

Mission Spotlight

2017 Multi-Region Corporation (MRC) Palmer Grant Cycle Awardee

Youth Enrichment Academy of Greater Cleveland — Cleveland Baptist Association

The Youth Enrichment Academy of Greater Cleveland is an after-school program created to minister to children from lower-income/under-served families in the Greater Cleveland school system and surrounding communities. The Academy was conceived by the **Cleveland Baptist Association**, a regional entity of the American Baptist Churches, USA. The Academy was built on an ethos of interrupting the prison-to-cradle pipeline in the Greater Cleveland Area. This is accomplished through programmatic interventions designed to spark an increase in third-grade reading levels.

The Academy's target population are children in the first through third grade who, along with their families, benefit from daily and weekly programming activities.

Daily programming activities include:

- Building healthy bodies and healthy family systems
- Providing academic support, including homework help, as well as, tutoring in math and reading
- Providing nutritional meals and training in healthy eating and isotonic exercise

And, weekly programming activities include:

- Arts appreciation, including performing arts, as well as, social skills development
- Providing children with a reading/lending library to enhance their reading skills, and an annual backpack filled with school supplies
- Providing parental support, including the provision of low-cost grocery shopping in the Academy's on-site pantry

The Palmer Grant award will provide financial support for these programming activities. These initiatives are designed to turn the tables on what is often a contributing factor to generational poverty, i.e. basic literacy. By providing a safe space for educational enhancement—archetypal social and economic barriers facing children and their families in the Greater Cleveland area can be addressed.

The *Youth Enrichment Academy of the Greater Cleveland Area* remains committed to equipping its patrons to live out their Christian faith and witness in obedience to the command of Matthew 25 to minister to the "least of these." Jesus certainly had a special place in his heart and ministry for children. The Academy upholds this command, and by doing so, the Great Commandment to love God and neighbor is fulfilled. The power of Christian servitude is indeed at work in the *Youth Enrichment Academy of the Greater Cleveland Area*. We take the opportunity to recognize them for their work in serving as a prophetic voice, as well as a practical force for change and transformation in individual lives and the community.



Ministry Spotlight



2016 International Ministries (IM) Palmer Grant Awardee*

Seminario Bautista de Mexico, Seminario Bautista de Mexicali and Palmer Theological Seminary (Spanish Language) Online Master of Theological Studies (MTS) Degree program

The **Master in Theological Studies (MTS)** Spanish on-line program was conceived in 2015. Built on the close relationship between *American Baptist International Ministries* and *Palmer Seminary*, the **MTS** program responds to the needs of Latino/a leaders and churches in Iberoamerica and the Caribbean. The program is also driven by the mandate of providing ministerial training at a master's level that is contextualized, flexible, and more affordable. As such, it runs overs two-years and consists of twelve courses in the areas of theology, biblical studies, church history and practice of ministry. The degree itself has been implemented with two initial cohorts and a total of 39 students representing two different regions in Mexico: Central Mexico and surrounding areas, including students from *CICEM (Council of Indigenous Evangelical Churches)* and Northwest Mexico. Working in conjunction with the *Palmer Seminary*, the program is facilitated by long-time *International Ministries* partners, the *Seminario Bautista de Mexico* and the *Seminario Bautista de Mexicali*. The 2016 IM Palmer Grant Award* continues to facilitate financial support for the MTS' 2nd year students, who otherwise would have limited means to complete such a degree.

**The 2017 Palmer Grant Awardees for IM cycle have not been announced at the time of this publication.*

The program's measurable goals are the following:

a. Provide theological education and training in the Spanish language to men and women pastors/leaders in Iberoamerica and the Caribbean. This will be evaluated by the number of graduates who successfully attain the MTS degree (aimed at 95% retention of the 39 students that began the program).

b. Create a supportive community of learners for pastors and lay leaders in Iberoamerica and the Caribbean. This will be evaluated with student assessments via course evaluations.

The **MTS** (Spanish online) program comes at a particularly pertinent time in history, where, at present, most seminaries in the Iberoamerica and the Caribbean region are only able to offer diplomas and undergraduate degrees in Bible and Theology. They lack the financial and human resources needed to have potential graduate level students travel and be equipped in developed countries like the USA. We take this opportunity to recognize *Seminario Bautista de Mexico, Seminario Bautista de Mexicali* and *Palmer Theological Seminary*, for their work in educating a new generation of global Christian leaders and witnesses with the tools to continue to effectively spread the Gospel of Christ.

