



The "Obra Hispana" in The Christian Church

Central Pastoral Office
For Hispanic Ministries, CCDC

Introduction

- ◆ The *Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)* in the United States and Canada has been involved in Hispanic Ministries for over one hundred years.
- ◆ In the late 19th century (1897-1899) our Church reached out to Hispanics in Northern Mexico, Texas, and Puerto Rico.

Other Disciple Groups

These evangelistic efforts resulted in the organization of three different Disciple denominations in Mexico and Puerto Rico:

- *The Evangelical Fellowship of Christian Churches in Mexico*
- *The Evangelical Alliance of Christian Churches in Mexico*
- *The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Puerto Rico*

The Obra Hispana

- ◆ It also fostered the development of Hispanic and Bilingual congregations in the United States.
- ◆ During the first part of the 20th century, our Hispanic congregations were concentrated in Texas.
- ◆ Toward the middle of the century, we organized Hispanic Churches in the Northeast.

Hispanic Conventions

- ◆ From the beginning, our Hispanic congregations formed Hispanic Conventions that provided both fellowship and opportunities to develop joint projects.
- ◆ The first convention, the State Mexican S.S. Convention, was established around 1915.

Five Hispanic Conventions

Today, there are five Hispanic and Bilingual Conventions that group congregations from different states:

- Midwest (Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Missouri)
- Northeast (Canada, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Washington DC)
- Southeast (Florida and Georgia)
- Southwest (Texas)
- Pacific Southwest (Arizona and Southern California)

Coordinating Hispanic Ministries

The work of the different Hispanic conventions was coordinated by *The Director of Services and Programs for Hispanic Congregations* (first the *Department of Domestic Missions of the United Christian Missionary Society*, then at the *Division of Homeland Ministries* of the CCDC).

Past Directors

- ◆ The following Hispanic leaders served as Directors of this office:
 - ◆ Rev. Domingo Rodríguez (retired)
 - ◆ Rev. Lucas Torres (retired)
 - ◆ Rev. David A. Vargas (*Executive Secretary of the CCDC/UCC Common Ministry for Latin America and the Caribbean*)
 - ◆ Rev. Luis Ferrer (*BCE General Consultant*)

A National Organization

- ◆ Under the leadership of this Office, the different Hispanic Conventions organized the *National Hispanic and Bilingual Fellowship of the CCDC*.
- ◆ The First National Assembly took place June 24 to 28, 1981 in Indianapolis, IN.
- ◆ The Rev. David Vargas was the Director of the Office at the time.

Restructure and Renewal

- ◆ During the late 1980's the National Hispanic and Bilingual fellowship explored several ways of restructuring the *Office of Services for Program and Services for Hispanic and Bilingual Congregations*.
- ◆ This resulted in the creation of the *Central Pastoral Office for Hispanic Ministries (CPOHM)* in 1991.

The Central Pastoral Office

◆ The CPOHM has the following objectives:

- To develop programs and to offer pastoral care to Hispanic ministers, lay leaders and congregations.
- To advise and counsel the different regional and general bodies of the CCDC on Hispanic ministry.
- To be an advocate for Hispanic Disciples.

What is the CPOHM?

- ◆ The CPOHM is a general organization of the CCDC. As such, it responds directly to the *General Board* of the Church and it is supported by *Disciples Mission Fund*.
- ◆ It is also supported by direct contributions from individuals, local congregations, regions and other organizations.

The Pastoral Commission

- ◆ The Pastoral Commission for Hispanic Ministries serves as the executive board of the CPOHM.
- ◆ The Pastoral Commission is composed by representatives of the Hispanic Conventions and representatives of the General Board, among others.

The National Hispanic Pastor

- ◆ The director of the CPOHM is the *National Pastor for Hispanic Ministries* of the CCDC.
 - The first National Pastor was Rev. David A. Vargas, who served from 1991 to 1992.
 - The second, Rev. Lucas Torres, served from 1992 to 1999.

Current Leadership

- ◆ The Moderator of the *Pastoral Commission for Hispanic Ministries* is Paul D. Rivera (who is also Moderator of our Church).
- ◆ The current *National Pastor for Hispanic Ministries* is the Rev. Dr. Pablo A. Jiménez, who began his tenure in January 2000.

Focus on Leadership

- ◆ The CPOHM, the Pastoral Commission for Hispanic Ministries, and the National Hispanic and Bilingual Fellowship have determined that the focus of their work for the next decade will be Leadership Development.
- ◆ We are developing programs for youth, lay leaders and licensed ministers.

Growth, Growth, Growth

- ◆ We need more leaders because the Hispanic community in the US is growing at a fast pace.
- ◆ According to the U.S. Census Bureau, there are 31.7 million Hispanics living in the nation (11.7% of the population).
- ◆ These numbers do not include the 3.88 million Hispanics living in Puerto Rico.

Church Growth

- ◆ The “Obra Hispana” among Disciples is also growing at a fast pace.
- ◆ We have about 80 established and developing congregations in different parts of the US.
- ◆ There are also Hispanic congregations in Canada. One of them is bilingual, worshiping in Spanish and French.

Multicultural Ministries

- ◆ At some point in time, every Disciple minister will have to interact with Hispanic people and with Hispanic Disciples.
- ◆ You may prepare yourself for such encounters by learning more about the Hispanic community, and about Hispanic theology.

Resources

- ◆ ***The Hispanic Population in the U.S.***, U.S. Census Bureau, March 1999.
- ◆ Justo L. González, (Abingdon Press, 1990). ***Mañana: Christian Theology from a Hispanic Perspective***
- ◆ Manuel Ortiz, ***The Hispanic Challenge: Opportunities Confronting the Church*** (InterVarsity Press, 1993).

Get in Touch!

We hope this information about the *Obra Hispana* will enhance your ministry, preparing you to better serve the growing Hispanic community in the United States. For more information, write to:

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