

INTRODUCTION

It doesn't seem that long ago that a group of us -- mostly Hispanic but with a few Anglo facilitators and observers -- met near Dallas to interact on a very important topic: "What do we need to know to do a better job of ministering among Hispanics in the USA?"

That was in April of 1988, and now a similar group will be meeting soon to discuss similar issues. However, a few of those who are now on the National Board of Directors of HABBM also were with us in Dallas. Jesse and Danny will remember that our time in Dallas was a very inspiring time, one of serious reflection, discussion, and dream-planning. It had to do with our thinking on the "status of the Hispanic Evangelical Church today and its role in the revitalization of Christianity in America."

As the HABBM Board meets and continues to interact on this vital question, now joined in their efforts by the Rev. Luis Madrigal as Executive Director, I will be with you in spirit. May the God of all of us "Samaritans" -- as Jesse likes to say -- be with you in power and with great blessing to guide you as you define your leadership role and make bold plans as the "shakers and movers" within the Hispanic Church of tomorrow!

Many of us have wanted to have the ability to "take a photograph" of the Hispanic Protestant Church in the USA of yesterday and today, and to share this information with the new generation of young Hispanic pastors and lay leaders whom God is raising up to take our place on the battlefield.

Earlier this year, Luis and I discussed the possibility of creating a database of information on the Hispanic population and the Hispanic Church, and with the support and encouragement of HABBM we have attempted to work toward that goal. The target date to have the preliminary version of the "National Hispanic Database" operational was September 30, 1993. We are happy to report that we have accomplished this task.

The enclosed report will give you an overview of our findings, and will no doubt inspire you to continue this effort during 1994 under Luis' leadership and oversight. All the information that we share with you today is from the database that I have created and installed on Luis' computer at the HABBM office at Faith United Presbyterian Church. As I mentor him in the process of "report making" via computer, he will be able to continue to provide you with updated information that will aid you in your personal ministry as well as in the joint ministry that you share with HABBM.

Soon, I will return to my home in Costa Rica to continue my work with IDEA's Regional Office for Latin America. I will attempt to work with Luis from afar, as well as during my frequent travels to the USA. Upon reflection, I think that some of the dreams that we shared during those few days in Dallas in 1988 are now becoming a reality -- the fact that HABBM is now a national organization working along side of AHET, APHILA and AETH gives me hope!

But, so that we don't forget some of the things that we discussed in Dallas, I have included two documents for your consideration: (1) The Final List of Participants, and (2) "Responses from the First Consultation of the National Coordinating Committee and Advisory Council" for the National Study of Hispanic Protestant Church Growth in the USA. As you review the list of participants and read the statements that were made, may this inspire you to keep on "pressing forward" in the footsteps of the Master. May He guide you along the path ahead, and may His Holy Spirit empower each of you to "be like Jesus" as you lead the way for others to follow.

A NATIONAL STUDY OF HISPANIC CHURCH GROWTH IN THE USA

FIRST CONSULTATION OF THE NATIONAL COORDINATING COMMITTEE AND THE NATIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL

(Irving, TX - April 5-7, 1988)

FINAL LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

<u>NAME</u>	<u>ORGANIZATION</u>
Clifton L. Holland, President (President, In-Depth Evangelism Associates, Inc.)	National Coordinating Committee
Jesse Miranda, Vice-president (General Superintendent, Latin American Pacific District, General Council of the Assemblies of God)	National Coordinating Committee
H.O. Espinoza, Secretary (President, PROMESA)	National Coordinating Committee
Juan Carlos Miranda, Treasurer (Director, Hispanic Department, Fuller Evangelistic Association)	National Coordinating Committee
Oscar Romo, Chairman (Director of Language Missions Department, Home Mission Board, Southern Baptist Convention)	Advisory Council
Daniel Sánchez, alternate	Southern Baptist Convention
Johnny Alicea-Baez	Reformed Church in America
Luis Pérez, alternate	Reformed Church in America
Roy Barton, alternate	United Methodist Church
Larry Blake	The Navigators
Bob Adame, alternate	The Navigators
Tim Gibson	World Vision/USA (donor agency)
Rick Gray, alternate	World Vision/USA
Danny De León, alternate	L.A. '88 Hispanic Congress
Guillermo Luna	Campus Crusade for Christ
Maria Martinez	American Bible Society (donor agency)
Garry McClure, alternate	Lutheran Church/Missouri Synod
Pablo Pérez (Executive Secretary, WEF Commission on Church Renewal)	Presbyterian Church in America
Jose Reyes (President, Hispanic National Religious Broadcasters)	Church of God of Prophecy
Alejandro Sandoval, alternate	Church of the Nazarene
Héctor Tamez (President, Hispanic Commission, National Association of Evangelicals)	Open Doors
Jorge Taylor	Evangelical Covenant Church
Manuel Vásquez, alternate	Seventh-Day Adventist Church
Jorge Villa	Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
John Mawhinney (guest, Trustee)	Latin American Mission (donor agency)
Nelson Romo (guest, son of Oscar Romo)	

A NATIONAL STUDY OF HISPANIC CHURCH GROWTH IN THE USA

RESPONSES FROM THE FIRST CONSULTATION NATIONAL COORDINATING COMMITTEE & ADVISORY COUNCIL

April 5-6, 1988 (Irving, TX)

QUESTION: What do we need to know in order to do a better job of ministering among Hispanics in the USA?

THE FOLLOWING RESPONSES WERE GIVEN:

1. Roy Barton: What are others doing “right” that’s helping them to grow?
2. Oscar Romo: How is it that the independent churches are growing so rapidly?
3. Daniel Sánchez: What evangelistic methodology is being used among Hispanics that really works?
4. Jesse Miranda: What is the relationship between caring for needs in the congregation (refugees, for example) and membership growth?
5. Guillermo Luna: What can we do to encourage leaders and to motivate them in their ministries?

We need a profile of pastors of growing churches--personality, leadership style, methods, etc.

6. George Villa: What are the characteristics of “dying” Hispanic churches? What are the characteristics of “growing” Hispanic churches?
7. Tim Gibson: Research is a tool for building relationships--mutual edification, learning from one another, improving communication, etc.
8. Oscar Romo: What is the relationship between the educational level of pastor and a “dying” church? Is there a problem of “over-education” or “under-education” of Hispanic pastors in comparison to the person in the pew?
9. Johnny Alicea-Baez: Are current Anglo programs of theological education relevant for preparing Hispanics for ministry among Hispanics? Are current Hispanic programs of theological education relevant for training Hispanics for ministry among Hispanics?
10. Oscar Romo: There seems to be a problem of decontextualization of pastors who come from Latin America and who try to do the same things here that they did over there?
11. Jose Reyes: I believe that pastors from Latin America need to receive training and reorientation after their arrival in the USA, in order to be more sensitive to the needs of their congregations here.

What is the role of prayer in the lifestyle of growing congregations?

We need to have a Cuban on the Advisory Council.

12. Roy Barton: We need a profile of the constituency of our local congregations--who are we serving? What are their needs?
13. George Taylor: We need to analyze the curriculum needs of training programs for preparing Hispanic leaders for ministry in the USA.
14. Daniel Sánchez: What languages are being used in worship and Christian education programs in the local church?

What “groups” are more responsive to the Gospel than others?
(new immigrants, what age levels, rural-to-urban migrants?)

What is the growth pattern of rural churches compared to urban churches or suburban churches?
15. Pablo Pérez: What relationship exists between a church with a outreach/missions program and the internal growth of the congregation in terms of maturity as well as membership growth?

How many churches are involved in a new building program, and how does that affect their growth?

How are programs like Evangelism Explosion affecting the growth of Hispanic churches?

Does Crusade Evangelism have a lasting effect on participating churches? What about Healing Campaigns?

Are leaders in the local congregation also involved as leaders in their local communities?
16. Oscar Romo: What “Bible” (version, publisher and language) is being used in local congregations? Does this vary with the region of the country or the denomination?
17. Luis Pérez: What is the relationship between having a part-time or full-time pastor and the growth of the local church?
18. Johnny Alicea-Baez: I am concerned about how a church views itself: do members perceive of themselves as “objects” or “agents” of mission?
19. Cliff Holland: What is the role of the small congregation (20-60 members) in helping to meet the needs of Hispanics for a sense of “community”? Do new arrivals seek out the small, introverted congregations as a functional substitute for their extended family?

20. Hector Tamez: What is the role of “signs and wonders” in producing accelerated church growth?

I was recently in Cuba and the manifestation of “signs and wonders” there today seems to be producing a lot of new growth--most of the churches that I saw were packed with people. Evangelicals are even preaching the Gospel in “unauthorized” places; and when one preacher gets arrested, then another and another takes his place to keep on preaching!

21. Jesse Miranda: We need to examine the role of “authority” in church growth--miracles, signs and wonders, preaching the Word with power and resulting in the conviction of sin and repentance and a high number of conversions.

We need to compare “conversion growth” with “transfer growth.”

22. George Villa: One area that needs to be explored is that of “feelings of loneliness” in relation to church growth. Many new arrivals (immigrants or migrants from out-of-state) in our churches seem to have this problem.

Also, if we had a national directory of Hispanic churches we could help some of our members who are moving to a new area find a new place to worship and serve God--one that would be similar to their previous one.

23. Johnny Alicea-Baez: I have difficulty in understanding the difference between “wholism” and “holism”--what do we mean by (w) holistic mission or (w)holistic evangelism or (w) holistic church growth?

24. Daniel Sánchez: What is the difference between the growth of old congregations compared to that of new congregations? Where is growth taking place?

25. Cliff Holland: In Central America we discovered that most of the membership growth at the national level was through the planting of new congregations, rather than through the growth in size of older congregations (growth through church planting, rather than by older churches getting fatter).

26. Jose Reyes: How are churches solving the problem of acquiring new buildings for planting new churches? Are they renting, buying older buildings, sharing facilities with an Anglo church, starting house churches, or what?

27. Tim Gibson: What is the criterion that we are using to determine the “ideal believer”? Is this an angloized concept? What about the self-image of Hispanic believers? Are they becoming “world Christians” (not “worldly” Christians!)?

28. George Taylor: Can we see a difference between “universal” church growth factors and those factors that are unique to Hispanic church growth? I think we need to define a profile of “a growing Hispanic congregation” based on an incidence of factors that affect growth--worship, music, celebration, cell groups, etc.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE NATIONAL COORDINATING COMMITTEE:

1. More female participation on the Advisory Council--Maria Martinez was the only woman present.
2. Delete the word "minority" from the language of the project proposal.
3. We need to analyze the differences between "assimilation" and "integration" variables.
4. Define "religion" (as in "the role of religion in social change").
5. Delete references to Catholics becoming converted to Protestantism--this sounds competitive.
6. We should produce a quarterly newsletter about the study.
7. We should explore funding from foundations that are interested in the growing "Hispanic market."
8. We should contact key denominational leaders regarding funding from their organizations via referrals from members of the Advisory Council--who are the key people that should be contacted by members of the National Coordinating Committee?
9. We need to join in united prayer and ask the Lord to release the funds that are needed to accomplish our goals for this project.
10. Members of the National Coordinating Committee ask the members of the Advisory Council to pray specifically for them as they seek to fulfill their responsibilities during the coming three years.

END OF DOCUMENT

(from the notes of Clifton Holland)

4/11/88