



MINUTE FOR MISSION

The Christmas Joy Offering helps form future leaders of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

Their student days may have been a generation apart, but both Lemuel Garcia-Arroyo and his nephew Jasiel Hernandez found the Presbyterian Pan American School (Pan Am) to be an incubator for Christian leadership in their lives.

Lemuel, now Associate Director in the Racial Ethnic & Women's Ministries area of the Presbyterian Mission, came to Pan Am from southern Mexico in 1981 as a high school sophomore. He enrolled in the Kingsville, Texas, secondary school in part to escape the scrutiny that comes with being a pastor's son. He says the space Pan Am gave him helped his faith grow and encouraged him to claim his love for the church.

Jasiel, a senior at Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary, made the trek from southern Mexico to Pan Am 27 years after Lemuel. He grew up hearing stories about Pan Am from Lemuel and his younger brother Joel, who is an information systems manager and lay pastor in Mexico City. Jasiel heard his uncles talk about opportunities to excel academically, create community, and grow spiritually. Jasiel and Lemuel spoke highly of Pan Am's academic preparation, chapel services, and extracurricular activities, but both also emphasized the importance of participating in student-organized Bible study and prayer groups.

"Who would have thought teenagers would voluntarily go to chapel to pray after breakfast?" Lemuel asks. "But that's what we did. I wasn't pressured to do it, but it helped solidify my identity and my love for the church."

Jasiel participated in a weekly dormitory Bible study. "It was there I discovered I wanted to learn more about God. I wanted to know more about people's faith and their understanding about how God works in their lives through different events and situations," Jasiel says. "So that Bible study really impacted my life. I wound up leading it my senior year."

Lemuel is grateful the Pan Am tradition continues and that it helped shape his nephew's calling. "I am so proud and joyful that God would call him into ministry," Lemuel says.

Jasiel is looking toward ordination in the PC(USA) and doctoral work in theology and Christian education after he finishes seminary.

Jasiel and Lemuel appreciate the scholarships that made it possible for them to enjoy Pan Am's spiritually nurturing and high-quality academic programs. They draw a connection between the student aid they received and gifts to the Christmas Joy Offering.

"My family is from humble origins, so money was tight," Jasiel says, "I appreciate those who gave money, because scholarships made it possible for me to go to Pan Am."

Your gift to the Christmas Joy Offering will make it possible for the Presbyterian Pan American School to prepare more leaders. Half of the Offering goes to Presbyterian-related racial ethnic schools and colleges, and the other half supports current and past church workers and their families who are in critical financial need. Your gift will make a difference in the lives of individuals and will strengthen our church. **Please give generously.**

Let Us Pray

Beckoning God, we give thanks that you call people to serve you and your church. We pray for young people who seek your leading. May we and they be faithful to the work you call us to do. **Amen.**