



# Meeting the Hispanic Ministry Needs of the Church

LUTHERAN SEMINARY PROGRAM IN THE SOUTHWEST,  
A PROGRAM OF WARTBURG THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

ABOVE

Adriana Maria  
Johnson-Rivas,  
LSPS TEEM student

"I will be ordained at Principe de Paz under a big tent on our six acres of open field where family, friends, congregation members, and colleagues alike will share with me a grand moment in my life made possible by hard work, brilliant teachers, and above all, a sweet and merciful God." Adriana Maria Johnson-Rivas is excited about her ordination this spring. It's been a long journey to get to this day – a journey that began decades ago and thousands of miles away.

Born in the city of Medellin, Colombia, Johnson-Rivas was raised, along with her seven siblings, "under the watchful eyes of two hardworking and loving parents." In her native Colombia, Johnson-Rivas studied to be a teacher, but never had a chance to continue with her education and

pursue her career, so in the 1980's, she followed siblings and moved to the United States for more opportunity. While living in the U.S., Johnson-Rivas became active in the ELCA and began attending Principe de Paz Lutheran Church in Houston, Texas. In 2002, upon the invitation of the pastor, she began teaching catechism class to both youth and adults at the church. "This invitation was wonderful!" Johnson-Rivas recalls, "I studied to be a teacher in my home country, but never finished. Teaching at Principe de Paz offered me a chance to pick up where I left off. I loved teaching and I loved to share knowledge and learn more myself."

Johnson-Rivas volunteered as a catechism teacher at Principe de Paz for eight years, before she had the opportunity to study in the Institute of Evangelism of Prince of Peace "La Escuelita" and accepted the position of SALM (Synodically Authorized Lay Minister). In 2009, due to the health problems of the current pastor, Johnson-Rivas was asked to lead the Principe de Paz congregation. To properly fill this role, she enrolled in Theological Education for Emerging Ministries (TEEM) at the Lutheran Seminary Program in the Southwest (LSPS) in Austin, Texas. LSPS is a program of Wartburg Theological Seminary. (See description on p. 13)

**"Without a doubt, LSPS and TEEM prepared me to be the leader that I am today. The overall flexibility of the classes and the homework was well suited for someone in my position- a person that not only had a day job, but also ran a household, served her community, and served the Lord. "**

ADRIANA MARIA JOHNSON-RIVAS

Johnson-Rivas will be ordained this spring and credits LSPS for helping her get where she is now, "Without a doubt, LSPS and TEEM prepared me to be the leader that I am today. The overall flexibility of the classes and the homework was well suited for someone in my position- a person that not only had a day job, but also ran a household, served her community, and served the Lord. LSPS brought together people just like me, other SALM who were running their own congregation. Meeting them gave me access to something books and classes might not be able to teach, real world accounts of other SALMs trials and tribulations. We all learned from each other."

Principe de Paz, where Johnson-Rivas will continue to serve, is located in the sprawling city of Houston, Texas, specifically South Houston, which is home to a large Hispanic community. After her ordination this spring, Johnson-Rivas will be fully equipped to attend to the spiritual needs of the Hispanic population in her congregation. She says the community suffers many hardships, many of which stem from the concerns over their legal status in the country. As Johnson-Rivas points out, many of the families there have been in this country for decades, but are afraid of deportation. She adds, "These wonderful people are not looking for charity or a handout, but rather a helping hand, a friend to console them when making decisions, and opportunities which they have never been offered before, and that's where my ministry comes in, the Lutheran Church, accompanying the Hispanic congregation to a bright and better tomorrow."



**Rev. Dr. Javier Alanis**

With the growing Hispanic population in the church and the country as a whole, others who can provide this kind of ministry are needed. Rev. Dr. Javier Alanis, Executive Director and Associate Professor of Theology, Culture, and Mission at the Lutheran Seminary Program in the Southwest,

explains, "**The need to prepare pastors who are equipped for intercultural ministry has never been greater than today. The demographics of our country reflect the rapid growth in the Hispanic community. LSPS students are well prepared to be culturally sensitive leaders who can meet this challenge. Adriana is a clear outcome of our mission.**"

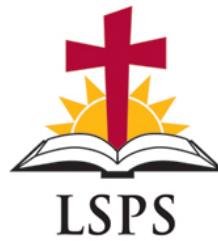


**LSPS** is a program of  
Wartburg Theological Seminary  
and the Lutheran School of Theology in Chicago.

**LSPS** trains leaders through the Theological Education for Emerging Ministries (TEEM) program of the ELCA.

Its primary focus is equipping women and men for mission in Spanish speaking contexts throughout the church.

Visit [www.lsps.edu](http://www.lsps.edu) or [www.wartburgseminary.edu](http://www.wartburgseminary.edu) to learn more or to support this program.



**LSPS**  
LUTHERAN SEMINARY  
PROGRAM  
IN THE SOUTHWEST



## **LSPS Intensive: Spanish Language and Hispanic Ministry**

The Lutheran Seminary Program in the Southwest will offer a Spanish Language and Hispanic Ministry Intensive on its campus in Austin, Texas from **May 26-31, 2013**. The intensive will include a trip to the U.S. - Mexico border to visit San Lucas Lutheran Church from May 31st to June 2nd, for an additional cost. Contact lsps@lsps.edu to learn more or to register.