

OPEN LETTER

AETH Announces the Two (2) Recipients of the Justo & Catherine González “Lifetime Awards” as Our 2026 Biennial Gathering: Roots and Horizons Gets Closer (Español arriba)

August 26, 2026

Dear Educational and Ecclesial Community,

Today marks a special date, as we are now only **50 days away from our 2026 Biennial Gathering**. Time has gone by quickly. Over the past several weeks, we have been immersed in preparations, including working sessions, designing the materials and content we will share, defining objectives, gathering key information, and engaging in conversations with our speakers, among many other details. It has truly been a team effort, with our Board of Directors, collaborators, and sponsors joining the AETH team to ensure that over these three days every participant can have a unique and transformative formation experience.

As you know, this year’s theme, **“Roots and Horizons,”** seeks to honor and recognize the value of the organization’s journey, together with the men and women who have walked alongside AETH, and the solid foundation upon which a committed, focused, and dynamic association is flourishing today, one that looks with optimism toward a promising future filled with new opportunities, partnerships, and resources for our members and for the Hispanic ecclesial community.

This year’s event also includes a very special celebration of our **35th anniversary**: we are returning to the place where our first Gathering took place in 1991, **Columbia Theological Seminary (CTS) in Decatur, Georgia**. We are deeply grateful to Rev. Dr. Victor Aloyo, President of CTS, for welcoming us to their campus for three days as we gather for formation, resources, and an enriching experience of growth.

“It is a tremendous joy and a profound honor for me that Columbia Theological Seminary will once again welcome the Association for Hispanic Theological Education (AETH) to the place where this extraordinary story began thirty-five years ago. As we celebrate this important anniversary, we give thanks to God for the visionary women and men whose faith, courage, and commitment laid the foundation for an organization that has transformed theological education and strengthened the Church's witness across generations.

The theme of this anniversary, ‘Roots and Horizons’, beautifully expresses how our future finds its greatest strength when it remains rooted in the wisdom, resilience, and faithfulness of those who came before us. Our roots ground us in our identity, our heritage, and God’s enduring faithfulness; our horizons invite us to imagine new possibilities, form new leaders, and proclaim the Gospel with renewed hope in a constantly changing world.

It is especially meaningful that this celebration returns to Columbia, the place where those first seeds were planted. May this anniversary not only honor an extraordinary history, but also inspire a new generation to continue building bridges of theological formation, faith, justice, and service for the flourishing of the Church and the world.”

Dr. Victor Aloyo
President, Columbia Theological Seminary

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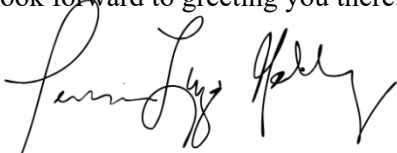
We are also proud to share details about the **Justo & Catherine González Lifetime Award**, an honor AETH presents at each Biennial Gathering to individuals who make significant contributions that generate change and support the development of theological education.

This year, the recipients will be **Rev. Dr. Joanne Rodríguez**, Executive Director of HTI, and **Dr. Daniel Schipani**, psychologist, theologian, and writer. Both colleagues have been selected to receive this recognition for their extraordinary commitment and valuable contributions to theological education in service to the Hispanic community. Throughout the years, their leadership, dedication, and impact have strengthened theological formation and inspired new generations to serve with excellence. Each of their legacies continues to enrich our community, both within and beyond the United States.

I invite you to join us for the awards ceremony, which will be part of AETH's 2026 Biennial Gathering, a hybrid event taking place **October 15–17 in Decatur, Georgia**. We will also feature more than 17 expert speakers representing diverse areas of expertise, organized around three primary pillars: education, church, and community, along with a program offering approximately 15 contact hours of formation.

We are very excited about this Gathering and confident that it will be a wonderful and meaningful experience, a blessing to every participant.

I look forward to greeting you there.



Rev. Dr. Jessica Lugo, MDiv, MBA
Executive Director | AETH

Pastor, Educator, and Administrator - Rev. Dr. Jessica Lugo Meléndez is an ordained minister of the American Baptist Churches. She teaches History of Christianity, New Testament, Evangelism, and Business Administration at several institutions, with a passion for developing emerging leaders. In October 2023, she became Executive Director of the Association for Hispanic Theological Education (AETH), leading efforts to strengthen excellence in theological education for Hispanics by building bridges between the Church and the academy.

