let me know that there were some hard feelings and a lack of understanding

⁷ Fax received from Eligio Rodriguez, 2-1-95. Translation: The call - A blessing or harm? 1) If the church has just begun, 2) if the church has not been prepared to continue the work that has just begun, 3) if the church doesn't have sufficient members for a person in charge of the functions of the church to leave, 4) if the church is not well known in the place where it is and is left without a leader who knows how to administer, or the office of the keys, 5) WHAT CAN SHEEP DO WITHOUT A SHEPHERD?

when one missionary left. Members left the congregation because of this lack of understanding. This was one missionary leaving. In the future all of the missionaries plan on leaving. When they leave, won't we see the same reaction, yet on a much greater scale? This would indeed be a great obstacle to overcome if the same lack of understanding still existed. And we can be sure that it does not, as Eligio continues:

Cuando una congregación está debidamente preparada y ha crecido suficientemente, no en membresía y si en conocimiento espiritual que se puede decir que esta está bien firme en el fundamento de la Palabra, dicha congregación puede decirse que está también preparada para la pérdida de un pastor y podría soportar esto sin pastor hasta que llegue otro con la misma doctrina y hasta de la misma congregación nacer un pastor.⁸

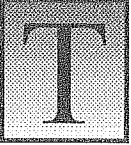
Right there is the goal. It is not being stated here by a visionary mission team, but by Eligio, a Puerto Rican who desires to be a pastor, who sees that other Puerto Ricans with him can and will one day take the Puerto Rican national church and walk on their own.

Seeing these obstacles overcome and this goal firmly in the hands of the national leaders, they and the missionaries can continue to move on, working together toward their goal. The course of this goal will take us to the year 2012, if God's goal is in accord with the Puerto Rican national church. As we have seen steps being taken towards the establishment of self-administration, self-discipline, self-propagation and self-support in the past, there are specific plans in all of these areas for progress in the future. By the year 2012, God willing, it will be complete, and the Puerto Rican church will be *debidamente preparada* and will have *crecido suficientemente, no en membresía y*

⁸ Fax received from Eligio Rodriguez, 2-1-95. Translation: When a congregation is properly prepared and has grown sufficiently, not in membership but in spiritual knowledge, that it can be said that this (congregation) is very firm in the foundation of the word, such a congregation can say that it is also prepared for the loss of a pastor and would be able to support itself without a pastor until another one with the same doctrine arrives and until THE SAME CONGREGATION PRODUCES A PASTOR.

si en conocimiento espiritual que se puede decir que esta está bien firme en el fundamento de la Palabra, and therefore when they do walk on their own, they will know that they are not alone.

FUTURE GOALS

he Mission Council together with the leaders of the Puerto Rican national church has set forth the following plans and goals in the area of self-administration. By the end of 1995, the national church plans to be incorporated with the State of Puerto Rico, and the national treasurer will assume administration of all local funds. In 1996 the incorporated national church will assume legal responsibility for all loans, titles, properties, etc. which are currently held by WELS in Milwaukee. One national layman will replace one of the three missionaries on the church Mission Committee (with the other two being replaced by the year 2012). As the WELS missionaries gradually withdraw from administration of the existing congregations, administration of the preaching stations and mission congregations which do not have their own trained pastor will come under the Mission Committee of the national church. The national Education Committee plans to evolve toward national lay leadership in the same way, to be made up of three nationals by the year 2008. In the years 2002 and 2003 the Education Committee of the national church will have the privilege of assigning the national pastor candidates who will have just graduated from the Seminary. All this is from God. Every ambassador of Christ has at his finger tips his full power.

The Mission Council together with the leaders of the Puerto Rican national church has set forth the following plans and goals in the area of self-discipline. By 1997, preaching duties will be completely in the hands of nationals for the San Juan and Humacao congregations. Also at this time nationals will handle 50% of the preaching duties in Guayama and Barrancas, and by the year 2000,

75% there. In 1999 one missionary will move to a new area on the island to do mission work. In 2002 Puerto Rico will see its first Seminary graduate. This graduate will be given control of the Guayama/Barrancas congregations by the Education Committee of the national church, and the missionary currently serving there will move to a new area on the island to do mission work. In 2003, full control of the San Juan congregation will be given to the next Seminary graduate. In 2005 the national church Mission Committee will take control of the Humacao congregation and assign it to a national pastor, if there is one available. All this is from God. Every ambassador of Christ has at his finger tips his full power.

The Mission Council together with the leaders of the Puerto Rican national church has set forth the following plans and goals in the area of self-propagation. The national church plans to continue to organize and support the Annual Evangelism Day. This day serves to unite all of the WELS congregations on the island. It also not only serves to remind them of how God has blessed their evangelism efforts so far, but encourages them to continue spreading God's good news throughout the island and even to other countries; other countries such as the Dominican Republic. In August of 1995 Eligio Rodriguez of Humacao plans to spend the entire month in the Dominican Republic as a lay missionary assisting Executive Committee Chairman Larry Retburg, while Missionary Ron Baerbock is on furlough. And as soon as one is available, a Puerto Rican lay couple will spend one year in the Dominican Republic as assistants to the missionary. In 1996 the Mission Committee will include lay representation. Upon graduation from the Seminary, the first national pastor will begin teaching Bible Institute classes (one in 2002 and a second in 2003). In 2008 a national pastor will assume control of the Seminary program.

2002 - Ten national evangelists will be trained

ON THEIR OWN BUT NOT ALONE * 12

- 2002 - A fifth congregation will be formed (Fajardo/Rio Grande)
- 2003 - A third Bible Institute graduate will be ready to enroll in the Seminary
- 2003 - A sixth congregation will be formed (Ponce)
- 2005 - A seventh congregation will be formed (?)
- 2011 - Twenty national evangelists will be trained

All this is from God. Every ambassador of Christ has at his finger tips his full power.

The Mission Council together with the leaders of the Puerto Rican national church has set forth the following plans and goals in the area of self-support. The first step was the setting of goals at the 1994 assembly. Goals were set for the complete self-support of the current congregations including pastors by 2004. One of these pastors will be a national pastor, and in 2002 Guayama and Barrancas will support their own national pastor, today's Seminary student, Sergio Cortijo. In 2003 San Juan will be ready to support the second national pastor, the next Seminary student to graduate, Manuel Monroig. When another Puerto Rican church needs a pastor and there is no national available, the Mission Committee of the IELC can call WELS pastors to be pastors, not missionaries, to their congregations. In 2008, when a national pastor assumes responsibility of the Seminary, the national church will be ready to assume part of his salary. In 2010 the Humacao congregation will receive funding to build their chapel, from the national expansion fund. In the year 2011 the national church hopes to have 16 preachers, 20 evangelists, 38 Bible Institute Students, 18 Bible Institute graduates, 2 Bible Institute teachers, 4 Seminary students and 2 national pastors. The chart on the following page which shows the IELC goals for the year 2011 has one open column. Let us always keep the third column of that chart open to God's will and be willing to rewrite our plans according to his. All this is from God. ⁹ See chart next page

⁹ Information under *Future Goals* from Tim Satorius, *Update of Field Goals and Vision: Puerto Rico, 1994*. See Appendix B for complete chart of *Projection of National Workers to Support an Independent PR Church, 1994-2011*.

	IELC Plans	God's Accomplishments
	2011	2012
National Preachers	16	
National Evangelists	20	
Bible Institute Students	38	
Bible Institute Graduates	18	
Bible Institute Teachers	2	
Seminary Students	4	
National Pastors	2	

I am looking forward to reading this every three or four years, and then again in 2012. The numbers probably won't be identical to the plans. The BWM or the Executive Committee or the Mission Committee of Puerto Rico may have to make changes along the way. This is all from God. Are God's plans greater? Will the numbers be greater than the national church envisions today? Are God's plans greater? Will the members be stronger than the national church envisions today?

The goal is to prepare *La Iglesia Evangelica Luterana Confesional* to walk on its own by the year 2012. Looking at how God has blessed them in the past, and at how God has given them the strength and the resources to continue, the Puerto Rican Mission Council and the national church firmly believe that one day God will carry their goals from the realm of vision to reality.

But those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength.
They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow
weary, they will walk and not be faint. Isaiah 40:31.

APPENDIX A

Possible Estimated Costs for DR Exploratory

Date	Item	Cost - WELS	Cost - IELC
July 1993-1994	WELS Sem grad	40,000	
	PR lay worker (family)	17,000	1,000
	<i>Equipo</i> (equipment)	5,000	
	PR missionary monthly visit	1,500	
	PR lay worker monthly visit		1,500
	TV programming	12,000	
	<i>Centro de Información Cristiana</i> (Christian Information Center)	8,500	
		84,000	2,500
July 1994-1995	DR WELS missionary	40,000	
	PR lay worker	16,500	1,500
	<i>Equipo</i>		
	PR missionary monthly visit	1,500	
	PR lay worker monthly visit		1,500
	TV programming		
	CIC	8,000	
	66,000	3,000	
July 1995-1996	DR WELS missionary	40,000	
	PR lay worker		
	<i>Equipo</i>		
	PR missionary monthly visit	1,500	
	PR lay worker monthly visit		1,500
	TV programming		
	CIC	8,500	
Misc.		1,500	
	50,000	3,000	
	TOTAL	200,000	8,500

Note: Plans and strategies have already changed and will constantly be revised throughout the early years of work in the Dominican Republic.

APPENDIX B

Projection of National Workers to Support an Independent PR Church

	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
Preachers	3	4	5	6	6	7
Evangelists	5	6	7	7	8	8
BI Students	2	5	8	10	12	14
BI Graduates	1	1	2	2	2	2
BI Teachers	0	0	0	1	1	1
Sem Students	1	1	2	2	2	2
Pastors	0	0	0	0	0	0

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Preachers	7	8	8	9	9	10
Evangelists	9	9	10	10	12	12
BI Students	16	18	20	22	24	26
BI Graduates	2	2	2	3	4	5
BI Teachers	1	1	2	2	2	2
Sem Students	2	2	1	1	2	2
Pastors	0	0	1	2	2	2

	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Preachers	11	12	13	14	15	16
Evangelists	13	14	15	16	18	20
BI Students	28	30	32	34	36	38
BI Graduates	6	8	10	12	15	18
BI Teachers	2	2	2	2	2	2
Sem Students	3	3	3	4	4	4
Pastors	2	2	2	2	2	2

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