


DR. MANUEL VASQUEZ

The Untold Story

100 YEARS OF *Hispanic Adventism*

NORTH AMERICAN DIVISION

THE UNTOLD STORY • 100 YEARS OF HISPANIC ADVENTISM • VASQUEZ



In 1913, Ellen G. White told José Abel Sánchez, one of the first Hispanic Adventist members in the North American Division:

“It has been shown me that the Spanish work will be placed at the vanguard and march at the head of the cause of God in the United States.”

This prophecy is literally being fulfilled today. From the 15 original members in the Spanish Church in Sanchez, Arizona in 1899, the Hispanic membership in the North American Division has mushroomed to nearly 105,000 in 1999!

The “Untold Story” is the first major volume ever written on the history of Hispanic Adventism in the North American Division.

- * Each of the nine Unions has its own Hispanic beginnings documented, with photographs and human-interest stories.
- * This historical volume contains a 32-page album of rare and previously unpublished

(continued on back flap)



The UNTOLD STORY

100 YEARS OF
HISPANIC
ADVENTISM
1899-1999

Cover Photograph: Elder Marcial Serna baptizing in an
irrigation ditch in Tuscon, Arizona 1901

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DR. MANUEL VASQUEZ
NORTH AMERICAN DIVISION

The
UNTOLD STORY

100 YEARS OF
**HISPANIC
ADVENTISM**
1899-1999

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Dust cover photograph: Elder Marcial Serna baptizing in an
irrigation ditch in Tucson, Arizona, 1901

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Dedication

This book is lovingly dedicated to the memory of Elder Marcial Serna, the first Hispanic Seventh-day Adventist pastor in North America, and to those members of the Lorenzo Sánchez family who, for love of the truth, joined the great Advent Movement and formed the first Spanish Adventist church in the territory of the North American Division in December of 1899.



The adobe Sánchez church which became the first Spanish Adventist Church in North America on December 23, 1899.



Marcial Serna

Note from the Author

This account of the beginning, development and contributions of the Hispanic work in the North American Division is not intended to be an inclusive, exhaustive or complete historical document. Instead, it is meant to give an overview of Adventism among Hispanics in broad strokes, highlighting select personalities, events, institutions and contributions.

Many of those who had first-hand knowledge of the beginnings of the Hispanic work in their areas are no longer living. However, the best attempts were made to obtain as much information as possible from: conference workers, union publications, General Conference actions and archival information, written accounts by individuals of their deceased relatives and personal interviews with many, many others. In order to be as accurate as possible, each chapter was read by several editors, authors and others knowledgeable about the subject matter.

However, it is beyond expectation to have a comprehensive history of the Hispanic work that includes every act, every congregation and every significant name. A chapter could have been written about every congregation (655 at this writing) and every worker. But this would have necessitated a voluminous work, which would be neither cost-effective nor reader friendly. Yet, an honest effort was made to include as many names of denominational workers and lay persons as possible.

It is the author's hope that readers of this volume will come away with a renewed appreciation for Hispanic Adventist heritage and their contributions to the overall mission of the church in the North American Division.

Manuel Vásquez



SEVENTH-DAY
ADVENTIST
CHURCH

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August, 2000



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**TO MEMBERS OF THE SPANISH SDA
CHURCHES THROUGHOUT NORTH AMERICA**

As you celebrate your 100 years of service in the North American Division, and with a curriculum of God's Holy Word to study and follow, I want to encourage all of you to completely submit yourselves to Jesus as Savior and Lord, and to live in harmony with His teachings.

The Church is put on earth to let human beings know of the blessings God offers through His Son. Therefore, when the gospel is preached in the Hispanic community, may it be spoken in the demonstration of the Spirit and with power. May those who come to worship in your churches find there the blessings of God's pardoning grace, God's comforting Word, and the promise of God's power to save. May your congregations be places of hallowed memories, places of fellowship with God and His people, and the birthplace of many souls in Christ. May you as members of the Hispanic churches continue to be a productive army dedicated to the glory of Christ and the finishing of His work.

Let the glory of the Lord fill this people as you mark 100 years of service in the year 1999, and may the Spirit of God descend upon and dwell in His people.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Jan Paulsen
President



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**GREETINGS IN THE NAME
OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST**

The Bible is full of celebrations. The dedication service of the Temple in Solomon's time. The rebuilding of Jerusalem, and its rededication. The feast days that followed the sparing of the Jews in Esther's time. The great assembly at the close of Joshua's life. The wedding at Cana at which Christ performed his first miracle. I believe the Bible encourages us to mark important milestones with celebrations.

It is so very appropriate that we celebrate 100 years of Hispanic work in North America. God has led wonderfully and blessed bountifully. The Hispanic people in North America have responded to God's challenge to reach every tongue in every nation and in every town and in every neighborhood. Praise God for the faithfulness of His people.

The celebrations in the Bible were not only times of rejoicing, they were also times of rededication. Joshua called the people to stand on the Lord's side. The Temple dedication was marked with rebirth of spiritual life throughout Israel. This 100th anniversary of the Hispanic work in North America needs to be marked by similar rededication. Let us always remember Jesus. Let our every good deed be dedicated to Him and His work. Let our best be given to Him daily. Let His presence fill each service of celebration during this centennial year, and let His Spirit lead in every work we do.

This book is a tribute to those who have begun the work. Let our lives be a tribute to God as we hasten to finish the work.

Sincerely yours,

Don Schneider

Don C. Schneider
President

Preface

“1999” was the centennial year of Hispanic Seventh-day Adventist heritage in North America. The Seventh-day Adventist work among the Hispanics on this continent began in Sánchez, Arizona in 1899, only 36 years after the Adventist Church was officially organized (1863).

No church committee at any level had planned a strategy for evangelizing Hispanics at that time. Rather, it came about as God directed. Two dedicated, missionary-minded Anglo men decided to sell Spirit of Prophecy books to the people of Tucson, Arizona, the majority of whom were Spanish-speaking. The Holy Spirit led these two men to the home of a bilingual Mexican Methodist pastor named Marcial Serna. He eventually became the first Hispanic Adventist pastor, raising up several Adventist congregations in the southwest region of the United States during his ministry.

Spanish was the first European language spoken in America and to this day it is the second most widely spoken language in the United States. In Canada, it is the third most widely spoken language. Moreover the United States, with its more than 30 million Hispanics, could be considered the fifth largest Spanish-speaking country in the world.

The U.S. Census Bureau projects that by 2010 the African-American population will be at 40.4 million and the Hispanic/Latino population will have reached 34.3 million. By 2015 Hispanics are projected to surpass the African-American population by almost one million, making the Hispanic/Latino population the largest minority group in the United States.

According to the 1995 U. S. population statistics (figures), Hispanics have not only reached but passed the 10 percent watermark of the U. S. population, thereby entering the mainstream of America. In 1994 one in ten persons in the United States was Hispanic. Today that ratio is approaching one in nine, or 11 percent. In California, the ratio is one in four. Likewise, Hispanic Seventh-day Adventists have become part of the mainstream of the Adventist Church, with over 100,000 members in the North American Division—11 percent of the total constituency.

The terms “Hispanics” and “Latinos” are used as umbrella terms only in the United States and Canada and refer to that greatly diverse segment of the American and Canadian populations whose cultural and linguistic origins can be traced to Spain or to the Latin American countries where Spanish is the dominant language. It does not, however, refer

to race, since Hispanic/Latino people cover the full spectrum of racial diversity. Their ethnicity may be Caucasian (Spanish, German, Italian, English, etc.), mestizo (Native Indian and Spanish), black, mulatto (African and Spanish) or any other racial classification, including Asians.

Large Hispanic/Latino families can be very complex and diverse in their make-up. These family members may include elderly grandparents from the "old country" who do not speak English and have not assimilated into the United States or Canadian cultures; middle-aged parents who are bilingual, bicultural, educated, and professional; young children who speak only English and are totally assimilated into the new culture.

Hispanics are religious by nature and the love of God and His truth still attracts many of them to the Adventist church. Hispanic members can be found in every local conference constituency in North America. Evangelism still burns within their hearts and they unite with the rest of their brothers and sisters in the faith to hasten the soon coming of Jesus.

This book is all about how the Advent flame was kindled, fanned, and made to burn brightly among the Hispanics of North America.

Section I

THE BEGINNING

1

Introduction

"Truth shall spring out of the earth and righteousness shall look down from heaven." Psalm 85:11 (KJV)

Famous Last Words

FAMOUS last words" have a way of staying in one's memory for years. I remember, as if it were yesterday, "the words" my first conference president said to me regarding the future of the Spanish work in his conference, and in all of North America for that matter.

Sitting behind his huge, mahogany executive desk, with a certain air of confidence and arrogance, my president told me, "My young friend, there is no need to plan for the expansion of the Spanish work in this conference or in any other place in the division, because in another generation or two, all the Hispanics will be speaking English and attending English-speaking churches." He went on to say, "So in a

few years there won't even be a need for Spanish-speaking pastors." Nothing could have been further from the truth.

That was in 1970, when there were only four Spanish-speaking Adventist churches and 215 Hispanic members in the conference where I was working. The whole North American Division had only 98 Spanish-speaking churches with 9,855 members. But, today, contrary to what my former president predicted, the number of Spanish-speaking churches in the division has more than quintupled to 655, with over 100,000 members, all to the honor and glory of God. Virtually every state in the United States and nearly every province in Canada has an Hispanic Adventist presence. And in the conference where I began my ministry, the number of Spanish-speaking churches now stands at 13, with a membership of over 600 members.

1999—100 Years After

One hundred years have passed since that first Hispanic baptism in the chilly winter waters of the Gila River in Arizona. During 1999, the Hispanic members of North America celebrated the 100th anniversary of their Adventist heritage in several ways: 1) a mega-evangelistic thrust, including a two-week international satellite effort, *La Red '99* (Net '99); 2) lay festivals on both coasts and 3) a division-wide Hispanic Evangelism Council, hosted by the Atlantic Union Conference.

The amazing account of how Hispanics first learned about the seventh-day Sabbath and their rapid membership growth in this division unfolds in the following pages. Stories of the brave and faithful men and women who sacrificed for the cause amidst seemingly impossible odds are also recorded here. In addition, the gallant, dedicated missionary spirit of numerous Anglo denominational workers who spoke Spanish is also recognized and highlighted in this commemorative work.

Sánchez, Arizona, Cradle of Hispanic Adventism

The Gila River Valley in Sánchez, Arizona, which is close to the border of New Mexico, formed the cradle of Hispanic Adventism in North America. In the summer of 1899, a young student from Healdsburg College (later Pacific Union College) in California, traveled to Tucson, Arizona to work as what was known in those days as a "*colporteur*." When this young man set out to sell Spirit of Prophecy books to earn a scholarship for college, he had no idea how far-reaching his work would be, nor did he know that he would become instrumental in the conversion of some of the first Hispanic Adventists and the first Hispanic pastor in North America.

The first Adventist converts were members of a Methodist family named Sánchez, who had settled in the Gila River basin near San José, Arizona. Much credit should be given to the faithful literature evangelists who, in many cases, were the first Seventh-day Adventists to bring the Advent message to the Hispanic people in the North American Division. These are the "unsung heroes" of God's army, the Adventist "marines," who on many occasions were the first to penetrate the unentered territories or, in this case, a people group.

Ellen G. White Prophecies About Hispanic Work in the NAD

In 1913, José Abel Sánchez, one of the converted sons of the patriarch Lorenzo Sánchez, was working at the academy in Angwin, California, to support his son Ismael, who was a

student there. One day Abel decided to visit Mrs. White in Elmhaven and was given a message of encouragement concerning the Hispanic work.

When Abel arrived at the two-story house in the country, Mrs. White graciously invited him in. While getting acquainted, she noticed his Spanish accent and asked where he attended church. "I'm a member of the Spanish-speaking Adventist church in Sánchez, Arizona," Abel told her. She then related to him the only known inspired words regarding the Spanish-speaking work in the North American Division.

It has been shown me that the Spanish work will be placed at the 'vanguard,' and march at the head of the cause of God in the United States.¹

In the last three decades the Hispanic work has been among the fastest, if not *the* fastest, growing segment of the

Adventist Church in North America. One factor that has contributed to this phenomenal growth is the fact that Hispanics have been given leadership opportunities. With dedicated leaders who understand and share the same Hispanic language and culture, successful plans can be made for the advancement of the Hispanic work. Since the '70's, Hispanics have served as administrators and departmental leaders at conference, union and division levels.

Today, Hispanic workers and lay persons serve on committees at all levels of church administration. Hispanic professionals and entrepreneurs hold membership in the Church's philanthropic organizations such as ASI (Adventist-laymen's Services and Industries) and Mission Church Builders. Numerous Hispanics serve as teachers and administrators in the church's educational system, as well as in the administration of the Adventist Health System.

However, as this rapidly growing segment of the church enters the twenty-first century, it faces many challenges: Making Christian education financially accessible, so more Hispanic youth can attend Adventist schools; finding methods of nurture and outreach for generations of bilingual/bicultural Latino youth, and for young professionals who are limited in their use of Spanish or speak only English; securing adequate places of worship for expanding congregations and newly planted churches.



Abel Sánchez (left), who spoke with Ellen White, pictured with his son Ismael (right).

More Than Just a Book About History

This book is more than just a history of the rapid growth of the Adventist Hispanic work in the North American Division. It is about the men and women who helped make it happen. It's about the times in which they lived, the world and national events that impacted their lives. It's about the leadership and contributions the sons and daughters of the first and second generation Hispanic pioneers have made to the over-all work of Adventism in this division.

Where we go from here and what the future holds for Hispanic Adventists in the twenty-first century is a significant part of this book and of major concern to Hispanic leaders. One thing for sure, however, is the inspired reminder from Ellen G. White that:

“We have nothing to fear for the future, except as we should forget the way the Lord has led us, and His teaching in our past history.”²

Therefore we move forward with confidence, knowing that the last chapter of our history will be written soon—“*Mas allá del Sol*”—far beyond the sun.

Endnotes

1. “La Iglesia en Acción,” *Revista Adventista*, December, 1980.
2. Ellen G. White, *Life Sketches of Ellen G. White*. (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1915), p. 196.

2

America and the Sánchez Family Before the Turn of the Century

*"Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD;
and the people whom he hath chosen for his own
inheritance." Psalm 33:12 (KJV)*

The United States Before the Turn of the Century

ON THE eve of the twentieth century America was still recovering from the wretched memories of the Civil War (1861-1865), the most casualty-inflicting and devastating war ever fought on American soil. It is recorded that "approximately 618,000 men perished in the

four years of fighting—an average of 423 deaths for each day of the war.”¹

Before the Civil War, America was isolationist, consumed with its internal national affairs and struggles. After the war, America was at a turning point. The United States began to expand its influence abroad under the presidency of William McKinley as it entered into international conflict in the Spanish-American War of 1898. This 100-day war, which helped Cuba, Puerto Rico and the Philippines gain their independence from Spain, resulted in the United States annexing the Philippines, Guam and Puerto Rico.²

From 1865 to 1890 in the eastern part of the United States, foundries and factories were booming, turning America into one of the most powerful industrial nations in the world. Meanwhile, in the western half of the country, native Indians still freely roamed the Southwest. Frontiersmen and their families homesteaded the fertile lands, converting them into productive farming communities.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church at the Turn of the Century

In 1900 the Adventist Church had 66,547 members, most of whom were in North America. George A. Irwin was the president of the General Conference (1897-1901). The only established non-English language work in North America was among immigrants from Europe.³ However, it was a time when the Church was poised to begin its greatest missionary outreach, both outside of North America and within the continent.

The work in Australia was in its infancy and Ellen White had been asked to go there to foster it. While she and her son William were in residence in the land “down under,” she completed the manuscript of *The Desire of Ages* and was instrumental in establishing what is known today as Avondale College.⁴

Lorenzo Sánchez, Patriarch of the Sánchez Family

Among the adventurous frontiers people in the Southwest were a few Civil War veterans who had set out to make a living there for their families. Lorenzo Baca Sánchez was one of them. Lorenzo was born on August 8, 1835, in Socorro, New Mexico to José Pedro Baca and Guadalupe Chávez Baca. Legend has it that Lorenzo’s parents were killed by Indians when he was a small boy and he was raised in the home of José Ramón Sánchez and his wife Manuela.⁵ Lorenzo grew to be a tall, slender man who wore a beard and, at times, a black felt sombrero. He was a Christian gentleman and a man of few words. But the little he said, he meant.



In 1862 he had served with the New Mexico Volunteers in the Union army as a private in Company E of the 2nd Regiment. Under the command of Colonel Pino, Sánchez fought in the battle of Valverde against a garrison of 600 Texas Confederate rebels.⁶ The legendary Kit Carson also led a regiment of Federal volunteers against the Confederates in that same battle on the banks of the

Don Lorenzo Sánchez, patriarch of the Sánchez family of Sánchez, Arizona.

Río Grande. The bloody battle lasted for two days. Union losses were 200 killed and wounded, with the Confederate losses believed to be even greater.⁷ But the Lord had His hand over Lorenzo, for from his family would later come some of the first converts to the Adventist faith.

Spanish and Mexican Influence in North America

According to the Sánchez family, their ancestors were Spaniards who had settled in New Mexico and other regions of the Southwest during the time when the territories were ruled by Spain and referred to as “New Spain.” This is very probable, because as early as the 1500’s, Spanish explorers like Alvar Nuñez Cabeza de Vaca and Francisco Vázquez de Coronado traversed the present-day states of New Mexico and Arizona looking for treasures (1539-1542) and for the seven cities of Cibola.⁸ García López de Cárdenas, another explorer, was the first European to lay eyes on the Grand Canyon.⁹ From 1541 to 1800 the Spaniards claimed all the territory from the Mississippi to the Pacific Ocean.¹⁰ In 1800 the territory of Louisiana, which covered much of the future midwestern states, reverted to France.

After 1800, Spain still ruled Mexico and the territories known today as Arizona, California, Nevada, New Mexico, Utah, Texas, and also the Southwestern regions of Colorado. When Mexico gained independence from Spain (1821), these territories remained with Mexico until the United States purchased or annexed them between 1845 and 1854.

Evidence of Spanish and Mexican rule in North America is still present today. More than 2,000 states, cities and towns in the United States west of the Mississippi have Spanish names, such as Arizona, California, Colorado, Montana, Nevada, Los Angeles, Las Vegas, and Amarillo. Many of the West’s rivers and mountain ranges have Spanish names: Sandia Mountains, Sierra Nevadas, Sangre de Cristo Mountains, Colorado River, Río Grande River. Geographical terms such as “arroyo,” “sierra,” “canyon,” and “mesa” are Spanish. Meteorological terms such as “hurricane,” and “tornado” are also of Spanish origin. Our English vocabulary is spiced with Spanish words such as “ramada,” “patio,” “coyote,” “vigilante,” “corral,” “vanilla,” “tobacco,” “canoe,” “hammock,” and “tapioca.” And this was long before “Taco Bell” became popular with its “burrito supremes,” tostadas and salsa picante.

The Sánchez Family

On August 10, 1856, Lorenzo married Juana María Sedillos Baca, whose mother had come from Spain. From this union 14 children were born.¹¹ They established their home in Limitar, New Mexico, about six miles from Socorro. Although Lorenzo and Juana María both came from Catholic backgrounds, Lorenzo accepted the Baptist faith and raised his children first as Baptists and later as Methodists.¹²

About the time their son Adiel was born, the Sánchezes moved south to a place called El Pajarito (the little bird), which had been a fort for the Union army during the Civil War. Since Lorenzo had been there as a soldier, he was familiar with the area and decided it was a good place to settle. Staking out several acres of land, he began clearing it to build a house and plant crops. But in the second year of their stay, disaster hit! Excessive snow melt and unusually heavy rains caused the river to overflow, flooding the entire valley and ruining crops.

An Invitation to Arizona

Lorenzo had a friend, I. E. Solomon, who lived in Arizona and with whom he had served in the Civil War. One day Lorenzo received a letter from Solomon who had heard of Sánchez's misfortune. "Why don't you come to Arizona and try your luck here?" he suggested. "I have a flock of sheep your boys could herd to earn some money while you're getting settled."

With apparently nothing to lose, Sánchez decided to accept the offer. In July 1878, he and his family packed their covered wagon with a few belongings, hitched up their team of horses, and traveled West to the Gila River valley in southeast Arizona.

Arizona—Still Part of the Frontier

When they arrived in Arizona, they found land just waiting to be homesteaded. Lorenzo chose 136 acres in the upper Safford valley, in the lowlands of the Gila River.

*Gerónimo
on his horse
(left) and
Nachez,
the son of
Cochise on
horse back
(right).
Gerónimo's
son is
standing
on the right.
1888.*



This frontier area was full of mesquites, chaparral, cacti, ocotillos, and rocks. But what really made it a frontier was the fact that the Sánchez family and the other settlers shared that vast territory with the Apaches, who had occupied and roamed the land even before the Spanish settlers arrived.

The Apaches of the Southwest were divided

into six subtribes. The most dreaded subtribe of all was the "Be-don-ko-he," whose chief was the much-feared "Gerónimo." His tribe occupied the mountainous country west of the eastern border of Arizona and south of the headwaters of the Gila River.¹³ Gerónimo was revered for his fearless bravery in battle, not only by his own tribe but also by the five other Apache subtribes. He was eventually made "War Chief" of all the Apaches.¹⁴ His Indian name was "Go kla yeh," but after a battle with the Mexicans in which he avenged the death of his mother, young wife and children, the Mexicans called him "Gerónimo." This was because the day the Mexicans had attacked his nomadic encampment, massacring his family, was the Catholic St. Gerónimo's day. The name stuck among both the Indians and the white men.¹⁵

Gerónimo once told S. M. Barrett, who helped him write his autobiography,

"During my many wars with the Mexicans, I received eight wounds, as follows: shot in the right leg above the knee, and still carry the bullet; shot through the left forearm; wounded in the right leg below the knee with a saber; wounded on top of the head with the butt of a musket; shot just below the outer corner of the left eye; shot in left side, shot in the back."¹⁶

Apaches Befriend the Sánchez Boys

In the spring, *Don* (Sir) Lorenzo and his sons planted *maíz* (corn) and *calabazas* (pumpkins) on the river bottom of their property. The boys tended sheep for I. E. Solomon in the hills north of the Gila River to earn a little income until their crops could be harvested. While working in the hills herding the sheep, the older sons had a couple of encounters with the Apaches, both of which fortunately ended on a friendly note. They soon developed a friendship with the Apaches, who would bring their children to play with the Sánchez children. Wrestling was their favorite game. Eventually the Sánchez boys came to know the invincible and much-dreaded Gerónimo, as well as some of his warriors and other Apaches, like Nachez the son of Cochise, who roamed that area of the Southwest.

Abel and Adiel developed such a level of trust and friendly coexistence with the Apaches that whenever the Apaches planned a raid on the town of Safford, 14 miles west of the Sánchez *ranchería* (ranch), one of Gerónimo's young sons would see to it that the Sánchez family was forewarned. "Tomorrow we are going to raid the town of Safford. So don't go into town," was the usual warning.

When Lorenzo's oldest son Ricardo married in 1886, Lorenzo gave him the farm and returned with his family to New Mexico the following year. There he and his younger sons worked for two years in the Santa Rita mines. In the spring of 1889, he retraced his footsteps to Arizona, where for the second time he claimed land, in the upper Safford valley in a place which later became known as Sánchez. Lorenzo lived there with his family until his death in 1899.¹⁷

Church, the Center of Their Lives

The Sánchezes were Baptists, but since there was no Baptist Church in the area, Lorenzo and his family joined the local Methodist Church.¹⁸ When *Don* Lorenzo returned to Sánchez, Arizona, in 1889, he was visited by Pastor Marcial Serna, a Methodist minister from Tucson who was also in charge of the Spanish Methodist work in five states (Texas, Arizona, New Mexico, Colorado and California).¹⁹

Marcial Serna was born in El Paso, Texas in 1860. No one seems to know the exact location. He was a short, small-framed *mestizo* (Spanish and Indian mix), whose ancestors were from Mexico. He was a noble, patient, gentle Christian man, with no higher desire than to be a tireless, consecrated worker for the Lord.

In 1896, the Sánchez boys built a church of adobe on the land of their brother Ricardo.



The adobe Sánchez church, built in 1896, which became the first Spanish Adventist Church in North America on December 23, 1899.

This *iglesia* (church) became the center of their lives. From time to time the sight of a blushing bride dressed in a white gown and a nervous groom were seen within its thick, sacred walls. And there were times when, almost on the same spot, a rough pine coffin was placed, holding the body of one of their loved ones, as one day one would hold Lorenzo Sánchez. Every Sunday morning the Word of God was preached. Every Christmas Eve, a nativity scene was portrayed on the rostrum. And during the week, this little meeting house doubled as the Sánchez school house.

Abel and Adiel Discover the Sabbath

The Sánchez family raised vegetables and cultivated an apple and pear orchard, the produce of which they sold in the mining towns, including Morenci and Clifton. It was late summer, 1899. Adiel, who was now 25, and his brother Abel, 27, were designated to do the selling. Of all the sons, Abel and Adiel were the most mild-mannered and obedient, as well as the most spiritually inclined.

Their selling trips to the mining towns usually took an entire week. On Sundays, Abel and Adiel would camp for the day, to keep holy the “sabbath” as they knew it. And what better activity could they have on that day than to study the Bible?

On one Sunday as they were reading Exodus 20:8-11, they were surprised to discover that they were keeping the wrong day holy. The Scriptures taught that *sábado* (Saturday), the seventh day, was the Sabbath, not Sunday. What a revelation! The two young men were so excited that, upon returning to the *ranchería*, they immediately sat down and wrote to Pastor Marcial Serna. “Why do we keep Sunday?” they asked. “The Bible tells us to keep the seventh-day Sabbath.”

Marcial wrote back, “I am dealing with two book salesmen on this very subject. We are going to have a debate. I will show them from the New Testament that the Sabbath has been changed to Sunday in commemoration of the resurrection of our Lord. . . As soon as I get through with these young men, I will come and teach you the truth about Sunday sacredness.”²⁰

Meanwhile in Tucson, other things were taking place that would change the lives of Pastor Serna and the Sánchez family forever.

Endnotes

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Sánchez, Arizona: Cradle of Hispanic Adventism

"Who despises the day of small things?" Zechariah 4:10 (NIV)

Literature Evangelists Call on Methodist Minister

IN THE summer of 1899 two Seventh-day Adventists knocked on the door of Marcial Serna, the pastor of the Tucson Mexican Methodist-Episcopal Church. Walter Lawrence Black, a literature evangelist, was selling Ellen G. White books in the Tucson area. Charles D. M. Williams, who had been sent to help develop the interests in Adventism that Brother Black found, accompanied him. When Serna answered the door, both Black and Williams were delighted to discover that he was

bilingual. Enthusiastically, Black proceeded to give him his canvass. However, after listening politely to Black, Pastor Serna told them, "I'm sorry, but I already have lots of books. I'm not interested in purchasing any more."

The two men left somewhat disappointed. Sensing, however, that this pastor was sincere and, if given the opportunity, might accept the Sabbath truth, they decided to try another approach. Returning the next day, Black and Williams knocked again on Serna's door. "Pastor Serna," Black began, "We're at a real disadvantage since there are so many Mexican families living here who do not speak English. We were wondering if you would be willing to teach us some Spanish so we could communicate with the people when we visit their homes."

Black and Williams Learning Spanish

Serna was a sincere man and he truly wanted to help them. "*Con gusto* (with pleasure)," Pastor Serna told them. "Come back tomorrow morning and we will start your lessons." Early the next morning, Black and Williams were at Serna's house learning to roll their "r's" and twist their tongues in imitation of their Spanish teacher.

"I think it would be good if we had something to look at, to be able to see the words we're trying to say," Williams suggested. "Why don't you show us some of these words in the Bible?"

"That's a very good idea," Serna agreed. Placing the Spanish and English Bibles side by side, they opened them to the first chapter of Genesis and continued their study. Everything seemed to go very well. They learned many new words such as *Dios* (God), *hombre* (man), *día* (day), *noche* (night), and the names for the numbers up to *seis* (six). The next day, however, when they started studying in Genesis, chapter two, things changed. They had only read verses two and three when the lesson ended in a disagreement over the phrase *séptimo día* (seventh day) and which day was the right day to observe as the day of worship.

"And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made. And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made." Genesis 2:2, 3 (KJV).

Serna was so confident that Sunday was the right day to observe that he challenged the two young men to a public debate on the Sunday-Saturday question.¹ "I know Sunday is the Sabbath. I can prove it from the New Testament. If we can't agree here, perhaps we should have a public debate and let the people decide who is right."

The Debate

On the day of the debate, many interested Christians and curious on-lookers were present. In those days, debates were a type of entertainment. Both of the young Adventists had prepared diligently, but Walter Black would lead out. Walter had a list of more than 40 Bible verses to use in his presentation, but just before he got up to speak, the Lord impressed him to make a very simple presentation. He cut his list down to twelve.

As Walter made his presentation, Marcial Serna began to take notes for his planned rebuttal. At first his notes were detailed. But the more he listened, the fewer notes he took.

Finally, he stopped taking notes and only listened. The Holy Spirit was planting the truth in Serna's heart where it found rich and fertile ground. By the time his turn came to speak, he was convinced. Standing before the people, with a few expressive words, he confessed, "I now see that my supposed opponents have brought out the truth from God's book. I was to show them where they were wrong, but I see the truth of the Bible. It is clear from God's word that the seventh day is the Sabbath, and I promise you and God that next Saturday I will rest on that day. With God's help, I will keep His Sabbath."²

After this surprising testimony, Serna invited Black and Williams to his home to discuss the matter further. He told them about the letter he had received from Abel and Adiel. "The hand of the Lord," he said, "has been working. At the right time He sent you to me. My eyes have been opened to understand His word on this particular subject. I plan to go see the young Sánchez boys in answer to their letter about the Sabbath. Will you go with me?"³

The Sabbath Brings Division to Sánchez

Meanwhile, on the Sánchez *ranchería* it was harvest time. Abel and Adiel went quite often to the mining camps with their peaches, apples, and dried vegetables. One day, when they returned from one of their trips, they found a letter from Pastor Serna waiting for them. "Hey, Abel, here's a response from Pastor Serna," Adiel said as he opened the letter. "He says he'll be here in the middle of this week. The two men he was having the debate with will be here too. I wonder if he proved to them that Sunday is the Lord's day of rest? Whatever the truth is, if it is proved by the Bible, I'll accept it, Abel. Won't you?"

"Yes, Adiel," Abel agreed.

"For the last few weeks," said Adiel, "my search has been to find out about the change of the day, to see if the seventh-day Sabbath was replaced by Sunday. If it is somewhere in

ELDER MARCIAL SERNA

Marcial Serna was a Mexican-American born in El Paso, Texas in 1860. For 17 years he served as a Methodist pastor before being converted to the Adventist faith in 1899. He was one of the first Hispanic converts to be baptized in the Gila River that same year and became the first Hispanic Seventh-day Adventist minister in North America. In 1900 the General Conference issued him a ministerial license and in 1901 he became a member of the Arizona Mission Executive Committee. Serna was responsible for raising up several Hispanic Adventist congregations in the Southwest. His 36 years of dedicated denominational service touched and blessed the lives of countless Hispanic families. He passed to his rest in 1935 in Sánchez, Arizona.⁴



the Bible, I won't have any more questions in my mind. If it can't be proven by the word of God, I've made up my mind to follow His word—even if I'm the only Sabbath keeper.”⁵

That Wednesday evening, Marcial Serna came, as he had promised, and brought with him the two literature evangelists. Pastor Serna called for a meeting and the little church filled to capacity. As Black and Williams stood to address the crowd, they were struck by the way that God was using them to bring His truth to these people.

“Here we are,” they thought, “two Anglos who cannot speak Spanish, addressing an audience, most of whom cannot speak English. God, You have to help us!” But God had already taken care of the problem, as He promised in His word, “Before they call, I will answer, and while they are yet speaking will I hear.” (Isaiah 65:24). Pastor Serna and Adiel were His chosen translators, and they helped deliver the message of the Sabbath to those people that evening.⁶

Lorenzo Vows to Kill

The message, however, divided the church—and the Sánchez family! The Adventist young men decided to stay in the area and continue studying with those interested, which included Adiel and Abel. This division in the Sánchez family over which day to keep continued for several months with the tension growing to the point that the patriarch Lorenzo could stand it no longer. Intending to settle the matter once and for all, he called his entire family together.

In those days, in accordance with the Hispanic culture and tradition, the father or patriarch of the family, did all the talking. The sons were not allowed to answer back since that would have been considered disrespectful. So the Saturday-keeping Sánchezes asked Black, Williams and Serna to be present to defend them.

After a stern lecture, *Don* Lorenzo had his Saturday-keeping sons and daughters stand before him. Sitting in his chair, with his rifle across his legs, he looked each one in the eye and warned them, “This division in the family, with some worshiping on Saturday and the others worshiping on Sunday, is not good. You must give up these crazy Adventist ideas about Saturday being the Lord's Sabbath and worship the Methodist way, the way I brought you up.” When he saw that he could not convince them, he was outraged and threatened, “If you do not obey me, I will kill every one of you!”

Abel and Adiel respected their father, but could not turn their backs on the truth. Their loyalty to their Heavenly Father and His commandments took precedence over all else. Even the threat of death could not persuade them to renounce their faith.

Unfortunately for them, at the time, they were all living in their father's house. One evening when the sons came home from work, *Don* Lorenzo was waiting for them at the door. “Abel, Adiel. Have you decided to give up this foolishness about the *sábado* yet?”

“Papa, we cannot do other than what the Bible tells us,” they answered respectfully.

“Well, since you will not renounce your faith, I have no choice but to disown you. You are no longer my sons. You are no longer Sánchezes. Take your belongings, your family, *your Sabbath* and get out of my house immediately!” Sadly and with heavy hearts, the two young men, their wives and little ones packed their few belongings and moved outside—into the yard, for there was nowhere else to go. For a time they were forced to live under the alamo (cottonwood) trees near the house, sleeping outdoors,

eating outdoors, and cooking on an open stove. But their faith never wavered. They had promised to follow God's Word, even if they were the only ones. Eventually, a relative had pity on them and took them in. They had passed the test, and God provided for them.

First Hispanic Baptism in Arizona

In December, 1899, Black and Williams had a group of 15 people ready for baptism. Among them were Marcial Serna and Abel and Adiel Sánchez, along with other members of the Sánchez family. Black and Williams contacted the Arizona Mission in Phoenix, requesting that someone be sent to baptize the group. Elder R. M. Kilgore, who was in charge of District number five of the General Conference, responded to the call and boarded the train.

When Elder Kilgore arrived, he met with the baptismal candidates, went over the doctrines with them and found them all firmly grounded in the truth. Arrangements were made for a baptismal service and on the cold but sunny afternoon of December 9, 1899, he led them to the bank of the Gila River, where one by one he immersed them in the chilly waters of the river. Pastor Marcial Serna was the first convert into the Gila River for his spiritual burial and resurrection to a new life as a Seventh-day Adventist.⁷

Dying Words of Lorenzo Sánchez

Meanwhile, *Don* Lorenzo was determined to make good on his threat and had acquired a revolver and plenty of bullets. He planned to kill all the newly baptized Adventists when they came back to the church from the baptismal service. But what happened next is a mystery to this day. After the baptisms, the members returned to the church for the three o'clock service. Toward the end of the meeting someone came running from the Sánchez house, which was only about 1000 yards from the church. Excited and out of breath, he called to the Sánchez boys, "Your father is dying." All the sons and daughters hurried to their father's bedside, and immediately had him taken to the hospital in Solomonville. He had apparently suffered a stroke and the doctors did all they could, but to no avail. Eleven days later, on December 20, he passed away.

However, before *Don* Lorenzo breathed his last, he gathered his family close to his bedside and pronounced a blessing on each one. When he came to Adiel, he said, "Son, you have been a kind and obedient son. I was always pleased with you. But lately you have chosen to obey your heavenly Father according to your conscience. May God give you the courage and strength to do what you have determined."⁸

Organization of the First Spanish Church

On December 23, the Sánchez Seventh-day Adventist Church was officially organized,⁹ becoming **the first Spanish Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America**. Elder R. M. Kilgore and C. D. M. Williams officiated. When the church elected officers, it was no surprise that Adiel Sánchez became the elder of the church.¹⁰

The little adobe church now became even more central in the lives of the Sánchez family, not only for their spiritual well-being, but also for the Christian education of their children. They were no longer satisfied to have just any teacher because they wanted their children to have an education that included God. They knew that an education without God would not be sufficient for this world, much less for the one to come.



Some of the members of the first Spanish Adventist Church in North America.

"And all thy children shall be taught of the Lord," (Isaiah 54:13) they had read in the Bible. "Send us an Adventist teacher," the people asked the leaders at the Arizona Mission. In response to their request, Augusta de Angeles, who also served as a Bible worker, was sent, becoming **the first Adventist teacher to serve in**

Sánchez. Subsequent Adventist teachers were F. M. Owen, H. F. Courter, Lorenzo Stump and Harold Ward.¹¹

The Church That Was Never Completed

The Methodist members of the Sánchez family decided to hand over the little adobe church to the new Adventist believers. "We will give you this church," the Methodists said, "with the condition that you help us build a new church for our members." The Adventists agreed and both groups promptly laid the foundation and put up the walls and the doors. However, before they could get the roof on, it began to rain. It was a heavy rainstorm. The water continued to pour down, day after day, without stopping, causing the project to come to a complete halt. When the rain finally stopped several days later, the Sánchez family ventured out to inspect what was supposed to have been the new church. What they found was that the building was flooded. The unprotected adobe walls had become water-logged and two of them had collapsed. There was no way to salvage it and it remained that way, never to be completed.

In 1927 the Sánchez Adventist congregation built another church building in the same general area. The shell of that little church still stands. Angel Tarín, one of the family members, relates an interesting note in connection with that church: "If baptismal candidates were still wearing some jewelry when they got up to take their vows on the platform of the church, the pastor would ask them to remove their jewelry and drop the rings, earrings and bracelets through the cracks of the platform floor so no one would ever get them. Stella López remembers that her mother, Reyes, dropped her jewelry through the cracks in the platform on the day of her baptism. Many years later, when the building was no longer in use, treasure hunters who knew about this custom went into the building and tore up the planks, searching for the discarded 'worldly' jewelry."

As the years passed, the children of the charter members moved away. Some went to Adventist colleges and became nurses and teachers. Many served in other church in-

stitutions. Augustine, son of Adiel, and Ismael, son of Abel, prepared for the ministry and served several years as missionaries in Mexico. Adiel's grandson, Albert Sánchez, with a doctorate in science, taught at the University of Montemorelos. Because of the gradual exodus of young people, in 1946 it was decided to merge the Sánchez Spanish church with the Safford English church, leaving **the Tucson Spanish Church as the oldest Adventist Spanish congregation still worshipping in North America today.**

Organization of the Second Spanish Church

Pastor Serna shared the Sabbath truth with his former Methodist-Episcopal members in Tucson and many of them decided to join the Seventh-day Adventist Church either by baptism or profession of faith. At the time, they had no church building so they began meeting in a tent in a section of Tucson called "Old Pueblo." It was those 23 members, mostly Mexicans, who became the charter members of the second Spanish Adventist church in North America when on December 31, 1899, Elder R. M. Kilgore organized the group.

Thirteen and one-half months later the Tucson Methodist-Episcopal Church building would be deeded over to the newly-organized Spanish Adventist congregation. It is noteworthy that God in His providence provided church buildings for the first two Spanish-speaking churches in North America and both were former Methodist Churches.

In 1901 the union paper, *Pacific Union Recorder*, stated in an article entitled, "The Arizona Mission Field,"



***Second Spanish Church in North America:
Tucson, Arizona, 1901.***

"At the close of 1900 there were four organized churches in the territory, with a membership of 111, and about 17 scattered Sabbath-keepers. The churches are located at Phoenix, Tucson, Solomonville, and Flagstaff."¹²

Two of the four churches in Arizona at that time were Spanish-speaking congregations. One was in Tucson and the Sánchez Church was identified as being in Solomonville since there was no post office in Sánchez, Arizona until 1901. Of the 111 members in the entire state, 41 were Hispanic.

The *Pacific Union Recorder* article went on to say, "The workers consisted of one

ordained minister, three licensed preachers, and two Bible workers.”¹³ The three licensed preachers were, Marcial Serna, C. D. M. Williams and W. L. Black. One of the Bible workers was Mrs. W. L. Iles, who had assisted Williams with an evangelistic effort in Tucson before the Tucson Spanish Seventh-day Adventist church was organized. Four of the six Arizona workers had had a significant role in the beginnings of the Hispanic work in North America.

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3. *Ibid.*
4. *Ibid.*
5. *Ibid.*
6. A. J. Howard, “The Arizona Conference,” *Pacific Union Recorder*, Vol. 3, No. 18, April 7, 1904, p. 12.
7. Ann Sánchez, “The Beginning of the Spanish Work in the United States,” pp. 1, 2.
8. Howard, p. 12.
9. *Ibid.*
10. Ann Sánchez, Unpublished document on the Sánchez family.
11. *Pacific Union Recorder*, August 15, 1901, page 8.
12. *Ibid.*
13. Myrtle A. Pohle, *The Truth Seekers*, p. 36.

4

The Advent Flame Is Kindled and Spreads Across the Southwest

"Who maketh his. . . ministers a flaming fire." Psalm
104:4 (KJV)

Hispanic Adventist Work From 1900-1925

THE period around the turn of the century was a revolutionary time in the Americas—not only because of the transition from one century to the next, but also because of political reform. As a means of introduction, some of the more notable events will be mentioned that occurred at this juncture, both in the secular world and in the Adventist

Church that, directly or indirectly, had an impact on Hispanics.

The Spanish American War (1898) brought Puerto Rico under American control. Congress passed the Jones Act in 1917, extending U. S. citizenship to Puerto Ricans and that same year, in World War I, Puerto Rican soldiers fought for the first time under the U.S. flag.¹ Although these events were significant, perhaps the most impacting on Hispanics during this period were the Mexican Revolution and the first wave of Mexican immigrants into the United States.

The Mexican Revolution and First Wave of Mexican Immigrants

South of the border, the Mexican Revolution was raging (1910-1917), and Hispanic immigrants in large numbers were coming to the United States, mainly from Mexico. Two leading figures of the Mexican Revolution were Emilio Zapata and Pancho Villa. The legendary General "Pancho Villa," (born Doroteo Arango in Río Grande, Zacatecas, Mexico in 1877) led an army of *campesinos* (farm workers) against the oppressive Mexican governments of Porfirio Díaz, Victoriano Huerta, and Venustiano Carranza.

Among the Mexicans on both sides of the border, Pancho Villa is considered a folk hero. There are even some Mexican Adventist families in North America today who verify with pride that their grandparents or other relatives rode with Pancho Villa and his soldiers during the Revolution. One of these is Elder José Rojas, Youth Director for the North American Division. "Both of my grandfathers were soldiers with Pancho Villa," he proudly states.

The Revolution made life hard in Mexico. Carmen Vásquez (the author's father) recalls as a child that when the people from the farming community of Santa Clara, near Jalpa, Zacatecas, realized that the government soldiers were within a day's ride of their farm community, everyone would hide out in the mountains until the soldiers were gone, which was sometimes up to six or seven days at a time. "When we returned to our homes," he said, "we discovered that the *soldados* (soldiers) had pillaged our food supplies and other valuables." His uncle Elías, who was a *Villista* (a soldier under Pancho Villa) told stories of adventures with the revolutionaries. He was well-respected for his fighting skills with the machete, and had six notches on the handle to substantiate his stories.

After the Revolution, Mexico was left in poverty. Widespread unemployment existed everywhere, causing more than one million Mexicans to flee to *el norte*, (the North).² Carmen Vásquez and his older brother Gavino were among them. This was considered the first wave of Mexican immigrants to the U.S. in modern times (1911-1922). These immigrants came looking for a better life and the American dream, like millions of Irish, Germans, Poles and Italians who had already come to America's shores.

The United States From 1900-1925

In the first quarter of the century, national events of far-reaching consequences were taking place in the United States. President William McKinley was shot and killed in 1901 by a Polish anarchist. Theodore "Teddy" Roosevelt succeeded McKinley and became the youngest president of the United States (42 years old). Under President Woodrow Wilson's administration (1913-1921), the United States entered World War I.

Two significant inventions changed the course of history during this period: the “flying machine” by Orville and Wilbur Wright in 1903, marking the beginning of aviation history; and the mass production of the automobile. Although the automobile had already been invented, it wasn’t until Henry Ford came out with his “Model T” and the “assembly line” in 1908 that the automobile became affordable for the average person.

Between 1900 and 1912, the Southern Pacific, the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railway companies began recruiting Mexican laborers to help build the railroads. By 1908 these American railroad companies had recruited almost 16,000 Mexicans. So it is no exaggeration to say that Mexican labor built the railroads in the Southwest and West.³

In 1912 the forty-seventh and forty-eighth states were ratified: New Mexico on January 6, and Arizona six weeks later on February 16. In 1916 Ezequiel Cabeza de Vaca became the first Hispanic elected governor of New Mexico after statehood.⁴

Notable Hispanics

Some of the better-known Hispanic American celebrities were born during this 25-year period. One was actor Anthony Quinn who was born Anthony Rudolph Oaxaca Quinn in Chihuahua, Mexico in 1915.⁵ Quinn appeared in more than 100 films and won two Oscars as best-supporting actor. He had an Adventist influence in his life since he grew up with the Hernández children who were from a Mexican Adventist family in Los Angeles.

Cuban-born Desi Arnaz (christened Desiderio Alberto Arnaz y de Acha III) was born in the city of Santiago de Cuba, in 1917. He was the first Hispanic to star in his own TV show, the much-loved American sitcom *I Love Lucy*. That program did much to help break down racial barriers against Hispanics.

José Ferrer (1912-1992), born José Vicente Ferrer de Otero y Cintrón, in Santurce, Puerto Rico, starred in many Broadway plays and movies. In 1953 he married popular singer Rosemary Clooney and had five children.

Adolfo Luque, a black Cuban, became the first Hispanic to play in baseball’s World Series (1919). Luque also pitched in the 1933 World Series for the New York Giants and was credited with winning the decisive game of that series.⁶

General Conference Session of 1901

Events were also taking place in the Adventist Church that for years to come would impact the way it was organized and administered.

The world membership of the Adventist Church at this time stood at 66,547 and the membership of what today comprises the North American Division was 55,252. The 1901 General Conference Session was a major turning point for the Seventh-day Adventist Church. “This will be the most important conference ever held by the Seventh-day Adventist people,” was the opening remark of President George A. Irwin at the 1901 General Conference session. Truer words were never spoken. At the close of the session, A. G. Daniells became the new General Conference president and a dramatic reorganization of the Church had taken place.

Two of the more significant changes were (1) the organization of Union Confer-

ences with the supervision of local conferences, divesting the General Conference of some of its power and delegating it to other administrative levels; (2) the organization into General Conference departments of most of the independent ministries of the church, such as “The Foreign Mission Board” and the “International Tract Society.”⁷

John Harvey Kellogg

The year 1901 also marked the beginning of Dr. John Harvey Kellogg’s separation from the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Kellogg, inventor of meat substitutes and the popular breakfast cereal “Corn Flakes,” was one of the most brilliant doctors the Adventist Church has ever produced. However, he came into conflict with the church leaders when he endeavored to control the Battle Creek Sanitarium in Michigan. Then pantheistic teachings appeared in his book *The Living Temple*, constituting a serious departure from orthodox Adventist theology. Ellen White and other Adventist leaders labored with Kellogg for two years, doing all they could to help him see his error, but to no avail. In 1907, with much sadness on the part of the leaders, Dr. Kellogg was disfellowshipped from the Church.⁸

The Passing of the Prophetess

Another very sad occurrence took place during this period. The Adventist Church lost the “voice” that had guided it for over 70 years. Ellen G. White, God’s “messenger,” broke her hip in a fall in her Elmhaven, California home and was bedridden for five months. On July 16, 1915, at the age of 87, she quietly passed to her rest and was buried next to her husband in the Oak Hill Cemetery in Battle Creek, Michigan. Meanwhile, in the Southwest, the Adventist truth among Hispanics began to spread.

WITH this secular and denomination background in mind, we will now focus on the way the Adventist truth began to spread among the Hispanics in the Southwest.

From Sánchez and Tucson to the Rest of the Southwest

Following his baptism in December of 1899, Marcial Serna, along with other Hispanic and Anglo workers, faithfully carried the truth of the third angel’s message to other regions of the Southwest and beyond. Serna’s efforts resulted in the establishment of both the first and second Spanish-speaking Seventh-day Adventist Churches in North America. Besides these ventures for the Lord, he shared the truth with his former Methodist minister colleagues with exciting results. Rafael Acosta and two other ministers accepted the Advent message and became Adventist ministers.⁹

After the Tucson Methodist church building was deeded to the Hispanic Seventh-day Adventists in 1901, very little is known of what happened with the members in the next few years. What is known is that in 1915, the Tucson Spanish-speaking congregation moved to a location on East Ninth Street. Then, according to Elder Burt Bray, “For lack of ministerial care this church dwindled away.” So on December 5, 1929, the Tucson Spanish Church was organized as a church for the second time.¹⁰

Benito Estrada, a young member at the time, recalls: "There were about 20 members who met each week in a small house. No one seems to know what happened to the Methodist Church building they had acquired earlier. Since they had no pastor, some of the men, including my father, Jesús, took turns preaching."

Brother Estrada, now in his late nineties, and still a faithful member, remembers that it was not easy to be a Seventh-day Adventist in those days. In the early 1900's, Tucson was still a small southwestern town, predominantly Mexican, with dirt streets and horse-drawn carriages. Most of the citizens were Catholics, steeped in the Church's traditions and bigotry. "If you were not a Catholic," said Estrada, "you became an outcast, ostracized from the community." Because of this, for many years the Tucson church barely managed to survive. It wasn't until the mid-1900's that it started to grow.¹¹

Taking the Message to Albuquerque, New Mexico

In the neighboring state of New Mexico, in 1888 (eleven years before the first Hispanic Adventist church was organized), there was another significant baptism. Florentino Martín (who later changed his surname to Martínez), his married sister Librada Sedillo, and his wife's sister Luisa Martínez (later Sandoval) were baptized. Luisa was the very first to be baptized that afternoon in the Río Grande River. Since there was no Adventist church in Albuquerque at that time, these newly-baptized Hispanics remained isolated for 15 years until the Martínez Town Church was organized in 1903.

Luisa later became **the first Hispanic Adventist teacher in the state of New Mexico**. One of Luisa's granddaughters, Antonia (Tony) Sandoval, became a nurse and married Elwood Staff. He later served as executive secretary of the Southeastern California Conference until his death in 1987.

Florentino lived in Old Town Albuquerque. But with its *cantinas*, fighting and lawlessness, it was not the place that he wanted to raise his family. So he moved to the outskirts of Old Town and invited his sisters and brothers to join him. Later their settlement became known as "Martínez Town" because everyone who lived there was a Martínez. Although today that is no longer the case, the *barrio* still continues to be known by that name.

Florentino's granddaughter, Irene Lovato, affirms that her father, Isaías, related the story of the 1888 baptism to her. Florentino had wanted to study the Bible but his poor reading ability hindered him. His sister-in-law Luisa, however, had learned to read and write at a very early age so she read Scriptures to him and Librada. When he learned about the ten commandments, he determined to keep them all, including the Sabbath. One day, an Adventist pastor knocked on Florentino's door and found that he, Librada and Luisa were already living much of the Adventist faith. All they lacked was a little more instruction and baptism.

Later, because of Florentino's burden to have all the Martínez children able to read the Bible for themselves, he started a little mission school. Luisa's ability to read and write in both English and Spanish, made her the perfect selection for the teacher.

Brother Florentino also had a burden to establish a Spanish-speaking church. He felt that if the conference would only send a Spanish-speaking worker to the area, they could easily plant a church there. Imagine his happiness when in 1903 the Texico Conference

asked Elder Serna and Elder J. A. Leland, a Spanish-speaking Anglo, to conduct an evangelistic effort in Martínez Town! Night after night these men of God held meetings in an old Spanish Presbyterian Church on the corner of Edith and Loma Streets. Night after night the people came out to hear the Adventist message. The Holy Spirit was there to impress the people with the truth and the effort was fruitful.

Brother Florentino's dream came true when an Adventist congregation was organized that same year, 1903, shortly after the effort, with 20 newly baptized members. Among the charter members of the **first Spanish-speaking Adventist church in New Mexico** were: Luisa Sandoval, Florentino Martínez, and Librada Sedillo, all of whom had been baptized in 1888. Elena Apodaca, and María Armijo (Luisa Sandoval's daughter) also joined the group as charter members.

A Church Building for Martínez Town

For a number of years the small Spanish Adventist group in Martínez Town met in the members' homes. But Florentino was a builder and had built many of the houses in the *barrio*. The Lord put another burden on his heart. "Why don't we build our own *"iglesia"* (church)?" he thought. "The Lord has given me that talent and I want to use it now for His glory."

Florentino, his son Santiago, and other members of the little congregation rallied together and in 1908 built an adobe block church in old Martínez Town on the corner of Walter and Granite streets, with a small school adjacent to the church so the members' children could gain a Christian education. That little church and school, which is still standing, served the congregation until 1946.

Augustine Sánchez

In 1924 the Texico Conference called a young minister (and his new bride, Ann) to pastor the Albuquerque church in Martínez Town. This young minister was none other than Augustine Sánchez, grandson of the patriarch Lorenzo Sánchez. His territory included every town from Socorro, in the middle of the state, all the way north to the border of Colorado, almost 300 miles away. Augustine and his wife had many wonderful and unique experiences in their ministry.

Baptized in a Hole

In 1926, a literature evangelist sold some Adventist books to a family who lived in the mountains close to Las Vegas, New Mexico. Honest in heart and hungry for the truth, they literally read themselves into the Adventist truth. Then they looked for others who believed as they did.

When they heard about the Adventist minister, Augustine Sánchez, they sent him a message. "We have read the books and believe the Sabbath. Please come and tell us what to do." Elder Sánchez responded to their call and found them ready for baptism. Unfortunately, Elder Sánchez was not yet ordained, so he could not perform the baptism. But he called his conference president, Elder Roy L. Benton, to come and officiate. Meanwhile, Sánchez put the time to good use, digging a deep hole in the family's yard and filling it with water from a nearby spring. This was the humble baptism used for the baptismal ceremony.

The Sánchez couple had worked in Albuquerque for a little over a year when Augustine received a call from the General Conference to become a missionary to Mexico (1926-1929). He was asked to work for La Misión de la Sierra Madre, whose territory covered the Mexican states of Sonora, and Sinaloa. Ann Sánchez relates that they moved to Mexicali and then to Nogales, Arizona, where she stayed while her husband traveled. Traveling from Nogales, he would spend weeks at a time in Mexico trying to make missionary contacts with interested individuals. But the laws in Mexico regarding proselytizing were very strict and he was arrested several times, spending many days in Mexican jails.

Because of poor health, Sánchez returned to the States where he again worked for the Texico Conference, this time in Socorro, New Mexico and the Manzano Mountains. But his health worsened until 1931 when he was forced to give up his strenuous and demanding work as a pastor. He was not a quitter, however, and he continued to give Bible studies, winning many more souls for the Lord.



*Pastor Augustine Sánchez
and his wife Ann.*

Taking the Message to San Marcial, New Mexico

Elder Serna continued to feel a burden for his former Methodist parishioners. Those were the people he had once pastored and taught to keep Sunday holy. They needed to know what he had discovered about the Sabbath. In 1904 he finally went back to visit one of his former Methodist congregations in San Marcial, New Mexico. Just as he had done with his former parishioners in Sánchez and Tucson, Serna shared the Sabbath truth with them and once again that seed found fertile ground.

That same year Serna organized **the second Spanish Adventist Church in New Mexico (San Marcial)** with 28 charter members. Ann Sánchez's parents, Flavio and Carlota Romero, and her sister Dolores (Doloritas) were among the first converts. Dolores was the oldest of the Romero children and was baptized with her parents. Ann was only two years old at the time. Little did she know then that her future husband would come from another prominent family that Elder Marcial Serna had brought into the church—the Sánchezes from Sánchez, Arizona.

Ann's Nephews, Larry and Flavio Vigil

Ann Romero's nephews, construction contractors Larry (Lauro) and his brother Flavio Vigil are sons of her sister Dolores Romero Vigil. They are currently staunch members and strong supporters of the Hispanic work in Albuquerque. Larry is proud to let everyone know that Augustine and Ann Sánchez are his uncle and aunt. Left in charge of the

San Marcial Spanish Church as elders were Matías Romero (Ann's uncle), and Pedro Galvardón. One of Galvardón's granddaughters, Evelyn, married Tony (Antonio) Vargas, who pastored for many years in the Spanish Adventist churches of New Mexico and Colorado.

Conversion of a Newspaper Editor

Elder Serna was always on the lookout for ways to make contact with and witness to



Candelario Castillo, first Hispanic Southern Baptist minister in North America who became an Adventist minister.

non-Adventists. When a person is that open to the leading of the Holy Spirit, he can be used in the mysterious plan whereby God puts a person who is looking for the truth in the pathway of one who has the truth. In 1902, Serna was used by God in just such an encounter.

While in Sánchez, Arizona, Serna was feeling somewhat ill so he went to the Solomonville drugstore to buy some medicine. The clerk took the bottle of medicine and wrapped it in a sheet of newspaper. "Here you are, Señor," the clerk told him, handing him the package. When Serna got outside, he noticed that the piece of newspaper wrapped around the bottle was in Spanish. Unwrapping the bottle, he carefully straightened out the paper and sat down to read it. On the back side, he noticed

the religious column which, to his surprise, contained a quote from the book *Patriarchs and Prophets*. The editor even gave Ellen G. White as the quotation's author.

Serna immediately wrote to the editor, Candelario Castillo, who turned out to be a Baptist minister as well as the editor of the Spanish newspaper in El Paso, Texas. Unfortunately, they had just started corresponding with each other when Castillo was transferred to Denver, Colorado and Serna lost contact with him.

Several years later, in 1910, Candelario Castillo was in Southern California where he made contact with the Adventists quite by "chance." One Saturday morning while he was out walking, he noticed an English-speaking church having a worship service. Curious, he crossed the street and read the church sign: "Santa Barbara Seventh-day

Adventist Church.” One of the members standing at the front door noticed him and asked him to come in. The speaker for that morning was Elder Thurston and when he discovered that Castillo was a Baptist minister, he invited him to be on the platform.

Later, Castillo, who smoked cigars at the time, recalled: “Brother Thurston’s sermon on temperance was meant just for me. I gave up my cigars that very day.” The next week Professor Paulin, another church member, made friends with Castillo and gave him some literature to read. Then Paulin and the pastor teamed up to give Castillo and his wife, Eulalia, Bible studies. The result: the Baptist minister and his wife were baptized. But there’s more to the story.

Twenty-five of Castillo’s Spanish Baptist church members, whom he had been teaching the newly-found truth as soon as he learned it, were baptized along with him! This made the Baptist officials quite upset since Castillo had been their first Hispanic Southern Baptist minister and had been very effective in establishing Spanish Baptist churches throughout the Southwest and West: El Paso, Texas (1900); Las Cruces, New Mexico (1901); Pueblo, Colorado (1903); and Santa Barbara, California (1910). Immediately following his baptism, Castillo traveled to the campus of Pacific Union College where he took several theology courses to further ground him in the truth and prepare him for the Adventist ministry.

First Spanish Adventist Church in Los Angeles —Spanish American Church

The earliest accounts of the beginning of the Hispanic work in Los Angeles record that it was started in 1905 by Anglo members of the Central English Church who wanted to work for Hispanics.¹² Then Juan P. Robles, a lay Baptist preacher came across an issue of *El Mensajero de la Verdad*, one of the forerunners of *El Centinela* and accepted the truth. In 1906, Elder E. S. Ballenger baptized eight Hispanics. The Southern California Conference then hired Augusta E. de Angeles as the **first full-time Hispanic Bible worker**.¹³ In 1911 the first Hispanic church was organized and a building was erected on Gless Street near First. Elder Blunt became the first pastor with Candelario Castillo and F. H. Westphal following him.

In 1921, Elder Carlos S. Nicolás, who was a graduate nurse as well as a minister, and who had also been a long-time, experienced editor in Mexico, was sent to pastor the Los Angeles Spanish Church. The members were meeting in a dingy little warehouse which they had converted into a makeshift church. The facilities were so small that the children’s Sabbath school classes were forced to meet in the alley behind the warehouse in the open air. The congregation met in these humble facilities for six years. Then they set up a tent on the corner of Pennsylvania Avenue and Bailey Street where they worshiped for two years while they raised funds to build a new church. During Elder Nicolás’ ministry, the Spanish American Church grew to 200 members. In 1929, they were finally able to begin building their new church at 1666 Michigan Avenue and in April of 1930 it was dedicated debt-free.¹⁴

One of the charter members of the Spanish American Church was Zeferina Hernández. In 1911 an Adventist layperson (Mrs. Dávalos from Long Beach, California) gave her Bible studies which led to her baptism. Zeferina then asked the conference Bible worker, Miss Hensen, to study with her daughter Delfina and her family.



First Spanish Adventist congregation in Los Angeles in front of their warehouse church.

However, Delfina's husband, Moisés, refused to have anything to do with Protestants. He was Catholic and that was "good enough" for him. But Delfina, her daughter Amparo, and son-in-law Pedro Luna took the studies and soon they made their decision to be baptized.

When Moisés learned of their decision to join the Adventist church, he was very upset. Confronting his wife, he threatened her: "If you get baptized, I'll leave you!" Unflinching, she looked him in the eye and pointing toward the door said, "There's the door." When he saw her determination to follow the Lord and the courage her conviction gave her, the Holy Spirit touched his heart and his attitude completely changed. "*Querida* (dear)," he said, "I want to ask you to postpone your baptism because I want to study the Bible and be baptized with you." What a memorable day when all four entered the baptismal font together!

Amparo and Pedro Luna's son, Pedro (Pete) Luna, Jr., who grew up in the church, eventually became an Adventist pastor, educator, and hospital chaplain. He is presently an associate pastor of the Glendale City Seventh-day Adventist Church in Southern California.

Moisés' and Delfina's son, David Torres, remembers hearing many interesting experiences from his father. "My father was a captain in General Francisco Villa's army during the Mexican Revolution," he relates. "He was short in stature but made up for it with his resourcefulness and brilliant mind for understanding complex matters and situations. Villa depended on him a lot," David says with sense of pride. "And just as he was valuable to Villa, he became more so to the Lord's cause when he was converted to

Adventism. He became a soldier in the Lord's army, a captain for Christ." Teaming up with his pastor, Elder Nicolás, Torres helped establish the Van Nuys church, the Pasadena Church (now the Temple City Church), and the Watts Church (now the Carson Church)—all in the Greater Los Angeles area of Southern California.

The Temple City Spanish Church had its beginning in 1932 in Petra Schmidt's home at 98 West Delmar Street. Elder Nicolás went door to door in the Spanish-speaking community of Pasadena, inquiring if anyone would like to know more about the Bible. Petra was one of those who answered with a resounding "Yes." Mrs. Schmidt was not only

blessed by having the group meet in her house, but was also rewarded when her son, Paul, became an Adventist minister and served not only as a pastor, but as a conference youth director and academy teacher.

In 1938 Elder Nicolás became the **speaker of the first Adventist Spanish radio program in North America, *La Hora Cristiana***. The 15-minute program aired from 7:00-7:15 a.m. every Monday, Wednesday and Friday on KFDV in Los Angeles.¹⁵ David Torres, the 14-year-old grandson of Moisés and Delfina, was asked to sing on the radio program and his sister, Margaret, played the piano. In the early 1940's the program was renamed *La Voz de La Profecía* with Elder Merardo León as announcer. In 1942 this radio program gave way to *La Voz de la Esperanza* (the Voice of Prophecy in Spanish), whose founder, first director and speaker was Elder Braulio Pérez Marcio, whom we will mention in more detail in a later chapter.

MOISES TORRES AND PANCHO VILLA



Captain Moisés Torres, before his conversion to Adventism, stands next to Pancho Villa (in General's uniform) as Villista troops mobilize against Mexican President Carranza in November, 1914.

After Moisés Torres left the Villista army, he became an Adventist and a "captain" in God's army, helping establish three churches in the Greater Los Angeles area.

Serna and Castillo Meet for the First Time

In 1911 Elder Marcial Serna and Elder Candelario Castillo met in person for the first time. Nine years had passed since they had first become acquainted through correspondence over a Spirit of Prophecy quotation in a religious column in Castillo's newspaper. Now, at the Spanish American Church in Los Angeles, they finally met in person.

It was an unforgettable moment for both. There was so much catching up to do on what had occurred during those "lost" years. For Elder Serna, it was an emotional moment to learn the details of the chain of events which had taken place since their first contact. How wonderful to be able to see the extent of the "fruit" which had developed from those seeds of truth he had sown. To celebrate their reunion, the two pastors decided to join in an activity which was close to both of their hearts—evangelism. They scheduled a joint evangelistic effort in the first Spanish church in Los Angeles to plant more seeds and reap more souls for the Lord.

Candelario Castillo—First Hispanic Pastor in Central California

Meanwhile, Elmer C. Bond, an English-speaking doctor whose practice was in Hanford, felt a burden to bring the Adventist truth to Mexican migrants and other Hispanics living in the area, many of whom were working in the fields of the San Joaquin Valley. As he treated people from the Hispanic community, he witnessed to them and found many who were interested in the Adventist message.

In 1914, he and his wife Ina organized a small group of believers. They did all they could to foster this group. Ina played the piano. Dr. Bond preached through a translator, and later helped finance a small rented church facility. Ismael Sánchez, a grandson of Lorenzo Sánchez, assisted Dr. Bond with the group. He had studied at Pacific Union College for a year and was now colportoring in Hanford. Ismael had needed a place to stay, so Dr. Bond offered his home. But Dr. Bond was a strict man and had established house rules that even his guests had to abide by. For instance, curfew at the Bond house was set at 9 p.m. On occasions when Ismael was detained with a Bible study and did not get home by curfew time, he would find himself locked out and would have to sleep outside or at someone else's home.

After a time, it became apparent to the Bonds that even with all the help they were giving, the group needed a full-time ordained pastor who understood the language and the culture to be able to penetrate the Hispanic communities more effectively. Young Ismael was not considered for the position, however, because at that time, the conference would not think of putting an unmarried worker in charge of a church.

In 1916 Dr. Bond contacted the Central California Conference asking them to please find a Hispanic pastor for the small group. This was a tall order since at that time there was only one ordained Hispanic Adventist pastor in the state of California and only two more in the whole Southwest. Besides these men, there was just a handful of Spanish-speaking Anglo pastors who were helping develop the Hispanic work in the Southwest.

Candelario Castillo, the former newspaper-editor-turned-Adventist was pastoring the only Spanish-speaking church in the "City of the Angels" (Los Angeles) when the Central California Conference extended a call for him to pastor the Hanford group and start some work in Fresno. When Elder Castillo accepted, he became **the**

first Hispanic Adventist pastor to work in Central California (1916).

Upon arriving at his new district, Elder Castillo immediately began going door-to-door, visiting the Hispanic families in Hanford. The Lord blessed his efforts, for within a year he nearly tripled the original number of 15 members to 41.

But by 1918 Castillo was already past retirement age so the Conference asked the young colporteur, Ismael Sánchez, to assist Castillo full time with the growing group. Elder Castillo, however, was not too thrilled with his assistant. He seemed to be somewhat threatened by Ismael's enthusiasm, preaching ability and outgoing personality. Perhaps it was also the fact that Elder Castillo had three daughters of marriageable age: Deborah, Evangelina (who was studying at the Spanish-American Training School in Phoenix) and Henriquetta. Like a typical Hispanic father, he tended to be somewhat overprotective of his daughters. So he decided to send Ismael to Fresno, which was 30 miles away, to help foster the Hispanic work there. But that did not prevent the inevitable.

On July 21, 1920, Ismael married Castillo's oldest daughter, Deborah, and then became the pastor of the district. Elder Castillo's health at that time was such that he was even too weak to perform his daughter's wedding. So Dr. Bond's older brother, Ernesto, solemnized the marriage. Elder Bond, who spoke Spanish, was pastoring the Hanford English Church at the time. A few months later, on December 11, 1920, he had the sad duty of officiating at Elder Castillo's funeral, who died at the age of 75.

The Beginning of the Work in Fresno, California

In 1921 two missionary-minded members of the Central Fresno English Church, Sisters Prince and Hago, decided they wanted to do something for the Lord. Using what they had, their English Bible and Sabbath School quarterly, they began studying with the Díaz family even though the Díazes spoke only Spanish. Since Sisters Prince and Hago spoke only English, they depended on the Díaz children to translate for them. But the Lord used these two good ladies, in spite of the language barrier, to sow the precious seeds of Adventism in the hearts of this lovely family. When we give ourselves totally to the Lord, He can help us do more than we ever dreamed possible!

A few months later, Ismael Sánchez, now the pastor of the Hanford Spanish church, was selling *El Centinela* (the *Signs* magazine in Spanish) from house to house in Fresno. God's providence led him to the Hispanic *barrio* (Spanish section of town) where the Díaz and Lara families lived. When Sánchez met them and saw their interest, he not only sold them magazines, he gave them what money cannot buy—the three angels' messages. Both families were very interested in the Adventist message, but since the Díaz family had been studying with the two ladies from the English Church, they were more interested.

Pastor Ismael continued studying with them for several months. Then Elder Frank (Francisco) Bond, a returned missionary from Spain living in Hanford, baptized them. It was just as Paul had told the Corinthians, "I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase" (I Corinthians 3:6). Mrs. Díaz and her daughter, Josefina Vargas, along with Federico and Lucille Lara became part of the nucleus of a little Spanish Adventist group. Years later, in 1940, it became the Fresno Spanish Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Brother Allano, Francisco Paolino, and his wife, Julie, and Carlos F. Innis joined that small company of believers. Innis helped foster the growth of this fledgling Spanish company by doing what he loved to do best—giving Bible studies. Two people he prepared for baptism were Mrs. Carmen Ortega and her sister, Mrs. Church. Mrs. Church and her husband owned a restaurant, bar and dance hall. In gratitude of her new-found faith, Mrs. Church donated to the Spanish-speaking church its first piano or “pianola” when the church was organized in 1940. That 1906 “Chicago Electric” nickelodeon had previously entertained patrons in her husband’s bar and dance hall.

First Spanish Adventist Church in Phoenix

The Hispanic work in Phoenix, Arizona began in 1914 when Elder Ernest Bond began giving Bible studies to a few Hispanic families. Some of his first converts were Mr. and Mrs. Hernández, Mrs. Segovia and her son. Since at the time there was no organized Spanish-speaking church congregation in that area, these new converts worshiped as isolated members. It was not until six years later, in 1920, when **the first Spanish Adventist church was organized at the Spanish-American Training School in Phoenix**, that they had a congregation to worship with.

The charter members were the Spanish students at the training school and the isolated Hispanic members that had been baptized in 1914. It was a joy for those formerly-isolated members to meet each Sabbath with the Adventist *hermanos* (brothers) in one of the academy classrooms.

Augustine Sánchez, a grandson of Lorenzo, was a young man at the time studying at the Spanish-American Training School. He and Elder Fred Owen went to Tempe, Arizona to do missionary work where they made contact with several Hispanic families that were interested in studying the Bible. One was the Sosa family. Mrs. Ana Sosa and her father, Mr. López, were later baptized by Elder Serna in 1921. That same year Ana began colportoring in Arizona and continued her work there among the Hispanics for almost 30 years until she was called to work in Southern California.

In 1923 Elders Frank Bond and Homer Casebeer held a series of meetings in the southern part of Phoenix in a large community of Mexican families. Later that same year the first Spanish Seventh-day Adventist church building in Phoenix was built on Mohave Street. In 1925 there were 100 members, including students attending the Spanish American Training School.

Bible Study at the Barber Shop

Augustine Sánchez walked from the Training School into town one afternoon in 1921 to get his usual haircut. Once a month he made the one-mile trek and got a chance to talk to his barber, Miguel. Arriving in the small rural town, he headed straight toward the barber shop. But even before he opened the front door to the shop, Augustine could see through the window that Miguel had another customer just stepping up to the chair. “*Hola, Don Miguel,*” Augustine greeted the older man as he walked in. “*Hola, joven* (young man). Have a seat. I’ll be with you in a little bit.” Augustine sat down in one of the two old rickety wooden chairs placed near the big picture window.

Augustine always carried his Bible with him to take advantage of precious minutes here and there to store Bible verses in his memory. As he took his Bible out to read, an

idea came to him. "Why not use this opportunity to talk about the Bible to Miguel?" He had just finished studying the state of the dead in his Bible class and the verses were still fresh in his mind.

"Miguel, have you ever wondered what happens to a man when he dies?" he asked his barber. The question seemed a little strange at first, but he continued. "Have you ever thought about what will happen to you when you die?" Without waiting for a reply, Augustine went into a Bible study. Miguel dutifully listened to what Augustine presented over the next 30 minutes as he gave his customer a shave and a haircut. But at the end of the study, Miguel made it clear that he was not interested in religion.

Augustine was a little disappointed, but not for long. He had failed to notice that someone else had been listening to him. Carlos Ayala, the young, single, but serious-minded customer, had been a captive audience. During Augustine's Bible study, Carlos' heart had been open to the impressions of the Holy Spirit. Unlike the barber, Carlos was very interested.

"I've always been interested in the Bible," he told Augustine. "I've gone to the Baptist Church all my life, but I've never heard anything like this from the Bible before. I'd like to hear more."

Bible Studies at the Ayala Home

Elder Henry Brown, the first principal of the newly-established Spanish-American Training School, in Phoenix, Arizona, decided that giving Bible studies to Carlos Ayala would be a good project for his Bible study training class. So he took Augustine and some of his other students to the house where Carlos and his three sisters lived with their mother, Lola (Dolores).

Elder Brown began to teach Carlos and his mother the beautiful Bible truths, and at the same time demonstrated to his students how a Bible study should be given. One of his students was a young lady, Ann Romero, from San Marcial, New Mexico, who was studying to be a Bible worker. Not only did she learn how to give Bible studies, but she later became a full-time Bible instructor with Augustine Sánchez, marrying him after they finished school in May of 1924 and sharing her life with him for 57 years.

One evening, for some reason, Carlos was not able to be at the Bible study. Elder Brown, however, proceeded with the planned study with his mother. Halfway through the lesson, Carlos' mother began to feel very uncomfortable with the testing truths she was hearing. That feeling then turned into frustration, and she lashed out at the *sabadistas* (Sabbathkeepers), as Hispanic Adventists were called in those days.

"*¡Váyanse! ¡Salgan de mi casa!*" "(Leave. Get out of my house!)" she ordered them. Surprised at the sudden outburst, Elder Brown rose to his feet, but was not ready to leave. He spoke to her in a gentle voice, assuring her that they were teaching God's word and not their own. She finally calmed down and agreed to continue the Bible study.

The Ayalas studied for almost a full year with the students from the Spanish-American Training School and Juan García, another Adventist, from Glendale, Arizona. Then in 1922, Carlos and his mother finally made their decision to join the church and were baptized into the Phoenix Spanish Church.

A Call to the Ministry

The following year, in 1923, Carlos Ayala felt a call to the ministry and enrolled in the two-year ministerial course at the Spanish-American Training School. That same year Anastacio Salazar and his wife traveled up from Alice, Texas also to study at the training school. It was through Elder Marcial Serna that they had joined the church. In 1910 Serna had sold Anastacio's father, Epifanio Salazar, a copy of *El Conflicto de Los Siglos* (*The Great Controversy*) and four years later, the entire Salazar family was baptized.

Anastacio brought his sister, Carolina, to Phoenix with them so she could babysit for his two young children, Daniel and Lydia, as well as take a few classes at the training school. One day, Carlos was walking down the hallway when he spotted Carolina. He immediately fell in love with her. For days he could not get this tall, sophisticated, dark-haired beauty out of his mind. He knew in his heart that she was "the one." Their courtship lasted for two years until he finished his studies. That year he received both his diploma and the woman of his dreams. They were married on May 30, 1925.

Fruits of Their Labors

The following year Carlos and his new bride took a call to pastor the church in Socorro, New Mexico and later in Las Vegas, New Mexico, where Carlos, Jr. was born on July 28, 1926. As Carlos and Carolina colportored part-time in and around Las Vegas, they planted the seeds of truth in every home they visited. One of those homes was that of Evangelina Barela Mortimore who was a staunch Presbyterian. To all appearances, their witness to her bore no fruit. For 67 years the seeds lay dormant in her heart. But in 1993 those seeds bore their fruit when Evangelina finally accepted the Adventist message and joined the Albuquerque Spanish Rio Grande Church, only one year before her death.

But the experience of Evangelina's sister, Teresina Fullerton, was quite the opposite. She heard about the Sabbath while visiting her cousin Emilia Chávez in Los Angeles in 1936 and after Bible studies, asked to be baptized. She was instrumental in the conversion of her parents, Cándido and Josefina Barela, four sisters and a brother. Teresina became a member of the Michigan Avenue Spanish American Church in Los Angeles and later a Bible worker employed by the Southern California Conference where she worked with Elder Carlos Nicolás.

Her sister, Shella Barela Torres, is the mother of Elder Arturo Rodolfo Torres, who pastored the Glendale City Church in Southern California and the Sligo Church in Takoma Park, Maryland. Mrs. Torres' other children (Charlie, Rachel and Jim) are also active members of the church. Charlie and Jim, owners of the *Food for Life Bakery* in Corona, California, sponsor the "El Camino a Cristo" (*Steps to Christ*) ministry which was initiated by the late Pastor José Mendoza and his wife Rosa in 1993 after his retirement. This outreach ministry distributes more than 5000 copies of the Spanish *Steps to Christ* each month. After Mendoza's death in 1997, Mrs. Mendoza continued the ministry with the help of many lay persons. One of her daughters, Lizette Mendoza Williams, worked as a graphic designer at ADRA (Adventist Development and Relief Agency), and a son, Edwin, is a pastor at the San Bernardino Spanish Church in California.

Children of the Ayala Family

At the end of 1926, Carlos Ayala, Sr. and his new family moved back to Phoenix where three daughters, Martha, Esperanza, and Luz Olivia (Lucy) were born. Because of finances, Carlos took a job as an electrician with the Phoenix Street Railway Transportation System. But his affiliation with the Adventist Church never wavered. For many years, he served as head elder and lay preacher of the Phoenix Spanish Church. Carlos, Sr. passed away in California in January, 1986, at the age of 96.

The Ayalas raised all their children to be faithful workers for the Church. Carlos Ayala, Jr. became one of the most outstanding Hispanic leaders the Adventist church has produced. In December of 1950, he married Esther Vega from Colombia. They were missionaries in



Elder Carlos Ayala, Jr., first Hispanic coordinator in the Southern California Conference, 1973.

Chile where he served as professor of theology at the Adventist college in Chillán (Centro Educacional Adventista de Chile) and director of OFASA (Obra Filantrópica y Asistencia Social Adventista), now known as ADRA (Adventist Development and Relief Agency). He also served as president of the Chilean Union Conference and was the director of the Adventist college in Alajuela, Costa Rica (Universidad Adventista de Centro America). In 1973 he was elected **the first Hispanic coordinator of the Southern California Conference**. Tragically, however, he served in this capacity for only two years before his untimely death at the age of 49.

His lovely wife Esther worked faithfully by his side for 25 years until his death in 1975. She became a very successful educator in her own right, working at several of the Adventist schools. Their children are: Carlos Edward Ayala, Martha Ayala Lucas, Esther Ayala Valenzuela, and Jairo Daniel Ayala.

Carlos' sister, Esperanza (Hope) Ayala, married Eliezer Benavides, and both served as missionaries in Colombia. Benavides later became one of the notable Hispanic leaders in the North American Division. Martha Ayala married Dr. Rubén Castillo who is currently practicing in Southern California and is an uncle of Elder Ernesto Castillo, Secretary of the Pacific Union Conference. Luz (Lucy) Ayala Venegas, the youngest daughter of Carlos Ayala, became a registered nurse and lives in Northern California with her husband, David Venegas.

These are some of the fruits that resulted from the faithful labor and efforts of the early Hispanic pastors and godly parents of the first quarter of the century in the West and Southwest.

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Section II

HISPANIC TRAINING SCHOOLS

Training Schools for Hispanic Workers

*Efforts to establish Spanish schools from 1920-1952
and the establishment of the Institute for Hispanic Ministries*

"And all thy children shall be taught of the Lord; and great shall be the peace of thy children." Isaiah 54:13

THIS chapter is dedicated to a very fundamental theme: the need for Christian education among North American Hispanic Adventists and the attempts to meet this need over the years. To provide a background, we will look at geographical data of the Hispanic population in North America as well as in the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

U. S. Hispanic Population and Church Membership

In 1920 an estimated one million Hispanics were residing in the United States, mainly in Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, California and a sizable number in Colorado. An official count, however, was not available until 1930 when the U.S. census recorded Hispanics as a separate ethnic group for the first time, showing 1.3 million Hispanics residing in this country.

In 1920, the number of Seventh-day Adventists worldwide was 185,450, with the North American Division claiming more than one-half of that number (95,877). Great membership gains had been made in North America in the previous decade, in large measure due to the Church's commitment to evangelism and the extensive training of its evangelists.¹ However, an abrupt decline occurred in the growth rate following World War I and continued until 1932.²

Meanwhile, by 1920, the number of Hispanic Adventists in North America had reached 470. Though relatively small in number, they were by no means an insignificant group. In contrast to the Division's church growth in general, Hispanics had a membership growth rate that accelerated quite rapidly, increasing from 15 members to 470 in only 21 years. In the next six years (1921-1926), Hispanics added over 700 more souls to their numbers,³ and by 1932 their membership was well over 1500.⁴

The potential for growth was great among the Spanish-speaking populace due not only to the large number of Hispanics already living in the United States but also because of the continual influx of others.

Need for a Training School

During the first quarter of the 20th century, much of the Adventist work among Hispanics in the Southwest had been pioneered by a handful of dedicated Caucasians, mostly former missionaries to Spanish-speaking countries. In addition, a small number of Hispanic Adventist pastors from Spain, Mexico and Puerto Rico helped pioneer the work along with a few Hispanic colportors (literature evangelists). In 1918, the General Conference established the Bureau of Home Missions (formerly the North American Foreign Department) which initiated work for the Spanish, Portuguese, French, and Jews.⁵ But by the 1920's a great need had become apparent—something must be done to prepare American-born Hispanics for ministry to their own people, in their own language and culture.

Although the earliest Adventist schools grew out of a desire to escape such things as the teachings of Darwinism and the spirit of anti-Christian rivalry,⁶ the need for Hispanic education was linguistic and cultural. This was not a new development, however, since special educational opportunities had already been extended to the Danish, Swedish, French, and German constituencies. Language and Bible courses in these languages were first offered at Battle Creek College. Later these departments were transferred to Union College when it opened in 1891. Then in 1909 a Danish-Norwegian school was established in the Northern Union Conference, a German school in the Central Union (now Mid-America) and a Swedish school in the Lake Union,⁷ with senior college status being granted them by the General Conference Committee in 1918. In the same year, Broadview College added other language departments to its offerings (Italian, Romanian, Russian, Ukrainian, Hungarian, Czechoslovakian, Polish, Yugoslavian, and Finnish).

By 1928 the need for foreign-speaking schools was outgrown, so they either merged with other schools or closed altogether. Students still requiring special linguistic training were sent to study in Europe.⁸ This was not the case, however, with Hispanics.

One of the arguments made in favor of a school for Hispanics appeared in the *Pacific Union Recorder*, July 18, 1912 when there were no more than 300 Hispanic Adventists in all of North America. Elder G. W. Reaser from the Arizona Conference recognized the potential for Hispanic growth and had a burden for a school which would train Hispanics to work for their own people.

Brethren and sisters, what standing, what strength, what foundation, would our work for the English-speaking people have, and what hope for the training of our children in the message and to become workers in the cause of God, *if we were without a single denominational school?* Such is really the condition of our work among the Mexican people. . . what prospect is there of training their children as workers in the cause, what can we hope from them in the way of financial support of our work, until we establish schools among them, and train them and their children in all the principles of the message?⁹

Even though his argument was well received, it took a while to implement the plan. It was another eight years before his vision would become a reality. And it happened in the same conference where he had made the appeal.

Spanish-American Training School in Phoenix, Arizona (1920-1933)

Three prime movers followed up on Reaser's vision for the first Spanish-American Training School in North America: Elder Homer D. Casebeer, Director of the Spanish Division in the Bureau of Home Missions for North America (1921-32), Elder Ernest Bond, Secretary of the Spanish work in the Southwest, and A. R. Sandborn, President of the Arizona Conference (1919-1926).

Since funding for building a school complex was non-existent, these men felt the next best thing was to house the new Spanish-American Training School on the campus of the Arizona Academy in Phoenix. That school had been established in 1913, first as the Phoenix Intermediate School and later, in 1919, as the Arizona Intermediate Academy. Situated on six acres (two hectares) of land northeast of what was then the city limits of Phoenix, it was an adequate facility.¹⁰ (All that is left of the original property today are three city blocks with an Adventist Community Service Center building occupying a section at 1320 North 15th Street.)

In the fall of 1920, the first school for Hispanics, the Spanish-American Training School, opened on the campus of the Arizona Academy. Although it shared the same facilities and the same principal, the training school's purpose and function were unique: to prepare American-born Hispanics as denominational workers. Young ladies were trained as school teachers and Bible workers, while the young men studied to become pastors, evangelists, and teachers. At its peak in 1926, 34 Hispanic students were enrolled.

The curriculum included Bible, Spanish, and Home Nursing classes. Training was practical as well as theoretical. Teachers would take students to the Hispanic *barrios* (neighborhoods) where they sought out people interested in studying the Bible. Then the theory learned



Phoenix, Arizona, 1922-23. Group of Hispanic students from the Arizona Academy, on a picnic probably at South Mountain Park near Phoenix.

in Bible study class was put to practice in the homes of those who opened their doors to them. Carlos Ayala, Sr. and his mother had been won that way. Students from this school were later instrumental in starting the first Spanish church in Phoenix. (See Chapter Four)

Meanwhile, the Southwestern Union Conference in Texas had recognized another need. The Spanish-American training school was adequately training its students to become Hispanic workers. But what about the needs for Hispanic youth in general? The Union studied the need and recommended that a temporary school be set up in Laredo, Texas, with a permanent school to be established later in San Antonio.¹¹ Then, together with the Bureau of Home Missions, they sought counsel from the General Conference.

On August 13, 1928, the General Conference Executive Committee, chaired by Elder James L. McElhany, considered their proposal for a Spanish secondary school, and subsequently referred it to the Autumn Council for consideration. On October 3, 1928, the Autumn Council voted the following:

“That the Bureau of Home Missions and the Educational Department keep in mind the educational needs of the Spanish young people and that they study the problem of the Spanish-American school in counsel with the Southwestern Union and the Pacific Union Conferences.”

It was further voted:

“That we thank the Pacific Union for the continuance of the Spanish-American Training School at Phoenix, and that we advise the Spanish-speaking students in the United States to attend the Phoenix school.”¹²

For 13 years the Spanish-American Training School in Phoenix provided the much-needed training for Hispanics. Several students became prominent leaders in the Adventist Church. Unfortunately, the school was not intended to be an educational institution offering scholastic degrees, even though some college-level classes were taught. Because the school lacked accreditation, its credits were not accepted by other colleges. This deterred many Hispanic students from attending the school, and, despite the support of the Bureau of Home Missions and the General Conference, enrollment began to suffer. With a low enrollment, the school soon became financially inoperable and in 1933, after only 13 years of operation, the sad decision was made to close its doors.¹³

Faculty and Students

K. M. Adams was the first principal to serve during the joint venture of the Training School and the Academy (1920-1924). Subsequent principals were W. L. Avery (1924-1926); C. E. Kellogg (1926-1928); J. E. Young (1928-1931) and C. D. Striplin (1931-1934).



Students and faculty at the Spanish-American Training School in Phoenix, Arizona (1927-1928 school year).

The Directors of the Spanish-American Training School under the above-mentioned principals were: H. F. Brown (1920-1922); A. N. Allen (1922-1925); C. D. Stone (1925-1926); and John D. Livingston (1927-1929). The last four years the Spanish-American School was in existence (1929-1933), it functioned without a director, mainly because of financial constraints.¹⁴

Some of the children of prominent pioneer Hispanic families that attended the Spanish-American Training School were: Ann and Augustine Sánchez, Edisa and Rebeca Sánchez (from the patriarch Sánchez family in Arizona); Vera Jiménez and María Rodríguez (also from Sánchez, Arizona); José León (from Riverside, California); Damazo Agüero; Andalesia Romero (from San Marcial, New Mexico); Anastacio Salazar (from Alice, Texas);

José Castillo (from Texas); Carolina and Carlos Ayala, Sr. (from Phoenix, Arizona); Evangelina Castillo, (daughter of Elder Candelario Castillo from California); Daniel Fuhrken (from California); Rafael and Manuela Flores (from Laredo, Texas); Edmundo Quezada, Luis and Nieves López (from Mexico).¹⁵ Others were: Leandro Chayra, who worked with Elder Antonio Fernández in Phoenix in the 1930's;¹⁶ and Luis López, who in 1925 became the school teacher and pastor of the Spanish-speaking church in La Reforma, Texas.¹⁷

No Funding for Hispanics

In the mid-1920's, while the training school was at its peak, a number of Spanish-speaking elementary-level schools were being established in various parts of North America (Texas, Colorado, California, New Mexico, Illinois, and New York). Elder Homer D. Casebeer promoted the idea that one of these elementary schools should be converted into a secondary school for Hispanics.¹⁸ Two of the possibilities in Texas were the Yancey and Laredo Elementary Schools.

Elder Casebeer continually tried to convince the church leaders to set aside funds for this endeavor. Frustrated, however, at the apparent indifference and reluctance of the church to provide funding, Casebeer wrote an adamant letter to Elder M. N. Campbell, Associate General Conference Treasurer expressing his feelings:

I hope we can get some action either giving Yancey a subsidy or establishing a central school at El Paso for the whole territory. Our Spanish folks have just been put off and put off until we are just about in the humor to see something done. If in addition to the big appropriation annually to the Oakwood Colored School they can turn around and donate an additional subsidy for \$6,000 to the Northern School for Negroes and then leave the Spanish with nothing when we have over 1500 members, then there is something wrong somewhere."¹⁹

Even more disturbing than this was a letter from Elder Campbell, which crossed Casebeer's letter in the mail. It mentioned money which had been set aside earlier to establish a Spanish school but which had evidently been used for another purpose. Campbell suggested, however, that the matter not be pursued.

With reference to the Spanish school problem, I discovered an item in the minutes on my return from a trip. You remember I wrote you that at the Fall Council a committee was appointed to dig up the facts concerning the Spanish school. I did this and think I sent you a copy of my findings which were certainly *very clear that some money had been set aside for a Spanish school but which had lost its identity in the treasury and there was no item on the books indicating that such a sum was held in trust.* Well the matter was studied one time by the brethren when I was gone somewhere and it was felt that in view of the depletion of the treasury, it would be impossible to make any appropriation for a Spanish school at this time, and so the committee that was appointed to study this matter was discharged. And *so there would be no point in attempting to resurrect this during the present year, for while the brethren might be ever so sympathetic with the proposition, they find themselves entirely unable to render financial help.*²⁰ (Italics supplied)

This was one of factors that set the plans for a Hispanic secondary school back several years. Casebeer's idea did not become a reality until 1942 when the Spanish-American "Seminary" was established in Sandoval, New Mexico.

Forerunners of the "Seminario Hispano-Americano"

But even while the Spanish-American "Training School" in Arizona was closing, God was already preparing the way for another Spanish training school that eventually would open in Sandoval/Corrales, New Mexico. The forerunners of the Seminario Hispano-Americano were the Maxwell Seventh-day Adventist Elementary School and the Dixon Seventh-day Adventist Jr. Academy. José Salomé Espinosa was instrumental in their establishment. His contribution to the Hispanic work in this area is noteworthy.

Conversion of José Salomé Espinosa²¹

In the fall of 1928 a literature evangelist, Marion White, came to Maxwell, a village in northeastern New Mexico. One day, instead of the usual door-to-door sales, White decided to visit the handful of businesses in town. That's where he met José Espinosa, Sr., general store manager and book-keeper for the Brendan Mercantile Company.

José listened politely to Mr. White's canvass (presentation) but told him: "I've been sick for the last three months and I hardly have any energy to work, let alone to read."

"Tell me about your eating habits," Mr. White asked. "Perhaps I can pinpoint the problem."

José said he ate three meals a day, but he admitted to eating between meals and also to drinking two to three bottles of soda pop each day. Mr. White outlined a

strict regimen: "No more candy between meals, no cookies, no cheese, no boloney—nothing between meals! Also, eliminate pork from your diet. And forget about the soda pop."

José agreed to try the plan and when Mr. White returned a month later, José was well on his way to recovery. Out of sheer gratitude, José bought a Bible and *The Great Controversy* from Mr. White. When Mr. White offered Bible studies, José said that if his wife agreed, he'd be glad to study.

José's wife, Polonita, however, like most devout Catholics, wanted to take *The Great Controversy* to mass so that the priest could bless it before she would read it or agree to study with Mr. White. But when the *padre* (priest) recognized it as a Protestant book, he strongly recommended they get rid of it.



The Grocery Store in Maxwell, New Mexico, where José Espinosa worked.

"But I paid good money for this book," José protested to his wife. "I'd like to at least look it over before throwing it away. Besides, I'm grateful to Mr. White for what he's done. I know what, let's allow him to come over and give us Bible studies, but we won't listen. We can look out the window or think of something else when he reads the Bible but we won't concentrate on what he says to us."

Polonita reluctantly agreed. But José must have forgotten the plan because he soon became intrigued with what Mr. White was teaching, and he drank in the whole message.

When José came under conviction about becoming a Seventh-day Adventist, Polonita was very unhappy. Perhaps it was because before they were married, José had convinced Polonita to change her religion from Congregationalism to Catholicism. Now he wanted her to change again. "Are you out of your mind?" she shouted.

His boss reacted the same way. "Have you lost your mind?" he exclaimed when José told him about his conviction to keep the Sabbath. "Saturday is our busiest day of the week. Besides, do you know that the Adventist Church also believes in tithing? How can you support your large family if you give 10 percent of your salary to the church? Especially if you lose your job?" José's faith was being put to the test. But he claimed the promise Marion White had read to him from the Bible: "... My God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory." (Philippians 4:19).

Despite the threat to his job, José made the decision to follow his convictions. Even though many of José's friends and relatives told him he was making a big mistake, he left his job and in the spring of 1929 was baptized by Elder George Casebeer from the Texico Conference office. Mr. White introduced José to A. G. Nelson, an itinerant Adventist dentist who studied further with José and then advised him to purchase a small farm in the country.

José bought a farm about a mile from town where he and his family could raise a garden and have milk cows and chickens to supply their food during the difficult times ahead. In God's providence, the property also had a large building which would later be used for a church school. When the great Depression struck, many of the same friends and relatives who had told José he was making a big mistake, came out to the farm asking him for food. José had turned out to be a modern-day "Joseph" (José), sent ahead to prepare for the famine in the land.

The Maxwell School (1933-1940)²²

In time, José Espinosa realized his children needed to get a Christian education. "I have a building," he thought. "If there were a few more students, we could afford to hire an Adventist teacher to come and teach them."

Dr. Nelson told the Texico Conference about José's plan to open a church school in Maxwell. An ad was placed in the Southwestern Union *Record* about the new endeavor, inviting other families to enroll their children. Several families responded: the Farnsworths and Woodrows from Oklahoma; the Meadows from Idaho; the Fernándezes, and another Hispanic family from Colorado.

With the children of these families and other local children, José was able to open a school in 1933 with 30 students.²³ This was one of the first three church schools in the Texico Conference (the others were in Hagerman and Dixon). They met in one of the large rooms in the back of the adobe building, the front part of which was used as the church.

Several self-sacrificing teachers responded to the invitation to teach: Lucille Tibbets, Delma Ackerman and Homer Eakes. Money was scarce because of the Depression, and most of the teachers' salaries were paid with produce and dairy products.

Even though this was a small and remote school, it helped nurture two prominent Adventist ministers: Joe Espinosa, Jr. and Glen Farnsworth. Pastor Espinosa enjoyed 41 years of outstanding ministry as a pastor, evangelist (including television), mission and conference departmental director, conference president, division field secretary, and General Conference Associate Secretary. Elder Farnsworth had 42 years of service as a pastor, teacher, and singing evangelist.

The Conversion of the Gurulés²⁴

Since José Espinosa was unemployed at the time, the conference offered to make him a literature evangelist in the north central section of New Mexico. During the week, he traveled, selling books and fruit during the day and giving Bible studies at night. On Fridays, he would return to Maxwell to spend the Sabbath with his family.



Cañón Plaza Church group. José Salomé Espinosa (center) sold books and gave Bible studies to the first converts.

One of the families José influenced was the Gurulés (Estevan and Manuelita), who lived in Ranch Cañón Plaza, south of Tres Piedras. They were sincere members of the United Brethren Church of Vallecitos.

When José arrived in Cañón Plaza, he went to the top of a hill and prayed "Lord, please lead me to a sincere soul in this community that will accept the truth that is in these books." God quickly answered his prayer. Later that afternoon, José was giving a canvass on a health book to Consuelo V. Gurulé. At that very time, Estevan Gurulé, Consuelo's brother-in-law, happened to be passing by her house and noticed a red pick-up parked in

front that he had never seen before. Something told him to go see who was there. When he entered the house, he met José Espinosa. Estevan perceived José to be a Christian man and said to him, "I try to be a good Christian, and the best way I know to do that is to keep the commandments of God."

"Precisely," agreed José. "And especially the fourth commandment."

"Why do you put so much emphasis on the fourth commandment? To me they are all equal," responded Estevan.

Then José took his Bible in hand and read to him a few texts on the Sabbath. Even though Estevan did not comment then, he kept those verses in his mind. Leaving the house, he ran home in the dark and told his wife "Quickly, bring me my Bible before I forget these texts. God may be telling us something." This was the only Bible study Estevan received from José, but how great a seed was planted. For six years Estevan and his wife kept the Sabbath by themselves without even realizing that there was a church that kept the Sabbath also. Through the study of the Scriptures they also found the truth on baptism and were planning to baptize each other. "I'll show you how to do it," Estevan told his wife. "I'll baptize you first and then you baptize me." But before they could carry out their plans, God sent someone else into their lives to take care of that matter.

One day in Tusas, Estevan providentially met Dr. G. A. Nelson, who was on his way to California. Dr. Nelson referred the Gurulés to Elder George Casebeer and soon after, Casebeer took a train to Tres Piedras to meet them. After some meetings, Elder Casebeer baptized the Gurulés along with several others on September 21, 1939, in the Tusas River. Those baptized were: Estevan and Manuelita Gurulé, their daughter Prisela, Eliazar and Rosita Valez, Salomón (Manuelita's brother) and his wife Estella Martínez.

The next year Elder Casebeer and Pastor Ponciano Mireles went back with Estevan Gurulé to Cañón Plaza to hold an evangelistic effort. From that effort Juan P. Chacón was baptized. And Disiderio Chacón followed some time later. Thus began the first group of Adventists in Cañón Plaza.

Prominent church workers who came from Cañón Plaza are: Pete Trujillo, literature evangelist in Texico, Elder LeeRoy Chacón, presently Secretary-Treasurer of the Texico Conference; Timo Chacón, Director of literature evangelists in the Texico Conference and Johnny Chacón, Assistant Treasurer of the Texico Conference (1975-1983). All three Chacones are grandsons of Disiderio Chacón.

Prominent church workers from the Dixon area are: the late Dr. Larry Mascarenas, Rubén Mascarenas, teacher in the Southwestern Union, (both sons of Alfonso and Mary Mascarenas) and Sam Ortega, pastor and Navy chaplain.

Other converts in north central New Mexico were Daniel Cisneros in Questa, the Arellanos in Dixon, Alfonso and Mary Mascarenas in Dixon and the Cevalles in Santa Fe.

The Dixon Jr. Academy (1940-1942)²⁵

In 1940 the Espinosa family decided to move to Dixon, which was around 85 miles from their home in Maxwell and considered to be a "hub" of Hispanic Adventists in northern New Mexico. Adela and Genoveve Romero of Socorro, under the direction of Pastor Ponciano Mireles, had established an elementary school, grades 1-5, in Dixon, in 1937. Some of the first students to attend the elementary school were the children of Margarito Maes, the Mascarenas, and other children from the community. When the Espinosas moved

to Dixon, they convinced the brethren there to expand their school to 10 grades to accommodate their children and the children of other Hispanic families.

In the fall of 1940, the **first 10-grade school for Hispanic students** opened in Dixon with Mr. Lyman L. Ham (son-in-law of Elder George Casebeer) as the principal. José's oldest children, Joe and Sally Espinosa, were attending Southwestern Junior College in Keene, Texas, but the younger children, Clyde, Mary, Willie, Richard, Rubén and Arlene, were elementary and high school age, so they became part of the first group of students to enroll when the school opened.



Teachers from the Dixon Junior Academy attending a New Mexico State Teachers' Convention in 1941. From left to right: Malissa Ruybalid (grades 5-8), Sally Espinosa Sánchez (grades 1-4), Lyman L. Ham, principal.

Since the Dixon site was only temporary quarters until a more suitable place could be purchased, the little Spanish church doubled as the Dixon Spanish church school. Ponciano Mireles, pastor at the time, allowed classes to be held in the church sanctuary and Sabbath school rooms. Mr. Ham taught the academy-age students and his wife, Beatrice, the elementary.

In the second and final year of the school's operation in Dixon, other teachers joined the staff: Nicolás and Concha Rodríguez, Lola Pereyra, Malissa Martínez Ruybalid (as 5th and 6th grade teacher); and Sally Espinosa Sánchez (José Espinosa's daughter). Sally had finished her studies at Southwestern Jr. College and taught grades 1-4.

Malissa Ruybalid obtained her degree from Adams State Teachers College in Alamosa, Colorado, and taught high school in that state for five years. Elder Reymundo Archuleta, who was pastoring in the southern part of Colorado, convinced her that she should be a teacher at the Dixon Seventh-day Adventist School. Even though she had a good paying position in the public school system, she felt it was worth the sacrifice, since this would also make it possible for her two boys, Jerry and Keith, to be educated in an Adventist school.

Some of the young people who attended the Dixon school were: Alfonso, Dilla, Edna, and Lee Mascarenas; Olivas, Almeida, Lucía and Carmen Maes; Rose Cisneros, Robert (Bob) Padilla, Clyde Espinosa, Mary Espinosa, Max and Lucas Martínez and their married sister Soledad's two children, Tomacita and Antonio (Tony) Trujillo; and Prisela Gurulé. Prisela's daughter, Anabel (Ann) Lucero, married Ron Wham, who is currently secretary of the Dakota Conference. The Hecoxes came from Santa Fe, New Mexico.

Elder Homer Casebeer, from the Bureau of Home Missions, reported on the Spanish growth around the country in his April, 1932 newsletter, *Las Buenas Nuevas*. The Prospect Church in New York City had a Sabbath School attendance of 134 the last quarter. In Chicago 14-18 people were attending Sabbath meetings at the home of Sister Ramona Pérez, a new convert. There were small Spanish church schools operating in Denver, Colorado; Corpus Christi, Falfurrias, Yancey, and Dallas, Texas; San Diego and Calexico, California; and New Mexico, which had at least seven or eight Spanish church schools.

Colegio Adventista de Río Grande

In the late 1920's M. B. Van Kirk opened a school for Hispanic students in Laredo, Texas, called *Colegio Adventista de Río Grande* (Adventist College of the Río Grande). A new school building was erected with the boys dorm located in the basement and three classrooms on the main level. During the 1932 school year the *Colegio Adventista del Río Grande* had 28 students and classes were taught in both Spanish and English. Teachers were Elder Carl Staben and Mrs. Velma Smith.²⁶ One of the students that attended this school was Samuel Castillo, who later became one of the prominent pioneers of the Spanish work in the Southwest.

Van Kirk had established *Colegio Adventista de Río Grande* with the hope that it would eventually become the training school for not only the Southwestern Union but for some of the countries in Central America as well. However, when the Inter-American Division announced plans to establish their own school in Mexico, Van Kirk's dream evaporated. Then, because of the uncertain political conditions in Mexico at the time, the Inter-American Division considered an alternate plan of establishing the school in Texas, just inside the United States border. But the school was eventually established in Montemorelos, Mexico.

During the 1930's, the Spanish work began to flourish in Arizona, Colorado, California, Texas, Illinois, and New York. But with the increase in membership, the question again arose concerning the need to train some of these young converts.

This gave impetus to plans for establishing a Spanish-American Seminary. On October 27, 1937, the General Conference approved the following action:

"In view of the fact that we have no school for the training of our Spanish-speaking youth in the Southwestern section of the United States; Resolved, That the following committee be hereby appointed to make a careful survey of the field occupied by these people to find if possible a suitable location for such a school, this committee to report its findings to the Biennial Council: M.N. Campbell, F.L. Perry, J.D. Smith, R.L. Benton, Glenn Calkins, H.A. Morrison, E.F. Hackman."²⁷

The Spanish-American Seminary (1942-1952)²⁸

Members of the General Conference committee which was appointed in 1937 to find a suitable site for a Spanish secondary school or Spanish-American Seminary traveled to Dixon, New Mexico, to evaluate the school there. It was determined that Dixon was too far away from accessible cross-country transportation.²⁹ The committee felt that a more suitable location would be the Albuquerque, New Mexico area which had excellent railroad connections to New York and Los Angeles, plus two major highways.

Since José Salomé Espinosa was a literature evangelist traveling around the state, Elder Homer Casebeer asked him to look for a parcel of land where they might locate the Spanish training school. One day, while canvassing in Sandoval, just 14 miles north of Albuquerque, José noticed a “for sale” sign on a ranch in the fertile Río Grande River Valley. When he found out the asking price was \$7000, José immediately informed Elder Casebeer. In the late fall of 1941, the General Conference authorized José to make an offer of \$5000, which the owner accepted.

In August of 1942, almost five years after the General Conference action to find a suitable location for the Spanish school, the *Seminario Hispano-Americano* (Spanish-American Seminary) opened its doors. Within the first two years, the two ranches on both sides of the property were also purchased, bringing the acreage of the school to 240 acres. This land, however, was divided by the county road going north and south, which left only 80 acres that could be cultivated.

Advertised as “the school with a purpose,” it was a junior college mainly for Hispanics. Dan W. Palmer was its first principal. Palmer had studied Spanish while attending Mt. Ellis Academy in Montana, and Walla Walla College in Washington. He further developed his Spanish language skills while serving as a teacher in the Ecuadorian Mission. Hispanic young people came to study at the Seminary, not only from New Mexico, but also from Texas, California, Colorado, and New York, as well as Mexico, Puerto Rico, Cuba, and Colombia.

Max Martínez, the First Graduate

Max (Maximiliano) Martínez, who had been attending the Adventist school in Montemorelos, Mexico, returned to the States to attend the Spanish school in Sandoval. On May 23, 1943 he had the unique honor of becoming **the school’s first graduate (the only one in the graduating class that year) while the school was still only an academy.** Max worked with Elder Wallace A. Lusk for two years in Texas in the churches of Mercedes, Mission, Edinburg and with a little company in La Reforma where the Laras and Requenezes lived. After those two years of internship, Max returned to the Spanish-American Seminary, which by this time (1945) was a full junior college. He graduated two years later in 1947 along with Anna Mercado from New York and Bob Padilla from New Mexico.

Max Martínez, like his brother-in-law José Espinosa, became an outstanding Hispanic



Some of the first students at the Spanish-American Seminary shown here with first Dean of Girls, Grace Wilson.

denominational worker. His full-time ministry spanned four decades (1945-1988). During that time he served in a variety of capacities: pastor, evangelist, departmental director, mission president, union administrator, and Native Ministry Coordinator for the Pacific and Southwestern Unions. To this day Max and his wife Mary are very actively involved in ministry to America's indigenous people.

Seminary Staff

Staff for the first year of the Seminary included: Dan W. Palmer, first principal; George T. Vore, Malissa Martínez Ruybalid, Mr. & Mrs. Forest Wilson (returned missionaries from South America); Mrs. Don Kloss, a local resident and Leví Ruybalid as maintenance person.³⁰ Later staff included: Reginald F. Mattison, dean of men and director of Medical Cadet Corps; I. M. Vacquer, principal and manager; Thermutis Padilla, dean of women; M. P. Clem, manager of the broom factory; E. S. Cole, science and mathematics; Adolph Bergold, farm manager; Mrs. Ellen Mattison, piano and music; Carlos Ayala, Jr., boys dean and religion teacher; Esther Vega Ayala, librarian and registrar; C. E. Fillman, geometry and religion; W. E. Baxter, Jr., religion and evangelism; Cornelia Sánchez, piano; Samuel Castillo, eighth grade; Felícitas Castillo, dean of women; and Ben Maxson, Spanish. All were remembered as consecrated and dedicated teachers who contributed much to the overall spirit and wholesome atmosphere of the Seminary.

Treviño Joins the Seminary

In 1945 Max Elizondo Treviño from Mexico City, Mexico answered a call to join the Spanish-American Seminary as treasurer, dean of boys, accounting and business teacher. He and his young family of three (Aída, Nellie and Max Arturo) lived on the first level of the boy's dorm. His wife, Esther, who had a secretarial teaching degree, at first chose to stay at home with her three children but later taught typing and shorthand part time. After five years at the Seminary, Max accepted a call to work as a sales representative at the furniture factory at Southwestern Jr. College in Texas.

Little Max Arturo was only two years old when he came to America. At a very early age, he exhibited a sense of responsibility and determination, two qualities that have made him a successful worker for the church. When he was only eight, he surprised his mother one day when he stated, "Mom, I'm going to go out and find me a job."

"Who in the world is going to give you a job?" his mother asked. "You're only eight years old."

"Don't worry, Mom," he replied. "When I get out of school today, I'm going to find a job."

Sure enough, that afternoon he approached Mr. Karr, the grounds manager for the Southwestern Jr. College campus. If Mr. Karr was surprised, he didn't show it.

"So you want a job?" Mr. Karr asked in a serious tone.

"Yes, sir," little Max replied.

"Well. . . you got one," Mr. Karr told him. "I'm putting you in charge of picking up all the papers and trash around the campus. You're going to keep this campus clean." Little Max took his new job seriously, learning the value of hard-earned money at an early age.

Max later went on to earn a B.A. degree in business at Union College in Nebraska. He has the distinction of being the first Hispanic in every position he has occupied: Assistant

manager, Adventist Book Center, Rocky Mountain Conference (1966-1969); Assistant Treasurer, Southwestern Union (1969-1972); Conference Treasurer, Oklahoma Conference (1972-1980). In 1980 the Southwestern Union called him back, this time as the head Treasurer, thus making him the **first Hispanic Union Treasurer** in the Division. Max served in that position for 17 years, until 1997 when he was elected president of the Southwestern Union, once again a first—the **first Hispanic Union President** in the Division.

Campus Life at the Seminary

The boys dorm at the Seminary was called “El Faro” (the lighthouse), and the young men were challenged to be “farolitos” for God wherever they went.

The girls dorm, “Casa Larga Vista” (Long House View), had a panoramic view, looking out across the beautiful Río Grande Valley to the majestic Sandia Mountains. But the “long view” was also symbolic. The girls were taught to look to their future and lay foundations that would give them lasting fulfillment in the Lord’s service.

Academic and social life at the Spanish-American Seminary was wholesome and fun. Esther Vega Ayala, who attended from 1946-48, recalls “We had beautiful socials. I’ve missed them ever since.” Every Saturday night the student body would meet in the gym for the customary Latin marches, “drop the hanky,” and other lively games. The school also sponsored picnic days at the foot of the Sandia Mountains, and campouts at the sand dunes behind the campus.

Besides studying, students worked to help pay for tuition. Some of the boys worked in the apple orchard, the broom factory, and the dairy. When Elder Palmer, the principal, wasn’t in his office, he could be found in the apple orchard working alongside the students.

The girls worked in the kitchen and the laundry. Every Saturday night after sunset and before the social, the students would take their dirty clothes to the laundry. On Sunday, the girls spent all day washing clothes with only three wringer washing machines. They would then hang the clothes out on the clothes lines. In the winter, the job of hanging clothes sometimes became unbearable. Reflecting on her school days, Esperanza (Hope) Ayala vividly remembers one Sunday afternoon in December when it was so cold that she could not even feel her fingers. “How can we be expected to hang out the wet clothes in this weather?” she thought out loud. She and her two co-workers agreed it was too much to ask of them so they decided to go on “strike.”

Somehow the word about their “strike” got to the principal, C. E. Fillman. In a short time, he was at the laundry. But, much to their surprise, instead of scolding them, he told them to warm their hands. Then he picked up one of the clothes baskets and marched out into the cold to help them hang up the rest of the clothes. This made a profound impression on the girls. It is still one of their favorite stories about campus life.

Another area in which the school felt it should prepare its students was for possible induction into the U. S. armed forces. Twelve thousand Adventist servicemen served in the Army during World War II. Although Adventists were opposed to bearing arms, they were not opposed to serving their country as noncombatants, particularly as medics. Reggie F. Mattison, dean of boys in 1951, started a Medical Cadet Corps to prepare the young men for their patriotic duty. Dr. Everett Dick, professor of history at Union College, also secretary of the War Commission Department of the General Conference and founder of

the Medical Cadets, visited the Spanish-American Seminary on two occasions to inspect the corps.

In 1951 an old school bus was purchased to transport the 24 students who commuted daily from Albuquerque. Those students formed what they called the "Early Riser Club" because they had to get up no later than 5:30 a.m. in order to catch the bus. The adventures they had with break-downs and detours were numerous. But William Goransson, the pastor who also drove the bus, always managed to get the students to school.

Seminary Students Who Became Denominational Workers

Some students who attended the Seminary and later became workers in the Adventist church were: Max Martínez, Daniel Chávez, Robert Zamora, Ben (Benjamín) García, Rudy Torres, Sam Anaya, Frank Valdez, Daniel Robles, Isaac Lara, Joe Hernández, Lucas Martínez Hernández, Abe González, César Vega, Harry (Jairo) Vega, Bob Padilla, Eloy Martínez, Esperanza (Hope) Ayala Benavides, Esther Vega Ayala, Arturo and Manuel Santos, Tito Densey, Teddy Ramírez, and Bob (Robert) Goransson.

In 1952 the Spanish School in Sandoval, New Mexico, ceased its function as the Spanish-American Seminary. That year the General Conference decided it could not continue to operate the school and offered to sell it to the Southwestern Union. But the Union felt they could not operate both Southwestern Jr. College and the Spanish-American Seminary so the General Conference sold it to the Texico Conference. They in turn shut down the Spanish-American Seminary and opened it as a secondary school for all the students of their constituents and renamed it Sandia View Academy. This turned out to be the last school which would specifically train North American-born Hispanics for ministry in North America. Thirty-two years later the Institute for Hispanic ministries would be stablished with classes in Spanish to enhance the ministry of Hispanic pastors.

Institute for Hispanic Ministries (IHM)

In 1977, Caleb Rosado, an Associate Pastor for Youth Ministries in the Berrien Springs Village Church, Michigan, began doctoral studies at the Theological Seminary at Andrews University. He immediately realized that in the 10 years since he had been away from the seminary, nothing had changed with regard to providing for the needs of Hispanic students. So in the spring of 1977, Caleb prepared a proposal, at first for a single course to be offered, "Issues in Latino Church Leadership," and then later for a full "Hispanic Studies Program."

From 1977 to 1983 his proposals were submitted six different times to four different deans of the seminary, one union president, and the North American Division President. Dr. Lawrence T. Geraty, Professor of Old Testament at the seminary, supported the proposal for a Hispanic Ministry Program by submitting Caleb's proposal to the Seminary under his own cover letter. The net response to all these efforts was a wall of resistance.

It wasn't until the early 1980's that the need for a Seminary to prepare young Hispanic ministerial students for the unique Hispanic ministry in the North American Division was once again brought to the attention of the church leaders. By this time the Hispanic membership of the NAD had risen to 63,000, with over 300 Hispanic pastors.

Three Hispanic workers in particular deserve credit, not only for having the vision for

this school but for being instrumental in implementing it: Caleb Rosado, Eloy Martínez, and Elías Gómez. Martínez was Associate Director of the Human Relations Department of the North American Division and Gómez was serving as Hispanic Coordinator for the Pacific Union Conference.

According to Martínez, his plan was to establish a Seminary for North American-born Hispanic ministerial students, similar to the one that had operated in New Mexico. But this concept was short-lived because of the greater, overriding need to prepare Hispanic seminarians and seasoned Hispanic pastors for a bilingual, bicultural ministry in North America. Since there was no funding for this initiative, Eloy contacted some Adventist businessmen, one of whom gave him a \$500,000 endowment, with the earnings to be used for the salaries of the Institute's director and his secretary.

Institute for Hispanic Ministries Opens

In 1983 the North American Division voted to establish the Institute for Hispanic Ministries (IHM) on the campus of Andrews University in Berrien Springs, Michigan.³¹ In the fall of that year, the IHM opened its doors to receive the first 21 students. Since then over 200 students have attended.

Elías Gómez was called to be the Institute's first director in January of 1984. Elder Gómez brought with him the necessary qualifications to fill this post since he was an American-born, bilingual Hispanic. He had pastored Spanish churches in the United States, been an educator in Spanish-speaking countries, and was nearing completion of his doctorate. More importantly, he had a vision of what the



Dr. Elías Gómez, first director of the Institute for Hispanic Ministries (1984 to 1986).

Institute should accomplish. Once the program was established, the University took over responsibility for Dr. Gómez's salary and the endowment earnings were then used to cover the salaries of an associate director and office secretary.³²

Purpose of the Institute

The purpose of the Institute is to prepare Hispanic pastors for ministry in the North American Division. Only in North America is there so much diversity of Hispanic cultures. But greater than that is the need for a bilingual, bicultural approach to Hispanic ministry. This presents a challenge that exists in no other Spanish country in the world. In North America, Hispanic pastors find themselves needing to minister to first generation Hispanics in the Spanish language and to the second generation, bilingually. They must

also be familiar with, if not comfortable in, both the Hispanic and Anglo cultures.

In an attempt to meet the cultural need, the IHM offers classes in Hispanic American Culture and Its Expression and North American Hispanic Church History. Language needs are addressed by religion classes offered in Spanish. At this writing those are: Roman Catholic Theology, Evangelism, Church Growth, Liberation Theology, Marriage and Family, Doctrine of Christ, Religious Education, Spirituality in Ministry, Biblical Preaching, Youth Ministry, Pastoral Counseling, Mission to the World, Pentateuch, Theology of Hebrews, Christian Personal Ethics, Old Testament Preaching, Pauline Writings, Psalms/Wisdom Literature, Preaching from the New Testament, Righteousness by Faith, and Development of Seventh-day Adventist Theology. All are adapted to address the particular cultural needs that Hispanic ministers will confront when working with Hispanics in North America.

The IHM coordinates the Spanish Master of Arts degree track in Pastoral Ministry and offers required courses in the Master of Divinity (M.Div.) and Doctor of Ministry (D.Min.) programs as extension courses off-campus. Andrews University Theological Seminary

offers the complete Master of Arts degree in Pastoral Ministry in Spanish through the IHM. This program is presently being offered in five unions: Atlantic, Columbia, Lake, Southern, and Pacific.

Change of IHM Directors

In 1986 Dr. Gómez left his position as Director of the Institute for health reasons. Dr. Atilio Dupertuis, a professor of theology at Montemorelos University in Mexico, was called to replace him. Three years later, in 1989, Dr. Alfonso Valenzuela, pastor of the Huntington Park Church in Los Angeles, joined the IHM as an associate. At this writing, both still serve in these capacities.

Some of the guest professors who have taught classes for the IHM are: Dr. Eradio Alonso, Dr. Elías Gómez, Dr. Samuel Núñez, Dr. Samuel Schmidt, Dr. Ciro Sepúlveda, Dr. Daniel Scarone, Dr. Francy Durán, Dr. Antonio Bueno Jr., Dr. Fernando Canale, Dr. Werner Vyhmeister, Dra. Nancy Vyhmeister, Dr. George Knight, Dr. Juan Carlos Viera, Dr. Enrique Becerra, Dr. Salim Japas, Dr. Angel M. Rodríguez, Eduardo Schmidt, Elbio Pereyra and Dr. Emilio García-Marenko.

No Hispanic College or University

The IHM has been successful in training pastors for a bicultural ministry and has helped upgrade seasoned pastors to the level of a doctoral degree in ministry. However, Hispanics still do not have a bilingual college or university of their own in the North



***Dr. Atilio
Dupertuis,
second
director of
the Institute
for Hispanic
Ministries
(1986-)***

American Division, even though their unique language and cultural situation still exists. North American-born Hispanic ministerial students who wish to enhance their Spanish-speaking abilities for Hispanic ministries find themselves facing two alternatives: study at one of the Adventist Spanish colleges or universities abroad, or take a mission assignment to one of the Spanish-speaking countries.

One wonders how much farther advanced the Spanish work would be today had the bilingual Spanish American Seminary in Corrales, New Mexico succeeded. It is possible that it could have become the "Oakwood College" for Hispanics in North America, turning out hundreds of trained workers well qualified to work for and among their own people. But that's an answer that will never be known.

However, all the efforts and sacrifices that went into the establishment of these schools and training institutions by both Anglos and Hispanics were not in vain. Many of the students who went through the doors of those schools became outstanding church workers. For this, the Hispanics are indebted and grateful.

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Section III

THE BEGINNINGS AND DEVELOPMENT OF HISPANIC WORK IN THE UNIONS

[illegible]

**Pacific
Ocean**

**Atlantic
Ocean**

Caribbean Sea

6

Atlantic Union Conference

Caribbeans Impact Hispanic Work on the East Coast

*"Do not be afraid; keep on speaking, do not be silent.
For I am with you, and no one is going to attack you,
because I have many people in this city." Acts 18:9, 10*

IN PREVIOUS chapters, the story was told of the Adventist pioneer work among Hispanics in the Southwest and western regions of the United States. This chapter will focus on the beginnings of the Hispanic work on the East Coast and is the first of nine chapters dedicated to the Hispanic work in each of the unions of the North American Division.

Introduction

The Atlantic Union Conference was organized on April 16, 1901 at the General Conference session. It originally included territorial states all the way from Quebec, Canada to Virginia, U.S.A.¹ Today it is comprised of six conferences (Bermuda, Greater New York, New York, Northeastern, Northern New England and Southern New England). It has the fourth largest Hispanic constituency in the division, with 11,323 members, 108 congregations and 61 pastors as of January, 2000.

Within its territory is the traditional landing site of the Pilgrims at Plymouth Rock, Massachusetts in 1620 and the beginning of Protestantism in the new world. But more significantly for the Adventist church is that the Atlantic Union houses the cradle of Seventh-day Adventism. Ellen G. White, the prophetess of the Adventist church, was born in Gorham, Maine, on November 27, 1827. The first Adventist church to keep the Sabbath is located in Washington, New Hampshire. Many Adventist pioneers were born in the territory of this union: William Miller (Pittsfield, Massachusetts), Joseph Bates (Rochester, Massachusetts), Hiram Edson (Port Gibson, New York), Uriah Smith (West Wilton, New Hampshire), J. N. Andrews (Portland, Maine), Ellen White (Gorham, Maine), and James White (Palmyra, Maine). Elder White's memoirs (*Life Incidents*) mention that his father, John, was a descendant of one of the Pilgrims who came over on the historic *Mayflower*.²

It took a little over half a century from the birth of Adventism among New Englanders in 1844 for the three angels' messages to reach Hispanics—and that occurred on the opposite side of the continent. It took over 80 years for the truth to reach Hispanics in New England even though the Adventist message had its beginnings there. Ironically, the message went first to Puerto Rico, and was brought back to New York City by Puerto Rican converts.

The Most Fascinating City in the World

For decades, the diverse ethnic population, density, and structural make-up of New York City have captured the interest and attention of millions around the world. It has been called the "most fascinating city in the world." Upper Manhattan Island has more skyscrapers of 50 stories or more than any other city in the world,³ as well as the world's most extensive subway system.⁴ It is the largest city in North America with more people per square kilometer than any other city in the United States or Canada (9,164 per square kilometer in 1994).⁵

New York City has become a microcosm of the world. As early as the 1650's when it was only a small Dutch colony on Manhattan Island with a population of around 1000, its inhabitants spoke 18 languages.⁶ Beginning in the 19th century, thousands from all over Europe crossed the Atlantic in search of the "American dream." New York City became the "golden door" of opportunity to this new life with the Statue of Liberty as the symbol of this reality. The famous quotation from Emma Lazarus' poem "The New Colossus," inscribed in the statue's pedestal in 1903, gave hope to millions:

"Give me your tired, your poor,
your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,
the wretched refuse of your teeming shore.
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me,
I lift my lamp beside the golden door!"⁷

Puerto Rico, an American Territory

Puerto Rico, the “island of enchantment,” lies 1000 miles southeast of Miami. Measuring 111 miles long by 36 miles wide, it is an island of a friendly, lively people, extremely proud of their native (Taino), Spanish, and African heritage and traditions.

During the Spanish-American War of 1898, Puerto Rico became a territory of the United States. After the Jones Act of 1917 gave them American citizenship, Puerto Ricans began migrating to the United States in significant numbers. But the second and largest wave of Puerto Rican immigrants (over two million) took place after World War II,⁸ with the majority settling in Greater New York. This migration was encouraged by the convenience of airline service available between San Juan and New York City. Before the war, travel had been mainly by steamship, requiring days of travel, whereas now they could reach the mainland in a few hours by plane. They came to work in the factories and the booming garment district of the city. Puerto Rican women, in particular, were a highly desirable work force.

❖ NOTABLE CARIBBEAN HISPANICS

Two notable Puerto Ricans have given leadership service in the United States government: **Hermán Badillo** and **Antonia C. Novello**. Badillo, born in Puerto Rico, was orphaned in 1940 and consequently sent to live with relatives in New York City. Thirty years later, in 1970, he had the distinction of becoming **the first Puerto Rican to be elected as a member of Congress**. In 1978 Congressman **Hermán Badillo** resigned his congressional seat to become **the first Puerto Rican appointed as Deputy Mayor of the City of New York**, under Mayor Edward Koch.⁹

In 1990, President George Bush appointed **Antonia C. Novello**, not only as the first woman, but also the first Hispanic to occupy the position of **Surgeon General of the United States**.¹⁰ Both Badillo and Novello have bolstered the Hispanic pride of their Puerto Rican countrymen, especially the “nuyoricans” (Puerto Ricans born in New York).

Samuel (Sammy) Peralta Sosa, who in 1998 shared the spotlight with Mark McGwire in baseball’s home run derby, was named the 1998 National League’s Most Valuable Player. He was born in San Pedro de Macoris, Dominican Republic in 1969, and when he was only seven, his father died. To help put food on the table, Sosa shined shoes for 25 cents and sold oranges for a dime. As a young boy, he remembers using milk cartons for baseball gloves.¹¹ Today all that has changed for Sammy. He is a celebrated major league baseball player (right fielder) with the Chicago Cubs and a household name because of his home run accomplishments—the pride and joy of the Dominicans, both in his country and in the United States. But with all his fame, he has not forgotten his hometown. San Pedro de Macoris now has a \$1.2 million commercial building because Sosa wants to attract business.¹² He has purchased several ambulances for the Dominican Republic as well as computers for its public schools. His generosity is exhibited by one of his goals, which is to give away a total of 50,000 Christmas gifts to needy children by the year 2002.¹³

The Largest Mission Field Overlooked at the Threshold of America

As America’s “front door,” New York City has been used by many religious denominations and societies to launch their missionary programs to such far-flung parts of the world as Europe, Africa, India, Australia, and Spanish-speaking America. Though New

York City has a vast diversity and teeming multitudes, churches have not always recognized it as the ripe mission field that it is. Even the Adventists had largely by-passed this fertile field until James and Ellen White visited it in 1848. Fifty-four years later, Ellen White wrote of her deep burden for the millions of New York City (1902):

“In Greater New York, the Lord has many precious souls who have not bowed the knee to Baal; and there are those who through ignorance have walked in the ways of error. On these the light of truth is to shine, that they may see Christ as the Way, the Truth, and the Life.”¹⁴

At Mrs. White’s recommendation, the Greater New York Conference was organized in 1902,¹⁵ and Elder H. W. Cottrell became its first president.

GREATER NEW YORK CONFERENCE

As the Adventist work in the city has progressed, the demographics of the Greater New York Conference have shifted from Euro-American to largely Hispanic and African-American. Hispanics now comprise the largest group of Adventists with almost one-third of the membership (6,715) and one-third of the churches. A reflection of this growth among Hispanics was the nomination in 1997 of Dominican-born **Dionisio Olivo, the first Hispanic president of that conference.**

Hispanic Work Begins in Greater New York

In the late 1920’s and early 1930’s, the largest Hispanic group in New York City originated from the Caribbean Islands, particularly Puerto Rico. In 1961, after the fall of Rafael Trujillo, longest-ruling dictator in the Dominican Republic and Latin America as well, the Dominicans began migrating in significant numbers to the United States and continued to do so through the 1980’s. By 1993 it was estimated that there were over 800,000 Dominicans living in New York City alone.¹⁶ In 1997, 20,000 Dominicans migrated to New York City, making them the largest ethnic group to immigrate to the “Big Apple” that year.

Even today the majority of Hispanic members in the Greater New York Conference and in Spanish Churches of the Atlantic Union Conference are predominantly from Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic. Nevertheless, as in any Spanish church in the North American Division, you will also find members there from one or more of the other 18 Hispanic countries in the world.

*Tracing the Roots of Hispanic Adventism in New York City*¹⁷

In 1928 New York City became the birthplace of Hispanic Adventism on the East Coast. Eventually the message spread to New Jersey, Connecticut, Massachusetts and upstate New York. However, the greatest concentration of Hispanic Adventists remained in Greater New York.

In tracing the roots of the Hispanic Adventist work in the Greater New York Conference, one finds that the story did not actually begin in New York City, but on the island of Puerto Rico.

It was 1922. Thirteen-year-old Carmen López was living with her mother and siblings in her native Puerto Rico when they received the tragic news of her father’s death. Rafael

López Miranda had been assassinated while selling books in Venezuela.¹⁸ A dedicated Adventist colporteur, Rafael had been working in the highland villages of the Andes Mountains, sharing the gospel with the villagers when the local Catholic priest warned him to stop his work. Rafael chose to ignore the warning and a band of “thugs” was hired to ambush him. His tragic death changed the lives of not only the López family but caused a chain of events that would impact the Lord’s work among Hispanics in the United States. But God has a way of turning tragedy into triumph.

Two years after her husband’s death, Esperanza López, Carmen’s mother, realized she could not support her family on her own. So she sent fifteen-year-old Carmen, the oldest of her six children, to New York City to earn some money and establish a base where the rest of the family would be able to live.

Although Carmen lived with one of her relatives in lower Manhattan, life in the “asphalt jungle” was strange and frightening for her. But she determined to stick it out and work hard so the rest of her family could join her. With her meager income, Carmen was able to save enough money to rent a small apartment on 103rd street in Manhattan and within the year, the López family was reunited in New York City.

However, the family’s relocation took its toll on their religious life. With the harsh struggles of survival in a strange new city, and no Hispanic Adventist church to attend, Carmen and her family gradually drifted from the Adventist faith for which their father had given his life.

A Favor Repaid¹⁹

One day in 1926, there was a knock at the door of the López apartment that would change the course of the López family again. When Carmen’s mother opened the door, there stood a medium-built, Caribbean black man. With a big smile on his face he greeted her in his broken Spanish, “*Hermana* (sister) Esperanza, it’s me, Sebastian Lewis.”

Some years before, Brother Lewis and his family, from St. Thomas in the Virgin Islands, had arrived in Puerto Rico, penniless. Carmen’s father, Rafael, a recent convert to the Seventh-day Adventist faith, had compassion on Brother Lewis and his family. He offered to let them stay in a house he owned across the street from his own. “You can stay here,” he told Lewis, “until you find a job and you feel you can pay me something.” That was a favor which Lewis never forgot. In the meantime, Carmen’s father trained Brother Lewis and his oldest son, Christian, to be literature evangelists, a work in which they became very successful.

When Brother Lewis learned of the tragic death of his dear friend, Rafael, and that his widow and children had moved to New York City because of financial constraints, he was deeply troubled. After he moved to New York City, he set out to locate the López family. When he finally found them, he discovered that they had not been attending church since there was no Spanish-speaking Adventist church in the city.



Sebastian Lewis, pioneer of Hispanic work in New York City.

"*Hermana Esperanza*, you must come back to the Lord for your husband's sake and for God's sake," Brother Lewis told her. "The work that your husband did for the Lord cannot be forgotten, especially by you. We must raise up a church here in this big city, a church for Puerto Ricans." There was no discussion, no argument. The following Wednesday night, Brother Lewis initiated a prayer meeting session at the López apartment which continued every week, even when they eventually moved to another apartment on 117th Street.

While the rest of the López family attended the prayer meeting every week, Carmen excused herself because of her work. One Wednesday evening when she came home, she found that the prayer meeting was still in progress. As she opened the apartment door, she saw Brother Lewis, her mother, her brothers, and Ángel and Lolita Ojeda kneeling. Everyone seemed to be praying and what she heard melted her heart. Her name was being raised up to the Lord in prayer by everyone in the room. "I fell to my knees right by the door in the hallway," Carmen recalls, "No one knew that I was there. But their prayers touched my heart and I felt like a sinner in need of Christ." That night she gave her heart to the Lord and He would later use her as one of the instruments in taking the Adventist message to the Hispanics of New York City.



Carmen López, 17 years old.

First Hispanic Baptism in New York City - 1927²⁰

In a short time the newly formed band of believers at the López apartment grew to the point where they needed a larger facility. Moving the group to a basement on 114th Street, Brother Lewis continued to nurture and prepare the López family and others for baptism. What a joy it was for him one Sunday afternoon in July of 1927 to see the fruits of his labor! The president of the Greater New York Conference, Elder L. K. Dickson, accompanied the small Hispanic group to the Hudson River on the New Jersey side in Palisades Park where he rebaptized Esperanza López, and baptized two of her children (Carmen and Manuel), along with Lolita and Ángel Ojeda. These sincere people became **the first baptized Hispanic Adventists in the Greater New York Conference**. They, along with Lewis and his family,

formed the nucleus of what would later become the first Spanish church in New York City.

"Love at First Sight"

When Carmen first came to the United States, she had begun working as a chambermaid in a hotel in Manhattan, and later as a manicurist, both jobs which she detested. When a girlfriend told her of an opening at a lamp manufacturing company (Salterini & Gallo Wrought Iron Factory), she jumped at the chance for better pay and a more challenging job.

One hot, summer day, as she was working in the un-airconditioned factory, the heat became so overwhelming she began to feel dizzy and eventually fainted. When she came to, she was lying on a cot in the First Aid office with a nice-looking young man standing

by her. Rafael Casimiro Morales, a young Venezuelan artist who handpainted lampshades at the factory, had carried Carmen to the station. He later recounted that for him, it was "love at first sight." For two years he pursued this lovely young woman until she finally said "yes." They were married on October 24, 1928 and had four children: Tito, Ralph, Jr., Lourdes, and Raúl.

Lourdes Morales Gudmundsson earned a Ph.D., became an author (*El Viajero: Rafael López Miranda*), for a time hosted her own television program (*Palabras de Vida*) and is an active Hispanic leader. She has taught at several colleges and universities, both public and Adventist, and presently heads the Modern Language Department at La Sierra University.

First Spanish Church Organized in New York City - 1929²¹

In 1928, the Greater New York Conference had 3,113 members in 26 churches under the care of 15 ordained ministers. But as yet it had no organized Hispanic work. In January of 1929, Elder N. H. Kinzer and his wife, missionaries on furlough from Puerto Rico, were asked to go to New York City to take charge of the group of Hispanics there.²² Brother



114th Street Church. First Spanish Church in Manhattan, 1929.

Sebastian Lewis had already established a Spanish Sabbath school, so when the Kinzers arrived, they were able to build the membership on the work Lewis had already done.

After meeting with the group a few Sabbaths, Kinzer had a suggestion to make. "I feel that it would be advantageous to move our group into the Latin barrio in order to reach more Hispanics," he wisely counseled them. The group scouted out a meeting place and when they relocated to the center of the Latin district, on 114th between Fifth and Madison,

the membership indeed began to increase. In June of 1929, at the one-year anniversary of the first baptism, this small group joyfully celebrated by having another baptism, this time with nine new members. Once again the waters of the Hudson River on the New Jersey side served as the baptismal site. That same Sabbath afternoon, Elder Louis K. Dickson, the conference president, organized 23 Hispanic members into **the first Spanish church in New York City**, which later became the Prospect church—mother church of Greater New York.

Carmen, First Hispanic Bible Worker in New York City



Pedro de Jesús

One day on her way home from work at Cosmo's Beauty Salon, Carmen saw Brother Lewis at the subway. Walking up to her, he looked her in the eye said, "Carmelita, I've been thinking about this matter for a long time. I am convinced that you should be our new Bible worker." Carmen was somewhat taken back by this unexpected announcement, but she felt as if God Himself was calling her. Carmen enrolled herself in a course offered through the Home Study Institute correspondence school ("144 Bible Doctrines") and at 19 years of age, she became **the first Hispanic Bible worker in the Greater New York Conference**.

Carmen's Experience in Selling El Centinela

Carmen needed to earn a little extra money so she began selling "*El Centinela*" magazines (Spanish equivalent of the *Signs of the Times*) in the Hispanic barrios of Manhattan. But her main desire was to give Bible studies. So she made a pact with the Lord.

"God, if you will help me sell 60 copies of *El Centinela* every Sunday morning between 9 a.m. and 12 noon, I will use the rest of the day to give Bible studies." For two years the Lord helped her reach that goal. There were even times when she

would finish 15 minutes ahead of schedule.

One Sunday when she knocked at a door, a 14-year old boy answered. "Would you like to buy a *Centinela*?" she asked him. "They're only ten cents each."

The young boy, Pedro, took the magazine, leafed through it and then became very excited. "Mama," he shouted to his mother, who was in another part of the house. "Come here. Look, it's a *Centinela*. I want you to buy me a 'whole' one."

A little confused at his remark, Carmen asked, "What do you mean, a 'whole' one?"

Then his mother related the story. Her husband, who lived in Puerto Rico, would send the local newspaper to his family to help them keep abreast of the happenings in

their homeland. Many times he would wrap the newspaper in a page of *El Centinela*. The young boy enjoyed reading those single pages of *El Centinela* more than the newspaper itself, but he had never seen an entire copy of the missionary magazine. When he saw the magazine, he realized this was his opportunity to have a complete copy.

Carmen returned to the boy's home the following week and began helping him memorize scripture. She then invited him to a young people's meeting at her church. One Friday evening he came and, without telling him, Carmen announced that there was a young man in the audience who was going to recite some Bible verses. When she called him to the front, he reluctantly went forward. After his recitation, however, everyone was so impressed that they congratulated him and made him feel special and part of their group. After that he never missed a meeting. That young man, Pedro de Jesús, was eventually baptized, attended Atlantic Union College and became a minister of the Adventist Church. During his ministry, he pastored many churches, including the Clinton, Massachusetts Church (which he was instrumental in planting) and the Intervale and Prospect churches in New York City where he retired in 1980. He also worked seven years in Puerto Rico, and was the pastor of the prominent Río Piedras Church when it was newly built.

Other Lives Touched by Carmen

Carmen worked with many Hispanics in Harlem, the Bronx, and Brooklyn. One was María Christina Tirado who initially disliked the Adventists so much that she hired some neighborhood children to knock down the church sign. Later, however, through Carmen's influence, she became not only a member of the church, but a dynamic literature evangelist as well.

Others whom Carmen brought into the Church were: Consuelo and Antonio Cerda, and their daughters Inés, (who married Carmen's brother Manuel López) and Altagracia (Grace), who became an academy teacher at La Sierra Academy and a college and university professor at La Sierra College and New York State University at Brockport; Catana Pastrana and her two children, Benny and Mary; and Santos Ofray Santos, who came to New York from Puerto Rico with her seven sons in the early 1930's. One of her sons, Arturo Santos, later became an Adventist minister who pastored several of the Hispanic churches in Greater New York, including the Prospect church.

While the group was meeting in the 114th Street basement, Carmen was in charge of the youth meetings and the choir. "On Saturday afternoons, the young people would march down the street from 116th to 111th Streets like army recruits singing 'Onward, Christian Soldiers' at the top of their lungs, followed by numerous curious onlookers. When they arrived at 111th Street, Lewis would set up a soapbox and start preaching, followed by Esperanza or Carmen."²³

First Spanish-Owned Church Building in New York City

By the early 1940's, the members had outgrown their rented facilities (Labor Temple) on 106th Street between Madison and Lexington. The pastor, G. A. Succar, began an aggressive fundraising campaign in order to purchase a church building. In the middle of the campaign, however, he was transferred. The group was left without a pastor for about a year until Ferris W. Thorp, who had just arrived (January, 1944) from Cuba where he had served as a college Bible instructor, was asked to pastor the 100-member Spanish congregation. At the

time they were meeting in the youth chapel of the Ephesus Black church in Harlem but they were very anxious to have their own building. So Elder Thorp and Sebastian Lewis began an earnest search.²⁴

Since constructing a church building in New York City was not a viable option, Pastor Thorp began to search out existing churches for sale in Manhattan and the Bronx. One day he was on Prospect Avenue when he saw a stately Jewish synagogue with a “for sale” sign in front. It had originally been a Protestant church but had been purchased by a Jewish congregation and converted into a synagogue. Now it was for sale again. Pastor Thorp felt the Lord had led him there and became so excited with the thought that this could become their church building that he immediately notified the conference so they could negotiate the purchase of the building. An arrangement was worked out

where they could rent the church while they negotiated a deal. Shortly afterwards, in 1944, they purchased the synagogue for \$40,000 and the **“Prospect Church” became the first Spanish-owned Adventist church building in New York City.** Prospect became the “mother church” of several Spanish churches, spawning daughter churches such as Intervale, Bay Shore, Manhattan, and Brooklyn. The Prospect Church also had an influence on the development of the Spanish Church in Connecticut and also in New Jersey, namely Patterson. The present membership of the Prospect Hispanic Church is 219.

Pastors of the Prospect Church were: Ferris W. Thorp, R. W. Prince, Francisco López, Mario Collins, Eduardo Acosta, Roberto Pérez, Eugenio Valencia, Rubén Ruíz, Efraín Murillo, Pedro de Jesús, Arturo Santos, Pedro Claussell, José Cruz (who organized the 50th anniversary celebration), and Josué Jara.

First Hispanic Coordinator—Eduardo Acosta²⁵

By 1956 the Hispanic work in Greater New York had seven churches and four groups. But it was not without a few growing pains. Members were finding it difficult to obtain Spanish materials. There was no one coordinating evangelistic or youth efforts among the Spanish churches. Frustration began to build up. Some churches even wanted to withhold their tithe. Others voiced the desire to form their own conference. Even though Pastor Thorp attempted to speak

on behalf of the Hispanic needs and concerns, there was still a great need for a Hispanic pastor to coordinate the work.

In 1956, E. L. Branson, president of the Greater New York Conference, called Eduardo



Prospect Street Church



Eduardo Acosta

Acosta from Puerto Rico to coordinate the Hispanic work in the conference. Having served as the president of the Salvadorean Mission in the Inter-American Division, Acosta had ample administrative leadership experience. Upon accepting the call, he became **the first Hispanic coordinator in the Greater New York Conference as well as in the entire Atlantic Union.**

When Acosta and his family arrived in New York City, he was overwhelmed with the reception he received from both pastors and laity. However, he discovered just how tense and serious matters were in the Spanish churches after he attended the first church board meeting. He was told that one of the members had brought a concealed weapon. But through Pastor Acosta's leadership and strong commitment to the Lord, harmony and growth returned to the Hispanic work in Greater New York.

Acosta's wife, Margarita, was not only his greatest supporter, but also his associate. Long before the emphasis on women's ministries, she was given many preaching appointments, and the people appreciated her ministry.



*Prospect
Church
Choir, 1950.*

Although a full-time coordinator, Acosta had neither an office nor a secretary at the conference. Instead, he worked out of a basement office in his home, producing all his own newsletters and evangelistic brochures with an old mimeograph machine, and absorbing most of the cost for the materials and mailings.

Acosta promoted revivals and citywide evangelistic efforts, bringing in such evangelists as Salim Japas, Braulio Pérez Marcio, and Walter Schubert. Some of the pastors that worked with him were: Eugenio Valencia, Pedro de Jesús, Rafael García, Pitino Valentín, Norberto Mulinari, Conrado Visser, Arturo Santos, Angel de la Torre, Pedro Celestino Roque, Wilfredo Lacayo, Félix Rodríguez, Lucas Díaz Castro, Samuel Camacho, Mario Collins, Silvio Fernández Piana (who also held evangelistic meetings), Ricardo (Richard) Vinglas, José Angel Fuentes, Hermes Méndez, Roberto Pérez and Herold Weiss.

Weiss at the time was pastoring the Broadway Spanish Church. In 1962 he married Aída, Eduardo Acosta's daughter. Two years later he received a Ph.D. in New Testament Studies from Duke University in North Carolina and became **the first Hispanic professor of theology at the Adventist Theological Seminary** in 1965. Presently he teaches at St. Mary's College in South Bend, Indiana.

Among the many outstanding lay people who worked with Pastor Acosta during the late 1950's and early 1960's were: Bienvenido Morales, Nicolás Morales, Pedrito Vélez,

Angelina Cuadrado, Jacinta Escobar, José Vega, Raúl Sales, Manuel Nezard, Rafael Bonilla, Rafael González, Teodoro López, Dr. Huerta and his wife Rosa.

Meanwhile, the Lord was blessing the work throughout the conference. By the mid-1960's, the following churches had been organized: Prospect Avenue, Intervale, Mott Haven, Bay Shore, E. Manhattan (123rd St.), Broadway (101st St.), Washington Avenue in the Bronx, Humboldt, East New York, Columbia Avenue in Brooklyn, Atlantic Avenue in Brooklyn. There were also other groups or "companies."

Church—the Center of Spiritual and Social Life

The Spanish churches in Greater New York provided a spiritual refuge and social outlet for the members. When new immigrants arrived from the islands and found a Spanish Adventist church, they also found warmth, renewal, identification, and acceptance. There they felt free from prejudice and discrimination and they felt at home because they were "*de los míos*," (among their own), a phrase commonly heard. Church also offered a welcome escape from their small, dingy apartments. It was a place where they could fellowship with friends as well as worship God.

In those days, churches had services on Wednesday, Friday and Sunday nights, as well as all day Sabbath, when many of the families would bring food enough for lunch and supper and stay all day. It was not uncommon to see the churches bustling with activity for the adults as well as for young people.

The *Federación de Jóvenes* (Youth Federation) was organized to involve Hispanic young people in various activities, such as religious concerts, temperance oratorical contests, Bible contests, and outings. Ismael Zayas and Eliezer Barrerio were the first two directors. Juan Bautista Machado was the secretary and Jorge Lake was treasurer.

La Federación de Dorcas (the Dorcas Federation). The fervor of the young people was matched by the ladies of the church who were very active with their Dorcas Federation, a responsibility they took very seriously. Highly organized and uniformed, 400-500 Dorcas ladies from all the Greater New York Spanish churches met each quarter to plan their inner city work with the poor and destitute, a work which was second to none in the union.

El Fondo de Auxilio Mutuo, an auxiliary mutual fund, was established for those members and workers with limited resources to help defray expensive funeral costs when a loved one died. Nicolás Morales, from Nicaragua, became the first treasurer. Every member paid 50 cents per month and one dollar at the time of the death of one of the members. Later that was raised to \$2. Many members have benefitted from this mutual fund, which is still operating.

Charter Members of Bay Shore Spanish Church

Rafael and Gloria Cruz, who had emigrated from Cuba to New York City, were members of the first Spanish church when it was meeting on 114th Street. In 1940, they moved to Long Island along with Francisco (Frank) Rodríguez, Cristino Rodríguez and their families. These three families were instrumental in establishing the Bay Shore Spanish church.²⁶ The Rodríguez family purchased some property in Long Island because they were concerned about raising their children in a large city environment. The Rodríguez and Cruz families continued attending the Spanish church in New York City, even though it meant traveling 80 miles round trip. However, when the war effort brought on the rationing of

gasoline in the United States, these families were forced to stay home and hold their own church services. At first, since it was summer, they met in a park under the trees. When the temperatures began dropping, they met in the home of Frank's sister, María Bonilla. Madelyn Cummings and her husband, members of the Babylon English church, came each Sabbath to lead out in the children's Sabbath school.

Soon they organized into a company of ten members and began renting a place in town where they could meet every Sabbath. Elder Thorp and Sebastian Lewis from the Prospect church would come to help out and encourage the group. Soon they decided that they wanted to build the first Spanish Adventist church in that area. This was a tremendous goal for a company of ten members, of which only three were men. But with faith and determination they entered into a building project of a church with a capacity of 80 persons. Other Hispanics joined the project and the conference helped financially so that in May of 1947 the building was dedicated and the group was organized into the Spanish Bay Shore Church with 18 members.²⁷

Some of the workers who have connections with the Bay Shore Church are: Cristino and Panchita Rodríguez's oldest daughter Ruth who married Josué Rosado, currently the Executive Secretary and Treasurer of Latin Educational Advancement and Research Network (L.E.A.R.N.); and Elder George Carambot, nephew to Francisco and Cristino, who has served the church for many years in treasury work in various conferences. He presently heads the Trust Services Department for the North Pacific Union.²⁸

The Bay Ridge Spanish Church

In the summer of 1952 a nucleus of Spanish members from the English-speaking Bushwick Brooklyn Church moved to East New York in Brooklyn with the purpose of planting a church there. Among these were Ildefonso de la Cruz, Julio Rivera, Rafael Santana and Lorenzo Valentín. The Lord blessed them so much that while the small group was meeting at a location on 119 Powell Street, it was organized into a company and a pastor, Francisco Migrant, was assigned to it.

In the next few years, the church moved to several locations, but none seemed to be satisfactory. Then one day in 1969 during Jorge Grieve's pastorate, Brother José Moore, a Cuban member, found a large church on 4th Avenue in Bay Ridge, Brooklyn that was for sale. Elder Grieve and the church board went to see it, and immediately felt the Lord had picked this church especially for them.

Elder Jorge Grieve Saves the Church

One day in 1969, soon after Jorge Grieve became pastor of the Bay Ridge Spanish Church (then located at 105 Riverdale), he had an unsettling experience. It was during the time of the civil rights movement and the churches in the area had been served notice by the Black Panthers that they were to establish food kitchens for all the children of the community. Evidently the Bay Ridge Spanish church did not comply so the Black Panthers decided to make an example of them.

Early one morning Pastor Grieve arrived at the church intending to fix the boiler. He was surprised when he heard noises coming from the basement. He really became suspicious when he noticed several pieces of wood and boards doused with gasoline scattered in the hallway of the church. Not sure of what he might encounter in the basement, he was



Jorge and Nila Grieve.

impressed to pick up a good-sized board as he proceeded quietly down the stairs. Just as he reached the bottom, he spotted two Black Panthers dowsing gasoline on more wood which they had strategically placed around the boiler.

"Hey, what are you doing?" the pastor yelled. Startled, the two men dropped their gasoline cans. Then, regaining their composure, they started toward the pastor as if to attack him. Elder Grieve began swinging the board around and yelling for them to get out. Apparently intimidated by this big man wielding a big stick, they turned and fled without a fight. God had intervened and the church building was saved from fire. But the problems did not end there.

Black Panther Revenge

The following week the Black Panthers returned to the church, stating that they wanted to use the basement as a meeting place. When the pastor denied their request, they decided that they would get rid of him.

During those troubled times, the church had been holding all-night prayer vigils one Saturday night a month. When the problems became worse, they held two vigils a month and finally they were having a prayer vigil every Saturday night. Omar Grieve, the pastor's young son, remembers that during one of the *vigilias* (prayer vigils) in February, the church boiler broke down and the temperature got down to 25 degrees *inside* the church. Omar's mother, Nila, had to put two pairs of pants on him to keep him warm. Many of the members took their own blankets to wrap up in so they could keep warm. Nevertheless, the church was packed!

One Saturday evening during a vigil, a 1966 white Chevrolet Impala, with two Black Panthers inside, parked at the street corner near the church. As members came and left the church, the young men, pretending to be visitors, told them they wanted to talk to the pastor and asked several of the members to describe him to them. Somebody told them he was a white male, about 5 feet 10 inches tall, weighing around 210 pounds and wearing a dark blue suit.

Around midnight, Pastor Grieve decided to go home. He barely stepped out the front door, when he was impressed to go back in. A few minutes later, Brother Pedro Ramos, the first elder, who ironically matched the description of the pastor, came out of the church and started to cross the street to get to his car. All of a sudden, the white Impala screeched out, sped toward Ramos and hit him, knocking him several feet into the air. When he landed on the other side of the street, he lay there badly injured, with multiple broken bones.

The commotion of the accident brought the whole church out to the street. Pastor Grieve was one of the first to reach Brother Ramos. Looking up at the pastor, he said "Tell my wife that I have made all things right with God and I'm ready." He later went into a coma, and for three weeks the doctors feared that even if he recovered, he would never

walk again. For 30 days the entire Hispanic constituency of the Greater New York Conference prayed for Brother Ramos' recovery. God answered those prayers, for at the end of the 30 days he was released from the hospital and went right back to his missionary work, climbing apartment stairs on his crutches. He proceeded to win 36 souls before he was even fully recovered from the accident. During his years at the church he was so faithful and dependable that Elder Grieve called him Enoch. Brother Ramos remained a staunch member of the Adventist Church until his death in Puerto Rico in 1993.

This attempted murder was the last straw for the church and they decided to move, eventually relocating to 4th Avenue in Brooklyn, where the present 200-member Bay Ridge Church still meets.

Pastors who served the East New York /Bay Ridge Spanish Church are: Francisco Megrant, Richard (Ricardo) Vinglas, José Fuentes, Pedro de Jesús, Jorge Grieve, Humberto Villegas, Vicente Rodríguez, Eduardo Escobar, Isai Rivas, Santiago Mejía, Obdulio Seguí, Rubén Merino, and Anselmo Mesa.

Greater New York Conference Hispanic Coordinators

Hispanic coordinators for Greater New York: Eduardo Acosta (1956-1969); Pedro Celestino Roque (1972-1984); Humberto Hernández (1984-1990); Héctor Torres (1990-1997); Santiago Mejía (1997-). From 1969 to 1972 there was no Hispanic coordinator. When Elder Acosta retired in 1969, the conference committee elected not to replace him, since the new conference president, L. L. Reile, spoke Spanish. The committee decided Reile could handle the Hispanic coordinatorship in addition to his other duties. This arrangement lasted for three years and then Elder Pedro Roque was called to coordinate the Hispanic work.



Pedro C. Roque

Pedro C. Roque

Pedro Celestino Roque (1918-1996) was born into a Catholic home in Morón, Cuba and was raised in Ciego de Ávila. When he was 17, he was marching in a Catholic procession on a Wednesday night which passed in front of the local Seventh-day Adventist church. One of the members went to the front door and called out, "If there is a person with a sincere heart, come in and join us." Pedro had just been sent to the back of the procession because of a dispute with the priest. So he stepped out of the procession and went into the Adventist church, never to walk in the Catholic ranks again. Pedro studied at the Seventh-day Adventist college of the Antillians when it was still in

Barlet, Cuba. He came to the United States from Colombia where he was serving as a missionary.

Elder Roque is remembered for translating and producing the first Sabbath school teacher lesson helps, and programs for the children's classes. At first he prepared this

material just for the Hispanics in the Greater New York Conference during the time he was the coordinator, but word spread fast and soon he was receiving orders from other Spanish churches in the North American Division, as well as from the Inter-American Division and Spain. Roque also translated the Bible lessons "*Christ Our Righteousness*," authored by Emilio Knechtle. Gloria Esther, his daughter, served as his secretary, and is the wife of Carlos Turcios, Multilingual Ministries coordinator for the New Jersey Conference.

SOUTHERN NEW ENGLAND CONFERENCE

***Beginning of Hispanic Work in the Southern New England Conference*²⁹**

It was in Bridgeport, Connecticut, not far north of the Statue of Liberty, that the Hispanic Adventist work began in Southern New England. Once again it was Hispanic members from Greater New York, trying to escape the congestion of the big city, who shared their faith as they began moving north to cities in Connecticut. Eugenio and María Olan, and Pedro and Lucía Vélez were two Puerto Rican families who in 1962 moved to Norwalk, 15 miles from the state line. Because there was no Spanish-speaking Adventist church there, the families began meeting in each other's homes for Sabbath services and Bible study meetings.

One evening while studying the Bible together, the Lord impressed them that it was time to go out and share the message. At the time, the major concentration of Hispanics was in Bridgeport, 13 miles northeast of Norwalk. So this seemed the natural place to center their missionary outreach. In order to conserve time, they would attend Sabbath morning services at the Brooklawn English church in Bridgeport and in the afternoon go into the Hispanic *barrios* visiting door-to-door. The Lord blessed their efforts, for they began finding all kinds of interests: those who were interested in studying the Bible, some ex-Adventists, and some isolated Adventists who did not have a Spanish church to attend. From this group they formed a nucleus of what would become **the first Spanish church in Connecticut**. Among those were Eladia Áviles, María Vilorio, Alicia Aza, María Castro de Carde and Pedro Vélez.

With the blessing of A. J. Purdey, pastor of the English Brooklawn Church, this little Hispanic company of 20 people was allowed to meet in a small room in the church. Within a year, the group doubled in size, making it necessary to find another meeting place. Meanwhile a small group of Czechoslovakian Adventists, whose congregation had dwindled, decided to sell their church building and join the English-speaking congregation. When the Hispanics learned of this, they were elated. Although they were a small and newly organized group, they wasted no time in negotiating the purchase of the church, which was located at 980 Sylvan Avenue. With the intervention of Merle L. Mills, president of the Southern New England Conference, they were able to purchase the church for only \$7,000—50 percent of the asking price.

First Organized Spanish Church—Bridgeport Spanish

Soon after the Bridgeport Spanish group purchased the Czechoslovakian church building in 1963, they became an official church congregation. On December 14, 1963 the conference organized them as **the first Spanish church in the Southern New England**

Conference with 21 charter members.³⁰ Brother Pedro Vélez became the first elder. Although they had no Spanish-speaking pastor, they did receive the backing of William Carpenter, the new pastor of the Brooklawn English Church.

Then Francisco Ramos, a theology student from Atlantic Union College (AUC), was sent to work with them. Ramos was the first of several AUC theology students who played a part in the development of the Hispanic work in Southern New England. Every Sabbath Ramos would preach in the morning and in the afternoon go out to do missionary work with the members. Ramos graduated from Atlantic Union College in 1966 and went on to earn two master's degrees. His ministry includes serving as a pastor/evangelist in Greater New York; Associate Evangelist for Metro-evangelism in Atlantic Union; Youth Director both in the East Puerto Rican Conference and Antillian Union; President of the East Puerto Rican Conference and most recently (1997) as Vice President of the Atlantic Union Conference.

Eventually, the Southern New England Conference invited Juan Machado, another young dynamic theology student from Atlantic Union College, to pastor the Brooklawn Spanish church. He was succeeded by the following pastors: Santiago Castañón, Efraín Murillo, Rolf Butendieck, Marco Rivas and Osvaldo Utz.

Pastor Marco Rivas, the fifth pastor of the Brooklawn Spanish Church, came from Perú, where he had served as a church ministries director for many years. In 1978, he moved to New Jersey but commuted to the Corona Queens Church in New York working as a Bible instructor with Hearley Roscher, evangelist for the television ministry *Ayer, Hoy, Mañana*.

In July of 1979 the Southern New England Conference called Elder Rivas to pastor the Brooklawn Spanish Church. Brother Pedro Vélez was still serving as the first elder there and continued to do so until his retirement in 1981. At that time this consecrated pioneer of the Hispanic work in Connecticut returned to his native Puerto Rico. Brother Vélez had an unfortunate death. His property was invaded by Brazilian fire ants and while destroying one of their mount-shaped nests, he received many painful and poisonous stings from which he never recovered.

At the beginning of 1980, the Brooklawn Spanish Church had 68 members, some of whom were commuting from Norwalk, New Haven, and Waterbury. At one of their church board meetings, they took an action to initiate Hispanic work in the three aforementioned cities. The nucleus of the work would be Hispanic Adventist families that resided in those cities. The members living in New Haven were: Rosa Calo and Máximo Irrizarry and family; in Waterbury: Raquel Pérez, Carlos Mota and his family. These members continued to establish new congregations to the north all the way up to Massachusetts.

Hartford Spanish—Second Spanish Church in Connecticut

In the summer of 1969, President Lowell Bock of the Southern New England Conference approached Jaime Alfredo Méndez, a theology student at Atlantic Union College. "There's a group of Hispanic believers meeting in the basement of the Hartford English Adventist Church," Bock told him. "Would you be willing to go and give leadership to that group?" Méndez, said "yes."

Pablo Hernández was the first elder of the group and Conchita Vega was a deaconess and a very active member. One of Mrs. Vega's sons, Gilberto Vega, was just a small boy then but he grew up and became a minister. Today he's the Hispanic coordinator of the Arizona Conference. Méndez worked with them all summer and when he returned to

college in September, he encouraged José López, a theology graduate from Atlantic Union College without a call, to take over the leadership of the group even though it would be on a volunteer basis. López did so well, that by December Elder Bock invited him to be a part-time pastor there, and later made him the full-time pastor.³¹ In 1970 the Hartford Spanish Church was organized, making it the second Spanish church to be organized in Connecticut.

Today the New Haven Church has 45 members; Waterbury, 82 members; Bridgeport, 65 members; Hartford, 117 members; Meriden, 60 members; New Britain, 30 members; and the Holyoke Church in Massachusetts, 45 members.

Massachusetts

During the 1963-64 school year at Atlantic Union College, a group of Hispanic students got together and started a Spanish-speaking Sabbath school and church services on campus. Students conducted the Sabbath school and those faculty members who spoke Spanish would preach at the church service. Later the students themselves began taking the preaching assignments. These Sabbath services attracted not only the Hispanic students on campus, but also young people and families from the community. This initiative eventually resulted in the spreading of the Adventist message throughout Boston and Framingham, and the state of Connecticut. Some of the student leaders of the group were: Judy Laguer, Carmen Olivera, José López, Jaime (Freddy) Méndez, Juan Machado, Nilsa López de Machado, José Canto, Celeste González, Magdalena Rivera, and Francisco Ramos.³²

On January 6, 1964, Rosalia Rivera, a young lady from the El Verde, Río Grande Adventist Church in Puerto Rico, flew to Framingham, a small city outside of Boston, to visit her cousin, Gladys Rivera. Gladys was the only Hispanic Adventist in Framingham so she was overjoyed to have someone of her own faith join her. How they longed to worship with others in their native language, but since there was no Spanish church, they attended the Framingham English church. In a few months, Rosalia returned to Puerto Rico to marry Carlos Vásquez but promised Gladys she would return. She kept her word. Soon after the wedding, she and her husband flew back to Framingham. Even though they could not speak English, they continued attending the English Church just to preserve their faith.

In the months that followed, some of Rosalia and Gladys' relatives and friends from New York moved to the Boston area: Felicita Rivera, Carmen Lidia Rosario, Carmen Rosa, Máximo Rivera, Jr., Zoraida Rosario, Eva Nieves, and Eliezer Meléndez. They all joined the little Hispanic group of believers but continued meeting with the English members.

In 1966, Juan Machado, a theology student from Atlantic Union College, went to visit the group and immediately felt a burden to help them. He encouraged them to start their own Spanish Sabbath school class in the church and promised to visit them as often as possible. Near South Lancaster, where he was studying, there were other Hispanics whom he encouraged to meet with the Framingham group. Some of these were Miguel Álvarez, Rafael Olmedo and his wife Lydia, their daughter Nydia who is currently in charge of the bilingual program in the Boston schools, and her husband, Freddy Méndez, a science teacher at the East Boston Middle School. The following year José and Lolita Legrand joined the Hispanic group and were instrumental in finding a small Nazarene church where they could meet and worship on Sabbath in their own language.

Framingham Spanish Church Organized

In November of 1967, the group was organized into a church with 29 members.³³ The church flourished and they soon outgrew the small Nazarene church building. The Baptists had a larger building so they asked to rent their church. In 1970 they were impressed that it was time to begin missionary work in three other cities with large Spanish concentrations: Clinton, Boston, and Worcester. The work grew in those cities, as it continued to do in the mother church at Framingham.

Finally, the believers at Framingham came to the conclusion that they needed a church building of their own. So under the leadership of Pastor Leonardo Gerometta, they bought a house and converted it into a church. But the attendance was growing so fast that in a very short time, that building was also outgrown. Then, during the pastorate of Osvaldo Utz, they purchased land at 305 Hollis Street and built a beautiful church there, which was inaugurated on March 2, 1985. Thus ended the Framingham Spanish Church pilgrimage of 21 years.³⁴



Framingham Spanish Church, first Spanish church in Massachusetts.

Rafael Olmedo's work in the cities of Boston and Framingham resulted in the establishment of churches in Boston, Jamaica Plain, Lynn, Lowell, Stoneham and finally Lawrence. The missionary work in Clinton resulted in two churches: one in Clinton which was organized by Pastor Pedro de Jesús in 1970 while he was a graduate student at Clark University in Worcester, Massachusetts; and the other in Leominster. The Clinton church has continued to spawn other churches such as those in Fitchburg and Worcester.

The Boston Spanish Church³⁵

In the summer of 1968 Celeste González, a student at Atlantic Union College, was working at the New England Hospital to earn money for her schooling when she received a letter from Alan Robinson, a member of the New England Memorial Hospital Church in Stoneham, Massachusetts. "Can you help us?" it said. Their church had an outreach project called the Boston Mission. Each Sabbath afternoon they would distribute food to those in need. But they had several Spanish-speaking families who were coming and they needed someone who could communicate with them.

Celeste was not able to help but she gave the letter to Rafael and Lydia Olmedo, who lived in Boston. Rafael was the first elder at the Framingham Spanish Church but he said he could go to the Mission on Sabbath afternoons. The first Sabbath he discovered that the building where they were distributing food had a small chapel in it, complete with piano, pews, and pulpit. "Why don't we use this chapel to start up Spanish work here in Boston?" he thought. He encouraged his wife, Lydia, his daughter Nydia, who was studying at AUC, and Freddy Méndez, her fiancé, as well as his son, Rafael, Jr., to help.

The next Sabbath Rafael, Sr. said to his future son-in-law, "Let's go to church in

Boston.” “What church?” Freddy asked. “There’s no Spanish church in Boston.”

“Well, we’re going to be the church,” Rafael answered. So they went to the little chapel and began holding a church service by themselves. That morning while they were singing, a Cuban lady and her daughter (Esperanza de la Vega and Conchita) were passing by, heard the singing and went up to the chapel door. “Is this the Spanish Seventh-day Adventist Church?” she asked.

“Yes, it is,” Rafael assured her. The woman and her daughter were baptized members from Cuba who had been living in Boston for a year and a half without having a Spanish-speaking church to attend. Then someone told them that on Tremont Street there was a sign that said “Seventh-day Adventist chapel” so they had gone to check it out. They were impressed that the Holy Spirit was working in mysterious ways to help build up the group.

The following Sabbath one of Freddy’s friends called him with the name and address of a Dominican living in Peabody, Massachusetts who was driving to New York City each Sabbath just to attend a Spanish-speaking church. His name was José Castillo, a man of much prayer. Freddy and Nydia drove to Peabody that afternoon to meet José and found that he lived in an attic. When José answered the door, Freddy introduced himself. “I’m Freddy Méndez, and this is Nydia. We’re from the Spanish Adventist church in Boston.”

José said, “You must be angels.”

“No,” Freddy said. “We’re Seventh-day Adventists.”

“You are an answer to my prayer. I have been praying that God would send me a messenger to tell me where there is a Spanish Adventist church in Boston.”

José told Freddy that he had left his family in New York City because there was no Spanish Adventist Church in Peabody. But now he would bring them to live with him, knowing that they would be able to attend an Adventist church. Freddy and Nydia promised to pick them up every Sabbath.

“There’s another family, the Quiñonezes, who used to be members in the Dominican Republic but they left the church and now live here in Peabody,” Brother Castillo told Freddy. Together they visited the Quiñonez family, who also became interested in establishing a Spanish church in Boston.

Boston Spanish Church Organized

In 1969 Richard Hayden brought his wife to the New England Memorial Hospital for treatments. The Haydens were American missionaries who had replaced Fernando Stahl in Perú, working in the Upper Amazon Mission. Since Freddy and Nydia were working around the hospital, they became acquainted with Dr. Ernest Horsley and his wife Margaret, who had been medical missionaries in Puerto Rico and were interested in the Hispanic work. When they learned that the Hispanic group had already outgrown the small chapel, this dedicated medical couple decided to donate a piece of property in Stoneham, Massachusetts, with a three-story house on it. The group sold it and the proceeds were later used for the Hispanic work in Boston and Framingham.

Through the Horsleys, Freddy became acquainted with Richard Hayden. Since he spoke Spanish, Elder Hayden offered to preach at the Boston Chapel Spanish Church on Sabbath. He became very involved with the group and was the pastor who officiated at the wedding of Freddy and Nydia Méndez. He was also instrumental in organizing the Boston

Temple Spanish church in 1972. At that time there were 42 members and they were renting a room in one of the local academies. Today there are 89 members.

After the church was organized, Elder Hayden went to the conference and told them "I know of a young Chilean pastor in Perú by the name of Elder Rolf Butendieck who would be willing to come to pastor the Framingham, Clinton, and Boston churches." Pastor Machado, who had been caring for all those churches, was now pastoring in Bridgeport. The conference took Hayden's suggestion and called Butendieck to come to their conference. Later, Butendieck invited his cousin, Pastor Alexander Davidovich, to join him in Massachusetts. At first Davidovich worked as a literature evangelist and then for a number of years pastored the Clinton Spanish group, which later moved to Leominster. He also pastored the Worcester Church before retiring.

In 1987 Francisco Ramos was asked to pastor the Spanish church in Leominster. In a short time the membership went from 97 members to 250. The church was filled to the point where Ramos had to put chairs down the middle and side aisles to accommodate the congregation. In fact, when the fire marshal found out what was taking place, he threatened to close the church. So Ramos went to plan "B." He took 33 of his members from Leominster and made them the nucleus for a new church in Clinton. This was the second time a Spanish church was established there. Today the Clinton church has over 140 members and has spawned a company in Marlboro. The Leominster Church also spawned the Fitchburg Spanish company.

Rhode Island³⁶

In 1973 Sister Noris Verastegui from Perú, and her three daughters, moved from New York City to Providence, Rhode Island. Since there was no Spanish church there, and because she had an interest in learning English, she did what many Hispanics have done in this situation, she began attending an English-speaking Adventist Church. Soon after, Sister Brunilda Rivera and her daughter, Rebeca, from Puerto Rico, began attending the same church.

In 1976 William Acosta, a Puerto Rican literature evangelist born in the Dominican Republic, was colportoring in New Jersey and winning souls through his literature evangelist contacts. Since his eight children were academy and college age, his brother, José, encouraged William to move close to Atlantic Union College where they could get a Christian education. That same year he found out that in Providence, Rhode Island there was a significant community of Hispanics and that it was virgin territory for literature work. Elder Ronald Aguilera, who was pastoring in the Boston district and serving as unofficial coordinator of the Hispanic work in the conference, asked William, "Would you go and help foster the little group of Hispanic members meeting in the Providence English church? They really need some leadership and I already have more than enough to do." William agreed to go.

When William arrived at the English church on Stoughton Street, he found six Hispanic Adventist members meeting in the basement. Through his literature work he was able to build up the membership and is credited with being the founder of what eventually became the **first Spanish church in Rhode Island**. William was assisted by his brother José who preached, while William served as the Sabbath school teacher. Their wives, Melida and Martina, helped with the children.

In two years, the group grew to 37 members. That year three people were baptized who would become active members of the local church: Carmela León de la Torre from

Ecuador, who became the director of the Sabbath school and at this writing is serving as church secretary; and Julio Medina and his wife Marina, who served as leaders in a number of different churches in the area.

Elder David Block, from Argentina, became the first pastor of the Providence, Rhode Island Spanish Church in 1980. Subsequent pastors were: Ronald Aguilera (1982-85), Gerardo Brito (1985-89), Manuel Mendizábal (1989-96), and Osvaldo Utz (1996-present).

As of this writing, the 34-year history of Hispanic Adventism in the Southern New England Conference has seen 18 Spanish churches and two companies raised up with seven pastors.

NORTHEASTERN CONFERENCE

Caribbean Hispanics' African Roots

It is a historical and biological fact that some Puerto Ricans, Cubans, and Dominicans have a strong African heritage. In the 16th and 17th centuries, the Spaniards brought Africans to these island nations to work the plantations. The result of the mixture or *mestizaje* of the European, the African, and the Indian, was the emergence of a new people.³⁷ They come in all hues, from fair-skinned to dark-skinned. When they come to the United States, some of them find that they have an affinity with African-Americans and they are warmly welcomed in churches that are under the administration of regional conferences.³⁸

Hispanic Work in the Northeastern Conference

In the North American Division there are forty-eight Caucasian conferences and nine regional conferences. Regional conferences were established in 1945 and 1946. Their constituent churches and the administrative staffs in their conference offices are mainly African-American.

They are called regional because of their distinctive geographical arrangement. Each regional conference covers all of its union territory, except in the Southern and Columbia Unions, which contain five regional conferences. The Pacific and North Pacific Unions have no regional conferences.

At least seven of the regional conferences have Spanish congregations which belong to their conference. The following is an account of how the Hispanic work began in the Northeastern Conference in the Atlantic Union.

Founders of the Rochester Spanish Church

In 1963, Puerto Rican-born Francisco Fuentes and his wife Eladia, and their four children, moved from New York City to Rochester, New York, where they heard there were many Hispanics. Francisco and Eladia loved to give Bible studies, and they felt a burden to plant a Spanish-speaking church in that city. Meanwhile, they looked for an Adventist church to attend and found the Emmanuel Temple Adventist Church on Jefferson Street, which belonged to the Northeastern Conference.

Brother Logan Bowen, who was originally from Jamaica, had studied Spanish in high school and developed a burden to become proficient in the Spanish language. When Brother Fuentes and his family arrived in Rochester, they, along with Brother Bowen, immediately

organized a group and began looking for Hispanic people in the community to study with. The first family Francisco and his wife contacted was Fernando and Jacinta Vargas. They were members of *La Iglesia del Séptimo Día* (the Seventh-day Church), not affiliated with the Seventh-day Adventist denomination. For about six months, Francisco and his wife studied with this family. As Francisco recalls, "Mrs. Vargas had a hard time accepting the Spirit of Prophecy. But the day came when they accepted the whole Adventist message and soon after were baptized." One of the Vargas sons, Fernando, Jr., is still a member of the first Rochester Spanish Church.

For the next four years, the group met in the Emmanuel Temple and Francisco, Sr. took it upon himself to nurture and keep the group growing. Brother Fuentes did the preaching, visited the members, and gave Bible studies. His wife, Eladia, would play the piano. Brother Bowen assisted Fuentes as an elder and then as church treasurer, an office he has served in for more than 25 years.

In 1967, when the group had grown to 70 members, Francisco went to the Northeastern Conference and requested that they provide a pastor for their group. "Why don't you consider being the lay pastor full time with a small stipend?" the conference asked him. Francisco and his wife prayed about it but did not feel that this was what the Lord wanted them to do. They wanted to continue working as lay people and insisted that the conference call a trained pastor for them.

The following year, the Northeastern Conference called Ciro and Gloria Sepúlveda to pastor the Rochester Spanish company. Ciro had just finished his M.Div. studies at Andrews University and graciously accepted the challenge to pastor **the first Spanish congregation in the Northeastern Conference**. Ciro later earned a doctorate and taught at Montemorelos University in Mexico and Atlantic Union College. Today, he is a freelance writer and a guest professor at the Institute of Hispanic Ministries at Andrews University.

First Spanish Church in Rochester

In 1972 the Rochester Spanish company was organized into the First Rochester Spanish Adventist Church under the pastoral leadership of Eliezer Carmona. Pastor Carmona had come from Puerto Rico that year and after they were organized, he helped them locate a house which they bought and converted into a comfortable and adequate church building. Unfortunately, the following year that building burned down. So they purchased another house which had already been converted into a church by the Pentecostals. There they worshiped until 1989 when, under the leadership of Matías Solís, they built a beautiful new church building at 47 Oakman Street with a capacity of 240 members. This was **the first Spanish congregation in the conference to construct their own church**.

The pastors who served this congregation were: Ciro Sepúlveda (1969-1972); Eliezer Carmona (1972-1976); Alberto Salas (1976-1980); Ireneo Martínez (1980-1984); Evaristo Gómez (1984-1988); Matías Solís (1988-1992); Antonio M. Rosario (1992-1996); and Héctor Ramos (1996-).

George Rainey's Effort in the Bronx

In the summer of 1969 Elder George Rainey, Ministerial Director from the Atlantic Union Conference, put up a tent in South Bronx and conducted an evangelistic effort for

the African-American community there. This effort was one of the ninth quarter intensives where Andrews University seminary students received practical evangelistic experience in soulwinning. Two of the participating Hispanic students were: Ángel Manuel Rodríguez, and Carlos de la Peña. These young men went out and invited Hispanics to the meetings, translating the sermons every night and giving Bible studies to those interested.

Angel Rodríguez later became a prominent educator and administrator, serving as president of the Antillian Union College in Mayagüez, Puerto Rico and professor of theology at Southwestern Adventist University in Texas. Today Dr. Rodríguez is the Associate Director of the Biblical Research Institute of Seventh-day Adventists at the General Conference in Silver Spring, Maryland. Carlos de la Peña in 1978 became the **first Hispanic coordinator in the Northeastern Conference**. In 1984, he was asked to take on the duties of the conference director of the Health and Temperance Department. In 1985, he became the full-time director of the Health and Temperance Department.

Since Elder Rainey's evangelistic effort was sponsored by the Ministerial Department of the Atlantic Union, pastors from the two conferences which shared the territory of New York, joined the effort. Among these were Pastor Eduardo Acosta, Hispanic coordinator for the Greater New York Conference and Pastor Arturo Santos, from the Washington Bronx Church.

"Apocalypsis 14" Spanish Church

God blessed that six-week effort with more than 100 baptisms, including 19 Hispanics. The Northeastern Conference decided to establish a church with the new converts and call it "The Bronx Temple." But they faced a dilemma. What were they going to do with the 19 new Spanish-speaking members? Evangelist George Rainey felt that their names should be given to the Greater New York Conference for membership. Both Pastors Acosta and Santos felt that they should join one of the Spanish churches in the area such as the Prospect Church and the Intervale Church, which were both in the Bronx. However, Elder L. L. Reile who was then the president, did not see light in that plan. So this group was organized by the Northeastern Conference and given a place to meet in the new Bronx temple with the Black congregation. When Carlos de la Peña finished his seminary studies the following year (1970), he returned to pastor the group which became known as *La Iglesia de Apocalypsis 14*.

Hispanic Coordinators of the Northeastern Conference

Today, the Northeastern Conference has 23 Spanish churches, 14 pastors and 1,950 members. Carlos de la Peña was the first Hispanic coordinator (1978-1985); Ireneo Martínez followed him (1985-1997) and Roberto Reyna is presently serving as coordinator (1997-present).

NEW YORK CONFERENCE

In 1959, a Catholic family, Rosa and Valentín Colón, and their three children, moved from Puerto Rico to Utica, New York. Later, a friend of Rosa enrolled her in a Bible correspondence school from *La Voz de la Esperanza*. When Rosa finished the course, she looked for a Spanish-speaking Adventist church to attend. At that time there was none in Utica, so she began attending a Spanish Pentecostal church nearby and continued worshiping with them for about a year. Eventually she was baptized into their church, but was not happy. "I

never received the Holy Spirit," she confessed. "And they scolded me for that."

One day in the summer of 1963, while waiting at a medical clinic in Utica, she picked up a volume of Uncle Arthur's *Bible Stories* and was captivated by it. Inside the back cover was a pocket with a card to fill out indicating an interest in buying the *Bible Stories* set. Rosa filled it out and in a short time Inez Noakoski, an English-speaking literature evangelist, came to visit her and to interest her in other Adventist books. Rosa really liked the books, but for lack of funds, she was unable to purchase them. A whole month passed and Inez was impressed to go back to Rosa's home. What a surprise Rosa had when she saw the literature evangelist at her door. "I was impressed," said Inez, "to come back and see if you would like to have Bible studies."

Rosa replied, "I have already taken a Bible study course from *La Voz de la Esperanza*."

"What did they teach you about the Sabbath?" asked Inez.

"To keep it holy," Rosa answered. That weekend Inez invited Rosa to the English Adventist Church on Herkimer Road. In June of 1965, Rosa was accepted by Elder Leonard Venden into the fellowship of the English Seventh-day Adventist Church by profession of faith. Rosa's husband, Valentín, was baptized in 1970 by Pastor Russell Vaughn. For several years the only Hispanic members attending the English church were Rosa and her husband, Ana González (Rosa's sister) and Josefina Rivera (Rosa and Ann's niece). In 1978, Gloria Cardona, from Puerto Rico, joined the group where she has been a faithful member ever since.

In 1980, the conference hired Pastor José Guillermo Barrios from El Salvador to pastor the Hispanic group. The following year, the Utica Spanish Adventist Church was inaugurated with 33 members. Those officiating were Henry Kenaston and C. W. Skantz, president of the New York Conference. The following pastors served in the Utica church: Epifanio Rodríguez (1986-1993); José Nieves (1993-1994); Raúl Rodríguez (1994-1996). Rosa Colón has served the church as Treasurer since its inauguration.

At the present time Pastor Paul Guevara is the pastor of the district which includes Rochester, Utica, and Syracuse. Besides the three churches, they are developing work in Albany and Schenectady.

The second church to be organized in the New York Conference was planted by a group of Hispanic lay persons from Rochester Bay Knoll Church in 1985. Their church is located at 909 Bleeker Street. The third church was the Syracuse church, organized on June 13, 1998. Pastor Ronal López now lives in Albany and is presently establishing a church there.

NORTHERN NEW ENGLAND CONFERENCE

According to the 1990 census, approximately 7,000 Hispanics live in Maine. It is estimated that 2000 of those live in Portland. In that city, where J. N. Andrews was born in 1829 and where Ellen White received her first vision in December of 1844, there was no Hispanic work until 1991. Presently the Northern New England Conference has two small Spanish groups with 47 members.

Portland, Maine

The person who initiated the Hispanic work in the Northern New England Conference was Julio Dient, born in the Dominican Republic and raised a Catholic. When he was 23 years old, Julio attended a Catholic seminary. It was there that his interest in reading the Bible began. One

day while studying the Bible, he discovered the truth about the Sabbath being the seventh-day, or Saturday. The Holy Spirit then led him to uncover other Bible truths. When they did not coincide with what the seminary was teaching, he left and migrated to New York City. He began looking for a church in the Bronx that kept the Sabbath. When he found one, he started attending and in 1985 was baptized into the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Since then Dient has been an active lay pastor and currently looks after the Lewiston Hispanic group as well as the Portland, Maine Spanish Church with 39 baptized members. The Portland group is presently meeting in the community center which belongs to the White Memorial Adventist Church. Dient assists members with questions on health care, driver's licenses, jobs and anything complicated by a language barrier. As an outreach, he and his friend, Armando Bibes, launched a soccer team called *Maranata* (Christ is Coming) for the youth in the city. The team has done well and is making a name for itself, which, in turn, is a positive influence on the lives of its team members.³⁹

Starting Hispanic Work in Lewiston, Maine

In the summer of 1998, Francisco Ramos, Vice President of the Atlantic Union, initiated a plan with Atlantic Union College to sponsor Elvis Vélez, a second-year theology student from the college, to start work among Hispanics in Lewiston, Maine. For the first month he traveled back and forth from college on the weekends. But he developed so many interests that he had to stay in Lewiston during the last two months of the summer just to attend to them. By the end of the summer, he had 75 Hispanics interested in the Adventist message and was studying with 40 of them. Ten people made their decision to be baptized by the time he returned to college.

These interests were left with Wilbur Moguel, a lay member who in 1996 had moved to Lewiston from Mérida, Yucatán, Mexico with his wife Lisa. They presently have six baptized members, with 8-12 visitors regularly attending.

Atlantic Union College Hosts 1999 NAD Hispanic Evangelism Council

The biennial North American Division Hispanic Evangelism Council for 1999 was celebrated in South Lancaster, Massachusetts at Atlantic Union College. Elder Francisco Ramos hosted the festive event which highlighted the division Hispanic centennial celebration and the first Hispanic-produced and coordinated satellite effort (*La Red '99*), co-sponsored by *La Voz de la Esperanza*.

The Atlantic Union Conference has played and will continue to play an important role in the outreach ministry for Hispanics migrating from all Spanish-speaking countries, but in particular those from the Caribbean. From those humble beginnings when Brother Sebastian Lewis, like a spiritual father, began meeting with Puerto Rican believers in New York City and helped establish the first Spanish church, to the present, the Hispanic growth and influence has been phenomenal. It has been so overwhelming that today more than half the Greater New York Conference members are Hispanic and two of the three line officers are Dominicans: Dionisio Olivo, President and Carlos D. González, Treasurer.

The Atlantic Union has produced and nurtured many excellent Hispanic leaders. Among them are: Francisco Ramos (mentioned in this chapter); Louis Torres, former Secretary of Greater New York Conference, Field Director of Palau and Yap in the Micronesian Islands,

founder of Mission College of Evangelism in South Dakota; and presently NAD/ASI Director of Training and Evangelism; Juan Prestol, who served as Treasurer for both the Greater New York Conference and Atlantic Union Conference, Treasurer for the Euro-Asian Division in Moscow and presently serves as the North American Division Treasurer.

ATLANTIC UNION HISPANIC LEADERS



Francisco Ramos
Atlantic Union Conference
Vice President for Hispanic Ministries



Dionisio Olivo
Greater New York Conference
President



Carlos D. González
Greater New York Conference
Corporation Treasurer



Roberto Reyna
Northeastern Conference
Hispanic Coordinator



Santiago Mejía
Greater New York Conference
Director, Hispanic Ministries

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7

Pacific Union Conference

*Largest Concentration of Hispanic Adventist Believers
in the Division*

"For thou art an holy people unto the Lord thy God: the Lord thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth." Deuteronomy 7:6

FROM the Atlantic Union Conference in the East we now cross the continent to the territory of the Pacific Union Conference on the West Coast, where Hispanic Adventism in the North American Division began in 1899.

INTRODUCTION

Hispanics in the West

It is a general perception that most Hispanics in the United States are immigrants, undocumented or otherwise, to this country. However, history shows that “many of the first Hispanic Americans did not choose to come to the United States. It came to them.”¹

In the early 1800's, Mexico's territory included the expanse of land in the western part of the United States in what is now Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, California and parts of Nevada, Utah and Colorado. With the Texas battle for independence in 1836, the Mexican War in 1846-48, plus the treaties between the U.S. and Mexico in the 1850's, that entire western territory became an official part of the United States. With the re-drawing of the official border at the Río Grande River, many Mexicans living in those areas found themselves residents of a different country, without having physically moved. The seventy-five thousand Mexicans who remained where they were, became the first Hispanic Americans.²

These new citizens were not without problems, however. Discrimination and prejudice led Anglos to force many Mexicans off their property and find refuge in Mexico. Angry groups drove them out of the gold fields in California and many were murdered or lynched. Others had to prove what land they had owned was theirs before the accession and defend themselves against Anglos who wanted to settle in those lands.³

Immigration has played an important part in the population growth of Hispanics. In the Southwest, many Mexicans crossed the border to work in the fields. Political unrest and economic hardships have also contributed to the influx of other Hispanic immigrants.

California has become the second Ellis Island for immigration to the United States, not for Europeans, but for Hispanics and Asians.

Adventist Church Structure

The Pacific Union Conference was organized at the 1901 General Conference session and originally comprised the vast territory of California, Oregon, Washington, Idaho, Montana, Utah, Nevada, Alaska, Hawaii and British Columbia. Arizona was added the following year (1902).

In 1906 the Union territory was divided, with the northern portion becoming the North Pacific Union, and California, Nevada, Utah and Arizona forming the Pacific Union. Hawaii was part of the North Pacific Union until 1929 when it reverted to the Pacific Union.⁴

When the Pacific Union was originally organized in 1901, Arizona was the only territory with established Hispanic work. The *SDA Encyclopedia* recorded that there were only four Adventist churches in Arizona, two of which were Hispanic (Sanchez and Tucson).⁵ The work spread to New Mexico, Texas and California. And as Arizona's state motto “*Ditat Deus*” (God enriches) declares, the lives of countless Hispanics who accepted the Adventist message were spiritually enriched.

In 1932, during the height of the Great Depression, the Union Conference made Arizona part of the Southeastern Conference, where it remained until 1936⁶ when it became a separate conference again.

The Great Depression (1929-1939)

This chapter will continue the story of Hispanic Adventists in the Pacific Union from 1920 to the present, beginning with Arizona. The backdrop is the “Great Depression” which began with the stock market crash of 1929 during Herbert Hoover’s presidential administration. In one day desperate speculators lost 16,400,000 shares of stock. By the end of that year, the government estimated that stock market investors had lost \$40 billion.⁷ To complicate the situation, President Hoover signed a controversial bill in 1930 entitled “Smoot-Hawley Tariff Act,” which in effect raised tariffs to an unbearable, all-time high.

Almost every business in the nation came to a standstill. Foreign trade shut down. More than 5,000 banks closed and over 32,000 businesses filed for bankruptcy.⁸ By the end of 1930, more than six million (or more than one in four) Americans were jobless. The following year, this number doubled to twelve million, representing half of the American workforce. America was experiencing the worst economic depression in its history!

Unwanted Competition

During the 1920’s, labor demands in the United States had attracted many Mexicans and Puerto Ricans. But when the Great Depression hit, the situation changed drastically! Among the first to lose their jobs were the Hispanics—immigrants as well as citizens. Many Americans began to look on the brown-skinned Latino workers as unwanted competition “who had no right to take the few existing jobs from ‘real’ Americans at a time of such extreme economic distress.”⁹ Hispanics living in the rural areas of Arizona, for example, were U. S.-born American citizens working in the copper mines. Already at the lower end of the income scale, they found discrimination and loss of personal income compounding their situation. Throughout the country Anglo leaders called for the Mexicans and Puerto Ricans to return to their homelands.¹⁰ Local government agencies rounded up not only undocumented immigrants, but first-generation Mexican-Americans and those who had lived here for centuries, sending them back “home” to Mexico. “Immigration from Mexico came to a complete stop and reversed, with many Mexicans going south over the border to avoid abuse.”¹¹

While the nation was going through hard times, the Adventist Hispanic work was also being adversely affected. Instead of immigrating, Hispanics were now exiting the country in great numbers, thus decreasing the number of potential converts. This exodus was one of the contributing factors in the closing of the Hispanic training school in Phoenix, Arizona, which resulted in a dearth of Latino leadership. Nonetheless, God’s work among Hispanics could not be stopped. It continued to move forward primarily under the missionary-minded and able leadership of Spanish-speaking Anglos.

❖ NOTABLE HISPANICS

Romana Acosta Bañuelos - First Hispanic U. S. Treasurer

In the history of America, three Hispanic women have had the distinction of being appointed as the Treasurer of the United States. The first was Romana Acosta Bañuelos, born in Miami, Arizona in 1925 of undocumented Mexican parents. In 1931, during the Great Depression, when she was six years old, her family was among those who were



Romana Acosta Bañuelos
First Hispanic U. S. Treasurer.

caught in the government's "anti-alien" drive to force Mexicans to leave the country. In these deportation drives, thousands of American citizens, including American-born children (such as Romana) were driven from their own country.¹²

At the age of 19, Romana returned to the States and settled in Los Angeles. Although faced with many odds, she succeeded in becoming a successful business woman and banker. In 1949, with only \$400 in capital, she started a

small tortilla factory. Twenty years later, she owned and managed Romana's Mexican Food Products, bringing in \$12 million a year. In 1970, she helped establish the Pan American National Bank in Los Angeles, serving as director and chairperson. President Richard M. Nixon recognized Bañuelos' outstanding abilities in business and banking and in 1971 appointed her as Treasurer of the United States, a position she held until February of 1974.¹³

The experience of the Honorable Romana Acosta Bañuelos should be an encouragement to young Hispanics to develop all their God-given talents, for as Queen Esther in the Bible was told, "who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" Esther 4:14. God has a plan for your life and when opportunities come you must be prepared to take them.

Katherine
Dávalos Ortega
and Catalina
Vásquez
Villalpando

Katherine
Dávalos Ortega
from New Mexico



Catalina Vásquez Villalpando (center)
Third Hispanic U. S. Treasurer with Hispanic Leaders
at the General Conference of SDA's.

and Catalina Vásquez Villalpando from San Marcos, Texas also became U.S. Treasurers. Ortega served under Ronald Reagan's presidential administration from 1983-1989. When George Bush came to the presidency in 1989, he appointed Villalpando as the 39th U. S. Treasurer,¹⁴ making her the third Latina to occupy that prestigious position.

On October 12, 1992, the Honorable Ms. Villalpando spoke at the Seventh-day Adventist world headquarters in Silver Spring, Maryland, addressing the General Conference leadership and support staff at a special convocation commemorating the 500th anniversary of Columbus' discovery of America. She received a standing ovation for her remarks highlighting the achievements of Latinos in the United States and a reception was held in her honor.

César Chávez

César Chávez is regarded as one of the most important Mexican-American, non-violent activists in the U. S. labor movement. Chávez was born in 1927 on the family-owned farm near Yuma, Arizona. In 1937, during the Great Depression, when he was 10 years old, his family lost their farm because they could not pay the Arizona property tax.¹⁵ From that time on, he and his family became migrant workers in Arizona and then in California, following the harvests in their old Studebaker and living among the other migrants. Working conditions for the migrant farm worker in those days were deplorable. Chávez remembered "the days when laborers lived in unspeakably dismal labor camps and were expected to work 'with no water in the fields and no bathrooms, no rest periods, no protection at all from pesticides, no grievance procedures, transportation just in an open truck. . .'"¹⁶ There were reports that duster pilots would spray pesticides while Mexican grape pickers were working in the fields, causing many to get sick. Chávez claimed that the heavy use of toxic pesticides was causing "frightening ailments among farm workers and leaving dangerous residues on grapes which the American public consumes."¹⁷

Hoping to improve the migrants' conditions, on September 30, 1962, Chávez and Dolores Huerta founded the National Farm Workers Association (NFWA), a forerunner of the United Farm Workers (UFW). By the late '60's, he had organized over 100,000 workers, resulting in better working conditions for migrant laborers in California. Improvements included adequate housing, health benefits, safer use of pesticides and higher wages. Chávez remained committed to his nonviolent approach to change, declaring that "the truest act of courage, the strongest act of manliness, is to sacrifice ourselves for others in a totally nonviolent struggle for justice."¹⁸

Javier Elenes Remembers Chávez

Some who benefitted from these reforms were Hispanic Adventist members living and working in the San Joaquín Valley in Central California in the late '60's. Javier Elenes, who now pastors a church in the Southern California Conference, remembers as a 16 year old picking grapes alongside Chávez in Delano. That was the summer of 1966, just before Javier left to study theology at the Adventist college in Montemorelos, Mexico. He remembers Chávez as *un buen hombre* (a good man).

César Chávez died in his sleep on April 23, 1993, at a friend's home in San Luis, Arizona. On April 29, over 20,000 people gathered in Delano, California to pay homage and mourn him as a national hero.¹⁹

ARIZONA CONFERENCE

Much of the early Adventist work in Arizona was characterized by Anglos working together with Hispanics. From the very outset it was Anglo Adventist leaders (W. L. Black and C. D. M. Williams) who took great interest and initiative in starting and developing Hispanic Adventist work in the North American Division. (See chapter 3) By 1925 there were four Hispanic congregations in Arizona (Sánchez, Tucson, Phoenix and Flagstaff).

The Spanish-American Training School had been established in Phoenix (1920-1933). (See chapter 5) Anglo leaders recognized the need to educate Spanish-speaking workers, not only for the work in the United States, but also as a missionary endeavor to take the



Anglo and Mexican Workers Meeting at the Phoenix Spanish- American Training School in 1924.

message to Mexico. Two of the teachers at the school were former missionaries to Latin America: H. F. Brown and A. N. Allen. This school played a crucial role in the concept of Hispanic work in the Southwest even though it did not endure.

It is of significance that the educational experiment in Phoenix went the same way as did the schools in Laredo and Yancey, Texas and in Corrales, New Mexico—they either became Anglo schools or closed down altogether. To date, no separate educational institution specifically dedicated to preparing Hispanic workers has ever succeeded in the North American Division.

At a comparatively early date, December 16, 1924, the Arizona Conference held the first workers meeting for Hispanic workers in North America. Both Anglos and Mexicans attended. References to evangelistic meetings during the 1920's and 1930's indicate that Anglo and Mexican workers labored together in the same meetings, but with the Anglo

always the leader of the two. It therefore became something of importance when in the 1970's Hispanic workers began leading out.

Much of the early work in Arizona depended on Marcial Serna, who had to divide his time between Arizona and New Mexico. Serna seemed to be unique among the first Hispanic workers because he was not only bilingual, but was also ordained very early in his career. Therefore he was able to work alone without the assistance of another ordained minister. The absence of ordained Hispanic ministers was compensated for somewhat by Anglo workers who had either a strong interest in the Spanish community or were former missionaries.

It wasn't until the 1950's that the Arizona Conference was able to recruit North American educated Hispanic pastors. Several articles in the *Pacific Union Recorder* pointed out their educational pedigrees, along with that of their wives, which made for a far more professional approach to evangelism and pastoral care. Church growth showed what a difference that education made.

Focus will now be turned to the Hispanic work in the Arizona Conference, highlighting the work of the two principal areas: Tucson and Phoenix.

❖ **TUCSON**

Tucson—The First Bilingual Congregation

It is interesting to note that though the first Spanish church in the Division (Sánchez, Arizona) was made up of only Spanish-speaking members, the second Spanish church, organized days later in Tucson, was a bilingual congregation (English and Spanish) with a bilingual pastor, Marcial Serna. In fact, it was **the first bilingual, Anglo/Spanish church in the North American Division**. From the outset of the Hispanic work in Arizona, there seemed to be considerable mixing of the Anglo and Mexican membership, and the church conducted dual services to accommodate both language groups.²⁰ With the great diversity in the North American Division, the church in this millennium, of necessity, will again need to emphasize a bilingual/bicultural ministry.

The First English-speaking Adventist Church in Tucson

Sadly, the original Anglo/Spanish church in Tucson functioned bilingually for only a few years. Because of the distinct challenges in meeting the needs of the two language groups, there was a friendly separation.

The Mexican congregation of 23 members remained in the church building, while the smaller English-speaking congregation of nine members began meeting in a home. This fact is significant because the history of the first English-speaking Adventist church in Tucson (now the Desert Valley Church) in actuality began with the Adventist Hispanic work which Walter Black and C.D.M. Williams started with Marcial Serna.

Since the original Methodist-Episcopal church had been owned by both groups, the Mexicans who remained in the church, agreed to help the English-speaking congregation with funding for another church building. Thus we see that a cordial and cooperative relationship existed.

By 1906, the Anglo congregation had built their new church. Their Mexican brethren gave countless hours of labor and funding for the new church as they had promised. It is

WALTER LAWRENCE BLACK



Elder Walter Lawrence Black was born on February 17, 1867, in Ripley, Ohio. He began studying medicine in Battle Creek, Michigan in the 1880's, but contracted tuberculosis, which halted his studies. He moved to Arizona for his health, where he eventually recovered. Black then attended Healdsburg College in California and became a literature evangelist in Tucson, Arizona where

he met and studied the Adventist doctrines with Pastor Marcial Serna in the summer of 1899. Later, Black became an ordained minister. He learned to speak Spanish while helping establish the Hispanic work in Sánchez and Tucson, Arizona. He lived to be 103 years old, passing away on January 9, 1971, in Elizabeth City, North Carolina. (The above picture was taken when Elder Black was 100 years old. With him are Barbara and Arthur Bryant of the Winslow Memorial Home in Elizabeth City, North Carolina.)

not clear what happened to the Methodist-Episcopal church where the Mexicans were meeting, but in 1915 it appears that the two congregations were again worshipping together just before the Anglo church was sold.²¹ After that the Mexican Adventist members met in a little adobe building owned by Jesús Estrada, who had been baptized in 1908 by Marcial Serna.

In 1916, a new English Adventist church was constructed at 621 East 9th Street and their congregation grew. However, the Spanish congregation almost dwindled away for lack of pastoral leadership but was later resuscitated by an evangelistic effort in 1929.

Hispanic Work in Arizona Struggles to Survive

In the 1920's there were four Spanish congregations in Arizona (Sánchez, Tucson, Phoenix, and Flagstaff), yet, fifty years later, the *Pacific Union Recorder* announced on

September 17, 1975 that the Conference had established its *fourth* Spanish church—Nogales²² which was organized for the second time. The Hispanic work in Flagstaff never quite developed and some time in the 1940's, the members of the Sánchez church joined the Safford English Church.

Burt Bray

In 1924 Elder Burt Bray, one of the pioneers of Hispanic work in New Mexico, was called to Arizona to succeed Marcial Serna as the Hispanic coordinator. In 1929 Bray decided that something had to be done with the small, struggling congregation in Tucson. "What we need is an evangelistic effort," Bray told them. The two church elders, Antonio Fernández and José Salazar, wholeheartedly agreed and teamed up with the pastor to hold the series. After one month, they had 30 to 40 regular attendees.

On November 9, 1929 the Tucson church was organized for the second time with 23 members—the same number they had started with thirty years before when they first organized the church in 1899.²³

But the new church was not without its challenges. Elder Homer D. Casebeer, in his July 12, 1932 North American Division Spanish newsletter, entitled, *Las Buenas Nuevas*, had a note of interest regarding a series of evangelistic meetings held by Elder Fernández and Brother Chayra. Opposition was felt when the local Catholic priest distributed a circular to all the Mexicans in the area. It said, "*Cuidado* (Beware)! On the corners of Ave. 20 and 8th Street, there is an evangelistic tent. Any Catholic that goes there commits a sin that deserves death." The circular continued its attack, "No one has ever seen the gospel preached in a circus like that."²⁴

W. A. Lusk

By 1933, when Elder W. A. Lusk was sent to pastor the small group, they were still meeting in a little adobe building with a dirt floor which belonged to J. M. Estrada. "We need to have a better place to meet," Elder Lusk told them. They agreed and soon located a site which they purchased for \$400.



Capilla Adventista in Tucson, 1937.

When the Tucson English Church heard of the Mexican members' building plans, they remembered how the Mexicans had helped with their first church construction and voted \$800 toward the new church, which was eventually built at 1101 S. 5th Avenue.²⁵

The Hispanics were greatly encouraged by this gesture of love from their Anglo brothers in Christ. But fundraising was slow and it wasn't until 1937 that they were actually

able to construct a small building on the church property. It was a simple adobe structure with a sign that read “Capilla Adventista” (Adventist Chapel). Although small, it did have a baptistry, which was an unspoken requirement for all Spanish churches. Located beneath the platform, the baptistry required the pulpit and part of the floor to be removed in order to use it. Those leading out in the building project were the Duarte, Rangel and Jesús Estrada families.²⁶

Francis Games

When the congregation moved into their new church home, they also got a new pastor. In 1937 Elder Francis Games arrived from Chicago to find a congregation of 30 members in their small, but adequate *capilla* (chapel). Elder Games also discovered that the pastor he was replacing was Elder William Steele—the same pastor who had baptized him 19 years before in the Dominican Republic. Games had only been in Tucson six months when the conference called him to Phoenix as pastor and Hispanic coordinator for the Hispanic work in the entire state. This left the church alone once again with only the local elders in charge.

Marcelino Quiroz

Two prominent personalities of the Tucson church in recent times are Marcelino Quiroz and Angelita Baldenegro.

Quiroz was born in Yucatán, Mexico, and as long as he can remember, he wanted to be a minister. He was baptized at age 15, attended the Adventist school in Montemorelos, and graduated in 1950 with an emphasis in ministry. After interning for two years in Nogales, Sonora, Mexico, he developed a sickness which affected the dexterity of his fingers to the point that he could not even write. When the leaders of the Mexican Union heard of his condition, they felt that it disqualified him for the ministry. But Quiroz left the work voluntarily before any formal action was taken, though he never lost his love for the ministry.

In 1953 he and his new wife, María del Rosario, moved to Tucson where he made a full recovery. At that time, Elder Arthur Westphal, a retired pastor who had worked in South America for 29 years, was the interim pastor, but was planning to leave for California. Recognizing Quiroz’s pastoral abilities, he asked if Quiroz would shepherd the church until the new pastor, Augustine Cortez, arrived. Quiroz accepted the offer *con gusto* (gladly). For many years, Quiroz served as a faithful elder of the Tucson church and continues to serve in that capacity at the present time.

Angelita “Mamalita” Baldenegro

Angelita was born in 1885 and became an Adventist in 1916. She was living in Globe when a literature evangelist visited the home of Elena Ponce, Angelita’s friend, and set up Bible studies with her. When Elena invited Angelita to join them, Angelita hesitated at first but later gave in. Conviction came over her that this was the truth. One thing, however, that she had trouble with was giving up her saints—that is until the literature evangelist showed her the first commandment in the Bible. Then she gave them up gladly.

Angelita’s husband, Emelcio Vásquez Baldenegro, was a miner who worked the dif-

ferent mines between New Mexico and Arizona. He contracted “miner’s consumption,” and in 1936 he died, leaving Angelita with eight children to raise during the last part of the depression. Angelita, however, managed to survive, providing for her family by taking in laundry and cleaning houses.

Each year she read her Bible through, directed Sabbath school for many years, and was a strong pillar in the church. Because of her own experience, her house was always open for those who needed shelter. She took in more than a dozen families during her lifetime. Her church family, as well as her own family, affectionately called her “Mamalita.” For 70 years she remained a faithful member of the Tucson church until her death in 1986 at the age of 101. One of her children, Eddie (Gildardo) Baldenegro, has continued to carry the banner of his mother’s faith by serving as an elder for 30 years both in the Oracle and the Tucson Spanish Churches.

Augustine Cortez

In 1953, fresh out of La Sierra College, Augustine Cortez and his wife Ruth were asked to pastor the Phoenix/Tucson district. They lived in Phoenix and would make frequent visits to the Tucson church. At that time, the congregation consisted of no more than 30-40 members but, as Elder Cortez remembers, they were *buena gente* (good people).

In 1958 Elder Cortez began broadcasting a 15-minute radio program at 1:30 every Wednesday on KVET in Tucson. This station had a Mexican audience reaching the entire city of Tucson and all the way south to Nogales, Sonora, Mexico.²⁷

Ingathering was one of the church activities well remembered by the Cortez family. Every fall, Ingathering became the consuming church outreach which lasted until Christmas Eve. Ruth recalls getting up before five o’clock on Sunday mornings, preparing a lunch, gathering all the Ingathering materials, dressing little Loida, their two and a half year old daughter, and leaving the house by 6 a.m. for the all-day activity. With their green 1950 Mercury they would drive to Tucson to rendezvous with church members and spend the day Ingathering in Globe, Douglas, Ajo, and Gila Bend. Then they would drive back to Phoenix, many times arriving home at midnight.

Being of Spanish ancestry, Ruth is fine featured and very light complexioned, but very fluent in Spanish. One morning she was canvassing a Mexican lady in Ajo. As Ruth was speaking *en español* (in Spanish), she noticed the Mexican lady looking her up and down, and was surprised when the lady said “Yo no speaky English.” Ruth became a little confused, but quickly realized that the Mexican lady had evidently mistaken her for an Anglo and hadn’t even heard a word she had said.

Víctor Cancel

One day while Elder Cortez was in California at the Central California campmeeting, he met Víctor Cancel, a very successful literature evangelist, and was impressed with the young man. Later, in 1959, when the conference asked Cortez to concentrate on pastoring the Phoenix church and become the new Hispanic coordinator as well, he highly recommended Cancel to the conference to replacement him in Tucson. Cancel was hired as a part-time pastor and part-time literature evangelist. This arrangement seemed to be successful, for the Tucson membership doubled from 28 to 56 members in the two years Cancel worked there.

Fred W. Miller

Elder Fred W. Miller and his wife, Sue, had worked in the Dominican Republic, and there developed a strong love for Hispanics. After returning to the North American Division, they labored exclusively in the Hispanic work from 1941 to 1973. In Southern California, they pastored in San Fernando, Santa Paula and Oxnard and in Arizona they worked in Tucson, Nogales, and Superior. When asked to pastor the Tucson church in 1961, Elder Miller made it his top priority to have another church building constructed. "This building is not representative of our God or our message," he commented to the members about the little *capilla*. The church had plenty of land to build on but because they were few in number, they didn't have the faith to launch into a major building project. To encourage them, Elder Miller bought the cement blocks for the church out of his own money. "Now you have the blocks," he told them. "Now you have to build." However, the resistance was so strong that no progress was made. As it turned out, it would fall upon the shoulders of the next pastor to actually start the building project.

Atilio Dupertuis

With the arrival of Elder Atilio Dupertuis and his wife, Eunice Isabel, in 1964, the Tucson church experienced a turning point. After approximately six decades of existence, the Tucson membership stood at only 67. Elder Dupertuis was an Argentine-trained pastor steeped in the Walter Schubert evangelistic approach and he immediately began an aggressive evangelistic campaign. New growth began to take place. By the end of 1967, the membership had risen to 130. They had completely outgrown the old pre-World War II church building which had served them for 30 years, but resisted the idea of relocating. Elder Dupertuis felt that as long as the Capilla Adventista stood, the congregation would not be motivated to build another church. So in May of 1968, he had the old adobe structure torn down. Some of the members still resisted, but eventually work on the new sanctuary began in earnest.

Many men worked on the church every night after work while the women prepared supper for them. So much of the actual labor was performed by the members that it was called a "do-it-yourself-church" by the local newspaper. Some of those leading out in the project were: Daniel Parra, Ed Baldenegro, Paul Sánchez, Gilberto Tovar and Manuel Valle. But no sooner had the new church project begun, than Elder Dupertuis received a call to be a professor of theology at what is today known as the University of Montemorelos. However, the members kept working.

Only four months after bulldozing the old church to a pile of rubble, the congregation was back at 1101 S. 4th Avenue worshipping in the new church where they still meet to this day.²⁸ [It is noteworthy that Elder Dupertuis is a fourth generation Adventist whose great-grandfather, Jules (Julio) Dupertuis, was one of the first Adventists in Argentina; and Eunice Isabel, Dupertuis' wife, is the daughter of Braulio Pérez Marcio, the founder and director of *La Voz de la Esperanza*. Dr. Dupertuis at present is the director of the Institute of Hispanic Ministries in Berrien Springs, Michigan.]

Carlos Montaña

Shortly after construction was finished, Elder Carlos Montaña arrived in Tucson from California and under his leadership the final touches were added to the new building. Now

the Tucson congregation felt they had a representative church to which they could invite their friends and relatives. The membership continued to grow and the church was dedicated debt-free on June 17, 1972.²⁹

Ramón Espinoza

During Elder Espinoza's pastorate (1972-1979), he placed much emphasis on public evangelism. As a result, the membership mushroomed to nearly 200. His evangelistic gifts were recognized by Elder Manuel Vásquez, who invited him to hold an evangelistic effort for his church in Phoenix. The resulting baptisms helped the Phoenix Spanish Church become the leading church in baptisms in the conference that year. One of the young people from the Tucson church, Raúl Maldonado, became so involved in outreach activities that he felt the call to the ministry. After studying at the seminary, he began pastoring and has had a very productive ministry. At this writing, Elder Maldonado is pastoring in Southeastern California.

Daniel Robles

When Elder Dan Robles (1979-1981) and his wife Nydia Camargo Robles came to Tucson, he emphasized social community outreach and public evangelism. During his tenure, three major efforts were held with the following evangelists: Pedro Arano, evangelist for *La Voz*; Eliezer Benavides, Hispanic Ministries, Pacific Union; Elías Gómez, professor of religion at Andrews University. The church continued as a thriving, evangelistically-minded congregation. In 1980 Elder Robles was asked to succeed Manuel Vásquez as pastor-coordinator for the conference. Presently, Elder Robles is one of the vice presidents of the Southern California Conference.

Hearley Roscher

Elder Roscher and his wife Amabelia had a comparatively long-term pastorship in Tucson. During his eight-year tenure, several significant events occurred. One was the organization of the Tucson Esperanza Spanish Church. Elder Roscher was an evangelist at heart and saw the need for work in the southern part of the city. He commissioned a group of his members to begin meeting at the Liberty Elementary School under the leadership of Daniel Parra. The group grew and upon its organization, it became the second Spanish congregation in the city.³⁰

In 1984 evangelist Elder Isaac Lara was invited to conduct a series in the Tucson Spanish church. A layman, who lived 17 miles from Tucson in a city called Marana,* would drive his family and other interests to the meetings every night. Even though he had a van, he had to make a number of trips to bring all of his interests. Because of this great interest, Elders Roscher and Lara decided to hold simultaneous meetings in Marana and Tucson. This resulted in a good number of baptisms and the local Community Church was rented for the new Marana group. This group was on fire for the Lord and soon had so many members that they needed to purchase their own, larger church.³¹

*This town was originally named "Mariana" by the Spaniards. However, the Anglos incorrectly pronounced it "Marana" and the name stuck.

Gilberto Vega

Elder Roscher was succeeded by Gilberto Vega as the new pastor/Hispanic coordinator in 1991. Under Vega's leadership, the Tucson church became a hub of activity. He and his wife Elba entered into a remodeling of the church, added a multipurpose building, had intense lay training and a strong evangelistic outreach, which included a radio program, *La Fe de Jesús* (The Faith of Jesus). As a result, the church began bursting at the seams. That's when the idea to plant a church in the northwest part of the city began to take place.

In 1994 those plans became a reality following two evangelistic efforts by Elders Vega and Jorge Grieve. The new group became known as the Tucson Northwest Company.³² Then, in 1996, the Marana Company was organized as a church, becoming the third church in the Greater Tucson area. Later, when Vega moved to the Mountain View Church in Phoenix, he continued as a pastor/Hispanic coordinator.

Omar Grieve

When Elder Omar Grieve came to Tucson in 1996, his vision of expansion and evangelism was realized by church planting. Grieve sent a group of members from the church to begin meeting in the southern part of the city. This group grew until it became *La*



Elder Omar Grieve alongside María García, who made the elegant 180 pound cake for the centennial celebration.

Iglesia del Sur (The South Tucson Spanish Church). The Tucson area now had four Spanish churches. God was indeed blessing His people.

Elder Grieve, the only son of Nila Grieve and her late husband, Jorge Grieve of the famed TV program *Ayer, Hoy, Mañana*, had the honor and privilege of celebrating the Tucson Church's centennial celebration on January 15, 2000. One of the highlights of the celebration was the re-enactment of Walter Black's and C.D.M. Williams' first encounters

with Marcial Serna, including the public debate on the Sabbath and the Sánchez family division over the Sabbath. This drama, directed by Nila Grieve, was so true-to-life that it made an emotional and spiritual impact on the audience.

Senior Pastors of the Tucson Church

The following served as senior pastors of the Tucson church, which is the oldest existing Spanish church in the North American Division: Marcial Serna, Burt Bray, W. A. Lusk, William Steele, Francis Gómez (Games), Arthur Westphal, W. England, Augustine Cortez, Víctor Cancel, Fred W. Miller, Atilio R. Dupertuis, Carlos Montaña, Ramón Espinoza, Daniel Robles, Hearley Roscher, Gilberto Vega, and Omar Grieve.

Principal Lay Leaders

Some of the principal lay leaders in the Tucson Church were: Jesús Estrada, Benito Estrada, Antonio Fernández, José Salazar, Ramón Soltero, Angelita Urbalejo, Trinidad Rivera, Víctor Cancel, Marcelino Quiroz, Ed (Gildardo) Baldenegro, Daniel Parra, Gilberto Tovar, Frank and Tony Lizárraga, Raúl Maldonado, María Hoskins, Víctor Merancio, Manuel Félix, Prov Erazo, Samuel Ochoa, David Encinas and Dr. Pedro Martínez.

Greater Tucson Area

To date, the Central Spanish Church, the mother church, has spawned four daughters (Esperanza, Marana, Northwest Spanish and South Spanish).

The Hispanic work in Tucson has truly gone through its struggles and times of slow growth. But today the dream of Walter Black and C. D. M. Williams, which began 100 years ago in the dusty streets of Tucson, has come true as the Spanish church has grown, expanded and prospered. Presently there are five churches and 800 Hispanic members in the Greater Tucson area.

❖ YUMA CHURCH

Way down in the southwestern corner of the state of Arizona lies the city of Yuma. In 1979, literature evangelist Adelfo Huerta went to Yuma to try to locate Humberto and Guadalupe Zamorano, who had mailed in a "lead card" for *The Bible Story* set of books. The problem was they had only listed a post office box number for their address. After



Members of the present Yuma Spanish Church.

inquiring around, Adelfo finally located them. He gave them a canvass, made a successful sale, closed with a short Bible study, prayed and then left.

Two years later, Adelfo was surprised when he saw the Zamoranos at the Spanish campmeeting in Prescott, Arizona. Adelfo found out that after his visit the Zamoranos had started attending the English Seventh-day Adventist Church in Yuma and were baptized along with their three children. He also discovered that they had shared their new-found faith with their friends and had a small group of 15 Hispanics meeting at the English Adventist Church.

In 1985 Eddie Canales, the conference Publishing Director, visited the small group of Hispanic believers and immediately saw the potential for starting a church. He asked the conference to invite Elder Isaac Lara, a very effective evangelist, to conduct an evangelistic effort. That effort yielded 30 baptisms, tripling their membership.

Elder Claudio Ingleton was brought in to pastor the group and by the end of the year, the congregation had bought a small church to accommodate their rapidly growing group of 70 members. In 1986, Elder Guillermo Zenner and his wife María were called to pastor the church and by the following year there were 110 members.

The conference then sent Adelfo Huerta, the literature evangelist who had been instrumental in the Zamoranos' conversion, to pastor the Yuma Church and he remained there for the next ten years. In 1998, Elder Aurelio Huerta replaced his brother, Adelfo, as pastor. The Yuma Church presently has 140 members and has spawned a second church in San Luis which has 70 members.



The Huerta Family

The Huerta Family's Conversion

The Huerta brothers have an interesting story to tell. There were nine brothers and two sisters, all raised in a very conservative Catholic home in Mexico. Their father taught them good work habits, while their mother instilled in them their religious values. Every Sunday they would go to mass. At the age of 16, Adelfo began studying for the priesthood and continued for the next four years.

He then decided to go to Los Angeles to earn money to further his studies. It was at the lamp factory where Adelfo was working that he became acquainted with a member of the Spanish Lincoln Heights Church in Los Angeles. This member shared his faith with Adelfo and Adelfo was thrilled with what he learned. He began sharing what he learned with his older brother, Ricardo, who was also in L.A. Ricardo went a step further and began formally studying with the Adventists. Soon, Ricardo was baptized and Adelfo followed soon after. When they tried to share their faith with their mother, Filiberta, she would have nothing to do with it. In fact, she was so upset when they told her they had been baptized into the Seventh-day Adventist Church, that she told Adelfo, "Forget that you are my son and that I am your mother." But the boys did not give up on their

mother. They knew that if she was converted, the rest of the family would follow.

In a relatively short time, that is exactly what happened. All nine of the remaining siblings along with their mother and father, were baptized. Shortly after, the entire Huerta family moved to California. Today, all of the Huerta children are professionals and five of their sons are Adventist pastors: Ricardo in Southeastern California, Adelfo and Aurelio in Arizona, Xavier in New Jersey, and Antonio in Washington state. When Ricardo and Adelfo announced to their father, Antonio, that they wanted to become Seventh-day Adventist ministers, their father told them, "If you want to serve God as ministers, be very careful, be faithful. I don't want to hear that one day they took you out of the ministry for doing things you shouldn't have."

❖ **PHOENIX**

Work among Hispanics in Phoenix started through the efforts of colporteur Frank Bond and his brother Walter when they formed a small Spanish company. One account places the date as early as 1910, while another dates it to 1914. The first Spanish church was organized in 1920 at the Spanish-American Training School in Phoenix under the direction of Pastor Henry Brown, director of the Spanish-American School on 14th and Willetta. The following is the history of the Phoenix Spanish Church.

Montezuma Church

In 1923 the members built a church at 711 S. Montezuma Ave., mainly through the efforts of Pastor Benton from the Central English church and dedicated it on December 22, 1928. Many Anglos attended, who contributed to an offering that enabled the new congregation to liquidate all of its financial obligations.

This expressed the long-standing practice of Anglo Adventists in Arizona supporting Hispanic work. Elder Bray noted that this place of worship was a stabilizing influence in the Mexican work and hoped that Phoenix would become the center of Hispanic work in Arizona.³³



Elder Francis Games (3rd from right) and members of the Montezuma Spanish Church.

Elder E. R. Johnson of Arizona Academy continued actively in Hispanic ministry. In 1932 he took charge of the Phoenix congregation while Antonio Fernández held meetings in Tucson. Phoenix members customarily held two meetings weekly, one in the morning for those in the city, and a second Sabbath school and church in the afternoon for those in the country. About 44 attended the afternoon meetings. Johnson discovered how rudimentary the actual practice of religion really was among these new Adventists at the first prayer meeting he held. No one responded to his call for volunteers to pray. Finally, one elderly member told him that they had a lot of faith, but no experience in public praying. Johnson made a special effort to pray in more simple terms so his new members would not feel intimidated by participating in worship.³⁴

Mohave Church

Then, in 1952, under Pastor Augustine Cortez, the church bought two lots at 350 W. Mohave where they built a church and dedicated it a year later. Twenty years later when they sold the property, they met in the Phoenix



The Mohave Spanish Church in Phoenix, Arizona.

Family Center while they made plans to build the present church at 4408 N. 35th Avenue.



Elders Saúl Visser and Manuel Vásquez at the dedication of the Phoenix Spanish Church.

Phoenix Spanish Church and Saúl Visser

It was under the able leadership of Elder Saúl Visser that the construction of the church on 35th Avenue began in 1973. The building committee consisted of Pastor Saúl Visser, José Schmied, Leandro Vega, Rafael Orduño, Norberto Galindo, Ali-

cia Galindo and Nellie Hanan. Brother José Schmied, a civil engineer in the city of Phoenix, was the architect and William Stansbury was the builder. Arnold Arias did the elegant wood paneling. The beautiful stained glass window that graced the front of the sanctuary was designed by Sergei Arias and donated by the Juan Armando Bonjour family from Thousand Oaks, California. In April of 1974 the Phoenix church cut the ribbon on their new 250-seat church, the third building in its history.

Phoenix Spanish Church and Manuel Vásquez

In 1976, Elder Manuel Vásquez, recently returned from Ecuador where he served as a departmental director, was called to be the pastor of the Phoenix church. Shortly after his arrival, he was asked to become the coordinator for the Hispanic work. It was under his leadership that the church was dedicated debt-free in May of 1979. In addition, the Tempe Church was established and a small group was started in El Mirage. From 1977 to 1980, Elder Vásquez and his wife Nancy produced a 30-minute radio program entitled *La Biblia Dice* (The Bible Says), which aired every Sunday at 10 a.m. on KIFN 860 AM in Phoenix.

In the summer of 1980, Vásquez was called to the Pacific Union Conference, where he served as a departmental director, Hispanic coordinator, and later as vice president. At the 1990 General Conference session in Indianapolis, he was elected a vice president of the North American Division, where he presently serves.

Dr. Joaquín Cázares, who is a physician and the present pastor-evangelist, reports that the Phoenix church now has 615 members and holds two Sabbath services to accommodate the people. In the greater Phoenix area there are presently 14 Spanish churches.

Pastors of the Phoenix Spanish Church

Henry Brown, A. N. Allen, Fred Owen, Burt Bray, Antonio Fernández, Ernest Johnson, W. A. Lusk, J. Francisco Games, William Miller, Samuel Alberro, W. H. England, Augustine Cortez, José Gil, Arturo Michel, Saúl Visser, Joe Hernández, Manuel Vásquez, Daniel Escamilla, José Piantini, and Dr. Joaquín Cázares.

❖ HISPANIC WOMEN'S MINISTRIES

María Denny's Baptism

During the pastorate of Manuel Vásquez, María Denny moved from California to Tempe, Arizona. Although she was a Baptist, she was open to learning more of God's truth. So when an Adventist friend of hers gave her *La Fe de Jesús* (The Faith of Jesus) Bible study lesson booklet, she liked it so much that she began giving others Bible studies from it. One day, however, she had a personal struggle over the lesson on the Sabbath. "How can I give a Bible study on the Sabbath when I don't even believe in it?" she asked herself.



***María Denny,
Arizona
Hispanic
Women's
Ministries
Director.***

One leisurely Sunday morning María was listening to the radio when she heard a program called *La Biblia Dice*. In God's providence, Elder Vásquez spoke on the Sabbath that morning. At the end of the program, María picked up the phone and called the response number. That call led to Bible studies with her and her husband, Bruce, as well as their four children. On April 7, 1979, María was baptized along with two of her friends, Lupe Tromley and María Gutiérrez. Little did María, or anyone else, know then that she would later be used by God to begin a ministry that would be a first in Hispanic history in this division.

Pioneering Women's Ministries Among Hispanics—María Denny

For several years, María attended the English-speaking women's retreats in Arizona, drinking in all the messages. Then she began to have a burden for her Spanish-speaking sisters. "They should have an opportunity to be blessed like I have been," she thought. She began talking with others about the idea, but found little support. One day she was encouraging an Hispanic pastor's wife to conduct a Spanish women's retreat when the pastor's wife told her, "I can't do it, but you can." And taking María by the hand, she repeated, "*Tú lo puedes hacer*" (You can do it.)

Those words kept ringing in María's ears for weeks, but she kept telling herself that she couldn't do it. One morning while she was working, she heard a voice, "If you don't do it, María, I'll ask someone else." María realized that it was the Lord calling her and she immediately fell to her knees and began to pray. "*Señor* (Lord), show me your plans. Here I am. Tell me what I have to do and your will be done."

María counseled with Elder Manuel Vásquez, who was now working in the Pacific Union Conference office. He encouraged her to accept the challenge and gave her suggestions on what to do and who to contact. María contacted Miriam Alonso and Rosalie Flores, who enthusiastically agreed to help. María's husband, Bruce, although not a member of the church, was her greatest supporter. Despite the fact that they had no financial support from the church, Bruce told her "Don't worry. If this is what you want to do, we'll use some of our own money and God will give us the rest. If not, we'll just go bankrupt." (But to the honor and glory of God, the retreat paid for itself.)

First NAD Hispanic Women's Retreat

María did not know it at the time, but that retreat would become **the first Hispanic Women's Retreat to be held in the North American Division**. This fact surprised María when Dr. Ramona Pérez Greek, the women's ministries associate in the division, told her.

The retreat was scheduled for April 20-22, 1990 in Prescott, Arizona with the theme "*Mujer a la Imagen de Dios*" (Woman in the Image of God). But when the registration deadline arrived, only seven people had registered. María went to the Lord in prayer. She was not discouraged, but she did need to have the menu confirmed, cabins assigned, programs, etc. and an accurate count of attendees. After much prayer and fasting, God blessed, and the final count was 126 women! Since then, María has held a women's retreat in Arizona every year—a total of ten to date.

Husbands Supporting Women's Ministries Retreat

María recalls the time when two women arrived at the meetings very late the night of registration. They wanted to register and each handed María a \$100 bill. María asked the

first one "Where did you get the \$100 bill?" "Oh," she said, "My husband gave it to me so I could come to this retreat. He was so anxious for me to come, even helping me get my clothes together, that I suspected he might have another woman. But I was so wrong. He told me that the change in me since last year's retreat was so much appreciated that he wanted me to attend again this year." Then her friend said, "When my husband heard of the favorable change that had taken place with my friend, he gave me \$100 so I could come as well."

Director for Hispanic Women's Ministries in Arizona

God has used María to help initiate and direct four Hispanic women's retreats in Hawaii. Today there are Hispanic Women's retreats conducted in nearly every conference with significant Hispanic work. The Arizona Conference recognized María's efforts by making her the Director of Hispanic Women's Ministries in the conference. Once again, her experience demonstrates what God can do with those who are totally dedicated to Him. She is truly one of the unsung heroes of the Hispanic work in this division.

Ernest E. and Myrtle A. von Pohle

Dr. and Mrs. von Pohle were an Anglo couple who always supported the Hispanic work in the Arizona Conference. Ernest was born in South Lancaster, Massachusetts in 1902. His parents were missionaries in Bolivia, Perú and Argentina where he grew up. In 1920, as a young literature evangelist, Ernest visited *el juez del pueblo* (the town judge) to interest him in *El Conflicto de los Siglos* (The Great Controversy). *El juez* was so impressed with *The Great Controversy* that not only did he buy one for himself, but he went through the courthouse offices, urging his colleagues and workers to get a copy of this great book. Then he contacted his brother, who was *el padrecito del pueblo* (the Catholic priest of the town), and told him he needed to get this fascinating, apocalyptic book for his library. That day, with the judge's help, Ernest obtained an unbelievable 42 orders for *The Great Controversy*!

When Ernest went to deliver *The Great Controversy* to *el padrecito*, it was late afternoon. Knocking at the side door of the church, Ernest was met by *el padrecito* who came out, looked all around to make sure no one was watching and then had Ernest come in, locking the door behind them. It was dark inside and Ernest began to fear that he might not ever see the light of day again. *El padrecito* led him to another door, unlocked it, went in and then locked the door behind them as he had done with the first door. This happened once again when they reached a room in the back. There *el padrecito* opened the offering box, counted out the money for the book and paid young Ernest. Ernest was led out in the same manner as he had come in and when he was out on the street again he breathed a sigh of relief that his mission had been accomplished. The seed was sown and only God knows how many will trace their conversion and acceptance of Christ and His truth to the humble and sincere work of that literature evangelist.

Dr. von Pohle's Education and Mission Service

Ernest graduated from Washington Missionary College in Takoma Park, Maryland in 1923 with a double major of theology and pre-med. After graduation, he married Myrtle Arkebauer, and they immediately left for the mission field in Guatemala and Mexico. They returned in the early 1930's so Ernest could study medicine and in 1936 he received his

medical degree from the College of Medical Evangelists in Loma Linda, California. After working in Mexico for one more year, they returned to the States, settling in Tempe, Arizona.

In 1942, Dr. and Mrs. von Pohle founded the Tempe Community Hospital, financing it with their own money. Although it was a small hospital with only seven beds, when Dr. von Pohle retired and turned it over to the Arizona Conference in the late 1960's, it had grown to a hospital of 80 beds.

Strong Supporters of Hispanic Work in Arizona

Dr. von Pohle and his wife never lost their love for the Hispanic people. He donated his time and medical skills to help those in need, and gave money to every Hispanic church building project during his lifetime in Arizona. He and his family used to travel to Tucson quite often to worship with the Hispanic members there and when necessary, to give them medical attention, free of charge. Dr. von Pohle passed away in 1978. In 1983, Mrs. Myrtle Pohle wrote the first historical account of the Adventist Hispanic work in Arizona, *The Truth Seekers, Saga of the Southwest*, published by the Pacific Press. She passed away in 1999.

Iglesia de Monte Vista (Mountain View Church)

In 1981 a literature evangelist went to the Phoenix church members and challenged them to send someone to look after several Hispanic families who were attending the Mountain View English-speaking church in the southern part of the city. Rosalina Gardano, Juan García and Max Pasilla responded to that call for help. They, along with the Spanish group, began meeting in a small house behind the church, paying \$25 a week for the rent. As their numbers increased, they made a series of moves. By 1985 they had 60 members, and on April 12, 1986, the group was organized into a church. Their membership then experienced a dramatic growth spurt, and they ended 1987 with 100 members.

In 1990, the pastor of the English Mountain View Church began feeling out the group to see if there was any interest in buying his church. The English congregation was dwindling and could not afford to maintain the building. The Spanish group was very interested in the offer and in June of 1991, they bought the church—the same place their group had started exactly 10 years before! After remodeling the church, they were considering renaming it to reflect the Spanish congregation. “Why not translate the current name?” they thought. They did and it is now the Monte Vista Spanish Church. In 1996, Elder Gilberto Vega became the pastor of the church while continuing to be the Hispanic coordinator of the Arizona Conference.

“The real growth in Arizona,” states Elder Vega, “has been in the last thirty years.” Today there are five churches in Tucson; fourteen in Phoenix; one in Nogales, El Mirage, Yuma, San Luis, and even a group in Sedona—24 congregations, with nearly 3,000 members in Arizona to date.

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA CONFERENCE

California—Largest Concentration of Hispanics

California is the state with the largest concentration of Hispanics—9.5 million according to the 1997 U.S. Census Report, putting it far ahead of second-place Texas which has 5.6 million. Florida and New York are tied for third place with two million Hispanics

each. Illinois comes in fourth with a little over one million.³⁵ Los Angeles-Riverside-Orange County has 5.8 million Hispanics.³⁶ Los Angeles alone has 18 percent of all Hispanic Americans living in America—³⁷ 3.7 million.³⁸ Imagine, a metropolis where one out of every three is a Hispanic. That is L.A.!

For many years “East L.A.” has been *el corazón* (the heart) of the Latino barrios in the Greater Los Angeles area. It is the oldest settlement and concentration of Mexicans. Spanish is still widely spoken there and the majority of businesses are owned by or managed by Latinos.

East Los Angeles gained notoriety in the early 1940’s during the “zoot suit riots.” Bands of U. S. sailors, marines and soldiers would go through the *barrios* looking for young Mexicans wearing “zoot suits” (long, broad-shouldered suit coats and gaberdine pegged pants, a style which dated back to the 1920’s). When the military men found them, they were beaten and many times stripped of their cultural-style clothes. These *latinos* were viewed as criminals by the Anglos and were often arrested by the police even though they were the ones who had been assaulted.³⁹ But in spite of the fact that Mexican-Americans were the target of discrimination and unjust treatment, many patriotically joined the armed services during World War II and fought for the country they loved.

World War II—A Turning Point

World War II became a turning point for many Mexican-Americans and other Hispanics.⁴⁰ Thousands left the crowded, impoverished *barrios* for the first time to join the armed forces. There they found themselves exposed to other young Americans, new ideas, regimentation and consequently developed a desire to have a piece of the American dream. When they returned from the war, some took advantage of the GI Bill and enrolled in colleges to earn their degrees and become professionals.⁴¹

Mexican-Americans received more Congressional Medals of Honor during World War II than any other minority. A disproportionate number of them fought valiantly on the front lines during the Korean and Vietnam wars, and thousands of names recorded on the wall of the Vietnam War Memorial in Washington, D.C. attest to the love and loyalty they had for their country.⁴²

Beginnings of Adventist Hispanic Work in Southern California

In many ways the Hispanic work in Southern California was the opposite of what it had been in Arizona. In Arizona, the work began in a mountainous, sparsely populated area. In Southern California, the work began in Los Angeles, one of the largest cities of the United States.

In 1924, the Hispanic population in Southern California alone was almost larger than the entire populated state of Arizona (350,000). Thus the Hispanic work developed faster.⁴³ By 1950 the work in Southern California had developed into a well-organized program, perhaps the most advanced in the North American Division. Similar to other regions, Hispanic Adventist work began under the care of former missionaries to Latin America.

Spanish American Church in Los Angeles—Early History

East Los Angeles was also the first location where Hispanic evangelism took place in the Southern California Conference. The church that emerged from that activity in the

early 1900's later became the Spanish American Church. That church was the focal point for much of the Hispanic work in the conference and it planted many new churches over a period of years.

Evangelism for Hispanics in East Los Angeles began in 1905. Church members circulated copies of *El Centinela* among Mexican families living in the area. A church pastor by the name of Blunt followed up with meetings and organized the first Hispanic group in March of 1911 with 13 members.⁴⁴ After the organization of the first Hispanic church in East Los Angeles, Elder Candelario Castillo was called to be the pastor, where he stayed until 1917. Little is known of the history of the church from that time until Frank Westphal became its pastor.

Even though the Hispanic work in the Pacific Union was still in its infancy as early as 1921, the *Pacific Union Recorder* reported that at least four of the conferences in the Pacific Union had "Spanish representatives." Those conferences and representatives were: Central California, C. F. Innis; Southern California, W. B. Miramontes; South-eastern California, R. B. Stauffer; and Arizona, Henry F. Brown.⁴⁵ Besides these men, the *Recorder* states that there were others who devoted their time to work among the Mexicans.

Frank A. Westphal became the pastor of the Spanish American Church in 1922 after returning from a long term of mission service in South America. When Carlos Nicolás, a Spanish-born worker who had also served in Mexico during the Revolution, became the pastor in 1928, Westphal continued his work for the church by soliciting money to build a new church.

By 1929, branch Spanish Sabbath schools, which were outgrowths of the Spanish American church, were meeting in Van Nuys and Glendale.⁴⁶ Elder Nicolás' community outreach was practical and relevant with him and his wife conducting cooking schools, home nursing and general homemaking. He even involved the children in a children's choir. In 1935, Nicolás began experimenting with radio programs on Station KTM to reach the mass of Hispanics in the city. Taking the format of the English *Voice of Prophecy*, he adapted it to the Hispanic population and made it work, even before Braulio Pérez Marcio produced *La Voz de la Esperanza*.

Henry Baasch

In 1941, after World War II began, Elder Henry Baasch, a strong personality with excellent background in church administration in the Inter-American Division, pastored the Spanish American Church. Although German-born, he had an impeccable command of Spanish.

Elder Baasch also had a love for music and wrote many hymns. Some later appeared in the Spanish hymnal, *Himnario Adventista*, and in *Melodías de Victoria*: "Haz Oído El Mensaje," and "Luz Celestial." His son, David Baasch, who later became a General Conference Associate Secretary, was also a composer and wrote: "Abre tu Corazón," "Yo Quiero Siempre Brillar," "Llena mi Ser," "Con Jesús," and "Enciende la Fogata." Henry Baasch also became involved in radio ministry. He produced a half-hour Spanish radio program every Saturday night on station KGER in Los Angeles, which was heard as far as Seattle, Washington to the north, deep into Mexico to the south and east to Arizona.⁴⁷

South American Influence

Before the 1960's, leadership of the Hispanic work in the Southern and Southeastern California Conferences had been provided almost exclusively by returned Anglo missionaries, such as Frank Westphal, J. T. Thompson, Homer Casebeer, Henry Baasch and Emery Lorntz. These pioneers had a strong affinity for Hispanics and did an excellent job of establishing and fostering the Hispanic work.

Then in the early 1960's, leadership came into the hands of South-American-born Hispanics, particularly Argentinians. These men influenced and led out in the Hispanic work mainly in Southern California for almost 20 years. This was a period of considerable growth, largely through the evangelistic efforts of pastors who were trained in the methods of Walter Schubert.

Samuel Weiss

Henry Baasch was followed by Samuel Weiss as pastor of the Spanish American Church. Weiss was an experienced evangelist from South America who spent approximately 20 years of his ministry in the Pacific Union territory. This remarkable man, who gave more than 41 years of service to the church, was born December 1, 1909 in Crespo, Province of Entre Ríos, Argentina. A graduate of Colegio Adventista del Plata, he began his ministry in 1931 in Perú as a missionary. Elder Weiss studied at Pacific Union College on his furlough from Perú, graduating in 1938. In 1945 after 14 years of service in Perú, he was called to work in Puerto Rico, the Dominican Republic, and Costa Rica.



Elder Samuel Weiss

Weiss Pastors the Spanish American Church

In January of 1953, Weiss was called from the Inter-American Division to pastor the Spanish American Church in Los Angeles, where he worked for the next 14 years. During his tenure, new churches were spawned. Among them were Ditman and Lincoln Heights. Elder Weiss had a strong personality, but no one denies that he was a dedicated, tireless worker. He had a high standard for the interns who trained under him. Some of those interns were Fred Hernández, Fred Díaz, Lucas Díaz, Johnny and Chester Robinson, and Eloy Martínez, who commented that Elder Weiss was "the best thing that ever happened to my ministry."

Under Elder Weiss' leadership, **the first union Hispanic young people's campmeeting was conducted at Cedar Falls in 1954**, a campmeeting that continued every year thereafter on Labor Day weekend. He also began having separate Spanish campmeetings.

Elder Weiss coordinated the 1956 three-month, city-wide evangelistic crusade for Evangelist Walter Schubert simultaneously in three separate locations of the Greater Los Angeles area: 1) Los Angeles in "La Casa del Mejicano" auditorium 2) a suburb of Temple City in the new Spanish church 3) and the other in Pacoima near San Fernando. During the



Schubert evangelistic team in Los Angeles, 1956.

day, Elder Walter Schubert conducted a school of evangelism for 25 Hispanic workers, not only from Southern California, but from other conferences in the Pacific Union. That crusade resulted in more than 100 immediate baptisms, with 75 others preparing for baptism.⁴⁸

Other city-wide efforts were held in Los Angeles during this period by Evangelist Salim Japas in 1963 and Braulio Pérez Marcio, director and speaker of *La Voz* in 1967.

Under Weiss' leadership, the Spanish American church reached 800 members. The affluence of the Hispanic Adventist community began showing up, not only in the amounts of tithes and offerings, but in the quality of the church buildings themselves—what the congregations could afford.

Weiss Serves on the Union Committee

In 1958, Elder Weiss was asked to serve on the Union executive committee as a representative of the Hispanic work in the Union. He was also asked to be the union Hispanic evangelist, while still pastoring the Spanish American Church.

Emergence of Native-born Leadership

In spite of the growth and progress, this was also a time of adjustment when Mexicans and American-born Hispanics in Southern and Southeastern California began looking to share in the leadership of the work. At the beginning of the Hispanic work, returned Anglo missionaries had provided leadership. Then in the 1950's and 1960's, South Americans took up the leadership torch. Both the Anglos and South Americans had the advantage of having obtained experience in departmental and administrative leadership overseas.

Such opportunities for leadership development had not been made available to American-born Hispanics. This, plus the need for a greater command of the Spanish language, put them at a disadvantage for providing a better service. To remedy the situation, in the

1960's, some began language study in the States or in colleges and universities abroad, while others went to the mission fields of Central or South America to serve the church and also to gain leadership experience and language development.

By the mid 1970's, several American-born Hispanics had returned from mission service not only with leadership experience and an improved command of the Spanish language, but with a broader vision of the Adventist work as well. Among these were: Eloy Martínez, Eliezer Benavides, Elías Gómez, and Manuel Vásquez.

Returned Missionaries

Eloy Martínez spent a total of eleven years (1967-1977) in the mission field: Paraguayan Mission as pastor and youth director, the Central Argentine Conference as departmental director, then in the Inca Union as youth director. Eliezer Benavides spent seven years in the Colombia-Venezuelan Union. Elías Gómez went to Colombia, Brazil and Costa Rica. Manuel Vásquez served for three years in the Ecuadorian Mission as Sabbath School/Personal Ministries and ADRA director.

Eliezer Benavides

Eliezer Benavides was born in 1927 in San Diego, California to Pedro Durán Benavides and Julia Galindo Benavides. At age eleven, Eliezer was baptized in Calexico, California at the close of an evangelistic effort where his mother had assisted Pastor Carlos Robaina as a Bible worker. "At my baptism," said Eliezer, "I made the decision to become a minister of the gospel." He was educated in church schools, served in the armed forces in France and Germany during World War II and in 1950 he married the former Hope Ayala. He entered the ministry in 1951 in the South-eastern California Conference and in 1952 worked as an associate evangelist with his brother-in-law, Carlos Ayala, in Barstow, California.



Elder Eliezer Benavides

In 1956 Benavides was ordained to the gospel ministry and the following year went to Guadalajara, Mexico for a 13-week advanced course in Spanish. In 1958, Benavides, who was pastoring the Calexico Church, was asked to serve on the newly-formed Pacific Union Human Relations Committee. At that time he spoke to the union president, R. R. Bietz, about the need for a Union Spanish Coordinating Committee. The concern and proposal were taken to the Union Executive Committee, which voted to set up a Spanish Coordinating Committee for the union, chaired by Elder Weiss and Benavides as secretary. Two of the original members of the committee were Braulio Pérez Marcio and Merardo León.

In 1967 Elder Benavides left for the mission field to pastor the largest church in the Inter-American Division, which was in Colombia. In 1970, he was asked to be the evangelist and ministerial secretary for the Colombia-Venezuela Union.

The Hispanic work in Southern and Southeastern California was now large enough

that it merited leadership on the conference level. Hispanics like Augustine Cortez, who was pastoring in the Southeastern California Conference, began addressing the issue in various committees, calling for Hispanic coordinators. His arguments began to be heard by the conference administrators.

Other Hispanic workers who were able to persuade conference committee members to establish Hispanic coordinators in the local conferences of the union were Carlos Ayala and Arnold Trujillo.



Elder Manuel Nestares and wife Aurora

Manuel Nestares

This resulted in Elder Manuel Nestares becoming **the first Hispanic Coordinator of the Southeastern California Conference** in 1971. Prior to this, Nestares had served as the district pastor of the Imperial Valley Spanish churches, chaplain at Calexico Mission, and for 11 years as the associate speaker for *La Voz de la Esperanza* and director of their Bible school.⁴⁹

Nestares was born in Bahia Blanca, Argentina on December 16, 1919, of immigrant parents. He studied at Colegio Adventista del Plata and graduated with a theology degree in 1942. In 1954, he and his family moved to Glendale, California when he received an invitation to work with *La Voz*. After he left the conference coordinatorship in 1975, he returned to pastoring and in 1984 was asked to be the interim director for the school he loved so

much—Calexico Mission School. In 1988, he retired from active service but continued doing volunteer work at the Loma Linda Medical Center. Nestares died on November 4, 1992, in the very month that he completed 50 years of denominational work.

In 1975, Daniel Riffel succeeded Nestares as coordinator of Hispanic ministries.⁵⁰ Two years later Augustine Cortez became the coordinator and that year there were 395 Hispanic baptisms in the Southeastern California Conference, raising the membership to 2,900,⁵¹ a figure that amounted to nine percent of the total conference membership.

Carlos Ayala, Jr. and a New Era for American-born Hispanics

In July of 1973, Carlos Ayala became **the first to fill the new position of Secretary for Spanish Work for the Southern California Conference**. Carlos and his wife, Esther, brought with them twenty-five years of experience in pastoral and educational service in the United States, Chile and Costa Rica.

Ayala's conference position marked the beginning of a new era for Hispanics in the Southern California Conference. Not only did he become the first to occupy this new department for Hispanic ministries, but he was also the first American-born Hispanic leader

in the conference office. At the time he entered his office, the Hispanic membership had exceeded 2,700 in the Southern California Conference.

Carlos Ayala Salazar was born in Las Vegas, New Mexico in 1926. His father was Carlos Inocente Ayala, one of the first students at the Spanish Training School in Phoenix and later a pastor in the Southwest. His mother was Carolina Salazar. Carlos and his sister Marta were baptized at a *Voice of Prophecy* tent meeting in Phoenix, Arizona by H.M.S. Richards, Sr. in 1939 when Carlos was 12 years old. When Carlos passed away in 1975, it was Elder Richards who presided at his graveside service in Forest Lake Memorial Park, Hollywood Hills, California. During Elder Ayala's tenure in the Southern California Conference, the membership reached over 4,000 in 15 churches.⁵²

First Full-time Union Hispanic Coordinator

In September of 1973, the Pacific Union Conference elected California-born Eliezer Benavides as **the first full-time Hispanic coordinator in the Pacific Union**. Elder Samuel Weiss had served as Hispanic coordinator, but only part-time.⁵³ Benavides, after having served seven years in the mission field, returned to California well qualified for this new position—fully bilingual, a master's degree in church leadership from Andrews University, and a keen mind for administration and church policy. He also had a vision for establishing Hispanic coordinators in every conference of the division with established Hispanic work. This would provide the much-needed network within the church structure since Hispanics had no regional conferences. Benavides and Arnold Trujillo (a member of the NAD Executive Committee) lobbied for this concept with the appropriate leadership at the General Conference year-end meetings. In the Pacific Union, Elder Benavides was instrumental in securing a Hispanic coordinator for Central California Conference (Elder Elías Gómez); for Northern California Conference (Brando Saldía); and for Arizona (Manuel Vásquez).

Elder Benavides retired in 1994 with 43 years of service. However, he is still active in the ministry conducting evangelistic campaigns and pastoring churches. He is presently the senior pastor of the 1,050 member Inland Spanish Church in Southeastern California.

After Benavides left the Pacific Union in 1981, Elías Gómez became the Pacific Union Hispanic Coordinator. Gómez served until 1984 when he was asked to head the Institute for Hispanic Ministries at Andrews University. At that time, Manuel Vásquez, who had earlier served as an associate in the department, was voted to give leadership to the Union Hispanic Department. In 1985 he was elected **vice president of the Pacific Union Conference—a first, not only for the union, but for Hispanics as well.**

Antonio Arteaga

In 1976, Mexican-born Antonio Arteaga, pastor of the 800-plus member Spanish-American congregation, replaced the late Carlos Ayala as Secretary of the Spanish Work in the Southern California Conference.⁵⁴ Elder Arteaga began his ministry in Southeastern California after which he spent nine years in Argentina. His educational background includes an M.A. and B.D. from Andrews University, plus a doctorate from Fuller Theological Seminary.⁵⁵ The department he inherited continued to thrive under his leadership. Although two public evangelists contributed much to this growth, Arteaga attributed much of the credit to lay evangelism.⁵⁶

Arteaga is best known for his dry humor and his gift for public evangelism. Of his 38

years of service, 30 were dedicated to evangelism. He has conducted over 80 evangelistic efforts in four world divisions, baptizing thousands. Even though officially retired, he has continued giving seminars and presently pastors a church in the Southeastern California Conference.

Augustine Cortez

In June of 1979, Augustine Cortez was called from his Southeastern California Conference coordinatorship to serve as the Associate Secretary and Spanish Coordinator in the Southern California Conference.⁵⁷ Cortez, a native of California, graduated from La Sierra College with a degree in religion and earned his master's degree at Andrews University in 1975. When he assumed the leadership of the Spanish work in Southern, there were 33 Spanish congregations with more than 6000 members. Elder Cortez is one of those unsung heroes in the development of the Hispanic work in California. As mentioned earlier, he was one of the first to call attention to the need of Hispanics in the local conferences. Cortez retired in 1987 with 37 years of service.

By the late 1970's, the Hispanic work in Southern California appeared to be quite advanced over that in other parts of the division. This was probably a result of the greater numbers of Hispanics in California, Hispanic leadership at conference levels, the urban character of the work, and the fact that money was easier to come by than in other locations where the giving rate was lower.

Spanish American Church

The Spanish American Church was blessed with effective pastors who stayed by for long terms of service, which gave continuity to the program from its early days into the 1970's. Seldom have churches been blessed with a sequence of such distinguished pastors. Frank Westphal had steadily preached that the Anglo membership had an obligation to support the Hispanic work with both its pocketbook and its moral support. Carlos Nicolás had imbued the church with an innovative missionary spirit that made his congregation an active soul-winning agency, and Henry Baasch gave the church an appreciation for an effective and efficient church organization.

Other pastors were: Homer Casebeer, Juan E. Pérez, Samuel Weiss, Antonio Arteaga, Rubén Ruíz, Arnold Trujillo, Ernest Castillo, and Brando Saldía. Presently Elder Abel López is the pastor of the mother church in East Los Angeles with 1500 members.

One *Pacific Union Recorder* article dating from the 1970's mentioned that the Los Angeles church (the Spanish American Church) had spawned thirteen other churches.⁵⁸ This well-led, well-organized and forward-looking church set the tone for Hispanic work in Southern California.

❖ LA IGLESIA DEL MILAGRO—THE MIRACLE CHURCH⁵⁹

The Challenge

In 1978 Elder Arnold Trujillo became the pastor of the Spanish American Church, which at that time was the largest Spanish church in the division with over 1000 members. It was also the second oldest existing Spanish congregation in the division. However, an enormous, seemingly impossible challenge faced Elder Trujillo. The church's

15-year lease on Paulson Hall, where they met, was expiring and the owner, the White Memorial Medical Center in East Los Angeles, had plans to demolish the old building to make room for more parking. Time was running out and the congregation had no place to relocate.

There were no other adequate facilities to rent nearby. The church did own property next to the freeway with frontage on Bridge Street, located about two to three blocks away from their present location. But to build another church facility would have exceeded \$2 million, and there was only \$20,000 in the building fund. So that was totally out of the question. Discouragement was setting in and the members were wondering if God was sending them a message to disband the church and start small congregations. But Elder Trujillo knew that man's limitations are only God's opportunities to demonstrate His ability to provide for His children.

With God, All Things are Possible

One day the idea came to Trujillo's mind, "Why not relocate Paulson Hall?" It was still a good building. But was it possible to move a building three stories tall with 20,000 square feet of room. Trujillo contacted relocation contractors to find out if it was possible and to solicit bids. The answer came back: "We've never done it before, but we believe it can be done. If we do it, this will be a first, a historical event for the city of Angels." With this plan, the church was infused with enthusiasm to make the relocation a reality.

What followed was a series of miracles. The pastor approached the White Memorial administration with the plan not only to remove the building and but also to ask them for the \$60,000 they had planned to spend to have the building demolished. To Elder Trujillo's delight, the hospital agreed not only to donate Paulson Hall and give him the \$60,000, but



Moving Paulson Hall, the Spanish American "Miracle Church", May 20, 1981.



The Spanish American Miracle Church, 1982.

they also donated a four-plex apartment that was also to have been demolished. That apartment was moved along with Paulson Hall and the income it later provided helped offset some of the expenses of the relocation.

A Move That Made History

Paulson Hall was divided into three sections. The first section was moved on May 20, 1981; the second on May 28 and the third on June 4. The day of the first move many East Los Angeles residents and city officials came out to see this spectacular sight of the largest building ever to be moved in the history of Los Angeles. The event was widely covered by the local newspapers and four major television stations. City telephone lines had to be temporarily cut to make way for the crossing of the building through the intersections.

Members of the church led the procession singing hymns, including "Más Allá del Sol." They held cords which were attached to the building and marched alongside it, forming a parade to the new site. Just as Joshua and the children of Israel had crossed the Jordan River carrying their tabernacle and ending 40 years of wandering, so the Spanish-American congregation was relocating its church building, ending years without a permanent church home.⁶⁰

On the day of the inaugural service, April 10, 1982, not only did the church dignitaries come out, but also Mayor Tom Bradley of Los Angeles, Art Snider, Los Angeles city councilman and State Senator Art Torres. President Ronald Reagan sent his highest ranking Hispanic administrator, Antonio Monroig, to personally represent him.

The Southern California Conference donated \$100,000 and also purchased a small temporary facility that enabled the congregation to stay together during the relocation pro-

cess. The total cost of relocating and rebuilding amounted to only one-third of the cost of building a new church and the Spanish American congregation had to borrow only \$300,000.

Over 11,000 volunteer hours were given to the project over a period of 16 months. Everyone pitched in—children, young people and adults. It was truly inspiring.

The Miracle Church

The Spanish American Church witnessed the fact that sometimes God takes seemingly impossible situations and uses them to His honor and glory. In this case, God performed all the miracles necessary to make it possible for those members to worship Him in their own church building. This is why the Spanish American Church from that time forward has been called “The Miracle Church.”

Arnold Trujillo

Arnold Trujillo is a man of faith and great accomplishments. The Miracle Church may never have been part of Hispanic history had he not been their pastor. His ministry to both Anglos and Hispanics is greatly admired.

Trujillo was born in 1943 in Capulin in southern Colorado, about 15 miles west of the Río Grande. The old Hispanic families living along the Río Grande River, specifically in the southern part of Colorado and the northern part of New Mexico, are descendants of the *conquistadores* from Spain. Among those families were some Sephardic Jews from Spain, to whom Trujillo traces his roots.

Although Trujillo was born into a Presbyterian home, he became a Seventh-day Adventist when he was only 10 years old. J. D. Hardt, pastor of the Hayward English Church, in California, baptized him. Trujillo studied one year in India at Spicer Memorial College and graduated from Pacific Union College in 1965. His ministerial experience includes teaching, pastoral ministry, conference administration, project manager for HART (Harvest 90 Adventist Research Taskforce), and Associate Director of the Pacific Union Public Affairs and Religious Liberty Department. In 1999 Elder Trujillo became the 26th president of the Hawaii Conference. He is married to the former Deloris Kinsey.

R. Ernest Castillo

Elder Ernest Castillo became the pastor of the Spanish American Church in 1983 when Elder Trujillo accepted a call to be the Secretary of the Texico Conference. Elder Castillo had been the associate Youth Director in the Southern California Conference. Arnold Trujillo had orchestrated the miracle of moving of Paulson Hall, the Spanish American Church, to its present site. Now Elder Castillo would re-emphasize the mission of the church, in one word—evangelism.

For the next four years, Elder Castillo promoted evangelism, adding more than 100 new members per year. When he accepted the call in 1990 to be the Vice President for Administration in the Pacific Union (a position that Elder Vásquez held until accepting a call to the North American Division), the membership had grown to 1550. In June of 1991, Elder Castillo was asked to be the executive secretary of the Pacific Union, making him **the first Hispanic union secretary in the North American Division**. Although Castillo serves as an administrator, he has not lost his love for evangelism. Every year he conducts at least one evangelistic crusade.

Castillo, a third-generation Adventist, was born in 1946 in Monte Vista, Colorado. His grandfather, Elder José Castillo, was one of the first students to attend the Spanish American School in Phoenix, Arizona in the 1920's and later pastored in Texas. His father, the late Elder Samuel Castillo, and mother Felicitas, gave 43 years of service in the Spanish work.

Castillo graduated from Pacific Union College and earned his Master of Divinity degree from Andrews University. He is married to the former Sara Rodríguez



Andy and Bobbie Hoyos

Andy Hoyos and a Need for Bilingual Ministry

One of the young men that Elder Samuel Weiss baptized early in his ministry at the Spanish American Church was Andy Hoyos, who was only 10 at the time. A third-generation member of the Spanish American Church, his grandmother and matriarch of the family, Mariana Félix Hoyos, was one of the early members of the church on 1st and Gless St. Andy's parents, Miguel Félix Hoyos and Aureola Flores Hoyos, were original members of the Spanish American Church constructed in 1930 on Michigan and Boyle Streets.

In the 1960's, realizing a need for English services for the young people, Andy Hoyos and others organized a service in the basement of the church. In the summer of 1971, when Andy and his friend, Rudy Hernández, came home from Pacific Union College to the Spanish American Church, they discovered that all the English-speaking youth had left. It seemed no one had wanted to minister to their needs in English. Andy and Rudy tried in vain to gain support from the church leadership to start up another



Mariana Félix Hoyos, 1930.

service. But they were not going to give up so easily.

It wasn't until the mid 1970's with new leadership in the church that they were allowed to hold English services again in the basement during the regular Spanish services, but only on a trial basis. This arrangement, however, was short-lived. Andy and Rudy then sought support from leaders like Hispanic Coordinator Carlos Ayala and Elder Benavides. Having been born in the U.S., both Ayala and Benavides fully understood and supported the need for the use of English to spiritually nurture the second and third generation Hispanic youth.

Therefore, in 1975 Carlos Ayala announced plans for a bilingual Spanish church where the services would be largely in English.⁶¹ Tragically, before Ayala could consummate his

plans, he passed away, only slightly more than two years since he had become the secretary of the Spanish Department.⁶²

First Hispanic Bilingual Church in Southern California

However, that same year, the Monterey Park Bilingual Church was initiated by lay leaders like Andy and Rudy, and it became **the first Spanish bilingual church in the Southern California Conference**. In 1976 Sammy Anaya, who is a descendant of the first Hispanic Adventist clan in Arizona, became their first pastor. Today, there are four bilingual churches in Los Angeles: Baldwin Park, Pico Rivera, Lynwood and East Los Angeles. Several other churches have provided some bilingual programs as well, but are not fully bilingual churches. Andy Hoyos is presently a public school teacher and member of the Baldwin Park Bilingual Church.

Ebenezer Chambi, M.D.

One of the best-known Adventist members in Southern California among the city fathers and Spanish churches is Dr. Ebenezer Chambi, director of the Chapel Medical Clinic in South Gate, California. Dr. Chambi was born in the Lake Titicaca Mission Hospital. His father was an Adventist pastor in the Altiplano of Perú and his grandfather was a personal translator for Fernando Stahl in the Lake Titicaca region. Dr. Chambi is a man who is very much involved in community needs and concerns.

In March of 1998, he gained prominence when he led a single-handed protest against a beer company's billboards which appeared in different locations in Los Angeles in both Spanish and English. They depicted beer bottles holding up the Greek Parthenon, with the caption "Pillars of Society." On a Thursday he went to the L.A. Hall of Administration in the civic center to register his complaint. By that evening the Spanish TV channels had gotten wind of it and interviewed him. Later the English channels interviewed him and aired his complaint. By Monday of the next week, the beer company was taking its signs down.

The Northridge Earthquake

On January 17, 1994, the 6.7 Northridge earthquake shook up the city for miles around. Dr. Chambi hurried to the area to see how he could help. The Red Cross was setting up its headquarters in San Fernando, so he went to Canoga Park where he found approximately 2000 disoriented Hispanics wandering around in the park in the wind and rain. Chambi immediately began treating those who needed help.

When the Red Cross finally got to Canoga Park, they asked Dr. Chambi to leave because he didn't have a permit to work there. He left but went straight to the L.A. Department of Health and told them what had happened and of the great need that he found out there. So the L.A. Health Department got the Los Angeles General Hospital to give Dr. Chambi a special permit to work in the tent city in Canoga Park.

Dr. Chambi on CNN Evening News

Later Dr. Chambi appeared on the CNN evening news, the Adventist church came to his aid. The Southern California Conference provided him with the community services van, several doctors from Loma Linda went out to help him; the van ministry directors in

New York City rushed him hundreds of pieces of Spanish literature on faith and courage, which were very well received by the people.

Dr. Chambi helped organize the temporary tent city the way he remembered helping organize Hispanic campmeetings. There were clean-up sessions each morning, and provisions were made for cooking facilities and for dispensing drinking water. He stopped the flow of junk food like hamburgers and potato chips that were being donated. Instead, he requested that the charity agencies bring in more wholesome foods such as fruits and vegetables. He also arranged for the Mexican ladies to be given beans and rice to cook so they could have some of the staple foods they were used to.

Dr. Chambi is a member of the Norwalk Spanish Church and each week gives many hours of free service teaching health and wellness at seminars, health fairs and churches. He is also a member of the Pacific Union chapter of ASI (Adventist-Laymen's Services and Industries).

Hispanic Work Comes of Age

By the 1980's the Hispanic work had come of age in Southern California. Some congregations were approaching a thousand members, while the Spanish American church had 1350 members. There were steady increases in tithe and offerings and for the first time, tithe from the Spanish churches exceeded a million dollars.⁶³

It was also clear that Hispanic ministry in the Southeastern and Southern California Conferences had developed a working model, coordinating the Hispanic work with the local conference structure that was implemented in the other conferences in the union. Today, even the Hawaii Conference has a pastor/Hispanic coordinator.

Many of the English programs had been adapted to reach Hispanics in their various cultures, as well as using techniques from various parts of Latin America. Although the concept of church planting was not unique to the Hispanic community, Hispanic Adventists practiced it with a special enthusiasm and more frequently than their Anglo brethren. And it gave good results. When the Highland Park Spanish Church organized in 1979, it became the thirteenth "daughter" church of the Spanish-American Church in Los Angeles.⁶⁴

Velino A. Salazar

Elder Velino Salazar became the Hispanic coordinator for the Southern California Conference in 1996. Originally from Mexico, he graduated in 1977 from the University of Montemorelos with a Bachelor's degree in theology and in 1981 completed his Master's of Theology degree from Andrews University. Elder Salazar's predecessor, Miguel Cerna, emphasized the training of thousands of lay persons. During Salazar's leadership, the emphasis is on putting those lay persons to work. This is done through promoting and sponsoring massive evangelistic programs like the TV series *Seminario Profético Global 2000* (*Global Prophetic Seminars—2000*) given by Elder Rubén Arn and the satellite "Net" efforts (*La Red '97, La Red '98, La Red '99* and *Acts 2000*). Thousands of lay persons were involved in following up interests and preparing people for the reaping meetings. Today there are 47 Spanish churches in Los Angeles with 14,500 members and Southern California Hispanic tithe for 1999 was over \$5.3 million.

SOUTHEASTERN CALIFORNIA CONFERENCE

Hispanic work in the Southeastern California Conference differed from that in Southern California in several ways. Much of its territory was rural and bordered Mexico, the motherland for the Hispanic culture that had been a part of that region even before it had become a part of the United States. Much of the Hispanic population in that area lived closer to their Hispanic roots than did the Spanish-speaking population that was farther north. The appeal of Adventism to these people was naturally more hispanized as compared to those in the northern regions of California. Occasionally marimba players from Montemorelos assisted evangelistic efforts in Southeastern, which conveyed a sense of ethnic relations between Mexico and the Hispanic work in California.

Total Hispanic membership was slightly smaller than in Southern California, but again much larger than in Arizona. As in Southern, a large number of workers showed up in Southeastern who came from other Latin American countries.

Temporarily, as an economizing measure during the Great Depression, the Arizona and Southeastern California Conferences joined, with the latter administering both from California from 1932 to 1936. When Arizona resumed its own administration, it had a membership of 1107.⁶⁵

Until the 1950's Adventism localized in three areas in Southeastern California: (1) San Diego (2) Barstow in the Mojave Desert and (3) the Imperial Valley. The first was in a large urban district while the latter two were isolated by large expanses of desert land.

Beginning of Hispanic Work in San Diego

Early accounts of the Hispanic work in Southeastern California state that Pastor R. B. Stauffer worked among the Mexican people in National City, near San Diego, ten miles from the Mexican border and Tijuana.⁶⁶ In September of 1923, Stauffer held an effort in National City and a great interest was awakened among the Mexicans. Fourteen families decided to obey God's truth with a total of 40 children among them, according to a report by Elder Frank Westphal in the *Pacific Union Recorder*.

After the effort, someone suggested they start a church school for the children. The father of one large family asked Elder Stauffer, "Do you now want some more preachers? I can furnish you with four, but you must take them now while they are small, and put them in your school and teach and train them, and they will come out preachers."⁶⁷ It appears that a Sabbath school for the children was started right away but it took a few years before a church school was established.

Elder J. A. Burden, head of the Paradise Valley Sanitarium, was also instrumental in starting the interest among the Mexican people of that city.⁶⁸ The efforts of other Anglo medical missionary outreaches played an important part in the Hispanic work in this conference; first in San Diego, then in Calexico and later in Brawley.⁶⁹ The Medical Missionary Dispensary which opened on National Avenue in San Diego was an outreach clinic for Hispanics sponsored by the Paradise Valley Sanitarium. Nurses and doctors from the hospital would be sent to treat the sick in the Hispanic barrio and offer health classes to the community. Soon, a small Spanish Sabbath school was started. One of the persons who joined the group at that time was Julia Benavides.



Julia Benavides at her home in Carlsbad, California, 1964.

Julia Benavides

Julia Galindo was born February 16, 1895 in Mexico City, Mexico. In 1912 she married Pedro Benavides and four years later, they came to the United States. Mrs. Benavides loved reading her Bible and one day came across the ten commandments, where, for the first time, she read the commandment about not bowing down to idols. Eager to obey the Lord, she destroyed all her statues of saints that she had in her house. Then she learned about the Sabbath and started to keep it. When she read the gospels, she realized she couldn't be a good Catholic anymore, but neither did she want to go to any other church. Finally, however, she and her husband began attending the Nazarene church where they were baptized in 1923. But

questions about the Biblical Sabbath still lingered in her mind.

Julia Joins the Adventist Church

One night Julia had a dream. Two young men came to her house selling books which contained the answers to her questions about the Sabbath. That very week, two Adventist colportors knocked on her door. When she opened it, she immediately recognized them as the two young men in her dream. "I know you. I knew that you would come to my house," she said to the two surprised men. During their visit, they told her that there was a small Spanish congregation which was keeping the seventh-day Sabbath and that they met in the building behind the Medical Missionary Dispensary on National Avenue.

Julia wasted no time in getting acquainted with Elder Carlos Innis, the nurses and a lay pastor, Arthur Nelson, at the clinic who began studying with her. This was a real threat to the Nazarene minister because he knew Julia was respected and well-liked by his members. He had good reason to fear, for when Julia left to join the Adventist group, some of his members left with her. But her husband was opposed to the Adventist message, particularly the Sabbath. Even though that caused problems in their home, Julia was determined to study at the Spanish Training School in Phoenix to become a Bible worker. But the Lord had other plans.

Eliezer—"Help from the Lord"

Julia became ill and the doctor told her that she was pregnant with her second child and needed bed rest. Her only child was 13 at the time, and she could not know that two years later she would lose him to pneumonia. Now, however, she had another dream. There were many people *en el fango* (in the mud) and a little boy came with two anchors on his shoulder. With these anchors he would pull the people out of the muddy place. Julia

believed the dream was of the baby she was carrying, which was Eliezer, and that his purpose in life would be to save people. One of the persons he would pull out of the muddy river (spiritually speaking), even before he was born, would be his own father.

Eliezer's father had been opposed to his mother because of her Adventist beliefs, but she devised a plan whereby she hoped he would change his mind. Since the doctor had told her that she needed complete rest during her pregnancy, she decided to begin memorizing the Bible while she was laid up. She told her husband, "You read better than I do. Will you read the Bible to me so I can memorize it?" At first he was reluctant, but later agreed and they started with the Psalms. In the process of reading the Bible, the Lord touched his heart and he



Eliezer and his parents, Julia and Pedro Benavides, in Selma, California, 1940.

was converted. Julia had accepted the Adventist truth by profession of faith, but when her husband accepted in 1926, she wanted to join him in the baptistry and they were baptized together. Someone else was also baptized with them—their unborn child. When he was born, Julia named him Eliezer, which means "help from the Lord." Julia felt that this child had helped them turn their lives around. She instilled in his young mind that he had come into this world with a purpose. She was a great inspiration to Eliezer, and it was through her that he became enamored with the Lord's work.

Julia was a gifted lady. Although never formally trained, she was like a concordance when it came to finding texts in the Bible. She was well-grounded in the Adventist doctrines and became one of the first Hispanic Bible workers in Southeastern California in 1930. Although she was not employed by the conference at the time, many of the outstanding evangelists like Carlos Robaina, George Casebeer, Henry Baasch and Joe Espinosa, hired her to work with them. In Calexico, she gave Bible studies to Rosario Merino, Elder Dan Robles' grandmother. Julia gave 44 years of denominational service, twelve of which were as an unpaid volunteer.

San Diego Spanish Church

By 1929 it appears that the Hispanic work in San Diego had dwindled to a very small number. C. F. Innis, pastor of the National City English church in San Diego, who also spoke Spanish, rallied the Mexican members and in a short time, a group of 20 was meeting in the chapel behind the dispensary⁷⁰ in the 1900 block of National Avenue. This group later became the first Spanish church or mother church in the Southeastern California Conference. The *Pacific Union Recorder* mentions two Hispanic Bible workers during this time who worked with Elder Innis: Elia Maldonado and Ester Calderón.⁷¹



Mary Place (center), first teacher at the National Ave. Church School with students, 1935.

The large *sala* (room) behind the clinic where the Hispanics had their church services was divided to create a room for a little eight-grade church school. Some of the students who attended were: Eddie Arregui, Celestino Fernández, Eliezer Benavides and Ruth Méndez (now Ruth Ortiz). Ruth, now a member of the Etta Church, attended that school from the sixth through eighth grades. Benavides obtained his first three years of schooling there. Mary Place was the first school teacher in that little school. Others were Ms. McCumsey and Mr. Kalvin.

Church Moves to Logan Heights

In 1935, the San Diego Spanish church members moved from the clinic to 1861 Logan Avenue where they purchased their first church building, which was the old English North Park Adventist Church. Elder Emery Lorntz, then pastor of the Spanish church, gave leadership in the purchase of the church, which became known as the San Diego Spanish Church in Logan Heights. A church school for the elementary grades was set up in a room behind the sanctuary which, sadly, lasted for only one year. The teacher, Mrs. Carmelita Martínez, became pregnant and could not continue teaching. Since there was no one to replace her, the school closed.

One of the students who attended that year was Margarita Tapia, now Margarita García. Margarita has been a member of the San Diego Spanish Church since she was baptized by Elder Antonio Arteaga in 1947 in the church on Logan Avenue. The church congregation is now located at 4222 Etta St. Margarita raised her children in the church and her faithfulness has been rewarded. Her son, José García, is the pastor of the Escondido Spanish Church in the Southeastern California Conference.

The Arregui Family Conversion

During the Depression years, a widow, Concepción Arregui, and her three teenage sons, Gabriel, Alfonso and Edward, were living in the vicinity of the Spanish church. Someone from the little Adventist group went to their home with a flyer announcing a series of meetings. The subject for the opening night was "The Falling of the Stars." Since Alfonso's grandmother had witnessed that phenomenon, his mother, Concepción, was curious to hear what these people had to say about that event. So they decided to attend that lecture. And they kept on attending. It took several years, but eventually the whole family was baptized.

The oldest son, Gabriel, became a minister, pastoring in the Southeastern California, Northern California, and Texico Conferences and serving as a missionary in Colombia. He gave 43 years of denominational service and presently lives in Sacramento, California.

Alfonso Arregui Keeps His Promise

Alfonso Arregui joined the Navy in 1944 and when he was discharged, he began attending the Spanish church in Logan Heights again. Brother Arthur Nelson studied with him and then baptized him in 1950. Alfonso had told his mother that if he was ever baptized, he was going to do it wholeheartedly. He kept his word and became a very active leader in the Logan Heights Spanish Church. He became the Pathfinder leader, lay activities leader, first elder and gave many Bible studies, preparing over 100 people for baptism. Among those he studied with and prepared for baptism was Manuel Vásquez (the author of this book), who was in the U. S. Navy at the time and stationed in San Diego, California. Elder Pablo Díaz baptized Vásquez in 1960 and he became a member of the Logan Heights Church.

Logan Heights Church Moves to Etta Street

By the late 1960's, the 175 members of the Logan Heights Church had outgrown their old facilities. The neighborhood had deteriorated and because the new Coronado Bridge had been built only a quarter of a block from the church, the noise from the traffic interfered with the Sabbath services. So under the leadership of Elder Henry Fuss, the church began making plans to relocate. They sold the church and bought a piece of property at 4222 Etta Street where they proceeded to build a new church building.

All the members made financial commitments toward the new church project and Sister Felicita Tirado was no exception. Even though she was retired, she decided to do what she did best—make and sell tamales, giving the profits toward the new church. Every week she would take the San Diego city bus to the Mexican border, crossed over into Tijuana where she bought all the ingredients for the tamales, and then travel back home with her heavy load. Early every Sunday morning, she would make hundreds of tamales, sometimes assisted by Inez Tapia, mother of Margarita Tapia García. Late in the afternoon, members and non-members alike would come to buy her fresh, home-made tamales, declaring they were “the best in town!” And they were only 50 cents apiece. When the church gathered the money for the down payment on the church, Sister Felicita gave them \$12,000 from her project—which represented the making and selling of over 24,000 tamales! Sister Felicita was well loved in her church. She passed away in 1975.

At this writing, the Etta San Diego Spanish Church has 687 members.

Pastors of the San Diego/Logan Heights/Etta Church

The pastors of the San Diego Spanish Church were: Carlos Innis, George Casebeer, Harold Brown, Antonio Fernández, Emery Lorntz, Antonio Arteaga, Eduardo Pérez, Herminio Vences, Francis Games, Pablo Díaz, Manuel López, Henry Fuss, Manuel Nestares, Frank López, Manuel Cabral, Ralph Martínez and Yohalmo Saravia.

Escondido

In the fall of 1946, Elder Juan Pérez of the San Diego Spanish Church on Logan Avenue started a Branch Sabbath school in Escondido. There were around 30 people at-

tending, most of which were children from that area and from San Pasqual.⁷² Less than two years later in 1948, following evangelistic campaigns by Elders J. E. Pérez and Antonio Arteaga, this group became an organized church with 18 charter members.⁷³ Arteaga continued on as pastor of the San Diego congregation while plans were launched for a new church building in Escondido.⁷⁴ Today the 198-member Escondido Church is pastored by Elder José García, son of Margarita García.

Barstow

Also very striking is the story of beginnings in Barstow. A young lady from the English church with a limited knowledge of Spanish encouraged a number of Mexican people

to enroll in the Spanish Bible correspondence course. When there was enough interest aroused, the Missionary Volunteer Society decided to sponsor a Spanish-speaking evangelistic effort. Elder J. F. Games was contacted and in January of 1947 he held some meetings there. A prominent member of a Sunday-keeping Mexican church attended the meetings and afterwards approached Games, requesting that he come back and establish a Mexican Adventist church in Barstow. "My people are hungry for practical religion," he told Games and predicted that if Games would preach Adventism in Barstow, the entire Sunday-keeping congregation would follow him.

Games agreed to conduct three evening meetings in a small meeting place.

The third night, a Sunday evening, the pastor of the Sunday-keeping church had to cancel his service because his entire congregation opted to attend Games' meeting.⁷⁵ Two and a half years later, in April of 1949, Pastor Herminio Vences began his internship with Elder J. F. Games. Elders Vences, Games and Pablo Díaz helped build a new church building in Barstow.

The Barstow English church, and its pastor, Elder Royer, also helped with the construction and funding of the new Spanish church.⁷⁶ On August 27, 1949, the new church was inaugurated and in 1950 Carlos Ayala became the pastor. The following year, Elder Benavides began his internship with Ayala, and remained in the Barstow church until 1954.

Barstow Church Invests in Water System

During these developing years (1950 to 1970), probably no case of witnessing in Southeastern California was more eye-catching than the experience the Barstow church reported. It bore a striking resemblance to the projects of ADRA (Adventist Development and Relief Agency) during the 1980's and onward. Under the leadership of Joseph Pierce, pastor of the Barstow Spanish Church, the small congregation purchased land in a developing part of the city. This was with a full understanding that they would have to spend at



First Barstow Spanish Church, 1950.

least \$1000 to install their own water line because municipal funds had not been allocated for utilities in this zone. But this was no problem since Elder Pierce had engineering experience. Pierce devised a plan where the community homeowners and the church could mutually benefit from a joint effort to secure water. The church voted to delay its building program and invest their money in a water system that would service the entire community. Each homeowner would pay \$100 for the hookup. Embarrassed city officials agreed to allow the church to put the plan into effect, and within the year (1955) a grateful community returned several thousand dollars to the church for access to the water supply system. The church gained the gratitude of 40 to 60 homeowners as well as the respect of an entire city. Property values had increased an estimated \$100,000.⁷⁷ Today, the Barstow church is a bilingual church with 68 members. The nearby Victorville Spanish church has 97 members.

JUAN FRANCISCO GAMES

Juan Francisco Gómez was born June 16, 1907 in the Dominican Republic. A literature evangelist sold his parents the book Patriarchs and Prophets after which they began attending a small Adventist church. Gómez was baptized in 1918 by Elder William Steele



and later came to the United States to study at Washington Missionary College (later Columbia Union College) and Broadview College in Illinois where he met and married Arlene Brown. He later changed his name to John Francis Games. He built several church buildings during his ministry, losing an eye in an accident when he fell off the roof of the Colton Church in 1948. In 1968, Meniere's disease struck, forcing his retirement a year later. He served as a pastor for a total of 36 years in Illinois, Arizona and California, and is remembered as a genuine Christian pastor with a smile on his face and one who loved everyone. He passed away in 1992.

Calexico

Perhaps the most unique case of Hispanic ministry in Southeastern California occurred in Calexico. Long before the language school movement hit Adventists in Asia, the notion of using English language study as a means of reaching people was used by the Calexico Mission School to help reach across the border into Mexico.

After visiting this community in 1931, H. D. Casebeer reported an interest in Advent-

ism on both sides of the national border, but the small group had no place to meet except in the home of Wilbur Ferguson and his wife, who were the workers assigned to that location. Two physicians contributed as they could from their contacts at Calexico Hospital and their private practice.⁷⁸ From these beginnings came a Mexican church which Carlos A. Robaina declared in 1934 was financially self-supporting. During the preceding two years, members had distributed 16,000 Spanish tracts, resulting in 11 baptisms in the first 10 months of 1934.⁷⁹

Robaina had a special burden for Mexicali, located immediately across the national frontier in Baja California, but was also sensitive to the fact that Mexican law forbade open evangelism. However, there was a practically unhindered traffic flow across the border which allowed Mexicans into Calexico. Once within the United States, outreach programs could legitimately touch them. In 1935 a radio station manager in Mexicali offered Robaina a weekly spot to present educational topics, which provided an opportunity to lecture about social conditions, child training, home values and temperance. Robaina hoped this would open doors when associated with the literature distribution program his members were conducting.⁸⁰

A year and a half later Robaina held an evangelistic series in Calexico, with Julia Benavides as his Bible Instructor, and traced eight baptisms to the radio program. Later Dr. T. E. Bartholomew donated an empty Studebaker showroom to be used as a chapel and soon 45 were meeting regularly.

Calexico Mission School⁸¹

The Calexico Mission School (CMS) is one of two mission schools in the North American Division. The other is Holbrook Indian School in Holbrook, Arizona. As the Adventist Spanish work grew from its early beginnings in Arizona, it was natural for the towns along the Mexican border to respond to the Third Angel's Message as colportors and evangelists entered the border towns and pioneered the work. The comparative ease of crossing the international border further aided in the development of both Calexico and Mexicali, not only commercially, but for the various churches.

In the late 1930's, a church school was begun in Calexico, supported by Dr. and Mrs. Bartholomew, an Adventist physician and his wife, who dedicated over twenty years to the work among the needy of Calexico and Mexicali. In his last years at Calexico, Dr. Bartholomew served as mayor of the city and was greatly loved by the citizens of that area. In his medical practice, he had delivered over 2,000 babies there before moving to Tulare, California in the early 1960's.

It was during the late 1930's that Pastor Carlos Robaina carried on personal evangelistic work on both sides of the border, and a church of about 40 members was raised up in Calexico. The new members met in rented quarters, more than likely the same place where the little church school was carried on. The teacher, María Moreno, served as principal and teacher, aided by Gabriel Arregui, a ministerial intern who taught classes and served as pastor of the church.

Early Growth and Expansion

In 1940 it became clear that the work in this area had potential for future growth, and it was decided to take advantage of the need for a larger and more adequate school. John

Ewing was called to teach and lead out as principal. María Moreno left to labor in the San Fernando Valley.

Always ready and willing to help in any way, Dr. Bartholomew purchased a vacant automobile showroom on Second Street to be used as a school, and for a time classes were held there under very difficult circumstances. It was decided to purchase the property across the street, and the showroom building was physically moved to that lot and onto a cement foundation. The building was divided into two main sections with a wide hallway between. One section was made into a chapel and church; the other was divided into two large classrooms, an office and a library.

As the new school opened its doors, John Ewing was the principal and teacher. Gabriel Arregui was the pastor and teacher, and Mabel Emley was the elementary teacher. Her classes were held in one of the three small buildings at the rear of the property. These small buildings were later renovated and used not only for the primary grades but also for a cafeteria and a typing classroom.

It was John Ewing's vision that generated the concept of teaching English to foreign and local Hispanic students. That has been the underlying basis for the rapid growth and increasing influence of the school. By 1944, 85 students had been enrolled. While offering academic courses to both Anglos and Hispanics, the school doubled as a language institute for many years. The *Pacific Union Recorder* reported that the faculty offered English classes three times a week for 50 professionals in Mexicali.⁸²

Earl and Hazel Meyer

In 1945 Ewing left the Mission School to serve as president of the Adventist college in Montemorelos. Earl and Hazel Meyer, who had come the year before as teachers, replaced him. Earl was principal-teacher and Hazel was the bookkeeper-treasurer and taught typing. Gabriel Arregui was the pastor. The following year Meyer reported that the radio station in Mexicali announced the opening of the mission school as an opportunity for Mexicans to cross the border to attend either the day classes or the night classes. In either case, it afforded a chance to learn English. That year enrollment reached 130, the majority of which were from non-Adventist homes. Bible classes were part of the study. Carlos Ayala, who had just graduated from Pacific Union College, joined the staff, replacing Pastor Arregui.

Although there were always students from Adventist homes, at least 80 percent came from non-Adventist homes, largely from across the border in Mexicali. Some of the Adventist families of Mexicali had been members of the church for many years and were instrumental in keeping the interest of the church alive.

Calexico Becomes a Mission School

The idea of a "mission" school was viewed by the Southeastern California Conference as a worthwhile missionary endeavor, and around 1946 the Missionary Volunteer Department of Southeastern California Conference took on the responsibility of underwriting the financial support of the school. A small tuition fee was charged, but much more was needed to carry on successfully. Dr. T. E. Bartholomew, Dr. Henry Forcher, Mr. and Mrs. Curt Effler, and Dr. Karl Korthur (all local professional and business people)

also generously supported the school and church during these formative years.

During the spring of 1946, 40 people enrolled in the special Bible classes, four of whom were baptized.⁸³ On December 30, 1950 Thomas Requénez baptized 17 as a climax to 12 weeks of meetings in Imperial Valley and Mexicali in which the teachers assisted. A later effort brought three more baptisms.⁸⁴ The impact of this mission school was considerable.

School Curriculum

Progress at the school was satisfactory, and it was sensed that the Lord was leading. Classes were divided as follows: Primary—grades one through four; and intermediate—five through eight. Special English Class, which Arthur Dalglish had initiated and which was the largest class in the school, was for those who came to learn English. It usually exceeded 70 students. Earl Meyer taught this class in addition to his responsibilities of being the principal. Grades 9 and 10 were referred to as the “academy.” Students in those grades had either graduated from the 8th grade, or were those who made the best progress in the Special English Class.

Students were required to measure up to the scholastic standards of any Seventh-day Adventist academy, and were given a certificate upon completion of the course, indicating they had successfully finished the tenth grade. Many of those graduates by this time had accepted the Adventist message and were interested in further study in an Adventist academy. San Pasqual and Newbury Park Academies were their usual preferences.

Enrollment Reaches All-time High

In Earl Meyer’s Biennial Report for the school years 1952-53 and 1953-54, he stated that Calexico’s enrollment had reached an all-time high of 180 students. All classes were filled to capacity and over 75 students had to be turned away. Meyer recalls that although most of the students were non-Adventists, one of the activities that the entire school engaged in was Ingathering. The students would go out two by two canvassing the homes in Calexico, practicing their English.

The Meyers had served 14 years in Calexico (1944-58) when Harley Boehm took over the principalship of the school. In his administration he led the school in a major move to a new campus a few blocks away, and a much enlarged faculty was now functioning with the addition of a full-time pastor, Eliezer Benavides, who had been pastor at the Brawley Spanish Church.

Some of the Faculty Members

Some of the faculty who served at the school were: María Moreno, teacher-principal; Carlos Robaina, pastor; Gabriel Arregui, teacher-pastor; Martha Ayala Castillo, teacher; Carlos Ayala, pastor; Earl Meyer, principal; Harley Boehm, principal; Harvey Miller, special English teacher; Eliezer Benavides, pastor; Sally Torres, teacher; Samuel Torres, treasurer; Herman Bauman, principal; Rafael Barros, treasurer and bookkeeper; Ruth Barros, special English instructor; Hildebrando Saldía, Bible teacher; Zita Robinson, elementary teacher; Ernest Silva, eighth-grade teacher; Dolores Silva, home economics teacher; Manuel Nestares, principal; Joshua Rosado, principal.

Distinguished Students

Some of the students who have distinguished themselves are: Juan Cortez, M.D., head of the Health Department, Mexicali; Estella Cortez, principal-teacher, Mexicali church school; Raúl Hayasaka, business, Sacramento, California; Robert Dale, who attained the highest position in the Adventist work of any of the graduates, served as secretary and vice president of the North American Division; José Hayasaka, pastor, principal liaison official of the Mexican Union—Mexico City; Daniel Robles, vice-president, Southern California Conference.

Presently at Calexico

The school has now grown to a full K-12 day academy and continues to be a positive influence in Calexico and Mexicali. At present they have 400 students and 13 teachers. Ninety-five percent of the students cross the border each day to attend school, and many students receive their entire education at Calexico Mission School. Ninety-eight percent of the student body are non-Adventists, so it continues to be a great missionary opportunity.

CMS has done well in establishing a good name for the church because it reaches out to touch people's lives in a very personal manner. It is a true missionary venture. Only a few Anglo Adventists in North America realize the impact this school has had on northern Mexico and Baja California.

Daniel C. Robles

Elder Dan Robles is one of Calexico's celebrated students. Elder Robles was born in El Centro, California in 1932 and is a third-generation Adventist. He attended Calexico Mission School in the early 1940's, completing the first nine grades before continuing at Sandia View Academy in Corrales, New Mexico. He graduated in 1952. He later studied at La Sierra College, Columbia Union College and finished his university training at San Francisco State College with a B. A. degree in Education and Social Services. His experience includes being a pastor, Hispanic coordinator, community services director and administrator. Robles has served the church for 39 years and is currently the vice president of the Southern California Conference.

Santa Ana

The earliest historical accounts of the Santa Ana Spanish Church are that in 1936 Pastor Antonio Fernández had a congregation of 28 members and that Lupita Villalobos was the first colporteur, selling books and 100 *Centinelas* each month, in Orange County.⁸⁵ But like so many other churches, it took several years and lots of help to finally get the church established.

Mrs. E. R. Johnson, wife of one of the Anglo ministers reported doing Hispanic community service in Redlands, Colton and Santa Ana. In 1939 she and her husband traveled regularly from Loma Linda to Santa Ana where they helped support the struggling Spanish church. Then the small group fell on hard times. When George Casebeer visited the community in 1946, he found only four ladies who were trying to keep the church alive. Casebeer began giving attention to the group, promoting *El Centinela* as a means of outreach and encouraging visitors to attend.⁸⁶ The church survived and in the summer of

1950, Pablo Díaz, a student from La Sierra College, held evangelistic meetings which resulted in six new members. This was a great source of encouragement for the small group and soon after they were organized into a company. Díaz became the church's first pastor. No one would have dreamed of it at the time, but Santa Ana would later become one of the largest Spanish churches in the Southeastern California Conference.

In 1954 Eliezer Benavides transferred from Barstow to Santa Ana and immediately saw the possibilities of increasing the membership and even acquiring their own church building. So in 1955, he arranged for an evangelistic effort, with evangelist Antonio Arteaga as the speaker. Julia Benavides joined the effort along with Carlos Bendrell, who was colportoring at the time. Together they visited interests and followed up with Bible studies. That effort proved to be very successful with 43 people baptized.

Now the congregation felt it was in a position to buy its very own church building. A Congregationalist church with a capacity of 250, was purchased for \$23,000 on the Corner of Shelton and Third Street and the members rejoiced in worshiping in their own church, a first in their history.

Following Elder Benavides, there were several pastors who contributed to the church growth: Francisco López, Herminio Vences, Merardo León, Manuel López, Manuel Nestares, Carlos Bendrell, and Daniel Fernández.

By 1982, when Juan Rivera became the pastor, the Santa Ana Church had grown to a very prominent church of 800 members. This large number of people could not fit into the sanctuary on Sabbath, even when divided into two services. Of necessity, they began spawning satellite churches, the first of which was Anaheim Spanish. To date they have 10 such daughter churches. Anaheim has now spawned a church of its own, La Habra Spanish.

Presently, Leslie Aragón is the district pastor and the Santa Ana membership alone is over 1200. The other two churches in the district are Santa Ana Edinger with 200 members and San Juan Capistrano with 80 members.

La Sierra Spanish Church

In 1960, the members of the Corona and Riverside Spanish Churches joined to form the La Sierra Church. At first they met in Corona, then they rented a part of the La Sierra University Church. Later they rented other churches in the area. Elder Merardo León pastored the church at that time with Valerino Vázquez as his associate. In 1970, the first phase of the building project was initiated with the construction of the gymnasium. The gym served the triple purpose of being the interim church sanctuary, an evangelistic center seating 1200 people, and a youth recreational center, which was equipped with two official size basketball courts.

Twelve years later, in 1982, under the leadership of Elder Rubén Rodríguez, the second phase was realized. The Mission Church Builders were contracted to build the 800-seat church building, and when it was finished, it was one the most elegant Spanish churches in the conference. The church membership was only 500 at the time. Today, according to Pastor Alberto Ingleton, the La Sierra Church has 1334 members and on many Sabbaths there is standing room only.

In 1998, the La Sierra Church launched a satellite church in the city of Corona. Pastor Antonio Arteaga is in charge of the Corona group of 120 people, who are officially members of the La Sierra Church.

❖ **HISPANIC WORK IN OTHER SOUTHEASTERN AREAS**

Redlands/San Bernardino

In 1932 F. H. Westphal, whose 74 years did not stop his desire to continue preaching among Hispanic people, joined George Casebeer in a two-week campaign in the Colton-Riverside-Redlands-San Bernardino area. Nineteen were baptized.⁸⁷

Three years passed before evangelists gave attention to this part of the conference again. In 1935 E. R. Johnson from Arizona Academy, assisted by C. A. Robaina, pastor of the Mexican church in Calexico, conducted meetings in Redlands. At the same time, Ernest E. von Pohle, a Loma Linda physician, conducted health lectures. There were 100 in attendance each night.⁸⁸ The Redlands company occupied a new church building that the district pastor, J. T. Thompson, was able to complete less than a year before their organization as a church in 1946.⁸⁹

Elder J. F. Games, who also worked with a Spanish group in Colton, expressed the hope that this new church would be a light in the region for Hispanic people. Quickly on the heels of organizing the Redlands church, Games followed up with an evangelistic series. By 1950 Redlands had its own pastor, H. G. Vences. Games remained as pastor of the Colton congregation and built them a new church which he and his members dedicated free of debt on October 14. This new facility was also the church home for believers in San Bernardino.⁹⁰

During the 1950's and 1960's, the established locations of Spanish congregations spread to outlying areas and new churches began springing up. One of these was the San Bernardino church on K Street organized in 1953. This was the fruition of many years of labor extending back to the days of Frank Westphal and the series of meetings in the Colton-Redlands-Riverside area. San Bernardino members regarded the Colton church as theirs as well, but with additional baptisms, the group organized an official congregation in September, 1953, with 19 members.⁹¹

Persistent labors through the remainder of the decade finally produced a church of 43, organized in November, 1960. During this time, Antonio Arteaga, J. F. Games, Eliezer Benavides and Joe Espinosa were prominent Hispanic leaders in this part of the conference. Repeated efforts were held in the nearby Redlands-San Bernardino region as well.⁹² Hispanic campmeetings also became a part of the annual schedule. For years these gatherings took place at La Sierra College, organized by J. F. Games.⁹³

The 1950's and 1960's witnessed an increase among Hispanics in developing new literature distribution programs and improved use of media for evangelistic purposes. The colporteur ranks grew from one to five full-time workers who had sold about \$4000 in literature during the first two and a half months of 1964.

Joe Espinosa, Southeastern California Conference Evangelist

In 1962 Elder Joe Espinosa was called to be the Hispanic evangelist for the Southeastern California Conference, where he worked for the next five years. Joe, being a man of action, wasted no time in forming an evangelistic team consisting of his wife, Dina, as receptionist and program arranger; Elder Eliezer Benavides as singing evangelist and marimba player; Hope Benavides as marimba player; and Julia Benavides and Noehmi Paz as Bible workers. During Elder Espinosa's tenure as conference evangelist, he and his team held meetings in many of the churches in the conference such as Escondido, Carlsbad,



Elder Joe Espinosa (right) and members of his evangelistic team, 1967.

San Diego, San Bernardino, Santa Ana, Colton, Redlands, and Riverside.

One of the most impressive media advances began in March of 1964 when Joe began a television series on a Tijuana, Mexico station, Channel 12, that also reached Spanish-speaking audiences in San Diego. For eight months he conducted this weekly half-hour program that aired every Saturday evening immediately following the televised bullfight from Mexico City. As soon as the matador killed the bull, Espinosa knew that was the signal to stand-by for their program entitled *Así Está Escrito*. Elder Merardo León was the announcer. During the time this TV program aired, Joe's evangelistic team held two efforts simultaneously, one in Tijuana and the other in San Diego. These resulted in 41 baptisms in San Diego and 56 in Tijuana.



Elder Joe Espinosa on television.

Southeastern California Hispanic Coordinators

Elder Manuel Nestares, as mentioned earlier, became the first Hispanic coordinator in 1970 in Southeastern California. Since then, Southeastern has had seven more coordinators: Daniel Riffel, Augustine Cortez, Lucas Díaz, Eradio Alonso, Alvaro Azevedo, Jorge Soria and Mario Pérez, who presently serves as the Vice-President for Hispanic Ministries and Director of the Sabbath School Department for the conference.

Mario Pérez

Elder Mario Pérez was born in San José, California in 1942 and is a second-generation Adventist. At the height of the Vietnam War, he was drafted into the Army, where he served for two years. Upon returning, he studied at San José State University, graduating in 1968 with a B. A. in Education. In 1971, he earned a Master's degree in Education from Stanford University in California and in 1979 he received a Master of Divinity degree from Andrews University. Twenty years later, he received a D.Min. from Fuller Theological Seminary in California. Elder Pérez, whose entire ministry has been in the Southeastern California Conference, has served as a teacher, principal, pastor, departmental director and vice president. Mario is married to the former Martha Bendrell, whose father, Sergio Carlos Bendrell, was a very consecrated and well-loved pastor in the Pacific Union.

For the Hispanic work in the Southeastern California Conference, 1999 was a bonanza year. There were 807 baptisms which increased Hispanic membership to 13,665. For the first time in conference history, tithe passed the \$4 million mark (\$4,285,373) from the 35 Spanish churches.

CENTRAL CALIFORNIA CONFERENCE

Overview

Central California benefitted from the labors of two Anglos, A. J. Stevens and Henry Baasch, who devoted much of their energy to building a strong work in Southern California. As far back as 1918, conference president A. J. Stevens reported holding a meeting for Mexican workers on a ranch near Armona,⁹⁴ between Lemoore and Hanford. In 1937, Henry Baasch settled in the Fresno area after returning from mission service in Inter-America and in 1940 wrote that membership in that community had risen to 32 with prospects of more in the near future. Attendance sometimes exceeded 70. During the campmeeting of 1940, nearly 200 Spanish-speaking members assembled.

In 1938, Bible worker, Julia Benavides, was called to work in the Fresno district. In Cutler, southeast of Fresno, she had 29 persons with whom she was studying the Bible. Baasch's expectations were well placed. By 1941, the Fresno district had grown to 53. In Hanford, a community adjacent to Armona, about a hundred gathered for Sabbath School.⁹⁵

Carlos Nicolás in Central California

After a distinguished career at the Los Angeles church in Southern California, Carlos Nicolás and his wife transferred to Central California where they worked tirelessly to continue the work that Baasch had nurtured along. Mrs. Nicolás became the editor of Henry Baasch's *Buenas Nuevas* newsletter about Hispanic ministry in North America. By the early 1950's there were at least four Spanish churches in Central California: San Francisco, Fresno,

San José, and Santa María. Because of its cosmopolitan character, the San Francisco church changed its name to the San Francisco Latin American Church.

Through the 1960's and onward, other Spanish congregations appeared in Mountain View, Modesto, and Watsonville. One of the drawing cards for Hispanic families in this conference was the Pacific Press, which attracted some highly educated and professional Spanish-speaking workers from all parts of Latin America. Some of them later found their way into other phases of Hispanic work. By 1977 about 1500 Hispanic Adventists held membership in Central California, a total that was considerably less than the two California conferences to the south, but a solid part of the Hispanic work in the Pacific Union.

San José

Thanks to a note that Gertrude S. Smith left inside the San José Spanish Church book, in 1948, we have an account of the beginnings of the San José Church. Apparently Gertrude was the director of the little Spanish Sabbath school at the time. She wrote, "Our Sabbath school was organized on July 24, 1948, with 31 members. There were two classes, five studied their lesson daily. The mission offering was \$6.36. The expense offering was \$5.00. I was elected to be the Director of the Sabbath school. Your servant, G. S. Smith, mother of Irene Jacobs, and a member of the church. Secretary, María Escalante. Children's director, Cora Escalante. Adults, Ester Paredes, (member of the English Mountain View Church). Youth, Trini Maynes, sister of Blas Maynes, member of San José. The location was Recreation Hall S.D.A., North 33rd Street, San José, California."

Dolores Urbina, who knew Gertrude Smith, remembers that she was very dedicated and involved in the church activities. She was the Sabbath school secretary, treasurer, head deaconess, pianist, director of missionary activities, and an excellent teacher. She was a much-loved member of the church and it was only because of her age that she discontinued her activities in the church.

Elder Reymundo Archuleta arrived as pastor in 1948. He continued to nurture the small San José Sabbath school group, along with other groups. Every Sabbath he would have church in San José, a service in Palo Alto and then another one in the evening in San Francisco. On October 1, 1949, the conference organized the San José group into a church with 32 charter members. Elders R. C. Baker, Scott Donalson, and R. R. Archuleta led out. By 1951 there were 56 members and a church building in process of being built.⁹⁶ In 1952, the membership was 75 and the congregation had completed their church with a seating capacity of 250.⁹⁷ In order to realize their dream of filling every seat in the church, they began a program of training the members to give Bible studies. They purchased five new projectors and equipment for giving the Bible studies and at that time the members were involved in giving 10-12 studies a week in San José.

Rosario Pérez

In 1947, Rosario Pérez and her husband Guadalupe Pérez moved with their family from Tucson, Arizona to San José, California. While living in Tucson, Rosario became acquainted with the Adventist church. Now that she was in San José, through the missionary activity of Gertrude Smith and Esther Paredes, she was once again contacted by the Adventists. This time she came under conviction and became a member of the San José English Adventist Church.

In 1948, Rosario's husband abandoned the family, leaving her with the three youngest children: Octavio, Dolores, and Mario. The other five children were already grown. Elder Ray Archuleta studied with her three young children and baptized them.

Rosario loved the church and involved her children in all its activities. She took them to prayer meeting and sent them to summer camp. Rosario, herself, was very involved in church. She was the champion ingatherer and distributed hundreds of *Centinelas*, visited the sick and was a great soulwinner, depending a lot on prayer.

Her faithfulness and dedication was greatly rewarded when Octavio and Mario became Adventist ministers. Today, Octavio (Tabby) is an Associate Director of Wills and Trusts for the Southern California Conference and Mario, with a doctorate, is one of the Vice Presidents for the Southeastern California Conference.⁹⁸ Dolores is a member of the Cutler Spanish Church.

Many years later, on December 11, 1971, the San José Spanish Church had a daughter church organized in Mountain View with 55 charter members, approximately one year after its organization as a branch Sabbath school.⁹⁹

In 1968, Elder S. Carlos Bendrell became the pastor of the San José Spanish Church. Two of his daughters married Rosario Pérez's two youngest sons. Nora married Octavio and Marta married Mario.

Fresno

Little is known of the history of the Fresno church from the early 1920's when Carlos F. Innis helped foster the struggling Spanish company to the time that it was actually established as a church in 1940. What is known is that when Elder Innis left the conference, Elder A. N. Allen, who had been a missionary in Central and South America, took his place.

In 1937 Henry Baasch was employed by the Central California Conference to work with the small company of Hispanic believers in Fresno and the surrounding areas. He also was in charge of helping the German church. In 1938, the conference called Julia Benavides to be Elder Baasch's Hispanic Bible Instructor. The Benavides family moved to Cutler.

For more than a year Julia gave Bible studies and prepared people for Elder Baasch's 1939 evangelistic meetings, which resulted in 15 baptisms, one of which was María Gaspar. Thirty-three years later when Elder Byron Spears held an effort at the Fresno Fairgrounds, María's grandson, Rudy Carrillo, his wife Karen, and his sister Helen were baptized. Rudy is presently the youth director for the Southeastern California Conference.

In 1940, Baasch gathered the Hispanic believers from Parlier (20 miles southeast of Fresno), Cutler and



Elder Henry Baasch and his wife.

Fresno, and after the meetings, was able to establish the Fresno Spanish Church with 45 members. The group first worshiped in the German Adventist church on California and B Streets in Fresno. This became the first Spanish church in Fresno.

Since both congregations worshiped on Saturday, they had to decide how they would share the facilities. They agreed that the Spanish Sabbath school would start at 8 a.m. followed by their worship service from 9:00 to 10:00. Then the German congregation celebrated their Sabbath school from 10:00 to 11:00 and from 11:00 to 12:00 had their worship service. This arrangement continued for several years.



Robert Cortner, front row in suit and tie.

are seeking for truth into touch with fellow beings who know the truth." The passage also states that it is "the plan of Heaven that those who have received light shall impart it to those in darkness."¹⁰⁰ This was the case with the García family.

Interest in Parlier

In 1938 and 1939, Elder Henry Baasch began developing Hispanic interests in Parlier. One of the homes in which he gave Bible studies was Salud García's. She and her family had been contacted the year before by Robert Cortner, a layman from the English Adventist church in Salem. The way in which this member was put in contact with the García family can only be explained as an act of God's providence. The servant of the Lord says that "In His wisdom, the Lord brings those who

Conversion of Augustine Cortez

In 1938 Augustine Cortez, a son of Salud García, was ill and bedridden. "Auggie," as all his friends call him, recalls that his mother was having a hard time with her pregnancy at the time. From his bedroom he could hear her crying out in pain. At the time he wasn't sure what he believed about God. But he raised his eyes toward heaven and said, "If there is a God, heal my mother and give me more light." Two days later, he prayed the same prayer. Without his even realizing it, God was answering his prayer. Within a few days, Auggie improved and Robert Cortner came to his home offering to give the García family Bible studies. The matriarch of the family agreed to take studies and Brother Cortner would come once a week. The study would usually be in Auggie's bedroom, where everyone gathered so that he could participate in the study. When Elder Henry Baasch heard about the García family's interest, he began to visit them as well. In time and with much prayer Auggie recovered from his sickness. Then on May 3, 1941, Elder Baasch baptized him and the other members of his family. From 1944 to 1947 Auggie studied at Pacific Union College, and then dropped out of school. In 1952 he enrolled at La Sierra College, where he graduated in 1953. He began his ministry in 1953 in Arizona and in 1965 Auggie received his Master of Divinity degree from the Seminary at Andrews University.

In 1941 Elder Carlos S. Nicolás replaced Elder Baasch, who was called to the Southern California Conference.

The Rest of the Story

When Auggie's mother died in 1965, Mrs. Cortner was at the funeral and asked Auggie if he would like to know what had prompted her husband, Robert, to go to Parlier to give Auggie's family Bible studies. Of course he was interested. "Well," she said, "a few days before my husband went to Parlier to call on your family, he was sick in bed and on two different nights he saw a bright light at the end of his bed, that spoke to him. It said, 'I want you to go to Parlier. I have people there.' My husband was sure that it was God talking to him." Elder Cortez listened with great interest and discovered that it was at the same time that he was praying for his mother and more light. Brother Cortner didn't know where God had "his people" so he just started knocking on doors, asking people if they would like to study the Bible, until he came to Mrs. García's home and she said, "Yes." As Paul Harvey would say, "And now, you know the rest of the story." Auggie's two sisters, Alicia and Nadine, are still members of the Fresno Spanish Church. Elder Cortez retired in 1989 with 36 years of denominational service and lives with his wife Ruth in Loma Linda, California.



Augustine Cortez, Parlier Grammar School graduation, 1935.

Exeter and Hanford

The Hispanic work in Exeter, California began in 1956 when Dr. David Zinke and his family arrived there from Montemorelos, Mexico, where he had studied medicine. Dr. Zinke immediately set up his medical practice. Because he spoke Spanish, he attracted many of the Hispanics from the surrounding area as his patients. Being a missionary-minded physician, he began inviting Hispanic patients to Bible study meetings in his home, using slides from *La Voz de la Esperanza*. This continued until 1960 when Elder Samuel Castillo, pastor of the Hanford Church, was invited by Dr. Zinke to conduct the studies. The attendance varied from six to as many as 35 interests.

In 1962, Elder Castillo was called to pastor the Fresno group and Frederico (Fred) Díaz became the next pastor of Hanford. In order to continue to follow up the interests in Exeter, he requested a Bible worker. Sister Margarita Lapostol was hired by the Central California Conference and began her work in October of 1962. Elder Díaz held an effort at the Exeter Women's Club Hall where as many as 150 people attended.

But in the spring of 1963, Elder Díaz left and Elder Thomas Requénez became the pastor. He also continued to follow up the interests in Exeter. Elder Requénez realized that they needed someone in the Exeter area to establish the small group. Elder Augustine Sánchez, from the first Adventist family in Sánchez, Arizona, and who was retired and

living in Hanford, answered the call to work in Exeter. Bible workers who helped were Epifania Salinas and Margarita Lapostol.¹⁰¹

In May of 1964, Sabbath school services were started in the Sierra View Junior Academy with 60 attending. Elder Sánchez, his wife Ann and Miss Lapostol continued their visitation program for the members and new interests. Some of the families who helped form this new Exeter company were: Frank Fernández and family from Tulare; the Delayo family from Lindsay, and Brother and Sister Tarango from Porterville. Dorothy Kissiar from the Exeter English Church was the pianist.

Exeter Church Organized

The following year in May of 1965, the Exeter Spanish Church was organized with 39 charter members. Elder Streeter, Secretary-Treasurer of the Central California Conference officiated, was assisted by Elder Thomas Requénez and Elder Augustine Sánchez. After a two-month evangelistic campaign in 1967, 25 new members were added, bringing the total membership to 86.¹⁰²

Exeter-Lindsay Merger

In 1981, the Exeter Spanish Church merged with the Lindsay Spanish Church and under Elder Antonio Romero's pastoral leadership, the Lindsay Spanish Church broke ground for the construction of a new church building at 580 E. Honolulu Street, in Lindsay. The first phase of the building project consisted of the sanctuary with a seating capacity of 300, a fellowship hall, classrooms, office and library. The second phase was a community center, including a full-size gymnasium, a shelter for the homeless and medical and dental clinics.

Hispanic Coordinators for Central California Conference

Daniel Escamilla was born in Scottsbluff, Nebraska. In 1963, he went to Colegio Vocacional y Profesional in Montemorelos, Mexico where he met and later married Nohemí Garza. From 1966-68, Daniel served in the United States Army. Upon his discharge, he attended Union College and Southwestern Adventist College where he graduated in 1971. He received his M.Div. from Andrews University in 1973, and immediately began his ministry as an intern in the Houston Central English Church. The following year he was asked to pastor the McAllen and Mercedes Spanish churches. The Rocky Mountain Conference called the Escamillas to pastor the Denver Spanish Church in 1977. He later pastored the Phoenix Spanish Church in Arizona and the San José Spanish Church in California.

In 1991, Elder Daniel Escamilla became the Hispanic Coordinator for the Central California Conference. During his tenure, he has emphasized small groups ministries, as well as motivation, training and mobilizing of Hispanic youth and adults alike. As a result, there have been 300-400 new members added each year. When Escamilla arrived, there were 4,810 Hispanic members and 23 churches. By 1999, there were 29 churches with 20 pastors and the membership had reached 6,744, a 40 percent increase. Hispanics represent 23 percent of the total constituency of the conference while their annual baptisms consistently reach 35-45 percent of the total conference baptismal report. In 1999, there were 462 baptisms.

Full-time coordinators for the Hispanic work in the Central California Conference:

Elías Gómez, Spanish Evangelism Coordinator (1978-1979); Isaac Lara, Spanish Affairs Coordinator (1980-1983); Juan Rivera, Hispanic Ministries Coordinator (1984-1990); Daniel Escamilla, Hispanic Ministries Director (1991-present).

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA CONFERENCE

Oakland

Adventism among the Hispanic population revolved around two locations in Northern California: the San Francisco Bay area and Pacific Union College. In 1925, H. D. Casebeer wrote of a Spanish-speaking community in West Oakland composed of immigrants from Puerto Rico, Spain, Mexico, and the Philippines. The origins of Adventism among these people can be traced to Rudolfo Limas, a Portuguese sailor, who deserted ship while in Mexico, and shortly after encountered Adventist missionaries. In 1914, he landed in San Francisco, attended English Adventist meetings, and joined the church. This young man held meetings on his own, and soon developed a small company of Hispanics which became the nucleus of a church organized in Oakland in 1925.¹⁰³

F. J. Owen and Henry F. Brown, both with experience among Spanish-speaking people, were early leaders of this first Spanish congregation of 24 members in Northern California. They shared a meeting place with Italian-American Adventists. One year after forming a church, the Spanish members sent 17 students to Golden Gate Academy, traveling daily in a donated bus. Some of them could neither read nor write English, but advanced rapidly in their new language.¹⁰⁴ However, no further mention is ever made about this church after the first two years of its establishment. In 1936 G. W. Casebeer conducted meetings in Oakland with the hope of organizing a church in that city, so apparently the original church did not last.¹⁰⁵

Forty years later, in 1976, Elder Eliezer Benavides, Union Hispanic Coordinator, read on page 403 in the book *Evangelism* a concern that Ellen White had for the Bay cities. She said, "As soon as possible, well-organized efforts should be put forth in different sections of this city (San Francisco), and also in Oakland." He immediately put into action an evangelistic plan to evangelize both cities. He formed an evangelist team with himself as the speaker, Carlos Pidoux, pastor of the Hayward Spanish Church, Erica Valverde as the Bible worker, Javier Elenes, Brando Saldía and Ralph Orduño as interns. Since Oakland belongs to the Northern California Conference and San Francisco is part of the Central California Conference, these two institutions, plus the Pacific Union were solicited for funding. Simultaneous meetings were held in the two cities and at the end of the 11-week effort (March 14-May 30), 25 were baptized in Oakland and 40 in San Francisco. Two years later, on November 4, 1978, the Oakland group was officially organized under the leadership of Elder Fred Hernández. Today the Oakland church has over 250 members.

Weiss Helps Evangelize Northern California

By 1973 Spanish congregations and companies were located in Fairfield, Hayward, Lodi, San Francisco, Stockton, and St. Helena. Both lay and public evangelism were high on the agenda of Northern California, which caused much of this expansion. Samuel Weiss, the long-tenured pastor of the Los Angeles church, held evangelistic efforts in Northern California. One of his effective techniques was to use both the Douay (Catholic) and King

James versions of the Bible in both Spanish and English. Braulio Pérez celebrated the reopening of the Hayward church in 1968 with an evangelistic series. In late 1969 and early 1970, Weiss held meetings in Sacramento and again in Hayward, bringing in 19 new members with 30 more in Bible classes.¹⁰⁶ Still another effort in Hayward in 1976 featured the choir from the Adventist school in Navajoa, Mexico.¹⁰⁷ By the end of 1977, five organized churches with 475 members existed in Northern California.¹⁰⁸

During the 1980's, a new Spanish church organized in Woodland, north of Sacramento, and other congregations built new sanctuaries. If Hispanic ministry in Northern California was slower than its counterparts in Southern and Southeastern California, it was largely because the Spanish-speaking population was considerably smaller. But the decade of the 1980's saw the movement grow large enough to warrant a coordinator.

Spanish Club at Pacific Union College

The Hispanic work made relatively little progress in the 30 years following its beginning in Oakland. Most of the Spanish-speaking activity centered in the language program at Pacific Union College where, from 1930-1950, language students formed a Sabbath school in Irwin Hall that provided an opportunity to practice their newly found skills.

When the group grew, they added a sermon to their morning services and moved to Winning Hall. As they continued to grow in membership, the Spanish Club on campus began visiting the Hispanic community door-to-door to invite them to their Sabbath church meetings.

St. Helena

In 1959 two families joined the group, Félix Rosado and Julio Vélez. The group then moved to St. Helena where Dr. Donald Thomann pastored.¹⁰⁹ Since the English Adventist Church members were building a new church, the Hispanics began renting the old building and later bought it, paying it off in less than five years. This became the only Hispanic church in the area where Ellen White had lived.

Signs of expansion of the Hispanic ministry appeared during the late 1950's. The San Francisco congregation reported its membership growth from 22 to 56 in 1961. Many of these new members originated from different parts of Spanish-speaking America, which prompted a name change to the Latin American Church.¹¹⁰ Meanwhile, in the Oakland suburb of Hayward, the Spanish congregation purchased a church, which they remodeled and dedicated on May 25, 1963.¹¹¹

St. Helena Church Organized

In 1960 the St. Helena Church was organized with 32 charter members with Professor Donald Thomann as their pastor and two PUC students, Daniel Fisher and Osvaldo Pereyra, as his helpers. Mrs. Eva Jiménez was the first person to be baptized in their new church.

Finally the group became large enough to merit a full-time pastor and Gabriel Arregui was called to pastor the church. When the Arreguis were called to the Inter-American Division as missionaries, Chester Westphal, pastor of the English Calistoga Church, became the interim pastor until a new pastor came. Elder Westphal pastored both churches for one year until Elder Virgilio Hernández arrived. During Elder Hernández's pastorate,

the church made plans to build a new church and were raising funds for that project. In 1978, Elder Carlos Pidoux became the new pastor. It was during his pastorate that the new church was built and inaugurated in 1982. Elder Héctor Ramal became the new pastor and under his administration the church was dedicated debt-free in 1988. Presently the church has 160 members and is being pastored by Elder Richard Dena. His district also includes the Napa and Santa Rosa churches. Two of the St. Helena satellite churches are Antioch and Fairfield Spanish churches.

Emán Collins and the Hispanic Work

It has been under the coordinatorship of Emán Collins that the phenomenal growth has taken place in the Northern California Conference Hispanic membership. When Collins became the coordinator in 1987, statistics showed only 700 Hispanic members, six churches, six pastors and barely \$300,000 in tithe. By the end of 1999, membership had grown to 1,980 members, with 15 congregations, eight pastors and an annual tithe of \$1 million. Hispanics represent five percent of Northern's total membership but baptize 20 percent of the conference baptisms.

Elder Collins' emphasis has been on training laity and promotion of small group ministries. Believing that the church loses too many of its newly baptized members, he has also initiated a retreat for all new members baptized during the previous year. These annual retreats are held at Leoni Meadows each March and have been very effective in deepening the Adventist roots of new converts and keeping them in the church.

Elder Collins was born in Argentina, received his bachelor's degree from River Plate College in Argentina in 1969 and married Ruth Mohr. After working for five years as an evangelist in his native country, he received his ordination in 1974 and then came to the Upper Columbia Conference to work as a pastor. In 1987, Collins received a call to pastor in the Northern California Conference, which he accepted, and the following year was asked to become the conference Hispanic Coordinator.

The first Hispanic Coordinator of the conference was George Carambot (1980-82), who was also Wills and Trust Director, followed by Roberto Enriques, who was also the conference Youth Director. Emán Collins is the first full-time Hispanic Coordinator.

NEVADA-UTAH CONFERENCE

Las Vegas

In 1978 Nancy Hibbert from the Las Vegas English Church did an ethnic-graphic study of the Las Vegas city area and discovered that there were 30,000 Spanish-speaking people in their city. This led to the idea of planting a Spanish-speaking church. Anita White, an Hispanic teacher, had moved to Las Vegas to teach in the public schools. Since there was no Spanish-speaking church, she joined the English church, where she met with two other Hispanic families. They formed a Spanish Sabbath school class and soon had 15-20 members attending. Because of their size, they began meeting in the youth chapel each Sabbath. Anita, as the group leader, would give a Spanish translation of the sermon preached by the Anglo pastor the previous week.

Edilda Araba, from Panamá, was baptized on January 27, 1979 and represented the first baptism for the new Spanish congregation.¹¹² In 1979 Pastor Ciro Castillo was called

to foster the group and under his leadership the group had regular Sabbath school, church services and prayer meetings as well as evangelistic meetings. When the pastor was called to the Oklahoma Conference, his father, Pastor Juan Castillo, took over the leadership. It was under his pastorate that the group was formed into a company on May 29, 1982 with 38 members.¹¹³ In the spring of 1985, the company became a church and separated from the English Congregation. When Pastor Castillo retired in 1988, there were 60 members. Elder Raúl Concha, Elder Alejandro Soto, and Elder Angel Rodríguez each pastored the church, which grew to 110 members.

In 1993, a new phase was entered when Pastor Orlando Magaña became both the pastor of the church and Hispanic Coordinator for the Nevada-Utah Conference. That same year the church bought property with the intentions of building a church, but instead remodeled an existing building where they moved in 1995. In 1997 they bought another piece of property where they built a church where over 400 members meet each Sabbath.¹¹⁴

Salt Lake City

In the spring of 1978, a seasoned and experienced pastoral couple, Elder Juan Castillo and his wife, Herminea, and family, moved to Salt Lake City to start Spanish work there. A joint effort of the Union and the Conference had provided a stipend for Castillo to work as part-time pastor and part-time literature evangelist. Elder Castillo began his ministry in Guatemala and worked in Honduras, Costa Rica and El Salvador as a pastor, evangelist, departmental secretary and mission president. For several years he had the distinction of being a "centurion," which meant he had baptized over 100 people during the course of a year.

At first the small group in Salt Lake held a separate Sabbath school class while meeting at the Central Salt Lake City English Church. When their numbers increased, they began meeting in the basement of the Castillo home for their full church services, even enjoying a potluck once a month.¹¹⁵ On April 14, 1979, they were formally organized into a church. Elder José Lombardo pastored the church for seven years and at present, Elder Gustavo Orozoco is the pastor.¹¹⁶

Ogden

The story of beginnings of the Ogden Spanish church demonstrates what God can do if you are willing to be used by him. In 1982, the pastor of the Ogden English Church, Elder Dahl, began studying with five Hispanics in the pastor's class during Sabbath school. He also gave Bible studies to other Hispanics during the week. The interesting note is that this pastor could not speak one word of Spanish, nevertheless he began to baptize one after another Hispanic interests. Gail Coria was the first, followed by Laura Coria. Soon there was a group of 10, all relatives and friends of Gail and Laura. In less than two years, the group was organized into a company.

The group made a request for the conference to provide an ordained pastor for their company. What the conference sent was a young, inexperienced pastor. Unfortunately, he did not last the year and once again the company was without pastoral leadership. By that time, Pastor Dahl had retired, but the group went to him and asked if he would please consider being their pastor. Pastor Dahl accepted the challenge and pastored full-time for the next seven years, with no extra pay. By the time he retired for the second time, the company

had organized into a church with around 65 members. Elder José Lombardo arrived in 1991 and at present Elder Gustavo Orozoco is pastoring the church. For years the members had met in the church basement of the English church, but in 1995, they bought a Jehovah's Witnesses hall which they remodeled into a church building of their own.¹¹⁷

Orlando Magaña, Hispanic Coordinator

Orlando Magaña was born in Belize, a city on the eastern coast of the Yucatán Peninsula in Central America. In 1975, he graduated from the Adventist college in Costa Rica and married Ruth Landaverde that same year. For the next six years he worked in the Inter-American Division territory. In 1982, Elder Magaña came to the States. He worked in the Van Nuys Church in Southern California as an associate pastor with Elder Miguel Cerna for one year and then received a call in the summer of 1983 to work as a pastor in the Illinois Conference. Three years later, the conference asked him to be the evangelist/Hispanic coordinator. In 1993, the Nevada-Utah Conference called him to be the pastor of the Las Vegas church and Hispanic Coordinator for the conference.

When Elder Magaña arrived there, there were 207 Hispanic members in the conference, three churches and two pastors. At the end of 1999, there were 750 members, five churches and three groups with a reported tithe of nearly \$330,000.

HAWAII CONFERENCE

Hawaii has become the last frontier for Hispanic work in the Pacific Union. For decades there have been Hispanics living on the islands, but no Hispanic Adventist work had ever been attempted until the middle of the 1980's. Today there are three small Hispanic groups on two of the islands which Elder Roger Beltrán coordinates. Arnold Trujillo is the conference president.

Oahu¹¹⁸

It all began at the home of Dr. and Mrs. Yamashiro, members of the Kailua Church. The Yamashiros use their hospitality gifts in entertaining young servicemen, both Adventist and non-Adventist, in their home every Friday evening. On one of these occasions, a young Hispanic marine, Jaime Guajardo, was invited. He was so impressed with the Yamashiros and their faith that he accepted Christ and was baptized. After his discharge from the marines, he returned to Kailua with a burden to reach out to Hispanics on the island. With the support of Pastor Rob Lloyd, pastor of the Kailua church, he started a Bible study group for Hispanics in 1994 which met in the Kailua English Church. In 1999, when Jaime left to return to his home in Weslaco, Texas, the group had grown to around 27 people. That same year when the Hawaii Conference called Roger Beltrán to be pastor of the Kanaohe church, the Spanish church from the Kailua group moved there so they could be nurtured.

Hawaii-Hilo¹¹⁹

The Hispanic work on the Big Island revolves around two individuals: Horace Farr and Enrique Martínez. Horace and his wife, natives of Hawaii, began an outreach mission program in Naalehu, 70 miles from Hilo on the south part of the big island in 1989. During their missionary work, they came in contact with a number of Mexican migrant workers who were picking oranges. Among these workers was an Adventist family. Horace began

bringing Sabbath school quarterlies and other literature to them every month and ministering to them in his broken Spanish. He and his wife continued this outreach for four years. During that time, the manager of the orange orchard nearby was so impressed with how well the Adventists worked that he recruited more Mexican Adventists from the mainland to work in his orchards. So the group began to grow.

New Lay Leaders for Hilo

In 1993, Enrique and Sara Martínez moved from Vista, California, to work at the California and Hawaii Foliage Growers Company in Hilo. Their very first Sabbath in Hilo, Enrique and Sara found the Adventist church, and who should meet them at the door, but Horace. When Horace found out that they spoke Spanish, he didn't say anything then. But when he welcomed them from the front, he told the members, "This is the family I have been praying for for years. They have now come."

Enrique and Sara were surprised at his remarks for they had no idea what he was referring to. After church, Horace invited them to dinner. After telling them the story of the Spanish group, he asked if they would help him. Enrique and Sara accepted *con gusto*. The Martínezes took the Hilo group under their wings and became the pastoral leaders of the group. Soon they began transporting the group to the Anglo church in Hilo every Sabbath morning, and then driving them back in the evening, even though it was 140 miles round trip.

Although the group has continued to grow, the membership is quite fluid, due to the fact that the migrant workers return to Mexico or the mainland once the harvest is over. But the seeds of truth they have discovered go with them to be shared with others in their homeland. Three stable families form the core group in Hilo: Enrique and Sara Martínez, their son Fernández Martínez and his wife Elizabeth; and Trini and María Zavala. They are quite active in their outreach. To raise funds for the outreach materials, they do what they know best how to do—prepare and sell enchiladas, rice, beans, tortillas and other Mexican foods.

Hawaii—Kona¹²⁰

In 1997, three of the families from the Hilo Spanish group relocated to Kona because of employment. One of these families was Felipe and Sara Meléndez. Felipe, who originally moved to Hawaii as a migrant worker, has become the leader of the group. The group of six members and 10 visitors meets in one of the rooms of the Captain Cook Adventist School every Sabbath. Opportunities for reaching out are even greater in Kona because of the number of Hispanics who work at the big hotels and resorts there. And because that work is more stable compared to that of the migrants in Naalehu, the Kona group should be able to grow at a more steady pace.

PACIFIC UNION CONFERENCE

Jorge Soria¹²¹

The man that leads the union with the largest number of Hispanic members in the North American Division is Elder Jorge Soria. Elder Soria was born in San Luis Potosi, Mexico in 1950. His parents moved to San José, California when he was 15 years old. The

following year they moved to Hayward, California where Pastor Alberto Guzmán and Bible instructor, Erica Valverde gave the family Bible studies. The entire family was baptized in 1966.

Jorge was well into sports in his high school years playing football and participating in statewide discus competition. Upon graduation from high school, he received three football scholarships from University of Southern California, University of Santa Clara and the University of California at Stanford. He admits that it was a great temptation

to accept one of the scholarships, but he knew where that would lead him. So he turned his back on collegiate football and went to Montemorelos University in Mexico to study theology. After three years, he returned to California and finished his studies at Pacific Union College, where he met his wife Lina Arias. Both graduated in 1974 and were married in 1975. In 1977, he received a Master of Divinity from Andrews University. He began his ministry interning with Elder Manuel Nestares in San Diego. Elder Soria has served the church as a pastor, evangelist, missionary, and Hispanic coordinator on conference and union levels.



Elder Soria (center) and members of the Kona Spanish Church in Hawaii.

Influence of Pacific Union Conference

The rapid growth of Hispanic members in the Pacific Union prompted two important administrative changes: 1) to establish Hispanic advisory committees 2) to encourage the establishment of Hispanic coordinator positions in all conferences with significant Hispanic constituencies. Both these models have been emulated in many conferences of the North American Division and have greatly enhanced the Hispanic growth.

From the very outset of Hispanic work in the union, evangelism has been one of the major driving forces. During the 1980's and into the 1990's, the number of baptisms in the Hispanic work became a major factor in the overall membership growth of the Pacific Union. In 1999, Hispanics, who represented only 25 percent of the total Union membership, baptized 2,702, or 40 percent of the total number of Union baptisms. The Hispanic membership of the Pacific Union Conference has now passed the 40,000 mark.

The Pacific Union carries the distinction of having prepared many Hispanic leaders who are now in administrative leadership positions in various parts of the division. Their Hispanic ministry has also helped set the pace for the work in all of North America.

PACIFIC UNION HISPANIC LEADERS



Ernest Castillo
Pacific Union Conference
Secretary



Jorge Soria
Pacific Union Conference
Hispanic Coordinator



Daniel Robles
Southern California Conference
Vice-President



Mario Pérez
Southeastern California Conference
Vice-President for Hispanic Ministries and
Director of the Sabbath School Department



Velino A. Salazar
Southern California Conference
Hispanic Coordinator



Eloy Martínez
Southern California Conference
Director, Human Resources and
Risk Management



Mario C. Negrete
Southern California Conference
Associate Ed. Director



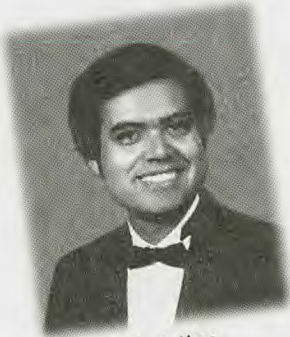
Rudy Carrillo
Southeastern California Conference
Youth Director



Juan Rivera
Central California Conference
Secretary



Daniel Escamilla
Central California Conference
Hispanic Coordinator



Gilberto Vega
Arizona Conference
Hispanic Coordinator



Emán Collins
Northern California Conference
Hispanic Coordinator



Arnold Trujillo
Hawaii Conference
President



Orlando Magaña
Nevada-Utah Conference
Hispanic Coordinator

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Southwestern Union Conference

Spawning Ground of Prominent Hispanic Leaders

"How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!" Isaiah 52:7

INTRODUCTION

BY ALL accounts, the chapter on the Spanish work in the Southwestern Union is one of the most important chapters of *The Untold Story*. The Southwest has produced several Hispanic Adventist pioneers who have made notable contributions to the church and left an indelible impression on the people they worked with and

and ministered to. Some of those pioneers were: José Castillo, Thomas Requénez, María Treviño, Joe Espinosa, Max Martínez, Isaac Lara, Pascual Peña, and Elías Gómez. While some of these workers have since passed away, others are still active, well known and highly respected. The story of the Southwest could not be told without recounting the contributions of these faithful pioneers.

Southwestern Union Territory

The year 1901 was significant, both in society and in the church. That year witnessed the assassination of President William McKinley and the installation of Theodore Roosevelt as the 26th President of the United States. Oil was discovered in Spindletop near Beaumont, Texas, and since then, Texas has become the largest oil-producing state in the nation.

In church history, that year saw the Southwestern Union Conference organized, encompassing the territory of Missouri, Colorado, Kansas, Texas, Arkansas, Arizona, New Mexico, and Oklahoma. That same year the Hispanic work was started in New Mexico by Marcial Serna, first Hispanic Adventist pastor in the Division.

The year 1902, however, brought changes. A major reorganization took place in the Southwestern Union. When all was done, the Union was left with only three states: Arkansas, Oklahoma and Texas. All the others, except for Arizona, which went to the Pacific Union, became part of the Central Union, now known as the Mid-America Union. In the latter part of 1907, another change occurred. New Mexico reverted to the Southwestern Union.

Change on the conference level was not over, however. In 1916, another internal adjustment was made when the New Mexico Conference and the West Texas Conference merged to form the Texico Conference.¹ Sixteen years later, in 1932, the last Union change occurred when the state of Louisiana was added to its territory, to complete what is currently the Southwestern Union.²

Pausing for a moment, the focus will now turn to some of the notable Hispanics of the southwestern region of the United States who have impacted and made contributions to our society.

❖ NOTABLE HISPANICS

In spite of the fact that Hispanics reached 10 percent of the total U.S. population and became mainstream in 1995, comparatively little is known about Hispanics and the contributions they have made to this country. Following are just a few selected Latinos who were either from the Southwest or trained there for their prestigious and illustrious careers.

Federico Peña

Federico F. Peña was born in Laredo, Texas in 1947. His parents constantly stressed excelling in school. But accomplishing this did not come naturally for Peña. To achieve good grades, he had to work much harder than his classmates. But his efforts paid off, for in his senior year, his high school classmates voted him "most likely to succeed."

Peña studied at the University of Texas School of Law, receiving his J.D. degree in 1972. Then, following in his family's tradition, he entered public service. During the Civil War, his great grandfather had served as mayor of Laredo. Another great grandfather had been a member of the first school board in Laredo and his grandfather

served as an alderman in Laredo for almost a quarter of a century.³

Peña is distinguished as the Hispanic who broke through the so-called "glass ceiling," serving as the first Hispanic in several public service positions. In 1983, at the age of 36, he became the **first Hispanic mayor of Denver, Colorado**, being re-elected to a second term in 1987.⁴ One of his major accomplishments as mayor of Denver was the completion of the \$3.1 billion Denver International Airport and a new convention center. In 1992, Peña was appointed a member of the President's Cabinet and became **the first Hispanic to be named Secretary of Transportation** in the United States government. In 1997, Peña was asked to serve as the **U. S. Secretary of Energy**,⁵ **another Hispanic first**.

Federico Peña is presently a member of the Colorado Board of Law Examiners and is an associate of the Harvard University Center for Law and Education.⁶

Franklin Chang-Díaz and Ellen Ochoa

Dr. Franklin Chang-Díaz was born in Costa Rica and immigrated to the U.S. in 1969. He moved to Houston, Texas where he trained at the NASA Johnson Space Center, the largest astronaut training facility in the world. In 1986, **Dr. Chang-Díaz became the first Latino astronaut in space**,⁷ flying on four space missions, and addressing the Spanish TV viewers in their own language from the space shuttle *Columbia*. In 1993, he became the Director of the Advanced Space Propulsion Laboratory at the Johnson Space Center.

Another Hispanic selected from thousands of astronaut applicants to train at the Johnson Space Center was Ellen Ochoa. Ellen was born in 1958, in Los Angeles, California to Rosanne (Deardorff) and Joseph Ochoa, of Mexican descent. Ellen was good at math and did extremely well in school, consistently staying at the head of her class. She was valedictorian of her graduating class in both Grossmont High and San Diego State University and earned a master's degree and a doctorate in electrical engineering from Stanford University. In 1990, she became the first Hispanic woman to be chosen for the space-shuttle program. When she became a crew member of the *Discovery* space-shuttle mission in 1993, she made history by becoming **the first Latina to travel in space**. Her assignment on board was to release and retrieve the \$6 million Spartan, a satellite designed to study the sun's corona and the velocity and acceleration of the solar wind. She is currently a researcher at the NASA Avionics Integration Laboratory.⁸

Because of Dr. Ellen Ochoa's success as a Latina astronaut, she has often been asked to speak to school children and community groups. Her burden is education and her message is simple and straightforward: "If you stay in school, you have the potential to achieve what you want in the future."

Lee Treviño—"Super Mex"

The United States has produced several Hispanic "pro" golfers, the most notable of which is Lee Buck Treviño. Treviño was born in Dallas, Texas in 1939 to Mexican-American parents who, unfortunately, divorced when he was only two years old. Treviño was subsequently raised by his mother, a humble cleaning lady, and his maternal grandfather, a Mexican immigrant gravedigger by trade. Treviño grew up in abject poverty in a small, four-room farmhouse which had neither running water nor electricity. However, as fate would have it, this humble house was located in back of the Glen Lakes Country Club fairways.

At a very early age, Treviño displayed his resourcefulness by going out on the greens,

collecting stray golf balls and selling them for a few cents to the golfers. At six years of age, bright and observant, Treviño began watching the golfers from his backyard, studying their forms. Lee found a discarded golf club, cut it down to his size and began to mimic the golfers on a makeshift, two-hole course that he dug in his own yard.

Fascination soon turned into an all-absorbing interest in golf, causing Treviño to drop out of school after only finishing the seventh grade. To be near the game, he became an assistant greenskeeper at a local pitch-and-putt course and caddied whenever he had a chance. The real bonus was whenever the course was empty, he would take advantage by playing a few holes. It wasn't until he was 15, however, that he was able to play a full 18 holes for the first time and then he shot a 77.

But when he joined the Marine Corps, he got his big break. He shot a round of 66 and impressed the colonels, who allowed him to play with them. In 1960, at the age of 21, he turned pro and the rest is history. He won the U.S. Open. In 1971, he was named the PGA Player of the Year. In 1979, he was inducted into the American Golf Hall of Fame. Treviño has become one of the greatest players in golf history. But he has never forgotten his early days of poverty. Whenever he has a tournament victory, he donates a sizeable sum to his favorite charities.⁹

Other Notables

Mention could be made of other Hispanics such as World War II hero, Gabriel Navarrete from El Paso who commanded the Men of Company E, an all-Chicano unit of the 141st Regiment, 36th (Texas) Army Division. Most of Company E's soldiers had joined the military right out of El Paso's Bowie High School and were considered "one of history's most efficient fighting units."¹⁰ Gabriel Navarrete was badly wounded in battle and was awarded the Silver Star and Purple Heart.

Another is Steven González from Huntsville, Texas, one of three U. S. soldiers captured, beaten and held as a prisoner of war during the Kosovo conflict in 1999.¹¹

In politics, Henry González from San Antonio was elected to the Texas Senate in 1956, becoming the first Mexican-American Texas state senator in 110 years. He also has the distinction of being the first Texan of Mexican descent to serve in the U. S. House of Representatives.¹² Stephanie González, in 1990, was elected Secretary of State of New Mexico. Jerry Apodaca, elected governor of New Mexico in 1974, was appointed as chairman of the President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports by President Jimmy Carter.¹³

However, we will now focus on the church and the men and women who, with unflinching conviction for the Adventist message, and moved by the power of the Holy Spirit, helped pioneer the Hispanic work in the southwest region of the United States. Their courage, faith and sacrifices have become a source of inspiration to all who have followed in their footsteps.

First, a quick overview of historical Hispanic developments, then a more in-depth look at some of these dedicated workers and institutions which became an important part of the "untold story" in the Southwest.

OVERVIEW

The first stirrings of Adventism among the Spanish-speaking people in the Southwestern Union took place in Texas and New Mexico. Because of the proximity of the two

states, many of the early developments in New Mexico were associated with pioneer Marcial Serna and the growth of Hispanic Adventism in Arizona. However, many of the early events were unrelated to each other, in the sense that they were not part of a comprehensively organized attempt by the local conferences to evangelize the Hispanic people.

First Two Decades of the Century

During the first two decades of the century, Hispanic work in New Mexico existed in San Marcial, Albuquerque, and Socorro. Elsewhere, in the territory that would eventually become the Texico Conference, a nucleus of Hispanic believers worshiped in El Paso, Texas.

In 1903, Marcial Serna and J. A. Leland, a former missionary to Argentina, conducted meetings in Martínez Town, a community in Albuquerque, New Mexico. This resulted in 20 baptisms and from this group the Martínez Town company emerged. Members were both Anglo and Hispanic,¹⁴ making it a bilingual congregation, reminiscent of the first one in Tucson, Arizona. The Martínez Town members continued to keep the Sabbath in their homes until 1908 when they built a small adobe church building.

In 1904, Pastor Serna established a church in San Marcial, New Mexico following another set of meetings. Their services, however, came to an abrupt end with the Río Grande flood of 1929, which washed away the church building as well as the homes of 100 families. Those families never returned. They resettled in places like Guadalupe, San Antonio and Socorro.

Beginnings of the Hispanic Work in Texas

In Texas, the beginnings of the Hispanic work took place in the southern part of the state, which is separated from New Mexico not only by distance but by the vast wastelands of West Texas. Between 1909 and 1913, a colporteur, W. F. Mayer, sold literature to the Mexican people in the Lower Río Grande Valley. His work, however, was hindered not only by opposition from the Catholic church, but by the difficulties of traveling through a desert country. But he faithfully kept at his work, planting seeds of Adventism among the Hispanics. His desire to spread the truth was such that, he would give free tracts to those who were not able to pay even a penny for his books. By 1916, those seeds of truth began to produce results and two Mexican churches (La Reforma and Mercedes) were formed with a combined membership of 43.¹⁵

Up until the 1920's, Adventism in New Mexico and Texas developed almost independently of each other. Although some traces of Adventism among Hispanics existed in the central and northern parts of Texas since the early years of the 20th century, it was not until the last quarter of the century that Spanish-speaking congregations began flourishing in that part of the Union and then spread to Oklahoma, Arkansas and Louisiana.

Through the 1940's, Hispanic ministries in Texas grew only slowly. San Antonio, Corpus Christi, and the Lower Valley had developed as the points of greater concentration of members. To the southernmost area, W. A. Lusk moved in 1943 to give full-time attention to the Spanish churches.

A turning point came almost imperceptibly in Houston during 1952 when a Spanish-speaking minister, A. V. Serra, began pioneering work among Hispanics in that city. Within months the Spanish Sabbath school had multiplied its membership several times while he planned an evangelistic series for his own people. The results of Serra's work did not produce a separate

Spanish-speaking congregation immediately, but his work marked the first attempt by an Hispanic minister to conduct a major evangelistic series in a leading Texas city.¹⁶

Another breakthrough occurred in 1958 when Walter Schubert, the South American evangelist who had joined the General Conference Ministerial Association, led a double-pronged set of meetings, three nights weekly in San Antonio and also three nights a week in Hondo, about 40 miles west of the city. This produced 46 baptisms.¹⁷

In 1958, R. H. Pierson, president of the Texas Conference, organized a Spanish Advisory Committee, which met to establish evangelistic plans.

Hispanics Placed in Leadership

Since the early years of Hispanic ministry in the Southwestern Union, many individuals had held the title of leader of the Spanish work in given conferences. These titles bore varying degrees of formal authority, but in 1972 the Southwestern Union officially organized a Spanish Advisory Committee composed of union and conference officers and four recognized Hispanic leaders: Isaac Lara, Sergio Ortiz, Max Martínez, and Pascual Peña. The recommendations from this group became Southwestern Union policy and included pastoral exchanges, recommendations for regularly employed Hispanic evangelists for each conference, proportional representation on conference committees and institutional boards, additional scholarships for Hispanic students to attend Southwestern Union College, better guidance for Hispanic congregations seeking to erect church buildings, and the inclusion of Spanish articles in *The Record* for the benefit of members who could not read English.¹⁸

Hispanic Coordinators

Through the 1980's and the 1990's, successive Hispanic coordinators in the Southwestern Union told the story that Adventism among Spanish-speaking people was advancing rapidly. In 1985, Max Martínez reported that the Spanish-speaking membership exceeded 6,000; Onésimo Mejía declared that in 1990, this figure had surpassed 8,000 and that tithe from Hispanic Adventists totaled more than \$3 million annually. Eduardo Canales stated that at the end of 1995, membership approximated 11,000, organized in 90 churches and 20 companies who turned in more than \$4.5 million in tithe.¹⁹

TEXAS CONFERENCE

Texas was still a part of Mexico when the first Americans settled there in 1821. The name "Texas" was derived from the pronunciation of the Indian word *Tejas*, which means "friends" or "allies." In terms of area, it is the second largest state in the United States.²⁰

The Beginnings of the Spanish Work in the South Texas Conference²¹

The work in South Texas (from San Antonio southward to Laredo, Corpus Christi and the Río Grande Valley) began some time between 1909 and 1919 from the efforts of two colportors, W. F. Mayer and Howard Leslie. These men worked among the Hispanics in the Lower Río Grande Valley.

The printed word has always been a powerful means of disseminating God's truth, and the Spirit of Prophecy (E. G. White) books have been the source of many conversions to the Adventist faith. One of those conversion stories is that of Ignacio Alvarado.



Some of the 72 people baptized in Austin, Texas as a result of La Red '99 and an evangelistic effort by Elder Víctor Collins (far right), Pastor Roberto Costa and wife Nancy (center front).

The Little Book That Changed Their Lives²²

In 1915, Howard Leslie, a young colporteur, traveled from Yancey to the Río Grande Valley, specifically to reach out to Hispanic families. When he knocked on the door of the Alvarado family, Ignacio met him and, after the canvass, he became interested in the Ellen G. White books. He purchased *La Esperanza del Mundo* (The Hope of the World).

Ignacio shared the book with his good friend, Estanislao Gutiérrez. Being honest of heart and God-fearing men, they soon came under conviction that the Adventist doctrines they were studying were true biblical teachings. By this time, the colporteur had moved on to other towns and they knew of no one else in the area that kept the Sabbath, understood the state of the dead correctly or believed in baptism by immersion. They were determined, however, to follow Jesus' example and be baptized by immersion.²³

Baptism in the Cattle Trough

"Why don't we find some water deep enough to cover us. Then I can baptize you," Ignacio suggested to Estanislao, "and afterwards you can baptize me."

"That sounds like a good idea," Estanislao responded.

So the two men went out to the old windmill that pumped water for the cattle. Climbing into the cattle's drinking trough, they had a humble baptismal service, just the two of them. Reverently, they knelt down in the water and prayed that God would anoint them as they baptized each other. Their faith was simple and their convictions were strong. And God blessed them. Ignacio had a passion for the truth and a gift for speaking and soon became a lay preacher.

A Spiritual Awakening

Hispanics are social by nature and very family oriented. So it was natural for the family clans to seek each other's company as often as possible. Every Saturday night, the relatives of patriarch *Don* Valentín Requénez would come from La Reforma and Rancho

La Paz and congregate at the Requénez's home for a social and spiritual gathering. Sitting around the large living room, they would listen as Antonia and Ignacio Alvarado read aloud by candlelight from the book about the second coming of Christ. This caused a spiritual awakening amongst the group. One Saturday evening after giving a sermon, Ignacio made a passionate call for his relatives to surrender their lives to Christ. Among those who responded was a serious, nine-year old boy by the name of Thomas Requénez. No one could have predicted that this young boy would later become one of the great pioneers of the Spanish work.

After reading *La Esperanza del Mundo* through several times at the family gatherings, the people began to hunger for more books on spiritual subjects. Someone suggested to Ignacio, "Why don't you write to the author and ask if there are any more books like this one." So Ignacio sat down and wrote a simple and sincere letter to Ellen G. White thanking her for the great inspiration the family had received from her book and requesting information on where they could purchase other books like that one. Then he sent the letter off to the California publishing house address which he found in the front of the book. When the publishers received the letter, they were touched by his sincerity and forwarded his request to the South Texas Conference in San Antonio for follow-up.

Nineteen Requénez Family Members Baptized

When the South Texas Conference received the forwarded letter from Ignacio, they responded by sending Pastor W. W. Miramontes, from San Antonio, to visit him. Pastor Miramontes was an excellent teacher and a powerful preacher who focused on the doctrines of Daniel and Revelation and he helped Ignacio and the others understand the Advent message better. That year (1917) Elder J. I. Taylor, President of the South Texas Conference, traveled to the Río Grande Valley and baptized 19 members of the Requénez family and relatives. Even though Ignacio had earlier baptized himself, he was happy to have Elder Taylor perform the "official" rite on him. When Pastor Miramontes moved away, the small company of believers in La Reforma were left without a pastor to nurture them. So Ignacio stepped in and became their lay pastor.

La Reforma Church Established

Four miles away from "La Paz" (the Requénez ranch) was a small town called La Reforma, where the first Adventist church in that area was established. Ignacio wanted a church building for his people so badly that he donated the land for it. Later, when the small Adventist group in Mission, Texas wanted to build a church, Ignacio and his wife, Beatriz, bought some property and donated it to them also. Eusebio Silva and his brother, however, were the ones who actually built the church in Mission.

Thomas Requénez, Baptized at 13

In 1920, Pastor Carlos Nicolás, who had been pastoring in Mexico, was sent to La Reforma by the South Texas Conference where he continued following up interests. The following year saw 20 people baptized, including 13-year-old Thomas Requénez. Others were María Requénez, José María Requénez, Rufina Arerri de Requénez, Blas Requénez, Macaria Requénez, José Longoria, Patricia Moya, Abundio Longoria, Paulita Sainez, Pancho Bazán, along with nine other family and community individuals. Luis H.

López from Mexico was the first pastor assigned to the group by the conference.

Thomas, the eldest of five brothers and two sisters, was born December 21, 1908 in Río Grande City, Texas. The Requénez family's Spanish land grant hacienda was in Starr County, La Reforma, Texas. Thomas was nine years old when he started school and the little school house he attended was the one his uncles had established in his farm house.

Later, in 1921, at the age of 13, Thomas enrolled in his first Spanish Seventh-day Adventist school established by the South Texas Conference in La Reforma. Antonia de Carranco, the wife of Juan Carranco, was Thomas' first full-time teacher there. **Her husband, Juan, was the first Hispanic Bible worker in South Texas.** The Carrancos had been sent to La Reforma to further help establish the small group.



Pastor Luis H. López and family. First pastor assigned to La Reforma Group.

Dying Mother's Last Words

That same year, on June 23, 1921, Thomas' mother, Cleotilde, died at home after giving birth to her seventh child. Unable to get the medical attention she needed, she felt her life ebbing away. But before she died, she called her first-born child, Thomas, to her bedside.

"Tomacito, I had a most wonderful dream last night," she told him in a frail voice. "I want to share it with you and I want you to remember it. I dreamed that *nuestro Señor Jesucristo* was coming down from heaven in a beautiful, white shining cloud, surrounded by thousands of angels, lights and heavenly music. Our whole family was there looking at this spectacular and glorious sight. Tomacito, be faithful, I believe it's going to happen." These last words, spoken to him by his dying mother, had a profound effect on Thomas' life and future ministry.

Shortly thereafter, Ignacio Alvarado acquired two more Spanish E. G. White books; *El Deseado de Todas Las Gentes*, (*The Desire of Ages*) and *El Conflicto de Los Siglos*, (*The Great Controversy*). One day, Thomas was looking through *The Desire of Ages* when he saw a picture of Christ's second coming. It was exactly the way his mother had described for him the day she had died. Thomas was overcome with emotion and he broke down in tears. But it caused him to be more determined than ever to be faithful so he could meet his beloved mother again at the second coming.

La Reforma Church Dedicated

In 1923, La Reforma Spanish Church was organized. With 56 new Hispanic converts baptized that year, the South Texas Conference then boasted one of the largest Hispanic constituencies of any conference in the United States.²⁴ By 1925, nearly half the total number of members attending the South Texas campmeeting were Hispanics.²⁵ In 1930, their membership reached 200.²⁶ Some accounts place the number as high as 300 members.

In 1926, Thomas Requénez went to Yancey Spanish Adventist Academy near San Antonio, Texas where his ambition was to become a teacher and pastor. Some of his classmates were Samuel Castillo, Apolinar (Polito) Delgado, and Trini Delgado. José Castillo was both the teacher and pastor of the Yancey Academy and church at the time.

Following his graduation from the Yancey school in 1927, Thomas became a colporteur during the summers, working all the farms and small towns between Alice and Río Grande Valley. Since he did not own a car, he either hitchhiked or rode his bicycle. He sold books in Edinburg, Weslaco, Mercedes, Corpus Christi, Alice, Falfurrias and Laredo, Texas. Thomas continued colportoring throughout the Río Grande Valley until 1936. In addition to that work, he established a small church and a school in Mercedes and taught for two years.

Thomas enrolled in Colegio Adventista del Río Grande in 1927, where Carl F. Staben was the Principal and L. Grant Beans was the Vice Principal. Thomas' father, Valentine, gave Thomas a used bicycle, which he used to travel back and forth from the college in Laredo, Texas to his home in La Reforma for the two years that he studied there. In the summer of 1929, Thomas colportored, working with Pastor Carlos Nicolás in the Falfurrias area.

Requénez Marriage and Family

When Thomas returned to Falfurrias in 1931 to colporteur again, he met and fell in love with a lovely young lady named María González Vela. Although María and her family were staunch Catholics, Thomas figured that María had a sincere heart and would accept the truth if she heard it.

But her father, like many Hispanic fathers, was very protective of his daughters, so Thomas and María began corresponding secretly. These letters were not only of a romantic nature, but a spiritual nature was well. Thomas was serious about his religion and began giving María and her sisters Bible studies through the mail. Two years of this "Bible correspondence" prepared María and her sister, Bartolita, for baptism. So when Pastor Gilbert Schwerin held an effort in Falfurrias in 1933, the two girls were baptized along with 28 other people.

Thomas then asked his father and padrinos, which included Pastor C. F. Staben, director of Colegio Adventista del Río Grande, to travel by wagon with him to María's house to ask, in the typical Spanish tradition, for María's hand in marriage. María's parents were evidently impressed, for on October 25, 1935, Elder Staben solemnized the marriage of Thomas and María in her parents' home in Rancho Paisano, near Falfurrias.

From this union, seven children were born: Anita Requénez-Moses, Eunice Requénez-Detton, Hilda Requénez-Cabrera, Esther Requénez-Yialilis, Ruth Requénez-

Schalkwyk, Linda Requénez-Bailey, and Thomas Requénez, Jr. All seven children became nurses, graduating from various Adventist colleges (La Sierra, Loma Linda and Pacific Union College). Anita and Esther married Adventist workers and served in the mission field.

When Anita, the eldest of the Requénez children, was born in 1936, her father, Thomas was assisting Elder Schwerin in a tent evangelistic effort in Mercedes, Texas. Times were hard and the Requénezes stayed in a small tent next to the large one. Anita's first little bed was an empty tomato box which her resourceful mother converted into a cradle, lining it with a blanket and pillow. Anita fit there just fine for the first few weeks of her life.

Requénez Ministry

It wasn't until the year 1940 that Elder Requénez received his first pastoral assignment which was also the first of a series of pastoral moves over the next ten years. He was invited to Chicago, Illinois to work with the Hispanic believers there. Three years later, he was called to the Colorado Conference (now Rocky Mountain Conference) where he was ordained to the gospel ministry in Monte Vista.

While working in Monte Vista, he would walk or hitchhike to Alamosa every Sunday morning to hand carry the large recorded records of Pastor Braulio Pérez Marcio to the radio station so they could air on the Spanish program. He also reopened the small church school in Monte Vista and taught there for a few months when the school teacher moved away. Elder Requénez held evangelistic meetings throughout the state, which caused the family to move quite often. Their daughter Anita remembers attending six different schools in one year. But the hardest experience came when the youngest child, Cleotilde, died of pneumonia during one of the evangelistic campaigns. This sobering experience caused Elder Requénez to realize the need and importance of his family's health and he asked the conference to bring in more workers to assist in the Hispanic work. Still another blow would come to the family in 1945. While living in Denver, Mrs. Requénez suffered a heart attack early one Sabbath morning and the medical doctors strongly recommended that the family move to a lower elevation for her health.

The following year Elder Requénez accepted a call to Texas where he pastored the San Antonio Church. In 1948, he was transferred to Corpus Christi where he established the first Spanish church in Kingsville. In 1950, the California Conference invited him to their territory, where he pastored the following churches: Brawley, El Centro, Calexico,



Elder Thomas Requénez, Sr.

Colton, Redlands, San José, San Francisco and established new churches in Indio and Templeton.

While pitching tents for the 1973 Soquel campmeeting, Thomas suffered a heart attack and officially retired that year. That did not stop him, however, from serving the church as a volunteer pastor. His wife, María, passed away in 1986 at the age of 72 and Elder Manuel Vásquez presided at her funeral. Thomas died in 1999 at the age of 91 and Elder Ernie Castillo presided at his funeral.

Thomas Requénez Rivas Carrión was one of the prominent early Hispanic leaders to come out of the Southwest. His ministry spanned seven decades and he was instrumental in starting the Spanish work in at least two unions

Alice, Texas

In 1912, the Valentino Salazar family, who had migrated from Mexico in 1908, began Bible studies with an Adventist colporteur, José María López, in Alice, Texas, about 50 miles west of Corpus Christi. The Salazar family quickly accepted the truths the colporteur taught them and within three months were observing the Sabbath.²⁷ One of the older sons, 18-year-old Anastacio Salazar, was baptized and immediately entered the colporteur ministry. Anastacio worked in several communities, including Kingsville, Alice and Beeville. Then, in 1920, he felt called to the pastoral ministry and traveled to Phoenix where he studied at the Spanish Training School for two years. Pastor Salazar served two Spanish groups in Texas (Fort Worth and Dallas) before he and his wife, Goyita, left Texas in 1928 to pursue a long pastoral career in their native Mexico.

Colegio Adventista de Río Grande

In the late 1920's, El Colegio Adventista de Río Grande (Adventist College of the Río Grande) was established in Laredo, Texas. Its purpose was to train Hispanic students for the ministry. The college taught only religion and ministerial-related classes. Although it had no more than 30 to 35 students in any given school year, it was reported to be an excellent school and it indeed produced some prominent Hispanic workers. Some of the students who attended there were: Daniel Chávez, Samuel Castillo and Nicolás Rodríguez. Daniel Chávez went on to earn a doctorate in theology and taught for many years at La Sierra University in California, which was then La Sierra College.

The Providential Encounter of Two Families

Another significant conversion story that took place in Texas was that of José and María del Refugio Zapata de Castillo. These pioneers were the parents of Elder Samuel Castillo, Raúl Castillo, Dr. Rubén Castillo, and the grandparents of Elder Ernie Castillo. In 1911, José and María, along with their one-year-old son, Samuel, emigrated from Matehuala, San Luis Potosí, Mexico, to Laredo, Texas, later settling in Corpus Christi. In this religiously divided home, José was a Quaker and María, or Cuca as everybody called her, was a staunch Presbyterian.

The story took place around 1916. Antonia and Juan Carranco, newly-weds, had just moved to Corpus Christi from Laredo, Texas. Antonia, an Adventist, had graduated from Keene Industrial Academy (now Southwestern Adventist University) with a certificate for teacher preparation and was possibly starting a new job in the city.

“Does Anyone Have A Room For Rent?”

The young couple searched diligently for a place to stay, but were unable to find an apartment or even a room to rent. In their desperation, they went to prayer meeting at the local Spanish Presbyterian church to see if someone there would at least rent them a room. At the end of the service, the pastor introduced the couple to his parishioners, told them of the couple's predicament and asked if anyone had a room they could rent to them.

Cuca Castillo was at church that evening and her heart was touched by the couple's need. Since her husband's work took him out of town a lot, Cuca thought it might be nice to have them stay with her. So she got up from her pew and told the pastor, “I have a room they can rent.” The Carrancos were overjoyed at this answer to their prayers. But as everyone was leaving the church, a member came up to Cuca and whispered, “Sister Castillo, why are you taking this couple into your home? They aren't even the same religion as we are.” Being a lady of action, Cuca went right over to Antonia and asked her, “What religion are you?” Antonia responded, “*Adventista*” (Adventist) But Cuca thought she said “*Bautista*” (Baptist). She figured Baptists were like Presbyterians, so she said, “Oh, we're the same.”

Sunday Is Not The Lord's Day

The Carrancos moved into the Castillo home and the next Saturday Antonia got ready in the morning, left the house and didn't return until the afternoon. Cuca wondered where she had gone, but said nothing. The next morning (Sunday), Cuca got herself and her two small sons, Samuel and Raúl, ready for church and left. When she came home, however, she was shocked to find Antonia sitting outside on the patio—crocheting, of all things.

Unable to hold back her feelings of righteous indignation, she blurted out, “What are you doing, working on the Lord's day?”

“This is not the Lord's day,” Antonia responded calmly, yet politely. “Yesterday was.” Her response startled María. Remembering the caution her church friend had given her, María again questioned Antonia on her religious affiliation.

“Tell me, what church are you from?” María demanded.

“I am a Seventh-day Adventist,” Antonia answered respectfully.

Although Cuca didn't know what a Seventh-day Adventist was, she sensed that there was going to be trouble in the house. “If I had known you were a Seventh-day Adventist, I never would have rented you a room,” she retorted. And with that, she turned around and whisked her two boys inside.

Cuca quickly informed her pastor of the situation and he too felt he had been deceived. He had nothing good to say about the Adventists. In fact, he told Cuca that Adventists were “white sepulchers” and that “they had been washed up from the Flood,” meaning that they were no good.

“Pastor, Please Take My Name Off Your Church Books.”

With these negative characterizations of the Adventists, María was more determined than ever to get rid of her boarders. But she would wait till her husband, José, returned home so he could back her up. However, before she could fill him in on the situation, he met the Carrancos and immediately struck up a friendship with Juan. Antonia took advantage of the situation and began talking to José about religion. To Cuca's dismay, José was rather intrigued with the Saturday-Sabbath idea as well as with some of the other Adventist



*José and Cuca Castillo and sons (left to right)
Raúl, Rubén and Samuel.*

doctrines. As it turned out, José asked Antonia to show him from the Bible about the Sabbath. Cuca was boiling inside, but José convinced her to “just sit and listen.” The Holy Spirit knew the Castillos were honest people, zealous for the Lord, so He began working on their hearts.

Eventually, both José and Cuca began studying the Bible with Antonia and Juan every evening. José had an open mind and as he learned each new truth, he accepted it with all his heart. It wasn’t long before he made his decision to become an Adventist. However, it would be two years be-

fore his more reluctant and suspicious wife would make that decision.²⁸

Although Cuca waited a long time before making a commitment, her conversion was very firm. Once she decided to join the church, she went to her Presbyterian pastor and confronted him. “Why didn’t you teach us the truth from the Bible?” she asked, holding out her Bible toward him as she spoke. That question, with all its implications, caused the pastor to go into a fit of anger. Grabbing the Bible from her hands, he threw it across the room. “Those Adventists have gotten you all messed up,” he yelled.

Cuca could not believe it. She walked over to retrieve her Bible and when she turned around, she said respectfully, yet firmly, “Pastor, please take my name off your church books. I have decided to follow Christ in all His truth. I will be an Adventist until I die.”

José Castillo Enters the Ministry

Like many new Hispanic converts, José and Cuca Castillo felt the need to share their new-found faith with others, so they moved to Victoria, Texas where they both worked as literature evangelists for the next two years. Then, in 1922, José decided to train for the gospel ministry and went to Phoenix, Arizona where he enrolled in the training school for Spanish-speaking workers. There, to his surprise, whom should he run into, but his old friend, Juan Carranco, who was also studying for the ministry. Juan later became the **first Bible worker in South Texas**.²⁹

❖ YANCEY, TEXAS

Beginning of Hispanic Work in Yancey³⁰

Meanwhile, Howard Leslie, a colporteur from Keene, Texas spent the summer of 1922 selling books in Yancey, Texas. Since there were no Adventist families in Yancey with

which to stay, Fritz Foseler and his wife, a Methodist family, took the young man into their own home for that summer. Mr. Foseler, being a religious man, became very interested in the books Leslie was selling and wanted to buy them. He began to search them earnestly to find the truth. Then he had so many questions for his Methodist pastor that it wasn't long before he was disfellowshipped from his own church. But that didn't bother Brother Foseler. He joined the Yancey English Adventist church, which had been established two years before.

Leslie was quite aggressive in his colportoring and by the end of the summer, he had created a strong interest in the community, especially concerning biblical prophecy. When Leslie left, these interests were followed up by Pastor Coon from the English San Antonio Church, 60 miles northeast of Yancey. Pastor Coon set up a large tent in Yancey and held an English evangelistic effort. Many Hispanics attended, a great number of which had purchased the book, *Hacia La Edad De Oro*, (*Toward The Golden Age*) from the young colporteur, Howard Leslie. Pastor Miramontes, from San Antonio, would visit the interested Hispanic families occasionally.

Then in 1924 the conference called Carlos Nicolás to oversee the growing work among the Mexicans in South Texas. Nicolás continued working in Yancey with Hispanic families who showed interest in the Adventist message. That same year he gave an evangelistic effort with good results. So by the time José Castillo arrived in 1924, there was a relatively large group ready to join the Adventist church. During his three years in Yancey, Elder Castillo baptized 100 people.

José Castillo Establishes the Yancey School

When José Castillo arrived in Yancey and began harvesting all the new interests, contrary to what one would expect, he did not start a church building program. Instead, he built a school. Pastor Castillo knew of the great prejudice that was exhibited against the Mexicans there. In fact, there was so much prejudice in the Anglo public schools against the Mexicans that they were not even allowed to march at their own graduation.

Apolinar Delgado, who today is 85 years old, remembers as a student being picked on and getting beaten up so badly that many times he would come home with his clothes all torn up. It was to provide an alternative and at the same time promote Christian education, that Pastor Castillo decided they needed a church school for their students. It turned out that the school became a good evangelistic tool also.



Yancey students posing for their picture, 1926.

**Yancey
students in a
classroom,
1926.**



Not only did the children of the Adventist Hispanics attend the little school, but other Hispanic children from the community who had suffered similar discrimination also enrolled. And not only were they learning to read and do math, but they were learning to play instruments as well. The non-Adventist parents were grateful for the good education the Adventists were giving their children.

The Yancey School Band

In 1927, Pastor Luis H. López became the pastor of the church and a teacher in the Yancey School. Pastor López was a good musician and wasted no time in forming a school band which greatly encouraged the students and promoted good will in the community. At the end of every school year, the Yancey School band, conducted by Elder López,



Yancey student band, 1926.

would put on a concert for the community. The non-Adventist parents were so pleased that they accepted the invitations to attend the Sabbath services at the school on Saturday mornings. This greatly helped the growth of the Yancey Spanish Church.

José Castillo Answers a Call to His Homeland

In 1927, Pastor José Castillo was called to pastor the La Reforma Spanish Church. From there the conference asked him to raise up the Spanish work in Corpus Christi, the city where he had been converted and baptized. In 1929, he pastored the Kingsville Spanish Church.

Meanwhile in Mexico, events were taking place that would greatly impact the life of

José and his family. In 1924, President Plutarco Elías Calles initiated land reforms and enforced constitutional control over the Roman Catholic Church,³¹ which had large land holdings and was sending huge sums of *pesos* out of the country. The reforms affected all other Christian denominations as well since the Mexican government took possession of all church properties, stopped church monies from leaving the country, and forbade foreign clergy from officiating in religious services. Only nationals were allowed to serve as church leaders. All foreigners were either forced to leave or take a back seat in church affairs. This created a dearth of Mexican Adventist workers in Mexico.

It was to help alleviate this pastoral shortage that Elder José Castillo decided to return to his native Mexico in 1931. He spent the next 30 years working there. Upon his retirement, he returned to Corpus Christi where he resided only a few months until his death in 1961.

Another worker who returned to Mexico for the same reason was Pastor Anastacio Salazar. The successful careers of these men showed that it was possible to train workers in North America for work in Mexico and other Latin American countries.

Yancey School Becomes a Boarding Academy

In 1929, Mrs. Antonia Carranco moved to Yancey to be the director of the school. Her husband, Juan, became the pastor of the church and colported part-time. Miss Elena Vildosola also taught at the school but because of an automobile accident, could not finish out the school year.

By 1930, the Yancey Spanish church school had around 70 students. That year the conference called Elder Carl Staben to develop the school into an academy since he had been the principal at a boarding academy in Laredo. With the presence of the Stabens, the members were greatly encouraged.

Elder Staben, along with the teachers, students and members of the church, began constructing dormitories, a dining room, a church, as well as an administration building for classrooms and offices. The school was built of lumber, while the church was built of adobe. Each Sunday, the men of the church would come out to make adobe and assist the Aguila brothers, Andrés and Maximino, in building the new church. The ladies would assist in whatever they could and, as the Spanish custom was, would prepare a hearty noon meal of beans, rice and warm tortillas for the men, complete with *salsa picante*. This new construction in Yancey was the means of bringing in other families to the area and the student enrollment increased. For the next few years, under Staben's leadership, the academy prospered.

The Hispanic membership in the North and South Texas Conferences had now reached



***Pastor José Castillo and
wife Cuca.***

200. Most of the members, however, lived in the region below San Antonio in places such as Corpus Christi, Yancey, Falfurrias, Mercedes and Edinburg. Two years later, the North and South Texas conferences merged, thus bringing the Hispanic work under one conference, located in Ft. Worth. Today, the offices are located in Alvarado.

Yancey Closes Its Doors

Meanwhile, the training school for Hispanics in Phoenix, Arizona was experiencing troubles. In 1933, it finally closed down, leaving Yancey as the only school operating in the Division which provided an effective worker-training program for Mexican Adventist students. Some of the students who attended Yancey were: María Treviño (Max Treviño's aunt), Samuel Castillo (Ernie Castillo's father), Nicolás Rodríguez and Thomas Requénez.³²

In 1935, an event took place which would eventually lead to the school's closing. Carl Staben's father died, causing Elder Staben to leave his responsibilities at the school to attend to his father's business. This left the school without a qualified person to teach the upper grades (9-12), resulting in a drop in enrollment.³³ Attempts were made to keep the Yancey School operating but all were unsuccessful. In 1936 the school closed its doors forever.

Some of those who taught at Yancey Academy were: Elder Carl Staben and his wife Jessie, Miss Irma Shaffer, Miss Velma Smith, Miss María Treviño, Miss Evelyn Jensen, Mrs. Aimee Jones, Pastor Samuel Castillo, Mr. & Mrs. Dallas Colvin, and Mr. & Mrs. Bufford Ward.

Only Memories Left

When the USA entered the Second World War in 1941, many of the families who had previously moved to Yancey left the area to find work in the larger cities. This left only a few attending members in the once-thriving church. Eventually, the conference sold the property—both school and church. From time to time, the pastor of the San Antonio Spanish Church would visit the few isolated members in Yancey to pick up their tithe and offerings.

On February 9, 1993, the last original member of the Yancey Spanish Church, Sister Cruz Salazar, passed away. All that remains now of the Yancey era are memories of the light that had once burned so brightly.³⁴

Three Spanish Training Schools Close Their Doors

By 1936, all three ventures in Hispanic education in the North American Division had come to an end. Also ending tragically was a plan by the Mexican Union to develop a school just over the border in Texas. The Mexican government had passed laws prohibiting the building and operating of private schools on private property in Mexico.³⁵ So the Mexican Union submitted a request to the 1935 Autumn Council to establish a school in South Texas. The request was approved. With a view of resolving the problem of educating their prospective ministers, the leaders of the Mexican Union purchased property in McAllen, Texas, less than ten miles from the Mexican frontier. This made it very accessible to students from Mexico. Unfortunately, on December 28, 1935, before the leaders of the project could even assemble a teaching faculty or organize a curriculum, the school building burned down.

One Last Attempt—Sandoval, New Mexico

One final attempt to launch a worker-training program for Hispanics in North America occurred in Sandoval, New Mexico during the 1940's. In 1942, the Spanish-American Seminary was established. News items informing the general Adventist public about the school appeared regularly in the *Record*. For a time a regular column in the union paper was devoted to the Seminary similar to the space assigned to Southwestern Junior College. In 1946 and again in 1947, descriptions of the Seminary, its students and its program were front page articles.³⁶

Dan Palmer and C. E. Fillman, both former missionaries to Latin America, served successively as the first two principals. After the 1947-48 school year ended, Fillman described the school as the fulfillment of a desire by church leadership at both the General Conference and local conference levels to maintain an institution for Spanish-speaking youth to prepare for church service.³⁷



Hispanic workers meeting, Spanish American Seminary, 1944. Among them are: Top row: Concha and Nicolás Rodríguez, María and Thomas Requénez, Max Martínez, Gabriel Arregui, Felicitas and Samuel Castillo, Julia Benavides. Second row: Mrs. Vore, José Rivera, Francis Games, Mr. and Mrs. Lusk, Mrs. Homer Casebeer, Mrs. Lorntz, Mr. and Mrs. Cerna, Mrs. George Casebeer, María Treviño, Margaret Palmer, Mrs. Mireles, Pr. Ponciano Mireles. First row: George Vore, Homer Casebeer, Elder Lorntz, George Casebeer, Dan Palmer, Ray Archuleta.

I. M. Vacquer, a South American and former principal of the Adventist secondary school in Uruguay, became head of the Seminary in 1950. Only eight years had passed since the institution had begun its first classes, and Vacquer was pleased to announce that

the school was equipped to offer two years of college-level courses for ministerial training. About 150 students from grades one through the first year of college enrolled for the 1951-52 academic year, traveling from New York, Illinois, Texas, Colorado, and California to attend. Others came from Puerto Rico, Cuba, Colombia, Mexico and Perú. While the majority of students were Hispanic, Anglos also attended, and to comply with state law, all instruction took place in English.³⁸

Seminary Becomes Sandia View Academy

In spite of these signs of success, Seminary operations ended at the end of the 1951-52 year and the school became the Texico Conference Sandia View Academy.³⁹

No doubt there were several reasons for the closing. One may have been the fact that in the post-World War II era through the mid-1960's the denomination strongly promoted secondary education and many new academies appeared with most conferences seeking to establish their own schools. The brethren may have seen the Seminary more as a potential conference school than a Seminary, since it was offering all of its courses in English anyway and the number of ministerial students was obviously quite small.

But whatever the reason, like its predecessors, the Spanish American Seminary in Sandoval faded after only a decade of operation. The school in Montemorelos, Mexico (Escuela Agrícola e Industrial), however, continued to grow, not only in number of students, but in prestige. Today it is known as Universidad de Montemorelos (Montemorelos University).

With no Spanish training schools at the college level in the North American Division, many young Hispanics from the States have found it advantageous, both financially and culturally, to attend the university in northern Mexico rather than attend a college in the United States. Some who attended Montemorelos at least one year are: Elder Max Martínez, Elder Benjamín (Bennie) García, Elder Pascual Peña, Elder Daniel Escamilla, Elder Johnny Rivera, Elder José Rojas, and Pastor José Esparza.

❖ SAN ANTONIO

San Antonio Durango Spanish Church

The earliest accounts of the first Spanish church in San Antonio are that around 1918 and 1919 Hispanic colportors came to San Antonio selling religious books and sowing the seeds of Adventism in the hearts of many Hispanics in that city. Within two or three years, a small group was meeting with Pastor Miramontes as their pastor. Later, when Pastor Carlos Nicolás was called by the South Texas Conference to shepherd the group, Dolores Zavala obtained a job working in their home, washing, cleaning and helping with the meals. Through their witnessing, Dolores learned about the Advent Message and subsequently requested baptism. So when Dolores decided to marry Florencio Martínez in 1921, it was natural that she ask Pastor Nicolás to solemnize their marriage.

In 1921 the first San Antonio Spanish church building was located on San Fernando Street in a house converted into a church. The members built a little school behind the church where one of the students was Sara Martínez. She recalls that her 4th and 5th grade teachers were Samuel Castillo and Helene Suckey. Several years later, in 1935, the congregation

moved to the corner of Durango and Chupaderas Streets. The present church building is located in the middle of the block at 2321 West Durango Street, with the church parking lot on the corner where the old church building once stood. This church has spawned three other churches: Bynumn Spanish, East Gate Spanish, and Northwest Spanish Company.

In 1946, one of Texas' own sons, Elder Thomas Requénez, was called from the Colorado Conference, to return to Texas as pastor of the San Antonio Church. Because many of the American soldiers were returning from World War II at the same time, the Requénezes encountered a shortage of housing in the city. They finally ended up living in a garage, with the lawn under a large tree, as their living room.

During his pastorate in San Antonio, Pastor Requénez conducted the first Hispanic campmeeting in San Antonio in a large tent set up on the church property. He also held evangelistic meetings in Yancey, which helped re-establish the church in that city.

Pastors of the San Antonio Church

Pastors of the San Antonio Spanish Church: V. Cunil, J. A. Leland, W. W. Miramontes, Carlos Nicolás, Luis H. López, Gilbert Schwerin, Joseph A. Smith, George Casebeer, Thomas Requénez, Reginald R. Mattison, A. Matar, Elías Gómez, Frank Martínez, Benjamín Colón, Ramiro R. Alonso, Teddy Ramírez, Ignacio Faz, Xavier Soto Valle, Jorge Morales, J. Orlando Pérez, Félix Rodríguez, Orlando Záceta, Ramón Banuchi, Lázaro Sánchez, and David Montoya.

❖ MERCEDES CHURCH

Although Hispanic work in Mexico originated before 1920, according to some of the original members of the Mercedes Spanish Church, it did not prosper until some time in the early 1930's. The Texas Conference took a firm step forward in 1933 when G. A. Schwerin, a former missionary in Colombia, Ecuador and the Lake Titicaca region, was sent to pastor the San Antonio Spanish Church and at the same time be the superintendent (coordinator) of Spanish ministry in the conference.

In 1934, Elder Schwerin held a three-month evangelistic effort (June-August) in Mercedes with Bible worker María Treviño. Elder Schwerin put up a large tent on the corner of Texas and First Streets and God blessed the effort, for several people were baptized. One of the Catholic families that joined the Adventist Church was Benigno González and his children (Federico, and his wife, Nieves; Benigno Jr. and his wife, Leonor; his daughter Guadalupe, and another son, Hilario). Others who accepted the truth were: Vernalda Castillo, her daughter, Guadalupe, and a family by the name of Villanueva.

Following that effort, the new believers met in the house of Elvia García. Elvia was a public school teacher who, although she believed the Adventist doctrines, was never baptized. However, she opened her home up for the Sabbath church services. The following year, 1935, Benigno González's wife, Petra, was baptized.

Five years later, the González daughter, also named Petra, was baptized by Reymundo Archuleta, who had come to pastor the Mercedes Spanish Church. Pastor Archuleta baptized Petra's husband, Remigio Peña, two years later. One of the children born to this couple was Pascual Peña, who later became an Adventist pastor.

The Mercedes Spanish Church, at this writing has 140 members.

Pascual Peña

In 1950, the Peña family moved to Santa María, California and joined the church that their former pastor, Ray Archuleta, was pastoring. The first year of their residence there, Pastor Archuleta baptized their young son, Pascual.

Pascual decided to return to Texas, however, so he could attend Valley Grande Academy with his friends. Following his graduation in 1954, Pascual traveled down to the Adventist school in Montemorelos where he studied for the next two years. The Northern Mexico Mission recognized the great potential in Pascual and called him into the ministry. He spent five and a half years in that mission before the Southern California Conference called him back to the States and gave him the Santa Paula Spanish Church to pastor.

In 1964, the Santa Paula Spanish Church was moved to Oxnard, where it still meets. But that same year Peña would return to Texas to pastor the El Paso Spanish Church. Five years later, another pastoral transfer would take him to the Mercedes and McAllen Spanish Churches, where, 34 years earlier, his family had originally come to know the Adventist message.

The Lord blessed Elder Peña's ministry. Soon his district grew and the Harlingen and Brownsville churches, on the southernmost tip of Texas, had spawned off the mother church. After eight years in that district, and with just over 20 years of service in the Adventist Church, Elder Peña asked for a year's leave of absence. Though he later became a successful businessman, he never forgot the church. Twelve churches in the southern part of Mexico have been financed by Elder Peña, as well as two Spanish churches in southern Texas.

Peña is very musically talented, with an outstanding voice, which he continues to use for the Lord. During his pastoral years, he recorded three sacred cassettes, using the profits to provide scholarships for Hispanic students. For the past 12 years, he has served as the lay pastor of the Donna Spanish Church, one of the churches he helped establish in southern Texas. The Donna Spanish Church has 110 members.

❖ FALFURRIAS CHURCH

Falfurrias is located between Corpus Christi and McAllen, Texas off highway 281. From the earliest accounts, it seems that in 1924 Pastor V. Cunil and his wife, Magdalena, who were originally from Spain, came to Falfurrias, Texas from Phoenix, Arizona. For several months they ministered to a small group of Hispanic Adventist believers in the area who were members of the Espiridión and Macedonia Lara family of El Rancho de Los Laureles en Parrita. Before Pastor Cunil left in 1925, Espiridión, his wife and seven of their children were baptized in Riviera, Texas.⁴⁰

In 1927, Pastor Carlos Nicolás arrived in Falfurrias to further help establish other members of the Lara family in the truth.

Isaac Lara

One of Espiridión Lara's sons, José, was baptized in 1930 along with his wife, Paulita González Lara. That same year, on May 5, José and Paulita were blessed with a son, little Isaac Lara. At a very early age, Isaac showed great promise. His father would put him on the platform so he could repeat his memory verses. Isaac attended Sandia View Academy and married Gladys Suárez Raymond in 1948. He attended La Sierra College (1960-66) where he studied for the ministry.

While at La Sierra, Lara's financial needs became such that his wife, Gladys, was going to have to find a job outside the home. Gladys, however, did not want to leave her small daughter, Rosalie, with a babysitter, so she decided to start up a business of her own. "Isaac," she pleaded with her husband, "just get me a fruit stand and I know I can make money selling fruit along the road." Isaac was a little skeptical at first, but decided to give it a try.

Gladys set up a stand near Loma Linda along Route 99, which today has given way to Interstate 10. At the time, it was the main road between Los Angeles and Palm Springs. She would buy fruit from the local orchards and sell them, as well as freshly-squeezed orange juice, to travelers. Some of those she remembers stopping by were such famous people as John Wayne, Desi Arnaz and Sophia Loren. Pretty soon, her business began to take off. Truckers began stopping by and asking if she could get them produce to take to the East Coast. She began supplying them with oranges, dates, olives and avocados. Eventually, she opened up and operated five more stands besides her contracting business. She was making so much money that she built a mansion on the hills of Loma Linda and bought herself a brand new Cadillac.

Isaac was greatly encouraged with her success and the thought crossed his mind that perhaps he should consider going into the business with her full time and leaving school. In fact, Isaac would study for one quarter and then take off two quarters to work with the business. Gladys, however, encouraged him to keep preparing for the ministry. But it took a narrow escape with death to convince him that she was right.

"Lord, I'm Your Man. Save me!"

One evening in December of 1962, Isaac drove from La Sierra College out to the main fruit stand in Loma Linda to relieve his wife. Gladys took the money she had made that day and left around 5 o'clock with their daughter. Isaac sold \$300 more before beginning to lock up at 6 o'clock. He had no idea that three armed men were hiding in the orchard behind his stand waiting to rob him. When the time was right, they stormed him. Isaac tried to fight them off, but to no avail. They forced him back into the orchard, where they tied him to a tree with some wires, beat him and blindfolded him with his own sweater.

After emptying the cash register of the \$300, they took the keys to his Plymouth convertible, jumped in the car and started to make their getaway. Suddenly, the leader had a



José and Paulita Lara, parents of Isaac Lara, from Falfurrias, Texas.



Elder Isaac Lara and wife Gladys on their 50th Wedding Anniversary, August

Isaac. Racing back to the car, he yelled, "Let's get out of here!" and the three screeched out onto the highway and sped off.

Isaac was left alone. When he could not hear them anymore, he yelled at the top of his lungs for help. A neighbor, who heard his calls, came, untied him and called the sheriff. It was right then and there that Isaac determined in his heart that he would finish his studies and become a minister after all. God had miraculously delivered Isaac because he was destined to become a great evangelist. In a matter of a few days, all three of the fugitives were apprehended and put in jail.

One of the Unsung Heroes

Isaac finished his studies in 1966. Immediately upon graduating, he received a call from Elder George H. Rustad to work in the northern Spanish district of New Mexico. As a young minister, Pastor Lara would preach every Sabbath at each of his four churches. At 9:30 he would be at the Dixon Church, and at 11:30 at the Santa Fe Church. In the afternoon, he would drive to Cañón Plaza to preach at 3 p.m. Then he would finish off the day by preaching at Tres Piedras around 6 p.m. By the time he finished

second thought. "Wait a minute," he told his buddies. Pulling out his gun, he said, "I'm going to go back and kill that guy because he can identify us." His buddies tried to dissuade him. "Forget it," they said. Let's get out of here." But the leader was determined.

Even though Isaac could not see through his blindfold, he could hear the footsteps of the gunman coming toward him. Then he felt the gun at his head.

Lord!" Isaac cried out. "I'm your man. Please save my life." Suddenly, a powerful, bright light appeared, knocking the gunman to the ground. Thoroughly frightened and confused, the gunman forgot all about



Old Dixon Church in New Mexico, 1952.

making the rounds, he had driven close to 300 miles in one day. Needless to say, the people loved the Laras for making the sacrifice to be with them every Sabbath.

Pastor Lara later became one of the outstanding Hispanic evangelists in the Division, baptizing thousands of souls during his ministry. He has worked in the Pacific Union, Mid-America Union, Southwestern Union and the North Pacific Union. He is indeed one of the unsung heroes of the Hispanic work.

Samuel and Olga Lara⁴¹

Isaac's younger brother, Sam (Samuel) and his wife, Olga, have lived in South Texas all their lives. Sam lived in Falfurrias and Olga was originally from Mercedes. They met through business ties. Samuel's father raised watermelon and Olga's father would travel to Falfurrias to buy them for resale at the markets.

Today, Sam and Olga raise their own watermelon on the family 500 acres in Falfurrias. Although they were not called to be the front-line soul winners that Isaac and Mary were, God has used them as strong witnesses in their community. Everyone from miles around know the Laras are Seventh-day Adventists and that they don't do business or work on the Sabbath. They do not harvest their watermelons on Saturday even if they are ready to be picked. All watermelon farmers know that when their watermelons reach their peak for harvesting, they need to be harvested immediately. One more day in the sun could severely sunburn them and render them unmarketable.

But the Laras always trusted God. When their crops were ready on Sabbath, God always brought clouds and cool weather to preserve them until Sunday. Farming for many is a big gamble because they depend on the rain and the sun to mature and ripen their crops. But Sam says, "It's not a gamble when you make God your partner." Olga adds, "I wish I had kept a diary of every year that we planted and harvested watermelon. For each year was a unique challenge in its own. And we have a different story of God's blessing for each of those 30 years that we've farmed."

Take the times when hailstorms destroyed fields of watermelon all around their fields, but none of the hail fell on Sam and Olga's crops. In fact, Olga said that in their 30 years of raising watermelon, they have never fully lost a crop. And in a good, rainy year, they have produced 100 semi-truckloads of watermelon, each weighing 50,000 pounds, for a whopping total of five million pounds of watermelon!

These people have been generous with their Falfurrias church and both have been very active. Sam is the first elder and Olga heads up the Community Services as well as teaches Sabbath school. They also share the work of treasurer for the church. Both Sam and Olga believe that their faith and reliance on God has been the secret of their success.

❖ HOUSTON

Pioneers of the Houston Robertson Spanish Church⁴²

By all accounts, Santos and Lidia Herrera, seemed to be the couple that instigated the beginning of the Robertson Spanish Church, the first Spanish church in Houston.

At the tender age of 11, Lidia Ruiz was baptized in Tamaulipas, Mexico in 1941, by Pastor José Castillo, the same pastor who had worked in the southern part of Texas. Santos, Lidia's husband-to-be, was baptized the following year by Pastor Emilio Ponce, the Mexi-

can author of one of the most popular songs in the Spanish Adventist Hymnal: “Más Allá Del Sol” (Far Beyond the Sun).

Santos and Lidia Herrera

Santos and Lidia grew up in the same *barrio*, Mante, Tamaulipas, Mexico. They fell in love and were married in 1944. Times were hard financially and the fact that they were Adventists caused problems for them in the all-Catholic community. So they moved to Olmito, between Brownsville and San Benito, in the southern tip of Texas. Though they found relief from religious persecution there, they would not find spiritual fellowship. Looking for a Spanish Adventist church in Olmito, they were disappointed to find that there was none. The nearest one, they were told, was 16 miles to the north in Harlingen. But with no automobile, and the fear of possibly meeting up with the border patrol, they could not travel far from Olmito. So for the next ten years they were unable to attend church.

In 1955, the Herreras, along with their five children, moved up the coast to Houston. After they established themselves, they again looked for an Adventist church to attend, but discovered that there was no Adventist Spanish work in Houston. After residing two years in Houston they began attending the Houston Central English Church, even though they did not feel comfortable worshipping in English. Since they had been away from the church for so long, Lidia approached the pastor, Ray Thurman, and asked him to rebaptize her. After the baptism, she told the pastor, “Pray for my husband to be rebaptized. I know that once he’s baptized, he’ll work hard for the church.” And that’s exactly what happened.

Separate Church Services for the Spanish Group

Three months later, Santos was rebaptized. “We’re going to work for the cause of Christ,” he told his wife. “We should have Spanish work here in Houston.” He had a longing in his heart for a Spanish church where they could worship *en el idioma del cielo*, (in the language of heaven). There were three other Mexican families in the church and Santos approached Pastor Thurman with the idea of starting a Spanish Sabbath school class. Elder Thurman was all for the idea and provided them with one of the school classrooms as well as Spanish Sabbath school quarterlies. Mrs. Thurman even volunteered to play the piano for them. This arrangement was fine for a while, but then they began to dream of having the 11 o’clock service in Spanish also. Since none of them felt that they could preach, Elder Thurman contacted *La Voz de la Esperanza* and asked if they could send some taped sermons for the group to use on Sabbaths. Santos bought a \$200 tape recorder, which was an expensive piece of equipment at the time, and the members began to listen to the *La Voz* speaker, Braulio Pérez Marcio, preach every Sabbath.

But they were not satisfied just listening to sermons. They had the Hispanic desire in them to share their faith. So each Sabbath after church, they would take the tape recorder and tapes and go out to share the messages with other Hispanics in the area. Then they offered the tapes to the local Spanish radio station. Félix Morales, the owner of the *La Tremenda*, (the tremendous one) KLBL radio station, liked the programs so much that he played them every Sunday morning. This created a lot of interest among the Hispanic community. *La Voz* sent the members small cards to give to interested listeners so they could contact *La Voz* directly. The Herreras also went to the English churches in the area to

look for other Hispanic Adventists to join them in worship. In eight months, there were 25 to 30 attending the group.

A Pastor for the Spanish Group

Lidia now went to the conference to ask Ben Leach, the president, for help in getting a Hispanic pastor for their growing group. Elder Leach found a Colombian pastor, Jorge Rendón, who agreed to work with the Spanish group for a small stipend of \$50.00 per month. Pastor Rendón was a widower and stayed with the Herrera family. He turned out to be a blessing for the Spanish group. The work grew and they were organized into a church on August 11, 1961.

But they were still meeting in the chapel of the Houston Central English Church. It wasn't until 1964, after Pastor Frank Martínez and his wife, Alice, came from California to pastor the church that they were able to obtain their own church building. Pastor Martínez told his little congregation, "If you expect to continue growing, you need to move out of the English-speaking church and into a building of your own."

First they rented a Pentecostal church on Maquia Street in the Mexican barrio on the north side of Houston. Shortly after, young Dr. Peter Valdez and his wife, Teresa, came from Guadalajara, Mexico where he had studied medicine. They joined the Spanish church, and with their help, the group grew to 80 members. Dr. Valdez conducted many Five Day Stop Smoking Plans, gave health lectures and worked with the evangelists.

Raising Funds for a New Spanish Church in Houston

Pastor Martínez launched an aggressive campaign to raise the necessary funds for the building project. One of the creative ideas he came up with was to give everyone a "talent." The adult members were given "talents" of \$20.00 each to invest. Each child was given \$5.00 to do the same. They were not to bury their talents, but, as the Bible taught, to make them grow and increase in value.

Some of the men took part-time and weekend painting jobs, using the \$20.00 to buy the cans of paint and donating all their profit to the building fund. Some of the ladies used their \$20.00 to buy ingredients for tamales and sold them. They, too, gave all their earnings to the church building fund. The children thought about what they could do and then bought gasoline for their lawn mowers with their \$5.00 talents. They cut lawns around their *barrios* and put the profit toward the new church. Some of the members earned up to \$600.00 with their \$20.00 talents. The investing of their talents plus their personal pledges and donations brought in enough funding to buy a piece of property and build their new church.

The Houston Robertson Spanish Church

In 1965, the members purchased a piece of property on 3218 Robertson Street, near the Herrera home, for \$6,000. Mr. Herrera was a construction contractor so he got all the families together to help build the church. It took three years, but they finished the 250-seat capacity building in 1969, at a cost of \$21,000. Then they had several campaigns by evangelists Braulio Pérez Marcio, Víctor Collins and Xavier Soto Valle from California.

On the day of the inauguration and dedication of the new church building, September 13, 1969, the church reached a landmark with the baptism of Guadalupe Martínez who became the 100th member of the church.⁴³

**VBS at
McKee
Spanish
Church in
Houston,
Texas,
1963.**



Pastor Benjamín Colón came from Puerto Rico to pastor the church in 1968 and remained there for the next ten years. It was Pastor Colón who began spawning new churches in Houston. He sent out groups which started the Rosenberg Spanish and Magnolia Park Spanish Churches, plus three others. Five churches were spawned by the Robertson Spanish Church. The Magnolia church, led by Mr. and Mrs. Daniel Villareal, Lidia Humada, and José Resendiz, grew to more than 300 members in a matter of a few years.

Pastors of the Robertson Spanish Church

The following were pastors of the Robertson Spanish Church: Jorge Rendón (1961-63), Frank Martínez (1963-65), Ramiro Alonso (1965-67), Benjamín Colón (1968-78), Diego Pérez (1978-84), Moisés Ponce (1984-90), Orlando Zaceta (1991-98), and Víctor Aispuro (1999-).

Magnolia Park Spanish Church and the Ochoas⁴⁴

One of the families who were baptized into the Magnolia Church was the Ochoas. José and Esperanza Ochoa were members of a local Catholic church in Houston. However, their children, Federico (Fred), Julio and Elizabeth were members of the Baptist church. Every Sunday after the Protestant service, their parents would take them to the 12:30 mass. When José's oldest son Fred, was about to start middle school, his parents were apprehensive because they didn't want him to go to a public school, but neither did they want him to go to the Catholic school. So they asked Liliana Hernández, a highly respected friend of theirs who held a high position in the Catholic Diocese of Houston and

Galveston, which school would be the best for their children. To their surprise, she recommended Gulfhaven Adventist Junior Academy. Through the Bible classes there, the Ochoa children learned all about the Sabbath, the state of the dead, and most of all the second coming of Christ. They then urged their parents to accept what they had been learning and join the Adventist church.

When Víctor Collins came to pastor the Magnolia church in 1983, he held a Revelation Seminar, which the Ochoas attended. They accepted the truth and were baptized. This was a hard decision for Mr. Ochoa, however, because his employer would not grant him the Sabbaths off. But he was faithful to his convictions and later was able to start his own business as a residential building contractor. His wife also established a successful commercial car wash company which proved a blessing to hundreds of needy Adventist students from Montemorelos University and colportors and pastors from Brazil. Mrs. Ochoa would hire the students during vacations and breaks, enabling them to earn money to pay their school bills.

Ochoa Children

The Ochoa children are all active members of the church. Fred helped pioneer the first Adventist Youth Federation for Hispanics in Houston. Julio also became active in the Houston Youth Federation. He later established a philanthropic organization (AMIM) which provided scholarships for needy Hispanic medical and pastoral students. He has raised over \$250,000 for his missionary efforts that reached out to over 4,000 in Cuba with humanitarian aid.

An interesting note to this story is that the "Catholic" lady who recommended the Adventist school was influential in bringing hundreds to the Adventist Church, most of them from the Catholic church. Unbeknown to the Catholic community, she had continued working in the Catholic diocese even after converting to the Adventist faith. She is still known for her outstanding missionary efforts in Houston and Mexico.

Presently here are 22 Spanish churches in the Houston area.

❖ DALLAS

Dallas Spanish Church

The Oak Cliff Spanish Church in Dallas, Texas was the **first Spanish church organized in Northern Texas**. The earliest recollection of its beginnings takes us back to 1930, when Anastacio Salazar pastored the small church in Dallas. At that time they were meeting in a little church building on McKinnon Street in the Mexican barrio of Dallas. But by 1936, Elder Salazar had returned to work in Mexico and the church was without pastoral leadership. But Lucio Treviño, a layman, took charge of the group of three families and his daughter, María Treviño, taught the group of 18 children at the small church school. María is the aunt of Elder Max Treviño, who is president of the Southwestern Union Conference.

The End of the First Era

The church seemed to do comparatively well on its own until the Great Depression. With the loss of jobs and income, members were forced to move to other areas where they

could survive. Others returned to Mexico and immigration came to a standstill. With no official leadership and many of the members relocating, the membership dwindled until finally, in 1938, the Texas Conference closed the church and the building was sold. Thus ended the first era of Hispanic work in Northern Texas.

The Beginning of the Second Era

Not until 1950 did the Hispanic work in Dallas resurrect. The year before, Rubén Ponce, a young literature evangelist, and his wife had arrived in Dallas to sell books. But, finding no Spanish church, they joined the Central Expressway English Church on Live Oak Street. When the Hernández family arrived from Mexico the following year, they joined the Ponces in the English church. José A. Hernández was a very active, missionary-minded member and asked the pastor if they could at least organize a Spanish Sabbath school class in his church. A short time later, Omar Arias and his family joined them as did a family by the name of Tobías.

In his outreach visitation in the Hispanic community, José Hernández found Patricio Moya, who had been a member of the original church on McKinon Street 20 years before, in 1930, and he began worshiping with the group again.

With the five families and a growing number of visitors, Brother Hernández decided to make another bold move. He asked for a room in the church school so they could have their own 11 o'clock service. Even though they didn't have a pastor, Omar Arias and Rubén Ponce took turns preaching. Soon, young Hispanic theology students from the college in Keene (like Teddy Ramírez and Elías Gómez) began attending and practiced their sermons on the fledgling group. In 1961, Aurelio and Chela Hernández and their family moved to Dallas from New Jersey. It seemed that things were going very well.

But in 1962, the group lost its lay leaders. José Hernández and his family moved to Keene, the Arias family went to Grand Prairie, and the Ponce family joined the English church. This left the group of 25 members with no leadership.

The First Pastor in 30 Years

In 1962, the Texas Conference called Pastor Jorge Rendón from Houston to pastor the Dallas Spanish Church. Rendón pastored the church for four years, doubling the membership to 50 members. His first baptism was held June, 1963 in Seagoville, a suburb of Dallas, where he baptized 15 new members: the families of Catalino Chávez, Eufracio Díaz and Arnulfo Rodríguez.

In the spring of 1964, Pastor Rendón baptized the families of Antonio Treviño, Juan Castillo and David Rodríguez, making a total of ten families in the church. By now, they had outgrown the rented facilities at the Dallas English Church. Because most of the members lived in the southern part of Dallas, in Ferris and Seagoville, they thought that would be the best place to either build or buy a church. So every Sunday they would go out in two or three cars, looking for an empty lot or a church to buy.

First Spanish Church Building in Northern Texas

One Sunday evening, they found a building they liked on Veterans Drive. From a nearby phone Pastor Rendón called Elder Ben Leach, the president of the conference so

he could come and see the place for himself. Elder Leach said he would be over there in thirty minutes. When he got there and saw the place, he didn't like it, mainly because it was in the Mexican barrio. "But," he said, "I'm going to check with my fellow officers and I'll get back with you."

The members, of course, were disappointed and began to feel a little impatient at this apparent delay. But, just as he promised, the president called them in the middle of the following week. "I have a nice surprise for you," he told them. "The English Oak Cliff Church is just about finished with the construction of their new church and they will be selling their old church which is located at 229 Hollywood Street. If you are interested in it, they are willing to sell it to you for \$24,000." The members were elated! This blessing greatly simplified the search and relocation of the Dallas Spanish Church. It also illustrates the truth that God sometimes says "no" to some of our plans in order to give us something better.

On August 15, 1965, they celebrated their first Sabbath in the new church, which became the first Adventist Spanish church building in the northern half of Texas. In October of the following year, Pastor Rendón retired and moved to California. In March of 1967, Elder Joe Espinosa was called from California to be the pastor and he doubled the membership again, from 50 to 100.

Today there are 13 Spanish churches, with 2,500 members in what is called the "Great Metroplex" of the Dallas-Ft Worth area.

Pastors of the Dallas Church

Anastacio Salazar, Jorge Rendón, Joe Espinosa, Elías Gómez, R. R. Roberts, Norberto Mulinari, Onésimo Mejía, Antonio Vargas, Orlando Záceta, Abel Paulín, Carlos G. Martín, Ignacio Faz, Aníval Herrera, and David Contreras.

Texas Hispanic Coordinators

Onésimo Mejía was appointed in 1979 as the **first Hispanic Coordinator in the Texas Conference**. Bobby L. Roberts succeeded Mejía. Carlos Martín became the third coordinator, followed by Frank Moore. Elder José A. Piantini is the present Hispanic Coordinator. Born in the Dominican Republic, Piantini attended Antillian College in Puerto Rico and later earned a Master of Business Administration degree from the Universidad Interamericana. He taught for 35 years, first as an academy teacher and later as a college professor. Besides being a church pastor, he has also served as a treasurer, secretary and auditor of a conference. He is married to Sarah Alvarez.

Hispanics at the Vanguard in Texas Conference

The Spanish work in the Texas Conference has become one of the pacesetters in the North American Division. When Elder Cyril Miller accepted the presidency of the Texas Conference in 1974, the Spanish work was not moving at its potential when you consider that in Texas, one in four persons is an Hispanic. There were only seven Spanish churches with a little over 500 members. But Elder Miller saw the tremendous potential and had a vision of what could be done. During his ten years as president, he brought in top soulwinning workers from eleven Spanish countries, building a blue-ribbon team of Hispanic pastors. And the Hispanic work began to explode with growth.

Hispanic Work Flourishes

Some of the pastors who made the work grow in leaps and bounds were: Onésimo Mejía, who became Hispanic Coordinator for the Texas Conference; Dr. Carlos Martín from Argentina who baptized up to 240 souls in one year and raised up many churches. He later became the Hispanic coordinator and set high goals for his lay people and pastors. Evangelist Víctor Collins, from Argentina, served as the Spanish evangelist for both the conference and the union, baptizing literally thousands in his combined efforts. Pastor Pascual Peña, a native of Texas, made a significant contribution to the growth of the work with his spiritual gifts for planting and building new churches.

Pastor José Pechero from Argentina has an outstanding record of baptizing over a hundred almost every year he has been in the conference. Pechero built the McAllen South Spanish church and raised the membership to a high of 600. Then he took a call to Houston to build the Bellaire church, which became the largest Spanish church in the city. Presently he is building the first Mega-Spanish church in the Valley with a capacity of over 1000.

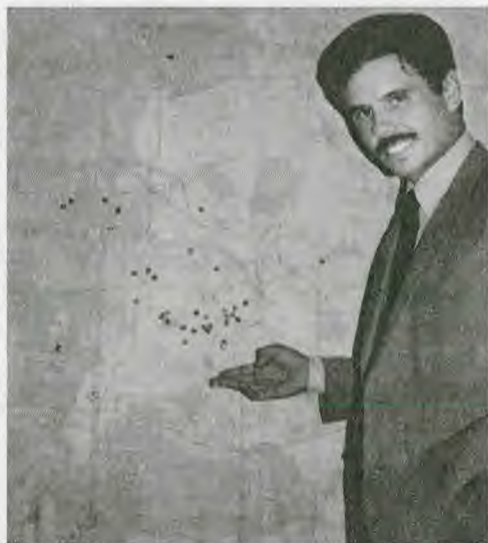
Cyril Miller also brought in top Hispanic evangelists like Raúl Sánchez, Víctor Schulz and Carlos Aeschlimann. Kenneth Cox held several successful Spanish evangelistic efforts in Texas. Elder Cyril Miller himself, as president, held many Spanish evangelistic efforts, with translators, throughout the conference.

The Spanish work grew so much that soon the annual Spanish campmeeting became the largest campmeeting of the Texas Conference and quickly outgrew the capacity attendance at Nameless Valley Ranch, the Texas Conference campgrounds.

The growth of the Spanish work in Texas owes much of its success to the financial backing of several successful Hispanic professionals and businessmen. Literally millions of dollars have been donated for church buildings. Some of the outstanding donors are: Ramón Longoria, Pascual Peña, Dr. Isaac López, Dr. Arturo López, Dr. Rubén Pechero, Pedro Valdez, Juan Pupo, José Resendiz, Dr. Carlos Japas, and José Ochoa.

Phenomenal Growth

The road from the Salazars, the Castillos, and others of the first generation of Hispanic Adventists in Texas had been long and slow at first, but as the 1990's were ending, the Spanish ministry in Texas was among the strongest in North America. The growth during the last 25 years has been phenomenal! From seven churches and 500 members in 1974, Elder José Piantini, Hispanic Coordinator, reports that the Hispanic work has grown to 61 Spanish churches and 19 groups, for a total of 80 congregations with a membership of 11,294.



Dr. Carlos Martín, Former Hispanic Coordinator of the Texas Conference

Hispanics constitute 35 percent of the conference membership but are responsible for 60 percent of the total conference baptisms. In 1999, their baptisms totaled 1,381. Hispanic tithe for 1999 was over \$5.3 million.

THE TEXICO CONFERENCE

The Texico Conference is comprised of the territory of New Mexico, except for San Juan County, and the counties in western Texas. New Mexico, discovered and largely settled by Spaniards in the late 1500's, was ruled by Mexican colonialists for almost 25 years, from 1821-1845. However, the colors of the state flag are the same as Spain's flag, red and yellow, reminding one of the fact that New Mexico was once Spanish territory.⁴⁵

It is the fifth largest state in area and is called the "Land of Enchantment." Three major groups of people reside in New Mexico: Indians, Spaniards and English-speaking Americans. New Mexico is officially a bilingual state with all state documents written in both English and Spanish.

New Mexico claims the oldest seat of government in the United States. Santa Fe, which, in 1610, was the capital of a Spanish province, continues to this day as the capital.⁴⁶

Another historical site is *El Camino Real*, the oldest road in the United States. In 1581, the first travelers used this road, which runs from Santa Fe all the way to Chihuahua, Mexico.⁴⁷ Today it is Interstate 25.

Sharing Leadership in the Texico Conference

Although the Spanish work in Texico started at the turn of the 20th century with Marcial Serna and J. A. Leland, it did not flourish until the 1970's. In 1975, the Adventist Hispanic work had become well developed and integrated into the Texico Conference administration. Besides a coordinator of Hispanic ministry, four Hispanic members sat regularly with the conference committee. The conference also sent an Hispanic representative to the Southwestern Union committee and another as a member of the Southwestern Union College board.⁴⁸ Max Martínez became secretary of the Texico Conference, a post which he left before 1980 to become a vice president of the Southwestern Union. Hispanic officers of the Texico Conference became common. In 1991, an Hispanic first took place when Ralph Orduño was elected as Texico's president.

Ralph Orduño⁴⁹

Although Elder Ralph Orduño is not a son of the Southwestern Union territory, his administrative abilities have impacted the overall work of the Texico Conference. Ralph is a third-generation Adventist from South Central Los Angeles, California. His father, Eduardo Orduño was a policeman. His mother, Lucille, was a housewife. The real influence on his life, however, was his grandmother, Cornelia Cobos, who always prayed for him. Ralph's grandparents, Rafael and Cornelia Cobos, were among the first Hispanic members in Los Angeles, California. In 1947, his family, including his grandmother, moved to Phoenix, Arizona.

Ralph felt the call to the ministry early in life, but did not act on it until nearly 30 years later. In 1953, he went to the Marine Corps where he served for three years. Upon his discharge in 1957, he enrolled in Arizona State University and that same year he met Dolores Figueroa, who had just finished her studies at the University. They were married



Elder Ralph Orduño, first Hispanic conference president (Texico).

in 1958. In 1967, he felt the call to prepare himself for the ministry, and went to River Plate College in Argentina where he studied for a year and one-half. When he returned to Phoenix, however, he figured there was no work for him in the Spanish ministry, so he started up his own business—a corrugated container plant. But God was still working on him.

Orduño Enters the Ministry

Elder Carlos Ayala, Hispanic Coordinator for the Southern California Conference, asked if Orduño would be interested in pastoring a church in Southern California. But before he could materialize a call for Ralph, Carlos passed away. In 1975, Elder Benavides followed through on the call but relied on Elder Arteaga who was Hispanic Coordinator for the Southern California Conference to actually invite Ralph to be the Associate and

Youth Pastor of the Spanish-American Church with Rubén Ruiz, the senior pastor.

From there Elder Orduño worked with Elder Isaac Lara as an associate in evangelism and then pastored the Lynwood Spanish Church. In 1977, Elder Calkins called him to be the conference Spanish evangelist when Elder Lara took another call. Ralph was then invited to Perú in 1981 to serve as Sabbath School/Personal Ministries Director. But like so many other missionaries, he wore several hats. He was Director of Lay Activities, Sabbath School, Communications, ADRA, and Evangelist. On his permanent return, Elder Orduño was invited to be the pastor of the San Francisco church. From there, Don Sullivan, president of the Texico Conference, called him to serve as Secretary of the conference, a post he held from 1987-1990. At the 1991 conference session, Elder Orduño was elected president—the first Hispanic conference president in the North American Division, a position he held for six years. Presently, Elder Orduño is the Hispanic Coordinator and Evangelist for the North Pacific Union.

Symbolizing a New Generation of Hispanic Ministers

When Lee-Roy Chacón became executive secretary of the Texico Conference in 1997, he became only one of a continuing line of Spanish-speaking leaders. But in a sense, he symbolized the new generation of Hispanic ministers, bringing with him two baccalaureate degrees and a master's degree, besides 17 years of experience in the ministry in California and Alaska.⁵⁰

It is noteworthy that the Spanish-speaking sector of church population began its most productive growth after native Hispanic leaders assumed leadership of the work.

❖ ALBUQUERQUE CHURCH

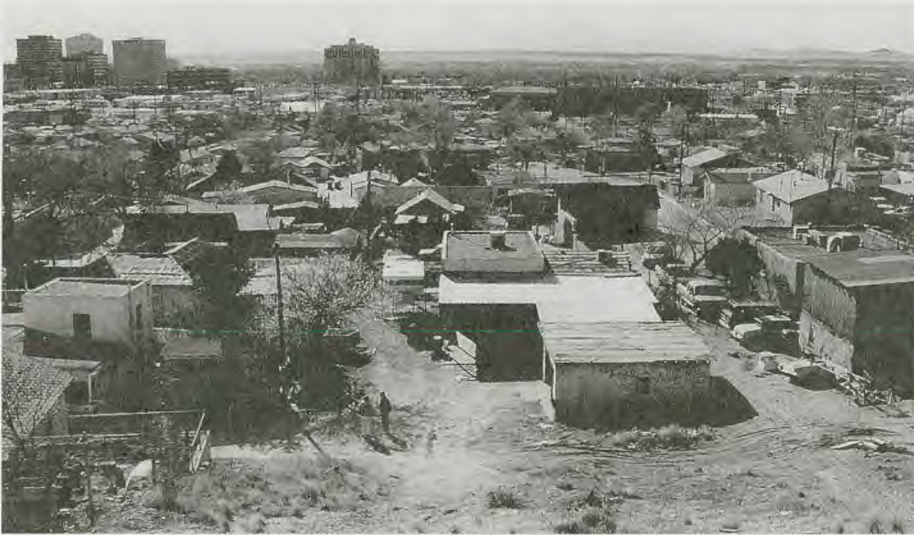
First Hispanic Adventists Baptized in the Division—1888

According to some reports, three Hispanics (Florentino Martínez and his married sister Librada Sedillo and sister-in-law Luisa Martínez) were baptized in 1888 near Albu-

querque, New Mexico. They had been studying the Bible on their own and were convinced that Saturday was the Sabbath. When a visiting Adventist pastor came in contact with them, he gave them further studies before baptizing them. At that time there were only three organized churches in New Mexico: Catskill (1896), Hagerman (1896) and Farmington (1899). Therefore, these three Hispanics remained isolated members until fifteen years later when they became charter members of the first Spanish church in Albuquerque at its organization in 1903. Four years prior to that, in 1899, the **Sánchez church in Arizona, was organized and is therefore considered the first Spanish church in the North American Division.**

Augustine Sánchez Pastors the Albuquerque Church

In fact, Augustine Sánchez, one of the grandsons of Lorenzo Sánchez, the patriarch of the members of the first Adventist church, became the pastor of the Albuquerque church in 1925. This is significant because Augustine's wife, Abner Ann Romero Sánchez, is the aunt of one of the early members of the Albuquerque church, Larry Vigil, when it



Old Martínez Town Church Building (center of Picture) in Albuquerque, New Mexico, 1998.

was still meeting in Martínez Town. Larry remembers being baptized in a metal water tank in 1936 by Elder George Casebeer who was in charge of all the Spanish work in the conference. In 1943, Elder Reymundo (Ray) Archuleta came to pastor the Martínez Town congregation and under his leadership they built a new church building with a 200- seat capacity at 1029 Sixth Street in Albuquerque. Larry is proud to say that he was one of those that helped Elder Archuleta in the construction of the new church.

Albuquerque Becomes the Center of Activity

Similar to the Texas Conference, no hub of Hispanic ministry existed in the Texico Conference, but during the 1940's and 1950's, Albuquerque came to be one of the most

active and productive centers, partly because the Spanish-American Seminary was situated only 15 miles north of the city. An end of an era occurred, however, when the Seminary closed in 1952 and the campus became the conference boarding academy. But Albuquerque, the largest city in New Mexico, also saw the development of one of the most influential of all the Spanish churches in the Texico Conference.

Widespread involvement by laypersons was typical of Spanish congregations, a fact that became evident in Albuquerque during the 1950's. In 1952, William Goransson, pastor of the local church, began a set of meetings and then turned them over to the laity to keep going.⁵¹ Later in the same year, José Espinosa, an experienced colporteur, and his two sons, Joe, Jr. and Willie, organized a radio program carried by an Albuquerque station. Patrocinio Martínez, a convert from Reserve, New Mexico, also was a part of the broadcast team.⁵²

Five years later the program was still on the air. Known by the name, *Los Heraldos de la Mañana*, it was a special project of Hispanic Adventists, but its growing influence was something the conference could not ignore. After an appeal by Roberto Pérez, an Hispanic pastor, the Texico Conference committee voted to devote four official offerings per year in the Spanish churches to support the broadcast.⁵³

Building Plan for Albuquerque Church

The Albuquerque church on Sixth Street served the Hispanic members well until they outgrew it. In 1965, they bought four acres of land on NW Iliff Street. The building plan was to be in two phases. First, a large auditorium with a seating capacity of 800 was to be constructed with the plan of using it as a church and an evangelistic center until the second phase, the sanctuary, could be built. However, plans changed and in 1987, the church sold the auditorium along with the one acre it was sitting on. With that money, along with fundraising, the members were able to build a church valued at \$1.5 million with a seating capacity of 350, an overflow capacity of 500, and an \$800,000 gymnasium on the remaining three acres. With 390 members at present, they have already outgrown the building.

The Albuquerque church has spawned two other churches: the Bilingual Church and the North Valley Church. They are in the process of starting another group in South Valley where there are 30,000 Hispanics.

Pastors of the Albuquerque Church

The following is a partial list of the ministers who pastored the Albuquerque church: Marcial Serna, Augustine Sánchez, George Casebeer, Ray Archuleta, Pascual Peña, William Goransson, Reynaldo del Sol, Isaac Lara, Manuel López, Raúl González, Moisés Ponce and Ramón Cano.

❖ EL PASO, TEXAS

The Beginnings of the Spanish Work in Western Texas

In 1915, J. A. Leland worked in El Paso, Texas and reported that a Spanish church had been organized there. Among the first Anglo evangelists to evangelize the Hispanic people in the Texas Conference were: A. G. Nelson, G. W. Casebeer, Burt Bray, and F. E. Wilson.

By 1941, the conference reported that there were eight Spanish churches and 300 Hispanic members, which represented 20 percent of the conference constituency. With that number of Hispanic members, it was notable that there were two Spanish church schools and one junior academy. Two Spanish campmeetings were held in 1944; one at Reserve, with 150 in attendance, and the other at Sandoval, with 200 attending.⁵⁴

El Paso⁵⁵

When Mary Vigil arrived in El Paso in 1950, there was already a small group of Hispanic members worshipping at the corner of 8th and Olive in a two-story house. Pastor Gabriel Arregui was the pastor who baptized her. She was told that the Spanish work started as far back as 1933. Amparo Calzada was one of the original members who met in a house on Durazno Street. Others were Refugio Saiz and Ruth Izquierdo. Louie Alvarez joined in the early 1940's.⁵⁶

Raúl Villegas, son of Pedro Villegas, one of the pillars of the Spanish work in El Paso, also had knowledge that the Spanish work started there some years before 1950. A small Spanish congregation of 20 were meeting on the corner of 8th and Olive Street in a two-story house.

Pedro Villegas, the Tailor

Pedro Villegas went to El Paso in 1947 and became one of the pillars of the El Paso Church. He was a faithful Adventist for many years, passing away in 1997 at the age of 93. Pedro had been a tailor by profession. One day, a customer, José Rubí, needed a suit and went to Pedro's shop. When the suit was finished, Rubí showed it to Juan Pérez, a 24-year-old graduate of the Tacubaya School of Evangelism in Mexico. One of Pérez' classmates was Alvaro V. Sauza, who in 1950 went to work with Braulio Pérez Marcio at *La Voz de la Esperanza*. Pérez liked the suit so much that he went to Pedro's to get one tailored for himself.

Both young men were members at the Torreón, Coahuila Seventh-day Adventist Church. Rafael Mendieta, an elder at the church, who was a compulsive individual, was also impressed with the suits that were tailored by Pedro Villegas and he went to get a suit for himself. After Mendieta was measured, he stayed there while Villegas made his suit. All the while, Mendieta talked to Villegas about the beasts and the horns of Revelation and got Villegas so intrigued and involved in the study that he was not concentrating on his work and the suit came out too big. Although this was a disaster, it gave Mendieta an opportunity to return to Pedro's shop and not only get the work corrected, but to speak to him further about the Advent message.

Pedro Villegas Shares His Faith

Pedro became interested, began attending church and in 1932, was baptized in Lerdo, Coahuila, Mexico. He immediately wanted to share his newfound faith and decided to give his relatives Bible studies at his mother's house. One of his cousins, who had studied to be a priest, but was unable to finish because of the Mexican Revolution which closed the seminary, became aware that Pedro was giving Bible studies. Being jealous for the Catholic faith, he incited some of the Catholic men in Lerdo against Pedro. One day, several men went up to the house with sticks and stones to disrupt the Bible study. Pedro, his

mother and the others who were studying with them, secured themselves in the house, expecting the worst.

But at that very moment, two drunkards passed by the group, arguing on their way to settle their dispute in a fist fight just outside of town, which was the gentlemanly way of doing things. The rowdy group of Catholic men were distracted by these arguing drunkards and thought it would be more exciting to see these two men settle their dispute than to continue to harass Pedro. So all of them followed the two drunkards to the outskirts of town. Never again were the Villegases harassed.

Pedro Villegas' Children

Pedro and his wife, Paula Eredia, had nine children: three sons and six daughters. Three of his daughters married Adventist pastors. Esther married Rodrigo Bustillos, who worked in Mexico as an evangelist and president. Raquel married Bennie García, who has pastored in the Southern California Conference. Elvia married Ignacio Faz, who has pastored in the Texas Conference and Southern California Conference. Raúl Villegas' son, Fernando, a grandson of Pedro, is a pastor in the Santa Fe, New Mexico English district.

Evangelistic Activity

In the 1950's, some of the ministers began developing an increasing role in evangelism. In 1954, Roberto Pérez conducted a seven-week series in El Paso, resulting in six baptisms with plans for a second ceremony to take place following his study with more than 20 who wished to prepare for the rite. The next year, Joe Espinosa and Reuben Schneider joined for a short series in Albuquerque.⁵⁷ Shortly thereafter Espinosa became the pastor of the El Paso church which he organized into a four-phase action program using illustrated Bible lessons. In 1957, he reported 13 baptisms in two months and 40 additional families that were studying.⁵⁸ These activities demonstrated that the Hispanic ministry in the Texico Conference was coming into its own.

Pastors of the El Paso Spanish Church

The pastors of the El Paso Spanish Church were: G. A. Schwerin, Gabriel Arregui, William Goransson, Roberto Pérez, Joe Espinosa, Raúl Sánchez, Reynaldo del Sol, Pascual Peña, Max Martínez, Isaac Lara, Manuel Cabral, Edgar Mendoza, Richard Bernal, Tony González, and Manuel Cruz.

❖ RANCHO GRANDE, RESERVE, NEW MEXICO

The Advent Message Reaches Rancho Grande

One of the most dramatic stories of the spread of Adventism among Hispanics in the Texico Conference during the 1930's was the conversion of the Martínez family in 1939. With the blood of both old Spanish settlers and Apache forebearers in their veins, this family from Rancho Grande, outside Reserve, New Mexico was a proud Catholic family. But God had His eye on them and had a plan for them in His work.

One day in July of 1938, a colporteur named José Ortega was driving from El Paso to Albuquerque by way of Reserve where he hoped to sell a few books. By the time he reached Reserve, it was near midnight. He was wondering where he would stay when

his car coughed and died right in front of the Martínez's "Rancho Grande." He got out, tried to find out the problem, but the engine was dead. Off in the distance he saw a house, but it was all dark. Not wishing to bother anyone that night, he decided to stay in his car. But it was cold and he found it very hard to sleep, especially since he had no warm clothing with him. When the sun finally came up over the mountains, he noticed smoke rising from the fireplace in the Martínez house. Ortega crawled out of his car and made his way to the house.

"*Hay gente?*" (Is anybody home?) Ortega called out.

Patrocinio, the Martínez patriarch, came to the door and greeted Ortega. When Ortega explained what had happened, Patrocinio graciously invited him in. "Sit here in the living room and warm yourself by the stove," Patrocinio said. "You must stay for breakfast."

After a delicious meal of *huevos rancheros* (sunny-side-up eggs, garnished with salsa and served with rice, beans and tortillas), Ortega was ready to tackle the day. Meanwhile, Patrocinio's sons had come to the house and Patrocinio sent them to check out Ortega's car and see what they could do to help him.

In no time, the boys found the problem and had the car running again. "How good the Lord is," Ortega said. "If the car was going to stop, this was the best place to do it. What do I owe you boys?"

They refused to accept any money. "We're happy to do this for you," they said. "In fact," Patrocinio added, "we want you to stay for dinner." They spent the morning visiting and strolling around the ranch.

"You have been so nice to me," Ortega told them. "I want to do something for you. I have some films with me. Let me show them to you."

Patrocinio's wife had suffered a heart attack and died only six weeks earlier. In the Spanish culture, the family mourned for their deceased loved one for a full year. "I'm sorry," Patrocinio told Ortega, "but we're in mourning, and we can't watch any picture films."

"But these are religious films," Ortega countered.

Patrocinio thought a bit and then said, "All right. I guess that would be okay."

So Patrocinio gathered his family together and Ortega brought in his religious films to show them. The interest was such that he ended up staying ten more days to study the Bible with them.

Conference Honors Deathbed Request

Ortega returned to Albuquerque but on his next trip to El Paso, he became ill and as he lay dying in the El Paso hospital, he remembered the Martínez family. Taking a postcard, he wrote to the conference headquarters. "I met a large, sincere family in Reserve, New Mexico—the Patrocinio Martínez family. They showed a lot of interest in the Bible. Please send someone to work with them. I'm sure they will accept the Adventist message."

Sadly, Ortega died before that postcard reached the conference office. When the conference officers received the postcard and read its message, they felt that they must respect the deathbed wish of this faithful colporteur. But they had no funds to send anyone down there. In 1939, they sent a call out to the Spanish church in Albuquerque, New Mexico for a layman to work in Reserve.

Matías Vargas Answers the Call

Matías Vargas, who had come into the church through the work of pioneer Augustine Sánchez, had been a coworker with Ortega and was touched with the dying wish of his friend. “I would like to go,” he told the conference officials. God had given Vargas a special gift in working with Catholics and he could now use it to work with the Martínez family. But there was something that he needed to take care of.

Vargas was a poor man, with no money to buy even a new pair of shoes, much less a car to drive to Reserve. In addition, he had a wife and nine children to support. But he came up with a plan and made an offer to his church. He could hitchhike to Reserve and save money that way. But what of his family? If the church could raise some money to feed his family while he was gone, he would go to Reserve. The church responded by raising \$60 and a visiting minister from the General Conference, Elder Mead Maguire, matched it with another \$60. Now Vargas knew God wanted him to go.

Poor in material goods, but rich in faith, Vargas loaded a bag with hymnals, Bibles, films and a few clothes. He then hitchhiked the 248 miles to Reserve, depending on the generosity of the people along the way to house and feed him.

When he finally reached Rancho Grande, the family patriarch, Patrocinio, welcomed Vargas, especially when he explained that he was a friend of Ortega. Patrocinio was terribly sorry to hear of Ortega’s death and explained that he and his family were also in mourning over the recent death of his wife, Rosaura.

Matías’ Prayer and His “Holey” Shoes

That evening, when the family came together at the father’s house, Vargas decided he would teach them Bible truths, particularly the second coming and the resurrection of the dead. But before he started, he asked, “Would you like for me to pray?” Knowing that they were a Catholic family, he used the word *rezar* which is the word Hispanic Catholics use for “pray.” Then, in the manner of a priest, he turned his back to them as he knelt to pray. It was only then that the Martínez boys noticed the big, gaping holes in the soles of Vargas’ boots. They could also see the newspaper that Vargas had stuffed in the holes and could not resist the temptation to make a joke of it. Whispering to each other, they said, “Let’s read the newspaper. He’s got the latest news.”

Although Vargas heard them, he continued to pray. In his prayer he mentioned what a beautiful mother Rosaura Martínez must have been in bringing up her twelve children. “Lord, I want this family to get to see their mother again. I want them to be ready when You return in the clouds of glory. And they will be ready if You’ll help them, Lord.”

When he finished praying, he heard deep, muffled sobs.⁵⁹ The boys wept for several reasons. First, they loved their mother dearly and Ortega had given them hope of seeing her again in the resurrection. But they also knew what had caused their mother’s heart attack. The family had run a dance hall where not only dancing, but drinking and fighting would take place. One of the brothers drank so much that he was nicknamed “José Botella” (Joe of the Bottle). This caused their mother a lot of emotional pain and grief, which ultimately resulted in her demise.

Within a few months, when some of the members of the family decided to accept the Adventist teachings, Patrocinio was alarmed. He did not wish his family to leave the Catholic faith.

Patrocinio's Dream

Patrocinio resisted these new teachings until God gave him a dream. In the dream, three men came to his house asking his boys to register for the war. They showed him the weapons, which were ten swords, all joined at the handle. Patrocinio could not figure out what it meant, but he knew it was important. When Vargas heard the dream, he gave the interpretation: Three men were to contact the Martínez family. Ortega had been the first and Vargas was the second. He would register them for the spiritual war, and a third man would come to baptize them. The ten swords represented the ten commandments. Patrocinio saw the hand of God in this dream and then not only accepted the Adventist truth, but encouraged his entire family to register for this “spiritual war” along with him.



***Elder Max Martínez
pointing to lake where
the Martínez family
members
were baptized.***

Nineteen Martínezes Baptized

The family was observing their first Sabbath when a stranger drove up to their house. As he stepped out of the car, Patrocinio cried out, “That’s the other man I saw in my dream.” It was Elder George Casebeer, who was in charge of the Spanish work in Texico. He was the minister who officiated in the baptismal ceremony in May of 1939, where 19 members of the Martínez family were baptized. Soon after that, a little church was built for the congregation and they were organized into the Rancho Grande Spanish Seventh-day Adventist church.⁶⁰

Max Converted Under a Fallen Horse

At first, young Max Martínez, Patrocinio’s son, was not always faithful in his church attendance on Sabbath mornings. His excuse was that “someone has to stay at the ranch.” And he was the one who offered to stay. One Sabbath morning, however, after everyone had left for church, he saddled up his horse and headed out for the track, which was near the house, to do some riding. For some reason, there was a metal barrel ring lying on the track, right in the path of his horse. When the horse came upon the ring, its feet got caught in it, causing the horse to fall and land right on top of Max. This could have been tragic, but the Lord had His hand over Max and all he suffered was a few scratches and

bruises. However, as Max looked up into the sky from underneath his horse, he thought, "I should have been in church. Lord, forgive me." That incident marked the moment of his true conversion.

Church School in a Dance Hall

Immediately following the baptisms, the Martínezes started a small church school for their children in a room which they built right inside the former Martínez dance hall. Elder Carl F. Staben was brought in as the pastor and his wife, Jessie, was the full-time teacher. Elder Staben helped ground the family in the faith by teaching the Bible classes for the children and going over the doctrines every Sabbath morning with the adults. He also held a Bible class each morning from 6:00 a.m. to 6:45 a.m. for the family and employees of the sawmill and as a result, a number of the employees became Adventists.⁶¹

The Martínez family experienced a tremendous change in lifestyle which did not go unnoticed in the community. Before, they had been shouting drunkards and fighting men. Now they were children of God, singing His praises. Instead of carrying guns, they carried a "two-edged sword," the Bible, as their weapon. People listened to their testimony for they had personally witnessed the transformation.

The Draft Calls Max to War

When the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor in 1941, the draft was taking the young men into the service. The Martínez boys, however, were deferred to run the ranch and the sawmill. Patrocinio wanted his sons to work in the Adventist Church. Maximiliano (Max) Martínez, who was 18 years old at the time, had every qualification for the ministry, the father felt. The church leaders agreed and so Max went to Montemorelos, Mexico to study at the Adventist school there. While there, the local draft board called him. Since all the other Martínez boys had been deferred, the board was not sympathetic when Max's brother, Marcial, met with them on Max's behalf. "Why should the Martínez boys be so special, when their own sons had gone off to war?" the board members wondered. But the church prayed and their pastor, Carl Staben, wrote to the General Conference president, Elder McElhany, who wrote a letter supporting Max's request for exemption with the weight of the Adventist church behind it. With that, the state board in Santa Fe overruled the local draft board and Max received a reclassification of 4-D. Max could now continue his studies and become a minister. He later attended the Spanish-American Seminary in New Mexico and Union College in Lincoln, Nebraska.

The Martínez Family in the Adventist Work

Young and handsome Max met vivacious and pretty Mary Espinosa while studying at the Spanish-American Seminary. Mary was an academy student and Max was continuing his ministerial studies. At the end of that year, Max became the first graduate from the Seminary. But his studies were not finished. From there he went to Lincoln, Nebraska where he received his bachelor's degree from Union College in 1947. That summer, on August 31, Max and Mary were married. This dedicated couple went on to work for the Lord in California, Chicago, the Texico Conference, Venezuela, El Paso, Texas and Denver, Colorado.

Many of the Patrocinio Martínez clan became colportors. One of them was the former



Literature evangelists in New Mexico. From right to left: Bessie and Tomacita Trujillo; Manuelita, Juanita, Soledad, and José Martínez; Manuel Romero, Jr.

“Joe of the Bottle.” Joe felt that he didn’t have long to live and wanted to go out and share his faith before he died. So he signed up as a literature evangelist and sought out his former drinking buddies. When he began witnessing to them, telling them what a difference Christ had made in his life, they knew what he was telling them was true because they had known Joe before he met Christ. His witness made such an impact on them that thirteen of those former drinking partners began studying the Bible with him and eventually joined the church. One of those was Ben García, whose story will be mentioned later. Joe’s fears of dying were unfounded, however, and he went on to become a very successful literature evangelist.

Lucas Martínez studied at Union College and became a teacher in Socorro and Albuquerque, New Mexico. While in Socorro, she met and married Elder Joe Hernández. They served in Southeastern California, Phoenix, Arizona, and the Texico Conference.

Frances Martínez studied at Southwestern Jr. College in Keene, Texas and became a teacher in Las Cruces, New Mexico.

It is interesting to note that every one of Patrocinio’s grandchildren attended church school and academy, with many graduating from college. Christian education was a high priority in the family. A number went into the professions of teaching, medicine and the ministry. One of those was Eloy Martínez, Martín’s son, who became a minister and then a missionary youth leader in Argentina and Perú. He also served as the Associate Human Relations Director in the North American Division. Currently he serves as Human Resources Director in the Southern California Conference. Martín’s daughter, Alicia, married a Bible instructor, Cruz Castro, who was serving in the school at Linda Vista, Mexico. Pauline Fernández, granddaughter of Patrocinio, married a minister, Daniel Fernández, and they worked in Southeastern California and the North Pacific Union.

The complete conversion story of the Martínez family can be found in *Three Angels*



Rancho Grande Church in Reserve, New Mexico.

Over Rancho Grande, by Viola M. Payne. News of this family's conversion spread to many Hispanics in New Mexico and many came to know the Lord because of them.

The Anaya Family⁶²

One notable family who was touched by the Adventist message through the Martínez family was

the Matías Anaya family. Matías and his wife Aurelia Baca Anaya, trace their ancestry to the early Spanish settlers of the Southwest. In fact, Aurelia was related to Juanita Baca Sánchez, the wife of Lorenzo Sánchez, the patriarch of Sánchez, Arizona. The Anayas lived in the mountains in Apache Creek, 12 miles northeast of Reserve, New Mexico and were good friends of the Martínezes. Both the Anayas and the Martínezes were cattle ranchers, owning thousands of acres of land where they grazed their herds of cattle. The family, as are most Hispanics, were professing Catholics.

In 1945, an incident took place which marked a turning point in the Anayas' spiritual lives. One day Matías was arrested for selling liquor to the Indians and was sentenced to one year in prison. The federal prison he was sent to was in Tucson where many of the Second World War draft dodgers were serving time. There he met a young Pentecostal lay preacher who opened up the Scriptures to him. Matías was intrigued with all that his friend taught him.

Upon his release from prison, Matías wanted to share his new-found faith. So he sought out his old boyhood friend, Espiridión Martínez, in the hope of converting him. By this time, however, the Martínez family had all accepted the Adventist faith. So instead of Matías converting Espiridión, through a series of Bible studies, Espiridión, with the help of the Holy Spirit, convinced Matías of the truth of the Advent message. Espiridión could hardly contain his joy when he saw the firstfruits of his witnessing—Matías, his wife, Aurelia, and two of their children, Sam Anaya and Margie Anaya—baptized in 1946 by Ray Archuleta, pastor of the Albuquerque, Socorro and Reserve churches.

Sam went on to study at the Spanish American Seminary in Sandoval, New Mexico. He also studied at Southwestern Jr. College and then graduated from La Sierra College in California in 1959. Elder Anaya worked as a pastor for 35 years, in two conferences, Texico and Southern California. From 1971 to 1972, Elder Anaya had the privilege of

pastoring the Reserve Spanish Church, the very church where he had been baptized and was a member for many years.

Sam is now retired and lives in California with his wife, Noemí Garza Anaya. Noemí is from the Falfurrias-La Copita, Texas area, and a first cousin to Isaac Lara. Sam is also a cousin to Toney Anaya, former governor of New Mexico.

The García Family⁶³

Another family whose lives were touched by the Martínez witnessing was the Bernardo García family. The Garcías lived in Glenwood, 35 miles to the south of Reserve, where Ben, as he was called, was a rancher, working part time for the state highway department. Ben was a descendant of an Irish immigrant who had married a Spanish lady, Emilia Ornelaz, from Reserve. At times, he would enjoy a drink or two with little Joe Martínez. When he heard of the new religion the Martínezes had accepted, he could not believe it. He thought Joe was too far gone with his drinking ever to be able to conquer it. But from the reports he had heard, Joe was sober now and out with his Bible, talking religion with anyone he could get to listen. That included his former drinking buddies. So Ben was dreading the day that Joe would find him.

Ben was not a religious man and didn't care to get involved with anything religious. Although his mother had been a devout Catholic, Ben had been turned off from religion when a priest had cursed him for not giving enough offering to the church. Ben had never forgotten the incident, which had left him bitter toward religion.

One day, the Lord placed a burden on the heart of little Joe Martínez to seek out Ben. This would not be an easy task since Joe had no means of transportation. But his zeal was such that he decided to walk the 35 long miles to Glenwood. When Ben saw him coming down the road, his first impulse was to hide or run out the back door. But it was too late. Joe had seen him.

"¿Qué hubo?" (A derivative of 'Qué hubo?' or 'What's happening?') Joe greeted him. Ben could not believe that this was the same buddy whom he had seen many times sprawled out on the floor, too drunk to stand. But now there was a change in the way he looked. Even the expression on his face was different.

"Ben," Joe said. "I have some wonderful things to tell you."

"Oh no," Ben thought. "Here goes." After listening for a few minutes, Ben decided to stop him. "Joe, some of these things are fine. I believe them, but the Sabbath is something I can't accept. You're wrong on that and I can prove it."

"Fine," Joe said. "Let's study it out of the Catholic Bible."

Ben and Joe began studying together and once again the Holy Spirit touched an honest heart. After one month of studies in his own home, Ben and his wife were ready to join the Adventist church and began worshiping on Saturdays with the Martínezes. The community was not only amazed at what Christ had done for Joe, now they were shocked to see that Ben was professing religion. Such is the power of Christ and the Holy Spirit to change lives and do what formerly seemed impossible.

Ben and his wife were baptized in 1943 by Pastor Ponciano Mireles, the district pastor. Their 14-year-old son, Ben, was baptized the following year. He attended Sandia View Academy and later took undergraduate studies at Montemorelos in Mexico, La Sierra College in California, and Union College in Nebraska before being drafted into the army.

He served two years in Germany in a medical battalion.

Elder Ben García has served 26 years in the Adventist ministry working in the Texico, Texas and Southern California Conferences. He is presently pastor of the Highland Park Spanish and Mid-City Spanish Churches in California. He is married to the former Raquel Villegas from El Paso, Texas.

One interesting note is that in later years, Amelia García passed away and her husband, the elder Ben, married Joe's sister, Juanita Martínez. Thus Ben and Joe became not only brothers in the faith but relatives through marriage.



Reserve Spanish Church in Reserve, New Mexico, 1998

Texico Conference Statistics

According to Lee-Roy Chacón, Texico Conference Treasurer and Hispanic Coordinator, as of December 31, 1999, the Texico Conference employs nine Hispanic pastors, has 26 Spanish churches and 2,423 members, or 34 percent of the total membership. The Conference has many more Hispanic members than are recorded on the books. Some Spanish churches have merged with English churches, while others which hold their services bilingually (seven churches) are counted with the Anglo membership. Should Hispanics in English churches be counted as Hispanic members, the conference membership would be 50 percent Hispanic. In 1999, Hispanics baptized 301, which represented about 34 percent of the total baptisms.

ARKANSAS-LOUISIANA CONFERENCE

First Spanish Church in New Orleans, Louisiana

Not until 1970 did the first organized church in the Arkansas-Louisiana Conference appear. Estimates of the Hispanic population in the Greater New Orleans area varied, but all agreed that the number was in the tens of thousands, of whom only about 25 were Adventists. From Puerto Rico, Sergio Ortiz and his wife entered this setting in 1970 as the

leader of Hispanic ministry. Their first church service took place in the youth chapel of the St. Charles Avenue church. A visit by Braulio Pérez-Marcio and an evangelistic series by Ortiz boosted membership, and only five months after the first gathering of Spanish-speaking Adventists occurred, conference officers organized a church of more than 40 members. These members hailed from Cuba, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Puerto Rico and Venezuela.⁶⁴

Diligent efforts by this church focused on direct evangelism and radio broadcasts. By the summer of 1971, a New Orleans radio station was carrying *La Voz de la Esperanza* to tens of thousands of Hispanics in the region. In May, 1972, a second church of 17 members was organized in Kenner, a west-side suburb of New Orleans.⁶⁵

A new era began in 1979 when Juan Chávez, an experienced pastor and successful evangelist, became pastor. Besides meeting in New Orleans, he also targeted Baton Rouge as a likely place for personal witnessing. With the help of Rafael Rodríguez, the associate pastor, he conducted meetings in 1981. Both the size and the attendance far exceeded their expectations. Baptisms from this series brought the Hispanic membership in the Arkansas-Louisiana close to 100. By 1982, these two tireless workers had organized a third group, a company, in La Place, a New Orleans suburb still farther to the west of Kenner.⁶⁶ A Spanish Youth Celebration in March of 1983 attracted 450 persons, among them Leo Ranzolin, from the General Conference Youth Ministries Department as speaker.⁶⁷ All of this activity took place in the Greater New Orleans area, but later Hispanic Adventists appeared elsewhere in the conference.

***Springdale, First Seventh-day Adventist Spanish Church in Arkansas*⁶⁸**

In 1973, Gilberto and Carmen García moved to Gentry, Arkansas. Since no Spanish church existed there at that time, they did what other Hispanics have done—they joined the English Church. Later that year the García family, María Chacón with others had the vision of starting a Spanish church. They began by distributing tracts and *El Centinela* to their friends and neighbors. Gilberto had a small business where he sold hot Mexican chili salsa. With every sale, he shared the Advent message with his customer.

In 1982, Dr. Leopoldo Garbutt moved to the Gentry area, setting up his orthopedic practice in Springdale. He too joined the English Church, but shared with the others the vision of having their own church some day.

Garbutt and Pardeiro's Community Outreach

Up to this time, the Hispanic members had been reaching out to the community, but only through personal evangelism. It wasn't until 1986, when Carlos Pardeiro and his wife, Nancy, and family moved to the Gentry area, that the group began doing public outreach. Pardeiro and Dr. Garbutt rented the local Siloam Hospital Conference Center where they offered several seminars on family and health to the general public. After a time, they moved the seminars to the Adventist Community Center in Gentry, following up the interests with Bible studies. Lucy Pulido, her mother Mary Parker, José Luis Reyes and his family, were some of those who joined the church through that outreach, boosting the group's membership to 20 people.

For several years the group continued to meet in the English church, which provided them not only a nice room for the Spanish Sabbath school class, but quarterlies

and other Spanish materials as well. However, they still met with the English congregation for the worship service, with Dr. Garbutt and Carlos Pardeiro translating the sermons. Even so, the Spanish group continued to grow.

However, since many of them lived near the city of Rogers, they found it more convenient to meet in the Rogers English Church. Larry Priest, pastor of the Springdale English Church, offered the group the use of his church, free of charge, if they wanted to hold their meetings there on Sabbath afternoons. This was very agreeable to the group and they began meeting there on a more permanent basis.

Alcón and Pardeiro Give Leadership

Around 1992, Pastor Jorge Alcón, with and his wife, Graciela, and their family moved from Alexandria, Louisiana to the area. Since he was unemployed, the Springdale English church went the second mile and voted to offer Alcón a small stipend to give leadership to the Spanish group. At the same time, they officially requested Pardeiro to also assist in the leadership.

During 1993, nine new families joined the group. With that influx of new members, they were now ready to become a church. With the blessing of the Springdale Church, the group leaders approached the conference, requesting the organization of their group into a church and that they be assigned an official Hispanic pastor. Their request was approved and on April 2, 1994, they were organized as a church with 54 charter members.⁶⁹ That same year, Elder Joe Espinosa retired from 45 years of denominational service as a church leader and moved to Arkansas where he joined the Spanish church and gave of his expertise and experience.

On June 18, 1994, the church celebrated the inauguration of their church building.

OKLAHOMA CONFERENCE⁷⁰

In 1981 the Oklahoma Conference called Pastor Ciro Castillo and his wife Susan from Las Vegas to start the Spanish work in Oklahoma City. Pastor Castillo decided he would visit the homes in the Spanish community. He would also go to Wal-Mart, where he would wait at the doors and talk to the Spanish people as they entered and left the store. The same year, he conducted a six-week Revelation Seminar at the Hispanic Cultural Center, resulting in the first eight Hispanic baptized members in the Oklahoma Conference. Among the first Hispanics to join the Adventist church were: Engracia and Uriel García, Silvestre Rodarte, Lupe Rodarte (Longoria), and Roberto Longoria. Rito Ramírez, Salvador Ortega, his wife Norma and their daughter Maricela, were baptized in the following months.

In September of 1982, Elder Castillo organized the first Spanish company and in May of 1983 the **first Spanish church (Oklahoma City Spanish South Church) was organized with 35 members.** They rented the local English Baptist Church. That same year, Elder Castillo went to the Seminary in Michigan and Pastor Claudio Consuegra was asked to pastor the church. Then Juan Castillo, father of Ciro, became the pastor (1986-90), followed by Pastor Wagner Gil (1990-91) and Pastor Víctor Felipe (1995-98). The church had no pastor from 1991-95. Elder Manuel Flores came in 1999 and has not only helped grow the Oklahoma City Spanish South Church to its present member-

ship of 80 members but has also established the Oklahoma City Spanish Northwest Church with 60 members.

Ciro Castillo, Hispanic Coordinator

In 1985, Elder Castillo returned to Oklahoma City where he held an evangelistic effort which resulted in 20 baptisms. The conference then sent him to Tulsa to start up Spanish work there.

At the present time, Ciro Castillo is the Hispanic Coordinator for the Oklahoma Conference in addition to pastoring three English-speaking churches and one Spanish church in West Siloam Springs (which has 40 members, with 70 attending).

Presently, there are four Spanish churches and one group in the Oklahoma Conference with a total of 260 Hispanic members. All four churches own their own church building. Besides Ciro Castillo and Manuel Flores, there are three other full-time Hispanic pastors: Roberto Valentín, who pastors two English churches and one Spanish group; José González, who is starting new Spanish work in the panhandle of Oklahoma, in Guymon; and Luis Rojas, who pastors the Tulsa Spanish Church. There are also two part-time lay pastors: David Ramos and Wagner Cilio.

Eduardo Canales

Eduardo Canales is an exceptional young Hispanic leader who was born in Tijuana, Mexico into a Catholic home. When he was 15, he moved to Morgan Hill, California, close to San José, with his parents. There he finished high school and met a young girl by the name of Angelina González whose parents were Adventists. Angelina insisted that Eduardo go to church with her. In a short time, he became interested in the Adventist message and both were baptized in 1974.

In 1976, Eduardo attended a colporteur rally and immediately a desire surfaced in his heart to become a literature evangelist. He discovered he had a natural ability for this line of work and went on to succeed. In fact, he succeeded so well, that in 1981 he was asked to be the Associate Publishing Director for the Central California Conference. Then the Arizona Conference took notice of him, and invited him to be the Spanish evangelist and their first Hispanic Director of Publications.

By 1988, his leadership as a Publishing Director had caught the attention of the Southwestern Union and they invited him to be the Associate Publishing Director. He returned to conference work in 1991 as Publishing Director of Texas.

A Brush with Death

It was while serving in the Texas Conference that Elder Canales had a close call with death. One afternoon in 1992, he and four of his student associate literature evangelists were driving back to the conference office from Southwestern Adventist University where they had eaten lunch. It had been raining that day and the roads were wet and treacherous. Elder Canales was driving his 1984 Nissan Stanza. As he came down the hill, he noticed that a train was approaching and would reach the crossing before he could safely cross. He immediately put his foot on the brake, but his car would not stop. The road was too slippery. He and the others thought they were going to die. But just before they reached the tracks, the car came to a complete stop, only four or five feet from the

passing train. After a sigh of relief and thanksgiving, Canales knew in his heart that it had to be the hand of God that stopped the car and saved them that day.

Wearing Many Hats

In 1995, Elder Canales was elected as Hispanic Coordinator and Evangelist for the Southwestern Union. While at the Union, Elder Canales launched an outstanding lay training program that has given hundreds of Hispanic and Anglo lay persons the tools and confidence to join ranks with their pastors in winning souls for the kingdom of God. Presently (year 2000) Canales is serving as the Secretary of the Arkansas-Louisiana Conference. However, he still represents the Southwestern Union Hispanic constituency at the NAD Hispanic meetings.

The Southwestern Union is the second largest constituency of Hispanics in the North American Division, with over 15,000 members. Elder Canales states that they represent 20 percent of the Union membership. But in 1999, they baptized 40 percent of the total Union baptisms (1,969). They have 69 Hispanic pastors and 121 congregations. The potential for growth is phenomenal and will continue to be one of the leading unions for Hispanic work in the Division.

SOUTHWESTERN UNION HISPANIC LEADERS



Max Treviño
Southwestern Union Conference
President



Eduardo Canales
Arkansas-Louisiana Conference
Secretary and
Southwestern Union Conference
Hispanic Coordinator



José Piantini
Texas Conference
Hispanic Coordinator



Lee-Roy Chacón
Texico Conference
Secretary and
Hispanic Coordinator



Rubén Rodríguez
Texas Conference
Hispanic Evangelist



Ciro Castillo
Oklahoma Conference
Hispanic Coordinator

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9

Lake Union Conference

Where Central American and Caribbean Hispanics Unite

"And he arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, 'Peace, be still.' And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm." Mark 4:39

The Lake Union Conference Territory

THE Lake Union Conference is comprised of the state conferences of Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Wisconsin and the Lake Region Conference, whose territory covers the present Lake Union territory, plus Minnesota. Union office headquarters are located in Berrien Springs, Michigan, adjacent to Andrews University and the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary.

When the Lake Union Conference was estab-

lished in 1901, its territory consisted of East, North and West Michigan, Indiana, Northern and Southern Illinois, Ohio and Wisconsin as well as the Upper Peninsula of Michigan, or the Superior Mission. Later, in 1907, the Ohio Conference was transferred to the Columbia Union Conference.¹

The Lake Union Conference is the home of Andrews University and the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary. The Seminary was originally established in 1944 in Takoma Park, Maryland but relocated to Berrien Springs, Michigan in 1960. Its primary purpose is to offer post graduate ministerial degrees, thereby preparing workers for a more effective Adventist ministry. In 1984, the Seminary created the Institute of Hispanic Ministry to provide Spanish post graduate studies for Hispanics.

Rich with History

The Lake Union Conference is rich with Adventist history, especially the city of Battle Creek, Michigan. There, under the leadership of Dr. John Harvey Kellogg, a brilliant, health-oriented physician, the Adventist-owned Battle Creek Sanitarium gained world renown in the early 1900's for its tremendous success with natural health therapies. Dr. Kellogg followed the divinely appointed health principles which Ellen G. White had brought out in her writings.

Battle Creek also became the cereal capital of the world. Will K. Kellogg, brother of Dr. John Harvey, invented the dry breakfast cereals and established the famous Kellogg Company there.

It is in the city of Battle Creek in the Oak Hill Cemetery that the resting places of Ellen G. White, the Adventist prophetess, and her husband, James White, are located.

The Michigan Conference became the first official state conference in the denomination, when it was organized in Battle Creek in October of 1861—two years before the organization of the General Conference and the adoption of the name Seventh-day Adventists.² The organizing committee of the Michigan Conference included such church pioneers as Joseph Bates, who chaired the committee and became the first conference president; and Uriah Smith, secretary of the committee who later served three terms as president.

Several distinguished Adventists served in the office of president of the Michigan Conference: Joseph Bates, Uriah Smith, J. N. Loughborough, S. N. Haskell, G. I. Butler, C. B. Haynes, T. G. Bunch, and N. C. Wilson.³

The “Windy City”

Chicago is the site of Adventist Hispanic beginnings in the Lake Union. This energetic city on the shores of Lake Michigan is the business and industrial center of the Midwest. The Sears Tower, located in downtown Chicago, is the tallest building in the United States, with 106 stories. Chicago is an important crossroads for travel, housing O'Hare International Airport, one of the busiest in the world.

With over 8.6 million people, it is the third largest metropolis in the United States, exceeded only by New York City and Los Angeles. The “windy city” has more inhabitants within its city limits than two-fifths (21) of the states have in their individual state territory.⁴

Hispanic Migration to Chicago

Chicago has a large constituency of diverse Hispanic cultures. The Hispanic population of Greater Chicago (Chicago, Gary-Kenosha) at present stands at 1.1 million,⁵ constituting the fifth largest concentration of Hispanics in the United States. In fact, Chicago has the second largest Mexican and Puerto Rican populations and the third largest Guatemalan and Ecuadorian populations in the United States.⁶ Some say the Mexican “Cinco de Mayo” Day and the Puerto Rican Day Parade in Chicago draw larger crowds than the St. Patrick’s Day Parade.

In Chicago’s early years, the predominant Hispanics were Mexicans, Puerto Ricans and Dominicans. In the 1920’s, Mexicans began migrating from the Southwest to industrial cities across the States, including Chicago, where they found employment in the steel factories and other industries.⁷

Following World War II, Puerto Ricans came to the United States in significant numbers, specifically to New Jersey, New York City, and Chicago in what some sociologists call the “greatest airborne migration in history.”⁸ Steel companies like the Carnegie-Illinois Steel Company of Gary, Indiana recruited 500 Puerto Ricans from the island in 1948 to work in its mill.⁹

However, in the last 20 years, Guatemalans, Ecuadorians, Hondurans, Nicaraguans, Salvadoreans, Peruvians and other Hispanics have migrated to Chicago in significant numbers.

❖ NOTABLE HISPANICS

Some of the notable Hispanics from the Lake Union territory are: Luis Gutiérrez, born to Puerto Rican parents in Chicago, in 1992, became the first Hispanic in Congress to represent Illinois;¹⁰ Sammy Sosa, the “Home Run King” of the Chicago Cubs, born in San Pedro de Macorís, Dominican Republic (mentioned in chapter 6); Judge George La Plata, who in 1979 became the first Hispanic (Mexican-American) judge in Michigan history.¹¹ He was also appointed by President Ronald Reagan to the U. S. District Court for the Eastern District of Michigan in 1985 and remains active providing *pro bono* service for his Hispanic community.

ILLINOIS CONFERENCE

Chicago, Cradle of Hispanic Adventism in Lake Union

The oldest Spanish-speaking Adventist congregation in the Lake Union dates back to the 1930’s in central Chicago. According to a statement issued by the Chicago Central Church (the oldest Spanish congregation in the Lake Union), the Spanish work began in 1934. This was substantiated first by Elder J. F. Gómez, (who later changed his name to Games) who was the first Hispanic pastor in Chicago;¹² and second, by an article in the *Lake Union Herald* by Elder William Goransson, the fourth pastor of the Central Spanish Church in Chicago.¹³

It seems that a colporteur by the name of Voss was working in the Spanish-speaking neighborhood of Chicago when he met a retired university professor, Mr. Colunga, and his physician wife, Dr. Colunga, both originally from Mexico and both in their early 80’s. When they became interested in the Adventist message, Brother Voss contacted the presi-

dent of the Illinois conference requesting someone to follow up these Spanish interests. The Illinois Conference then contacted the General Conference for help in locating an Hispanic worker. Their recommendation was J. F. Games.

J. F. Games, First Hispanic Adventist Pastor in Chicago

Pastor J. F. Games, from the Dominican Republic, had studied at Washington Missionary College in Takoma Park, Maryland for two years before traveling to Illinois to study at Broadview College (20 miles west of Chicago). While at Broadview, he met and



Elder J. F. Games and wife Arlene with friends.

married Arlene Brown on July 13, 1933. A few months later, in October, someone from the General Conference contacted him, requesting that he go to Chicago to evaluate if there was enough interest there to start Spanish work among the Spanish-speaking people. At the time, there were only 31,000 Hispanics in Chicago.

Due to the financial constraints of the Great Depres-

sion, the conference could only offer Pastor Games a salary of \$7.00 a week with no subsidies or reimbursements. Pastor Games and his new bride lived in a little house in LaGrange, Illinois, so he had to travel to Chicago by train and the fare was 20 cents each way!

Pastor Games Finds a Group of Sabbath Keepers

One day, as Pastor Games was visiting in a Spanish barrio, he met Mrs. Bautista, her son and two daughters. What a surprise it was when he found out that Mrs. Bautista kept the Sabbath and was meeting each week with a small group of other Hispanics in a private home. Pastor Games was sure the Lord had led him to her house and he immediately asked if he could meet with them too. Mrs. Bautista told him "*Como no* (of course)," and invited him to their next meeting.

When Pastor Games arrived the next Sabbath, he met the leader, Mrs. Moreno, a woman in her early 60's. She was pleased when she discovered that he was a minister and invited him to speak to the group of around 20 people the following Sabbath, which he was only too happy to do.

Conflict Over the Resurrection

Pastor Games spoke the following Sabbath and the group enjoyed it so much that they invited him to speak several times in succession. One Sabbath Mrs. Moreno asked him to preach on the death and resurrection of Jesus the next Sabbath. Pastor Games did not know that this was a test.

The next week, as he was preaching, he noticed Mrs. Moreno shaking her head in disapproval. As soon as he finished speaking, she got up and addressed the congregation. "*No es uno de nosotros* (He's not one of ours)," she told them. Then turning to Pastor Games, she said, "Please do not come back here again. We do not want you to preach to us anymore."

When Pastor Games asked the reason for this decision, she said, "We believe that Jesus was crucified on Wednesday and was resurrected on Sabbath." Pastor Games had never heard of that teaching and it shocked him. "Here is the name of our retired pastor. Talk with him," Mrs. Moreno said.

Pastor Games, being a man of action, went right over to the man's house and asked him about his understanding of the time period that Jesus was in the tomb. Taking his Bible, the old minister read Matthew 12:40, "As Jonah was in the belly of the whale three days and three nights, so the son of man will be in the heart of the earth three days and three nights."

"Wednesday to Saturday is the only period that can possibly cover three days and three nights," he told Pastor Games.

"Do you take those verses literally?" Pastor Games asked.

"*Por supuesto* (Of course)."

"Well then, do you know how deep the heart of the earth is?" Pastor Games asked again.

The old minister became angry at that question. "Well, all I know is that my Redeemer liveth!" he said. Then, snapping his fingers, and turning on his heels, he left the room, slamming the door behind him and leaving Pastor Games sitting alone in the living room. After ten minutes of patiently waiting, Pastor Games left, feeling both victorious and yet defeated. He had longed to show the old man the truth and make him a member of the congregation he was hoping to raise up in that big city. He wanted to read to him from Luke 23:54 that Jesus died on Friday, the preparation day, and from Luke 23:56 that Jesus rested in the tomb on Saturday, the Sabbath. Then he would have read from Luke 24:1 where it says that Jesus rose on the first day of the week, which was Sunday. Therefore, He was in the tomb only from late afternoon on Friday, through all day Saturday to early Sunday morning. According to Hebrew reckoning, any portion of a day counted as a full day, thus Matthew 12:40 and Luke's account are both correct and coincide with each other.

Pastor Games Finds A Suitable Meeting Place

The next day, Pastor Games was still feeling a bit down. However, determined to establish his own little group of Hispanic Adventists, he took the early train into Chicago. Walking up and down the streets in the Spanish neighborhood, he noticed a sign on one of the buildings on Maxwell Street. "Mercy Center," it said. He said to himself, "I like those words." He went into the building, climbed the stairs to the third floor, and found some

janitors who were cleaning the hallway. When he asked them where the manager's office was, they took him right to it.

Elder Games introduced himself to the manager, Mr. Smith, and told him who he was and about his new work. Being the open person that he was, Games even recounted his depressing experience of the previous day. Then he told the manager that he needed a place to hold meetings and have church services.

"Well, we have two large meeting halls in this building. One will seat 150 and the other has a capacity of over 200. You may use either one."

"How much will you charge?" he asked.

"No charge," Mr. Smith told him. "There are so many people unemployed from the Depression that the government is using this building to feed and care for the people. These halls are used to lift the spirit of the people by having socials and dances. You can use the hall every Saturday morning and every Tuesday night. If you need a pianist, we can furnish one."

Pastor Games could hardly believe what he heard, but he knew this was an answer to his prayer.

Forming a Congregation

Immediately he began visiting the people from the small congregation he had been preaching to. Many had become his friends by now and sympathized with him. Soon he had a group worshipping with him in the free meeting hall.

But because of the noise, they stayed for only two or three months until they could afford to rent some place more quiet and fitted to their needs. They found a hall half a mile away where they met for about a year. Then they moved to a hall on Blue Island Avenue where they worshiped in a second floor room right above a coffee factory and restaurant.

It was at this time that a six-week Spanish evangelistic crusade was held in Chicago which added several members to the group.¹⁴ Since Pastor Games was not yet ordained, Elder Wright from the English church baptized some of the new converts, among them were Mr. and Mrs. Macías and their daughter; Mr. and Mrs. Rodríguez; and Mrs. Bautista, the lady he had first met in Chicago, along with her son and daughter.

Pastor Games Takes a Call to Arizona

Although there was a lot of noise from the businesses below their meeting place, the fledgling group remained at that location until their company was organized in 1935 with 30 charter members. Then, in 1937, four years after starting the work in Chicago, Pastor Games was called to Tucson, Arizona, leaving the little company, the only Adventist Spanish group in the Union, to fend for itself.

Chicago Central Spanish Church Organized

It appears that the group was without pastoral leadership until 1940, when Thomas Requénez, who had been one of the early Hispanic converts in the Rio Grande Valley of Texas, was called by the Illinois Conference to pastor the small Chicago company.¹⁵ By this time the company's number had dwindled and Pastor Requénez had to work hard to build the membership back up again.

Some of those who joined the group at this time were Puerto Ricans who had become Adventists in their island home before migrating to Chicago. Others were Mexicans converts who had come from Mexico to work in the foundries. In 1944, Elder Requénez was called to the Colorado Conference. That same year, Elder José Isabel Rivera, a Dominican, took the over the leadership of the group.

Elder Rivera had been a pastor in the Central Adventist Church in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic but wanted to have his children educated in the United States. He encouraged other members of his church to come with him to the States and twenty of them took up the challenge. Among them was Antonia Rojas who remembers some of the early struggles and racial prejudice the church members suffered in Chicago.¹⁶

Two years later, in 1946, the group had grown sufficiently to be **organized into an official church—Iglesia Central de Chicago**. Among the charter members were Eddy, Betty and Israel Novoa. Brother Gabriel Santiago was a local elder for many years. Elder Rivera pastored the congregation for ten years (1944-1954), the longest tenure of any of the early pastors.¹⁷ Assisting him part of the time was brother Juan Sosa, a layman from Puerto Rico.



*Pastor Thomas Requénez and
his wife María.*

The Chicago Congregation Buys Its Own Church

When Elder Rivera left Chicago, Elder William Goransson, who had served in Latin America, became the church's pastor. By now, the congregation had grown to more than 130 members despite their pilgrimage from one uninviting place of worship to another. When Elder Goransson found them, they were meeting in a garage at Harrison and Ashland Streets. He was not happy with the situation. "It's not right that we worship in a place like this," he told them. "We must find another, more suitable place."

The following year found them putting a down payment on an old abandoned Lutheran Church at Wolcott and Superior, which they remodeled and redecorated. This building served as their place of worship until 1975.

Prejudice Against the Hispanics

In front of their newly purchased church was a large lot for sale with an old two-story house on it. Elder Goransson encouraged the congregation to purchase the property with the proposal that the top floor could be used as a parsonage, and the bottom could function as a church school for grades 1-6.

Sister Antonia Rojas recalls some of the opposition the congregation faced when they moved into their new church home. The area in which the church and their future school was located was a Polish neighborhood. Some of the neighbors manifested their racial prejudice by puncturing the Hispanics' car tires and breaking out their car windows. Feelings became so strong that someone even planted a bomb in the parsonage which destroyed the first floor of the house where the classrooms were located. But the Lord had His hand over His people. The classroom was empty at the time of the explosion, thus the lives of the children were spared. The members, however, were determined to continue worshiping in their new sanctuary and with the insurance money that Elder Goransson was able to secure, they rebuilt the school and proceeded with their plans for educating their children.

Central Church Establishes a Church School

By 1958, the church was operating a school for 50 students, with two well-equipped classrooms and a large, well-equipped playground. The first teacher was Brother Joseph Miller.¹⁸

By 1960, enrollment had jumped to nearly a hundred, including a kindergarten, taught by Sylvia Cano. The staff consisted of four teachers and a cafeteria director, Consuelo Lodier, who served about 70 meals a day. Students could eat all they wanted.¹⁹ Some of the other teachers were Harvey Miller and Mario Collins.

As successful as the school was, however, it came to an end in September 1962, a month after the new academic year began. By then enrollment had reached 125. But city fire and building inspectors, apparently concerned with the age and the questionable repair of the school structure, condemned the building and the school had to be closed. However, the conference superintendent of education commented that the Spanish church school had served a need "as urgent as in any mission land."²⁰

Launching a Soul-winning Campaign

Two events, the coming of Elder Goransson as their new pastor and the purchase of a new church, were pivotal points in the history of the Central Church. Inspired by having their own sanctuary in which to meet and having a new pastor who was aware of newly developing trends in Hispanic evangelism, the church members launched an extended soul-winning campaign that saw the membership rise to 300 by mid-1960.²¹

Walter Schubert Evangelistic Series

It all started with an evangelistic series that Elder Walter Schubert held in 1955. Schubert had recently transferred from the South American Division to the Ministerial Association of the General Conference. Only a few weeks before, he had completed a set of meetings in New York City in which he had adapted many of the aspects of evangelism he had developed in South America's large metropolitan areas. More than 135 baptisms resulted from the effort in New York City, and Goransson hoped that large numbers would also come from an evangelistic series in the Chicago Hispanic community.

Elder Schubert began his meetings in November, but long after the series ended, church members continued their contacts with interested persons by giving additional Bible studies. By April, 1956, 35 new members joined the Central Church from the effort, which

raised the membership to 216. Before the year ended, Goransson conducted four baptismal ceremonies, which added another 18 members. When the congregation dedicated its church free from debt in 1958, the membership had risen to 270.²²

These additional baptisms indicate that Schubert's meetings did not account entirely for the rise in membership. The church had become active in personal evangelism as well.

The Church Continues to Grow

In 1960, while the church was approaching a membership of 300, Goransson reported that members had given more than 300 Bible studies in the first quarter of the year.²³ When Elder Goransson left in 1959, Elder Max Martínez, from New Mexico, took his place as pastor and under his leadership, the Central church continued to grow beyond the 300 mark.

Central Church Spawns Other Churches

During the 1960's, the evangelistic spirit that had permeated the Central Church and characterized its growth, spread to other parts of the Hispanic community in Chicago. In 1966 a church of 35 organized as the South Spanish Church.²⁴ Two years later, the Central Church spawned a third congregation of 38 charter members in the north, called the North Church, largely of Puerto Rican membership. Antonio Arteaga, a Mexican evangelist who was doing graduate studies at the Seminary at Andrews University, had contributed to the increase in membership on the north side prior to the formation of the new congregation.²⁵

In 1972, a fourth church organized, called the West Church, again predominantly Puerto Rican.²⁶ In spite of these new congregations, the Central Church continued to be the strongest concentration of Hispanic Adventism in Chicago as well as in the Illinois Conference.

Youth Federation Radio Program and Congresses

The rise in Hispanic membership and the spread of Adventism through metropolitan Chicago also brought challenges to Hispanic leaders. A case in point was to provide opportunities for young people to direct their efforts into church activities. In 1970, the four Hispanic churches combined to form the Spanish SDA Youth Federation which assumed responsibility for producing a Spanish radio program aired from the north-side suburb of Evanston. Within weeks, a former Adventist who heard the program, now a member of the Bolivian consulate, was looking up an Adventist church to attend. Other families began attending church after writing letters of inquiry about Adventism.²⁷

In 1981, the Federation sponsored the first union-wide Hispanic youth congress which occupied a full weekend. It was held at the Ramada Inn at the O'Hare Airport and its theme was "Ardiendo por Cristo" (On Fire for Christ.) Guest speaker was Elder Eloy Martínez from the Human Relations Department of the North American Division when it was still a part of the General Conference. Besides the guest speaker, temperance contests for posters, orations and activities centering on biblical knowledge were part of the fare.²⁸ More than 300 Hispanic youth attended.

Cultivating a Sense of Identity

To cultivate a sense of identity among the Spanish churches, city-wide events were planned which brought the various congregations together. In 1972, Braulio Pérez

Marcio conducted a rally in support of *La Voz de la Esperanza*.²⁹

Annual congresses for the Spanish-speaking churches featured well-known Latin American personalities who had become part of the North American Division or were still working in another part of the Spanish-speaking world. In 1973, Salim Japas, originally from South America, but at the time laboring in Puerto Rico, shared the pulpit with Salvador Iserte from Spain.³⁰ The following year the most significant event for the gathering was a baptism of 17 new members.³¹ Evangelistic methods and plans were often the focus of the Hispanic multi-congregational gatherings.

Purchase of a Lutheran Church

In 1975, the Central Church purchased a former Lutheran church at 913 N. Hoyne, with a seating capacity of 1100. Then the Chicago Spanish-speaking congregations pooled their resources to help support Efraín Murillo, who had wide experience in Greater New York and Pennsylvania as an urban evangelist. In Chicago, he was to spend a year conducting three evangelistic series, first in the Central Church, next in the South Church, and then in the North Church for the third and final series. To support this program, the conference budgeted nearly \$25,000, slightly less than a quarter of its entire evangelism allocation for the year.³² An indication of the results of these efforts came in September following Murillo's second set of meetings when 35 new members joined either the North or Central congregation, as they chose.³³

Lay Involvement

Emphasis on the involvement of lay members was a constant benchmark of Hispanic evangelism in Chicago. Luis Leonor, Lake Union vice president in charge of Hispanic ministry, reported plans in 1992 that called for 100 crusades by lay members to be coordinated with major evangelistic meetings by experienced speakers.³⁴

In 1995, Hispanic laity in the Illinois Conference met for an intensive training session for personal evangelism and missionary activities. The principal presenter was Velino Salazar, Sr., who for many years was president of the Mexican Union.³⁵

"Chicagoland Better Living Center"

At times evangelism also assumed the indirect form of civic outreach. When the tide of refugees brought a wave of new immigrants to Chicago in the 1970's, the Central Church responded by organizing the Chicagoland Better Living Center, a place where Hispanics could enroll in English classes and study for college entrance examinations. The Central Church pastor, Colombian-born John Robinson, arranged with a local university to provide instructors for this program. In 1973, the college prep class attracted 142 students while 80 enrolled in the English classes. Funding through grants enabled the largely non-Adventist clientele to participate without incurring any expense.³⁶

"Operation Amigo"

Chicago Hispanic Adventists, some of them long-time residents of the United States, others recent immigrants, did not forget their roots in Latin America. With a history of their own that began with a small band of believers worshiping in a coffee warehouse and a garage, they participated in a program called "Operation Amigo," a plan that called for

their adoption of a sister conference in Latin America. In 1996, the Illinois Conference provided a check of \$15,000 to the officers of the East Dominican Mission to construct meeting places for fellow Adventists in the Dominican Republic.³⁷

All of these activities produced results. By 1999, the Spanish-speaking membership in the Illinois Conference had grown to more than 1700 who were organized in 14 churches in the Greater Chicago area. Seven pastors led these churches.

The Central Church listed 383 members, not even a hundred more than it had in 1960, but its role had not been to become a huge, institutionalized congregation but rather to inspire and sometimes furnish part of the charter membership for many of the other churches. Its influence had been crucial to the Hispanic ministry in Illinois.³⁸

Pastors of the Central Spanish Church

Pastors of the Central Spanish Church: J. F. Gómez (Games), Thomas Requénez, José Isabel Rivera, William Goransson, Max Martínez, Mario Collins, Gabriel Castro, Lucas Díaz, Eduardo Escobar, Samuel Camacho, John Robinson, José Rodríguez, Efraín Murillo, César Funes, Hazael Bustos, Adeberto Alarcón, Víctor Aispuro, Ernesto Sánchez.

Influence of Emmanuel Missionary College

The influence of Emmanuel Missionary College and later the Adventist Theological Seminary at Andrews University was closely related to some of the Spanish churches in the Greater Chicago area. Some of the original endeavors among Chicago Hispanics had been made by Seminary students from Berrien Springs. Although it was a drive of about 100 miles from the school, in later years Hispanic students both in the college and the Seminary often served the churches or participated in their programs.³⁹

Otoniel Reyes, Hispanic Coordinator, Illinois Conference

In April of 1999, Elder Otoniel Reyes was asked by the Illinois Conference to serve as their Hispanic Coordinator. Before accepting this post, he had carried the responsibility of Stewardship and Health Director for the Northern Mexican Union. Elder Reyes brings to this post experience as a pastor, departmental director and administrator.

Elder Reyes, a second-generation Adventist, was born January 24, 1953, in El Terrero, Chihuahua, Mexico. His father was Benedicto Reyes and his mother was María de Jesús Márquez. Otoniel earned a B. A. degree in theology from the Adventist university in Morelia, Mexico and a master's degree from Loma Linda University in 1983.

On October 23, 1976, he married his college sweetheart, Sandy Rodríguez, who graduated with him with a degree in education. Elder Reyes began his ministry the same year in the North Mexican Conference. Ten years later, in 1986, the Texas Conference extended him an invitation to pastor the Houston Spanish Church. Then he returned to Mexico where from 1989-1995, he served as President of the Northeast Mexican Conference with a constituency of 30,000 members.

As of the end of 1999, the Illinois Conference had seven full-time pastors, 14 Spanish congregations, with 1,722 members.

MICHIGAN CONFERENCE

While Chicago Hispanics benefitted from the proximity of Andrews University, the institution exerted a much greater impact on the growth of Hispanic ministry in the Michigan Conference.

The development of Hispanic Adventism in Michigan began as an attempt by concerned members of one of the leading academic centers in the Adventist world church to minister to the spiritual needs of migrant workers—transients in agriculture. Although these field laborers did not constitute a permanent part of the population, their status as a temporary and economically disadvantaged work force only emphasized their need and strengthened the missionary motivation that both faculty and students felt. Because of the instability in this group, the focus shifted to Michigan's urban centers where Latin American immigrants were creating Hispanic communities. As also occurred in other conferences in which large Spanish-speaking colonies developed near Adventist colleges, an almost natural outreach to these newcomers evolved from the language departments. At Adventist schools in Massachusetts, California, Tennessee and Texas, this trend had also occurred.

The Michigan Conference benefitted not only from this tendency, but enjoyed the additional blessing offered by many able and experienced Latin American Adventist pastors enrolled in the Seminary at Andrews University. These ministers brought with them an evangelistic fervor that characterized the extraordinary membership growth trends in the South American and Inter-American Divisions. Many of the fledgling Hispanic congregations within a 150-mile radius of the Seminary enjoyed the blessings that these men could give to them.

❖ **BERRIEN SPRINGS**

History of the Berrien Springs Spanish Church⁴⁰

The history of the Berrien Springs Spanish Church is closely connected with Andrews University, its Modern Language Department and the Pioneer Memorial Church.

The Modern Language Department had the tradition of encouraging and promoting the holding of Branch Sabbath schools in foreign languages such as French, German and Spanish. This not only gave opportunity for students to practice their language, but also provided a means of outreach.

Sabbath School Class

In 1961, with the endorsement of the Pioneer Memorial Church, a Spanish-speaking Sabbath school class began meeting in one of the second floor rooms at Nethery Hall at the University. This group continued meeting each Sabbath for the next five years until they were challenged by a professor at the University to raise their vision for the work and branch out.

Challenge to Move Out

In 1966, Leslie Rhys, a Spanish teacher in the Modern Language Department, encouraged the group to focus its attention on the thousands of migrant workers, most of them Mexicans, who passed through the region annually to harvest fruit crops.

His challenge was not immediately met, however. In 1967 Pastor Elías Gómez, a Mexican-American from Texas, arrived to study at the Seminary. Gómez would later in his ministry become an Associate Director of the General Conference Office of Human Relations and Director of the Institute for Hispanic Ministries at the Seminary. But for now, he and Professor Rhys, along with other University students such as Ishmael Olivares and Benjamín Inquilla began visiting the fields, distributing literature and inviting the migrant fruit pickers to the branch Sabbath school. Professor Rhys again expressed his vision. "Let's go out, organize a church with a pastor and work to win some of those 28,000 Hispanic migrant workers." Rhys knew that if they could establish a church in Berrien Springs, it would be a catalyst for starting Spanish work in other Michigan cities.

In 1968, Professor Humberto Rasi came from the Pacific Press in California to head the Modern Languages Department. Dr. Rasi enthusiastically joined the group in their outreach efforts. By the end of 1970, Elías Gómez took up Rhys' cause and endeavored to convince members to move their meeting place to where the migrants would feel more comfortable attending. He found it hard to convince the humble migrant workers to come onto a University campus to attend the Spanish Sabbath school as they felt intimidated in such an academic atmosphere.

Pastor Elías Gómez Hired on Part-time Basis

As this Sabbath school was under the auspices of the Pioneer Memorial Church, Rasi and Rhys spoke with the pastor, John Kroncke, and a missionary commission was formed, composed of Gómez, Rhys, Rasi, Wilson Trickett (Lay Activities leader of the church) and Dr. Herald Habenicht who had just returned from the Inter-American Division. They recommended to the Pioneer Memorial Church that they employ Pastor Gómez on a



Elías Gómez and family.

part-time basis to take care of the development of the Spanish work. When the Pioneer Memorial Church asked the Michigan Conference to help finance some of this activity, the conference told them that they did not wish to take on any responsibility for the Spanish work. So the Pioneer Memorial Church continued to pay the part-time pastor's salary.

The Move to Berrien Springs

The group was not discouraged, however. In 1971, Gómez organized an evangelistic effort in which Rasi, Gómez and Habenicht were the speakers. By October the enlarging group of Hispanic worshipers began meeting in the local community center. Wilson Trickett, a teacher in the Business Administration Department, had bought a church building from the United Brethren which he planned to use as a Community Center. He told the Hispanic

brethren that he would be happy for them to use it for their meeting place. Even though they were not officially organized, they organized themselves with Elías Gómez as their pastor and Frank Cardona, Ernest Castillo, Daniel Escamilla, Eliseo Orozco and Mario Riveros as associate pastors. Humberto Rasi was the elder. The Department of Languages contributed by printing the church bulletin for the services for \$2.00 per week.

Purpose of the Berrien Springs Spanish Group

Some of the purposes of the Berrien Springs Spanish group were: to take the gospel to the migrant workers in the area, providing an environment in which the migrants would feel comfortable; provide an opportunity for the Hispanic students to preach as well as do outreach; and to become the center for the establishment of the Spanish work in other cities in Michigan.

Support of Non-Spanish-speaking Anglos

The brethren worked hard to convince the conference to establish a church and they had the support of the Pioneer Memorial Church in paying the pastor's stipend. But it took a special man to change the negative attitude of the conference administrators. That man was Wilson Trickett. Dr. Trickett was very interested in the Spanish work. On March 27, 1972, he wrote a four-page letter to the conference president urging him to do something in favor of the development of the Spanish church, which by now was composed of 70 to 100 people.

Dr. Trickett knew how to talk the administrators' language. Some quotes from his letter:

1. "We believe that the potential for a thriving Spanish work is present in Michigan."
2. "I believe that plans to develop a Spanish work can succeed, but they must have encouragement and help."
3. "I perceive more talent and dedication among our Spanish-speaking people here than I have witnessed in other areas of our church population."
4. "I believe that with God's blessing, there will be a rich reward of several new self-supporting Michigan churches in two or three years."

One of the points that he made struck a sensitive note. Since there was no active Spanish work, some of the Spanish believers were sending their tithe to other Spanish areas rather than to Pioneer Memorial. This could be remedied if they had their own work, Trickett said.

The Conference Finally Listens

Two weeks after the conference received that letter, they met and invited Elder Orval Scully, a former church administrator in Chile, to assist in evaluating and developing the organization of the Spanish work in Berrien Springs. But they figured the need was only temporary. So it was voted to employ Scully for two months. A second action was to invite Elder Eliezer Benavides to conduct a Spanish Field School in the Michigan Conference.

Organization of the Berrien Springs Spanish Church

Before the end of 1972, it became apparent that the need for an official church was a valid one and the conference approved the **formation of the Berrien Springs Spanish**

Church, the first in the Michigan Conference,⁴¹ and the eighth in the Lake Union. This historic event took place on February 10, 1973, and the Hispanic believers finally realized their goal of being organized as a church. An interesting footnote to this organization is that the sermon was given by none other than the president of the conference who had opposed them all the way.

The church was organized with 50 charter members, the nucleus of which was Virginia López, Ishmael Olivares and Humberto Rasi. Elder T. Castelbuano represented the Pioneer Memorial Church and was very excited to witness the organization of the first Spanish church in Michigan.

During that first year the membership grew from 51 to 72 while the congregation found time to buy and remodel a church building and provide help to an Hispanic group in Grand Rapids.⁴² They asked Dr. Trickett to sell them the church building they were meeting in, at a reduced price, of course. He gladly consented and when they approached the conference with the request, the conference not only approved it, but also helped with one-third of the cost.

On April 21, 1973, less than three months after its organization, the church held its first baptism in which Daniel Baltazar, Felicita Ortiz and Rafael Ortiz were baptized. By their first anniversary, the group had grown from 50 to 72.

Today the church has more than 350 members and has spawned three daughters: Grand Rapids, Detroit and Lansing.

The Unique Role of the Berrien Springs Spanish Church

The Berrien Springs Spanish Church filled a unique and powerful role in Hispanic ministry in Michigan which was comparable to the impetus from other large urban congregations in Los Angeles, Miami, Orlando and Chicago. As a matter of record, evangelistic outreach to the Spanish-speaking population was one of the purposes for organizing the Berrien Springs Church. On the very day of their organization, members of this first Spanish church in Michigan instituted plans to promote Adventism elsewhere in the conference.

With the assistance of Raúl González and José Guillen, both pastors from the Caribbean, Scully presented a comprehensive evangelistic program for Hispanic communities in Michigan—Detroit, Saginaw, Lansing, and Muskegon. Scully estimated that about 180,000 native Spanish-speakers lived in the state, most of them in Detroit, which meant that the state's largest city was the most likely place for Hispanic Adventism to spread.⁴³

Pastors of Berrien Springs Spanish Church

Pastors of the Berrien Springs Spanish Church were: Elías Gómez (intern), Orval Scully, Luis Leonor, Jorge Mayer, and Luis Fernando Ortiz.

❖ DETROIT

The Beginnings of the Detroit Spanish Church

Spanish-speaking Adventists in Detroit traced the beginning of their identity to the 1940's and 1950's when the flow of Hispanics into the city was only a trickle. The first known Hispanic Adventist family was that of José and Polín Felán, who had come to

Detroit from Mexico in 1943. Since there was no Spanish church, they joined the Black Inkster Adventist Church. Another Adventist family was that of Dr. Pedro Medrano who came from Chile in 1951 and joined the Oakwood English Church.

Early Interests

The Mexican-American Guajardo family moved to Detroit in 1952 and shortly thereafter enrolled in the *Faith for Today* correspondence course. When the Oakwood Church held an evangelistic series in 1962, the Guajardos attended and the mother and daughter were baptized.

Rosa Olivares, the daughter, remembers two students from Andrews University in Berrien Springs visiting Detroit to study with interested families. One was Pablo Mesa from Colombia and the other was Gilberto Harper. Meeting in a park behind the YWCA, they would sing songs and give Bible studies to those who came to listen to the music. Mrs. Guajardo took her daughters to hear them, the youngest of which had not been baptized. She did not believe everything she was hearing about the prophecies and decided to investigate on her own at the library. What she discovered convinced her that it was true. Eventually both she and her father accepted the Adventist faith and were baptized.

Ines Rickemberg, a new immigrant from Chile, became a Seventh-day Adventist after settling in Detroit, and joined the Oakwood Church in 1966, where she found several other Hispanics. She launched the idea of a separate Sabbath School and her pastor responded with quarterlies and a place to meet. Although the group later disbanded, it revived in 1971 when David Chávez arrived from Texas where he had been an active layman. In a year's time, he had not only resurrected the Sabbath school class, but was also instrumental in bringing *La Voz de la Esperanza* to a Detroit radio station.⁴⁴

First Pastor of Detroit Spanish Church

By the end of 1974, the conference asked Elder Raúl González to lead the group and prepare for the evangelistic meetings which Elder Salim Japas was to hold the following summer. They rented the Lutheran Church at 2110 Springwell Street and met for their first service on July 12, 1975. Although the members were very happy and grateful, there was trouble on the horizon. For some unknown reason, Elder Japas left before the meetings were to start, leaving the group to search for another evangelist. They contacted Elder Antonio Arteaga, who was studying at the Seminary, and he started the meetings. However, he, too, canceled out because of unknown reasons and Elder Emilio García-Marenko from Nicaragua, also a Seminary student, finished the meetings. All of this took place between August 4 and September 20, 1975.

But there were some reasons to be thankful. The Berrien Springs Spanish Church furnished \$1000 to help meet evangelism expenses. Several Seminary students traveled to Detroit to help with the effort. David Chávez and Norma Barranzas, a Chilean teacher who came from New York, were employed to help in the crusade. As a result of these meetings 17 converts joined the church.

Detroit Church Organized

On November 29, 1975, the Detroit Spanish group was organized into a church with 32 charter members, thereby becoming the second Spanish church in Michigan. The con-

ference president, Elder R. D. Moon, had the sermon. Among those who formed the nucleus were Inés Rickemberg, Estela Felán de Ramos, Alicia Díaz, and David Chávez. David Chávez and Ciro Sepúlveda were elected to serve as elders.

The following year Elder Orval Scully, who had been the Pastor/Hispanic Coordinator in Berrien Springs, became the pastor of the Detroit Church. Elder Luis Leonor became the next pastor of the Berrien Springs congregation.⁴⁵ As of December 31, 1999, the Detroit Spanish Church had 141 members. Elder David García-Marenko is the present pastor and Elder Claudio Martín is the Hispanic coordinator for the Michigan Conference.

Pastors of the Detroit Church⁴⁶

God has used several pastors in building up the work in the Detroit Spanish Church: Raúl González, Alberto Rodríguez, Orlando Vázquez, Eddy Valdes, Rubén Rivero and David García-Marenko.

❖ GRAND RAPIDS

Beginnings of the Spanish Church in Grand Rapids

A third church emerged from the Hispanic community in Grand Rapids. The primary force behind this new congregation was a Cuban lady, Marta Moore-Walwyn. Marta moved to Grand Rapids from New York in 1967 with her physician husband who was fulfilling a residency at a local hospital. Her interest in outreach to other Hispanics led her to the Echeverría family, also Cuban immigrants of whom only the wife, María, was a Seventh-day Adventist. After Marta's brother, Miguel Moore, moved to Grand Rapids in 1971, the small nucleus pressed for financial assistance from their local Anglo congregation to pay for the expenses of Hispanic Seminary students to conduct outreach programs in the Spanish community on Sabbaths. Some of those students were Miguel González, David Cruz and Miguel Valdés.

María's Prayer Answered After 34 Years

With support from both the Grand Rapids Church and the Seminary, the Spanish group grew. In 1972, when Eliezer Benavides came to hold an effort with several of the Seminary students, María Echeverría's husband and daughters were baptized, the first three souls won by the group, which now numbered 23 and needed a pastor. María had been praying for 34 long years that her family would become members of the church. Now she had the joy of witnessing all three of them being baptized into the church she loved. This is a testimony that should encourage us that as long as our loved ones are alive and haven't grieved the Spirit away, there is hope for their salvation and we shouldn't give up praying for them.

Miguel Moore Speaks with Conference President

Miguel Moore remembered some of his friends in New York who had expressed a desire to move away from the big city. So he began writing them letters and calling them. Soon several family had relocated to Grand Rapids: the Tross family from Peru, the St. Clair family, the Barriero family and the Cruz family. This greatly increased the number as well as the spirits of the group.

Elder Scully visited the Grand Rapids Church once a month, but the members wanted more leadership. They approached the conference president and told him "If the Michigan Conference can't provide us with a full-time pastor, we'll go to the Lake Region Conference."

The president told them: "The growth of the Spanish work is very low. Besides, the children of the Spanish believers will grow up speaking English and will prefer to attend the English-speaking churches, so the Spanish work will just die out." He also cited another instance in which the conference had helped organize a non-Hispanic ethnic church in Detroit, only to have it fizzle out after a few years.

Miguel Moore challenged the president: "Give us a pastor for two years and if within that time we do not have an organized church in Grand Rapids, you can take him away. But give us this chance."

First Hispanic Pastor for Grand Rapids

Elder Orval Scully arranged for José Guillén to become a part-time pastor while continuing his studies at the Seminary and then become full-time upon completing his Seminary program in 1976. By the time he finished, the group had grown to 47, while still meeting in the Anglo church.

But the conference president preferred hiring an English-speaking pastor who could also speak Spanish and who would work under the English church pastor, just in case the Spanish work did not progress.

The brethren confronted the president telling him, "Elder Guillén is the man we need here." When they spent the Sabbath fasting and praying, God honored their prayer request. Elder Guillén was appointed as their church pastor.

Under Guillén's leadership, the group grew and on July 17, 1976, they were organized as the third Spanish-speaking church in the Michigan Conference.⁴⁷ Some of those who were instrumental in the establishment of the church were Miguel Moore and his wife Nora, Marta Moore-Walwyn, and Seminary students Eliezer Benavides, L. Morales and Luis Pacheco.

Pastors of the Grand Rapids Spanish Church⁴⁸

Pastors of the Grand Rapids Spanish Church were: Orval Scully, José Guillén, Vicente Rodríguez, Gilberto Gatón, Rubén Rivero, Orlando Vázquez, Eduardo Valdez, and Rubén Rivera.

Other Spanish Churches in Michigan

During the years since the Berrien Springs, Detroit, and Grand Rapids churches organized, other churches and companies have formed in several Michigan cities. Compared to the Spanish ministry in the Illinois Conference, these congregations were spread over a larger region of the state. Geographically, the Spanish churches in Michigan appeared in urban centers in the lower third of the state. The northernmost congregation was in Saginaw, about 130 miles above the southern border of the state. In one notable case (Grand Rapids), many of the members deliberately moved from New York to Michigan to contribute to the possibility of a Spanish-speaking church in that community.⁴⁹

The Hispanic congregations in Michigan grew encouragingly but did not become large.

In 1995, the Berrien Springs congregation numbered 372. After years of meeting in cramped quarters, the Detroit church purchased a sanctuary in 1997 with a seating capacity of 220. Other congregations in Ann Arbor, Kalamazoo, Saginaw, Lansing, Holland, and Lawrence remained small—less than 100—but active.⁵⁰

Claudio Martín, Hispanic Coordinator

Claudio Martín is the Hispanic Coordinator for the Michigan Conference. A native of Uruguay and a third-generation Adventist, he was born to Joaquín and Edith Brouchy Martín. Elder Martín graduated from River Plate College in Argentina with a B. A. in religion. He is married to Elva Maier and they have two children, Claudia and Gustavo.

The Martíns came to the United States in 1989, settling in Dallas, Texas, where he assisted the pastor of the Dallas Spanish Church. Their first assignment came in 1991 when the Rocky Mountain Conference called Elder Martín to Denver, Colorado to head up the Spanish work in their conference. When he arrived there, he found two churches (Denver and Greeley) with a total of 120 members. Realizing that there were over 340,000 Hispanics in the state of Colorado, he knew there was plenty of room for growth. By 1998 the number of Spanish churches in Colorado had grown to nine with over 500 members. The key to his success, besides the marvelous workings of the Holy Spirit, were small groups ministries and public evangelism.

With these experiences behind him, he came to Michigan as the Hispanic Coordinator.



Claudio Martín, Hispanic Coordinator for Michigan Conference, baptizing during the Hispanic Festival of Faith in Albion.

INDIANA CONFERENCE

Because Andrews University is situated in the southwestern corner of Michigan, it also has affected the Hispanic ministry in the Indiana Conference. Two of the Hispanic Seminary students who helped nurture the Gary Church in the early 1960's were Manuel Vásquez and Richard Dena.

Gary, Indiana Church

The beginnings of this group go back to 1950 when a humble but zealous layperson, Mrs. Agnes Matuzik,⁵¹ who spoke little English and no Spanish, began doing missionary visits, passing out literature. She came across two former Adventists from Puerto Rico and urged them to recommit themselves to Adventism. After some visits and attending church

again, they were rebaptized. Their rebaptism led to other Hispanic conversions in the community, which, in turn, gave rise to a Spanish Sabbath school later that same year. An Hispanic worker attending Emmanuel Missionary College, Carlos Schmidt, made weekly trips to Gary to guide the group. After two years, the membership reached 36 and on November 13, 1954, conference officers organized them into an official church.⁵² Rafael Pérez, from Cuba and a member of the Spanish church in Chicago, joined the ministerial staff in Indiana and was assigned to pastor the group.

Until the 1990's, the Gary congregation remained the sole Spanish church in the Indiana Conference. Because Gary, Indiana is a suburb of Chicago, the Gary Spanish Church became a part of the galaxy of congregations in Greater Chicago. Robert Goransson became pastor of this church after leaving the Chicago Central Church in 1960. Under his leadership, the Gary Spanish Church was the first to reach the Ingathering Vanguard goal in 1961.⁵³ For 16 years the congregation had worshiped in a small and inadequate church building in East Gary which they had built themselves. But they had long since outgrown it when they purchased a vacant Jewish synagogue for only half of its asking price. However, in their search for a suitable place to worship, the Gary Church members moved to East Chicago.

Gary Moves to East Chicago

The transaction occurred during the pastorate of Caleb Rosado, who organized the congregation to move into its new East Chicago sanctuary in 1973. Not only was the move advantageous because of the price, but it also located the congregation nearer an Hispanic community of about 9,000 Mexicans and Puerto Ricans. Membership growth was not dramatic as was the case in some metropolitan churches. When the church celebrated its 40th anniversary in November, 1994, about 100 people gathered to recall their past.⁵⁴

While the East Chicago congregation remained small, Hispanic groups appeared elsewhere during the 1990's as colonies of Spanish-speaking immigrants formed in Indiana. Inspired by Global Mission, Rubén Rivera, an Andrews University student from the Dominican Republic, began working among the 20,000 Hispanic residents of Indianapolis. The Anderson Church in the city underwrote this church planting project.

In February, 1992, a Branch Sabbath school formed, which moved from the Anglo sanctuary to a rented church in the city. Helped with financial support from local Anglo congregations, assisted by other Hispanic pastors and encouraged by Spanish cultural programs staged by groups from Andrews University, the members launched a lay movement that reaped 25 baptisms during the first year.⁵⁵

Indianapolis Church

By the next year, Indianapolis had become the center for Spanish work in the conference, with Carmelo Mercado as Coordinator of Hispanic Ministry. Under his supervision about 60 Spanish members gathered in June, 1993, to hold the first Spanish campmeeting in Indiana. Among the guests was Atilio Dupertuis, Director of the Institute for Hispanic Ministry at the Seminary.⁵⁶

Ten baptisms during the next year raised the membership to 39, enough to organize an official church. At the time of organization, about 75 were attending the Indianapolis Spanish Church.⁵⁷

By 1997, three more congregations appeared in Fort Wayne, South Bend, and Huntington, pushing the total of Spanish churches to five, with a combined membership of approximately 200. Although this number was relatively small, most of it had occurred since 1990. Impetus for this growth had emanated from both Chicago and Andrews University.

Orlando Vázquez, Indiana Hispanic Coordinator

Orlando Vázquez is a second generation Adventist. His father, Ignacio, and his uncle, Miguel Vázquez, were among the first Adventist pastors in Cuba. Orlando was born in Santiago, Cuba and pastored various churches there from 1967 to 1980, when he and thousands of his fellow countrymen left Cuba in the overcrowded Mariel boats. Elder Vázquez, his wife Raquel, and their daughter were on the very last boat, the *Edodne*, that left on September 23, 1980 from Mariel. The captain had come from Miami to Cuba to pick up ten members of his family, but Castro officials forced him to take 240 more people on board the 50-capacity boat. The 90-mile trip to Key West, Florida took 24 hours, during which time Elder Vázquez remembers there was no drinking water and literally every inch of the boat was covered with people. In the middle of the trip, due to the tremendous load they were carrying, one of the two motors burned out. There were five Adventists on board and their prayers were continually ascending to God.

The Lord heard their prayers and the boat reached the shores of the United States and freedom with its human cargo safe and sound. Elder Vázquez and his family traveled to Andrews University to study for his Master of Divinity and later settled in the Detroit area where he was hired in 1981 as a pastor by the Michigan Conference. Later, in 1985, he was asked to pastor the Lansing Spanish Church and four years later was transferred to Grand Rapids. In 1991 he became the Milwaukee pastor and Hispanic Coordinator for the Wisconsin Conference. The Indiana Conference then called him in 1999 to serve as their Hispanic Coordinator.

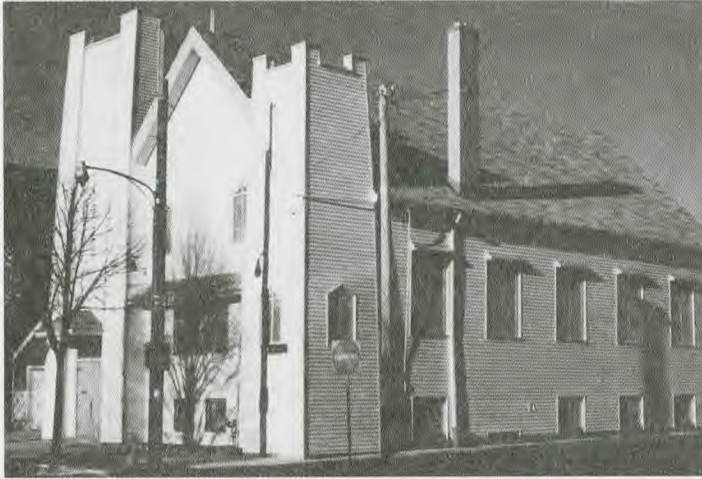
WISCONSIN

The Spanish work in the Wisconsin Conference likewise felt the evangelistic spirit radiating from Andrews University and Chicago. In Milwaukee, a city with a metropolitan population of well over a million, the first Spanish church organized in 1977, the product of four years of labor by Adventists from Chicago and Andrews University combined with an undying desire by Hispanic immigrants to spread their faith.

Milwaukee—First Spanish Church in Wisconsin

Guatemalan refugees, Héctor and Emma Santiago, arrived in Milwaukee in May of 1973. Two years of their persistent witnessing paved the way for others to join the church. Among them were Ruth Soto, Caren López, María Santiago, Perla Santiago and Estrella Quiles.⁵⁸ In October of 1975, they formed their own Spanish Sabbath school class in the Central Church in Milwaukee. Guests from Chicago, about 70 miles to the south, frequently preached, as did Hispanic ministers from the Seminary. Among them was Julio Peverini, who, in 1977, conducted an evangelistic series in a tent in the southern part of Milwaukee. From these meetings came 40 newly baptized members who **formed part of the first Spanish church in Wisconsin** when it was **organized on December 17, 1977,**

with 58 members.⁵⁹ This dream was realized through the great vision and support of the conference president, Elder Robert Dale.⁶⁰ Having attended Calxico Mission School in California in his academy years, he had developed an affinity for Hispanics and was sympathetic toward their spiritual needs.



Milwaukee Central Spanish Church.

Milwaukee Spawns Other Congregations

Almost immediately the members of this congregation began working to plant other daughter churches. The first evidence of their success occurred in Racine, 25 miles south on the shore of Lake Michigan.⁶¹

By 1979, 26 members formed a third group on the north side of Milwaukee. Pastoring these three congregations was César Puesán,

with the assistance of Ismael Rojas as an associate.⁶²

North Milwaukee Church Organized

Not until Miled Modad conducted evangelistic meetings in October of 1987 did the North Milwaukee Spanish Church prosper. Among those dedicated lay people that assisted with the pastor's soul winning program were: Ramiro, Manuel and Alejandro Alvarez; Elder Lozano and Juanita Lozano; Virgilio, Neisy, Isaac and Ibzán Monteagudo; Wilfredo Arce, Carmen, Joel and Arleen López; Javier, Ernestina and Miguel Mares; and David and Jeanette Pastrana. Following the baptism of 25 converts from these meetings, a membership of 61 became an official company, a status that lasted only from January, 1988 to the following **September (1988) when the conference recognized it as an official church.**⁶³



Milwaukee Southeast Spanish Church.

Two years after his meetings in North Milwaukee, Modad took his evangelistic fervor to the south side of the city where he began another series in October of 1989. With the help of his members from the North church, he preached for 60 nights, harvesting 20 baptisms. With these new converts as a nucleus and four families who transferred to the south side (Ramiro Alvarez, Antonio Torres, Manuel Alvarez and Carmen López), a fourth Spanish congregation began.⁶⁴

Beyond question, the strength of the Hispanic movement in the Wisconsin Conference lay in Milwaukee. By 1997, after a history of slightly less than 25 years, the membership of the four area churches, including Racine, hovered at 335.⁶⁵

First Pastor of the Milwaukee Spanish Church

Early on, the Spanish-speaking members depended heavily on help from both Chicago and Berrien Springs, but as the community grew, its members generated most of its own drive. In part, this success was the product of the first pastor of the Milwaukee churches, César Puesán, who remained in the district for about a decade, providing continuity during the formative years of Hispanic ministry. Puesán came to Milwaukee with experience in church leadership in both the Dominican Republic and the Antillian Union, and eventually became a member of the teaching faculty of Montemorelos University in Mexico.

Because the Milwaukee Spanish churches were the dominant force in Wisconsin, the pastor of the district also carried the additional responsibility of coordinating the Hispanic ministry in the conference.



Hispanic Baptisms at Camp "Go Seek" during Spanish Campmeeting.

During the 1990's, the Hispanic ministry spread northward to Wautoma, a tiny hamlet of less than 2,000 people in central Wisconsin, and to Sheboygan, a coastal community of about 100,000 persons, approximately 50 miles north of Milwaukee. In both instances, the Milwaukee members provided much needed support by attending and leading worship services. With the organization of companies in these locations, the total Hispanic membership of the Wisconsin Conference approached 400.

Participating in "Operation Amigo"

Similar to their colleagues in the Michigan Conference, Wisconsin members participated in "Operation Amigo," selecting the North Dominican Conference in the Inter-American Division as a sister conference. During an 18-month period in 1993 and 1994, Wisconsin volunteers helped build four churches in this part of the Dominican Republic.⁶⁶

Rubén Rivera, Wisconsin Hispanic Coordinator

Elder Rubén Rivera, born in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, is a second-generation Adventist. His father, Felipe Rivera, was a dedicated, self-supporting lay worker and his mother, Dominga, was a seamstress. Young Rivera studied at the Dominican Adventist University where he received his B. A. degree in Religion. His work experience in the Dominican Republic included academy chaplain, associate pastor and senior church pastor. In 1988, Elder Rivera and his wife Areli Arias Rivera moved to Boston, Massachusetts, where he served as a Bible instructor before taking a call to New Jersey where he did the same work. Elder Rivera and his family moved to Berrien Springs, Michigan in 1990 so he could study for his master's degree, after which he was called to Indianapolis, Indiana to establish the Spanish work there.

When Elder Rivera and his wife attended the 1990 General Conference session in Indianapolis, he discovered that there was no Spanish work in Indianapolis. It was there that the Lord put a burden on his heart to return some day to Indianapolis to start Spanish work. Three years later, the Lord gave him that opportunity and he established the Central Spanish Church, the first Spanish church in Indianapolis. When he left in 1999, the church had 80 members and an attendance of 150. He also re-established the work in South Bend, Indiana and started the work in Jasper, Indiana. In 1999, he was asked to be the Hispanic Coordinator for the Wisconsin Conference.

LAKE REGION CONFERENCE



Pastor Archie Colón, Lake Region Conference.

The Lake Region Conference also has Spanish churches in its constituency. The first Spanish church to become a part of the Regional Conference was the West Spanish Church, known as the Logan Square Church. This took place in 1975. Several factors figured into this transfer, the more prominent one being dissatisfaction with decisions by the Illinois Conference officers affecting the Hispanic congregations, primarily touching the problem of an unstable pastorate.⁶⁷ Some of the Hispanic members, under the leadership of Archie Colón, a lay person who became the group's spokesperson, approached the Regional Conference for a transfer to their conference. This request started a process which took one year to complete. Colón later entered the ministry in the mid-80's and was ordained in 1992.

Logan Square Church Transfers to Lake Region Conference

On September 2, 1975, the Lake Union Committee voted to approve the recommendation of the Illinois Conference to transfer the complete membership of the Logan Square Church to the Lake Region Conference. The first Hispanic pastor to be hired by the Lake Region Conference was Julio Astacio, who had been part of the movement.

A short time later, the Aurora Spanish Church followed suit, requesting a complete transfer of their membership to the Regional Conference. Several members from the Spanish North and Central Churches along with members from the Regional West Church were organized into a company on February 21, 1976 to form the third Spanish church in the Regional Conference. This left the Spanish work in the Greater Chicago area divided with three churches in each conference.

A small Spanish congregation in South Bend, Indiana, organized as a company in November, 1991, under the auspices of the Lake Region Conference,⁶⁸ and the following year the Hispanoamericana Church with 54 members formed in Chicago as a “daughter” church of the Chicago Logan Square Church.⁶⁹

Phenomenal Growth

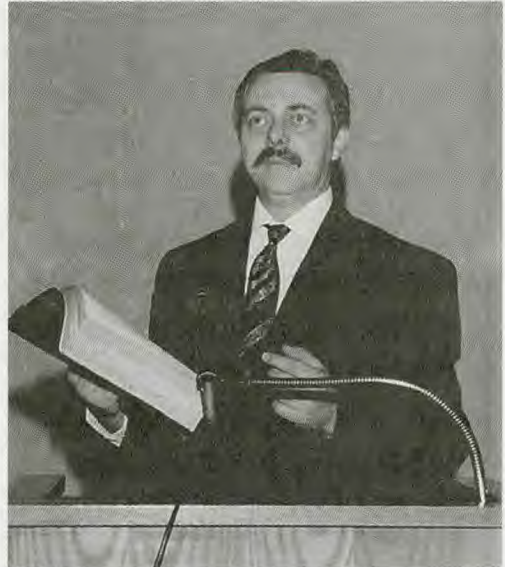
The phenomenal growth of the Hispanic work in the Lake Region Conference began in 1992 under the leadership of Elder Hugo Gambetta. When Elder Gambetta came as pastor of the Logan Square Church, there were only four churches and approximately 100 Hispanic members in the conference. The Logan Square Church only had 15 members after a schism which took place under the former pastor.

Elder Gambetta took up the challenge of making the Hispanic work grow in his conference. He emphasized evangelism, training of lay people, established small groups and brought in stipend pastors to plant churches. The Regional Spanish churches also sponsored local radio and television outreach programs, including *La Voz de la Esperanza*.

By 1999, the Hispanic work in the Regional Conference had grown to 21 organized churches and five companies for a total of 26 congregations with 1233 members.

Hugo Gambetta

Elder Hugo Gambetta, born in Posadas, Misiones, Argentina, comes from a long line of Adventist pioneers and administrative leaders of the church. His father, Víctor Gambetta, was a noted evangelist in Argentina. His uncle, Elder Federico Drachenburg, served as an Associate Treasurer of the General Conference while another uncle, Dr. León



Pastor Hugo Gambetta, Lake Region Conference.

Gambetta, worked at the Pacific Press for 30 years, taught at La Sierra College and now teaches at Pacific Union College.

Elder Gambetta moved to the United States when he was only 13 years old but later returned to Argentina to study. Later, he graduated from River Plate College. With 27 years of denominational service as a church pastor, professor of theology, and evangelist, he is presently the Hispanic Coordinator and Evangelist for the Lake Region Conference. His radio and TV programs, *El Evangelio Eterno* (*The Everlasting Gospel*), have been on the air for 15 years and can be heard on 145 radio stations and seen on 112 TV stations in the North American, Inter-American and South American Divisions. During his ministry, he has personally baptized over 15,000 new members. He is married to Mabel Mascheroni.

❖ RECENT EVENTS IN THE LAKE UNION

Women's Ministries on Union Level

In keeping with contemporary trends, the Lake Union Conference organized a Women's Ministries Department, appointing Ileana Freeman-Gutierrez as the coordinator of Hispanic women. In 1995, in South Bend, Indiana, she conducted the first Union retreat for Hispanic women, to which more than 300 came. The agenda included seminars and plenary sessions that ran the gamut from evangelism to homemaking, but all meetings were motivated by the conviction that Spanish-speaking women had special needs in an Anglo society.⁷⁰

Hispanic Work Continues to Develop

Union-wide gatherings for Hispanic ministers began in August, 1993, when Luis Leonor, the Union Coordinator for Hispanic Ministry, presided over the first retreat for Spanish-speaking pastors. It was to be a prelude to intensive evangelistic activity that the ministers were scheduled to launch in the fall.⁷¹

Two years later, the Hispanic clergy organized the Lake Union Conference Ministerial Association with representatives from each of the conferences on the slate of officers. In April, 1995, they held their first meeting in Berrien Springs, Michigan.⁷²

When Leonor, who also held the title of Lake Union Vice President, submitted his report covering five years, inclusive, from 1991-1995, he indicated that Hispanic membership in the five conferences of the Union had increased from 3,271 to 4,078. These members represented a cross section of the 20 Spanish countries and constituted about six percent of the Union total.⁷³

Benefitting the Division

While Spanish-speaking Adventists in several other North American unions were more numerous, the Lake union membership was giving a remarkably good account of itself and engaging in activities that benefitted the entire North American Division. Production of *Tu Historia Preferida*, a Spanish version of *Your Story Hour*, an Adventist staple item for children, began in Berrien Springs studios in 1985. It soon spread to stations throughout Latin America.⁷⁴

Also of significance was a grant from Pew Charitable Trusts, a philanthropic foundation, to Andrews University to conduct a study of Hispanic theological education among Adventists in the North American Division and Puerto Rico.⁷⁵

It was not possible for Hispanics in the Lake Union to look at themselves at the end of the 20th century without reminding each other that their churches, membership, and contributions to the church at large was a demonstration of heavenly blessings. Because of the drawing power of the Seminary at Andrews University, probably as many influential personalities from Latin America had participated to some degree in the Lake Union Hispanic ministry as anywhere in the world, and the impact was undeniable. For the Spanish-speaking membership, it had been a long step from the humble beginnings in a coffee warehouse in Chicago.

Luis Leonor – Vice President

Luis E. Leonor, Vice President of the Lake Union Conference, was born in San Francisco de Macoris, Dominican Republic. His father, Juan R. Leonor, was a fine cabinet maker and his mother, Altagracia Rizea, was a housewife. In 1958, young Luis was sent to Cuba to attend Antillian Union College where he studied until 1961, when Castro took over the college. Luis is one of those non-Cubans who witnessed first-hand the Cuban Revolution which started in January, 1959.

Elder Leonor has worked as a departmental director in Puerto Rico and Honduras. He pastored in the Dominican Republic and was president of both the Salvadorean Mission and the North Dominican Mission, the latter of which Juan Prestol, now the Treasurer of the North American Division, served as his treasurer.

In 1976, Leonor went to the Seminary at Andrews University where he studied while at the same time serving as the full-time pastor of the Berrien Springs Spanish Church, a post he held for 15 years. In 1978, the Michigan Conference asked him to be the Spanish Coordinator while continuing as pastor of the church. In 1990, he was invited to serve as the Vice President of the Lake Union, a position he still holds. He is married to the former Noemí E. Escobar.

Luis Leonor's Initiatives

Elder Leonor has given outstanding administrative leadership as Vice President for the last ten years both to the Spanish work and other administrative assignments given him. He has been instrumental in establishing the Lake Union's adoption of the Dominican Union Conference as their sister union. Under this plan, the Lake Union and lay persons have financed and assisted in the construction of two large church schools and 12 new churches.

Each year Elder Leonor organizes a mission trip. In 1999, it was a Union ASI trip to Honduras. The Union ASI also sponsors *Your Story Hour* in Cuba. Every December for the past 20 years, the Lake Union Pathfinders have gone to Santo Domingo, accompanied by doctors and dentists, where they assist the medical people in setting up a temporary medical clinic and attend to as many as 5,000 people.

Union Statistics

Under Elder Leonor's leadership, the Spanish work has grown from 3,300 in 1990 to 5,049 members in 1999 (35 percent growth), making it the seventh-largest Hispanic constituency in the North American Division. From 28 churches in 1990, it has grown to 68 with 33 full-time pastors. In 1999, Hispanics baptized 535, or 21 percent of the Union's total of 2,504 for the same year.

LAKE UNION HISPANIC LEADERS



Claudio Martín
Michigan Conference
Hispanic Coordinator



Luis Leonor
Lake Union Conference
Vice-President



Rubén Rivera
Wisconsin Conference
Hispanic Coordinator



Otoniel Reyes
Illinois Conference
Hispanic Coordinator



Orlando Vázquez
Indiana Conference
Hispanic Coordinator



Hugo Gambetta
Lake Region Conference
Hispanic Coordinator and Evangelist

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73. Lake Union *Herald*, June, 1996.
74. Lake Union *Herald*, January, 1990.
75. Lake Union *Herald*, January, 1995.

10

Mid-America Union Conference

Growth Despite Isolation

"To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." Isaiah 8:20

Formation of the Mid-America Union

THE present Mid-America Union is a fairly recent creation, formed by merging the Central and Northern unions in 1980. These two unions had functioned since the early years of the century (1902) except for a five-year period (1932-37) during the Great Depression when the Central Union absorbed the territory of the Northern Union in an economizing measure.

Mid-America sprawls over nine states (Colorado, Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, Wyoming, and the San Juan County of New Mexico), making it one of the largest union territories in the North American Division. Only the Canadian and the North Pacific Unions are larger in area.

However, Mid-America is one of the smallest in Adventist memberships. It is also one of the least urban unions in North America. Partly because of this rural character, Hispanics early on did not settle in large numbers in this region, but rather tended to gravitate to large metropolitan areas. Although Hispanic work presently exists in every conference in this union, Colorado has the distinction of being the state where Spanish work was first established.

COLORADO CONFERENCE

State History and Background

“Colorado,” a Spanish word meaning “colored red,” was the name given to the river (Colorado River) which flows through the canyons of red stone. Spanish explorers, looking for gold, were the first white men to set foot on Colorado soil.

In 1706, the Colorado region was claimed for Spain by Juan de Ulibarri, a Spaniard official, but in 1821, Spain lost the western part of Colorado to Mexico. Later, the United States gained control of Colorado at the end of the Mexican War (1846-1848), with the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. Within a few years after this treaty, southern Colorado became settled by immigrants from New Mexico, establishing small townships throughout the San Luis Valley. The first of these was San Luis, in 1851, making it the first settlement in Colorado.¹

Colorado has been nicknamed the “Centennial State” since it gained statehood in the centennial year (1876) of the Declaration of Independence.² The state is famous for its beautiful, majestic Rocky Mountains which lend to its popular winter sports. One of the better-known peaks, Pike’s Peak, has an elevation of 14,110 feet. Another attraction in Colorado is the Royal Gorge Bridge, the highest suspension bridge in the world. Located near Canon City, the bridge stretches 1,053 feet above the Arkansas River. The gorge itself is more than 1000 feet deep. Colorado also claims to have the highest automobile road which takes one to an altitude of 14,264 feet at the top of Mt. Evans.³

The United States Air Force Academy (“West Point of the Air”) is located in Colorado Springs as is the North American Air Defense Command (NORAD) underneath Cheyenne Mountain.⁴ One of the U. S. Mints is located in Denver, almost exclusively minting coins. Every day it mints 38 million coins.

Where Adventist Hispanic Work Began in Mid-America

Hispanic ministry in Colorado began in the 1920’s. Two areas of Spanish-speaking population existed in this state, one in Denver, and the other in the San Luis Valley in the south-central part of the state which skirted the border of New Mexico. At that time, most of the Hispanic residents of Colorado were descendants of Spanish settlers, or Mexicans. Some of the Mexicans were from families that went back to the days before 1848 when the Mexican Republic included much of the American Southwest, including portions of Colorado.

Vore Finds Work “Most Difficult”

The written records of Hispanic ministry in Colorado are sketchy, but in 1931, George T. Vore confessed in the *Central Union Outlook* that his work in Denver and the San Luis Valley was the most difficult of his ten years of labor among Spanish-speaking people.⁵

Elder Vore began his pastoral duties in Colorado in 1926 after spending about five years in Cuba. He and his family devoted their first energies to Denver, but soon settled into a home in Monte Vista in the San Luis Valley, which became a virtual mission field for them.⁶

Elder Vore was not the first Anglo to evangelize among the Hispanics in Colorado, and although his predecessors did not openly admit to hardship, their written reports in the Union paper suggest that they, too, found Colorado a hard place to work.

Brown Conducts Evangelistic Effort in Denver

In 1925, H. C. Brown came to the Colorado Conference with the specific assignment of developing the work among the Hispanics. He noted that the conference had previously done very little for them and that the Hispanic membership in Denver consisted of only one family and two other members.⁷

An evangelistic effort in Denver that Elder Brown began on February 15 stimulated hope for baptisms, but as the series progressed, it became clear that the results would be modest. In April, the *Outlook* observed that attendance at Brown’s meetings was good and the audience appeared eager. Elder Brown himself wrote in June that his lectures lasted six weeks, resulting in a baptismal class of 25. Although some had already requested baptism, he cautioned his fellow Adventists that the converts were still only diamonds in the rough and that they had a long way to go before they could “stand alone.”⁸

Brown’s stay in Colorado was short. After only eight months, he and his family left on August 29 to take up new duties in South America.⁹ It is doubtful that he completed the follow-up work to his evangelism in Denver, but that others, such as F. W. Miller, were left with the responsibility of pursuing his efforts.

Casebeer Visits Hispanic Families in Denver

In May, 1926, H. D. Casebeer from the General Conference Bureau of Home Missions passed through Colorado, stopping long enough in Denver to visit several Spanish families, and to spend the Sabbath with the Spanish company that had been raised up by F. W. Miller.¹⁰ We can only speculate that Elder Miller had grasped the reins that Brown left in his hands. Whatever Elder Miller’s role was in organizing this Spanish group, it did not last long. Within weeks after Elder Casebeer’s visit, Elder Vore and his family entered the scene. After five years, he may have characterized his ministry as difficult, even discouraging at times, but he brought continuity to the Hispanic work and gave it the leadership it needed to establish it as a permanent aspect of Seventh-day Adventism in Colorado.

Vore Emphasizes Evangelism

By living in the San Luis Valley, Elder Vore emphasized the importance of evangelism among the Spanish population in the rural areas and small towns of Colorado. His first steps in Hispanic ministry were in the twin settlements of Mogote and Mesitas, about 35 miles south of his home in Monte Vista. He also worked early in La Veta, New Mexico,



Elder G. T. Vore and family (left to right): Clell, Leola, Elder Vore, Mrs. Vore, Delicia and George, Jr.

about 60 miles east of his home. In the first locale he nurtured a Sabbath school and in the second, he opened a series of meetings in early 1927.¹¹

The next year he called the results “encouraging,” but described the difficulty in gaining converts from the Hispanic people. The leading problem, he said, stemmed from the reluctance of Catholics to accept any form of Protestantism without first seeing a genuine demonstration of Christian principles in the lives of those who were proclaiming a new faith. It was a lack of these qualities in the general public that made evangelism so hard.¹²

Besides La Veta and Mogote-Mesitas, Elder Vore was supervising work in Rocky Ford and La Junta, neighboring towns east of Pueblo, about 150 miles from his home. In Walsenberg, Trinidad, and Pueblo, he saw potential for soul-winning among Hispanics, many of them agricultural workers among the beet fields in the San Luis Valley.¹³

Denver, First Spanish Church in Colorado—1927

Elder Vore’s emphasis on the Hispanic population of southern Colorado did not mean that he neglected Denver. In December, 1927, he launched an evangelistic series in a vacant store in the Spanish section of the city, assisted by Carlos Hidalgo, who was from Central America.¹⁴

By March the meetings were over and Elder Vore returned to Monte Vista, leaving Brother Hidalgo in charge of pursuing the interests that had developed. Before leaving, however, Elder Vore baptized 11 converts who joined the 15 other Hispanic members, to form **the first Spanish-speaking church in the Colorado Conference.**¹⁵

Vore Alternates Between Denver and San Luis Valley

Almost simultaneously at the constituency meeting in Boulder, the conference president noted that Colorado employed a full-time worker for each of the non-English-speaking congregations—German, Italian, Scandinavian, and Spanish. He commented that the prospects among the Spanish population were encouraging, adding that all of the officers of the new Spanish congregation in Denver were Spanish.¹⁶

Elder Vore returned to Denver in November, 1928, to spend a few weeks nurturing the Hispanic members. Before departing again for the San Luis Valley, he helped Hidalgo begin another series of meetings.¹⁷ Alternating time between the city and southern Colorado became a pattern in Elder Vore's work habits, but he depended on Hidalgo to provide at least some leadership to the Denver church.¹⁸

Spanish Sabbath Schools in La Manga and Mogote

Gradually the results of Elder Vore's steady work in the San Luis Valley bore fruit. By 1931, he had organized a Sabbath school of 18 in La Manga, near the New Mexico border,¹⁹ and in Mogote the Sabbath school attendance rose to 24, including one member who donated a plot of land for a church and a cemetery.²⁰

Mogote, First Spanish Church School in Colorado—1931

This turn of events was the inspiration that the struggling Spanish group needed in the San Luis Valley. With land at his disposal, Elder Vore began to lay plans for a new church in Las Mesitas and a Spanish mission school in Mogote, only two miles apart on the south central border of the state. He solicited funds in the union paper and visited churches to gather financial support.²¹

As rapidly as funds came to him, he worked on these projects. Through the spring and summer, the structure went up, an L-shaped building, part of which would be a schoolroom. It was his hope that all would be ready for the new school year in September.

As the day approached, G. M. Mathews, secretary of education for the Colorado Conference, joined Elder Vore to make certain that the new enterprise was off to a good start, but the day before school was to begin, the classroom was still without a floor and the teacher had not arrived. Under hastily improvised conditions, classes began the next day on September 14, 1931, with Elder Vore teaching a dozen Hispanic



W. A. Wolcott and family, in Antonito, Colorado, 1939.

children until W. A. Wolcott, the regular teacher, moved from Dallas, Texas.²²

By January, 1932, enrollment had risen to 20 students, and Wolcott and his wife were deeply immersed in missionary work. The building was still not completed and lacked equipment, but it was usable and Elder Vore was obviously pleased with it and the prospects of financial support that was still coming from Adventists around the conference. Elder Vore had spent less than \$725 to erect this multi-purpose building in Mogote that included a schoolroom for 25 pupils, a 90-seat chapel, and a two-room apartment for the teachers.²³

Hispanics Intimidated by Catholic Church

For the Hispanic population in the area, this school with a fluent, bilingual teacher was a gesture of surety that Adventists had moved into the community to stay. Ever since his arrival in Monte Vista, Elder Vore had been laboring tirelessly to enlarge the Spanish-speaking Adventist membership but advancement was slow for reasons that Elder Vore attributed to a general lack of Christianity among Protestants. But there were other causes for reluctance among Hispanics to embrace Adventism. The case of the Ed Baca family illustrates the situation.

Excommunication

Ed Baca and his wife, agricultural workers in the San Luis Valley, had received Bible studies from G. T. Vore and C. T. Blackwell, the Adventist rancher who employed them. For three years Blackwell continued the Bible studies until finally Ed was convinced that the Advent message was the Bible truth. When he shared the good news with his family, four of his sisters and one of his brothers accepted the Advent message and in 1929 all five were baptized by Elder G. T. Vore.²⁴

When the Bacas became Sabbathkeepers, they were promptly excommunicated from their Catholic church and condemned by members of the Hispanic community. During the ensuing months, they experienced both support and stiff opposition that embroiled various members of Mrs. Baca's family on both sides of the conflict.

Persecution

One of Brother Baca's, brothers-in-law became the president of the newly organized secret Catholic Ave-Ramon order whose members took a vow to defend the Catholic faith until death.²⁵ Their mission now was to get rid of the *sabadistas*, as the Sabbathkeepers were called. In God's providence, however, no one was killed, but life became very difficult for these Sabbathkeepers. Since at the time there was no organized Spanish-speaking church, the Bacas joined the Monte Vista English SDA church.

Rumors that Adventists were not a stable group and that they did not care for the souls of the dead nor did they provide burial places for them took their toll in the community in which the Bacas lived. But the construction of the mission school and chapel at Mogote on a plot of land large enough to develop a cemetery changed the public reaction to Elder Vore and his work. For about three years, the Baca family had suffered persecution, but when Spanish-speaking families for whom Elder Vore had been working saw the permanency of the Mogote mission, including plans for a cemetery, they began to warm up to him and to look more favorably toward Adventism.

Breakthrough in San Luis Valley

On a Sabbath afternoon shortly before the Mogote school opened, Elder Vore and brother Blackwell met with 25 Hispanics in Del Norte, a community about 15 miles west of the minister's home. Elder Vore preached for five hours, taking time out only to eat a hasty meal. By the time the evening meeting ended, Baca and his wife, along with some of their relatives in the Romero and Medina families, requested baptism.²⁶

This meeting proved to be the breakthrough in the San Luis Valley for which Elder Vore had been laboring so long. In October of 1931, H. D. Casebeer conducted a revival series to culminate the work that Elder Vore had been pursuing, and climaxed his meetings with a baptism of eight "in the icy waters of the Conejos River," Elder Vore wrote.

On November 7, about 200 assembled at the Mogote mission to witness the organization of a Spanish-speaking church. It was called Las Mesitas Spanish Mission, named after the nearby community.²⁷ Elder W. A. Wolcott, who in addition to teaching, also served as the secretary of pastoral district 24 in the conference, reported on December 5 that membership of the Spanish congregation stood at 22.²⁸

In the summer of 1933, F. L. Perry, who had recently joined the Spanish Department in the Bureau of Home Missions, found Elders Vore and Wolcott still at their posts. "Through the efforts of the brethren, much prejudice has been removed and there are openings in several places," he noted, after spending considerable time with them visiting believers throughout the San Luis Valley.²⁹

American Citizens, Not Immigrants

Work among non-English-speaking congregations was an integral part of the work in the Colorado Conference, as news notes in the union paper testified, but frequently these references excluded the work that Elder Vore and his predecessors had done within the Hispanic community. From his vantage point in the Bureau of Home Missions, Elder Perry observed that the thousands of Spanish-speaking people in the San Luis Valley constituted a mission comparable to traditional world fields (he had worked in Peru, Uruguay, Argentina, Chile and Mexico). But rather than immigrants, as were the members of the Italian, German, and Scandinavian congregations in Denver and other locations, many Spanish-speaking people were American citizens for whom Colorado was home. Some were Americans with ancestry reaching back farther than that of many Anglos. What made them different was their cultural heritage which they retained, including the language they spoke.

It was easy for conference leaders to visualize the work of the Bureau of Home Missions as relating to immigrants rather than long-standing citizens, but Elder Perry urged the leaders of the Colorado Conference to become more interested in the Hispanics and do no less for them than what they had done for other foreign mission groups. At the July district meeting for the churches in the San Luis Valley, the conference took steps to recognize the Hispanic members by inviting them to attend and providing a translator for the Sunday night meeting.³⁰

A Spiritual Awakening Among Hispanics

In January, 1934, Elder Vore, having spent eight years in Hispanic ministry in Colorado, reported that a general awakening was occurring in the Spanish-speaking community. He had good reason to believe so. Assisted by W. A. Wolcott, he spent the previous

ELDER REYMUNDO ARCHULETA



Reymundo Archuleta had the distinction of being the first American-born, Adventist-educated Hispanic minister to enter the work in Colorado. This Colorado "home boy" earned a junior college degree from Southwestern Jr.

College in Keene, Texas.

Born in 1911 in Walsenburg, Colorado, in the southern part of the state, Ray was raised by his parents, Juan Francisco Archuleta and Ursula Escobedo Archuleta, as a devout Catholic. He came into the Adventist church through an evangelistic effort which his mother-in-law, Gregorita García, encouraged him to attend.

In 1927, Ray married Corina García. Although both were only 16 at the time, that union lasted for 57 years until her death in 1984. Elder Archuleta died in 1985 having given 33 years of ministry, working in Colorado, New Mexico, California, Florida and Arizona. Their children are: Gloria, Ursula, Robert, David and Elona.

summer and fall conducting evangelistic meetings in Jaroso and Alamosa which led to further Bible studies with five or six families. After preaching to nearly 50 in each of two meetings in the counties of Conejos and Costilla, he said the people were especially eager to hear the message. Calls were coming to him from a half dozen Hispanic communities in the San Luis Valley wanting to hear Adventism preached in Spanish.

Back in Denver, Elder Vore began an evangelistic series that drew such large audiences he was forced to preach twice each night.³¹ As the latter half of the decade of the 1930's unfolded, the momentum that Elder Vore perceived became more visible, and a new name appeared among the prominent workers in the San Luis Valley. In 1936, G. W. Chambers, evangelist, conducted meetings in Saguache, about 35 miles due north of Monte Vista, which produced several Spanish-speaking converts. At the same time, young Reymundo Archuleta, a native of Colorado, held meet-

ings in Denver, which led to the baptism of five new Hispanic members, most of whom were the result of witnessing by lay members.³²

Archuleta Launches His Ministry in Colorado

In 1936, when Ray finished his second year at Southwestern Jr. College, the Colorado Conference called him to work in the San Luis Valley. That was the beginning of a long

pastoral and evangelistic career for Pastor Archuleta in the North American Division. A year and a half later, he reported that the Saguache group had grown from its original four members to a church of 31 who maintained a church school with 23 children. Eight new members had joined the Las Mesitas congregation following meetings in Antonito, about five miles distant.³³ During the last seven months of 1938, 18 new Hispanic members were baptized in the San Luis Valley.³⁴

Returning to Saguache, Archuleta launched an effort in January, 1939, which he repeatedly publicized in letters to the conference office. On March 18, 23 converts were baptized, swelling the Saguache membership to 44. With plans ripening for a separate building for the Saguache church school, Archuleta hastened on to Las Animas, more than 150 miles east for another effort.³⁵ In May he told the readers of the *Outlook* that 18 new church members had resulted from this series of meetings.³⁶

As the decade of the 1930's ended, the Hispanic ministry in Colorado, though small in numbers, showed signs of flourishing. Leadership had passed from the hands of hard-working Anglos, such as Elders Vore and Wolcott, to Hispanics themselves.

A Church and School Built in Saguache

Tomás Sandoval, a lay Adventist pioneer, and his son, Eneas Sandoval, who was only nine years old at the time, remember that in 1936 Elder George T. Vore and Elder Chambers came to Saguache, Colorado, set up a tent and held a 10-week evangelistic effort in Spanish.³⁷ At the end of the crusade, Eneas' parents, Tomás and Laura Sandoval, were baptized along with his grandfather, Ventura. Another prominent Hispanic family baptized at that time was the Velásquez family (Antonio and Eduvijen).



Saguache Spanish Adventist Church and School (left), 1937.

Saguache was a small town in the south central region of the state. It was a farming community where the principal crop was potatoes. There were only two grocery stores, one hotel and a school. In 1937, Brother Tomás, Brother Antonio Velásquez, and other members built the first Hispanic SDA church building in Saguache. It was made of adobe brick and a year after its completion, another room was added, which was converted into the one-room school house. Although the church services were held in Spanish, the children were taught in English in the little school. For the next few years, the school had an enrollment which fluctuated between eight and 12 children. Some of the teachers that taught there during this time were: Ms. Brownell; Malissa Ruybalid and Rufina Velásquez Sánchez, daughter of Antonio.³⁸



1941 tent effort given by pastors Ray Archuleta (first row, far right), Ray Blackwell (third row, far right) and Samuel Castillo (back row, fourth from left). Others pictured are Ed Baca (back row, 6th from left) and Tomás Sandoval (back row, 3rd from right). Tent was pitched in Tomás Sandoval's yard in Monte Vista.

First Spanish Church is Built in Monte Vista

In 1942, there were 16 Hispanic members in Monte Vista, but without their own meeting place. So Salomón Sandoval donated some land and built a 20 x 20 frame stucco church.

Tomás Sandoval became their lay preacher and the following year he entered the colporteur ministry as well. Some of the families that made up the membership at that time were: Tomás and Rebecca Armijo (grandparents of Antonio Chris Armijo, who married Sylvia Bargas, daughter of Pastor Fred Bargas and his wife Alice); Pete, Leroy and Edward Armijo; Virginia Maes; Silviano Martínez; Toby Baca; Ernestina and Lydia DeHerrera.



Tomás and Laura Sandoval, 1951.

***The One Dollar Church Building*³⁹**

In 1951, Elder N. C. Petersen called Pastor Fred Bargas to take the San Luis Valley district (Monte Vista, Saguache and Magote Churches). When he arrived, the Monte Vista Church had only 20 members attending. But he felt that if they had a larger church building, he could fill it. Through God's providence, the members were able to purchase an Army barracks building in Los Alamos, New Mexico for \$1. The Sandovals, who were truckers, hauled it all the way to Monte Vista—150 miles—where they totally refurbished it, converting it into a comfortable place to worship. When Freddy Bargas left the San Luis Valley district in 1957, there were 65 members in that church.

***The Fernándezes, Pioneer Family in New Mexico and Colorado*⁴⁰**

One of the stalwart families in the history of the Denver Spanish Church was the Fernández clan. Patriarch Juan Bautista Fernández was born in 1886 in the northeastern part of New Mexico. On August 1, 1908, he married María Cleofes Maes and settled in Cleveland, New Mexico, between Holman and Mora. For a time Fernández homesteaded the farming land nearby in Wagon Mound.

In 1921 an Hispanic literature evangelist came to their farmhouse and sold Juan's father, Andrés, a copy of *El Conflicto de Los Siglos* (*The Great Controversy*). Juan borrowed the book from his father and read it from cover to cover. Then, in the back of the book, he noticed an advertisement for Adventist tracts, which he sent off for. Through them he learned more about the Adventist message, including the Sabbath truth. The Holy Spirit was working and Juan came under conviction that Saturday was the Sabbath.

Meanwhile, Manuel Juaros, a Spaniard, moved to the area. It was rumored that he was a Methodist. One day some of Juaros' sheep strayed off and got lost. When Juaros stopped by the Fernández farm to inquire if they had seen the sheep, Juan engaged Juaros in a conversation and soon they were talking about religion. Since Juan had already discovered the Sabbath, he asked Juaros, "Do you think we're keeping the wrong day of worship by keeping Sunday?" Juaros did not want to get into a discussion on the subject, so he just said, "It's very possible" and left it at that.

Juaros Borrows The Great Controversy

A few weeks later, Juaros went to the general store in Wagon Mound to sell some eggs and pick up provisions. While there, he asked the store proprietor, "Do you happen to have any books that I could borrow?"

"I have only one book," the proprietor told him, "and it's on religion. But I would be happy to loan it to you."

Juaros declined the offer. However, two weeks later, he returned and asked the proprietor the same question, "Do you have any books I can borrow?"

"Like I said," the proprietor answered him, "I have only one book and it's called *The Great Controversy*." That book had been sold to him by the same colporteur who had sold Juan's father his copy. Juaros took it and began reading. Then he noticed the list of Adventist tracts in the back offered to those who were interested. The Holy Spirit impressed Juaros, just as He had done with Juan, to write to the Texico Conference for the materials in Spanish.

Fernándezes Are Baptized

Juaros' letter was given to Elder Burt Bray, who read and spoke Spanish. He drove to Wagon Mound to deliver the tracts in person and when he saw the spiritual interest that Juaros had, he decided to stay to study with him. Juaros thought of his friend, Juan Fernández and invited him to the study. Immediately Juan saddled his horse and rode over to his father Andrés' house and then to his brother Pedro's to invite them to come to listen to the word of God that coming Saturday.

At the end of the studies, several people were baptized, including Juan and María Fernández; Juan's father, Andrés Fernández, and family; Juan's brother, Pedro Fernández, and family; and Juan's brother-in-law, Luis Medina, who became the grandfather of Dr. Ben Medina from San Diego. Soon after Juan Fernández's baptism, he felt the Lord calling him to the literature ministry.



Fernández Family in Fort Lupton, Colorado, 1961

Fernández Family

Juan and María Fernández had twelve children: Roberto, Filiberto, Perside, Esperanza (Hope), Julian, Onésimo, Bersabe (Bessie), Evangelina, Ezekiel, Priscilla, Juan (Johnny, Jr.), and Roberto (Bob).

In 1932, the two oldest children (Roberto, 25, and Filiberto, 23) died of typhoid fever only three days apart. The disease was highly contagious with very little medicine available to treat it. Even the doctor who cared for the Fernández children contracted the disease and died. Onésimo almost succumbed to it, losing all his hair and having to learn to walk all over again. But God spared his life for a purpose. All living children are still members of the church.

Onésimo Fernández and Family⁴¹

Onésimo Fernández was born in 1923 in Wagon Mound, New Mexico. At five years of age, he begged his parents to allow him to attend the Adventist church school, which at that time was one of the first schools of any kind in Maxwell. When he was ten, he requested baptism and Elder A. G. Nelson officiated at his baptism, lowering him into the waters of a lake in Holman, New Mexico. In 1936, the Fernándezes pulled up roots and moved to Fort Lupton, Colorado, 25 miles north of Denver.

When Elder Thomas Requénez came to Denver in 1943 to reestablish the Spanish work there, the Fernándezes became members of the Denver Spanish group which met at 10th and Lawrence Streets. Onésimo's father, Juan, served as elder in the Denver Spanish church for many years. Onésimo's sister, Evangelina (Vangie), was the only pianist for many years.

Onésimo Meets Eva

In 1939, the Fernández family attended a Spanish campmeeting in Monte Vista in the San Luis Valley. Onésimo, who was only 16, remembers seeing Eva Velázquez from Saguache for the first time at that campmeeting. However, it wasn't until nine years later, in 1948, that he saw her again. Elder Samuel Castillo, who was the pastor in Denver, had just purchased a new 1948 maroon-colored Ford, and he asked Onésimo to go with him to Saguache to visit some members. That's when Onésimo saw Eva again and this time he took special notice of her. For a little over two years they corresponded and he made frequent trips on weekends to see her in his own 1948 gray and gold colored Hudson. On February 10, 1951, Elder Castillo solemnized their marriage in the Saguache Spanish Church.

Onésimo has been very active in the church, serving as an elder in the Denver, Fort Lupton and Longmont churches for over 49 years. He has given hundreds of Bible studies and has won 28 souls for the Lord. He is still an active member of his church in Fort Lupton.

Fred Bargas

One of the dynamic preachers in the Spanish work in Colorado in the 1950's and 1960's was Elder Fred Bargas. Fred was born in 1918 in Raton, New Mexico. His parents, Fred and Elvira, were baptized in 1936 by Elder Johnson of the Colorado Conference. Four of their children, Cilfredo, Josefina, Ercenia, and Vera were baptized along with their parents. The only one not baptized was their son Fred. As Fred remembers, at that time, the grip of the world was still on him. Nevertheless, the prayer his mother had offered to God before his birth haunted him. She told Fred many times, "Before you were born, son, I



Elder Samuel Castillo buffing his new 1948 Ford. Denver, Colorado, 1948.

**Elder Fred
Bargas and
family in
Pueblo,
Colorado,
1963.**



prayed to God, like Hannah, and said, ‘Lord, if you will give me a son, I will dedicate him to your work.’” God answered her prayer when little Fred was born. But it seemed that now Fred was running away from God.

Bargas is Baptized and Prepares for the Ministry

Two years after his parents’ baptism, Fred finally decided to stop running and surrendered himself to the Lord. He and his wife, Alice, were baptized in 1938 in the Las Animas English Church by Elder Ray Archuleta from the Denver Spanish Church.

In 1944, Fred was drafted into the Army, where he served one year before receiving a “dependency” discharge because of his five children. He then began selling E. G. White books in Denver before heading to Southwestern Jr. College in Texas in 1947 to begin his formal preparation for the ministry. The following year he transferred to Union College, in Lincoln, Nebraska, where he graduated in 1951 with a B. A. in theology.

Bargas’ Ministry

Freddy, as he was called by his family and friends, was called to the pastoral ministry on July 8, 1951 by Elder N. C. Petersen, president of the Colorado Conference. He was given churches in the San Luis Valley Spanish district: Monte Vista, with 48 members, Saguache with 15 members, and Mesitas/Mogote with seven members.

During the 1950’s, Fred Bargas led the Spanish work in the San Luis Valley. Gradually, it became more integrated into the mainstream of conference activity. In 1953, a joint English-Spanish campmeeting took place in Monte Vista, which was also the location of the largest Spanish congregation, about 70 members.⁴²

Then in 1957, the conference moved Elder Bargas to the Arkansas Valley district where he pastored both English and Spanish congregations: Rocky Ford with 20 English members; La Junta with 35 English and Spanish members; Las Animas with 15 members, English and Spanish; Lamar with 10 English-speaking members; and Springfield with 12 English-speaking members.

In 1962, Bargas was given the Lycan English district with the Burlington and Limon churches. Then he worked in the Pueblo district from 1963 to 1965 starting up the Spanish work there. One of the first things he did was to set up a big tent and hold a crusade. Among those baptized was Amos Rivera, who owned the Rivera Funeral House in Pueblo.

Elder Bargas used the radio media to preach to the masses in Rocky Ford, Lamar and Pueblo. After spending 15 years as a pastor in Colorado, in 1966, he accepted a call to Oakwood College, in Huntsville, Alabama, to teach Latin American literature, Spanish and religion classes. Although Elder Bargas is no longer in denominational work, he was instrumental in establishing the first bilingual Spanish-American Seventh-day Adventist Church which meets at 2680 South Decatur Street in Denver, Colorado.

From Catholic Priest to Adventist Minister⁴³

An interesting piece of Hispanic history in Colorado is the story of a Spanish-born Catholic priest who was a missionary in Guatemala when he became acquainted with the Adventist truth.

The conversion of ex-Catholic priest Rafael González began when an Adventist woman in Guatemala confronted him with the fact that he was not keeping all the ten commandments. This accusation startled him, causing him to study the Sunday/Sabbath matter in depth. When he discovered that she was correct, he left the Catholic Church and later became a Seventh-day Adventist minister.

Catholic Church Tries to Banish González

The Catholic Church had planned to banish González to El Salvador because he was “contaminating” the other priests with the Adventist doctrine. But, he managed to escape and contacted the conference president of Guatemala who helped him to get to Monterrey, Mexico.

In 1955, José Castillo and his wife, María del Refugio, who had helped pioneer the work in Texas, heard about this dramatic conversion and contacted González. They contacted their son, Samuel

Castillo, who was pastoring in Denver at the time, recommending this priest-turned-Adventist who was an excellent speaker.

Elder Castillo contacted Elder N. C. Petersen, president of the Colorado Conference, and convinced him that they should hire González. Then Elder Castillo and his family, accompanied by church members David and Vera Jaramillo, made the long trip down to Monterrey, Mexico with plans to bring González back with them.

But because of complications regarding visas and other necessary documents for González, they had to return home empty-handed. In a matter of a few months, however, all of González’s papers were in order and he crossed over into Corpus Christi, Texas where José Castillo lived. Once again Elder Castillo made the trip down to get him. When they arrived in Denver, González’s first assignment was to hold an effort in Greeley.



Pastor Rafael González (2nd from right) with members of the Gil Spanish Church in Gil, Colorado, 1958.

Pastor González Meets Future Wife

It was during that evangelistic meeting in Greeley that Pastor González met his future wife, Kathleen Robb. Kathleen's mother, Dora, had volunteered her daughter to play the piano for Pastor González's effort. They met, fell in love and married in 1957. Two years later, in 1959, their daughter Patty was born.

He pastored in Greeley and Gil for three years (1956-59) and then was asked to pastor the Monte Vista Church and Alamosa churches when Fred Bargas was transferred from the district. In 1958 Pastor González and Eric Beavon, an Anglo pastor, joined to conduct an English-Spanish evangelistic series in Jaroso.⁴⁴

From 1959 to 1969, Pastor González pastored in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; Weslaco and Pharr, Texas, and built the Spanish church in McAllen, Texas. In 1970, he and his family moved to Berrien Springs, Michigan where he helped in translating projects for the Seminary. When he later worked as a literature evangelist, one year he was recognized as the top salesman in his conference. He retired in 1984 with 28 years of denominational service. Presently he lives with his daughter, Patty Ruggle, in Calhoun, Georgia. His conversion story is told in *The Brand from the Burning* by Alcyon Fleck.

❖ DENVER

Ray Archuleta Comes To Colorado

In 1936, Ray Archuleta, whose ancestral roots were in the San Luis Valley, became the Colorado Spanish pastor. In 1940 Elder Archuleta reported Spanish churches in Denver, Las Mesitas, Saguache, and members in other locations in the San Luis Valley, besides two thriving Spanish schools (Magote and Saguache).

Archuleta's ministry in Colorado was interrupted in 1940⁴⁵ when he moved to Keene, Texas. The responsibility for the so-called Spanish Department of the conference became J. A. Smith's responsibility. A branch Spanish Sabbath school in Pueblo and an officially organized church in Monte Vista were two developments during the years through 1942, while the church at Las Mesitas and the school in Saguache continued.⁴⁶

Requénez Comes to Colorado

In 1943, the Colorado Conference gave Thomas Requénez a call to take charge of the Spanish work in the Monte Vista and Denver churches. Elder Requénez, though not a native of Colorado as was Archuleta, was from the Rio Grande Valley in Texas and had attended both of the schools for Hispanics in Laredo and Yancey, Texas. Since 1940, he had pastored the Spanish congregation in Chicago,⁴⁷ and before that, had pastored in Texas.

When Pastor Requénez moved to Denver, he found a small Sabbath school meeting at 10th and Lawrence, only a remnant of the congregation that had once met in that great me-



**Elder Thomas Requénez family,
Denver, Colorado, 1944.**

tropolis. Juan and María Fernández and their children were one of the faithful families still attending.

The previous year, 1942, colporteur Antonio Mespas from Fort Collins had given Bible studies to two Hispanic families who later became stalwart members of the church: Matías and Aurora Alarid and José and Emilia Sánchez. In December of 1943, Pastor Requénez performed their baptisms in the Adventist Black Church on 26th and Ogden Street. Others baptized at that same time were Danny and Gloria Moya and Priscilla Fernández. Under his leadership, the Denver Spanish Church revived.

Since Requénez was in charge of the Hispanic work in the whole state, he moved his family many times. His daughter, Anita Requénez Moses, recalls that in one year she attended nine different schools.

Pastor Requénez pastored the Monte Vista Spanish Church and also worked closely with *La Voz de la Esperanza*, personally carrying the large recorded records that Braulio Pérez Marcio would send him to the local radio station. Elder Requénez helped re-establish the Spanish church in Denver in 1944.⁴⁸ The first elder was Juan B. Fernández. Other prominent members were Matías and Aurora Alarid, José and Emilia Sánchez.⁴⁹

Castillo Becomes New Denver Pastor

When Pastor Thomas Requénez accepted a call to Texas in 1946, a call went to a fellow Texan, Pastor José Samuel Castillo, to pastor the Denver church. Elder Samuel Castillo and his wife, Felícitas, were not strangers to Colorado, having previously pastored in Las Mesitas and Monte Vista from 1942-43 and again from 1945-46.

But when they moved to Denver in July of 1947, they did not know they were walking into a crisis. At the end of their first Sabbath service, two families publicly announced they were leaving to form a group of their own inasmuch as they purported to have new light. Two other families also subsequently left. Then, two weeks later, the church in which they were meeting was sold, forcing them to meet in a home.



Elder Samuel Castillo and family.

Adventist church. Eventually they moved to a vacant grocery store on Larimer Street. At that time, Larimer Street was one of the "skid rows" in Denver. Just two blocks from the



Pastor and Mrs. Thomas Requénez with Dave Sandoval (center) in Denver, Colorado.

The Store Front Church

The first step the Castillos took to get out of their dilemma was to arrange for weekly services in the basement of the Denver Black



Denver Spanish Church on Humboldt Street, 1954.

Denver Spanish Store Front Church were many saloons, dance halls, restaurants and even brothels. Nevertheless, they rented that store front for several years until one day they discovered that the conference was selling the Swedish Adventist church on Humboldt Street. The members bought the church and in 1954 they moved into their comfortable new church home.

Some of the stalwart members of the church were the Juan Fernández family, Matías and Aurora Alarid, José and Emilia Sánchez, Pedro Harare, and Jacob Samson.⁵⁰ Other members added to the church at this time were Elí Martínez; Samuel Caseros, George and Trinnie Trujillo; Dave and Vera Jaramillo; Cilfred Bargas and Carmen Vásquez.

The Denver church produced several of the Hispanic leaders in the North American Division. One of the Castillos' sons, Ernest Castillo, is serving as the Executive Secretary of the Pacific Union. Carmen and Ermen Vasquez's son, Manuel Vásquez, is serv-



Mrs. Felicitas Castillo (right) with Juan and María Fernández in Ft. Lupton, Colorado. Early 1950's.

ing as one of the Vice Presidents of the North American Division. Johnny Rivera is the Secretary for the Central California Conference and Manuel Avitia is a pastor in Central California.

Castillos Pastor Denver District for 13 Years

The Castillos showed that they had what it took to weather the storms that rose from time to time during their early ministry in Denver. In fact, they did so well that they ended up pastoring the Denver and Gil churches for the next 13 years. The Castillos were caring people and the members loved them.

In May of 1960, the Castillos took a call to Hanford, California. "It was not an easy move," Mrs. Castillo remembered, when they had to say *adios* to the members in Denver.⁵¹

The Requénez and Castillo pastorates in Denver signaled a change in emphasis in Hispanic ministry in Colorado. From the beginnings in the 1920's through Archuleta's ministry, the focus had been on the San Luis Valley, but the Requénez-Castillo period drew attention to the Denver area. Castillo nursed the ailing Denver church back to health, and conducted the evangelistic meetings that built up the membership.⁵²

Carmen Vásquez—A Seeker for Truth

Another pillar in the Denver Spanish Church was Carmen Vásquez, a man who was searching for God's true church. Carmen was born in 1905 in the *ranchito* of Santa Clara, near Jalpas, Zacatecas, Mexico, to Ramón and Elena Briseño Vásquez. Like most Mexican people at that time, Carmen was a Catholic. However, when he was nine years old, a tragic event took place which shattered his faith in Catholicism. Ramón Vasquez, Carmen's father, was plowing in his field one day when the plow got stuck in a tree root. Endeavoring to help the horse pull away, he yanked on the plow with all his strength, injuring himself internally. His condition deteriorated quickly and in a few days he was at the point of death.

"Call the *padre*," Don Ramón told his wife. So the family sent for the local priest in Jalpa. But when the priest arrived, to their great disappointment, he refused to give the last rites to their father. The priest told them that their father had not attended church as often as he should have. This denial of last rites greatly grieved the family and following his father's death, Carmen lost faith in the church. However, his faith in God was still intact and he began to look for truth in other places.

Carmen and Gavino Come to United States

In 1922, at the age of 17, Carmen and his older brother, Gavino, said *adios* to their mother and siblings and began their journey to *el norte*, as the United States was referred to. They hoped to find work and send money back home to support the family. Carmen and Gavino landed first in Los Angeles, California. Finding no work there, they were forced to sleep under bridges and frequently went to the farmer's market to find discarded produce to live on.

Finally they hopped a train which took them to Gary, Indiana where they found work in the foundries. The brothers were able to enjoy some of the "good life" while still being able to send money back home. For the first time, Carmen felt free to begin his religious search for truth, one which would last for many years.

Carmen Moves to Colorado

In 1935, Carmen moved to the Midwest, settling down and working the farms in Keensburg, Colorado. There he met the Gustavo Santos family and married the eldest daughter, Ermenehilda. The first of their four sons, Manuel Vásquez, was born in Keensburg in 1937. In 1944, Carmen and his family moved to Denver where he continued his search for the truth, again visiting different Protestant churches and studying with both pastors and lay people. Although he couldn't put his finger on it, he felt something was still missing.

First Adventist Contact

One day in 1946, Fred Bargas, who was colporting at the time, came by the Vásquez house. It was around 5 p.m. and sales had not been good that day. Bargas felt like calling it a day and going home, but something told him that he should call on one more house.



***Carmen and Ermen Vásquez with their children
(left to right): Manuel, Luis and José Martín.
Denver, Colorado, 1943.***

He was on the 3600 block of Delgany Street and the next home he would canvass was a basement house with an A-frame roof with the second floor only three feet above the ground. It was located on three beautiful park-like city lots, with green grass and lots of trees. Brother Bargas noticed that Carmen, the man of the house, was in the back chopping wood so he went right up to the fence, cupped his hands to his mouth and called out, "*Buenas tardes,*" (good afternoon) Carmen turned around and answered, "*Entre.*" (Come in)

Carmen was genuinely interested in the books Fred Bargas showed him and bought a copy of *El Conflicto del los Siglos* (*The Great Controversy*.) Although Carmen did not realize it then, he now had the book that would end his searching for truth. But it would take another Adventist worker to help him recognize it.

Castillo Holds Cottage Meetings

Two years later Elder Samuel Castillo began holding house Bible studies in the home of Juan Padilla who lived across the street from the Vásquezes. Carmen and other neighbors were invited to attend. The studies proceeded normally until Pastor Castillo presented the Sabbath. Then Juan Padilla had second thoughts about holding the Bible studies

in his house. So Carmen quickly offered his house and invited everyone to come for the next meeting. But that evening none of them showed up. Only the Vásquez family and Pastor Castillo were present.

In spite of this disappointment, the studies continued to the end. Carmen was ready to accept the truth, but, like Noah, he wanted all his family to be in the Ark with him. He was praying that his wife, Ermen, and their four boys, Manuel, José (Joe), Luis (Louis) and Ramón (Ray) would join him in baptism. Although he knew that he had found the truth in the Adventist Church, Carmen postponed his baptism for nine years while he waited for his family.

“To The Law and To The Testimony”

Although not a baptized member, Carmen faithfully attended church. He was happy that now he had a rule by which he could measure the biblical teachings of other denominations, Isaiah 8:20: “To the law and the testimony; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.”

Then in 1958 Pastor Castillo ended an evangelistic effort he was conducting in Greeley, Colorado. Carmen took his two younger sons, Louis and Ray to witness the baptism. His older sons, Manuel and Joe, were serving in the U. S. Navy. Just before the baptismal service began, Pastor Castillo made one last call to his audience to join the Adventist Church through baptism. Carmen felt that it was the Lord asking him to finally take that all important step by faith. “Perhaps if I get baptized now, the rest of the family will follow,” Carmen thought. And that’s exactly what happened. Carmen went forward and was baptized that afternoon.

The last member of the family to join the church was his wife, Ermen, who in 1967, was baptized by Pastor Herminio Vences. Carmen remained a faithful member until his death in 1978. He served for many years as elder, deacon and lay preacher.

Even in his retirement years, Carmen served as an honorary deacon, opening up the church for every meeting, making sure it was heated or air conditioned, and shoveling snow. He was always the last to leave, closing up and making sure everything was secure. Manuel, his eldest son, became a Seventh-day minister and has served as pastor, missionary, departmental director and administrator.

Ray Archuleta Pastors Denver Church

When Pastor R. R. Archuleta and his family came to the Denver Spanish Church in 1960, they found the members had outgrown their small facilities and plans were made to



Aurora Alarid and Ermen (Helen) Vásquez, Denver, Colorado, 1994.



Elder Herminio Vences and his wife Dorcas. 1998.

raise the necessary funding to build their own church. The members began taking on various fundraising projects. But when a Miss Westing offered to donate \$5000 toward the new construction, the members were greatly encouraged. Miss Westing even sold her home and moved into a smaller one in order to meet her pledge. This was a great help in securing the four lots on Pecos Street where the church was eventually built.

Pastor Vences Builds the Denver Spanish Church

In 1965, Cuban pastor H. G. Vences and his wife Dorcas and family arrived in Denver with the pur-

pose of building the new sanctuary. Pastor Vences began serious fundraising starting with the members of the church. Major church families pledged \$1000 apiece, the full amount to be paid before groundbreaking took place. Some of those major families were: the Vences, the Jaramillos, the Fernándezez, the Sánchezez, the Vásquezez, the Alarids, the Trujillos, the Martínezez, the Herreras, the Bargases. Many borrowed the money, with some mortgaging their homes. Some of those same families also paid for the eight chandeliers in the church, each family being responsible for the cost of one.

By January of 1966, construction had begun. Members gave thousands of hours of labor after their work days and on Sundays, with the ladies preparing meals for the laborers. By June of the same year, the new Spanish church on 44th and Pecos Street had been completed and was inaugurated. It turned out to be the most beautiful and elegant Spanish church in the Mid-America Union.



Denver Spanish Church, 1970.

Some of the other special contributors to the building fund were: Miss Westing, Dr. and Mrs. Horner, Mrs. Comrie, Mrs. Johnston, Mr. George Sanders, Mrs. Vanice, and Dr. Horseley.⁵³

Manuel Vásquez Pastors the Denver Spanish Church

In 1970, the Colorado Conference invited Pastor Manuel Vásquez and his wife Nancy to take the leadership of the Spanish work in the newly-built Denver church and the small Gil congregation near Greeley, when Elder Vences accepted a call to California. This was not only Pastor Vásquez's first pastorate, but it was his home church as well. When he had left that congregation a few years earlier to study for the ministry, he had been heavily involved in church work, but as a layman. Now he had returned to take up his work as their full-time pastor.

One of his goals was to work with the young people, which he did by starting up a Pathfinder Club which became strong enough to bring home first prize trophies from the state Pathfinder Fair. Church outings. Socials provided occasions not only to nurture the youth, but were used as outreach events as well, targeting non-Adventist relatives and backslidden members.



Elder Manuel Vásquez and wife Nancy with daughters (left to right) Sherri, Julie, and Lori. 1973.



Denver Spanish Church Choir, 1972.

Pastor Vásquez tried to involve everyone in some project, whether it was cleaning the church, raising funds, Ingathering, or singing in the choir. But outreach was high on his priority list also, so every year, two efforts were held in his district, and the Lord blessed with new members added to the church. In 1972, Samuel Castillo, Jr., the eldest son of



Elder Manuel Vásquez with newly-baptized members of Denver Spanish Church. Samuel Castillo, far right. 1972.

Pastor Samuel Castillo, helped Pastor Vásquez with an evangelistic effort and together they baptized 14 new members.

Gil Spanish Church

In the early 1950's, Elder Samuel Castillo and his wife Felicitas learned of a Mexican lady, Josefina González, a member of a Pentecostal church in Gil, who had found the Sabbath truth while studying the Bible. When the Castillos began visiting her, she introduced Elder Castillo to her pastor, Feliciano Canchola, who also became intrigued with the Bible Sabbath. "Come to my home and study with my members," he

requested of the Castillos. So every Sunday afternoon, they met to study the Bible.

In 1954, Elder Castillo held a tent effort in Gil at the end of which several were baptized: Pastor Canchola, his wife Juanita, Bernabé and Celia León, Josefina González and a few others. Brother León felt they should build their own Spanish church, so he encouraged the group by donating the land. By the following year, a small church was built with a capacity of 60 people.

Pearl Fredrickson, an Adventist member from Greeley and the aunt of Kathleen González, wife of the ex-priest González, donated the benches, windows and other materials for the church. She also paid for the children's Sabbath school materials for many years.



Gil Spanish Church, 1972.

“Return All Your Blessings to the Lord”

One day an interesting situation took place between the treasurer of the Gil Spanish Church and another member. Brother Feliciano Canchola became angry at the church for some unknown reason and stormed over to the house of the church treasurer, Mrs. Josefina González. Banging angrily on her door, he demanded that she let him in. Reluctantly opening the door, she watched dumbfounded as he burst in, marched to the middle of the living room, turned around and told her, “I want all the tithe back that I have given this church.”

Sister González wasn’t quite sure what to say, but the Lord must have inspired her because she looked him right in the eye and said, “Well, if you can arrange to return to the Lord all the blessings that He has given you during your years of tithe paying, I will see about giving your tithe back.” Canchola had no answer to her proposition, so he turned and left as suddenly as he had come. He never mentioned the matter again, although he remained a faithful church member.

Víctor Schulz Holds Meetings in Denver

In 1981, a year after the Central and Northern unions merged into the Mid-America Union, the Colorado and Wyoming conferences also merged to form the Rocky Mountain Conference. Two years later, Víctor Schulz, an Hispanic evangelist from Indiana, organized an evangelistic series in Denver. He was not prepared, however, for the problems that descended on him. On the second night he was assaulted with his



Dr. Víctor Schulz (center) during Denver effort, 1988, pictured with Richard Lamm (left), Governor of Colorado, and Raymond Vásquez, translating.

attackers making off with equipment valued at thousands of dollars. Other disasters awaited him. A toxic spill in the vicinity of the meetings forced the evacuation of 20,000 from the heart of the area where most of the people lived who were attending the meetings. Four storms dumped a total of 60 inches of snow on the city during the meetings. Nevertheless, Schulz watched a spiritual revival take place in the Denver Church and from the Spanish crusade anticipated the largest baptism of Hispanics in the history of the conference.⁵⁴

Pastors of the Denver Spanish Church

Pastors of the Denver Spanish Church were: George T. Vore, Reymundo Archuleta, Thomas Requénez, Samuel Castillo, H. G. Vences, Manuel Vásquez, Max Martínez, Daniel Escamilla, Claudio Martín, and Juan Carlos Sicalo.



Elder Claudio Martín with Elder Thomas Requénez, Denver, 1994.

Claudio Martín and Hispanic Growth⁵⁵

In the 1990's, the long-awaited revival and growth among Hispanics took place under the ministry of Claudio Martín, pastor of the Denver Spanish Church. The 267-member church, located on 44th and Pecos, is considered the mother church. Between 1991 and 1995, it spawned seven new churches, all but one within a 60-mile radius of Denver. The following are synopses of the beginnings of those churches.

Denver West Spanish Church

In the city itself the newly formed Denver West Spanish Church numbered 43 members in 1995. This church, which began as a group of seven Spanish members of an English church, began holding a Spanish Sabbath school. When they asked Elder Martín to help them form a church, he encouraged his own church members to go as "missionaries" and organize a daughter church in the west side of Denver. Five families answered the call and the second Spanish church in Denver was born. Today it has 164 members.

Brighton Spanish Church

Early in 1992, 15 miles northeast of Denver, an English crusade was scheduled at the Brighton Church. When the evangelist canceled his meetings, the local pastor called Elder Martín and challenged him to hold the crusade in Spanish since the population of the city was about 30 percent Hispanic. He could take advantage of the budget and organization which had already been arranged. Elder Martín asked the members of the other two Spanish churches to assist him and in April they conducted the crusade, bringing in the first fruits in baptisms. Presently there are 83 members.

Fort Collins Spanish Church

In Fort Collins, 55 miles north of Denver, a church was organized in 1993. Within two years, the membership reached 41. In January of 1993, a part-time assistant pastor for the Spanish churches was at one of the regular conference workers' meetings. His roommate, who was the Fort Collins pastor, became ill and while the assistant pastor attended to him, they began sharing their dreams and experiences with each other.

The Fort Collins pastor mentioned a group of Hispanic people who were not being ministered to because of the language barrier. When he asked the Hispanic pastors to do something for these brothers and sisters, the pastor conducted a short crusade which brought in the first three baptisms. Presently the congregation has 42 members.

Hispanic-American Church

Also in Denver, Hispanics who spoke only English formed the Hispanic-American Church. They had a burden to do something for the thousands of Hispanics living in the metro Denver area, most of whom did not speak Spanish. In the spring of 1993, they began meeting in the conference office auditorium. Presently, the church has 25 members.

Aurora Spanish Church

The Aurora Church in Metro Denver swarmed from the 100-member Denver Second Spanish Church in 1995 to serve Hispanics in the east part of the city. In the span of six months, two lay training seminars were conducted by both the pastor and lay members. In May of 1996, ten Revelation seminars were launched by lay members. Today the congregation has 50 members.

Colorado Springs Spanish Church

The English-speaking pastor of Colorado Springs, a city 60 miles south of Denver, along with a group of Hispanic members, requested help in starting an Hispanic ministry in their city. In 1994, work began in Colorado Springs, and today they number 40.

Glenwood Springs Spanish Church

The most distant church, Glenwood Springs, 160 miles west of Denver, developed from a group of Hispanics who visited with Elder Martín when he was preaching in one of his congregations. They had been sent by the Glenwood Springs English-speaking pastor. At the end of the service they approached him and requested assistance for their group of ten. In May of 1993 Elder Martín started work in their city and today there are 40 members.⁵⁶

More Spanish Congregations Organized

In October, 1998, two more congregations appeared in Colorado—the Denver Central Spanish Church with 96 members and the Rifle Spanish Company on the western slope with 59 members. Juan Sicalo, the Spanish Coordinator for the Rocky Mountain Conference, reported that 130 Hispanic converts had been baptized during the first half of 1998.⁵⁷

Also in 1998, work was started in Olathe (12 members) and Leadville (20 members) on the western slope.

In 1991, there were 120 Hispanics attending the lone Spanish church that existed in Denver. Thirty other Hispanics worshiped in Greeley, making a total of 150 Hispanic members in the whole area. Just nine years later, in 2000, there are 11 organized congregations in the north with over 770 members and two churches in the south, Pueblo and Lamar, with a combined membership of 45. This totals 815 for the Rocky Mountain Conference. At the present time, there are two full-time pastors, Juan Carlos Sicalo, who coordinates the Spanish work; Ramón Banuchi; and two part-time pastors, Noris Custodio and Carlos Torres. The legacy of the Vores, Wolcotts, Archuletas, Requénezes, and Castillos is stronger than it has ever been.

Colorado Conference Summary

Looking back at what has happened to the Spanish work in the San Luis Valley, one is saddened because the Spanish work that began there with the descendants of the old Span-

ish settlers virtually faded away. In the beginning, it was difficult to penetrate the long-time established Hispanic Catholic families, but through the perseverance of Anglo returned missionaries like G. T. Vore, H. C. Brown, and G. Casebeer, the Spanish work was eventually established. At one time there were two Spanish schools and four Spanish churches in the Valley. The Spanish work continued thriving in that area until the 1950's.

Then by the 1960's membership in the San Luis Valley began declining until finally, in 1970, the Colorado Conference merged the existing Spanish churches with the English churches, thereby ending all the Spanish work in the San Luis Valley which had been worked for so hard.

In 1999, the work started again in the Valley, specifically in Lamar, but the main group of people that make up the current membership are not the descendants of the old Hispanic families, but the recent immigrants from Mexico. Most of the members from the old Hispanic families that still attend church are now members of Anglo congregations. Pastor Ramón Banuchi says "It is first generation Mexican immigrants who are fueling the Hispanic growth in the north." A group of 25 members currently meets with Pastor Hermán Hernández, who pastors the Lamar Spanish group in addition to an English district.

On the other hand, to the north the Denver Spanish Church seems have weathered the storm, even becoming the main Spanish church in the Rocky Mountain Conference. For several years it was the only stable and growing Spanish church in the conference. But in the 1990's there was a phenomenal growth among the Hispanics in the state. Under the able ministry of Pastor Claudio Martín, the Spanish work has flourished. When Pastor Martín left in 1997, he had established seven additional Spanish churches in the conference.

NEBRASKA CONFERENCE (1878-1980)

❖ LINCOLN

Hispanic work in other conferences in the Mid-America Union appeared much later than in Colorado. As was the case in nearly all Adventist college communities, an interest in Sabbath services at Union College in Lincoln, Nebraska, stemmed from students enrolled in Spanish classes and Hispanics from Costa Rica, Venezuela, Panama, Colombia and Mexico who were attending the school.

By 1955, this group was meeting in the College View Church, and as students from various parts of Latin America arrived in Lincoln, the number became large enough to form a choir, led by Samuel Coala. Other activities included reaching out to the local community, and offering Bible studies to those in the Hispanic neighborhoods.

In 1962, Erwin García obtained permission to use Rees Hall Chapel in the girls dormitory where they met for Sabbath school and would hold church services whenever they had a guest speaker. Some of the Hispanics who formed part of this group of 35 were Erwin and Gloria García, Noé Coto, Manuel Vásquez, Nancy Cachero, Eunice and Ruth Escandón, Irma and Dianne Martínez, Viola Perea, Carlos Arroyo, Fernando Carrillo and Dr. Victor Griffiths.

For several years this group kept up its weekly meetings, moving from the college church to the Capital View Church. Leadership was in the hands of Hispanic ministers who labored in the area, particularly Pastor Greg Vargas, bilingual pastor of the Capital View Church. Under his leadership, they organized into a small group.

In 1977, the group became large enough to purchase a church building of its own,



Spanish group in front of Rees Hall at Union College in Lincoln, Nebraska, 1962.

located at 70th Street and Sky Way Drive. In 1981, the Kansas-Nebraska Conference organized the group as a company, whose pastor was Arthur Andreas, a bilingual Hispanic who also pastored the Capital View Church.⁵⁸

❖ **SCOTTSBLUFF**

In Scottsbluff, a Nebraska city on the North Platte River in the western part of the state, Anita Carrillo, a lone Spanish-speaking member of the Anglo church, dreamed and prayed for organized Hispanic ministry in her city where she had many Hispanic friends. She decided to ask her pastor to consider bringing in a Spanish-speaking evangelist for her people.

The pastor contacted the Nebraska Conference president, Elder J. L. Dittberner, and he, in turn, called his friend, Elder Ben Leach, the Texas Conference President. "Can you recommend an Hispanic evangelist who could come to hold meetings in Scottsbluff?" he asked Elder Leach.

"I may have someone who can help," Elder Leach said.

Raúl Sánchez Holds Effort in Scottsbluff

Meanwhile, Elder Raúl Sánchez and his wife, Yolanda, were pastoring in El Paso but at the time were under appointment to work in Mexico City, Mexico. Elder Leach approached Elder Sánchez and told him, "I know you have accepted a call to work in Mexico, but as a special favor to me, I would like you to go to Nebraska and hold a three-month effort in Scottsbluff."

Immediately, Elder Sánchez contacted Mexico to ask for a six-month extension, which was granted. Then, in February of 1961, they headed north to Scottsbluff, where they landed in the middle of winter, snow everywhere and temperatures in the teens. Coming from El Paso, which claims to have sunshine every day, this was quite a shock. But they quickly settled into a small motel where they set up a makeshift office.

Elder Sánchez and his wife wasted no time in making up a brochure announcing the effort, *Asombrosas Verdades Reveladas* ("Astonishing Truths Revealed"), to be held in the Old Grove Movie Theater in Gering, four miles from Scottsbluff. Then they began visiting the Hispanic homes with the brochure, inviting the people to the meetings. They even went out to the farms where they encountered the Escamillas and the Herreras in Minatare, Nebraska.

The first night, there were 90 people in attendance. Evidently, the people enjoyed it because the following night they brought their friends and around 150 attended. The attendance remained around 150 for most of the three-month series which extended to four months in spite of the opposition of both the Catholic and Pentecostal churches in town.



The Escamilla family, 1997

Pastor Sánchez and the Ham

Pastor Sánchez is a pastor who loves people, and because of this he was loved in return by many of the people he was working with. Even today, he is remembered as being one of the best pastors that Scottsbluff ever had.

One of the families attending the meetings, Alvaro and María Escamilla, decided to give him a gift in appreciation for all the wonderful truths that they were learning from him. One evening after the Bible study as he was getting ready to leave, María presented him with a big ham from one of their home-raised pigs. They had obviously not yet studied the health message. The Pastor accepted the gift ham graciously and thanked them, knowing they had made a sacrifice in giving it to him.

Alvaro Makes Important Lifestyle Change

A few nights later, when Pastor Sánchez returned to study with them, he said, "I have to make a confession. Remember when you gave me that ham? I threw it away because I and my family don't eat pork and tonight I'm going to explain why from the Scriptures."

After the prayer, he had them open their Bibles to Leviticus 11 and began reading.

And the Lord spake unto Moses and to Aaron, saying unto them. Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, 'These are the beasts which ye shall eat among all the beasts that are on the earth. Whatsoever parteth the hoof, and is clovenfooted, and cheweth the cud, among the beasts, that shall ye eat.

Nevertheless these shall ye not eat of them that chew the cud, or of them that divide the hoof: as the camel, because he cheweth the cud, but divideth not the hoof; he is unclean unto you. And the coney, because he cheweth the cud, but divideth not the hoof; he is unclean unto you. And the hare, because he cheweth the cud, but divideth not the hoof; he is unclean unto you.

And the swine, though he divide the hoof, and be clovenfooted, yet he cheweth not the cud, he is unclean to you. Of their flesh shall ye not eat, and their carcase shall ye not touch; they are unclean to you. Leviticus 11:1-8.

When Pastor Sánchez finished this passage, Alvaro ("Barr" as he is called by his family and close friends) said to his wife María, "Well, that does it for me. I'm going to get rid of all of our 30 pigs." From that day forward, Barr not only stopped eating pork, but gave up eating all the other unclean meats mentioned in Leviticus 11. Today he continues to be a healthy vegetarian.

Mrs. Sánchez and the Gift She Couldn't Use

After the second or third week of meetings, Florencia García, who had been attending the meetings with her husband, Juan, was so thankful for what they were learning that she



Members of the original Scottsbluff Spanish Church with Raúl Sánchez (far right, second row), 1961.

brought Mrs. Sánchez a brown bag to the meeting which contained a choice piece of meat as a gift. People around Scottsbluff raised hogs and it was quite common to offer pork rather than beef. Mrs. Sánchez gratefully thanked her and took it home with her to the motel, where she showed it to the proprietor. She asked him what kind of meat it was since they were vegetarians. The motel owner said, "It's pork and it's the best. It's pork loin."

She told him "We have no use for it since we don't eat meat."

"I'll take it," the proprietor offered.

The following night, Pastor Sánchez preached on the unclean meats and Mrs. García was so embarrassed and told Mrs. Sánchez, "I shouldn't have given you that meat. I didn't know." Her husband also shared the same sentiments and the next day, Juan García went to his freezer locker in town, took out the rest of the pork meat he had there and got rid of it.

God Blessed Pastor Sánchez's Efforts

Several converts came from these meetings and a congregation was formed. They first met in the basement of a Methodist church in Gering. An Anglo family named Brown assisted the pastor greatly with the group. Later the group rented a small house on 9th Street in Scottsbluff. The work kept growing and several new families came into the church: Herreras, Serranos, Martínezes, and the Garcías. In two years they had 50 members with 80 attending Sabbath school.



Groundbreaking for the Scottsbluff Spanish Church, 1962.

The Sánchezes Say "Good Bye"

Elder Raúl Sánchez's commitment to hold an effort in Scottsbluff for three months extended to two and one-half years. He had planned to leave immediately following the effort, but all those he was working with said, "How can you leave us now? We're just beginning to learn about the Adventist message and lifestyle." So he arranged to stay until he established them firmly in the faith.

In 1963, Elder Sánchez, his wife and family took a call to serve as a departmental director in the Northeast Mexican Conference, which at that time was located in

Nogales, Mexico. Shortly after, he was elected president of that conference.

Raúl Sánchez and his wife gave 42 years of faithful denominational service. He retired on his own because he wanted to become a free-lance evangelist, which he continues to do even today. He is a prolific writer, and is considered an authority on Catholicism. His interest in Catholicism stems from his father having studied to be a priest.

Plans For Their Own Church

For the next few years, this group worked faithfully to raise money to build a church, hoeing beets and beans, gathering corn and selling bricks. Finally, on October 16, 1971, their dreams were realized when their new little church opened its doors with 65 members.



***Scottsbluff
Spanish
Church on
11th Avenue.***

José Escamilla

One of the stalwart members of the Scottsbluff Church is José Escamilla, baptized in 1962 at the age of 68. Born in Molino, Cortijo, Mexico in 1894, José migrated to the United States when he was 20. Two years later he met Rita Zavala whom he married. Their union resulted in 20 children, ten boys and ten girls. An interesting note is that later several of the Escamillas married into the Herrera family, making it a closely-knit church “family” in the real sense of the word.

José was reared a Catholic but later joined the Pentecostal Church. But he was a seeker and when he found out about the seventh-day, Saturday, being the Sabbath, he joined the Adventist Spanish Church. He was very active in the church as a deacon and lay preacher. At age 97, he was preaching about three times a year and witnessing with friends and neighbors. He also had another ministry. Even in his late 90’s, he had managed to retain his driver’s license and would run a “shuttle” service to the church for those people who had no other means of transportation.



José Escamilla at 105 years old. 1999.

Although he is presently 106 years old and no longer drives, he’s still able to read the Bible without glasses and preaches at least three times a year. On his 106th birthday, March 22, 2000, he was the honored speaker for the eleven o’clock service at the church. One of his current projects is putting together a chart of world events.



José Escamilla preaching at 103 years old. 1997.

The “Tumbling Choir”

The Scottsbluff Church became very active both in nurture and outreach. Besides participating in conference programs such as the Pathfinder competitions, they organized church trips, Christmas plays, and choir tours. They held the first Spanish campmeeting in Nebraska with Hispanics from Colorado, Nebraska and Wyoming in attendance.

The Scottsbluff choir, under the direction of the pastor, Erwin García, decided to tackle the “Hallelujah Chorus” for the finale to the meetings. They practiced long and hard and that evening as they stood proudly on the riser platform in their choir robes, they sang with great gusto to the

delight of the audience. It was an inspiring rendition of Handel’s classic.

As everyone was “amen-ing” the choir, Jim Herrera, a tall young man in the back row of the choir, was relieved at having successfully finished the special number and he let himself fall back onto his chair. The leg of his folding chair slipped off the platform and Jim fell with it, almost pulling down the makeshift curtain which was behind them. As he went down, Jim grabbed the next chair with its occupant, who grabbed the next person, who grabbed the next person and the domino effect caused the whole back row to disappear. Abner Castañón, one of the victims, quickly scrambled back onto the platform. But what he faced was an amused audience and in his embarrassment, he fell back down behind the curtain again. To this day, the choir is remembered as the “Tumbling Choir” of Scottsbluff.

From this small Spanish church four ordained pastors of the Seventh-day Adventist church have come: Daniel Escamilla, Abner Castañón, Eliezer Castañón, and Armando Camacho.⁵⁹

Pastors of the Scottsbluff Church

Raúl Sánchez, Santiago Castañón, Erwin García, Rafael García, Antonio Vázquez, Marcos Valencia, Daniel Cruz, Roberto Ochoa, Ramón Everio Astacio, Canuto (Ken) Maldonado, Daniel Schiffbauer, and Joe Storey.

IOWA-MISSOURI CONFERENCE

Kansas City, Missouri—A Colporteur Plants the Seed in Hispanic Barrio

Kansas City, Missouri was another location of Hispanic ministry whose first stirrings occurred during the 1970’s. However, in 1964, Manuel Vázquez, then a ministerial student at Union College in Lincoln, Nebraska, spent the summer in Kansas City colportoring in the Hispanic *barrio*, leaving Adventist books in many Hispanic homes.

At the end of the summer, Manuel had made friends with several of the families. He invited them to his wedding, which was to take place in August at the Central English Church. They accepted the invitation and even offered to prepare chicken *mole* for the wedding reception. They knew that Manuel's family was from out of town and figured he probably needed someone to help him out. Manuel graciously declined the offer, but expressed his gratitude for their interest in his welfare.

The unfortunate part of the story is that there was no Hispanic pastor to follow up the interests. It would be several years before anyone would again take notice of the potential among those Hispanics living in Kansas City and attempt to take them the message of the Adventist truth.

Spanish Sabbath School Organized

With the arrival of Luis Torres in 1978, as the evangelist for the Iowa-Missouri Conference came the "discovery" of four Spanish-speaking families in the Kansas City Central English Church: Norbil and Ana Dávila, Ramón and Elba Vega, Baltazar and Abigail Fernández, and Dr. Hugo Velarde. Some of these families had moved to Kansas City for reasons of either study or employment. Torres organized them into a Sabbath school class and Elder Jim King, the Anglo pastor, gave them a place to meet.

First Hispanic Baptism in Missouri

Soon, as a result of his personal witnessing combined with that of member Jean Muñoz, Pastor Torres baptized Simón Muñoz, Jean's husband. Simón worked for the government and was responsible for printing the Social Security checks for everyone in Missouri and California. Sometimes the printing date fell on a Sabbath. When Simón began keeping the Sabbath holy, he asked his superiors to have that day off. At first they were reluctant, but because of his loyalty and good work, they granted him his request. Muñoz was the first Hispanic to be baptized in Kansas City.⁶⁰

God Prepares a Pastor in Cuba⁶¹

While this work was beginning to grow in Kansas City, in the heart of the United States, some 1500 miles away on the island of Cuba, God, in His mysterious ways, was preparing a young Cuban pastor and his wife for their part in His work in the Iowa-Missouri Conference.

In 1965 Pastor Ignacio Chaviano had been studying at the Adventist Seminary in Cuba when he, his brother and other Adventist seminarians were ordered to report for military service. But when they reported, they were sent instead to a labor concentration camp in Camagüey to be re-educated or brainwashed regarding their views on Communism. They were told that they would never be released from the camp until they changed their way of thinking. If they resisted, they would die there and be buried just outside the fence.

The camp was filled with men of different religious persuasions who, because of their strong views against Communism, had been taken from their jobs, put in this labor camp and were being subjected to re-education. For the next three years, Chaviano and his friends endured harassment and deprivation, while being schooled in Communist philosophy. But God kept His promise of never leaving them alone, and through His love and His power, their faith remained strong.

Prison Guards Try to Break Chaviano

Many times the labor camp guards would try to force Chaviano to give up his faith and work on the Sabbath. Every Sabbath, they would round up the Adventist young men, take them to the sugar cane fields, hand them a hoe and order them to work. Chaviano and his friends would refuse because they could not violate their consciences.

On one occasion they were punished by not being allowed to bathe for three weeks. This caused them a great deal of discomfort. After working all day in the sugar cane fields, with the juice from the sugar cane and the ashes from the burning of everything that was not cane, their skin became encrusted with a coat of sugar and soot, which literally blackened them. That, along with the effects of the perspiration from working every day in the hot sun, made their situation almost unbearable. But through it all they kept their faith and God sustained them so that they would not break down.

One Sabbath morning after taking the Adventists to the fields, the guards tied a hoe to Chaviano's hands, commanding him to begin hoeing around the sugar cane. When he refused, the guards put their hands on his arms and began swinging the hoe, cutting down some weeds.

"Aha," one said. "You worked on the Sabbath!"

Calmly, Chaviano answered, "No, I didn't work. You did."

Before a Firing Squad

Another time, Ignacio's brother (whose first name must remain anonymous for his security), along with seven other young Adventists, were taken out to a field and told to dig a large trench that would serve as their graves. When they finished, the guards commanded them to stand in front of the trench and then blindfolded them. A firing squad positioned themselves a few yards in front of them. The officer in charge of the squad asked them to recant, to give up their faith in Christ. But each one refused.

The leader of the firing squad then asked Ignacio's brother if he had any last words to say. "Yes," he answered. "I am praying that all of you will accept Christ as your Savior before His second coming."

With that, the officer went into a rage and ordered the execution to begin without further delay. He ordered the firing squad to aim their guns and was about to give the command "fire," when a soldier came running from the headquarters shouting, "Stop! Stop! The lieutenant said to stop the execution!"

In frustration, the officer said, "Oh, what's the use? They will never change anyway." But to punish them, he put them in solitary confinement for 14 days with no food.

Trials in a Concentration Camp

While the young Adventists were being tried, their witness did not go unnoticed by the guards. There were young men of other faiths in the prison, but the Adventists became the most respected. One Christmas, the guards decided they would do something "nice" for the men to convince them that Communism was a good system. One evening they offered each of them a can of beer as they came to the dining room for their meal. Though the other religious inmates gratefully accepted the gift, the Adventists graciously refused. This greatly impressed the guard who was directly over Ignacio's barracks.

Religious materials were prohibited in the camp, but someone had smuggled in a

Bible and a Sabbath school quarterly. The Bible was carefully wrapped in plastic and buried in a hole near the fence. At night the Adventists would sneak out of their barracks, dig it up, and read it.

It was also prohibited to discuss religion. However, it was next to impossible to keep the Jehovah's Witnesses and men from other religious persuasions from engaging in discussions or debates with the Adventists.

One day, Chaviano and a Jehovah's Witness were discussing doctrine and didn't notice a guard approaching. By the time they realized it, it was too late.

"What are you two discussing?" he asked them. The Jehovah's Witness said, "Nothing."

Chaviano answered truthfully, "Religion, sir."

"I suspected as much," the guard said. Then, turning to the Jehovah's Witness, he said, "You don't need to discuss any more. The Adventists have the truth." With that, he left.



Elder Ignacio and Ana Rosa Chaviano with baby Annette in Kansas City, Missouri. 1983.

A Guard is Won Through Their Witness

As mentioned before, the purpose for these young men being interned in the camp was to erase religion from their minds. However, the guard assigned to Chaviano's barracks had been closely observing the Adventists for some time and the Holy Spirit began working with him. One day, the guard's wife came to the camp. When she saw the Adventist young men, she secretly told them, "I want to thank you for the influence you've had on my husband. He's going to be leaving the military shortly because he wants to be able to live up to some of the things he's learned from you." The young Adventists were thrilled at the news.

Later the guard himself told them, "I came here to change you, but your lifestyle and faith have changed me and I'm going to leave here to become an Adventist." Even in such extenuating circumstances God had used them as tools to reach one that they had thought unreachable. But he was not the only to be converted. Many other inmates also came under conviction and after their release, they were also baptized into the Adventist church.

The Chavianos Cross On the Mariel Boats

Ignacio Chaviano and his friends were eventually released from their three-year internment in 1968. On January 4, 1971, Ignacio married his sweetheart, Ana Rosa, who had waited patiently for him through his years of imprisonment. Later, he and Ana Rosa, with her father, Oscar Bringuier, and mother, Odilia, left Cuba on one of the dangerous Mariel boat runs for the United States. After a short time in Miami, they headed north to the Adventist Seminary in Berrien Springs, Michigan.

Chavianos Called to Kansas City, Missouri

The acquisition of a Spanish-speaking pastor for the little Spanish group in Kansas City resulted from a meeting between Elder James King, the Iowa-Missouri Ministerial Director, and Ignacio Chaviano. The two met in 1981 in the Madison Boulevard Church in Madison, Tennessee, where Chaviano was relating, through an English translator, his Cuban labor camp experiences. Elder King was impressed by the experiences that Chaviano had gone through for his faith and felt that he should be the one to help develop the Spanish work in Kansas City.

Elder King convinced his conference administration to invite the Cuban refugee to Kansas City and six months later, in August of 1981, Chaviano and his wife, Ana Rosa, had moved to Kansas City and began regular Sabbath services for the Spanish group in the Blue Chapel of the English Central Church.⁶²

Elder Randy Murphy Supports Hispanic Work

When Elder Chaviano came to Kansas City in 1981, there were only seven Hispanic members attending a Spanish Sabbath school class in the Kansas City Central Church. Elder Randall Murphy, the pastor, was very enthusiastic about the Spanish work and he, along with his members, supported Elder Chaviano in his outreach. The Spanish work had its struggles and challenges, but its leaders never lost the dream of some day being able to have a more visible presence of Hispanic Adventists in the city.

By 1986, the group had grown to 75 and been organized into a church. Elder Chaviano then accepted a call to Texas to pastor two English churches, and Pastor Roberto Espinoza was brought in to shepherd the group. Six years later, in 1992, however, Elder Chaviano returned to Kansas City, this time to pastor the English Church which had earlier sponsored him and the Spanish work in its infancy. Although the 490-member church had only 68 Anglo members attending at the time he returned, Elder Chaviano built the membership back up to where there are 230 now attending.

Juan Acosta and the Expanding Work

In January of 1996, Elder Juan Acosta and his wife, Elena, also from Cuba, were called from San Francisco, California to head the congregation at the Kansas City Spanish church. When they arrived, they discovered the membership had dwindled to around 30 members. Elder Acosta began promoting outreach in the northeastern part of the city where a sizeable Hispanic community had evolved. Three months later Pastor Carlos Bence from California held a week of meetings on "Home and the Family" in the Park Memorial Church on Chelsea Street in Northeast Kansas City and a branch Sabbath school was formed which met each Sabbath afternoon. By the end of June, a mini-reaping series was held by Pastor Ramón Canals from Oregon. This one-week campaign brought 22 people to the Lord in baptism.⁶³

The work was beginning to pick up now and members began giving Bible studies on an individual basis. A team of colportors led by Brother Orlín Turcios lent their talents to the effort by finding and following up many interests. The year ended with another evangelistic effort by Pastor Isaías de la Torre from Orlando, Florida. The fruits of that effort brought 12 more souls to the cause of Christ. Eventually the Hispanic membership exceeded 100.

An Associate Pastor for The Group

The year 1997 was an unbelievable year for the Northeast Kansas City Spanish group. They were pleasantly surprised when the conference offered them a part-time associate pastor even though they were not yet organized as an official church. Young Pastor Elden Ramírez, originally from Costa Rica, spent part of his time working with the youth at the Cedarvale Junior Academy and part time with the church. His energy, musical talent and positive spirit benefitted the Spanish group greatly.

A Free Church Building

Later in 1997, the church had another unbelievable blessing. The work continued to grow and the Central Spanish church decided to organize the Northeast group into the second Spanish church. Several families voluntarily offered to transfer to the Northeast church. Several young people, including Gregorio Garibay, were baptized. The group continued to grow to the point that they needed a permanent place to worship. The Northeast Anglo church had dwindled to almost nothing so the Iowa-Missouri Conference, recognizing the potential of the Spanish work, handed over the church building to the Hispanic members without any cost whatsoever.

On April 25, 1998, La Iglesia Latinoamericana (Latin American Adventist Church), a daughter church of the Central Spanish Church, became an officially organized congregation.⁶⁴ The Central Church was also the inspiration for the formation of other Spanish groups in Kansas City as well as in Des Moines, Iowa.⁶⁵

Spanish Work Spreads to Other Parts of Missouri⁶⁶

In 1999, two Spanish groups were started near the Arkansas border. Pastor Carlos Tamay, a Mexican literature evangelist, currently fosters the groups, serving as their itinerant pastor. One of the groups reports 25 members.

Elder Elden Ramírez, the former Hispanic youth pastor in Kansas City, is now planting a Spanish church in St. Louis. At last report, there was a group of 20-25 people meeting.

A second English church building, whose Anglo membership had dwindled, has recently been donated by the conference to a growing Spanish group in the southwestern part of the state. The Cassville English SDA Church has been renamed the Cassville City Spanish Church.

Currently, in the Iowa-Missouri Conference, the Spanish work represents only 2.3 per cent of the total membership. However, their baptisms represent 13 per cent of the total number of conference baptisms.⁶⁷

KANSAS-NEBRASKA CONFERENCE⁶⁸ (1980-)

Isaac Lara Begins Spanish Work in Kansas

The Spanish work in Kansas started with an evangelistic effort that Elder Isaac Lara, Spanish coordinator and union evangelist, held in Wichita in February of 1984. The Union felt that the Wichita area, which had a good-sized Hispanic population, held a potential of starting Spanish work there. Since there were no Hispanic Adventist believers there at the time, Elder Lara and his wife went up and down the streets of the Hispanic barrios, inviting people to come to the evangelistic effort.

Even though many promised to come, on the first night of the effort, only seven people showed up. It was a great disappointment for Elder Lara, but he preached his opening sermon as if there were 70 people in the audience. After the meeting that night, they found out that many people had been unable to locate the meeting place, which was located behind a public school.

So the following day, he and his wife went back out on the streets calling on the Hispanic homes once again, inviting them to the second night and this time making sure they had adequate directions. That night, the attendance quadrupled with 28 people in

attendance. Each night the attendance kept building until they reached 100.



Elder Isaac Lara baptizing some of the first members in Wichita, Kansas. 1984.

Elder and Mrs. Lara Stay to Nurture the Group

Following the first baptism in March of 1984, Elder Lara felt committed to remain in Wichita to help nurture the new members since the conference could not hire a pastor to follow up the interests. His wife, Gladys, would invite two families every

Sabbath for lunch at their one-bedroom apartment with a kitchenette to teach them how to prepare more balanced, nutritious meals and how to cook without lard. Five months later, Elder Lara had baptized a total of 75 souls and the conference had hired Elder Bolivar Tejada to shepherd the new believers.

The Work Expands

From these 75 which were baptized in 1984, the work has grown considerably. Today there are three Hispanic pastors in the conference: Bolivar Tejada, Ricardo Cabedo and Eduardo Chacón, pastoring six organized churches: two in Wichita, one in Lincoln, Nebraska; one in Lexington, Garden City, Kansas City, plus three groups: Topeka, Dodge City, and the latest one in Great Bend, Kansas, organized in February, 2000 with 21 charter members. Kansas-Nebraska Conference has a total of 800 Hispanic members.

MINNESOTA CONFERENCE⁶⁹

Minneapolis-St. Paul

In 1989, five young Hispanic Adventists from El Salvador arrived in St. Paul, Minnesota, looking for employment. When they attempted to find an Adventist church to wor-

ship in on Sabbath, they discovered that not only was there no Spanish Seventh-day Church in St. Paul, but there was not even one in the entire state of Minnesota. However, their desire to worship God was strong, and even though they knew very little English, they began attending the English Adventist church. To their delight, they discovered that the pastor's wife, Eva Smith, could speak Spanish. So they asked her if her husband, Elder Alvin Smith, could hold a service for them on Sabbath afternoons, with her translating. The Smiths were happy to do it and this arrangement continued for five months. Then Elder Smith organized a Spanish Sabbath school for them.

Huff Launches Official Spanish Work in the Conference

By 1990 the little Hispanic group had grown to eight: five members and three non-Adventist spouses. When Elder Lee Huff, conference president, learned about the Hispanics meeting in the St. Paul East Church, he came under conviction that the time had come to establish Spanish work in his conference.

With the blessing of the Executive Committee, Elder Huff traveled to the Adventist Theological Seminary in Berrien Springs, Michigan looking for a bilingual Hispanic worker to pastor the St. Paul East Church, the Stillwater Seventh-day Adventist Church and as well as to establish the Spanish work in the conference. Elder Benjamín (Ben) Barcenas and his wife Rebecca (Becky), both bilingual, were given the call.

As soon as Elder Barcenas and his wife arrived in St. Paul, they began meeting with the Spanish company Sabbath mornings in the closed balcony during the English Sabbath school time. Then while he preached the English sermon for the Anglo congregation, the Hispanics conducted their Spanish Sabbath school.

First Spanish Church in Minnesota

Elder Barcenas not only had the total support for establishing Spanish work from his president, Elder Lee Huff, and treasurer, Raymond Rouse, but the members of the St. Paul East English Church supported him as well. Thus every year for the next three years he was able to bring in the Illinois Conference Hispanic Coordinator, Orlando Magaña, to hold an effort.

By August, 1992, the Spanish group, with 32 members, was **organized into the first Spanish Adventist church in Minnesota**. Elder Magaña recommended to the conference that they hire a Bible worker to follow up interests. Taking his suggestion seriously, they hired Elder Rubén Rivera, who had pastored in Mexico.

Purchase of First Spanish Church Building

That same year, 1992, the treasurer found a church building for sale and suggested that the Hispanic members and Pastor Barcenas go see it. Valued at \$200,000, this repossessed building was being sold by the bank only for what they had in it—\$90,000. That summer during campmeeting at Maplewood Academy, Elder Huff and Ray Rouse both made appeals to the audience to help the Hispanics in buying the church building. Bringing Elder Barcenas and the Hispanic members up on the platform, they told the story of the Spanish work and their specific need. It was evident that the Lord touched the hearts of His people because that day they raised \$60,000!

The Hispanic members took out a mortgage for the remaining \$37,000, which included other related costs, and bought their first church building.

Rivera Becomes Pastor of St. Paul Spanish Church

By 1993, the church had grown to 67 members and Elder Rubén Rivera, the Bible worker, was asked to pastor the church while Elder Barcenas continued with the two English churches. Within two years the Spanish congregation had paid off their mortgage.

In 1994, the St. Paul Spanish Church spawned a church in Rochester, about 60 miles south of the twin cities. Today there are 80 to 90 members meeting in the St. Paul Spanish Church and two other Spanish churches have been established in St. James and Willmar.

Eddie Valdés, Spanish Coordinator

In May of 1997, Cuban-born pastor Eddie Valdés and his wife, Iris, were called to pastor the Spanish churches in St. Paul and Minneapolis. He was also asked to oversee all Spanish work in the conference. Since his arrival, the conference Hispanic membership has grown to nearly 400. Although he is the only full-time Hispanic pastor, there are four part-time pastors: Saul Flores in the Rochester church; Oscar Aguilar in the Wilmar Church; Yulián Tinoco in the Minneapolis Church; and Joni DeLeón in the St. James Church.

Pastor Valdés has also organized a Lay Federation that is directed by Ezequiel Trejo, first elder of the St. Paul Spanish Church. This Federation has organized three Lay Training Institutes (1997-99) and two Lay Congresses (1999 and 2000). Minnesota also has a Spanish Youth Federation directed by Anna Esqueda. They have organized the first Hispanic Youth Congress in Minnesota.⁷⁰

MID-AMERICA UNION

Outside of Colorado, the Mid-America Union did not attract large numbers of Hispanic immigrants as did the southern fringe of the United States and some of the large North American cities, but ripples from general migration and the northward flow of refugees beginning in the 1960's produced Hispanic communities in the heartland of America that were large enough to expect evangelistic activity.

The total Union Spanish-speaking membership at the end of the century stood at 2,327. It is one of the smallest unions in Spanish membership; however, the future looks very bright if the burst of growth that has taken place in the last decade in Colorado, Missouri and Minnesota is any indication of what will take place in this new millennium.

MID-AMERICA UNION HISPANIC LEADERS



Juan Carlos Sicalo
Rocky Mountain Conference
Hispanic Coordinator



Eddie Valdés
Minnesota Conference
Hispanic Coordinator



Harry Rimer
Kansas-Nebraska Conference
Hispanic Coordinator

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39. Telephone interview with Antonio Chris Armijo, son-in-law of Pastor Fred Bargas, by author, June 25, 2000.
40. Telephone interview by author with Onésimo Fernández, June 25, 2000.
41. *Ibid.*
42. *Reaper*, May 27, 1952; September 22, 1953; June 17, 1958.
43. Alcyon Ruth Fleck, *Brand From the Burning* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1960); Interview with Rafael González and daughter, Patty Ruggle, by author, July 15, 2000; Telephone interview with Jackie Metz, Rafael González's daughter, July 18, 2000.
44. *Reaper*, March 25, 1958.
45. Interview by author with Elona Archuleta Rice, daughter of Ray Archuleta. July 25, 1999.
46. *Reaper*, April 15, 1941; June 3, 1941; November 4, 1942; April 21, 1942; December 1, 1942; December 29, 1942.
47. Interview by author with Anita Requénez-Moses, daughter of Thomas Requénez.
48. Claudio Martín, "Historia de la Iglesia de Denver." August 23, 1969. (Unpublished document).
49. Felicitas Castillo, wife of Pastor Samuel Castillo. Notes on her husband's ministry. (Unpublished document).
50. *Ibid.*
51. Interview by author with Felicitas García-Castillo.
52. *Central Union Reaper*, May 13, 1958; statement by Felicitas Garcia-Castillo in interview.
53. Claudio Martín, "Historia de la Iglesia."
54. *Mid-America Adventist Outlook*, June 2, 1983.
55. Claudio Martín, "Historia de la Iglesia."
56. Gilbert Vega, unpublished document.
57. *Outlook*, December 1998.
58. Typewritten statements; *Outlook*, November 12, 1981.
59. *Outlook*, November 1991; two prepared statements, unsigned.
60. Interview with Elder Louis Torres by author.
61. Interview by author with Elder Ignacio Chaviano, pastor of Kansas City Central Church, July 19, 2000.
62. Elder Ignacio Chaviano, "Comienzo de la Obra Hispana en la Conferencia Iowa-Missouri," June 15, 1999. (Unpublished document)
63. Letter from Juan Acosta, pastor of the Kansas City Spanish Church, January 23, 1998.
64. Ignacio Chaviano, "La Historia de la Iglesia Adventista Latinoamericana."
65. "Comienzo de la obra Hispana en la conferencia de Iowa-Missouri"; *Outlook*, December, 1998.
66. Telephone interview with Elder Ignacio Chaviano, July 19, 2000.
67. Telephone interview by Julio Ochoa with Elder Juan Acosta, June 22, 2000.
68. Telephone interview by author with Elder Isaac Lara and Gladys, July 20, 2000; Telephone interview with Eduardo Chacón, July 20, 2000.
69. Rubén Rivera, "Breve historia de la obra Hispana en el estado de Minnesota." March 16, 1995; Telephone interview by author with Elder Ben Barcenas, July 20, 2000.
70. Telephone interview by author with Eddie Valdés, pastor/Hispanic Coordinator in Minnesota, July 19, 2000.

Faces and Images of Hispanic Adventists

1899-1999



Reyes and Adiel Sánchez, charter members of the first Spanish church in the North American Division.



Abel Sánchez, charter member of the first Spanish church in the North American Division.



Edisa Sánchez Romero, daughter of Adiel and Reyes Sánchez.

The Sánchez ranch house in Sánchez, Arizona.





*Third
school in
Sánchez,
Arizona.
Early
1900's.*

*Funeral of
Juanita
Baca
Sánchez,
mother of
Abel and
Adiel, in
1915,
Sánchez,
Arizona.*



*Edward Sánchez,
son of Adiel
and Reyes Sánchez.*



*Drawing of first Spanish church in North
American Division, Sánchez, Arizona, 1899.*



Candelario Díaz Castillo (first Hispanic pastor in Central California) with wife Eulalia and daughters Henrietta, Evangeline and Débora.



Mr. and Mrs. Ward, school teachers at Sánchez school in Arizona.

Mr. and Mrs. Gerónimo Romero and family, members of San Marcial church in New Mexico. G. Romero was Ann Sánchez's uncle.



Group of members from Sánchez Spanish Church in Arizona.



Adiel Sánchez and wife Reyes at their 60th anniversary celebration in 1955.



Adiel, Jr. and sister Anita, children of Adiel and Reyes Sánchez, at Arizona Academy in Phoenix.



Estella Sánchez Ramírez, 1937.



Pastor/teacher Carl F. Staben and students of Rancho Grande, first church school, in Reserve, New Mexico, 1940. Max Martínez, standing next to Staben. Lucas Martínez, back row, second from left.



Campmeeting in Martineztown, Albuquerque, New Mexico, 1941. Homer Casebeer, GC Home Missions Director (far left). G. W. Casebeer, 2nd from far left. Patrocinio Martínez, back row, 2nd from right. Max Martínez, back row, 5th from right.



Members of the Dixon Spanish church in New Mexico.

Arizona Spanish workers meeting at Arizona Academy. July, 1923. From left to right: Pastors J. Anastacio Salazar, José Castillo, Marcial Serna, Carlos Benítez, Luis López, Carlos Ayala, Sr.



Elder George W. Casebeer



Pastor Carl Staben and wife. Principal of the secondary school in Yancey, Texas, 1930.



Pastor Augustine Sánchez with Sabbath School members in Socorro, New Mexico, 1930.



Carolina Salazar Ayala with son Carlos, Jr. and daughter Martha. Phoenix, Arizona, 1929.



Part of Estevan Gurulé family and their spouses. Front row: Bernardina Valdez Gurulé, Priscilla Gurulé Lucero, Carmen Gurulé Martínez, Rosa Gurulé Martínez. Back row: Gilbert Gurulé, Lucrecio Lucero, Charles Martínez, Lucas Martínez.



Tres Piedras Sabbath School youth and children in the early 1950's.



Elder George Casebeer baptizing Manuel Romero in Rancho Grande, New Mexico, 1939.



*Estevan and Manuelita Gurulé
from Tres Piedras, New
Mexico.*



*Hispanic members at Tres Piedras, New Mexico. Elí
Martínez (3^d row, far left), 1953.*



*Laying the cornerstone
of the boys' dorm at the
Spanish American
Seminary.*

*Midland
Spanish
Church
members at
the organiza-
tion of their
church in 1990.
Pastors Daniel
González, Don
Sandstrom and
Ralph Orduño
of the Texico
Conference
were present.*



*Pastor
Carlos
Ayala and
wife
Carolina
holding
Carlos, Jr.,
with church
members in
Cleveland,
New
Mexico,
1926.*



*Members of the first Dixon
Spanish Church. Back row
left to right: Isabel Padilla,
Elisa Maes, Margarito
Maes, Bobby Padilla, and
Chris García. Front row:
Carmen Maes and Elique
Maes, 1942-43.*



*Wedding of Ernestina and José Gurulé in Dixon, New
Mexico, 1938. Members of Cañón Plaza Church.*



*First students of
Dixon school.
From left to right:
Chris García,
Bobby Padilla,
Cora Padilla, Rubel
García, and Isabel
Padilla.*



1924 Arizona workers' meeting in Phoenix. Workers include Marcial Serna, Elder Casebeer, Elder Bray, Augustine Sánchez, Carlos Ayala, Sr., and Elder Allen, principal.



Students at Arizona Academy. Adiel Sánchez, Jr. (back, 3^d from left) and Anita Sánchez (front, 2nd from right).



North American Missions Convention. Dime Tabernacle in Battle Creek, Michigan, 1962.



Elder Francis Games (Gómez), wife Arlene and son.



Ayala family (left to right): Carolina, Carlos, Jr., Martha, Carlos, Sr. Front: Lucy and Esperanza (Hope), 1938.



Elder Pedro C. Roque, Spanish coordinator for Greater New York Conference (1972-84).



Pastor Jorge Grieve and wife Nila of Ayer... Hoy... Mañana TV program. Spanish TV Magazine, 1975.

Sebastian Lewis, instrumental in forming first group of Hispanic Adventists on East Coast (New York City), 1929.



Carmen López-Morales, first Hispanic Adventist Bible worker on the East Coast (New York City).



Lay training session. Mott Haven Spanish Church in New York City, 1984.



Hispanics from Northern New Mexico at 1968 Dallas Youth Congress. Isaac Lara, back row, 2nd from right.



Myrtle Pohle, 1986. Author of The Truth Seekers: Saga of the Southwest.



Socorro Church in New Mexico, 1946. Elder Ponciano Mireles was the pastor.



Pastor José Hernández and members of the Chico church in California at future site of their new church, 1960.



Los Embajadores Reales quartet. From left to right: Ricardo García, Francisco Ramos, Freddy Sosa, and Luis Cadic, 1974.



Juana Torres, Dan Robles' great aunt from Calexico, California. Born November 24, 1844 and died in 1952 (108 years old).



Elder Braulio Pérez Marcio and family.



*Elder
Braulio
Pérez
Marcio and
the King's
Heralds.*

*Hispanic pastors
of the Southern
California Confer-
ence, 1955.*

*Standing: left to
right, Fred
Hernández,
Valeriano
Vázquez, Henry
Fuss, Lucas Díaz,
Manuel López.
Sitting: Samuel
Weiss, Fred W.
Miller, and Manuel
Rosado.*



*Antonio
Arteaga,
pastor-
evangelist
and Spanish
Coordinator,
Southern
California
Conference.*



*Pastor and poet, Raúl
Villanueva. Associate
editor of El Centinela.*



*Theology students at Pacific Union
College, 1944. Left to right: Otto
Vyhmeister, Augustine Cortez,
Carlos Ayala and Antonio Ríos.*

*Elder Ray
Archuleta
and family.*



Pastor and Mrs. Merardo León.



*Augustine Cortez, pastor in
Calexico, California, 1962-65.*



*Members of the Exeter church in California, 1967. Included in picture:
Ann and Augustine Sánchez, top left.*



Dr. Ebenezer Chambi, left, in his chapel clinic in South Gate, California.



The Ortiz Sisters, popular singing trio in the 1970's.



Juanita Lizarraga and Rosalina Gardano, during Ingathering campaign in Phoenix, Arizona.



Alfonso Arregui, a lay Bible instructor from San Diego with wife Lina and son Gabriel.



First Hispanic Women's retreat, April 1990. Camp Yavapines, Prescott, Arizona.



Pastors (from left to right) Tulio and Milton Peverini.



Pacific Union Conference Hispanic coordinators with Elder Walter Blehm, President, 1984.



Pacific Union Lay Congress in Soquel, California, 1984.



School of Lay Evangelism held at Cedar Falls Camp, Southern California, 1984.



*Central
California
Hispanic
Workers
Retreat.
Johnny Rivera,
Hispanic
Coordinator.*

*Ministers quartet at
lay congress in
Soquel, California.
From left to right:
Francisco Priano,
Ernie Castillo,
Miguel Cerna and
Gerry Fuentes.*





*Lay training meeting at
Fresno Spanish Church,
1983.*



*First meeting of Pacific
Union Youth Federation
presidents with coordina-
tors. Westlake Village,
California, 1994.*



*Los Heraldos del Rey quartet: (left to right) Rafael Parrilla,
Sóstenes Valenzuela, Armando Cordero, and Fernando Vargas.*



José Rojas, North American Division Youth and Young Adult Ministries Director at La Sierra Spanish Church for Hispanic graduation ceremonies, 1996.



Ministers quartet at Hispanic Ministerial Council in Keene, Texas, 1994.



Ramona Pérez-Greek, former NAD Associate Women's Ministries Director. Her husband Jim and son James Pierre.



Jorge Soria, Assistant to the President for Hispanic Ministries, Pacific Union; wife Lina, sons Edson and Jay (left to right).



Dan Robles, vice president for Southern California Conference and wife Nidia.

*Elder
Eradio
Alonso,
wife
Miriam
and
José
Ocampo,
1992.*



*North American Division Hispanic leaders with Elder Alejandro Bullón in
São Paulo, Brazil, for Net '97.*



Elder Alejandro Bullón making a call at Net '99 in Orlando, Florida, 1999.



Wautoma Wisconsin Company.



Durango Hispanic Church in San Antonio, Texas, 1977.



*La Sierra
Spanish
Church
dedication.*



*Central Spanish
Church in Miami,
Florida.*



*Meraz Spanish
Church in El
Paso, Texas.*



Dedication of the Bayshore Church in New York City, 1947



Pastors Víctor Aispuro and Gilberto Velásquez from the Illinois Conference.



*The fourth Hispanic
Adventist church and
school in Sánchez,
Arizona, 1996.*



*Hispanic leaders
stand with
relatives of
Marcial Serna in
Sánchez,
Arizona, 1997.*



*Fajardo family members,
relatives of Marcial Serna,
at his graveside in
Sánchez, Arizona, 1999.*

*Pastors attending
the centennial
celebration of the
Tucson, Arizona,
Spanish Church
hosted by Pastor
Omar Grieve
(far right),
January 15, 2000.*



*Hispanic Union
coordinators at
centennial celebra-
tion recognizing
Elder Manuel
Vásquez for his
leadership.*

*Cynthia Jones and
Mariachi group at
North American
Division Hispanic
centennial celebration
in Sánchez, Arizona,
February, 1999,*



*Members and
friends
attending the
Tucson
Hispanic
centennial
celebration,
January, 2000.*



Re-enactment of Don Lorenzo Sánchez threatening to kill his sons if they don't give up Adventist message. (Tucson centennial celebration)



Lydia Pérez and Estella López, descendants of Lorenzo Sánchez, cutting centennial cake, surrounded by Hispanic retirees.



Blowing out candles on centennial birthday cake. Left to right: Elders Tom Mostert (President, Pacific Union Conference), Herman Bauman (President, Arizona Conference) and Manuel Vásquez (Vice-President, North American Division), 1999.

**Sánchez
cemetery,
1998.**



**Lydia Pérez and
Estella López,
descendants of
Sánchez family,
standing by the
Hispanic Adventist
centennial plaque
at the Sánchez
cemetery. Sánchez,
Arizona, 1999.**

**Historical marker
commemorating
NAD Hispanic
Adventist
centennial in
Sánchez, Ari-
zona. Left to
right: Elders Tom
Mostert, Manuel
Vásquez, Alfred
McClure and
Juan Prestol.**



Adly Campos, Lay Evangelist, being recognized for her more than 4,000 baptisms, 1997.



Félix and Agapita Rosado and sons: Caleb, left (14 years), Otoniel, right (17 years), and Josué, kneeling (11 years), 1957.

Juan Carlos Gaviria (far left), founder and director of the International Evangelistic Ministry, "Jesús Es la Solución" (Jesus Is the Solution), with other leaders of the program.





North American Division Hispanic Advisory, 1998.



First Hispanic baptism. December 9, 1899, Sanchez, Arizona. Elder R. M. Kilgore baptizing Pastor Marcial Serna.

11

Southern Union Conference

Hispanic Haven in a New Land

"He maketh the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still. Then are they glad because they be quiet; so he bringeth them unto their desired haven." Psalm 107:29, 30

Southern Union Conference

IN 1901, on April 9, the Southern Union Conference was organized with three conferences (Cumberland, Florida and Tennessee River) plus a mission field which included six states. During the following summer, those six states were organized into five conferences: Alabama, Carolina, Georgia, Louisiana and Mississippi.

In 1908, the Union divided, with the eastern half forming what was called the South-

eastern Union Conference. However, the two unions were reunited in 1932. Later, in 1946, the Black constituents formed two regional conferences, the South Central Conference and South Atlantic Conference, which became part of the union. A third regional conference, Southeastern Conference, was organized in 1981.

Today the Southern Union Conference is comprised of the following conferences: Carolina, Florida, Georgia-Cumberland, Gulf States, Kentucky-Tennessee, South Atlantic, South Central and Southeastern.¹

Formal work among the Spanish-speaking people in the Southern Union is of recent origin compared to Spanish work in the other two unions along the southern border of the United States. As might be expected, Spanish work in the South began in Miami, Florida, the North American gateway to the Greater Caribbean and was in part an outgrowth of the Inter-American Division.

FLORIDA

Spanish influence and involvement in the history of America dates back to the 16th century, before the Pilgrims landed at Plymouth Rock. It was a Spaniard, Juan Ponce de Leon, who, in search of “a fountain of youth,” discovered Florida in 1513. While he found no fountain, what he did find was a land abundant with flowers, for which he named the region *Florida*, meaning “full of flowers.”

In 1565, another Spaniard, *Don Pedro Menéndez de Avilés*, sent by the King of Spain, founded the city of St. Augustine, Florida, the first white settlement and the oldest city in the United States.²

The United States acquired Florida from Spain in 1819 and Spanish influence continued as, three years later, Joseph Marion Hernández became the first Hispanic elected to the U. S. Congress, representing Florida and the Whig party.³

❖ NOTABLES HISPANICS

Xavier Suárez

Xavier Suárez was the first Cuban mayor of Miami in 1985 and served for three terms. Xavier was born in Las Villas, Cuba in 1949. His father was a university professor who fled Cuba with his family. After studying law and public policy at Harvard University, Suárez relocated to Miami where he became involved in politics,⁴ set his sights on the mayor's office and became the first Cuban to occupy that position.

Robert (Bob) Martínez

Robert (Bob) Martínez was born in Tampa, Florida on Christmas day, 1934. After receiving a master's degree from the University of Illinois, and operating his own business in his home town, he became the Republican mayor of Tampa, serving from 1979 to 1987. In 1988, he was elected governor of the state of Florida, a position he held for one term. It was during his tenure as governor that President Ronald Reagan invited Martínez to a White House conference on a drug-free America. Later, in 1991, President Bush appointed Martínez as the Director of the Office of National Drug Control Policy.⁵

Ileana Ros-Lehtinen

Ileana Ros-Lehtinen is recognized for being not only the first Cuban-American woman to be elected to the U. S. Congress, but also the first Hispanic woman to become a congresswoman in 1989.⁶

Cristina Saralegui⁷

Cristina Saralegui is one of the most influential Hispanic ladies in media—like the Oprah Winfrey of the Latin world. Her number one Spanish TV talk show, *El Show de Cristina* (The Cristina Show), airs from Miami, Florida and reaches 6.5 million Hispanics daily. She also hosts a daily, nationally syndicated radio program, *Cristina Opina* (Cristina's Opinions), as well as being editor-in-chief of her new monthly magazine, *Cristina-La Revista* (The Magazine Cristina).

Cristina was born on January 29, 1948 in Havana, Cuba and was raised in a family of very distinguished journalists. Her grandfather, Francisco Saralegui, an editor and columnist known as the “paper czar” throughout Latin America, initiated her into the publishing business. This he did through exposure to such popular Spanish magazines as *Bohemia*, *Carteles* and *Vanidades*, a magazine for which she would later work.

When Cristina immigrated to Miami, she attended the University of Miami, majoring in mass communications and creative writing. By 1979, she had become the editor-in-chief of *Cosmopolitán-en-Español*, an international magazine, where she continued working for ten years, until launching her own television career on *The Cristina Show*. In 1991, her show won an emmy award—a first in Spanish-language talk shows. In 1999, Cristina won the “Hispanic Achievement Award.”

Miami and the Waves of Cuban Immigrants

In recent history, the Spanish influence in Florida has become more pronounced. When Fidel Castro overthrew the Batista regime in Cuba on January 1, 1959 and set up his revolutionary Communist government, many middle and upper class white Cubans fled to the United States. Between 1959 and 1962, over 215,000 found haven in this land of freedom.⁸ Among those leaving Cuba were some Adventists who found the Spanish-speaking congregation in Miami to be a haven in a new land.

First Wave

This first big wave of Cuban immigrants, called *gusanos* (worms) by Castro supporters, were mostly well-educated, middle-class citizens. Miami, which was then a declining city, welcomed them with open arms. It needed this “new talent” or “new blood” to help jump start its economy, and the Cuban newcomers came through, adapting well to their new land, and rising quickly, both socially and economically. They started up 18,000 new businesses,⁹ and brought in much appreciated import business from Latin America countries. In a short time, Miami went from a sleepy resort town to a booming, commercial city.

In 1960 Miami's population was only six percent Hispanic, but by 1980, that percentage had jumped to 41. The majority of the Cuban exiles, as they called themselves, however, had hopes of returning to a free Cuba one day and consequently, held onto their Cuban culture and citizenship. They were not seeking to adapt or assimilate into a new

culture. Instead, they tried to build an alternative Cuba in south Florida to live in until they returned to Cuba.¹⁰ However, during the 1970's, many had given up that hope and began obtaining American citizenship.¹¹

Second Wave

The second wave of Cubans, which arrived in 1980, were, for the most part, from the lower-income and less urban groups.¹² Castro's Cuba, unable to support all its citizens, temporarily opened its doors, allowing thousands to leave the country for America, 90 miles away.

Between April and September, 1980, more than 125,000 *Marielitos* migrated to the States. Cuban-Americans living in Florida organized a *flotilla* (fleet) of boats to sail to Cuba to rescue their family members and friends.¹³ But Castro also took this opportunity to open his jails and mental institutions, putting those undesirables on boats with the other Cuban refugees on their way to America. While the majority of the Cubans in the second wave were blue-collar, healthy males,¹⁴ whose only crime had been to oppose Communism, Castro's sinister act resulted in an unfair stigma being put on all Cubans who arrived in Miami during that time.

The new Cuban refugees were not as well received as had been the first wave. The *Marielitos* were dispersed to several army bases across the country. Known criminals were sent to penal institutions in Louisiana and Georgia. Adding insult to injury, in 1994 President Clinton pulled in the red carpet which had been in place since 1960, announcing there would be no more automatic entries extended to Cubans.¹⁵

Miami Today

Little Havana, located in downtown Miami, is one of the best-known barrios of the Cuban refugees from both the first and second waves. Almost overnight, in 1960, clothing stores, restaurants and other Cuban businesses sprang up in this area, catering to the new Cuban residents. *Arroz con frijoles negros* (black beans and rice) *plátanos fritos* (fried bananas), *yuca con mojo* (yucca), *ropa vieja* (a shredded beef dish), and guava paste with cream cheese are some of the menu items which delight the taste of customers in the many Cuban restaurants in Miami.

Walking along the streets, a heavy Spanish influence is noted with most of the signs being in Spanish, and some businesses even posting signs in their windows saying, "English Spoken Here."¹⁶ Miami is a place where you can have the experience of visiting a "foreign country" without ever leaving the homeland or needing a passport.

Recently, there has been another group of immigrants which have slowly been making a presence in Miami—the Nicaraguans. Little Managua is their growing community. They have taken up jobs in the Cuban-owned stores in Havana which the younger generation of Cuban-Americans has left as they have moved to the suburbs.¹⁷

Inter-American Division Moves from Cuba to Miami

While the waves of Cubans coming to Florida contributed greatly to the Hispanic influence in America in general, an earlier event took place in 1945, which was significant in the history of the Adventist Hispanic work in Florida.

On April 17, 1945, the General Conference Committee voted to relocate the head-

quarters of the Inter-American Division from Havana, Cuba to Miami, Florida. Although this move was to take advantage of better communications and air transportation to all the Inter-American Division countries, an uncalculated by-product was its contribution to the beginnings of the Spanish work in Florida.

The new offices of the IAD were first located in Coconut Grove, Miami. Then in 1956, when a fire destroyed the offices, the IAD moved again, this time to Coral Gables, where they remained until the summer of 2000.¹⁸ The IAD is now located on the corner of 82nd Street SW and 117th Avenue in Miami.

FLORIDA CONFERENCE

❖ MIAMI

The Time is Ripe for Spanish Work in Miami

When the Adventist workers of the IAD first arrived in Miami in 1945, they began attending the area English Adventist churches since there were no Spanish congregations at that time, even though many spoke only Spanish. In addition, there were some leaders in the Division whose dominant language was English. These included some Spanish-speaking Anglos, some of them second-generation workers of missionary parents, and other workers who did not speak Spanish or French, the two major languages in their territory other than English.

Situations that contributed to the start of the Adventist Spanish work in Miami were the increase of membership in Inter-America, the growth in the number of national workers, and consequently more Hispanics in the Division office. Also, because of the proximity of Cuba and Puerto Rico to Miami, an Hispanic community sprang up in the city in which occasional Adventists appeared. This created a ripe situation for the commencement of Adventist work among Hispanics in Miami.

Inter-American Division Sabbath School Class

In 1950 Raquel Genanian, a secretary in the Inter-American Division office, saw the need for, and organized, a Spanish Sabbath school class in the Miami Temple English Church, mainly with a group of Hispanics who were employed in the offices of the Division. By 1955, Raquel was inviting workers from the Division office, such as Barbara Westphal, Vernon Berry, Nicolás Chaij, L. L. Reile and David Baasch, to preach to the group. Thus, independent Spanish church services were started.

Ernesto Santos, the First Pastor

By 1957 members of the Spanish group numbered 33 and Florida Conference president Elder H. H. Schmidt called Ernesto Santos to be their first pastor, while serving as an associate to the English pastor, Harold Fagal.

Pastor Santos had come to the United States from Oriente, Cuba in 1952 where he had been an active lay preacher. Santos was now finishing his B. A. degree in theology at Washington Missionary College in Takoma Park, Maryland. His wife, Iris Marrero, had been working at the General Conference for four years.

Shortly after Pastor Santos' arrival in 1958, the group outgrew the Sabbath school

room and requested the use of the Miami Temple English Seventh-day Adventist Church youth chapel. When that became too small for the Spanish company, they moved to the Greater Miami Adventist Academy. But they soon grew too large for their classroom, and in nice weather they would move outside, meeting under the trees. Some of the original members were Cristina Samajoa, Eddie and Rosita Cardona, Marina Tosta, Ana Sewcubaluck, Mario Almonte, Eladia González, Raquel Genanián, and Rebeca Mazlumián.

Organization of First Spanish Church in Southern Union

On December 20, 1958, Florida Conference officers **organized this company into an official Spanish congregation, Miami Spanish Church, today known as Miami Central Spanish Church. This was the first organized Spanish church in the Union.** Elder H. H. Schmidt gave the 11 o'clock message on the strength of unity.

On the day of their official organization, a tall, old wooden radio console served as the "pulpit." There were 40 charter members,¹⁹ with two of those people joining by baptism. Alberto Paneque and Arnoldo Mejía were baptized by J. D. Culpepper. That very day, Paneque was asked to be the elder, deacon and youth director for the church. Paneque later became the church treasurer, a position he held for 18 years. Mejía went to study at Newbold College, the Adventist school in England.

Alberto Paneque²⁰

Alberto Paneque was the first Hispanic to be baptized into a Spanish Adventist Church in Florida. He was born in Oriente, Cuba. Although he grew up in an occultic, spiritist and

Catholic family, he never believed in their teachings or participated in their practices. As long as he can remember, he always felt the need to find God.

Then in 1954 his uncle, Miguel Angel Ramírez, who had recently been baptized in the Adventist church, heard that Alberto had applied for a visa to go to the United States. He decided he needed to share his newfound faith with him before he left for the States. What Alberto remembers is that his uncle started reading him chapters out of *The Desire of Ages* on the life of Christ, which he enjoyed very much. Then his



Alberto Paneque, first Hispanic to be baptized into the Spanish Adventist Church in Florida.

uncle told him, "When you get to the United States, don't forget to look up the great Adventist family. They can help you."

Thirty days after applying for a visa for the U.S., and a series of miraculous events

which took place regarding money and special consideration, he was granted a visa. When he arrived in Key West, Florida on July 14, 1955, he took a bus to Miami where Julio Fortunato, who had granted him an affidavit to come to Miami, gave him a room to stay in until he found a job. A week later he got a job at the Fountain Bleau hotel, and just as his uncle had told him to do, he sincerely looked for the Adventist church, but without luck.

One day, as he was moving into an apartment building in southwest Miami, he found an old city church directory. Immediately he looked for the listing of the Adventist church and its address. The directory only listed the Miami Temple English SDA Church. There was no mention of a Spanish church, so the next Sabbath he went to the English church. When he arrived, he was surprised to find a group of Hispanics who were meeting as a Sabbath school class in the English church.

The “Four-Four” Church

By 1959 the members of the Miami Spanish Church had acquired property on 4th Street and 4th Avenue on the northeast side of the city. That church was lovingly referred to as “*La Iglesia de la Cuatro-Cuatro*” (The “Four-Four” Church). There the members started aggressive missionary and community service outreach programs, even establishing a small medical dispensary in the parsonage. The community center, located in the basement of the church, specialized in caring for newly-arrived Cuban refugees.



Church officers and Pastor Ray Archuleta (far right) of the First Miami Central Adventist Spanish Church on NW 4th Street and 4th Avenue (La Iglesia Cuatro-Cuatro).

Response to Refugee Movement

The impact of the 1960's Cuban refugee movement on the new Spanish church in Miami was profound. The city of Miami granted a permit to remodel the basement of the church. Since Alberto Paneque was out of a job temporarily, Pastor Ernesto Santos asked

him to remodel the basement to accommodate their church school. He gladly accepted, considering it a great privilege and honor to do this for the Lord. When he was finished, he told the pastor to accept his work as a gift to the church. When Paneque arrived at his home, the phone was ringing. It was a call from a hotel lady he had worked for previously who was now offering him a job at the Dorall Hotel. Paneque assumed that it was the Lord's way of rewarding him for his generosity to the church.



Elder Ernesto Santos with ladies from the Community Center. Right to left: María Santos, Rosalina Gardano, Celia Tabores, Iris Santos (pastor's wife).

Subsidizing the Miami Spanish Community Center

When the basement church school could no longer handle the increasing number of students, the Central Spanish Seventh-day Adventist Church remodeled the house on the corner of its property to house their new school.²¹ The new Adventist church also joined the Protestant Latin American Emergency Committee, a community organization of sixteen denominations, to handle the increasing flow of Cubans flocking to Miami. Besides this, Elder David Baasch, from the Inter-American Division, was instrumental in securing \$148,000 from the General Conference, Inter-American Division and the

Florida Conference, to subsidize the Miami Spanish SDA Community Center. Led mainly by women in the congregation, the community center set up a relief center where refugees could acquire clothing and food, enroll in English and cooking classes which introduced them not only to an American cuisine but to an Adventist one as well. Mrs. Santos remembers that during their pastorate in Miami, more than 300 refugee families found help in her home, besides those that were helped at the center.

Church Sponsors Resettlement Program

As the tide of refugees continued, the church expanded its operations to participate in a refugee resettlement program and helped immigrants find jobs. Appropriations from both the Florida Conference and the General Conference helped finance this project. Literature was readily made available to the newcomers, as were opportunities to enroll in *La Voz* Bible correspondence course, *Tesoros de Vida*. The church also conducted extra worship services on Sunday nights.

Church Doubles Membership

During 1960, Elder Santos baptized 17 and by mid-1961, he had baptized five more. In less than three years after its organization, the church had doubled its membership through immigration and baptism.

An organization of four different working bands in the Central Spanish Church helped prepare interested persons for membership. Among their activities were assistance to non-Adventists taking Bible correspondence lessons and holding cottage meetings.

The Miami Central Spanish Church (the Four-Four Church) continued to grow and spawned a new church in Hialeah which was organized on October 11, 1969. The following year, the English Miami Temple Adventist Church on 4th Street and 8th Avenue S.W., decided to relocate and sell their old church building. This was the very church where the little Spanish group had started as a Sabbath school class 20 years before.

Purchase of Miami Temple Church

Steady growth through the 1960's had produced a congregation of about 400 and the 800-seating capacity of Miami Temple was a dream for the growing congregation as was the additional accommodations it had for socials and a community services center.²² Some of the Hispanic members were very interested in purchasing the Miami Temple, while others thought it was not a good business venture because they erroneously thought the ceiling beams in the church were damaged by termites. Thus, the Spanish members delayed with their final decision, and the church was put on the market.

But no sooner had it gone up for sale than a Baptist congregation put a \$10,000 deposit on the property. This caused the Central Spanish congregation great distress, feeling that they had now lost their opportunity forever.

Alberto Paneque, the treasurer, was devastated. He went to the Lord in prayer. "Dear God," he prayed, "we are the first Spanish church in the state of Florida. We need that building. The Temple English Church building should be kept as a Seventh-day Adventist church for the Spanish congregation."

Given a Second Chance

Three or four days later the pastor of the Temple English church called and told him that the Baptist congregation had withdrawn their offer. Paneque was elated at the turn of events and then told the Anglo pastor about his prayer.

The pastor said, "Good. Now you have the chance to buy the church. The church is for you."

Brother Paneque immediately went to his pastor, Ray Archuleta, and urged him to make an offer to buy the church no matter how much opposition they had. Elder Archuleta



Miami Temple Spanish Church on 4th Street and 8th Avenue S. W.

also felt that God wanted that church building for them, so he and Brother Paneque went to H. F. Roll, the conference secretary-treasurer, to negotiate the purchase of the English church.

Wasting no time, they made an offer, and with the assistance of the Florida Conference, they negotiated the purchase of the church for \$155,000. That building is now considered an historical site in Dade County, Florida.²³

Miami Central Spanish Church

The Miami Central Spanish Church played a key role in the development of other Spanish churches in the Greater Miami region. It is considered to be the mother, grandmother and great-grandmother of all sixteen Spanish churches in Greater Miami.

The first daughter church of the Miami Central Spanish Church was the Hialeah church in 1969 (as mentioned earlier), then Carol City in 1972, and during the 1980's and 1990's, fourteen more. In addition, several were spawned by the new churches themselves. This prolific growth did not weaken the original congregation. Miami Central's membership exceeded 600 when the church dedicated its sanctuary in August of 1981, free from indebtedness. By 1998 it claimed 1,040 members.²⁴

Pastors of the Miami Central Spanish Church

Pastors of the Miami Central Spanish Church were: Ernesto Santos, Hermes Méndez, Ray Archuleta, Erwin Hise, José Hernández, Rafael Rodríguez and Isaac Suárez.

Hialeah East Spanish Church—Second Church

The Hialeah East Spanish Church was started with 50 members from the Miami Central Spanish Church in 1969. At first they began meeting in a hall in the building across from the Hialeah Seventh-day Adventist Hospital, which was owned by the hospital. Eradio Alonso became the first pastor of the new Hialeah Church, which was the second Spanish church to be organized in the Florida Conference.

Eradio Alonso

Elder Alonso, a third-generation Adventist, was born in Havana, Cuba. Although his mother, Delfina López de Alonso, was a member of the Adventist Church, his father was not. Interestingly, however, Eradio's paternal grandparents, *Don* José and Maria Alonso, were among the founders of the Marianao Adventist Church in Havana, Cuba.

Eradio studied for the ministry at the Antillas Seventh-day Adventist Seminary in Santa Clara, Cuba and married Miriam González in August of 1964. In June of the following year, he entered the ministry, pastoring the Ranchuelo/Las Cruces/Cien Fuegos district in Cuba.

In 1968, Elder Alonso left his native country for Spain where he served in Madrid as the associate pastor of the Alensa Seventh-day Adventist Church for 13 months. In the summer of 1969, Elder Alonso traveled to Miami, arriving precisely at the time that Elder Carlos Aeschlimann, Inter-American Division evangelist, was to hold a two-month evangelistic effort. Simultaneous meetings were held in the Central Spanish Church and the municipal auditorium in the city of Hialeah, three nights a week in each location.

Eradio Alonso, First Pastor of Hialeah, Homestead and Carol City

Elder Alonso was hired as one of the Bible workers for the evangelistic effort in the city of Hialeah. At the close of the effort, Elder Alonso had 17 of the 46 candidates prepared for baptism. In December of 1969, the group was organized into a company and Elder Alonso was asked by the conference to be their first pastor.

In 1971, Elder Alonso baptized "a brand from the burning." José Lombardo was a fugitive from the law in Cuba and had also served time in the United States. After his conversion, Lombardo became an Adventist pastor and at this writing is an associate evangelist with *La Voz de la Esperanza*.

Elder Alonso also became the first pastor of the Homestead and Carol City Spanish churches. He pastored this district until 1973 when he took a call to the Forest City Spanish Church in Orlando, Florida. During his pastorate in the Forest City Church, Elder Alonso baptized young Frank González. He could not know then that this young Cuban would one day become the speaker and director of the world-renowned Adventist Hispanic radio and TV media program, *La Voz de la Esperanza*.

Elder Alonso has served as pastor, evangelist and Spanish coordinator on both conference and union levels. He is an author and a recording artist. In 1997 he earned his doctorate from Andrews University. Presently Dr. Alonso is serving as Associate Director of the North American Division Ministerial Department.

Frank González²⁵

Events leading to Frank González's conversion started with his uncle, Dr. Francisco García, a pediatrician in Cuba. The pastor of the Santos Espíritus Adventist Church in Cuba, Pastor Fernando Paulín, had been visiting Dr. García, acquainting him with the Adventist message.

After Dr. García came to Orlando, Florida, he began receiving visits from Pastor Paulín's brother, Eladio, a lay member in the Orlando Church (Forest City Church), who continued to cultivate the seed of truth that his brother had planted. Brother Eladio informed the pastor, Elder Alonso, about the interest Dr. García and his family had in the Bible and in a short time, Elder Alonso began a Saturday afternoon Bible study visitation plan with the family, which included Frank González's mother, his uncle, and cousins.

Frank, however, was not interested in the Bible study at the time. He was resentful toward God because his father had been a political prisoner in Cuba and felt that God had abandoned him. But God never abandons His children. In fact, God had His hand on



Inauguration of Hialeah Spanish Church in Florida, 1972. Emilio Girado (left), first elder, with Elder Eradio Alonso.

Frank, choosing him for a very special work in his life. So, though outwardly uninterested, Frank would listen to the studies from an adjacent room out of curiosity, “just to see what they were talking about,” he told himself.



Elder Frank Gonzalez

Frank Gonzalez's Conversion

One Saturday afternoon, Elder Alonso gave a Bible study on angels, in particular, their guardian angels. At the time, it didn't make a big impression on Frank, but the following week an incident took place which brought that truth vividly to his mind.

One day Frank found himself surrounded by a gang of Anglo rough-necks who had been harassing the new Cuban family in the all-Anglo community since they had arrived. Frank remembers that they came at him from all directions with sticks and chains, calling out derogatory names at him. At that moment, his thoughts were drawn heavenward, “God, if I have a guardian angel, I need him right now!” What happened next was almost unbelievable.

Frank recalls that his attackers were suddenly knocked down by an unseen force that put such profound fear in them that they took off running in all directions. Frank was made a believer! The following Sabbath afternoon, he joined the Bible study and told them of his experience. From then on, he never missed a study and in 1974 was baptized by Elder Alonso.

Following his graduation from Southern Missionary College in Tennessee, Frank became an associate pastor of the very church in which he had been baptized—the Orlando Spanish Church, now known as the Forest City Spanish Adventist Church. Later he became pastor of the Apopka, Castlebury and Tampa Spanish SDA Churches in the Florida Conference.

❖ ORLANDO

Beginning of the Forest City Church

The person credited with initiating the Spanish work in the Orlando area was Captain David Flechas of the United States Navy. One Sabbath in 1962 he went to the Central English church in Orlando with the purpose of encouraging the Spanish-speaking members there to form their own group. Captain Flechas talked to the pastor and requested a place to meet in the church, which the pastor gave them. Then Captain Flechas began looking for all the Hispanic members meeting in the various Adventist churches in the city of Orlando.



First Spanish Group of Orlando. Captain David Flechas, front row, left. 1966.

One of the first brethren he contacted was Tem Suárez and his family, who became leaders in this group that met on Saturday afternoons. Other original members were: retired pastor Gregorio Vences and his family; sister Marta San Martín; Mirta Keskinene, Aurora Sánchez and the Kummer family. Every Sabbath at 4 p.m. this small group would meet. By mid-1962, their attendance had reached 30, but they were not yet ready to be organized officially.

From their original location in the Central Church, this company moved to better accommodations at the Florida Adventist Hospital where they were allowed to use the chapel in the nurses' dormitory. It was there that young, dynamic Máximo Rojas, the first pastor, found his new congregation worshipping in 1965.²⁶ However, he was only there a short time before being moved to Tampa.

Eugenio Valencia

Elder Eugenio Valencia is considered another one of the pioneers of the Spanish work in Orlando. After he retired with 42 years of denominational service in the Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico and the Greater New York Conference, he moved to Orlando, Florida in 1966. When he settled in Orlando with his wife, Atalia, they found only a third of the group that had been meeting in 1962 still holding their services in the nurses' chapel in the Florida Adventist Sanitarium,

Shortly after Elder Valencia's arrival in Orlando, Wallace (Wally) Coe, the conference president, asked him to take charge of the Hispanic group and build up the membership.

Meanwhile, every Sabbath at the sanitarium, the



Elder Eugenio Valencia.

nurses would use the small chapel for their worship services, then turn it over to the Hispanics for their Sabbath services which took place between 10 and 11 o'clock. This arrangement continued for two years before Elder Valencia decided to invite the brethren to hold their Sabbath services at his house. There the little flock met for the next year and a half.



Little white church on Forest Lake Academy campus. 1970.

At that time several of Elder Valencia's former members from the Greater New York Conference decided to move down to Orlando to get away from the big city influence in New York City. They joined the group and this influx dramatically increased the membership.

Church House on Academy Campus

In 1969, encouraged by their growing numbers, the Hispanics bought an old, white frame house on the campus of Forest Lake Academy. Although the house was in dire need of repairs, that did not discourage the 35 grateful members who were just happy to finally have their

own home church. They began an ambitious remodeling program. Then in December, 1970, the Florida Conference officers organized the company into the Forest City Spanish Church,²⁷ making it the third organized Spanish church in the conference.

In 1972, the church bought five acres of land on Bunnell Road in Altamonte Springs.



Forest City Spanish Church on Forest Lake Academy campus. Pastor Eugenio Valencia, in front holding a book, 1969.



The inauguration of the Forest City Spanish Church, first Spanish church in Orlando. December, 1970.

It wasn't until 1975, however, when Elder Manuel López was their pastor, that they built their first church on the property, which seated 400.

Rapid Growth

The congregation grew rapidly, not only through the influx of Adventist immigrants but also through active evangelism conducted by laypersons. In 1978 the lay activities director of the church arranged for four soul-winning campaigns, only one of which had an ordained minister as the speaker.²⁸ The church grew to 430 members by the mid-1980's and by the late 1990's, the membership had reached nearly 800.²⁹

Through the 1990's, the dramatic development of this congregation continued. They bought an additional five adjacent acres, bringing their property holdings to 10 acres. In 1995, under the leadership of Elder Cándido Enríquez, the church had the groundbreaking for their second church building with a capacity of 1000 members at the cost of \$1.5 million. It included classrooms, a community services center and other facilities. Ernesto González and José Barbosa were the architects, Luis Cuadra was general contractor, and José Franco became construction supervisor.

When the new and larger church building was constructed, the old church building was converted into a church school. This school included a kindergarten and elementary school which enrolled 116 students during the 1994-95 school year. After more than 140

registered for the following year, the church also expanded its educational facilities.³⁰ For the school year starting August 21, 2000, enrollment stood at 150.

The youth of the church were very active, launching “ROCK 2000” (Reach Out Community Kickoff), an evangelistic effort to reach their non-Adventist peers with the Adventist message. José Antonio Pagán, youth pastor of the church, was the speaker, while the youth simultaneously translated into English.

Elder Rolando de los Ríos (former Associate Director of *Ayer, Hoy, Mañana* and Hispanic Coordinator for the Florida Conference), who became the pastor in January of 1998, reports that the membership now stands at 1,060. In 1999, they baptized 98 people. Forest City is not only the largest Spanish church, but one of the fastest-growing churches in the conference. Among the 200 churches in the conference, it is the fourth largest in both membership and tithe.

Forest City Spawns Daughter Churches

Similar to the influence of the Miami Central Church in southeast Florida, the Forest City Church provided the incentive to form a number of other churches around Orlando and as far away as Melbourne on the east coast. The first to organize was Deltona in October, 1982, which was located midway between Orlando and Daytona Beach. Two months later the Casselberry Church organized in South Orlando.

Before the end of the decade, groups in Melbourne, Apopka, and Kissimmee had formed. The latter two spawned other churches during the 1990’s as far south as Haines City. By 1997, thirteen churches in Central Florida could trace their beginnings to the Forest City Church. Many of the second-generation congregations became relatively large, such as the Casselberry church which mushroomed from 51 at the time of its organization in 1982 to 288 in 1995 when it broke ground for a new 500-seat sanctuary.³¹

Pastors of the Forest City Spanish Church

The pastors of the Forest City Spanish SDA Church were: Máximo Rojas, Eugenio Valencia, Eradio Alonso, Manuel López, Erwin Hise, Sergio Torres, José (Pepe) Hernández, Eugene Torres, Cándido Enríquez and Rolando de los Ríos.

Tampa Bay

In the Tampa Bay area signs of growth appeared in 1967. For decades the Tampa-St. Petersburg municipal region had housed a large general Hispanic community, but not until 1965 did a small group of 15 Adventists organize under a layman, Gabriel Ramírez. It was for this group that Máximo Rojas became the pastor in 1967 after leaving the small band of members in Orlando in the hands of Eugenio Valencia.³²

Elder Rojas did not remain long in Orlando nor did he stay long in Tampa, but left to enter medical school. His departure left the company without the leadership of an ordained minister. But in God’s providence, Luis Márquez, a Cuban refugee, arrived in April, 1971, and preached his first sermon the following Sabbath. For the next 24 years he served as the first elder of this church.

Meanwhile, Hermes Méndez arrived to pastor the congregation. On October 9, 1971, eleven months after the Forest City Church organized, the first Hispanic congregation in Tampa became an official church, making it the fourth Spanish church in the Florida Conference.

Tampa Church Spawns Other Congregations

As was the case in other Hispanic congregations, remarkable growth took place in this congregation. Less than four years had passed before these members purchased a sanctuary of their own, and in 1980 their number had grown to more than 140.

Following the example of other Spanish-speaking churches, the Tampa church divided in 1982 to form another group in Brandon, a suburb on the eastern side of the city. Through the 1990's, five more churches sprang from the original Tampa congregation, spreading from Spring Hill, about 40 miles on the coast north of St. Petersburg to Palmetto, approximately the same distance south of Tampa on the gulf shore.³³

Strong Commitment to Evangelism

One of the key elements to the rapid growth was a strong commitment to evangelism among laity. An example occurred in 1981 when Elder Walter Cameron, Florida Conference coordinator of Spanish evangelism, spent \$20,000 on filmstrips and projectors to distribute among church members for lay evangelistic purposes. Revelation Seminars, Five-Day anti-smoking programs besides more traditional methods were part of the Hispanic outreach ministry.³⁴

In 1981 the Florida Conference claimed 12 Spanish churches; by 1988 the number had grown to 18 with nearly 4,500 members. In November, 1988, Elder Cameron gathered the fifteen Hispanic pastors in the conference to review their accomplishments and to lay plans for pastoral care and future evangelism. They pledged to baptize 460 in the following year.³⁵

Celebrating 30 Years of Hispanic Ministry in Florida

Over the weekend of September 3, 1988, Spanish-speaking Adventists gathered in the Dade County Auditorium in Miami to celebrate 30 years of Hispanic ministry in Florida. More than 2,300 attended as some of the pioneers in the Spanish movement in Florida led the worship services, among them a group of the charter members of the Miami Central Church, including Ernesto Santos, the first pastor.

The Work Expands

At the time of that gathering, 23 organized Spanish churches and four other companies were scattered across the state of Florida. By 1997 the number of Hispanic Adventists in Florida exceeded 8,000. Only a year later on the 40th anniversary of Hispanic ministry in Florida, membership had risen to 9,000 with 56 congregations, 35 of which were organized into official churches. The remaining were official companies and groups. The growing Spanish work in the Florida Conference was a living fulfillment of the aim of Hispanic believers: "Donde haya presencia hispana, que haya presencia adventista."³⁶ (Wherever there is an Hispanic presence, let there be an Adventist presence.)

Jorge Mayer, Hispanic Coordinator

Elder Jorge Mayer is the Hispanic Coordinator for the Florida Conference. A third-generation Adventist, he was born in Entre Ríos, Argentina. His father, Adán Mayer, was an Adventist pastor and his mother was Irma Bismark.

As a youth, Jorge was very athletically inclined and loved sports. In 1970, he and a friend, Telmo Trossero, rode their bikes approximately 2000 miles from the college to the South American Division Youth Congress in Curitiba, Brazil, a venture that took over two weeks. For the first two days, they traveled by day. However, because Jorge is fair complexioned, his skin became blistered from the sun. So they decided to travel by night and sleep during the day, resting wherever they could—in homes, shelters and even under the trees. But it was a rewarding experience.

In 1972 young Jorge began his studies at River Plate College in Argentina where he received B. A. degrees in philosophy, education and theology. There he met Nibia Pereyra and they were married in 1976. In 1978, his alma mater, hired him as their youth pastor and later promoted him to the position of associate dean of the college.

In 1980, Elder Mayer and his family moved to central California where he worked as a literature evangelist before being called the following year to pastor the Arlington, Virginia Spanish church in the Potomac Conference. Four years later, he went to the Adventist Theological Seminary in Berrien Springs, Michigan where within a year he received an M.Div. degree.

Elder Mayer's Ministry

The Potomac Conference asked Elder Mayer to return to pastor the Capital Spanish Church on 16th Street in Washington, D.C., which he did until 1991 when he became the Spanish coordinator for the conference. That same year, the Michigan Conference invited him to pastor the Berrien Springs Spanish Church as well as to serve as their conference Spanish coordinator.

In 1998, Gordon Retzer, president of the Florida Conference, extended Elder Mayer a conference committee invitation to serve as the vice president for Hispanic Ministries with additional duties as the Southern Union Conference liaison for Hispanic Ministries.

The following year, Elder Mayer received his Doctor of Ministry degree from Andrews University in family ministries. He promotes establishing a family life ministry

program in every local church as well as promoting personal and public evangelism.

As of December 31, 1999, the Florida Conference had 36 Hispanic pastors, 48 congregations, 9,759 members (22 percent of total Florida Conference membership). Dr. Mayer reported baptisms were 993, or 81 percent of the total Florida Conference baptisms for that year—a



"Los Peregrinos" Church in Miami, Florida.

phenomenal feat for a group representing only 22 percent of the conference membership. This trend is not unique to the Florida Conference. Wherever there is significant Spanish work, Hispanic baptismal percentages always exceed the percentage of their membership. The high number of Hispanic baptisms greatly enhances a conference's overall baptismal report.

Florida Conference Hispanic Coordinators

The Florida Conference Hispanic Coordinators have been: Manuel López, Walter Cameron, José (Pepe) Hernández, Rolando de los Ríos, and Jorge Mayer.

SOUTHEASTERN REGIONAL CONFERENCE

La Iglesia Emanuel de Tampa (Emmanuel Tampa Spanish Church)³⁷

The Southeastern Conference, a regional conference with its headquarters in Altamonte Springs, Florida, claims 13 Spanish churches in Florida, four full-time pastors and four part-time pastors with 1,200 members. The Emmanuel Tampa Spanish Church, in Tampa, Florida, was the **first Spanish church to become a constituent church of the regional Black conference**. In 1980 Eulolo and Noemí Silva were members of the Southside English SDA Church, now known as the Carolwood English Church. They had the desire to form a Spanish church and contacted some of the Hispanic families that lived in the area. One of those was Tito and Ruth Ayala from Puerto Rico. Another was Sylvia Cuevas. At first they began with a Spanish Sabbath school class at the Southside English Church. When the group grew, that same year they went to the Southeastern regional conference and asked for a pastor. The regional conference responded by asking Pastor Julio Astacio, who was pastoring the Town and Country Regional SDA Church in Tampa to be their pastor. The small Spanish group continued meeting for Sabbath services at the Southside English Church. In the evenings they would meet at the Ayalas' home. Then they met in rented quarters until they bought a house located on 7611 North Sheldon, which they converted into a church. The Tampa Emmanuel Church today has 90 members and is pastored by Josué Parker, the younger brother of the famous Cuban international opera singer Moisés Parker who lives in Germany.

West Hialeah Spanish Church Becomes "Los Peregrinos"³⁸

When the Mariel exodus from Cuba took place in 1980, over 80 members from the Marianao Adventist Church in Havana were among the first to arrive in Miami. The Marianao church was the largest Adventist church in Havana with over 600 members. Elder Charles Vento was their pastor. He had built that church through a combination of diplomacy and great sacrifice. In those days cement was a commodity that the Communist government had full control of and was not accessible to just any entity or persons who wanted or needed it. But Elder Vento was fortunate because he was able to obtain all the cement he needed for the construction of his church.

When the former Marianao members arrived in Miami, they began attending the Spanish Adventist churches in the area. But desiring to meet together more often for church services and wanting to be more active in witnessing, they requested that they be able to start

a new Branch Sabbath school in Miami. With the help of José Blevin, Colporteur Director in Miami, they began looking for an appropriate place to meet. Later in September, when Elder Vento and his family arrived in Miami, his former members, recalling the former days in their Marianao church in Havana with their beloved pastor, expressed the desire to have Elder Vento once again as their pastor.

They found a meeting place in a small church at 8155 West 12th Avenue named Resurrection Lutheran Church. There a group of more than 20 met for the first time on October 11, 1980. Having recently arrived in America and experiencing religious freedom, these members became very active in sharing their faith and the group grew larger each time they met.

Organization of West Hialeah Company, "Los Peregrinos"

Four months after their first meeting, the Florida Conference organized them into The West Hialeah Company on February 21, 1981. Soon they began meeting in the Palm Springs Presbyterian Church. Financially, the conference could not justify hiring another pastor, so they put them under the charge of a young Hispanic district pastor. The young pastor was generally only able to meet with the group twice a month due to his other responsibilities. So Elder Vento, even though he had a full-time job, would give Bible studies as well as preach on the other Sabbaths and every Wednesday and Sunday nights.

Origin of Name "Los Peregrinos"

The West Hialeah Company wanted their congregation to be a "haven," not only for the Cuban refugees, but for other Hispanics coming from the Caribbean and Central America. They understood from experience what these new immigrants needed: food, clothing, housing and employment, and they wanted to be able to help. One Sabbath, during his sermon Pastor Vento said:

Now we are not only Cubans; there are other countries represented in our church. For example, Puerto Rico, Colombia, Mexico, Chile, France, Dominican Republic and others. How wonderful it is to know that it does not matter where you were born, nor does it matter what your nationality is. We are united here as children of God preparing to go to our heavenly home, because we are only transients in this world; we are pilgrims marching toward the heavenly land. We are only temporarily here in this land because very soon we shall be citizens of the Kingdom of God.

From that message came the name for the church—*Los Peregrinos*—The Pilgrims. Elder Vento added, "Let our symbol be: 'our arms stretched out, one extended to the refugees coming to this country and the other toward heaven.'"



Elder Charles Vento, 1998.

Los Peregrinos Church Joins the Southeastern Regional Conference

The lack of a full-time pastor, in addition to other situations, created problems which led the Florida Conference to believe, at one point, that it was best to disband the company. What followed in the succeeding months was a series of meetings between conference administrators and the members. Insensitivity, lack of understanding, and the final blow of being denied acceptance into the sisterhood of churches of the Florida Conference led the company to join the Southeastern Regional Conference on June 30, 1982, with 106 members, making it the second Spanish church in the regional conference.

The Los Peregrinos congregation began fostering the establishment of several churches. The first was Miami Beach Spanish on January 29, 1983 with 29 members. Then on January 26, 1985 the Northwest Miami Spanish Church was organized with 23 members. Other daughter Spanish churches are: Efeso, Country Garden, Perrine, Boca Raton, Ft. Lauderdale and El Buen Redil, in Southwest Miami.

The Uniqueness of Los Peregrinos Sanctuary

In 1988, an ambitious and aggressive project was launched to build a 1200-seat capacity church. After thousands of dollars invested and hundreds of donated hours of labor by the members and friends of the church, the building was completed and inaugurated in 1998. When Elder Vento set out to build this church, his desire was to build more than just an ordinary church in which to worship. He dreamed of having a church building which would include strong biblical symbols of events and functions to create a more conducive environment for worship.



Inside the "Los Peregrinos" sanctuary.

As part of the brickwork on the landing in front of the church, there are three arches representing the Trinity. Upon entering the sanctuary, one's eyes are drawn to the 30-foot high ceiling where a wooden panel design of Noah's Ark is embedded in the ceiling. Decorating the platform are three massive, gold curtains. The first one closes behind the platform (symbolizing the Holy Place); the second one (symbolizing the Most Holy Place) drops in front of the choir loft, and the third covers the baptistry. The mural behind the baptistry is of the New Jerusalem, with the water from the River of Life flowing into the baptistry. Today, the church and its property is valued between \$6 and \$7 million.

Southeastern Regional Conference Spanish Churches

From the humble beginning in 1980, the Southeastern Regional Conference now has eight Spanish pastors (four full-time and four part-time), 13 Spanish churches and 1200 members. Elder Vento is now the pastor of the Miami Beach, Country Garden and Cutter Edge Florida Spanish churches. Eduardo Quintiana, a part-time minister, pastors the Hialeah West Church. Lay pastor Kircio Mota is in charge of the Efeso NW Miami church and El Buen Redil SW Miami church. Pastor Douglas DeJesús Osorio is in charge of the Ft. Lauderdale and Boca Ratón Churches. Elder Josué Parker pastors the Emmanuel Church in Tampa, the Spanish church in St. Petersburg and a group in Edgewater, Florida.

Elder Raúl Cruz is the pastor of the Sheeler Oaks church in Orlando and Pastor Prudencio Ojeda pastors the Lakeland Spanish church.

Roger Alvarez, Hispanic Coordinator, Southeastern Regional Conference

Roger Alvarez is the Hispanic Coordinator of the Southeastern Regional Conference. Elder Alvarez, a second-generation Adventist, was born in Pilón, Granmá, Cuba, on December 23, 1957. His father, Raúl Alvarez, served as president of the East Cuba Conference while his mother, Mercedes Alfonso de Alvarez, was treasurer. In 1986 Roger received a B.A. degree in theology from the Seventh-day Adventist Seminary in Cuba. That same year he married Leonor Gavilán and started his ministry at Pinal de Ríos, Cuba.

For the next twelve years Elder Alvarez worked as a pastor, and departamental director on both the conference and union level. In May of 1998 he received a call from the Southeastern Regional Conference to pastor the following churches: Los Peregrinos (545 members), El Buen Redil (29 members), and The Efeso (30 members). Brother Kircio Mota assists Pastor Alvarez as the associate lay pastor.

Elder Alvarez was the first pastor in Cuba to test the religious prohibitions by establishing small groups with the families of his church. Until then, no pastor had ventured to promote small groups ministries because of fear of being imprisoned. Elder Alvarez's members were also concerned about being arrested, but he told them that they should move ahead in faith. For the first month, every Tuesday while his members met in small groups, he spent the whole hour on his knees praying that the angels would blind the authorities' eyes so they would not interfere. At the end of the year, his small groups ministries had baptized 43 new members. After that, other pastors were encouraged to follow his example.

Elder Alvarez was also the first conference departamental director to establish a youth camporee, which 893 youth attended. This type of function had also been prohibited in Cuba, but his camporee went uninterrupted and established a precedent. In June of 2000,

Elder Alvarez was asked by the Southeastern Regional Conference to serve as the conference coordinator for Hispanic Ministries.

Summary of Spanish Work in Florida

Unlike the large Hispanic memberships in Texas, New Mexico and California, the Spanish-speaking churches in Florida sprang up suddenly, mainly because of the influx of refugees that began in the 1960's. Although the Cuban Revolution was responsible for the largest single Hispanic group, citizens from all parts of Spanish-America found their way to Florida. Many were fleeing from political upheavals that lasted well into the 1980's; others came to avoid worsening economic conditions in their home countries; but others came simply to begin a new life. Some were common laborers, others were well-educated professionals.

The churches that emerged from this largely immigrant society did not take a long time to develop as the early Spanish-speaking churches did in the West and Southwest. Many Adventists who came from Latin America arrived with experience in church organization and understood the many different areas of church activity. Consequently, community service centers, youth activities, including Pathfinder clubs, elementary schools, and advanced evangelistic techniques were part of the Spanish churches in Florida from the beginning. In short, the Spanish churches in Florida benefitted from the experience their members brought with them from their original locations in the South and Inter-American Divisions.

The membership of Hispanic Adventists in Florida far outnumbered Spanish work in other conferences in the Southern Union. As recently as 1988 the *Southern Tidings* noted that only 11 Spanish-speaking churches existed outside the Florida Conference, six of them in the Southeastern Regional Conference, which included the state of Florida. Three Spanish congregations were in the Georgia-Cumberland Conference, and one each in the Carolina and South Atlantic conferences. In the Alabama-Mississippi Conference, (later known as the Gulf States Conference), and the Kentucky-Tennessee Conference (comprising the western two-thirds of Tennessee and all of Kentucky) there were no Spanish groups of worshipers.³⁹

Today the state of Florida (Florida and Southeastern Regional Conferences) still has the greatest concentration of Hispanic members in the Southern Union with almost 11,000 of the 13,875 Hispanic members in the Union.

GEORGIA-CUMBERLAND CONFERENCE

Collegedale, Tennessee

In the Georgia-Cumberland Conference, the beginning of Spanish work occurred on the campus of Southern Missionary College (now Southern Adventist University) in Collegedale, Tennessee. For many years, dating from the 1940's, Spanish teachers had sponsored a Spanish Sabbath school that functioned more or less as an opportunity for students to hear the spoken Spanish language outside their classrooms in natural situations. Attendance was voluntary, but a few Hispanic students sometimes took an active interest in the organization.

During the 1960's and 1970's, the atmosphere changed when the stream of arriving

immigrants created a Spanish-speaking community in the Greater Chattanooga area. At the same time the number of Hispanic students at the college increased, some of whom began meeting regularly with the Spanish group each Sabbath. The group went from being an extra-curricular event to becoming a true Hispanic place of worship.

Collegedale Spanish Church Organized

During the late 1970's, the group became large enough to meet for preaching services as well as Sabbath school. Frank González, then a ministerial student, assumed leadership. But after his graduation, an ordained minister, Iván Ruiz, moved to Collegedale from Atlanta to shepherd the Hispanic flock. Elder Ruiz, a Costa Rican with years of experience in the ministry both in Central America and the United States, led the small group in a fund-raising campaign to build their own sanctuary. With the help of the college, which donated a plot of land, and the help of members of the Anglo churches who contributed both money and time, they were able to realize their dream.

In the mid-1980's, the Spanish company organized into an official church and moved into its new church building on the college campus. By the end of the 1990's, this congregation had approximately 250 members originating from many parts of Latin America.

Dalton, Georgia

Desiring to do more missionary outreach, Elder Ruiz began to work among the Spanish-speaking immigrants who had settled in Dalton, Georgia, 40 miles south of Collegedale, and were working in the internationally known carpet mills. His persistence generated interest for regular weekly meetings. But before he could enjoy the fruition of his work, he retired and returned to Costa Rica.

Gabriel Ruiz, an experienced Puerto Rican pastor who by chance bore the same last name, succeeded Iván Ruiz in 1993 and continued the Dalton outreach project. By 1996, he started a simple outreach program in the Hispanic community of Chattanooga where many Central Americans had migrated. Within two years Elder Ruiz had secured a small, but attractive meeting place for this band of Sabbathkeepers. What was once a Sabbath school class for college students had now become an active church that was nurturing an interest in Adventism among its Hispanic neighbors.

Greater Atlanta Region⁴⁰

The influx of Hispanic immigrants to the Greater Atlanta region was another opportunity to establish a Spanish-speaking Adventist church in that area. Among the new residents were a physician and his family, Reuben and Martha Castillo, from Texas, and their three children, who settled in Atlanta in 1970.

Missionary-Minded Castillos

The missionary-minded Castillo family immediately set out to find other Hispanic Adventists by visiting the local Anglo churches. They went to the local radio station to inquire about the possibility of having the *La Voz de la Esperanza* radio program on the air. Then they contacted Elder Milton Peverini, the director and speaker of the program. He agreed to send tapes directly to the radio station each week while the Castillos funded the program for two years. To this day, *La Voz* is still aired in the Greater Atlanta region.

Raúl Montesdeoca

In 1971, a Catholic couple, Raúl Montesdeoca and Hermiba Coffino, were married and baptized by Elder William Ambler of the Beverly Road SDA Church in Atlanta. Immediately after, the Castillos asked Raúl and his wife to join them in forming a nucleus of an Hispanic Adventist group. Every Sabbath they would meet at the Montesdeoca home. In the afternoon, they would take the telephone directory and systematically call the people with Spanish surnames to see if there was any interest in studying the Bible. In the process, they found six former Adventists.

The Castillos taught Raúl and his wife how to give Bible studies and together they would study with the interested people. With the permission of the conference officers, the Castillos began Sabbath services for the small group of Hispanics that they had befriended. Dr. Castillo also invited several of his Hispanic patients to meet with them. Meanwhile, the radio program was beginning to produce results with correspondence and requests for the *Los Tesoros de Vida* (*Treasures of Life*) Bible course. Dr. Castillo bought 500 copies of *The Great Controversy* and mailed them to those with Hispanic surnames found in the telephone directory.

Request for a Pastor

By 1972, with 17 attending their worship services, Dr. Castillo contacted Elder Milton Peverini again, this time for suggested names of pastors that might be able to come to Atlanta. Elder Peverini suggested Elder Silvio Fernández, secretary of the Department of Radio/Television and Evangelism for the Austral Union in the South American Division. Dr. & Mrs. Castillo approached the conference president, Elder Desmond Cummings, with a request to bring Elder Fernández to pastor the group. Although the president was favorable, he told the Castillos that the conference could not be financially responsible for his transfer. Not to be discouraged, the Castillos personally took on the financial and legal responsibility with the Immigration and Naturalization Service, working through the designated state and government offices.

Elder Fernández Arrives

A short time later, in 1974, Silvio Fernández and his family arrived from South America to pastor the group. At the first meeting, plans were laid to obtain a place to worship and God opened the doors for them to rent a small chapel in a Baptist church in Grand Park, near downtown Atlanta, free of charge. The group was soon organized into a company with 14 members.⁴¹

In his new location, Fernández conducted evangelistic meetings and the congregation continued to grow. But Fernández' pastorate ended much sooner than anticipated with his announcement that he planned to move to a larger Hispanic community. Following him was Iván Ruiz who led the group for about two years before moving to Collegedale.

First Spanish Church in Atlanta

In 1975 while Ruiz was pastor, the officers of the Georgia Cumberland Conference organized the original company as the **First Spanish Church in Atlanta**, but it was still meeting in rented quarters. The day the First Spanish Church was orga-

nized, they chose Raúl Montesdeoca as the first elder and treasurer, offices he held for 18 years.

For 11 years, from its beginnings in the home of Raúl Montesdeoca, the members of this church had moved from place to place searching for adequate worship accommodations until 1983 when they bid \$125,000 for a church building near the heart of Atlanta. By a substantial amount it was the lowest of three bids for the sanctuary, which carried an asking price of \$250,000. But by a miracle their bid was accepted, which the Adventist members took as God's providential intervention on their behalf. On October 17, 1983, the First Spanish Adventist Church opened the doors of its own sanctuary.⁴²

Elder Obdulio Seguí is Called to Atlanta

In 1993, Al Long, secretary of the Georgia-Cumberland Conference, passed a conference call to Elder Obdulio Seguí and his wife Elsa to pastor the First Spanish Church in Georgia. When the Seguís arrived in Atlanta, they found around 50 members in the First Church and a very small group meeting in Gainesville. The Seguís have always been dedicated workers and they immediately began visiting the members and giving Bible studies to make the Spanish work grow in Georgia.

Alma Spanish Church

In 1995, Elder Seguí heard that there were some Hispanic Adventists in Alma, Georgia. Alma was approximately 240 miles from Atlanta, but that did not deter him. Elder Seguí wasted no time in making an appointment to meet with them. For several months, he would send his elders from the First Spanish Church to conduct the Sabbath services for them.

Then he learned that the Alma English SDA Church was going to close down because their membership had dwindled to almost nothing. Elder Seguí approached the conference officers to see if they would consider selling or transferring the church building to the Hispanic group in Alma since it was a growing congregation with no place to meet. The officials were open to the idea and asked Elder Seguí to plan a Sabbath rally in Alma for the official transfer.

The rally took place in May of 1995 and Elder Manuel Vásquez, a vice president from the North American Division, was invited to be the 11 o'clock speaker. Internationally-known Adventist Hispanic singing artist José Ocampo, from California, gave a concert in the afternoon. After the concert, the conference officers, Elder Seguí, and Elder Vásquez met with the Hispanic members and organized them into a company. The conference then officially turned over the English church building to the new Spanish company. The church has continued to grow and presently it has 90 members with Pastor Carlos Enrique as its pastor.

The Spanish Work Continues to Multiply

Elder Seguí has also helped establish other churches in the conference: the Marietta Spanish SDA Church, 20 miles to the north of Atlanta, which was organized on April 3, 1999 with 75 members; and a group in Gwinnett, with up to 100 people meeting every Sabbath, is ready to be organized.

Neftalí Ortiz, Hispanic Coordinator

When Roy Caughron retired in December of 1999 as the Ethnic Ministries Director of the Georgia-Cumberland Conference, Elder Stan Peterson took over his responsibilities. But the Spanish work has grown so fast in the conference that for the year 2000 Neftalí Ortiz assumed the responsibility of Hispanic Coordinator.

Elder Ortiz was born in Río Negro Antioquía, Colombia. He is a convert to Adventism who was baptized by Elder Bobby Roberts in 1955. Elder Ortiz began his studies at Icolven (Colombia Adventist University) in Medellín, Colombia but finished at Antillian Union College in Puerto Rico where he received a B.A. degree in theology. While at the college, he met Nancy Lozaba and they were married in 1974.

Elder Ortiz began his ministry the following year in Colombia. But in 1978 he and his family moved to Hemet, California where he worked under Elder Francisco López as a stipend associate pastor in the Hemet Spanish Church.

He continued his studies, receiving an M.Div. degree from Andrews University in 1984 and, immediately following, accepted a call from George Woodruff, president of the Chesapeake Conference, to start the Spanish work in Baltimore, Maryland.

In 1986 the New Jersey Conference called him, where he worked in several Spanish districts until 1998. That year he received a call to the Georgia-Cumberland Conference to pastor the First Spanish Church of Atlanta, the Marietta Church and coordinate the Spanish work for the year 2000. In 1999 he received his D.Min. degree from Andrews University.

The Spanish work in the Georgia-Cumberland Conference has experienced phenomenal growth in the last four years. In 1996, there were only two full-time Hispanic workers compared to the year 2000 with six full-time Hispanic pastors, two Bible workers and 20 congregations with a total of 991 members.

SOUTH ATLANTIC REGIONAL CONFERENCE

Atlanta Central Spanish Church

In 1978, when the First Spanish SDA Church in Atlanta, Georgia had achieved a membership of about 80, some members promoted the idea of dividing into two churches. Raúl Montesdeoca remained with the original church of about 45-50 members, while under the leadership of the Castillos, the rest of the believers began meeting at the English Belvedere Church where they had their own Sabbath school and gathered for a translation of the Sabbath church service. They invited several speakers from the General Conference, Southern Missionary College (which today is Southern Adventist University), and the Seminary at Andrews University.

The second group grew and moved from the Belvedere Church to a separate location. They later became the Atlanta Central Spanish Church organized by the president of the South Atlantic Regional Conference on September 12, 1981 with 40 charter members. The regional conference brought in Pastor Carmelo Rivera from Puerto Rico to shepherd the flock.⁴³

The First Spanish SDA Church also grew but remained in the Georgia-Cumberland Conference. They presently have 150 members, although they have spawned three daugh-

ter churches: the North Hispanic SDA Church in Chamblee and the Gainesville Group, both under the direction of Elder Obdulio Seguí; and the Marietta Hispanic SDA Church with Raúl Montesdeoca as elder and treasurer;

Central Church Cuban Prison Ministries

In the wake of the Mariel exodus in 1980, Dr. Castillo managed the distribution of 900 Bibles among Cuban inmates of the penitentiary who had entered the United States as refugees.⁴⁴ Castro had sent over hundreds of criminals from his prisons along with the other refugees fleeing Cuba on the Mariel *flotillas*. The American government, instead of returning them to Cuba, shipped the criminals to two penal institutions, one in Oakdale, Louisiana and the other in Atlanta, Georgia.⁴⁵ The work among those Cubans took hold and they baptized 22 penitentiary inmates.⁴⁶

Efraín Poloche

Efraín Poloche has served in the South Atlantic Regional Conference since 1986, first as the pastor of the Central Spanish Adventist Church in Atlanta and presently as the Hispanic Coordinator. Elder Poloche, a second-generation Adventist, was born in Cali, Colombia in 1954. His father, Alfredo Poloche, was the director of the literature evangelist work in the Alto Magdalena Conference in Colombia and his mother, Florelia, was a devoted wife and mother. In 1957 Elder Poloche earned his B. A. degree in theology from Icolven (Colombia Adventist University). That same year, he began his ministry as a pastor in Valencia, Venezuela. The following year he married Xiomara Escobar, a Venezuelan student at Icolven. Today, she teaches Spanish in the Greater Atlanta Academy and the Atlanta Adventist Academy.

In 1983, the Poloches went to Southern Missionary College in Collegedale, Tennessee, to study English. In 1984, he joined the literature evangelist ranks in the Georgia-Cumberland Conference. The following year, he bolstered the ranks of the literature evangelists in the Greater New York Conference. Finally, in May of 1986, the South Atlantic Regional Conference called Elder Poloche to pastor the Central Spanish Adventist Church in Atlanta. A few years later, they asked him to coordinate the Spanish work for the conference.

As of December 31, 1999, the South Atlantic Conference had two full-time pastors (Elder Efraín Poloche and Dr. Alberto Treiyr), and ten congregations with 462 members. The Georgia congregations are: Central Spanish in Atlanta; East Spanish Church in Stone Mountain; Chamblee Spanish Adventist Church; Marietta Spanish Church; Charlton Spanish Church; Jonesboro Spanish Church; Rosewell Spanish Church. In North Carolina there are four congregations: Warsaw Spanish Church, Emmanuel, Los Peregrinos and Seven Spring congregations.

CAROLINA CONFERENCE⁴⁷

Notwithstanding the statement by the editors of the *Southern Tidings* in 1988, that the Carolina Conference included only one Spanish-speaking church, the seeds of a growing membership were already germinating.

Columbia Spanish Church

In August of 1985, a small group of Hispanic Adventists who had been attending the English-speaking church in the First Seventh-day Adventist Church in Columbia, South Carolina, requested that Dave Priest, the pastor, grant them permission to meet as a group. The church board gave them the "okay" and they began meeting in Columbia Junior Adventist Academy. It was the first such Spanish gathering in the conference.

Later Waldo Lumpuy, a Cuban layman, approached the president of the conference, Elder Robert Folkenberg, and asked him to consider the possibility of sending them a pastor to build up the Spanish work. Elder Folkenberg, having spent many years in the Spanish work in the Inter-American Division, was sympathetic and requested funds from the "Carolinas Breakthrough" program which was specifically for opening up new work. The president contacted Elder Mario F. Muñoz, who was then taking some classes at Southwestern Adventist College in Keene, Texas, to come and pastor the group.



Elder Robert Folkenberg presiding over organization of Columbia Spanish Company, in South Carolina, 1986. Elder Mario Muñoz, right.

In January of 1986, Elder Muñoz moved his family from Honduras to Columbia, South Carolina, where he took charge of the group of ten which was still meeting in the junior academy classroom. He moved them to a rented Baptist church in a Spanish *barrio* in order to better reach the Hispanic community.

This group was officially organized as a company on July 28, 1986 with 15 charter members. Elder Robert Folkenberg, president, presided at the meeting. When other Hispanic Adventists in the Carolinas heard of the company, they began traveling to meet with them each Sabbath. Some traveled as much as three hours each way. In the mid-1990's, this group was dissolved mainly because it was made up of transient workers who moved away from the area. However, in the year 2000, 25-30 members are again meeting at the English church, and are part of the district overseen by Pastor Isaac Vallejo.

Hickory Spanish Church

Similarly, an Adventist presence in Hispanic *barrios* in other Carolina towns was established. Among them was Hickory, North Carolina, about three hours north of Columbia, South Carolina. The Hispanic brethren who traveled the three hours to Columbia each Sabbath to worship with that group decided in 1987 to stay in North Carolina and attend the English Adventist churches, first in Lincolnton, and then in Hickory. The Hickory church began providing them with Spanish Sabbath school quarterlies. Shortly thereafter, Walter Sepúlveda, a Puerto Rican-born layman in the English church, assumed leadership of the group.

At first they separated for their own Sabbath school, then united with the Anglo members for the worship service. But as they continued to grow in numbers, they began holding their own worship services as well. About this time, the English congregation built another church and let the Hispanics meet in their old sanctuary. Other Hispanic worshippers began attending the group from Morganton, about 25 miles to the west, and from Charlotte, approximately 60 miles to the southeast. Eventually about 60 persons comprised the Hickory Spanish group.

Following the development of the Hickory group, Elder G. E. Maxson, a minister with long experience as a church administrator in South and Central America, was serving the Carolina Conference in the Stewardship Department and took both groups (Columbia and Hickory) under his wing. But the stream of Adventist Hispanic immigrants, mainly Mexicans, into the Carolinas was producing small groups faster than he could oversee them.

Spanish-speaking services were soon taking place in four more locations around the conference: Rockingham, Ashboro, and Roanoke Rapids in North Carolina, and Spartanburg, South Carolina, cities separated by more than 300 miles. Active laity, such as Noel Laboy from Spartanburg, were emerging as local leaders, which proved to be very helpful, but they needed consistent pastoral leadership.

Elder Bert Elkins Pastors Hickory and Charlotte Before His Tragic Death

In 1991, Spanish-speaking Adventists in Charlotte decided to separate from the Hickory English church in order to establish their own weekly worship services. On January 5, they met for the first time in Charlotte with 20 persons in attendance. Among those first members were Raúl Pérez, a former literature evangelist and his wife who took charge of the leadership of the group. Although they lived 45 minutes away from Charlotte, they traveled there each Sabbath to preach as well as during the week to attend to the group. When the conference saw the interest of these lay persons, they decided to help the group.

Conference officials asked Elder Bert Elkins, a retired church administrator who had served in South and Central America, to pastor the Hickory and Charlotte groups. Elder Elkins was one of those unique church leaders from the old guard who felt a calling to minister among the Spanish-speaking people. All his years of denominational service were in the Latin countries of the Americas. The people whose lives he touched remember him for his total dedication and untiring labor.

In December of 1991, Elder Elkins and his wife, Louise, moved to a small town between Hickory and Charlotte to be closer to the groups. Tragically, Elder Elkins suffered a fatal heart attack which cut short his ministry only nine months after he had taken that assignment.

Samuel Romero Takes Up the Leadership

At the request of the Carolina Conference, Samuel Romero, an ordained minister who had enrolled in the nursing program at Southern College, agreed to fill the vacancy that Elkins' death had created. To his surprise, the day he reported for his new duties, he discovered that the conference officials had also named him as the coordinator for Hispanic ministry in the Carolina Conference.

The six-year history of difficulties in finding pastoral leadership was not lost on Romero. Realizing that he could never handle the needs of six different groups dispersed widely around the conference, he began an intensive program of training lay workers to assist him. Elder Romero taught them how to give Bible studies, how to obtain decisions and how to be lay preachers so they could preach the Sabbath sermons. It was a technique that both the South American and Inter-American Divisions had successfully utilized to compensate for the scarcity of pastors while membership was growing rapidly.⁴⁸ The laymen responded enthusiastically.



The 17 candidates baptized in Charlotte, North Carolina as a result of the Revelation Seminars given by laymen.

Charlotte—First Spanish Church in Carolina Conference

After the first year, Romero baptized 17 as a result of Revelation Seminars that the lay workers had conducted in Hickory and Charlotte. Church organization naturally followed membership increases. **In December, 1994, Charlotte became the first Spanish church in the Carolina Conference with 73 charter members**, and a month later, the Hickory company, renamed Laurel, organized with 56 members.

The Laurel church was the first to own its own sanctuary. Charlotte Spanish Church, with a membership exceeding 80, purchased land and developed plans for its own facilities. By the end of the 1990's, 15 Hispanic groups, varying in membership from 20 to 60, were meeting regularly in the Carolina Conference.

Samuel Romero, Hispanic Coordinator⁴⁹

Samuel Romero is the Hispanic Coordinator for the Carolina Conference. He was born in Costa Rica and is a second-generation Adventist. His father was José Romero, a professional tailor, and his mother, Mercedes Matus, was a dedicated housewife. Samuel obtained all his formal education in Costa Rica at La Universidad Adventista Centro Americana (Central American Adventist University), beginning in 1957 in kindergarten through his graduation from college in 1972, where he received a B. A. in theology. He began his pastoral ministry the same year he graduated.

In 1975 he married Mary Handal. He and his family moved to New Orleans, Louisiana in 1981. Dr. Milton Peverini, speaker of *La Voz de la Esperanza*, was conducting a six-week evangelistic effort in New Orleans and Elder Samuel Romero was hired as one of his associates for the effort. Following the effort, Elder Romero was hired by the conference to pastor the La Place Spanish group in Louisiana. Later he was moved to Baton Rouge. When the conference was going through financial difficulties, they were forced to reduce their ministerial staff, and Elder Romero was let go.

In 1988, Elder Romero went to Southern College (now Southern Adventist University) and studied nursing for two years. In January of 1991, he was called to work in the Carolina Conference as coordinator of the Hispanic work.

As of December 31, 1999, there were eight Hispanic pastors, 18 congregations and 900 Hispanic members in the Carolina Conference. Even though the Spanish work in the Carolinas is relatively new, it is an area where many Hispanics from Central America are migrating to and therefore a promising field for future Hispanic Adventist growth.

Summary of the Hispanic Work in the Carolinas

This membership growth and organization in the Carolinas had taken place only during the final 15 years before the year 2000. Unlike the development of Spanish-speaking congregations in Atlanta, Miami, and Orlando, these Spanish groups and churches were from the beginning comparatively small and scattered. Obtaining pastoral leadership required a solution quite different from their large, urban counterparts.

Romero reported at the end of the 1990's that a unique aspect of the Hispanic ministry in the Carolinas was the practice of employing bilingual pastors for those districts that included Spanish-speaking churches and groups. If the increase in the size of the Hispanic Adventist community is a reliable indication, the system was functioning well.

KENTUCKY-TENNESSEE CONFERENCE

❖ NASHVILLE

In the Kentucky-Tennessee Conference the beginnings of Hispanic ministry followed the pattern that developed elsewhere in the South where Spanish-speaking immigrants formed urban colonies within large cities.

The first Spanish company in the conference began when Martha Walwyn, who previously had established a Spanish-speaking group in Grand Rapids, Michigan, collaborated with others to initiate Sabbath worship services for Hispanics in Nashville. Visitation and Bible studies with interested parties followed, until the small body of worshipers **became**

a company in January, 1992. The 18 members of this band persisted in their missionary program, and three years later in **February, 1995, the conference organized 68 members into the Nashville Spanish Church.**

In typically Hispanic fashion, these members continued their personal evangelism in other parts of the city and even at the time of their organization into a church were planning another group for official recognition as a church.⁵⁰

❖ **MADISON**⁵¹

In March of 1997, Alex Morales and Eliseo García, members of the Nashville First Spanish Church felt the necessity of having “*una luz más en el camino*” (One more light in the way); in other words, a Spanish church in the Madison area. Consulting with Elder Randolph Stafford, from the Riverside Church in the South Central Conference, they found he was in agreement with the idea, even offering them a place to meet. But it was not in the town of Madison. However, as their numbers grew and after moving from place to place, they rented a room at Madison Academy and later met in the school auditorium.

When Elder Carmelo Rivera arrived to pastor the Nashville Spanish Church and coordinate the Spanish work in the conference, he began encouraging the Madison group, visiting with them and meeting with the congregation. Their desire to form a church was strong and the members spent several days fasting and praying. The Kentucky-Tennessee Conference officials offered to organize them into a church. It was a hard decision since they felt a bond with the Riverside Church in the regional conference. But **on October 3, 1998, the Riverside Spanish Seventh-day Adventist church of Madison, Tennessee, was organized** by the Kentucky-Tennessee Conference. On the very same day of the organizing, six people were baptized into the new church, joining the 56 charter members of the “One more light in the way” church.

Carmelo Rivera, Hispanic Coordinator⁵²

Carmelo Rivera-Oquendo is the Hispanic Coordinator for the Kentucky-Tennessee Conference. Carmelo was born into a Catholic home in Ponce, Puerto Rico in 1946. While a senior in high school, he worked at *La Casa Agrícola*, a local animal feed store. One day, he found a copy of *El Centinela* which someone had left on the counter. Picking it up, he noticed an article about the Sabbath and read it. It made such a deep impression on him that the next Sabbath, instead of going to work, he stayed at home and slept all day, thinking that “sleeping” was the way to “rest” on the Sabbath.

After keeping his first Sabbath, he embarked on a search for a church that observed the Sabbath the way he believed. But he never found one. Instead, what he found was other denominations who spoke against *el sábado*, the Sabbath.

After graduating from high school, he enrolled in the University of Puerto Rico as a law student. While there, his interests changed when he began working as an actor and a singer, appearing on radio, television, theaters and night clubs. He did so well with his singing that he was voted the Singer of the Year award for 1965-1966 in an island-wide contest of over 50 contestants.

One day he went to the recording studios at radio station WKAQ, the largest in Puerto

Rico. Arriving a little early, he happened to hear part of a *La Voz de la Esperanza* program with speaker Braulio Pérez Marcio. Once again he was reminded of his earlier convictions on the Sabbath and religion. So he wrote to Luis Germán Cajiga, the director of the Conference Radio Bible School in San Juan.

Cajiga, having been a movie actor, musician, writer, poet and a celebrated Puerto Rican cultural artist, understood this young man and related well with him. Cajiga took Carmelo under his wing, becoming like a spiritual father to him. Through Cajiga, Carmelo received Bible studies and even lived in the Cajiga home for a time.

Carmelo, however, went through a struggle between the pull of the world and the wooing of the Holy Spirit on his life. Happily he chose the better road when he finally decided to be baptized. His first convert was his mother, Trinidad, and the second was his wife, Milagro. He later attended Antillian College where he studied business administration and religion. Later he received a Master of Public Health (MPH) degree in International Health from Loma Linda University in California. He also took additional graduate work from Andrews University.

In mid-1998, the Kentucky-Tennessee Conference made a call to the East Puerto Rican Conference where Elder Rivera was the Communication and Public Affairs Director. They extended an invitation to him to pastor the Nashville First Hispanic church as well as to coordinate the Spanish work in the conference.

Elder Rivera is married to Milagro Reyes and they have three children: Carmelo, José Daniel, and Camille.

GULF STATES CONFERENCE

❖ **MISSISSIPPI**⁵³

Not until 1994 did the Hispanic ministry begin in the Gulf States Conference, comprised of Mississippi, Alabama, and part of the Florida panhandle. A Spanish-speaking couple, Jesús and Clara Cisnero, who had arrived in southern Mississippi in 1991, attended church at times in Meridian or Forest with other Hispanic Sabbathkeepers who were part of season tree planting crews.

After learning that many Hispanic families lived in the area, the Cisneros began seeking Bible study interests and soon had cultivated a group of about 40 who met for their Sabbath services in the chapel of Pine Forest Academy in Forest. Within three years the group had grown to 80.

❖ **ALABAMA**⁵⁴

The Alonzo Francisco family moved from Florida to Gadsden, Alabama, about 65 miles northeast of Birmingham, and actively sought out other Hispanic families with whom to share their faith. Moving successively from the mothers' room in the Gadsden English Church to a classroom and then to a rented meeting place in Albertville, about 30 miles to the northwest, the group grew to about 110 by 1997. Their experience was a repetition of events in other Spanish-speaking congregations, planting another group in Collinsville, approximately 30 miles northeast of Gadsden.

Eván Valencia Becomes Hispanic Coordinator

These beginnings caught the attention of conference leaders who initiated official support for the Spanish work in 1995. Eván Valencia became the Hispanic Coordinator. The scattered aspect of the Hispanic groups in Alabama and Mississippi resembled those in North and South Carolina. Therefore, Elder Valencia began a training seminar for Spanish-speaking members. Samuel Romero, who had successfully instituted this plan in the Carolina Conference, was the first seminar leader.⁵⁵

SOUTHERN UNION SUMMARY

Hispanic Ministry in the South Compared to the Southwest and West

Besides what has already been said about the rise of Hispanic ministry in the Southern Union, we should look at these events in the light of the social circumstances within the United States at the time. The growth of Hispanic Adventism was part of a movement across the country. But in some respects it differed from region to region, in this instance, in the Southern Union as compared to what occurred in the heavily Hispanic unions of the West and the Southwest.

First, Hispanics in Texas and westward to California had been long-established in these regions, even preceding the dominating Anglo culture by two and a half to three centuries. Although migration brought new personalities to these parts of the United States, they were only an addition to the existing Hispanic resident groups.

By contrast, the Hispanic movement occurring east of Texas was largely a product of the flow of refugees and immigrants that came during the last 40 years of the 20th century. This brought a new ingredient into the southern states. The exodus from Spanish America northward to the United States was predominantly a trend of the Greater Caribbean (Cuba, Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic), and immigrants from Mexico and Central America, but fewer from South American countries. Because of their citizenship, Puerto Ricans frequently referred to the United States as the “mainland” and were able to enter or depart at will.

Hispanic Immigrant Attitudes Toward North Americans

Hispanic immigrants brought with them a common belief that North Americans had not been particularly good neighbors, neither had they been sympathetic to Hispanic life and culture. Therefore, many were wary of North American Anglo authority and leadership. In addition, the ethnic make-up of a large portion of the immigrants was Caribbean Black Latino. This was important in light of the fact that the southern states were also at the heart of a civil rights struggle between the Blacks and the Whites.

It was only natural for these new immigrants in North America to feel the impact of this environment. Hispanic Adventists did not escape the influence of these attitudes either. In addition, it is important to note that the immigrant movement also coincided with the years when the regional conferences, or Black conferences as most North Americans referred to them, were expanding their evangelism, resulting in a sharp rise in Black membership. Hispanics were also heavily involved in evangelism.

All of these circumstances made it easy for some Spanish churches on the East Coast

to look more favorably to the regional conferences for support and brotherhood and eventually join a regional conference rather than what were commonly called the White conferences. In short, Hispanics sometimes felt they had more in common with the regional conferences, either ethnically or evangelistically, or both, and simply responded to these feelings, even when dealing with church leaders.

Expectations of Hispanic Assimilation

Anglo administrators probably thought that the Spanish churches would and should become part of their church organization. Since the earliest days of Adventism the church had faced the question of Black-White relationships and how to deal with other large immigrant groups. They knew that in time the immigrants merged into society and the special concessions or programs that the church had provided them were no longer needed. Such integration had not occurred among the Blacks, but instead the regional conferences had evolved to accommodate them. Not even the civil rights and desegregation movements from the late 1950's onward erased these conferences.

Probably church leaders had thought that the Hispanic immigrants would assimilate as other immigrants had, and thus the leaders were not always quick or helpful in meeting the needs of their new Spanish-speaking members. In some instances they were probably apprehensive about developing another circle of churches based on ethnic differences that eventually might also ask for organizational change similar to the regional conferences.

Hispanics and Regional Conferences

Time showed that Hispanic immigrants were strong in retaining their cultural heritage and rapid assimilation into the Anglo society did not occur. Moreover, some Black Latinos felt pressure from the same discriminatory attitudes as African-Americans felt. Most of the Spanish congregations in the Southern Union opted for inclusion in the Anglo-led conferences, but the fact that 26 percent of Spanish congregations chose the regional conferences could not be overlooked. As of December 31, 1999, the regional conferences had 24 Spanish congregations with a total of 1,697 members, overseen by 11 pastors as compared to the Anglo-led conferences with 92 Spanish congregations, 10,172 members and 55 pastors.

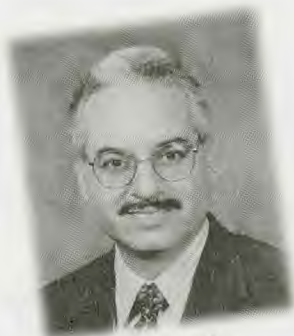
Spanish Statistical Report for the Union

Elder Jorge Mayer, who serves as the liaison for Hispanic Ministries in the Southern Union, reports that as of December 31, 1999, the Union had 66 Hispanic pastors, 116 congregations with a total of 13,874 members. This makes it the third largest union in the North American Division with Hispanic members.

Hispanics Still High on Evangelism

It is evident that the Spanish work in the Southern Union is strong. Only fairly recently has it come of age, but in a no less dramatic way than it had developed in the West and Southwest. In the 1990's the immigrant flow slowed, but it has continued to change the demography of the South. Whatever issues exist in the church, the all-important concern among the Spanish churches is still evangelism, reaching out to their non-Adventist Hispanic neighbors with the Adventist truth that has given them salvation, a cause and purpose for life.

SOUTHERN UNION HISPANIC LEADERS



Evan Valencia
Florida Conference
Executive Secretary



Jorge Mayer
Florida Conference
Vice-President and Acting Hispanic
Coordinator for the Southern Union



Sergio Torres
Florida Conference
Youth Director



Roger Alvarez
Southeastern Regional Conference
Hispanic Coordinator



Efraín Poloche
South Atlantic Regional Conference
Hispanic Coordinator



Samuel Romero
Carolina Conference
Hispanic Coordinator



Neftalí Ortiz
Georgia-Cumberland Conference
Hispanic Coordinator



Carmelo Rivera
Kentucky-Tennessee Conference
Hispanic Coordinator

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12

Columbia Union Conference

Central Americans Impact Hispanic Work

"And what one nation in the earth is like thy people, even like Israel, whom God went to redeem for a people to himself, and to make him a name. . . ." II Samuel 7:23

Columbia Union Conference Territory

THE Columbia Union Conference has within its territory the city considered by many world diplomats as the "capital of the world" and the government seat of the most powerful and influential nation in the world — Washington, D. C. It also contains the city of Philadelphia, the cradle of the United States, as well as of Hispanic Adventism.

COLUMBIA UNION CONFERENCE

The Columbia Union Conference was formed in 1907 by combining the southern part of the Atlantic Union Conference and the Ohio Conference which had been part of the Lake Union Conference. W. J. Fitzgerald was the first president.

Presently the union is comprised of the following conferences: Allegheny East, Allegheny West, Chesapeake, Mountain View, New Jersey, Ohio, Pennsylvania and Potomac.¹

Beginning of Spanish Work

Adventism among Hispanics in the Columbia Union began separately, but almost simultaneously, in three states during the early 1950's: Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and Maryland. These first phases of the movement took place among Caribbean immigrants, primarily Puerto Ricans, but also among Cubans and newcomers from the Dominican Republic. Although Hispanics from other parts of Latin America also migrated to the United States, the Caribbeans continued to form the largest group of Spanish-speaking people and the group which Adventists targeted.

PENNSYLVANIA CONFERENCE

City of Philadelphia

Philadelphia holds an historically important place in American history. Founded by William Penn, an English Quaker, in 1682, it is the birthplace of the United States and served as the nation's capital during the Revolutionary War period. It was in Independence Hall that the founding fathers signed the Declaration of Independence and the United States Constitution, two of the most important pieces of legislation in American history. It was also here in the "city of brotherly love" that the first seeds of Hispanic Adventism were sown in the Columbia Union territory.

Two Conferences Merge

At the time when Spanish work began in Pennsylvania, the state was divided into the East Pennsylvania and West Pennsylvania Conferences. The two merged in 1963, becoming simply the Pennsylvania Conference. The first Hispanic groups were found in the eastern part of the state, but even as late as the end of the 1990's, evangelism among Hispanics had not yet penetrated what had once been the West Pennsylvania Conference.

Philadelphia—First Seeds of Hispanic Adventism Sown in Columbia Union²

In God's providence, Puerto Rican Marcos Valles and his family moved to Philadelphia in 1950. As a result of his consistent missionary work, a small group of Puerto Ricans joined with other non-English-speaking Adventists (mainly Italians and Filipinos) who were meeting in the Philadelphia Anglo Adventist church on 17th and Spruce.

At the time, the majority of these non-English-speaking members were Italians (25 or 30 members) so the group was known as the "Italian Church." An elderly Italian ex-Catholic priest, Elder Raffaele Valerio, who had just come from Italy, was asked to serve

as their pastor. This was a multilingual-multicultural congregation which sang and worshiped in three languages: Italian, Spanish and English. Since Elder Valerio spoke only Italian and a little English, Marcos Valles, who understood Italian, translated his sermons into Spanish for the Puerto Ricans. Guillermina Aguayo and Irma Godizano, who were members at that time, remember that there was a wonderful spirit of unity and harmony in that church.

This group continued meeting in the English church until 1955 when they bought an old Baptist church on Frankford Avenue and Montgomery, that needed extensive remodeling. By this time, the group had grown to over 100 members. Puerto Ricans made up half the members, while the Italians remained at their original number of 25 members.

Some of the original Hispanics in the group were: Marcos Valles, Luis and Guillermina Aguayo, Rubén and Doris Meléndez, Antonio Hernández, Juan Molina, Fares Ramos, Juan Cruz, Irma Godizano, Carlos Quiñones, and Astacio Torres.³

First Spanish Church in Philadelphia Organized

In 1957, Carlos Quiñones and the majority of the Puerto Rican members from the Italian church formed their own Spanish group, leasing the Zion Lutheran Church at 1602 Mount Vernon Street. Later that same year, on November 16, they became the first Spanish Adventist company in Philadelphia, with over 50 charter members. Ralph Pérez, a minister from Indiana, was called to pastor the new company and to organize soul-winning efforts within the Hispanic community in Philadelphia.⁴ A few months later, **on May 24, 1958, the Spanish company was organized into the first Spanish Adventist church in Philadelphia** as well as in the East Pennsylvania Conference.

Spanish Church and Italian Group Rejoin

Meanwhile, the Italian church, which still had a few Puerto Rican members, continued to meet at Frankford and Montgomery. What took place in the years between 1957 to 1959 is sketchy at best. It seems that Elder Valerio transferred, leaving the Italian church with no pastor for a period of six to eight months. Elder George M. Woodruff, pastor of the Boulevard English Church, had taken Spanish in academy, so he looked after the church in 1958 for eight months. Then Italian Pastor Anthony Petrone and his wife, Josephine, were assigned to the Italian church in 1959 but stayed less than a year.

Meanwhile, during Pastor Petrone's pastorate, the lease on the Zion Lutheran Church ran out, leaving the first Spanish church in Philadelphia with no place to meet. Finding no alternative, the Spanish church members moved back to the Frankford Church which still had a few Italian and Filipino members.

Rafael González Called to Pastor the Philadelphia Spanish Church

In August of 1961, after Pastor Petrone left, Spanish-born Rafael González, a former Catholic priest who had become an Adventist, was called from the Colorado Conference to pastor the churchless Spanish congregation. Elder González immediately set out to find a new home for the members. What he found was an old, red-brick Republican Club House on the corner of Lawrence and Lehigh which they purchased and converted into a church building. When they moved out of the church on Frankford, the small Italian and Filipino congregation remained.

Elder González pastored the Spanish Church until December of 1966 when he took a call to the Texas Conference, he returned to the Pennsylvania Conference in 1976 to serve as director of the literature evangelists for one year.

Purchase of Church on Luzerne⁵

In 1972, when young Pastor Moisés Gullón was called from the Southern California Conference to pastor the church, he was not happy with the old converted church building where the members were meeting and convinced them to sell it. With the money from the sale, they bought an investment property: a three-story house with three garages and a huge lot in the suburbs of Philadelphia, hoping to make a quick profit. In the meantime, however, they needed a place to meet.

One Sunday, just before noon, Pastor Gullón and his elder went out looking for a church to rent with an option to buy. They had driven only a short time when they noticed a nice-looking Lutheran church on the corner of 7th and Luzerne. Entering the church, they noticed four German elders praying in the sanctuary. They discovered that they had been asking God to send them a buyer for their church since their membership had dwindled and they were no longer financially able to maintain the building. Pastor Gullón told them that his church would be interested in purchasing their church but first they would need to rent. This they arranged to do. When their residential property in the suburbs sold in 1974, the Spanish church made a profit which provided most of the funding to purchase the Lutheran church.

Efraín Murillo and Church Expansion

When Elder Gullón returned to Southern California to pastor the Pasadena Spanish Church in 1975, the Pennsylvania Conference called pastor and literature evangelist Gerardo Brito to replace him. Brito led the church for the next five years.

Church leaders in the Pennsylvania Conference hoped for a productive evangelistic program for the growing number of Spanish-speaking residents in metropolitan Philadelphia, who in time, became tens of thousands. Not until the pastorate of Efraín Murillo during the 1980's did the church fulfill these expectations. Pastor Murillo, who became pastor of the Philadelphia congregation in 1980, was at heart an evangelist rather than a congregational pastor, but he remained at the church for nearly a decade.

During this period, the idea of church planting that had characterized so many Hispanic communities in North America caught on. Pastor Murillo conducted several series of meetings that produced a second church in 1984, which Pastor Manuel Kavistan was asked to pastor. Soon after, the Central church spawned a third church in Philadelphia, which came under the pastorship of Porfirio Rodríguez, who worked as an associate to Pastor Murillo.

Under the leadership of Elder Rubén Duany, who succeeded Pastor Murillo as pastor of the Central church, the fourth Spanish church in Pennsylvania was established in 1989. His brother, Elder Efraín Duany, became the pastor of this new congregation. Five years later, in 1994, Elder Samuel García, Elder Efraín Murillo, and lay pastor Minervino Labrador formed the fifth Spanish church in the Greater Philadelphia area in Lawndale.

The Work Organized in Lancaster

The Spanish work in Lancaster, an industrial city, about 70 miles west of Philadelphia, began in 1965. Members from Philadelphia went to help begin a Spanish Sabbath school there. At first these few worshipers gathered in the Anglo church, then moved to an African-American Methodist church whose members did not charge them a single cent of rent for three years.

After becoming a company in 1969, the small but growing Spanish congregation began searching for a church building of its own. These efforts culminated with the purchase of a meeting house for only \$15,000, slightly more than a third of the asking price. Inspired by these financially favorable events that the group regarded as divine intervention, increases in membership began that led to the organization of an official church on March 2, 1974. In 1992, they purchased a Lutheran church and parish home for the growing congregation.⁶

Frank González, First Hispanic Coordinator

In 1992 Elder Frank González assumed the responsibilities as the **first coordinator of Hispanic ministry** in addition to his duties as leader of one of the largest English-speaking churches in the Pennsylvania Conference. For more than three years he functioned in this capacity before becoming the associate director of *La Voz de la Esperanza* in California. His successor was Juan López, who had been called in 1994 to pastor the Spanish church in Lancaster.

Juan López, Hispanic Coordinator

Juan López was born in La Hincada, San Luis Potosí, Mexico of Catholic parents. When only six years old, his father, Pablo, took him to some Adventist meetings in the house of José Loredó. There he learned of the Adventist message. But it wasn't until he reached 16, that he decided to be baptized. Pastor José Mansilla officiated at the event in a nearby river. Juan was the first of his family to be baptized, with other members following at a later time.

In 1971 at age 22, Juan decided to study theology at Montemorelos University. But there was a problem. Juan had studied at the small rural school in his home town, but that had only been through the fourth grade. So he had to make up his elementary education deficits, which he did in six months. Then he studied three more years to finish his high school requirements. Finally, in 1974, he was able to start his studies in theology, finishing with a B. A. degree in 1978.

That same year, he received a call to the Southeastern California Conference to work as an associate pastor in the Ditman Spanish Church in Los Angeles. One day, while remodeling the church, he met his future wife. Daisy Daula, one of the members, happened to be driving by the church that day, noticed the cars parked there and, out of curiosity, stopped and went in. She met the new associate pastor and a friendship developed. Elder López later went to the Seminary but returned in December of 1981 to marry Daisy.

At the end of 1999, Elder López reported that the Spanish membership in Pennsylvania had risen to 1200, distributed among 11 congregations, ten of which were official churches.⁷

Distribution of Spanish Churches

Of the 11 groups, one was a company in Kingston, a suburb of Wilkes-Barre, slightly more than 100 miles north of Philadelphia. Five of the churches were in Reading, Allentown, West Chester, Lancaster, and York, all within 100 miles of Philadelphia; the remaining five were in the City of Brotherly Love itself.

POTOMAC CONFERENCE

F. E. Wall and Spanish Sabbath School

Simultaneous with the events in Philadelphia, seeds of Adventism were sprouting in the Potomac Conference, composed of Delaware, the District of Columbia, and parts of Maryland. As had been the case in other college communities, the impetus for evangelism originated in the Spanish classes of Washington Missionary College, afterwards called Columbia Union College. For the benefit of students and interested returned missionaries, F. E. Wall, Spanish teacher and academic dean, decided in 1953 to offer a Spanish Sabbath school class as part of the services of the Sligo Church. Hispanics in the area gravitated to the class, and, in turn, assumed leadership of the group of Spanish-speaking worshippers.

Not content with merely discussing biblical topics each week, they formed a committee to study evangelistic possibilities. A six-month series of meetings followed in the chapel of the denominational seminary, then located in Takoma Park adjacent to the General Conference offices. From the telephone directory, the group selected the names of 200 Hispanics in the District of Columbia and set about to visit them, hold Bible studies, and promote the *Tesoros de Vida* correspondence course from *La Voz de la Esperanza*. They also sent *El Centinela* to all of the members of the Spanish-speaking diplomatic corps in the national capital.⁸

Attempts to Start a Spanish Church⁹

Three years after Professor Wall began his Spanish Sabbath school class, the group was large enough to dream of becoming an organized church. When Manuel Rosado, a Puerto Rican minister, enrolled in the Seminary in 1957, he was asked by the Spanish Sabbath school class meeting at Sligo Church to teach their lesson. Although he was studying full time at the Seminary, he worked with the group, and together they began to reach out to the community. The group soon grew to 45 members.

One day Iris Marrero de Santos approached Pastor Rosado and said, "You are an ordained minister. Why don't you start a Spanish church here? We're willing to help you." Several attempts had been made before to start a church by such men as William Mulholland and Dr. John Livingston, retired ministers, and Dr. Daniel Hammerly Dupuy, a professor from Argentina who was studying at the Seminary. However, an influential member of the conference committee had discouraged the attempts. His arguments were that there were enough churches already in Washington, D. C., that the Hispanics should learn English, and that they should return to their countries of origin to preach the gospel.



Elder Manuel Rosado, pioneer of Hispanic work in Columbia Union.

hear from us *again and again and again* until we have a Spanish church here in the capital, the great diplomatic city of the world."

Conference Agrees to Start a Spanish Church

Since the Hispanic group had no church home, they had been sending their tithe and offerings to their home countries. But when they prepared a new request to send to the conference, Pastor Rosado stipulated that upon organization, their tithe and offerings would be given to the new Spanish church where the money would be handled according to accepted procedure. Then, sending the letter to the conference, they prayed and fasted that God would touch the hearts of the officials.

Approximately five days after the letter was mailed, Pastor Rosado received a letter from the president which said, "Pastor Rosado, the conference committee voted to organize a Spanish church in the Potomac Conference. In addition, it was voted that you be the pastor of that church, receiving half salary for half time." This was the long-awaited answer to their prayers and the hope that they had had for so long. God was good. So Pastor Rosado continued studying full-time and working with the members part-time.¹⁰

Pastor Rosado Takes Up the Challenge

When Pastor Rosado heard the challenge that Iris had given him, he thought, "Perhaps God has brought us here precisely to start the Spanish work." So he got the members together to discuss the possibility of starting a church. That provided the spark for them to begin working intensely toward that goal. There was no Spanish church of any denomination in the Washington, D. C. area at the time. But that would soon change.

Pastor Rosado made himself the pastor of the group as well as the catalyst and liaison between the Spanish group and the conference leaders. When the conference president told him that the conference committee did not see light in organizing a Spanish church, Pastor Rosado asked him, "Have you read the parable of the importunate widow?" The president answered, "Of course." "Well," Pastor Rosado answered, "I am that widow. You will



Elder Manuel Rosado and wife Abda in front of church on Van Buren Street.

First Spanish Church in Potomac Conference Organized

The members of this new congregation had no meeting place of their own; consequently, they gathered wherever they could. Their first meeting occurred under a tree on the Columbia Union College campus. They later arranged to worship in the lower level of the Capital Memorial Church, where they met on May 4, 1957 for the first time. The group continued to grow and four months later, September 14, 1957 they were organized as the Washington Spanish Church with 46 charter members, making it the **first Spanish church in the Potomac Conference as well as the first Spanish church of any denomination in the capital city.**



Washington Spanish Group, 1957.

During the five years following their organization, they were instrumental in establishing broadcasts of *La Voz de la Esperanza* on two area radio stations. **It was the first occasion of any Spanish radio broadcast in the capital city of the United States.** In September, 1960, Braulio Pérez Marcio conducted an evangelistic series in downtown Washington. New members joined the congregation. Later the church moved to the Seminary in Takoma Park, and finally, in 1962, into a Methodist church on Van Buren Street, which they eventually purchased for \$80,000. When the congregation dedicated this church in 1962, membership had reached 90.¹¹

Distribution of Spanish Bibles to Refugees

The rapidly swelling Hispanic population in the Washington area was a constant reminder to this church of the need to evangelize. In 1962, after the first wave of Cuban refugees fled their island home in the wake of the Revolution, the Adventist Hispanics saw an opportunity to witness by distributing Bibles.¹²

Bible Worker Hired and Rosado's Evangelism Plans

Before the 1963-64 academic year began at Columbia Union College, Laura González, a Puerto Rican Bible instructor, arrived to enroll in a degree program and to work part-

time for the Washington Spanish Church.¹³ When Manuel Rosado, who was still pastoring the church, laid his plans for a large-scale evangelistic series in 1966, he estimated the Spanish-speaking population in the Greater Washington area as approximately 100,000.¹⁴



Washington Spanish Church Choir (directed by Rafael Bracero Enríquez) which sang for Salim Japas' meetings.

Salim Japas Evangelistic Effort and Donor

The evangelistic mantle fell on the shoulders of Salim Japas, who came from Argentina. In September, 1966, his meetings were still in progress with promising results. Among the converts was a native of Spain, a young woman named Francisca Aristena, who was a staff member in one of the embassies. She startled Elder Japas one day when her conviction prompted her to drop \$30 in the offering plate during the first offering, and another \$10 the next week. The next week she handed the pastor an Adventist Spanish publication rolled up with a rubber band around it. Pastor Japas thought it was an article that she wanted him to read so he took it and thanked her for it. Later, when he opened it, he found a \$20 bill inside the cover. Turning the pages, he kept finding more \$20 bills—ten in all. The following week she gave another \$500 contribution.

She was not a wealthy lady but God touched her heart. When another appeal was made, she handed in an envelope containing \$1000. The following week she gave another substantial gift. But the most important contribution came when she gave her heart to the Lord and requested baptism into His remnant church. With this dramatic result and other conversions as well, a very pleased Rosado predicted the formation of a second Spanish church.¹⁵

The Bowdoin Conversions¹⁶

Another conversion story from the Japas meetings was of the Bowdoin. Elvita and Roberto Cabrera were Cuban refugees who with their four children had moved to Wash-



Pastor Manuel Rosado presents Bible to Rebecca Cabrera in a program designed to provide Bibles for Cuban refugee families. Mrs. Elvita Cabrera, Lydia, and Arthur H. Roth look on. 1966.

ington, D. C. They did not know that their neighbors, Cecilia Bowdoin and her daughter, Yolanda, would watch them as they left for church each Saturday with their Bibles in hand. When Cecilia was in dire need of a babysitter for nine-year old Yolanda, she asked the Cabrerases if they could help.

Babysitting—Opportunity for Witnessing

“*Con gusto*,” Elvita replied, “I would be glad to take care of Yolanda if you don’t mind my taking her to church with us. And I won’t charge you.” Yolanda attended Sabbath school and church each week. The Cabrerases began giving studies to Cecilia, and when Elder Salim Japas came to town with his evangelistic series, they rarely

missed a meeting, although they had no transportation other than what the members provided.

Cecilia Exchanges Her Saints

One day, Cecilia decided to give up her saints to whom she was accustomed to praying daily. Strange things had been taking place in connection with the saints which frightened Cecilia and she knew she should not keep them. Boxing them up, she took them to church, handed them, along with her rosary and jewelry, over to Pastor Manuel Rosado. He in turn gave her a Bible.

August 20, 1966, was a memorable day when Yolanda and her mother were baptized by Pastor Rosado.



Cecilia Bowdoin gives Pastor Manuel Rosado her saints in exchange for a Bible as a result of evangelistic meetings and the witness of a devoted church member.

Spanish Work Continues to Grow

From the 51 baptisms resulting from Salim Japas’ evangelistic meetings and from additional immigration, the Capital Spanish Church on 16th Street was organized. By 1976

the Hispanic constituency of the Potomac Conference had grown large enough to conduct their own separate campmeeting. About 250 attended the weekend meetings at the conference youth camp.¹⁷ Meanwhile, Rosado had moved to the New Jersey Conference, but returned in 1975 to become the assistant director of the Potomac Conference Publishing Department, with special emphasis on the sale of Spanish literature, another indication that the Spanish community was still growing.¹⁸



Hispanic leaders at Capital Spanish Church construction site, 1985.

Hispanic Work in Washington and Capital Spanish

Together, the Washington and Capital Spanish churches constituted the Hispanic ministry in the Potomac Conference. In its early stages, the Washington Church had benefited from the ministry of Hispanic ministers who were attending the denominational Seminary in Takoma Park as well as from a small nucleus of former missionaries to Latin America and other Spanish-speaking workers as well. As the membership grew, and the Hispanic numbers in Washington increased, leadership passed to the church itself. The churches were active, both in their support of conference programs and in devising activities of their own.

In 1971 the two congregations sponsored Red Cross Home Nursing courses as an outreach program. Thirty-two persons received certificates, five of whom were non-Adventists.¹⁹ The Capital Spanish Church took advantage of its cosmopolitan membership to hold an annual food fair, which was attended by 1,000 people. This was a popular event for socializing, sharing of cultures and fundraising.²⁰

Ingathering Champions²¹

In 1977 members of the Capital Spanish Church distinguished themselves by raising more than three Vanguard goals during the annual Ingathering drive. Francisca Aristena, affectionately called Pakita by her friends, knocked on many doors in order to raise \$1200.



Washington Spanish Church on Van Buren Street, 1959.

This was the same young lady from Spain who, before becoming a church member, had donated hundreds of dollars to Pastor Rosado for Salim Japas' evangelistic campaign.

Another member, Angelita Claros, raised \$500 on her own. She had been out Ingathering with the members for two years before joining the church and had obviously learned well. Each of those years she had collected \$400. The pastor, Ismael Rojas, credited the success of the Ingathering crusade to the fasting and prayer that the members had done before launching the program.

Washington Spanish Church on New Hampshire

Pastor Carlos Montaña pastored the Washington Spanish Church from 1976 to 1979. During that time they sold the church building on Van Buren and bought eight acres of land for \$180,000 on New Hampshire Avenue where they planned to build their new church. However, it was under the leadership of Pastor Humberto Meier, who came in 1979, that the actual construction took place. In June of 1981, they began building; six months later, in January of 1982, the Washington Spanish Church was inaugurated. This church has been responsible for seven other churches in the area.



Washington Spanish Church on New Hampshire Avenue.

Special Bilingual Service

The church had a large number of young people and Pastor Meier recognized the challenge of meeting their needs. In 1984, a young people's Sabbath school was established, which quickly became a bilingual group. Under Pastor Rogelio Weiss' leadership, the bilingual group continued to grow and diversify. In 1992, a year after Pastor Rubén Ramos arrived, the group was strong enough to be officially established as the Bilingual Service of the Washington Spanish Church.

Its success in meeting the needs of the second-and third-generation Hispanic young people is reflected in its attendance, which ranges from 40 to 80 each Sabbath. Each year this group of young people plan their own spiritual retreats and weeks of prayer. Some of the leaders of the group were: José Cortez, Néstor Desia, Ed García, Iris Argueta, Carlos Sibrián, Alex García, and Otis Coutsoumpos.

Pastors of the Washington Spanish Church

Pastors of the Washington Spanish Church: Manuel Rosado (1957-1967), Leonardo Gerometta (1967-1975), Delfín Gómez (1975-1976), Carlos Montaña (1976-1979), Humberto Meier (1979-1986), Rogelio Weiss (1986-1991), Rubén Ramos (1991-1997), Freddy Sosa (1998- present)

***Langley Park Spanish Church*²²**

Langley Park is a suburb of Washington, D. C. with a very diverse population. Originally an Anglo residential area with a significant number of Jewish inhabitants, in the 1970's "white flight" began when African-Americans and other ethnic groups began moving into the area. In the 1980's, due to the political unrest in Central America, significant numbers of Salvadoreans and other Hispanics found their way to Langley Park, replacing many Blacks and Whites.

For Hispanic outreach, Langley Park was situated in a strategic location between the two Spanish Adventist churches in the area. Rogelio Weiss, pastor of the Washington Spanish Church and Hispanic Coordinator, consulted with Jorge Mayer, pastor of the Capital Spanish Church, regarding the possibility of raising a church in Langley Park. Both had a number of members who lived in that area and who were full of missionary zeal, so they launched out in an aggressive plan of missionary work among the Hispanic community of Central Americans in Langley Park.

First Meeting in Langley Park

They were able to rent the Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church, located in a strategic area on New Hampshire Avenue. There they met for the first time on March 18, 1989, and that same day began an evangelistic series for *Semana Santa* (Holy Week). The group grew so rapidly that the Lutheran pastor asked them how they did it. "By knocking on the doors of apartments, houses and hearts," they told him.

About this time a young, dynamic pastor, Campo Elías Suescún, arrived in town. Under his leadership, the group grew by leaps and bounds. Six months later, on September 23, 1989, they were organized into a church with 95 charter members. An experienced pastor and evangelist, Juan Carlos Sicalo was called to pastor the church and by August of 1993, their membership had grown to 300.

Establishment of the Wheaton Spanish Church

When Pastor Samuel García arrived at the church, he and Pastor Rubén Ramos of the Washington Spanish Church, worked together to launch yet another church, this one in the heavily-populated Hispanic area of Wheaton, to the east of Langley Park and south of Washington Spanish. In February of 1995, a group of members from both churches began outreach in Wheaton and to date a church of more than 100 members meets as a testimony to the mission which Hispanics have taken seriously in this section of the Washington, D. C. area.

Rubén Ramos, Hispanic Coordinator²³

Rubén Ramos, a third-generation Adventist, was born in Villa Libertador San Martín, Entre Ríos, Argentina. His father, Rubén Ramos, Sr., was a Bible professor at River Plate College in Argentina. His mother, Victoria Morais, was a homemaker.

Rubén studied at River Plate College, earning B. A. degrees in philosophy and education in 1979 and a third degree the following year in theology. Immediately upon graduating, he migrated to the United States, working as a literature evangelist in Pennsylvania for one year where he was instrumental in raising up the Spanish church in Reading. The following year, in 1980, he returned to his home where he married Paula Nora Espósito at River Plate College, with her father, Elder José Espósito, officiating.

In 1982 the Ramoses returned to the States, settling in Allentown, Pennsylvania where he worked as an associate pastor in the Spanish church with Pastor Gerardo Brito. The Potomac Conference called him in 1985 to pastor the Arlington Spanish Church in Virginia. In 1988, he decided to study at Andrews University, where he earned an M.Div. degree the following year. In 1991 he was called to the Washington Spanish Church in Maryland as pastor, with the additional responsibility of assisting the Hispanic Coordinator, Elder Rogelio Weiss. By 1995 the Spanish work had grown to 17 churches and 2,500 members, sufficient numbers for the conference to hire a full-time coordinator. Elder Ramos was asked to assume this responsibility, in which he continues to serve.

Elder Ramos is a successful evangelist and church planter. Besides establishing Spanish churches in Reading, Pennsylvania and Wheaton, Maryland, he has raised up churches in Vienna, Alexandria, and Manassas, Virginia. As of December, 1999, he reported that the Potomac Conference had 4,106 Hispanic members (20 percent of the total conference membership), 32 Spanish churches and 16 pastors. During 1999 they baptized 864 members, representing 60 percent of the total baptisms in the conference.

NEW JERSEY CONFERENCE

❖ NEW JERSEY

New Jersey is one of the Mid-Atlantic states, to the north of Delaware and to the east and northeast of Pennsylvania. Although Trenton is the capital city, Newark is the largest. "The Garden State" as it is known, is comparatively small. Hispanics in New Jersey are principally Puerto Ricans and Cubans.²⁴

Paterson Spanish Company

The New Jersey Conference was the third location in the Columbia Union where Spanish work began during the 1950's. In 1954, Eladio Vázquez, representing a handful

of fellow Adventists in Paterson, New Jersey, approached the Prospect Spanish Church in the Bronx, which was only about 15 miles from Paterson, seeking assistance in establishing a Spanish group in his town. The result was a branch Sabbath school that met in the afternoon in homes, primarily in the house of Ismael Ortega.²⁵

The *Visitor*, the union paper, reported that when this group became a company on July 10, 1954, it was the tenth non-English-speaking congregation in the New Jersey Conference.²⁶

Paterson Temple Spanish Church—First Organized Church in New Jersey

José Rivera, a tireless Puerto Rican minister, became pastor of the small Paterson company in 1954, immediately following his graduation from the Seminary in Takoma Park, Maryland. Finding an adequate meeting place was not easy for these members but they began meeting every Sabbath and Sunday, Wednesday and Friday nights in the YMCA at 339 Straight Street.

The company eventually purchased a church building on Godwin Street. By April, 1955, this group had grown to 24 members and was organized into the **Paterson Temple Spanish Church, making it the first organized Spanish Church in the New Jersey Conference**. Before the end of 1958, the Paterson Temple Church had fostered the formation of other congregations in Elizabeth, Hoboken, and Perth Amboy, all within the metropolitan New York City area.²⁷

Purchase of a Church in Hoboken²⁸

In 1961, Elder Rivera learned of a family who was driving 20 minutes each way from Hoboken to Paterson for Sabbath church services. They asked Elder Rivera to start a Branch Sabbath school in Hoboken, which he did.

Soon they were meeting with several Hispanic families in an old English Protestant church on 8th and Bloomfield Streets. As seems to have been an unfortunate pattern, the old Anglo Protestant congregations were dying out and this congregation on 8th and Bloomfield was no exception. They decided to sell their church and offered it to the Hoboken group.

Elder Rivera began soliciting funds from the General Conference, Columbia Union and friends. His leverage was, "We're buying this church and the General Conference is giving us \$15,000. Can you match that?" When he got a sufficient amount of money, he went to the New Jersey Conference for the final business of obtaining money from them.

However, the group still needed \$5,000. Elder Rivera went to the Lord in prayer and was impressed that he should present the need to his congregation that Sabbath. Just before the sermon, he told the members that they still lacked \$5,000, which was due the following Monday. Although the people had been faithfully raising funds all along, they enthusiastically responded. Many gave checks, others pledges. Some promised to go to the bank on Monday and withdraw their savings to cover their pledge. Within 30 minutes the needed money was raised. Then Elder Rivera began his sermon as if nothing unusual had happened.

Pastors of the Paterson Temple Spanish Church²⁹

The pastors of the Paterson Spanish Church were: José Rivera, José Pitino Valentín, Pedro Geli, Roberto Goransson, Gabriel Castro, Ramón Mercado, Ismael Rojas y Rojas,

Ronald Aguilera, Carlos Zunita, Samuel Núñez, Wilfredo Lacayo, Alfredo Gaona, Rolando de los Ríos, José Guillén, Raúl Parra, and Leonel García.

The Spanish Work Spreads and Vineland Company Formed

In 1960 Rivera carried his missionary work from Hoboken five miles south to Jersey City where 21 members formed a company on April 9.³⁰ Meanwhile, another group was emerging in Vineland.

Vineland Company Organized³¹

One day in the winter of 1960, Pastor Tom Green, from the Vineland English church, approached Elder Rivera. "José," he said, "I have this small group of Hispanics that come to church every Sabbath morning, and they can't understand a word of English. I can say a few things in Spanish, but I'm not equipped to do much more in their native tongue.

Why don't you come down to Vineland some week and see what's going on?"

Elder Rivera drove the two and one-half hours to Vineland which was located in the southern part of the state. He arranged for the small group to meet in the English church on Sabbath afternoons from 3:00 to 5:00 for a full church service, an arrangement they continued for two years.

On May 20, 1961, the camaraderie among Hispanic members was evident when 120 gathered from New



Vineland Spanish Church.

York, Philadelphia, and other churches in New Jersey to witness the formation of the new company in Vineland. Thirteen members comprised this new company with six more planning on baptism in the near future.³²

Some of the Hoboken members moved to Vineland to help and their combined efforts under Rivera's leadership produced a growing membership that soon outgrew their meeting facilities in the English church, forcing them to find another place.

Vineland Church Organized

The members relocated to the old Veterans of War Building and began raising funds to build their own church. In February, 1962, after the members numbered 38, they became an officially organized church, and eight months later, in October, they were meeting in their newly purchased church.³³ Vineland was the first attempt by Hispanics in New Jersey to spread beyond the Greater New York City area.

Emphasis on Evangelism Contributes to More Growth

Rivera's emphasis on evangelism was probably the strongest such effort among Hispanics in New Jersey. While he remained busy in the southern part of the state, signs of growth and organization were becoming evident elsewhere. Elder José Rivera noted with evangelistic expectancy that large Spanish-speaking colonies existed in Dover, in the northern part of the state; in Camden, immediately across the Delaware River from Philadelphia; and in Trenton, the headquarters for the New Jersey Conference.³⁴

A branch Sabbath school with 50 members began in Newark in 1962, which raised the number of Spanish congregations to seven: Elizabeth, Hoboken, Jersey City, Newark, Paterson, Perth Amboy, and Vineland.³⁵ Church officers' meetings were becoming part of the routine in Spanish congregations. The Paterson Church organized a humanitarian program which the Dorcas Society implemented, with its members in full uniform. In September, 1963, representatives from all seven congregations joined to form the Spanish Dorcas Federation and to promote further community service.³⁶

First Spanish Literature Evangelist in New Jersey

An invigorated literature sales program included a commitment by the conference in 1961 to increase the prominence of Spanish printed materials. The following year, Galo González, who was working in a wallet factory in New York City, was called to be **the first Spanish literature evangelist in New Jersey**.

One day Galo sold the *Conflict Series*, which included *The Great Controversy*, *Desire of Ages*, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, etc., to the owners of a large radio and TV repair shop. A few weeks later, Galo happened to pass by the same TV repair shop and noticed a sign on the door. "Closed on Sabbath--Open on Sunday," it said. The following Sabbath when he arrived at church, he found the man and his wife (the shop owners) inside worshipping. Soon they were baptized as a result of the books he had sold them.³⁷

After just two years in the literature work, he began training others and eventually became the full-time associate publishing secretary. Through his efforts, he is credited with over 200 baptisms, which was a considerable contribution to the growth of the Spanish work in New Jersey.³⁸

New Jersey Appoints Hispanic Coordinator

In 1964 Spanish work in New Jersey had reached its tenth anniversary. In March, officers from all seven Spanish congregations in the conference converged on the Perth Amboy church to attend church officers' meetings and to plan for a unified evangelistic program.³⁹ With a consciousness of the 125,000 Hispanics in the state and a goal of more than 200 baptisms for the year, Gabriel Castro, with experience as an evangelist and pastor in the Inter-American Division as well as more recently the United States, became the official Hispanic coordinator and evangelist for New Jersey.⁴⁰

These events marked a turning point for Hispanic ministry in New Jersey. Although still very much a minority, Hispanic members had gained a solid identity in conference activities on which they built their program in the following years. In 1965 they gathered in the Hoboken Church to discuss how their Sabbath schools could become more evangelistically oriented.⁴¹ The following year all Spanish congregations joined to launch simultaneous evangelistic meetings.⁴²

Further collaborations occurred in 1968 when all of the Hispanic pastors convened at the conference headquarters to lay plans for evangelism. At the time five pastors led nine congregations, one of which was a combined Spanish and Portuguese-speaking church.⁴³

The Cuban Refugee Challenge

Part of the new challenge to the Spanish community was the heavy influx of Cuban refugees who were flocking to the state. Galo González estimated the number to be 50,000, some of whom had concentrated in Union City, five miles north of Hoboken. Responding to this opportunity, Juan Chávez, pastor of the Hoboken Church, organized his members to visit Union City to distribute literature, arrange for Bible studies, and conduct meetings once a week.⁴⁴

Hispanics Merit Separate Campmeeting

Hispanic members were numerous enough to enjoy separate meetings at the New Jersey campmeeting, but attendance quickly increased to the point that a separate camp was necessary. In 1973 attendance at the seven-day gathering of Hispanics reached 1,500, drawing people from as far away as Philadelphia and Washington, D. C.⁴⁵

These yearly events became a rallying point for Spanish-speaking Adventists, featuring Hispanic leaders from the General Conference and other prominent church positions. In 1977 Milton Peverini from *La Voz de la Esperanza*, Arturo Schmidt from the General Conference Ministerial Association, and Jorge Grieve from Metro Ministry addressed the audiences. The meetings closed with a baptism of 28 converts and a commitment by 70 more for baptism. It was the united efforts of Hispanic pastors during the first half of the year that contributed to the baptism of 216 new members.⁴⁶ The following year the campmeeting ended with 40 baptisms.⁴⁷

Hispanic Evangelism in Camden

Evangelism was the focus of the Spanish work in New Jersey. Hardly had the veteran pastor and evangelist José Rivera moved to Vineland in 1961 when he put Camden on his evangelistic agenda. That community, known as the “poorest city per capita in the nation” proved to be particularly difficult to penetrate.⁴⁸

Gangs fighting in the streets at night militated against evening meetings; consequently, he organized branch Sabbath schools, which kept the group alive. But membership shrank despite his best efforts, and it was only after the lapse of years that the Hispanic workers overcame the obstacles to establishing a prosperous congregation in Camden.⁴⁹

In 1969 Rivera conducted a set of meetings in this hard city. Laymen devoted to evangelism also worked, among them José García, a literature evangelist, who led door-to-door visitation in 1968, and Felipe Gorier, a dentist, who joined the group in 1972. After another evangelistic series in 1974 by Eradio Alonso, the conference Hispanic evangelist, a company was organized, and the following year Camden finally became an organized church, the 15th Spanish church in the New Jersey Conference.⁵⁰

Hispanic Growth

The 15 Spanish churches in New Jersey in 1975 grew to 38 by 1998.⁵¹ This increase can be attributed to many causes. One was the joint effort by Hispanic pastors and lay

members alike who linked together in continual campaigns to bring people to Christ. It was their conviction that divine blessings always attended them.

Tribute to José Rivera

But there was also the matter of human instrumentalities. New Jersey had been blessed by the extended and consistent labors of **José Rivera, the first ordained Hispanic pastor in the conference**. For 17 years until his retirement in 1970, evangelism was his life blood.⁵² During those years, he had been instrumental in organizing eight Spanish churches. During his entire ministry, he had won approximately 1,000 people to the Lord.⁵³

Following his example of sacrifice and commitment, a large number of workers and members emerged who were willing to work purposefully and to endure discouraging circumstances if necessary to further the gospel.

Looking Back and Reaching Forward

The early days of Hispanic ministry in New Jersey had not been an easy time, especially for members who lived in the northeastern area of the state that formed part of Metropolitan New York. When conference officers met in 1971 to consecrate the Newark and Jersey City churches, they recalled how the first members had met in store fronts, old halls, rented churches, and even a saloon. Frugality was a byword among them, as was optimism. Fifteen years after they first began their Sabbath meetings, the 72 members of the Jersey City Church owned a 500-seat temple, remodeled from a former Greek Orthodox church, in full view of the World Trade Towers across the Hudson River in Lower Manhattan.⁵⁴ It was a small wonder that Noemí Matos, one of the members, remarked in 1998, "*La gloria sea a nuestro gran Dios.*" (Glory be to our great God)

Carlos Turcios, Multilingual Ministries Director

Carlos Turcios, a second-generation Adventist, was born in Guatemala City, Guatemala. His father, Carlos Sr., was a highly-respected, well-known educator in Guatemala who taught for 42 years. His mother, Julia Orozco, also taught for 32 years. She was the first to become acquainted with the Adventist message through a personal contact and was baptized in 1947. Thirty-two years later, in 1979, Carlos Jr. baptized his father in the Río Dulce River.

Carlos Jr. was baptized in 1962 by Pastor Emilio García in the Zone 5 Church in Guatemala City. In 1964, Elder Pedro Celestino Roque went to the Central American Union Conference in Guatemala to serve as the Sabbath School and Personal Ministries Director. Pastor Roque and his family became members of the same church as Carlos. Roque's daughter, Gloria, became the youth director and Carlos was the youth secretary. In December of 1968, they were married with Elder Roque officiating. The next year the couple went to Colombia where Carlos studied at Icolven for three years and Gloria became the secretary to Stanley Folkenberg, the president of the Colombia-Venezuela Union Mission.

In 1971, Carlos and Gloria immigrated to New York City where he served the church in various capacities while studying in the Adult Degree program from Atlantic Union College. In 1975, he graduated with a B. A. in religion. In 1978 Carlos finished a master's degree in Counseling Psychology from Andrews University. The next year, he accepted a

call to the Florida Conference to serve first as an English singing evangelist and later, in 1981, as a Spanish singing evangelist with Walter Cameron. From 1982 to 1990, he pastored in the Homestead, Westchester and Carol City Spanish churches. In 1990, he accepted a call to the Greater Sydney Conference in Australia to be the senior pastor of the Central Spanish Church in Sydney and in a short time was asked to be the Spanish coordinator for the conference.

In 1996, Elder Turcios returned to the Florida Conference as an associate pastor of the Forest City Spanish Church. In April of 1998, he was called to the New Jersey Conference where he presently serves as the Ministerial Secretary, Multilingual Ministries, Sabbath School and Personal Ministries Director. In 1999, the New Jersey Conference had an all-time high in baptisms—789. The Hispanics baptized 453 of that number, or 57 percent.

As of December 31, 1999, the conference had 13 Hispanic workers, shepherding 40 congregations with a total of 3,978 members.

OHIO CONFERENCE

❖ CLEVELAND

A Spanish congregation had existed in Youngstown, Ohio for years before the Spanish ministry took a giant step forward in Cleveland.⁵⁵ This city, facing Lake Erie, constituted the largest municipal area in the state and became the target of outreach by Hispanic Adventists in Youngstown, about 75 miles southeast of Cleveland on the Pennsylvania border. Contacts between Hispanic families in this eastern Ohio city and their Protestant friends in Cleveland led to small gatherings in the Quiñones home, a family of Pentecostal believers from Cuba who had settled in Cleveland in 1958. This group was largely on its own, and although it reached about 25 at one point between 1972 and 1975, it shrank to about half that number in 1976.⁵⁶

Manuel Rosado Called to Pastor Group

Encouraged when four new members joined them, the leaders of this group petitioned the Ohio Conference president to furnish them a pastor. The call went to Manuel Rosado, at the time a minister in the Potomac Conference, who responded cautiously but affirmatively. His arrival in Cleveland was the first of a chain of events that led to the establishment of a new church in its own meeting place.⁵⁷

Organization of Cleveland Spanish Church

When Elder Rosado first visited Cleveland in December, 1976, he found only about 15 worshipers, including visitors, a challenge that he met vigorously. The results were quick and effective. Nine months later, the number had risen to 45, a group large enough to merit status as an official church which the members became in September, 1977. By mid-1978, the membership rose to 61 and by 1997, the Cleveland congregation had grown to 226.⁵⁸

Cleveland Congregation Purchases Church⁵⁹

Shortly after Elder Rosado became pastor they discovered that the Lutheran church they were renting was to be sold. The Lutheran membership had dwindled to only 22

elderly members, meeting only on Sundays. The rent had been a bargain, only \$150 per month for use on three days each week.

When Elder Rosado spoke to the leaders of the Lutheran church, they told him that the church building had been appraised at \$120,000, but if he was interested, they would sell it to the Adventists for \$100,000. Elder Rosado said he would take their proposal to the board. That same week, a second option presented itself when Elder Rosado received a letter from a church on Orchard Street that they had previously rented, offering to sell them their building and parsonage for \$30,000.

The board decided to make an offer on the Lutheran church since it was in better condition and in a better location than the Orchard Street church. "\$30,000 is our offer," Elder Rosado told the Lutherans. The Lutherans countered with "\$75,000." The Adventists said, "We'll raise it to \$35,000." The Lutherans lowered their price to \$60,000. When Pastor Rosado came in with a \$40,000 offer, the Lutherans did not give a counter. For several weeks the two groups waited. One day, the Lutheran pastor called to tell Pastor Rosado that they had decided to put the church on the market with a realtor.

Pastor Rosado told them, "That's fine. But remember, first, we're renting the church and second, whatever anyone else offers, we'll offer you." Three months went by and then a Pentecostal group made an offer of \$42,000 for the church. Immediately Pastor Rosado put an offer in writing offering \$42,000. "That's the same amount the Pentecostals are offering us," the Lutherans said. "Yes, but if you sell it to them, you'll have to pay a commission to your realtor. We had been doing business with you before you put it up for sale, so if you sell it to us, you won't have to pay the commission." That argument convinced the Lutheran congregation and in January of 1977 they accepted the offer. With financial assistance from the Ohio Conference, the Spanish-speaking members finally owned their own church building.⁶⁰ But the Adventists got a little more than they actually bargained for. Several years later, while cleaning up and remodeling, they discovered in the basement adjacent to the ladies restroom, some of the old tombs of former Lutheran pastors of that church.⁶¹

Pastors of the Cleveland Spanish Church

Pastors of the Cleveland Spanish Church were: Manuel Rosado, José Feliciano, José Osorio, Guillermo Meléndez, José Guillén, and Edgar Mendoza.

Edgar Mendoza, Acting Hispanic Coordinator

Edgar Mendoza was born in San Salvador, El Salvador. His mother, Eva Mendoza, became an Adventist when Edgar was a young boy. In 1961, while a student at the Colegio Vocacional de América Central in Alajuela, Costa Rica, he was baptized. In 1967, he went to Montemorelos, where he graduated with a B. A. degree in theology in 1970. That same year he married Dulce Castillo, daughter of Elder Juan Castillo, in Medellín, Colombia.

Elder Mendoza began his ministry in 1971 in Nicaragua, pastoring several church districts. In 1974, he immigrated to the United States and worked as an associate to Pastor Carlos Morales in the Carson Spanish Church in the Greater Los Angeles area. After pastoring in Southern and Central California, he moved to El Paso in 1981. In 1985, he went to Andrews University where he received his M.Div. degree. From there, he was

called to the Texico Conference in 1987 where he worked in a district including Valencia, Socorro, Reserve and Belen. In 1991, he was called back to the Texas Conference and since 1994 has been pastoring the Spanish district in Cleveland, Ohio and also serves as the acting Hispanic Coordinator for the conference.

ALLEGHENY EAST CONFERENCE⁶²

❖ WILMINGTON

Spanish work in the Allegheny East Conference, the regional conference consisting of Delaware, New Jersey, and the eastern parts of Pennsylvania, Maryland and Virginia, began in 1977, although three years earlier José Meléndez, a Spanish-speaking literature evangelist had worked in the area of Wilmington, Delaware.

In 1977, as an employee in the Latin American Center in Wilmington, a publicly-funded entity, Meléndez began part-time labor among the Hispanics in West Wilmington. Two years later, they moved their meeting place to Sharon Temple, the Wilmington church in the Allegheny East Conference.

Wilmington Church Organizes

Assisted by a Mexican immigrant, Meléndez delivered a bilingual evangelistic series that produced eight baptisms, half of them Hispanics. From a Sabbath school class that the Spanish-speaking members organized in the Sharon Temple Church after these meetings, **the first Spanish Adventist church in the conference was organized in 1980.** The following year Meléndez became the full-time pastor of this small congregation.

Churches Raised Among Cuban Refugees

These events coincided with the Mariel Exodus which brought thousands of Cuban refugees to a camp near Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, slightly less than 100 miles from Wilmington. On a single day the pastors of the Harrisburg church and the Spanish church in Lancaster separately visited the camp to seek out Adventist refugees. The Harrisburg pastor found 20 while the pastor of the Spanish church located 37. The Harrisburg Church seized the initiative in sponsoring the group, providing a worship place each week. In a short time, this group soon became the second organized Spanish church in the Allegheny East Conference. Armando Morais, a Bible worker assisting in the Lancaster Spanish Church, became the pastor, a position he held for 11 years.

Third Spanish Church—Georgetown

In 1993, a third Spanish church in Allegheny East was established in Georgetown, Delaware, following an evangelistic series by Pedro Claussell, who had helped to organize the Cuban refugees in 1980 before taking up new duties in Greater New York. Two brothers, Josué and Rigoberto Velázquez, initiated the first activity near the end of 1993 when they invited a group of Guatemalan refugees to the Millsboro Anglo church to study the Bible. Realizing that this group was beyond his language capabilities, the pastor invited Pastor Claussell to conduct evangelistic meetings. A baptism of 50 converts produced a new congregation that was established in nearby Georgetown.



First meeting of the Council of Spanish Churches in 1995.

Organization of Council of Spanish Churches

This productive effort demonstrated not only the existence of a receptive Hispanic community, but the need to evangelize it. Consequently, leaders of the Allegheny East Conference organized the Council of Spanish Churches in 1995. Headed by Pastor Claussell who became the newly-appointed coordinator of Hispanic ministry, and composed of a balanced mix of lay members, pastors and conference officers, this body provided leadership to this new soul-winning program under which the work began to grow.

Pedro J. Claussell, Hispanic Coordinator⁶³

Pedro Claussell is a convert to the Adventist faith, the first of his family to be baptized. Born in 1948 in Humacao, Puerto Rico, on the east side of the island, he grew up in a nominal Catholic home. His father, Eduardo, and his mother, Angela Mercedes Ruiz, allowed him to join the local Seventh-day Adventist Pathfinder Club, but because he was a minor, he was not allowed to go to the church.

In 1964, Elder Raúl Villanueva, the Puerto Rican Conference evangelist, held a six-week tent effort in the city of Humacao, population of 30,000. Sixteen-year-old Pedro attended every night, becoming acquainted with the doctrinal message, but, although he came under conviction to join the church, was not baptized. Following the effort, Pedro began attending the Adventist church in his hometown. The next year evangelist Villanueva held another crusade in the nearby town of Canovanas. Although Pedro never attended that crusade, he was baptized by Elder Villanueva at the conclusion of the meetings in 1965. At the time, Pedro was a pre-med student at the community college. Following his baptism, he changed majors and attended Antillian Union College where he graduated with a B. A. degree in religion in 1970. That same year he married Gloria Rosa, a third-generation Adventist, in her hometown of Aguada.

His formal ministry began in 1971, when he became an associate pastor in his home church of Humacao. He was ordained in 1975 by the pastor he admired so much and considered his spiritual father—Elder Raúl Villanueva, then president of the Puerto Rican Conference.

In 1976, Elder Claussell went to the Northeastern Regional Conference in New York City where he pastored for one year before transferring to Pennsylvania. There he worked as a pastor and evangelist till 1985. For the next ten years he was a pastor-evangelist in the Greater New York Conference. Then, in 1995, he was called to the Allegheny East regional conference, where he served as the Director and Coordinator of the Spanish Council of Churches. He continued graduate studies and in 1998 received an M.Div. from Andrews University. In 1999, he received his doctoral degree in pastoral counseling from Andersonville Georgia Baptist Seminary. Having never abandoned evangelism in his ministry as pastor and administrator, Dr. Pedro Claussell has established eight new churches to date through public evangelism.

As of December 31, 1999, the Allegheny East Conference had 14 Hispanic pastors, 19 congregations, and 652 members.

CHESAPEAKE CONFERENCE

Baltimore Spanish Church⁶⁴

The Chesapeake Conference includes the city of Baltimore where a large Puerto Rican colony developed during the 1970's. Unlike Hispanic communities in other large cities, the Spanish-speaking residents of Baltimore did not concentrate in identifiable localities, but scattered across the city. Whatever discontinuity existed among them, sufficiently large numbers of Hispanic Adventists lived in Baltimore to warrant action.

Spanish Group in English Church

It was in August, 1984, that Neftalí Ortiz, a bilingual pastor in the final phases of his Master of Divinity degree at Andrews, arrived in Baltimore to pursue the prospects for organized Spanish work. By November, a Spanish-speaking group formed as part of the Baltimore First English Church on Frederick Avenue. The following year, these members rented a church in what was called the *barrio hispano*, a region in the city where only five Hispanic families lived.

Baltimore Spanish Caring Center

An evangelistic series by Reggie Mattison, the fluent Spanish-speaking head of the conference ministerial association, led to the establishment of the Baltimore Spanish Caring Center, an organization that offered various kinds of assistance to members of the growing Hispanic community in the city.

Difficulty in Establishing Baltimore Group

Despite these efforts, however, a Spanish-speaking church did not quickly materialize. Matters drifted until 1989 when Isael Ramírez, a Cuban minister, moved to Baltimore from New Jersey with the specific intention of developing the Hispanic work in Baltimore, Annapolis and Hagerstown where there were large numbers of Hispanics. He found

only a small remnant in Baltimore that gathered weekly to study the Sabbath school lesson. Within two weeks, he acquired permission to meet in a Sabbath school room in the Adventist English church, but only seven persons attended the first week. Plans for an evangelistic series produced no results. Matters worsened when the Anglo congregation notified the Hispanics that they were planning to sell the church.

Growth Begins and Takes Off

It appeared to be a severe blow to their hopes when the Spanish-speaking members moved with their Anglo brethren to Ellicott City, a town on the west side of Baltimore. But unexpectedly, visitors began filtering in, and in November, 1989, two people joined the group by baptism: Bruni González and Jacqueline Torres. By May, 1990, Spanish membership topped 30. On May 12, only 14 months after Ramírez rescued the diminishing Hispanic group from extinction, the **first Spanish church in the Chesapeake Conference** became a reality. By baptism, profession of faith and migration, the church grew to 140 members by 1997 and moved into their own rented meeting place on Frederick Road, a Presbyterian church. Although the original group had been Puerto Rican, the Baltimore church in 1997 included Hispanics from 17 countries, a truly cosmopolitan congregation.

As of this writing, the Chesapeake Conference has the Baltimore Spanish Church, with 176 members, and two groups, one in Frederick and one in Hagerstown with 30 members each for a total of 236.

SUMMARY OF COLUMBIA UNION CONFERENCE

Although Spanish churches existed in many different places in the Columbia Union, their largest concentrations revolved around the municipal areas of New Jersey, Philadelphia, and Washington. During the early post-World War II era, the Spanish-speaking population in these regions was primarily Puerto Rican, but with the growing number of immigrants, Hispanics from elsewhere in Latin America became prominent in the Hispanic communities.

Philadelphia, where Adventism among Hispanics began in the Columbia Union, was part of the growing megalopolis along the east coast of the United States from Boston to Washington where hundreds of thousands of Hispanic immigrants settled. It was the mobility of this population that had also contributed to the encouragement and support of Adventism. When the first church formed in Philadelphia in 1958, the conference president noted that friends from Washington, New Jersey, and New York had come to participate in the services.⁶⁵

Much of the growth of Spanish work in northern New Jersey was a byproduct of the work that had started in New York City, and while administratively these congregations were a part of the New Jersey Conference, geographically and economically they were part of the Greater New York Conference. Some of the New Jersey churches were literally in the shadow of Manhattan skyscrapers.

The Mountain View Conference, mainly comprising the state of West Virginia, has a few Hispanic members but no organized Spanish work. Part of the reason is that West Virginia has less than five percent non-Anglo population. Minorities usually migrate to large cities. Charleston, with 80,000, is West Virginia's largest city.

The Spanish work in the Washington area benefitted from the growing number of Latin American leaders at the world headquarters of the church. While these persons did not ordinarily join the Spanish churches, their very presence was a constant reminder that the Hispanic community at large could not be overlooked.

Prior to its move to Berrien Springs, Michigan, the Seminary attracted a few Hispanic pastors for graduate study, some of whom remained in the area to take an active part in the development of the Spanish churches. This was a precursor to the far greater impact that Hispanic pastors from the Seminary at Andrews had on Hispanic congregations in the Lake Union. It was a part of the growing complexity and success in the movement of Spanish work in North America.

The Columbia Union Conference is the union with the fifth largest number of Hispanic constitutents. As of December 31, 1999, it reported 53 pastors, 107 congregations and 10,401 members.

COLUMBIA UNION HISPANIC LEADERS



Denise León Valenzuela
Columbia Union Conference
Director of Communications Services



Dowell Chow
Columbia Union Conference
Treasurer



Roger Weiss
Potomac Conference
Secretary



Carlos Turcios
New Jersey Conference
Secretary



Rubén Ramos
Potomac Conference
Hispanic Coordinator



Juan López
Pennsylvania Conference
Hispanic Coordinator



Edgar Mendoza
Ohio Conference
Hispanic Coordinator



Pedro Claussell
Allegheny East Conference
Hispanic Coordinator

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13

North Pacific Union Conference

One of the Last Frontiers

"Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low; and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain." Isaiah 40:4

North Pacific Union Territory

THE North Pacific Union, consisting of the five most northwestern states in the United States (Washington, Oregon, Idaho, Montana and Alaska), has the smallest population base of all the unions in the North American Division. Its 12 million people constitute half of the next smallest union, Mid-America. The territory of the North

Pacific Union is also divided between the 48 mainland states and Alaska, where American soil extends within less than 100 miles of Siberia, Russia in the Euro-Asia Division. The four states of Washington, Oregon, Idaho, and Montana, which constitute most of the North Pacific Union, are known as the Northwest.

Early Claims on the North Pacific Territory

In the early 1800's, Britain laid claim to Washington and Oregon since George Vancouver and other Englishmen had previously explored them.¹ It was the Lewis and Clark Expedition (1804-1806), however, which helped strengthen the claim of the United States on that territory. But, ownership was not settled until the 1846 Oregon Treaty, which gave the United States the territory of the two present-day states of Oregon and Washington.

One of the historical sites of that region is the Oregon Trail, stretching more than 2,000 miles, from the midwestern town of Independence, Missouri all the way to the Pacific Northwest.² Opening in the 1840's, this trail became a major thoroughfare for thousands who crossed the continent in search of a better life on the West Coast.

Hispanic Presence in the North Pacific

Noticeable numbers of Hispanic immigrants began settling in this region after World War II and more recently within the last 25 years. The Montana Conference is the only conference that does not have established Spanish work, although, in 1998, the 118th edition of *The Statistical Abstract of the United States*, recorded that there were 15,000 Hispanics in that state. It is only a matter of time, according to Elder Ralph Orduño, Hispanic Coordinator for the North Pacific Union, before an Adventist presence among the Spanish-speaking residents of Montana will become a reality. Plans are already underway to hold a Spanish evangelistic effort in Billings in the year 2001, to begin Spanish work there.

From all available information, the Spanish work in the North Pacific Union Conference can be traced to both the Yakima Valley in Washington and Weiser, Idaho in the year 1956.

IDAHO CONFERENCE

In 1956, a few Hispanic Adventist members were meeting in the Weiser English Church in Idaho, dreaming of some day having a Spanish church. But they had no leader. It wasn't until Juan Olveda and his wife were baptized in 1961 by Elder Harry Gray, pastor of the Weiser English Church in Idaho, that someone began to give leadership to realizing that dream.

Juan and his wife were very active and faithful in giving Bible studies, which they did for more than a decade in Weiser and the neighboring towns. When William Morgan, a Bible instructor, came to work in the area, he came in contact with the Olvedas. He was overwhelmed with the interests they had developed and concluded that they needed a Spanish-speaking pastor to harvest and develop the Spanish work.

Augustine Sánchez Comes Out of Retirement

It was through Brother Morgan that Juan Olveda learned about retired Pastor Augustine Sánchez, the pioneer minister and son of Adiel Sánchez, one of the charter members

of the first Spanish church in the North American Division. Juan Olveda decided to write to him to see if he would be willing to come to Oregon to help them. Brother Morgan contacted the conference about the matter, and they called Elder Sánchez in the early part of 1973 to come out of retirement to pastor the budding congregation. The Sánchezes made the move from California to Idaho and began working among the interests. His ministry in Weiser, however, was short, less than a year, but very effective.

The Work Progresses

The group began meeting in the parsonage of the Weiser English church. By April 7, 1973, eight young people were baptized. Two weeks later, Mrs. Julia Hernández requested baptism. Elder Sánchez arranged to have *La Voz de la Esperanza* radio program aired over radio station KWEI in Weiser, Idaho. Within a short time more than 30 homes were opening their doors to study the Adventist message. Elder Sánchez baptized five new members: Brother and Sister Gonzales, their daughter, Francisco Flores, Alfreda López and Ruthie Olveda. But Elder Sánchez's health was declining and by the latter part of the year, it became obvious that he could not continue his rigorous schedule. Because his heart could not take the stress of the work, his doctor advised him to leave immediately for treatment at Loma Linda University Hospital in California.

About this time, a lay person donated \$25,000 to the Idaho Conference to use for whatever purpose they deemed worthy. The committee decided to designate that money for Hispanic evangelism and immediately began looking for a Spanish-speaking pastor to continue the work that Elder Sánchez had started.

Walter Vyhmeister Pastors Weiser Spanish Church

In March of 1974 the conference called Walter Vyhmeister, a former civil engineer from Chile who had recently settled in Los Angeles, to pastor the Spanish group in Weiser.³ The following year the small Spanish group of 16 was able to purchase the Weiser English Church when that congregation built a new sanctuary.

In Ontario, Oregon, just across the Idaho border in Oregon, a group of 54 non-Adventist members were meeting regularly in homes, studying the Adventist message. But it was not without opposition. The Catholic priest from Weiser went to Ontario and warned the Catholic parishioners, especially the Hispanics, about the Adventist pastor and his aggressive proselytizing activities. "Don't let them come into your homes," he told them. "My church in Weiser is empty because of them."⁴

Ontario, Oregon Spanish Group

In spite of vigorous warnings from the priest, the Ontario Spanish group grew. What they needed now was their own church building. Elder Walter Vyhmeister knew that without an appropriate place to meet, any attempts to evangelize the Hispanic community in Ontario would be hindered. Many Hispanics in the community believed the Adventist doctrines but were hesitant to leave their Catholic church because there was no suitable place to worship with the Adventists. The English Adventist church had burned down the year before (1976) leaving the small group of 40 without a church home. Pastor Vyhmeister opened up his home to the group and they began holding services in his basement.

Another reason for the urgent need of a church building was to give the people proof that Adventism was not just a fly-by-night religion. As Elder Vyhmeister said, "Building a church will give these people proof that, in addition to preaching Bible truth, the Seventh-day Adventist Church is a strong, stable movement which will give them a permanent church home."⁵

Plans were already being made for a special December 1977 offering in the conference which would be designated toward this need. In anticipation, a five-acre tract of land had been selected as the building site.

In 1980 Union Conference bilingual evangelist Robert Goransson held an evangelistic meeting in the Lindberg School auditorium in Ontario, Oregon, which resulted in 21 baptisms.⁶

Opening of Work in Other Areas

In 1982 Elder Vyhmeister led several Hispanic families from Weiser in a church planting project in Fruitland. Approximately 50 members began meeting in a refurbished frame building on a nine-acre farm they had purchased in 1980.

The opening of the new Pacific Press plant in Nampa, Idaho in 1984, brought Hispanic Adventist professionals to the region. In 1988 some of them joined other Spanish-speaking members to organize as the Caldwell Spanish Church with 33 members.

Other Pastors of the Weiser and Caldwell Churches

When Elder Vyhmeister took a call to the Texico Conference in 1990, Elder Richard Bernal became the new pastor of the Weiser, Fruitland, and Caldwell Churches. By 1994 the Spanish Church had acquired its own church building in the nearby city of Nampa. The following year Elder Bernal took a call to the Alaska Conference.

Juan Borges became the pastor of this huge district in 1995. That same year a small group of 15 formed in Heyburn, about 250 miles southeast in the lower bend of the Snake River, and two years later a dozen more members began meeting regularly in Idaho Falls, again on the Snake River in the eastern part of the state.

Idaho Conference Hispanic Statistics

By 1998 Elder Borges reported around 300 Hispanic members and an estimated Hispanic population of around 40,000 in his field.⁷ As of December 31, 1999, there were 310 members, three churches and two groups in the Idaho Conference.

UPPER COLUMBIA CONFERENCE

The Upper Columbia Conference is comprised of the eastern part of Washington and Oregon, plus a portion of Idaho. This "Inland Empire," was part of the territory when it was organized in October of 1877 as the Upper Columbia Conference.

❖ YAKIMA VALLEY

***Kenneth Fleck Pioneers Spanish Work In Upper Columbia Conference*⁸**

The history of the Spanish work in the Upper Columbia Conference had its beginnings in the Yakima Valley in Washington state in 1956. President C. L. Bond, realizing

the potential for Spanish work among the thousands of migrant workers in his territory, asked Elder Kenneth Fleck, who had just returned from Guatemala as the mission president, to come and start the Spanish work in the Yakima Valley area. Elder Fleck and his wife, Alcyon, both bilinguals, moved to Granger, Washington, where they began planning for their Spanish outreach.

Elder Fleck held evangelistic meetings in the Toppenish English Church. Some of those baptized as a result of those meetings were: Frank García and family, Camilo Dávila and family, and the Montelongs. The Anglo church members welcomed the new converts into their church.

Following up his meetings, Elder Fleck began holding cottage meetings, using film strips and a projector. A few more Hispanics joined the church. However, most of the Hispanics in the area were migrant workers, so following the harvest time, many would return to Mexico or migrate where work was available. Although this was a little discouraging, Elder Fleck persevered in his work until 1958 when he was called back to the mission field, this time to work in Honduras.

Later, Elder R. R. Mattison began working on behalf of the Hispanic people in the Yakima Valley. By 1960, there were approximately 20 baptized Hispanic members attending the group. However, during the next eight years the group was without a pastor and eventually the work that had been started with so much effort, dwindled to almost nothing.

Richard Dena Revives Spanish Work in Yakima Valley⁹

Then, in September of 1968, the conference called Pastor Richard Dena from the Adventist Theological Seminary in Berrien Springs, Michigan to revive the Spanish work in the Yakima Valley, which by this time had over 20,000 Mexicans, mostly migrant workers. When Pastor Dena and his wife, Eneida, arrived, they found only two Adventist Hispanic families remaining in the city of Toppenish.

Pastor Dena began working in the community with the Spanish Bible lessons, *Escrito Está* (*It is Written*). In the course of four years he had 80 Bible studies, resulting in 41 baptisms. Three evangelistic meetings were held in his district, one by Elder Roy Hennenberg in October of 1971, which resulted in 10 baptisms and two by profession of faith.

Toppenish—First Spanish Church

In 1972 the group was meeting in the basement of the Methodist church in Toppenish with an average Sabbath attendance between 60 and 65. Then on June 3 of that same year,



***First Spanish
Group in
Toppenish,
December 1974.***

36 of those members were organized into **the first Spanish church in Toppenish, Washington**. Conference officers participating in the organization service were: President R. C. Remboldt; Secretary H. F. Hannah; Public Relations Director R. E. Eckerman; and the pastor of the Toppenish English church, A. G. Beierle.

❖ **WALLA WALLA VALLEY**

Richard Dena Fosters Spanish Work in Walla Walla Valley

The following year, 1973, Pastor Dena had an official assignment added to his duties—to foster the Spanish work in the Walla Walla Valley. Before the year was over, the conference committee made the Yakima and Walla Walla Valleys into a new district, and requested Elder Dena to oversee it.

Emán Collins, Evangelist and Coordinator

During the next year and a half, events moved rapidly in Hispanic ministry in the conference. In September of 1974 the Upper Columbia Conference brought in pastor/



Elder Emán Collins and wife Ruth with one of the first converts in Toppenish.

evangelist Emán Collins, originally from Argentina, to hold an evangelistic effort in Toppenish with Elder Dena. The meetings were held in the Toppenish theater. The effort was a success, with 25 baptisms. Among those baptized were members of four generations of the Reyes family: the great-grandmother, grandparents, mother and daughter, Joaquín and María. The Reyes family became pillars in the Toppenish Spanish Church.

Elder Dena left in December of 1974 to as-

sume new duties as a mission worker in Bolivia which made way for Emán Collins to pastor the Toppenish/Walla Walla Spanish district. Elder Collins remained in that district until 1986.

Although the two key congregations in the Spanish district were Walla Walla in the southeast and Toppenish in the northwest, nearly 100 miles apart, the district itself stretched far beyond these communities, as far north as Yakima and eastward to regions surrounding Walla Walla. Because of the large area encompassed in this district and the evangelistic potential it held, the conference employed José Arias as associate pastor in 1975 to

assist Elder Collins. Elder Collins would focus on the upper end of the district in Toppenish, while Arias would concentrate his efforts in the opposite part in Walla Walla.¹⁰ Thus Arias became the first Spanish pastor in Walla Walla.

Brief History of Walla Walla Spanish Group

Norma Albain was one of the first Hispanic Bible workers to visit Hispanic homes in the Walla Walla area. One of the first converts was Mike Rodríguez. Then a group, including Federico Chuquimia, a Walla Walla student, and Reymundo and Ana González, began studying the Bible together. In time, new Mexican families joined the group. In 1970, a Mr. Wandersleben was employed by the conference to develop the Spanish interests.

Reymundo González is still an active member in his church. Years ago, he started a prison ministry at the Washington State Penitentiary. In the August 24, 2000 edition of the Walla Walla Union Bulletin newspaper, he was recognized for his 35 years of prison ministry by being named "Prison Volunteer of the Year."¹¹

Carlos Ayala Fosters Group in Walla Walla

In 1971, Pastor Carlos Ayala, who had just finished a master's degree at Pacific Union College, accepted a call to direct the Spanish Department at Walla Walla College. His wife, Esther, taught English as a second language to the Mexican migrant workers, with Pedro Carrera serving as one of her teacher aides. When Elder Ayala heard that there was a small group of Hispanics meeting at the Stateline English Church in Oregon, he volunteered to be their interim pastor.¹²

Two years later, the Ayalas were called to California where Pastor Ayala became the first Hispanic Coordinator for the Southern California Conference. This, however, left the group without a leader. So Pedro Carrera, who was the first elder, agreed to serve as the acting pastor while still continuing his theology studies. Even though his studies suffered, Pedro said, "I just couldn't wait until my graduation to help this church. So I took both jobs (pastor and student)." However, he did have the assistance of Orlando Contreras, another student, and José Arias, who was a part-time pastor.¹³

For nine years this company had been meeting as part of the Stateline English Church in Oregon where they conducted their own Spanish services in the Pathfinder room. As they continued to grow, so did their aspiration of one day having their own place to worship.

Walla Walla Company Gets Their Own Church

Among those who made the dream of having a Spanish church in Walla Walla possible, were Everett and Edna Craik, owners of the Craik Lumber Company in Walla Walla. Mrs. Craik was very interested in the Spanish work and helped raise \$7,000 toward the \$14,000 needed to buy the Trinity Baptist Church in Walla Walla. In December, 1974, the Upper Columbia Conference gave a matching appropriation of \$7,000.¹⁴

Organization of Walla Walla Spanish Church

On Sabbath, January 11, 1975, the Spanish members of Walla Walla held their first Sabbath services in their newly-acquired church building on the corner of Howard and

Newell. Among the conference administrators attending was Elder Ed Beck, secretary, who gave the 11 o'clock message. Pedro Carrera, a sophomore theology student at Walla Walla, translated.

In the afternoon, under the direction of Elder Richard Fearing, president, and Ed Beck, secretary, the Walla Walla Hispanic members were **officially organized into the sisterhood of churches in the Upper Columbia Conference.**¹⁵

Members Help in Crusade

Almost ten years later, in December of 1983, Elder Robert Goransson and Pastor Emán Collins held an evangelistic crusade in a Protestant church building on 2nd Street in Walla Walla. Several members from the Walla Walla Valley English Church offered their help. Julie Overstreet, from Weston, Oregon, gave countless Bible studies in Spanish even though she spoke little Spanish. Using the audio-visual film strips of the *Encounter* lessons, she was able to reach her students. Bernice Larrabee, who had learned Spanish while a missionary in Central and South America, also used a film strip projector to give studies to families she had contacted through her work at the Community Services Center. Lura Marsh, a member of the Spanish church, played the piano during the meetings and also visited interests. Dr. and Mrs. Dan Palmer were the only bilingual members of the visitation team.

In addition, four Hispanic theology students from Walla Walla College formed part of the evangelistic team: Eddie Allen, César León, David Flores and Dagoberto Barrios. They gave countless Bible studies and drove the buses that brought the people to the meetings every night.

Elder Robert Goransson, North Pacific Union bilingual evangelist, commented that "Contrary to some prevailing myths, bringing Hispanic persons into the church is no simple task. Most have strong ties to their Mother Church. It takes a very personal, caring touch to lead them into a new covenant through adult baptism." These lay persons and theology students were instrumental in loving 27 new members into the Spanish church.¹⁶

David Flores and the Pasco Spanish Group

In January of 1981, Walla Walla junior theology student, David Flores, was asked to work with the small group of six Hispanics in Pasco, Washington on the weekends. His work went so well, that during the summer, he was taken on by the conference as a taskforce pastor. By November there were 45 people attending the group. Although meeting in the Riverview English Church, they held their own Sabbath school and worship services in the youth chapel. They had 32 weekly Bible studies in the community and a branch Sabbath school with 25 people. The group also organized **the first Spanish Pathfinder Club in the Upper Columbia Conference with 13 members.**¹⁷

David Flores' classmates, Eddie Allen and César León, also took on Spanish church district assignments. Eddie Allen fostered the Spanish work in Pendleton and Milton-Freewater, Oregon. César León worked with the Spanish group in Hermiston, Oregon.

First Spanish Company in Yakima

On April 17, 1981, Sergio Perelli, a young colporteur-minister, arrived in Yakima, Washington, in response to a request from the conference to minister to the Hispanic

people in that area. Two weeks later he met with four Spanish-speaking members in the basement of the Terrace Heights English Church for their first church service together. Then they went out into the community, door-to-door, armed with Bible courses, audio-visual programming and a free Bible offer. They came back with 25 Bible studies. In ten months that system resulted in 15 baptisms, with more continuing to prepare for baptism. This also resulted in the March 27, 1982 organization of the first Spanish company in the city of Yakima, the third organized body of Hispanic believers in the conference.¹⁸

First Spanish Church Built in North Pacific Union

In 1995 Eddie Allen became the **first Hispanic evangelist in the Upper Columbia Conference.**¹⁹ Allen's enthusiasm and leadership had previously been felt in the Hispanic



***The Milton-Freewater Spanish Church
groundbreaking, 1989.***

ministry in the Upper Columbia Conference. In 1989 he led the Spanish members of the Milton-Freewater Company in the **construction of the first church building for Hispanics in the Upper Columbia Conference and in the entire North Pacific Union territory as well.** This new church was built on a 4.7-acre plot of land, 1.5 miles north of Milton-Freewater, with a seating capacity of 200.

The venture was no small undertaking, costing more than \$214,000. Even at this price, much of the labor was donated, some of it at odd hours. When the cement company poured the foundations, Allen saw to it that 12 volunteers were on the job to help even though it was five o'clock in the morning.²⁰

The Milton-Freewater Spanish Company, with 145 members, was large in comparison to most Adventist companies that became churches. Located barely below the Washington-Oregon border, about ten miles south of Walla Walla College, it was only part



***The Milton-Freewater Spanish Church
building, 1989.***

of Allen's pastoral duties that included another company in Hermiston, approximately 60 miles west. In addition to his supervisory role in the construction of the new church in Milton-Freewater, Allen was actively engaged in evangelism. After the baptism of 28 new members in 1990, he conducted regular weekly meetings to establish them better in their new-found faith.

Some of the members of the Toppenish Spanish Church, 1980.



Eddie Allen, Evangelist and Hispanic Ministries Director

Eddie Allen was born in Nicaragua, Central America, in 1953. His father, Raymond Allen, was converted to Adventism, and owned his own fishing business. Eddie's mother, Magdalena Taylor, also an Adventist, was a housewife. Eddie was baptized in November of 1973 in Managua, Nicaragua, at age 20, and the following July married María de Lourdes Caldera. In 1980, he went to study at Walla Walla College, where he received a B. A. degree in religion. In 1986 he received a master's degree in religious education from Walla Walla.

Eddie began his ministry in the summer of 1982 as a taskforce worker in the Pendleton Spanish Church. Two years later he was hired by the Upper Columbia Conference as a full-time pastor, where he still serves as the conference Hispanic evangelist and associate to the conference secretary for Hispanic Ministries.

Elder Allen loves evangelism and faithfully holds one out-of-the-division effort each year and five four-week efforts in his own conference. But more than his love for evangelism is his love for planting churches.

Upper Columbia Conference Statistics

As of December 31, 1999 the Upper Columbia Conference had nine pastors, 16 churches, and 2,003 members.

OREGON CONFERENCE

❖ WOODBURN

"We will even build a church for you."²¹

In 1968, Dolores Caballero and her eleven young ones moved from California to Hillsboro, Oregon. Because there was no Spanish church in the area, she began attending

the English church in Forest Grove. Then, in 1970, she started a Spanish Branch Sabbath school, which was a first in that city.²²

By the 1970's hundreds of Mexican agricultural workers, fruit pickers and their families began migrating to the Woodburn area to work in the fields and orchards. After the harvest, many decided to stay and raise their families in Oregon. This phenomenon caught the attention of Elder Walt Blehm, president of the Oregon Conference at the time. A visionary leader and a man of action, he convinced his conference executive committee to make Spanish outreach one of their priority projects.

Frank Ottati Called to Woodburn

In December of 1973, Elder Blehm learned through some former classmates of a young man, Frank Ottati, who could lead out in the Spanish work. Elder Blehm had attended Walla Walla College with Bert and Louise Elkins who became missionaries to South America. Frank was their son-in-law.

Frank was born in Ecuador, South America. When Elder Bert Elkins became the president of the Ecuadorian Mission, Frank met and married his daughter, Cathy. They later moved to the States and Frank began studying for his M.Div. at the Adventist Seminary in Michigan.

During their first long-distance telephone conversation, Elder Blehm told Frank, "If you like us and we like you, we will give you five years to establish a Spanish church in our conference." Then he added, "We will even build the first Spanish church for you."

The attractiveness of this opportunity encouraged Frank to accept the call. But he knew it would not be an easy task. "It is a special ministry," Frank said. "There is more than just a language barrier. The whole Spanish-Catholic philosophy makes a Protestant ministry difficult but at the same time, very rewarding."²³

Frank Ottati—First Spanish Pastor in Oregon Conference²⁴

When Pastor Ottati and family arrived in Portland in January of 1974, they found only a half dozen Hispanic members. For the next six months Pastor Ottati worked long hours visiting in the community, trying to find interested Hispanics. But it was hard since they were very dispersed throughout the city.

Then he met an elderly Anglo lady who told him "Look, I will take you to a city where there are a lot of Hispanics." She took him to Woodburn, 35 miles south of Portland, and he discovered many Hispanics working in the orchards. So Elder Ottati moved there with his family to be closer to them. Renting a Pentecostal church, he shortly had 11 Hispanics meeting for Sabbath services each week.

Then he held an evangelistic effort in the Pentecostal church. Night after night he preached the Advent Message of hope and salvation. However, at the close of the meetings there was only one person baptized, Marta Araujo. But, recalling the words of inspiration, "If there had only been one sinner in this world, Jesus would have died for him," Pastor Ottati figured the effort was all worth it.

Building the First Spanish Church in the Oregon Conference

The group continued to add members and in the spring of 1975, they purchased a two-acre plot of land for \$14,000 and plans to build a 2,082 square feet, 150-member capacity church were put in motion.



Woodburn Spanish Church members in front of new church building, 1975.

After Pastor Ottati and some of his members laid the foundation, many local Adventist men came to the new Spanish church site to help. Every Sunday, the ladies prepared hearty Mexican meals for the workers. Shirley Blehm, the president's wife, was the interior decorator for the church, even making all the drapes for the building. Her husband, Walter, helped by putting up all the curtain rods and metal drapery hangers. It seemed that everybody pitched in, in one way or another to make the first Spanish church in the Oregon Conference an adequate and attractive house of worship.

The first Sunday all the walls and framing for the roof went up. The following Sunday, all the plumbing, electrical wiring and units were installed. On the last Sunday all the dry wall, doors and fixtures were put in place. In three Sundays the church was built. By the following Sabbath, the Woodburn Spanish Church on 1480 Laurel Street was ready for its first worship service.



Elder Frank Ottati with Hispanic Lay Pioneers in Woodburn.

Hispanic Lay Pioneers In Woodburn

Some the lay pioneers were Bob and Linda Durkos. Linda was very active with youth activities. Bob, on the other hand, served as first elder and taught a Sabbath school class. Margarito Estrada (or "Magoo" as he was called) and his wife, María,

who were baptized by Elder Ottati, were a real asset to his ministry in Woodburn. Before Brother Estrada became an Adventist, he had such a hunger and thirst for the Word of God that Bible studies at the Estrada home would go on for three to four hours, even up to five hours.

Although Brother Estrada wasn't able to read well in Spanish, he was determined to learn. Every day he would read his Spanish Bible aloud. In the evening he would read *The Bible Stories* aloud to his children. His effort paid off. He became so proficient that he became a lay preacher, delivering all his sermons in Spanish.

Elder Ottati Accepts a Call to Costa Rica

In the summer of 1977 Pastor Ottati received a call to be the senior pastor at the Adventist college in Alajuela, Costa Rica, as well as teach religion classes. Ottati had only pastored in Oregon for three and half years, but he left the Woodburn Church with 90 members and two small groups established: the Hillsboro Spanish Church with 30 members and the English Woodburn Church with 20 members.

After pastoring at the Costa Rican college, he became the college president during 1979 and 1980. Then he returned to the States where he served as a pastor and district vice president. In 1988 he received a call to serve as the Vice President of the Columbia Union in charge of Evangelism, Ministerial and Multilingual Ministries. Presently, he is the pastor of the Houston English Church in Houston, Texas.

Dedication of the Woodburn Spanish Church, 1979

When Elder Ottati left for Costa Rica in 1977, the Oregon Conference called Elder Rubén Darío Sánchez from the North Chicago Spanish Church, to be the new pastor of the Woodburn Spanish district. H. Jack Harris had replaced Elder Blehm who had taken a call in 1976 to be the president of the Southeastern California Conference. Elder Harris was just as interested in seeing the Spanish work continue to grow in his conference as Elder Blehm had been.



Elder Rubén Darío Sánchez, pastor of the Woodburn Spanish Church, 1977.

Rubén Darío Sánchez's Radio Ministry

Elder Sánchez began his outreach by inaugurating two Spanish radio broadcasts. The first was a 30-minute weekly radio program, *Aprendiendo a Vivir (Learning to Live)*, which aired every Sunday morning at 9 a.m. on KWRC, in Woodburn beginning in July of 1977. A daily program by the same name was aired in Hillsboro, beginning in September of that same year. The program was heard at 8:55 a.m. on public service time on station KWKL. Good interests developed with some attending church services as a result.²⁵



The new Woodburn Spanish Church.

Woodburn Spanish Church Dedication

On May 12, 1979, the Woodburn Spanish Church was dedicated with 160 members. That Sabbath over 300 were in attendance, including children. Among the conference officers that participated in the dedication were Elder H. Jack Harris, president, and Elder Rankin Wentland, executive secretary. The cost of the Spanish church was \$75,000 plus approximately 50,000 hours of donated labor.²⁶

Rubén Darío Sánchez Establishes a Church School in Woodburn²⁷

In 1979 Pastor Sánchez also received his doctoral degree in philosophy from the California Graduate School of Theology. His dissertation was on Bilingual Education. This knowledge was put to practical use in his new district. The Woodburn Spanish Church had grown to over 160 members by now. With so many children in the church and the nearest church school 20 miles away in Salem, Pastor Sánchez thought the solution would be to establish their own K-8 grade church school, an idea he had been entertaining in his mind for two years. He presented the proposal to his church board, which they approved.

In March of 1979 the conference approved the plan to establish a bilingual, bicultural Adventist school for the Woodburn Spanish Church. Raising \$25,000, Dr. Sánchez purchased the materials and on June 13, 1979, the cornerstone was laid in place with a Bible inside as a symbol of the Christian foundation the children would receive. Then Maranatha International volunteers arrived on July 1 to begin building the school with two large classrooms, an office, an audio visual room and an all-purpose room.

Pacific Northwest Bilingual Bicultural Christian School Opens

The Pacific Northwest Bilingual Bicultural Christian School opened on September 4, 1979 with 67 students, a combination of children from both the Spanish and English churches in Woodburn. With all of its classes being taught bilingually, it became the first bilingual school in the entire state of Oregon.

The school had three full-time teachers: Renán Serrano, principal and teacher of the upper grades; Linda Durkos, kindergarten teacher; and Lina Sánchez, lower grades teacher.

The first graduation was held on June 1, 1980 with four students graduating from the eighth grade and ten from kindergarten. Later on, the school became a junior academy, but unfortunately it was closed down in 1990.

During Elder Sánchez's tenure in Woodburn, he started Spanish work in Mt. Angel and Independence and had a religious radio program in both Woodburn and Hillsboro. Pastor Alvaro Sauza was hired by the conference as his associate.

In 1980 Elder Sánchez was called to Thousand Oaks, California to serve as the Associate Director of *La Voz de la Esperanza*, Announcer and Director of the Bible Correspondence School. In 1985, Elder Sauza became the pastor of the Woodburn district.



A classroom in the Pacific Northwest Bilingual Bicultural Christian School, 1979. Principal Renán Serrano, standing.

Pastors of the Woodburn Spanish Church²⁸

Frank Ottati, Rubén Darío Sánchez, Jaime Chanagá, Alvaro Sauza, Isaac Lara, Eliseo Orozco, Carlyle Raymond, Ramón Canals (interim).

Ramón Canals

Elder Ramón Canals is the Evangelist and Hispanic Coordinator for the Oregon Conference. Elder Canals, a native of the Dominican Republic, was born and raised in a Catholic home. As a young man, he served as the treasurer of the Catholic young people's club and recited his rosary every night before retiring. At age 16, he came to New York, where he continued attending the Catholic church. But he discovered some fallacies in the doctrines and became dissatisfied with the church.

In Ramón's heart, there was a longing for something which he couldn't put his finger on. For the next three years he looked for satisfaction in the world, but found none. Andy Cuello, an Adventist friend of Ramón, invited him to the Broadway Spanish Church where Elder Brando Saldía was the pastor. Ramón heard his first Adventist messages from the lips of Elder Saldía. Little did he know that the Holy Spirit was working on him. Then he left New York and went to Paterson, New Jersey. One day while driving home on Highway 80, he heard an inner voice that said, "Read the Bible. Read the Bible. Read the Bible."

Canal's Life Begins to Turn Around

When he got home, he began reading his Bible. The next morning, which happened to be a Sunday, he had a desire to go to church. Driving by several churches, he couldn't

decide which one to attend, so he never stopped at any. When he got home, he noticed his neighbor, Belayo Chávez, working on his car. Belayo engaged him in a conversation and discovered his longing for spirituality. "Why don't you come to church with me next Sabbath?" he said. Ramón received Bible studies from Víctor Odicio and was baptized on May 10, 1975 in the Paterson, New Jersey Spanish Church by Elder Jorge Grieve.

On September 4, 1977, Ramón married Aurora Romero. In 1985 he received a B. A. from the Adventist college in Costa Rica and then studied at Andrews University where he received his M.Div. in 1988. Ten years later he obtained his doctorate with emphasis on evangelism and lay training.

Ramón Canals, Evangelist and Hispanic Coordinator

From 1986 to 1994 Elder Canals pastored in the New Jersey Conference. Then the Oregon Conference called him to be the Hispanic evangelist and the developer of the Spanish work in the Oregon Conference.

Every year Dr. Ramón Canals holds five to six efforts in his conference and trains lay persons to be soul winners. In 1993, he trained 52 lay evangelistic preachers. Three of them held their own efforts. One, Hipólito Morales, held his in Woodburn, baptizing 24 people. The following year Morales did another effort in the same city and baptized 20 more.

When Pastor Canals came to the Oregon Conference in 1994, there were 1,100 members. Presently there are 2,500 Hispanic members in the Oregon Conference.

WASHINGTON CONFERENCE

The earliest records available regarding the beginning of the Spanish work in the Washington Conference indicate that the **first Spanish church was organized on March 18, 1977** in Bellevue with 33 charter members. It was under the ministry of Pastor Silvio Fernández, Hispanic coordinator, that the Seattle area Spanish group was formed. Among those officiating from the conference were Elder James Chase, president, and George Crumley, treasurer. Elder Ernest Furness, pastor of the Bellevue English Church, was also instrumental in the formation and development of this group.²⁹ By 1993, when Manuel Cabral became their pastor, the church had grown to 110 members.

At the end of 1999, the Hispanic membership in the Washington Conference numbered about 800. This membership was spread among six groups in Seattle, Tacoma, Federal Way, Bellingham, Bellevue, and Lacey. These churches were cared for by three pastors. All except Bellingham were in the Seattle-Tacoma metropolitan area; Bellingham was located 15 miles south of the Canadian border on the northern shore of Puget Sound.

ALASKA CONFERENCE

Alaska is one of the areas of the North American Division where Spanish work has recently been established. As far back as the 1970's several attempts had been made to start the Spanish work in this most northern state, one of them being a small Sabbath school class in the Anchorage English church.

Beatto Suaro, a volunteer Hispanic pastor, had a burden for the Hispanics in Alaska.

He and his family moved from New York to Anchorage, Alaska, to begin the Spanish work among the nearly 6,000 Hispanics that lived in the city of Anchorage.³⁰ He managed to raise up and organize a group of about 25 on September 22, 1990. When he departed, Domingo Macavilca, a layman from the Northside English Church, continued to lead the small group.

In November of 1993, Pastor Lee-Roy Chacón accepted a call to foster the small group while also managing the Adventist Book Center (ABC). When he arrived, he found only four Hispanic members. However, through his efforts, the Spanish group in Anchorage, Alaska was organized into a church company on Saturday, February 5, 1994 with 26 charter members.³¹ By the year 2000 the company had grown to 45 members. Later, Elder Chacón became the associate treasurer, and in 1997, he took a call to serve as the secretary of the Texico Conference.

NORTH PACIFIC UNION

Eliseo Briseño, Hispanic Coordinator

Elder Eliseo Briseño took up his responsibilities of Union Hispanic Coordinator in May of 1989. Within months he had launched a vigorous evangelistic program for the more than 280,000 Hispanics living all the way from Alaska, in the north, to Oregon and Montana in the south and east.

Elder Briseño continued a practice in the North Pacific Union of conducting annual convocations for Hispanic Adventists, but the membership was growing. After the ninth Spanish convocation in Auburn, Washington, in 1989, he admitted that he was encountering difficulties finding locations to handle meetings for as many as a thousand people.

Ralph Orduño, Union Hispanic Coordinator

Elder Ralph Orduño was the first Hispanic conference president (Texico Conference) before accepting a call to the North Pacific Union as Spanish Coordinator in 1996. Elder Orduño is not only an able administrator, but also a successful evangelist.

In addition to his Hispanic coordinator responsibilities, he also assists in the coordination of the Global Missions overseas evangelistic efforts. These mission outreach trips have inspired participating pastors to hold evangelistic efforts in their own churches upon their return. Elder Orduño is not just a promoter of evangelism; he sets the example by holding at least one effort overseas each year plus four major efforts in his own union.

NORTH PACIFIC UNION SUMMARY

Hispanic evangelism in the North Pacific Union was called "The Story of the Decade" by the editor of the *Gleaner*, the Union paper, in the August 21, 1989 issue. In the nine years following 1980, the Hispanic membership more than doubled, and the number of churches quadrupled. The number one problem facing Hispanics was inadequate church facilities to accommodate the number of members attending.³² However, history was made when the Milton-Freewater Hispanic company built the first church building in the Northwest which was designed and built for Hispanics.³³

Between 1990 and 1995, the Hispanic membership doubled again, to 3,186 members.

The Seattle Spanish Church in Washington was reported as one of the fastest growing churches in the Northwest and possibly in the North American Division.

By the end of the 1990's, Hispanic membership in the North Pacific Union had grown to 5,100 members. During 1999 alone, Hispanic pastors baptized 530 new members. This evangelistic success destroyed the myth that "the farther north you go, the harder it is to reach Hispanic people with the gospel."

Although their membership is still small compared to other unions in the North American Division, this last frontier has shown the same characteristics of evangelistic fervor that is typical of Spanish-speaking congregations in the more populous areas of North America.

As of December 31, 1999, the North Pacific Union had 29 Hispanic pastors, 51 Spanish congregations and 5,100 members.

NORTH PACIFIC UNION HISPANIC LEADERS



Ralph Orduño

*North Pacific Union Conference
Evangelist and Hispanic Coordinator*



Juan Borges
*Idaho Conference
Hispanic Coordinator*



Eddie Allen

*Upper Columbia Conference
Evangelist and Hispanic Ministries
Director*



Ramón Canals

*Oregon Conference
Evangelist and Hispanic Coordinator*

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14

Seventh-Day Adventist Church in Canada

Hispanics Migrate Further North

"For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in." Matthew 25:35 (NIV)

CANADA

CANADA ranks as the second largest country in the world in territory, after Russia, with a population of 30,500,000. Most Canadians are from European ancestry, reflected in their official languages of English and French. Although an independent, self-governing country, Queen Elizabeth II of Great Britain reigns as queen.¹

CANADIAN UNION CONFERENCE

(The Seventh-day Adventist Church in Canada)

The Canadian Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists covers the territory of Canada and the French islands of St. Pierre and Miquelon. Its conferences are: Alberta, British Columbia, Manitoba-Saskatchewan, Maritime, Ontario, and Quebec.

In 1901 when the first union conference was formed, it was comprised of only eastern Canada but in 1913 the descriptive name of Eastern Canadian Union Conference was given to it. The Western Canadian Union Conference was organized in 1907 and the two were united in 1932 to form the Canadian Union Conference. The Union was incorporated in 1986 as the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Canada.²

Adventist Hispanics Among Immigrants to Canada

Similar to the United States, the large flow of immigrants from Latin America beginning in the 1960's and 1970's produced Hispanic *barrios* in many Canadian cities. Political unrest in Central America forced many of its citizens to find refuge in other countries such as the United States and Canada. In some instances, restrictions on immigration caused some newcomers to bypass the United States and settle in Canada. In these new Spanish-speaking communities were Seventh-day Adventists who, because they could not understand English, sought to establish their own worship services soon after they arrived. As time passed, they engaged in evangelism among their Latino neighbors and their numbers grew.

ONTARIO CONFERENCE³

❖ **TORONTO**

Toronto has a population of 3.9 million people, making it the largest city in Canada. Two-thirds of its inhabitants claim no religion at all. Adventists, however, in the Ontario Conference alone, claim 43 congregations with over 12,000 members.⁴

Beginnings of Hispanic Adventism in Toronto



***Dr. Víctor Schulz with Violeta Jaramillo,
the first baptized convert in Canada.***

The first known Hispanic Adventist in Canada was Carlos Valdivia who arrived in Montreal in 1971;⁵ but it was in Ontario, 400 miles west of Montreal, that Spanish-speaking Adventism had its roots. There César Bravo and Violeta Jaramillo, both from Ecuador, were baptized into the Portuguese Adventist church in 1973, thus becoming the first known Hispanic converts in Canada.

In 1974 the Portuguese Adventist Church acquired a church building at 506 College Street in Ontario, next to the Adventist Ukrainian Church. Despite easy communication between the Portuguese and the Spanish members, Francisco

Botelho, the Bible worker assigned to the Portuguese church, began a separate Sabbath school in Spanish the following year. César Bravo and Violeta Jaramillo (the two original converts) were joined by newly baptized members Marisa Carrasco-Carrión, Rafael Carrasco and María Andrés, and Adventist immigrants Victoria Franco and Zoila Serrano from Ecuador, to form the seven-member class.

By 1976 the group had grown to 19 and gathered each week in an especially assigned room in the church. To their Spanish Sabbath school they soon added a church service with Portuguese Bible worker, Francisco Botelho, and Elder Polishuk, the Ukrainian pastor, occasionally speaking at the service.

Antonio Bueno Comes to Toronto From Spain

Pastor Henry Feyerabend, a former missionary to Brazil, was the pastor of the Portuguese church at the time. In addition to the Spanish group, Italian-speaking Adventists were also meeting in the Portuguese church. The Italian population in the city was noticeably growing, and to meet the needs of this third ethnic group in his church, Pastor Feyerabend was sent by the conference to Italy to find a minister for them. He regarded it as a case of divine intervention when he learned that Antonio Bueno, a native of Spain who was serving in Rome as president of the Italian Mission, was willing to transfer to Toronto to shepherd both the Hispanic and Italian worshippers.

When Elder Bueno and his wife, Amparito, arrived in Toronto in 1976, they found a small group of 19 Hispanics. Although Elder Bueno won some Italian converts, the majority of his converts were Hispanic.



Dr. Antonio Bueno, Sr. and his wife Amparito. He was the first pastor of the Toronto Spanish Church, the first Spanish Church in Canada.

Organization of First Hispanic Adventist Church

On May 13, 1978, two years after Elder Bueno assumed his new duties, the Ontario Conference officers organized the **Spanish Church of Toronto, which became the first Hispanic Adventist church in Canada**, consisting of 60 members, 13 of which were Italians.⁶

The celebration was a high day for the Toronto Adventists. A combined choir of Spanish, Portuguese, and Italian members prepared a repertoire in all three languages. A congratulatory telegram came to the new church from Elder Robert Pierson, president of the General Conference, as well as from Moses S. Nigri, general vice president and Roger A. Wilcox, field secretary. Other messages came from both Spanish and Italian sources in Europe.



**Elder Pedro Rodríguez and wife
Anita, 1996.**

Spain Sends "Shower" Gifts⁷

A unique feature of the celebration was a "shower" for the newly born church patterned after a baby shower, with gifts laid in a bassinet adorned with flags representing the many countries from which the members originated. Among the gifts were a new communion set and more than \$1800 in cash.

Spain, who that year celebrated the 75th anniversary of Adventism in her country, participated in the shower gifts. As the mother country of the Spanish language (*Castellano*), Spain feels akin to Spanish-speaking churches. That day Adventists in Spain sent three gifts to the Toronto Spanish Church. One was a magnifi-

cent double-silk Spanish flag, embroidered on both sides. Another was a large, leather-bound Bible. The third was a \$300 check to go toward the purchase of a piano.

In 1979, after serving three years in the Toronto church, Elder Bueno returned to his native Spain. The church remained without a pastor for one year, with only the elders attending it. The major responsibility fell to the head elder, Héctor Franco. In 1980, David Sangüesa, also from Spain, took over the pastorate. During the next nine years, the membership grew to 231.⁸ While this growth was taking place, other Spanish-speaking congregations were appearing in the Province of Ontario.

Spanish Bethel Church in Toronto

In Windsor, across the river from Detroit, Michigan, a group became a company in 1990 under the direction of Elder Pedro Héctor Rodríguez. Elder Rodríguez took his ministerial training at Central American Union College in Costa Rica after he left his native Cuba during the Mariel exodus in 1980. In 1989 Elder Sangüesa and Elder Rodríguez traded churches, and within a year the Toronto church spawned a second congregation. It grew to 67 members by 1991, largely due to an evangelistic series by Elder Rodríguez.

On June 15, 1991, this new company with 67 members became the second organized church in Toronto, known as the Bethel Spanish Church. They met at 33 Pritchard Avenue in the North Runnymede United Church.⁹ Elder Sangüesa, who had spent two years in Windsor, returned to Toronto to pastor this new congregation only days after its organization. He remained there for four years, raising the membership to 159 by the time he retired in September of 1995.¹⁰ Elder Saúl Aispuro and his wife Loyda then became the pastoral family in the Bethel Church.

❖ OTTAWA

Spanish Work in Ottawa

In Ottawa, Canada's capital city, a small gathering of Hispanic Adventists, mainly from Chile, met each week in the English-speaking church. Spearheading this group was Manuel Donoso, a recent convert. Donoso had emigrated from Chile in 1969 and married

a Canadian Anglo who did not speak Spanish. Together they became Adventists in 1988 and joined the Ottawa Anglo church.

In June, 1991, José and Xiomara Mendoza arrived from Chile with their family. Since they could not speak English, Manuel Donoso formed a Spanish Sabbath school class. For their Wednesday evening prayer meetings, they met in the home of Benjamín and Gabriela Miralles. By the following year they were holding their own church services in the basement of the church.

By 1994, twelve people had been baptized and the Spanish company had grown to 24. In January of the following year, the Ontario Conference called Pastor Roberto Aguilar and his wife Elvira to foster the growth of the Ottawa Spanish Company so they could be organized into a church. Two years later, in 1997, there were nearly 40 Hispanic members gathering weekly in Ottawa.



Elder Roberto Aguilar addressing the Toronto Spanish Church, 1998.

Other Companies Formed

Other companies formed in Hamilton (approximately 40 miles southwest of Toronto) and Kitchener (about 60 miles northwest of Toronto). By 1997, the membership of these Ontario Spanish congregations totaled about 500. Although this increase was encouraging, Pastor Rodríguez, of the Toronto Spanish Church, noted that all of these congregations faced a common challenge, that of locating acceptable places of worship. Because of prohibitive prices of property, not one of the six Hispanic congregations in Ontario could afford to purchase its own sanctuary.¹¹

QUEBEC CONFERENCE

Montreal Spanish Church

The Spanish work in the Quebec Conference dates back to the 1970's. The first Hispanic Adventist was Carlos Valdivia who arrived in Montreal in 1971. Hispanic families who came from the Caribbean and Central and South America to this French-speaking city began meeting in homes for their services. It wasn't until October 12, 1979 that they began meeting in the Norwood English church, holding their own Spanish Sabbath school, but worshipping with the Anglos for the 11 o'clock service.

When several Salvadorean refugees came to Montreal, the Spanish Sabbath school group saw the need to have church services as well. Because no one was available to preach in Spanish, Miriam Valdivia would translate Pastor Donn Leatherman's sermons into Spanish so he could read them to the group each Sabbath. In the interim, the Quebec

Conference made Isaías Santos, the Filipino pastor, available to the Spanish group. However, since he could not communicate in Spanish, his English sermons had to be translated.

As the group grew, they needed larger facilities in which to worship. They found a suitable place to meet at the Adventist school at 5619 de Cote St. Antoine; however, they were without a pastor until Elder Isaac Claudet of Perú came. But his ministry was cut short because of immigration problems. After Pastor Claudet left, the group found it necessary to move once again, this time to the church building of the Italian United Church of Canada in Montreal. To fill the void created by Elder Claudet's departure, the Quebec Conference once again asked Elder Isaías Santos to be their interim pastor. The Montreal Spanish Church was organized on January 26, 1985.

North Montreal Church Established

Eventually Héctor Jurado, a Panamanian pastor, arrived. During his ministry the Montreal Spanish group grew sufficiently to motivate some members to consider planting a second congregation elsewhere in the city. Accordingly, a small group formed a company in North Montreal on November 12, 1988, which became an official church four months later, on March 11, 1989. Pastor Jurado became the pastor of this new church as well as an English church, leaving the original group with a young, prospective minister, Ernesto Alers. Less than a year after its formation, on January 20, 1990, the North Montreal church acquired a sanctuary of its own, a Catholic church building located at 7980 Marquette.

The problem of pastoral stability continued as Pastor Jurado soon departed for the United States to pastor the Grand Rapids and Holland churches in Michigan. This left both Spanish congregations in the hands of Pastor Ernesto Alers who could devote only weekends to his congregations because of a graduate study program to which he was committed. Another Spanish-speaking minister, Pastor Benítez agreed to lead the church, but his pastorate also lasted only a few months. Understandably, the congregation was not happy about the rapid turnover in pastoral leadership. In 1994, however, Roberto

Rothermel, a full-time, permanent pastor, moved from Andrews University to Montreal to care for the two Spanish congregations. In July of 1997, Elder Héctor Jurado returned to the Quebec Conference, this time to serve as the Executive Secretary of the conference.

Montreal Spanish Churches

Of the two Montreal congregations, the original one, known as the Central Church, encountered more struggles. It



Elder Roberto Rothermel at the dedication of the Montreal Spanish Church, 1985.

was still without an established meeting place. One day Víctor Hernández, a member of the church, was returning home when he decided to take a different route. To his surprise, he discovered a church he had never noticed before, the Maple Hill United Church. The following Sunday, he attended their church services and afterwards talked to the Anglo pastor and some of his members. When he told them about his group's need for a meeting place, the pastor gave him a key and told him that they could meet at his church and not to worry about paying. However, they eventually ended up paying \$20 per meeting.

Church Property for One Dollar

The Maple Hill Church had only a few elderly members. To put it in perspective, the youth director was 60 years old. Within a few months, they decided to put their church building up for sale. The Adventist congregation had not anticipated this turn of events, but was very interested in buying the church. But so were the Pentecostals who had also been renting the church, and whose pastor lived across the street. They came in with an offer which was double what the Hispanic Adventists could afford. For unknown reasons, other than the providence of God, the Maple Hill church board decided to sell their building to the Hispanic Adventists. As if this was not a big enough answer to their prayers, the owners suggested that the Adventists buy the adjacent lot. Since the Maple Hill Church hadn't been able to maintain the property, they had donated it to the city. When the Hispanics approached the city officials and inquired about buying the property, they were even more amazed when the city sold it to them for the unbelievable price of one Canadian dollar. Blessings like this were an indication to the members that God was leading the Spanish work in Montreal.

ALBERTA CONFERENCE¹²

In the western Province of Alberta, seeds of Hispanic ministry began germinating in 1983 when five families from Chile, Cuba and El Salvador formed a Spanish Sabbath school in the Edmonton English church. Mel Djkwich, pastor of the Edmonton Central Church, was very supportive of the attempts to start the Spanish work and provided materials for them.



Members of the Edmonton Spanish Group, September, 1985.



Some of the members of the Edmonton Spanish Church, 1997.

Furthermore, in response to the needs of these families, the English church elected Amador Albórnoz, from Chile, as an elder in their church to represent the Spanish group. Brother Juan Capote from Cuba gave leadership to establishing a worship service in Spanish.

Víctor Schulz's Evangelistic Meetings

Following a visit by Glenn Maxson, the Spanish-speaking secretary of the Canadian Union, the Alberta Conference invited Víctor Schulz to conduct an evangelistic series for Hispanics in Edmonton, a city of half a million. The meetings, which began on May 9, 1986, in the Convention Center, were the first of its kind in Canada, and the results were felt in two important ways. The most immediate was the baptism of 30 persons, which raised the Edmonton Spanish congregation to more than 60. The second result was a decision by the Canadian Union to appoint Elder Schulz as the coordinator of Hispanic ministry for Canada while he continued more specifically to shepherd the growing work in Alberta. Under his direction the Hispanic membership in Alberta climbed to 300 by the end of the 1990's. Half were in the Edmonton congregation and half distributed among a church in Calgary, a group in Red Deer, and several Anglo churches.

***Outreach through Radio and Immigration Center*¹³**

During Dr. Schulz's pastorate, he arranged to have *La Voz de la Esperanza* broadcast in Canada beginning in 1994 and a branch Bible correspondence school which was established in Edmonton. He also produced his own daily radio outreach, *Radiografía del Vivir*, aired out of Edmonton, with the tapes being sent to Adventist World Radio (AWR) for rebroadcasting in their various world stations.

Dr. Schulz's wife, Elsa, has a unique outreach of her own. She created the "New Home Immigration and Settlement Centre," a center for immigrants coming into Canada where they can acquire the skills necessary to establish themselves in the community. The center provides housing information, employment assistance, skills development, computer instruction, career counseling, the host program, and language proficiency. This is the first of its kind in the North American Division.

Realizing that an immigrant who is settling in a new country is open to a new way of life, including religion, Mrs. Schulz is ready to offer spiritual help to anyone who requests it, even though it is not a formal part of the program. There have been several baptisms from those who have attended the center. It serves over 800 adult students a year from 69 different countries and primarily provides seven levels of English proficiency. With a staff of 44 full-time employees, it operates on a \$1 million annual budget funded by the government.

❖ CALGARY

The church in Calgary is nearly 200 miles south of Edmonton. It was in the summer of 1987 that Nicaraguan refugees Hermes Ayerdis and his wife, Fatima, landed in Calgary where they found friendly people in the Pineridge English-speaking church. But to communicate they had to depend on sign language or interpreters when they were available.

Although they were only few in number and only able to offer limited worship accommodations, these newcomers arranged for Bible studies with Josefina and Vila Parrilla. Later, Gilberto González joined the group, and in a few months, the number of Hispanic members rose to eight. They met in the kitchen of the church for their sermons or to hear a translation by one of two interpreters: Luis Gaitán or Marvin Pineda, even though he was only a child.

On September 5, 1987 Elder Víctor Schulz, who visited the group each month, baptized three of the group and six others joined the Pineridge Church by profession of faith: Daisy Pineda, Gilberto González, Hermes Ayerdis, Fatima Ayerdis, Karen Ayerdis and Norlan Ayerdis. Persistent in their personal witnessing, the group became ever larger, moving from the kitchen to the basement of the church. Steady increases in the number of attendees made it impossible to conduct their services anywhere in the building simultaneously with the English services; consequently, the Anglo congregation agreed to give the Hispanics access to the entire church on Sabbath afternoons to conduct their services.

Organization of Calgary Spanish Church

In July of 1988, Pastor Juan H. Pérez arrived to attend to the Spanish group and to form a church. In September of 1989, only two years after the first Spanish services began in the Pineridge Church, Schulz conducted an evangelistic campaign in one of the schools in Calgary which produced 15 baptisms. With these accessions, the group rented its own meeting place, a Presbyterian church in front of the Adventist sanctuary. In January, 1990, two-and-a-half years after the Spanish group had formed, it was organized into an official church of 37 members with Elder Don Corkum, president, Elder Bob Lemon, treasurer, Elder Schulz and local pastors officiating.

Commitment to evangelism was a priority for this new church. A Revelation Seminar by Juan H. Pérez brought the membership to 46 by the end of the year. In 1992, evangelist Xavier Soto Valle held evangelistic meetings and baptized 11 more. In 1994, Elder Efraín Murillo held an effort in Calgary and as a result, 12 additional people were baptized.

Nine years after the determined Ayerdis family began their meetings with only sign language, a Spanish church of 92 members was continuing the traditions of personal outreach that the original group had established.¹⁴

BRITISH COLUMBIA CONFERENCE

❖ VANCOUVER

Quezada and Vásquez Move from Long Beach to Vancouver

Adventists in the Province of British Columbia could tell a story similar to their counterparts in Alberta. Their experience began in the early days of 1987 when news reached the José Luis Quezada family in Long Beach, California, that the United States would not extend amnesty to illegal immigrants who had entered after 1982. Because they had entered the United States after the cutoff date, the Quezadas wasted no time preparing to leave. Conversations with the family of fellow church member Germán Vásquez led them to the decision to move to Vancouver, Canada also. Brother Quezada was an elder in the Spanish church in Long Beach and Brother Vásquez was a deacon. After resigning from their church offices, quitting their jobs, they sold or gave away their belongings and set off for British Columbia. After they were questioned at the border, they entered Canada and drove to Vancouver. There they rented an apartment and met to thank God for His care and blessings in allowing them to arrive safely.

Hispanic Families Begin Meeting in Central SDA Church

Scarcely a month had passed when, on February 13, 1987, they began meeting in Quezada's home at 5740 East Hastings, Apartment 8, in the city of Burnaby, for Sabbath school and church services. At the same time they encouraged newly-found friends to attend their worship. While they enjoyed their privacy, by April they realized that they should seek out the fellowship of an organized church. Pastor Dirk Zinner from the Central Adventist Church in Vancouver supplied a small room for the two families and gave them names of other Hispanics who had visited the church and signed the guest book. The Quezada and Vásquez families visited those people and invited them to their Sabbath school. Shortly, the attendance reached 65, including many who had fled their countries because of economic and political conflicts.

Jesús Flores Pastors the Vancouver Group

A year after the Quezadas and Vásquezes arrived in Vancouver, Jesús Flores and his wife, Gladis, retired workers living in Oregon, agreed to pastor the Hispanic group. When Elder Flores held a Revelation Seminar, Brother Vásquez drove to different parts of Vancouver and as far away as Coquitlam, more than 20 miles from the heart of the city, to transport visitors to the church. The group grew to the point that near the end of 1989, Lynn Baerg and his wife, Sharlet, North Americans with missionary experience in South and Central America, were called in to relieve the 75-year-old Flores of the burden of leadership.

The Baergs' Contribution to Spanish Work

For seven years the Baergs helped the Spanish congregation achieve specific goals, among them annual Spanish campmeetings, evangelistic meetings, training seminars for youth, informational seminars for successful homemaking, and the organization of a Path-

finder Club. Members who led in these programs were of Peruvian, Mexican, Nicaraguan and Salvadorean origin. Baerg also established *La Voz de la Esperanza* on a local radio station, and *Ayer . . . Hoy . . . Manana* and *Panorama Hispano* on Vancouver television.



Hilda Torres-Amaro manning one of the COMCAST T.V. cameras

Panorama Hispano (Hispanic Panorama) was a television program that was produced and hosted by Hilda Mireya Torres-Amaro for channel 8 in Baltimore, Maryland. On the program Hilda interviewed professional Hispanic leaders from the community as a public service. This program was aired for six months in Vancouver and resulted in 450 new contacts some of which were baptized.

The youth benefitted from Baerg's commitment by enjoying a church program of financial assistance to students who attended the Adventist school in Deer Lake. Baerg also carried a burden for the Portuguese-speaking community in Vancouver. He brought *Está Escrito*, the Portuguese version of *It is Written*,

to the city. After he retired in 1996, his successor, David Bravo, continued to support evangelism in the Brazilian and Portuguese population.

Organization of Vancouver Spanish Church

In 1994, the British Columbia Conference invited Jim León, a Nicaraguan minister, to join Baerg as an associate pastor. Working together, these two men led the Spanish company to become an official church on October 9, 1994. At the time of its organization, the membership stood at 125.

Other Churches Spawned

One of León's responsibilities was church planting, a task that he fulfilled by raising up a group in Surrey after a Revelation Seminar in 1995. Approximately at that same time, the Quezada family, with memories of their own beginnings in Vancouver, along with Wigberto Peñalba, led a move to spawn another Spanish group in Abbotsford.

Although the end of the 1990's the Hispanic ministry in British Columbia had not grown beyond the Greater Vancouver area, within a decade from its humble beginnings, it had succeeded in establishing a strong center whose influence extended into many Spanish-speaking neighborhoods.¹⁵

Víctor Schulz, Hispanic Representative for the Canadian Union

Víctor Schulz, born in Paraguay, South America, is a third-generation of Seventh-day Adventist pastors. His grandfather, Otto Schulz, was converted through the personal influence of Ellen G. White when she was in Europe. Otto studied at Madison College in

Tennessee and upon completion asked the General Conference to send him anyplace in the world that needed workers. He was sent to South America where he worked in Peru, Bolivia, Chile, Uruguay, Argentina and Paraguay. Víctor's father, Lucas Schulz, studied at River Plate Adventist College in Argentina. He married Melida Hien and their four children are all in the Adventist work. Their two daughters are married to Adventist workers and Víctor's brother, Luis, is president of River Plate Adventist University.

Elder Schulz graduated from River Plate College in 1964 with a B.A. in theology. Later he attended the University of Argentina in Buenos Aires, earning a B. A. degree in Communications. He married Elsa Esparcia in 1966 and began his ministry in South America as a pastor-evangelist. In 1973 the Schulzes came to the North American Division where he was invited to start the Spanish work in the Ohio Conference. In 1976, he received a call to the Indiana Conference to work among the Spanish-speaking people, where he later started a group in East Chicago.

In 1979 he graduated from Andrews University with both a Master of Divinity and a Doctor of Ministry degree. From 1982 to 1986 he was an itinerant evangelist, holding efforts in Australia, England, Portugal, Venezuela and several parts of the United States. In 1987 Dr. Schulz began working in Canada where he has served for 13 years. Besides being a district pastor and evangelist, he serves as the Canadian Union representative to the NAD Hispanic Advisory.

CANADIAN UNION CONFERENCE

The story of Hispanic Adventism in Canada shows that from the moments of their beginnings, Spanish-speaking congregations displayed a great interest in sharing their faith, both personally and through public meetings. By 1997, Adventist radio and television programs in Spanish were covering parts of Canada daily. Satellite hookups for *La Red '97* and '99, the Spanish version of the worldwide *Net* programs that began in 1995, were a part of the Hispanic evangelistic plan. In Toronto these programs were shown daily in Adventist vegetarian restaurants.

According to Dr. Schulz, Hispanic Representative for the Canadian Union, in 1997, Seventh-day Adventist Hispanics were scattered as far north as the Arctic Circle, and from Prince Edward Island, lying in the Atlantic Ocean off the coast of New Brunswick, to Vancouver Island in the southwestern corner of the country.

Although Hispanic Adventism was spread thinly in places, for the most part, it was an urban movement in British Columbia, Alberta, Ontario and Quebec. The membership rose from 130 in 1987 to 1,611 in 1999, with 23 congregations and 11 Hispanic workers. Although this total is only a small fraction of the more than 48,000 Adventists in Canada, their rapid growth demonstrates that they have become a vigorous segment of the Canadian Union.¹⁶

SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH IN CANADA LEADERS



Héctor Jurado
Quebec Conference
Secretary



Víctor Schulz
Canadian Union
Hispanic Representative

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Section IV

SPANISH PUBLICATIONS AND MEDIA

15

ASTR Research Center Library
General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists

Pacific Press Publishing Association

Impacting the Growth of the Hispanic Work

"How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, Who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation, who say to Zion, 'Your God reigns!'" Isaiah 52:7

INTRODUCTION

THE power of the printed word can hardly be overestimated. Millions have come to find Christ through this powerful media, a truth that has been borne out in the Hispanic work. Greatly impacting the phenomenal growth of the Hispanic work in the North American Division have been the Spanish publications produced by the Pacific Press

Publishing Association. The history of this institution and its leaders as it relates to *El Centinela*, the most well-known Adventist Spanish-language magazine, plus the printing of other materials in Spanish, will be covered in this chapter.

***Pacific Press Publishing Association and Spanish Publications*¹**

The Pacific Press Publishing Association was established in 1874 in Oakland, California. For the first few years of its operation, publications were in English only. However, on May 21, 1901, the prospect of establishing a branch office in Mexico to publish Spanish materials was mentioned at a Pacific Press stockholders' meeting.² The project was approved, subject to General Conference approval, and a fundraising campaign was authorized. Nevertheless, for some unknown reason, the implementation of the project was postponed for several years.

At the annual stockholders' meeting in January, 1906, it was voted that the Press "undertake the publication of Spanish literature" in cooperation with Hamburg Publishing House,³ the German Adventist publishing house which published materials in 20 languages, including Spanish. The decision was a logical one, since the Pacific Press was the closest Adventist press to the Spanish-speaking fields in the Inter-American Division.

Elder George W. Caviness, an experienced Spanish translator, was asked to assist in the writing and translating of the Spanish materials which the Press produced between 1909 and 1911. In 1897 Elder Caviness had moved to Guadalajara, Mexico to work with an international commission that was translating the Bible into Spanish. While there, he became the editor of *El Amigo de la Verdad*, which had been in existence for only a year, but which is believed to have been one of the forerunners of *El Centinela*.⁴

International Branch

Meanwhile, back in the United States, the need for foreign language literature was recognized by the church since at that time it was estimated there were six million people in the United States who could read only foreign languages, among them, Hispanics. In response to this need, the International Publishing Association was established (1903) in College View, Nebraska to publish foreign language literature. In August, 1914, the Pacific Press, acting on the recommendation of the General Conference, took over the International Publishing Association operations, bringing the foreign language publications under the management of one publishing house.

Tragically, the International Press building burned to the ground on February 27, 1916 and the operation was then moved to a new building in Brookfield, Illinois, about twenty miles west of Chicago.⁵ From 1916 to 1959, millions of books, magazines, and tracts rolled off the press from this location helping to meet the spiritual needs of foreign-speaking people both at home and abroad.

Inter-American Division Branch—Cristobal, Panamá

At the November, 1916 Autumn Council of the General Conference, the brethren asked the Pacific Press to expand its operation further by producing publications for the Inter-American Division. In a unanimous vote, it was recommended, "That the Pacific Press Publishing Association be invited to establish a branch publishing house in the West Indian Union or Northern Latin American Mission field territory."⁶

The Pacific Press' response was positive: "We know that this is accepting a tremendous responsibility, with prospects not of financial gain, but of heavy burdens and perplexities. However, as this is moving right in line with instruction given in the *Testimonies*, we take courage."⁷

In accepting this challenge, the Press agreed to serve a large territory with a population of nearly 40 million. Aside from small English, French, and Dutch elements, the majority of the people in that territory were Hispanic. Selecting Cristóbal, Panama as the location for the office and factory, they bought a house and lot for \$7,500 in January of 1918, which they planned to convert into a printing press.

It was almost two years later, however, on December 28, 1919, before the concrete building was ready for dedication, though it had been occupied in July. This branch provided books, magazines, and tracts for colportors and church members in all the Spanish-speaking countries, as well as for Hispanics in the United States, until 1952, when it was moved to Brookfield, Illinois in the United States. In 1959, the Brookfield Branch was merged with the main office and factory of the Pacific Press in Mountain View, California, which took over the preparation of Spanish and other foreign publications.

Mountain View, California

In 1904 the Pacific Press moved its Oakland plant to Mountain View, California, where it would stay for 80 years until the move to its present location in Nampa, Idaho in September of 1984.

From 1959 to 1984 the Foreign Language Department (as it was known at that time) experienced solid growth, especially in the area of Spanish publications. These publications were used both in the North American and Inter-American Divisions, as well as other places where Spanish was spoken. During this period the following Pacific Press leaders are credited with producing, promoting and increasing the distribution of Spanish materials: Frank L. Baer, editor of *El Centinela* and manager of the International Publications Department of the Pacific Press (1954-1980); Marcelo I. Fayard, editor-in-chief of *El Centinela* and French publications (1949-1961), Fernando Chaij, editor-in-chief of *El Centinela* (1962-1964; 1969-1971) and book editor of Spanish publications (1962-1978); Benjamín Riffel, first director of International Periodical Sales (1959-1980); and Sergio V. Collins, editor of the French Department, associate book editor of Spanish publications, editor of the health magazine *Viva Mejor (Better Life)*, and associate editor of *El Centinela* (1966-1983).

Nampa, Idaho

At the beginning of 1982, a combination of serious economic and political problems affected several countries in the Inter-American Division territory, making it impossible for the Pacific Press to continue providing printed materials to those countries. Consequently, the General Conference stepped in and created the Inter-American Division Publishing Association (IADPA), which would be responsible for carrying on the publishing program in that Division.

With a reduced market and the high cost of operating in the Bay Area of California, as well as other financial concerns, the Pacific Press Board took an action to sell their property in Mountain View, California and relocate to a less expensive and more centralized area of the Division, where they could design and build an efficient facility. They chose a 40-acre (16 hectares) property in Nampa, Idaho. The relocation began in the summer of

1984 when they moved into temporary quarters in Nampa until their new building was completed in the spring of 1985.

With the blessing of God and the outstanding management leadership of two presidents, the late Eugene Stiles (1983 -1989) and Robert Kyte (1989 -), the Pacific Press has surpassed all expectations of record sales and profits.



Pacific Press Publishing Association, Nampa, Idaho.

During the last fourteen years, the administration has given outstanding support to the publication of Spanish materials. In 1985 Humberto M. Rasi, who had been the editor for international publications since 1978, was asked to serve as **the first Hispanic Vice President for Editorial Development**. This department included both English and International publications. Rasi served in that capacity until 1987, when he was elected to the position of Director of Education for the General Conference.



Elder Félix Castro

In 1987 Félix Castro was called from the Pacific Union Conference Home Health Education Department to fill the position of Director of Subscription Sales (literature book sales). Both Dr. Rasi and Félix Castro proved to be valuable components of the Pacific Press and gave outstanding service to both the institution and the field.

Another important factor in the success of the Spanish publications was the continuing support of Hispanic pastors, conference and union Hispanic leaders, and Hispanic administrators at the North American Division level: Joe Espinosa, NAD Field Secretary and Director of Multilingual Ministries (1980-1990); and Manuel Vásquez, NAD Vice President and Director of Multilingual Ministries (1990-). Both have written numerous articles for *El Centinela* and *La Revista Adventista* and have had several books published by the Pacific Press.

Books for Literature Evangelists

From the time the Pacific Press first began printing Spanish materials in 1906, special emphasis was given to the publication of books for literature evangelists' use in both the North American and Inter-American Divisions. Many of those books were also sold in the South American Division. The two main subjects published for the literature evangelist sales were: religious (for both adults and children), and healthful living. The Pacific Press is proud of its Spanish publications, some of which have been bestsellers (selling over 20,000

copies). Following is a partial list in their different categories (indicating title, author, and year of publication):

1909-1938

(a) Religious

- *El conflicto de los siglos (The Great Controversy)*, Ellen G. White, 1910
- *Heraldos del Porvenir (Heralds of the Future)*, Asa O. Tait, 1919
- *Por sendas extraviadas (The Marked Bible)*, C. L. Taylor, 1922
- *Nuestro siglo a la luz profética (Our Day in the Light of Prophecy)*, Guillermo Spicer, 1926
- *Patriarcas y profetas (Patriarchs and Prophets)*, Ellen G. White, 1926
- *Hacia la edad de oro (Toward the Golden Age)*, Marcelo I. Fayard, 1930

(b) Health

- *Salud y hogar (Health and Home)*, several authors, 1909
- *Guía práctica de la salud (Practical Guide to Health)*, Federico Rossiter, 1911
- *El consejero médico del hogar (The Medical Counselor)*, Huberto Swartout, 1938

1940-1970

(a) Religious

- *El mundo del futuro (The World of the Future)*, Daniel Hammerly Dupuy, 1947
- *Lecciones prácticas del gran Maestro (Christ's Object Lessons)*, Ellen G. White, 1947
- *El desenlace del drama mundial (The Outcome of the World Drama)*, Fernando Chaij, 1956
- *Potencias supranormales (Mysterious Powers)*, Fernando Chaij, 1963
- *Las bellas historias de la Biblia (Bible Stories)*, ten vol., Arthur Maxwell, 1965 to 1966

(b) Health and Home

- *Fuerza y salud por la alimentación (Health and Strength by Proper Eating)*, Marcelo Fayard, 1947
- *La clave de la felicidad (Key to Happiness)*, Marcelo Fayard, 1950
- *El secreto de la dicha conyugal (Happiness for Husbands & Wives)*, Harold Shryock, 1952
- *El guardián de la salud (Guardian of Health)*, Huberto Swartout, 1953

1971-1997

(a) Religious

- *Solucione sus problemas con la Biblia (Your Bible and You)*, Arthur Maxwell, 1972
- *Cuéntame una historia (Uncle Arthur's Bedtime Stories)*, five vol., Arthur Maxwell, 1981
- *Las hermosas enseñanzas de la Biblia (Bible Readings)*, 169 Bible studies, 1984
- *Mis amigos de la Biblia (My Bible Friends)*, five vol., Etta R. Degering, 1987
- *Dios revela el futuro (God Cares)*, two vol., Daniel and Revelation, Mervyn Maxwell, 1989

- *Enciclopedia cristiana del hogar (Bible Reference Library)*, 12 vol., Ellen G. White (except *Bible Readings for the Home*), 1991

(b) Health and Home

- *Enciclopedia médica moderna (Modern Medical Encyclopedia)*, three vol., Marcelo Hammerly, 1971 to 1972
- *Enciclopedia médica familiar (Family Medical Guide)*, three vol., Mervyn G. Hardinge, 1994 (published jointly with Inter-American Division Publishing Association (IADPA) and the Buenos Aires Publishing House (ACES)
- *Las mejores historias para los niños (Great Stories for Kids)*, five vol., Jerry Thomas, 1995

Books for Church Members

Books produced for literature evangelists include the Adventist doctrines and are mainly sold to non-members as a missionary outreach. Books published for church members basically seek to nurture and affirm their religious experience. In this category there are different types of books such as: doctrinal, devotional, marriage, youth, children and current issues that impact the church. Pacific Press has published hundreds of these books in Spanish almost from its very outset. The following categories include three types of books for church members plus a few others that merit mentioning.

Christian Home Library (Biblioteca del Hogar Cristiano)

The Christian Home Library collection contains books written almost exclusively by Ellen G. White. In agreement with the White Estate, the Pacific Press has translated into Spanish and published the majority of the books authored by Ellen G. White. The Inter-American Division Publishing Association and the Buenos Aires Publishing House have also participated in this monumental project which has helped put the writings of the Spirit of Prophecy into the hands of two Hispanic generations.

The Ellen White bestsellers in Spanish are: *El camino a Cristo (Steps to Christ)*, *El Deseado de todas las gentes (Desire of Ages)*, and *El conflicto de los siglos (The Great Controversy)*. In 1992 *Eventos de los últimos días (Last Day Events)* was published and became an instant bestseller as well.

Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary (Comentario Bíblico Adventista del Séptimo Día)

The Spanish *Bible Commentary* has been perhaps the most demanding and expensive Spanish publishing enterprise ever undertaken by the Pacific Press. The translation, updating, and production of the seven volumes required 12 years to complete (1978-1990). The North American, Inter-American, and South American Divisions, as well as the General Conference shared in the cost of production with the Pacific Press.

The Spanish edition was translated from the revised 1976 English edition published by the Review and Herald. Víctor Ampuero Matta from the Buenos Aires Publishing House was the principal translator and Nancy W. Vyhmeister, the associate translator, also did the updating and revising of the text. The chief editor was Humberto M. Rasi. Associate editors were: Sergio V. Collins, León Gambetta, Tulio N. Peverini, Juan J. Suárez, and Raúl Villanueva.

The 66 books of the Bible are covered in the seven volumes as listed:

Volume 1	Genesis to Deuteronomy
Volume 2	Joshua to 2 Kings
Volume 3	1 Chronicles to Song of Songs
Volume 4	Isaiah to Malachi
Volume 5	Matthew to John
Volume 6	Acts to Ephesians
Volume 7	Philippians to Revelation

In 1997 ACES published two additional volumes of this series in Spanish: Volume 7-A (Ellen G. White Comments) and Volume 8 (*SDA Bible Dictionary*).

Devotionals – Mainly the Morning Watch Devotional Books (*La Matutina*)

The Pacific Press, IADPA and ACES, publish the morning watch devotional books each year in Spanish on a rotating basis. Circulation in the North American Division is nearly twenty thousand copies.

In the late 1990's Hispanics began writing their own devotional books instead of translating them from English writers. Mario Veloso, Associate Secretary for the General Conference, was the author of the 1998 Spanish devotional: *Conversando con Dios (Talking with God)*. Alejandro Bullón, Ministerial Director of the South American Division, authored the 1999 devotional book.

Other Special Titles

The following titles written for specific purposes merit mentioning:

- *Preparación para la crisis final (Preparation for the Final Crisis)*, Fernando Chaij, 1966. This bestseller was translated from Spanish to English and was reprinted many times.
- *Creencias de los Adventistas del Séptimo Día-Las 27 doctrinas fundamentales (Seventh-day Adventists Believe)*, Ministerial Association of the GC, 1988. This book is recognized as the official book with the 27 doctrines of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. (See Appendix for a brief statement of these doctrines along with accompanying scriptural texts).
- *Peligro al Acecho (The Danger Within)*, Manuel Vásquez, 1994.
- *De mujer a mujer (From Woman to Woman)*, edited by Ramona Pérez-Greek, 1994. This compilation of devotionals written by Hispanic women was the first of its kind for the Hispanic constituency in North America.
- *Todavía creemos en su venida (We Still Believe)*, written in 1994 by Robert S. Folkenberg, then president of the General Conference.
- *La línea directa a Dios (God's 800-Number Prayer)*, Manuel and Nancy Vásquez, 1995.
- *José* (autobiography of Pastor José Rojas), 2000.
- *Apocalipsis y el fin del mundo (Revelation and the End of the World)*, Mario Veloso, 1998.
- *La explosión de la Nueva Era (The Mainstreaming of New Age)*, Manuel Vásquez, 1998.
- *Mensajera del Señor (Messenger of the Lord)*, Herbert E. Douglass, a new and solid study on the life and ministry of Ellen G. White, 586 pages, 2000.

The Pacific Press also published the Spanish church hymnal which has been used in North America and other divisions where there are major concentrations of Hispanic believers. The first Adventist hymnal (*Himnario adventista*) was published in 1921, with 449 hymns; and republished in 1962, with 527 songs.

Outreach Materials

The Pacific Press has published a number of Spanish outreach books and pamphlets to assist the Hispanic members in sharing their faith with non-Adventist friends:

Libro Misionero del Año (Missionary Book of the Year)

During the past 12 years, the Press has published a yearly Spanish missionary book for mass distribution written by either an evangelist or church leader.

- *El mayor descubrimiento (The Great Discovery)*, Tulio N. Peverini (then editor of *El Centinela*), commemorating the 500th anniversary of Columbus' discovery of America, 1992; 36,000
- *Mensajes de un Amigo (Messages from a Friend)*, Miguel A. Valdivia (then associate editor of *El Centinela* and editor of *Revista Adventista*), 1994; 31,000
- *Esperanza para el planeta Tierra (Hope for Planet Earth)*, Stephen Bohr (pastor), 1995; 38,000
- *¿Fin del mundo o nuevo comienzo? (The End of the World or a New Beginning?)*, Angel M. Rodríguez (associate director of the General Conference Biblical Research Department), 1996; 33,000
- *Del abismo a la gloria (From Abyss to Glory)*, Milton Peverini (director and speaker of *La Voz de la Esperanza*), 1997; 40,000
- *Cristo es la solución (Christ is the Solution)*, Alejandro Bullón (ministerial director for the South American Division), 1998; 60,000
- *Año 2000: ¿Será éste el fin? (The Year 2000: Will This Be the End?)* Juan C. Viera (then director of the White Estate at the General Conference), 1999; 30,000. This was the **first time an author had written a missionary book that was used for both English and Spanish in the same year.**
- *Es Hora de Ver a Jesús (It's Time to See Jesus)*, Alejandro Bullón (ministerial director for the South American Division), 2000; 80,000

Paperback Editions of Ellen G. White Publications

The Pacific Press has published the following Ellen G. White books in Spanish in very inexpensive editions to facilitate distribution by the hundreds of thousands:

- *El Deseado de todas las gentes (The Desire of Ages)*, 774,500 copies
- *El conflicto de los siglos o El conflicto cósmico (The Great Controversy or Cosmic Conflict)*, 822,500 copies
- *Palabras de vida del gran Maestro (Christ's Object Lessons)*, 72,500 copies
- *El hogar cristiano (The Christian Home)*, 42,500 copies
- *El camino a Cristo (Steps to Christ)*, which has been the top seller with over 2,500,000

copies sold.

Discovery Series (*Serie Revelación*)

The Discovery Series consists of 25 booklets (32 pages each) on the main beliefs of the church, adapted to non-Adventists. Half of the booklets were written by Spanish authors, with the other half written by English authors and translated into Spanish. They were produced jointly by PPPA, IADPA and ACES between 1990 and 1993.

Tracts (*Folletos*)

During the last 30 years, the Pacific Press has published a variety of different witnessing tracts in Spanish. Following are some of the titles:

- *Encounter (Serie Encuentro)*, 20 studies
- *Maranatha (Maranata)*, 12 lessons on prophecies of Daniel and Revelation
- *Cristo habla al hombre moderno (Christ Talks to Modern Man)*, 18 lessons
- *Así está escrito (It Is Written)*, 20 studies
- *Un diálogo con Dios (A Dialogue With God)*, five studies
- *Mensajes de esperanza (Messages of Hope)*, 18 tracts. Published in 1988.
- *Desafíos juveniles (Youth Challenges)*, nine tracts. Published in 1989.
- *Descubra (Discover)*, 26 lessons. Published in 1996 by Voice of Hope and Seminars Unlimited and printed by Pacific Press.
- *Paz para vivir (Peace for Living)*, 20 studies. Published in 1997 for the Spanish Net '97, upon the request of NAD Multilingual Ministries Department.

Perhaps the most effective and widely used lessons in this category have been the baptismal manuals written by Carlos E. Aeschlimann and published by the Pacific Press in 1975:

- *La fe de Jesús (Faith of Jesus)*, 20 lessons, for adults, with an advanced course of ten lessons and six supplemental lessons for the youth.
- *Amigos de Jesús (Friends of Jesus)*, 17 lessons for children.

La Revista Adventista (Spanish Adventist Review)

In 1974 the Spanish editorial department of the Pacific Press began printing *la Revista Adventista*, which could be referred to as a Spanish version of the English *Adventist Review*. The editors were Wanda Sample and Raúl Villanueva. Unfortunately, this monthly magazine was discontinued in 1977.

It reappeared, however, in 1990 as a quarterly with a circulation of 10,000. The editor, Miguel Valdivia, was also an associate editor of *El Centinela*. Manuel Vásquez, NAD Vice President and Director of the Multilingual Ministries Department, became its editorial advisor. According to Valdivia, the goals of the magazine were to: "(1) Inspire and strengthen the faith of Hispanic members. (2) Provide church news and information. (3) Promote unity and provide articles on current subjects that impact the Hispanic work." In 1998 the circulation was up to 18,000.

Valdivia continued as editor until the end of 1997 when he became the editor of *El*



Dr. Armando Juárez

Centinela. In 1998 Armando Juárez, a professor of theology from Montemorelos, Mexico, became the editor of *Revista Adventista*. He had been the coordinator of the Graduate Division of the School of Theology at the Adventist University of Montemorelos.

Spanish Quarterlies

In addition to the Spanish books and magazines, the Pacific Press also publishes the adult Spanish Sabbath school quarterlies (regular, teacher, and large print editions) for the North American Division. The three publishing houses (Pacific Press Publishing Association, ACES and IADPA) share in the preparation. ACES does the translations, Pacific Press prepares the negatives and then sends them to IADPA for printing. The equipment and the expertise at the Press contribute greatly to the excellent quality of these lessons.

Ingathering Brochures (*Informantes de Recolección*)

The Ingathering campaign plays an important role in Spanish churches. As far back as the second issue of *El Centinela*, published in October, 1919, it was noted that an entire issue was dedicated to the Ingathering campaign with a run of 40,000 copies. In 1926 the *El Centinela* Ingathering issue numbered 62,000.

For several years, especially in the 1970's and the beginning of the 1980's, Ingathering brochures were published as special editions of *El Centinela*: six editions for the Inter-American Division (IAD) and 13 for the NAD. Presently the Pacific Press prepares five language brochures for the NAD, including one in Spanish, with a circulation of nearly one million copies.

EL CENTINELA

For more than a century, *El Centinela* has been perhaps the most effective outreach journal for Hispanics the church has had, in both the North American and Inter-American Divisions. The beginnings of *El Centinela* and its forerunners take us back to Old Mexico and the year 1896.

Forerunners of *El Centinela*

El Centinela had two notable forerunners: the Mexican magazine *El Amigo de la Verdad* (which later became *El Mensajero de la Verdad* and then *Las Señales de Los Tiempos*), and the Puerto Rican magazine *El Centinela de la Verdad*.



El Mensajero de la Verdad, Mexico, July, 1901.

- In 1896, Elder Dan T. Jones and other missionaries from the Urban Guadalajara Mission in Mexico began printing a magazine called *El Amigo de la Verdad* (*The Friend of the Truth*). As mentioned earlier, the following year, Elder George W. Caviness, an Adventist scholar, arrived in Guadalajara and became the magazine's editor, a position he held for more than 20 years. In 1901 Elder Caviness began publishing the periodical in Tacubaya, Mexico City under the name of *El Mensajero de la Verdad* (*The Messenger of Truth*), and in 1910 the name was changed again, this time to *Las Señales de los Tiempos* (*Signs of the Times*).

• In 1903, an Adventist missionary, Brenton E. Connerly, arrived in Mayagüez, Puerto Rico, and shortly after began publishing a 16-page outreach magazine called *El Centinela de la Verdad* (*The Sentinel of the Truth*). The first issue appeared in April of that year, with a yearly subscription price of 50 cents. In 1909, the preparation and printing of that magazine was transferred to Panama in Central America.

However, in 1911 a fire erupted in Cristóbal, Panama, destroying 60 houses, including the building where *El Centinela de la Verdad* was printed. This tragedy forced the discontinuance of the Puerto Rican magazine until July of 1919, when the Pacific Press, then located in Mountain View, California, began publishing it again under the name *El Centinela* (*The Sentinel*).



El Centinela de la Verdad, Mayagüez, P. R., April, 1903.

The Beginning of El Centinela

It was at the 1919 Spring Council, that the General Conference took the following action:

Whereas, there is urgent need of a Spanish periodical in the United States for use among the many thousands speaking that language, especially in the West and Southwest; and whereas, there is fair assurance of a good circulation of such a periodical; therefore, we recommend, that the Pacific Press be requested to publish a quarterly Spanish magazine at Mountain View, beginning with the third quarter of 1919.⁸

Complying with this request, the Pacific Press board took the following action on May 25, 1919:

VOTED, That we comply with the request of the General Conference to print a Spanish *quarterly magazine*, and that Brother E. R. Johnson act as editor, the first number to be issued in July and that the circulation should be in the United States, the West Indies, Mexico, Central America.⁹

However, by the end of the year, plans for a quarterly magazine had given way to publishing a monthly edition. Consequently, on December 16, 1919, the Press took another important action:

VOTED, That we grant the request of the General Conference and representatives of the Spanish field, and make *El Centinela* a monthly magazine, beginning with the January [1920] issue, the paper to be six-teen pages and cover; subscription price: \$1.50 per year.¹⁰

In 1921 a General Conference committee decided to discontinue the Mexican magazine *Las Señales de los Tiempos* (*The Signs of the Times*), which originally had been *El Amigo de la Verdad*, in order to avoid duplication. *El Centinela* was then officially appointed the “successor” of the Mexican magazine.



El Centinela Mtn. View, CA, January, 1920.

Editors and Places of Publication

The following are dates and locations where the *El Centinela* magazine has been prepared and published by the Pacific Press:

July, 1919 - June, 1921	Mtn. View, California
July, 1921 - March, 1953	Canal Zone, Panama
April, 1953 - September, 1959	Brookfield, Illinois
October, 1959 - September, 1984	Mtn. View, California
October, 1984 -	Nampa, Idaho

Editors of *El Centinela*:

Ernest Johnson Jorgenssen	1919- 1926
Delwin Rees Buckner	1926- 1932
Benjamin O. Maxson	1932- 1937
Robert L. Odom	1938- 1943
Benjamin O. Maxson	1943- 1944
W. A. Wild	1944- 1947
Benjamin O. Maxson	1947- 1949
Marcelo I. Fayard	1949- 1957
Héctor Pereyra Suárez	1957-1959
Marcelo I. Fayard	1960- 1962
Fernando Chaij	1962- 1964, co-editor
Héctor Pereyra Suárez	1962- 1964, co-editor
Frank L. Baer	1962- 1964, co-editor
Héctor Pereyra Suárez	1964- 1968
Fernando Chaij	1969- 1971
Tulio N. Peverini	1971- 1997
Miguel A. Valdivia	1998-



Elder Marcelo Fayard

In the next paragraphs we want to underline the contributions given to the church by some of the editors and Pacific Press leaders already mentioned.

Marcelo I. Fayard

Marcelo I. Fayard, native of France, devoted almost all his life to editorial work in two Adventist publishing houses: Buenos Aires Publishing House (from 1918-1948) and Pacific Press Publishing Association (from 1949 to 1961). In this institution he served as book editor, editor of *El Centinela* from 1949 to 1957, and then from 1960 to 1962, as chief editor of the Spanish and French Departments. He wrote many articles for Adventist magazines and 14 original works, and translated 47 books from English into Spanish (13 of them

written by Ellen G. White). In his writings, he put special emphasis on subjects related to health and nutrition. Some of his books were *bestsellers* sold in the three Americas: *Hacia la edad de oro* (*Toward the Golden Age*), *Fuerza y salud por la alimentación* (*Health and Strength by Proper Eating*), and *La clave de la felicidad* (*Key to Happiness*). He was born in 1894, in St. Fortunat, France, and passed to his rest in 1966, in Mountain View, California. "We must pass on the message," was one of his favorite mottoes, which filled him with fervent zeal.



Dr. Fernando Chaij

Fernando Chaij

Dr. Fernando Chaij was born in Argentina in 1909 and served the church 48 years, 43 of them as journalist, writer, and editorial director. Besides his theological studies, he obtained a doctoral degree in history and philosophy. He performed his duties as editor and editor-in-chief in the Buenos Aires Publishing House for 24 years, and then 17 years at Pacific Press Publishing Association with similar responsibilities. He wrote 12 books, translated 16, and authored hundreds of articles; he was also editor of *Vida Feliz* (Happy Life), *El Centinela*, and *Revista Adventista* the Spanish *Adventist Review*. He contributed to the preparation of a complete generation of Adventist editors and made a solid and spiritual impact in the field. Among his most known books are *El desenlace del drama mundial* (The Outcome of the World Drama), *Potencias supranormales* (Mysterious Powers), *Paz en la angustia* (Peace in the Anguish), and *Preparación para la crisis final* (Preparation for the Final Crisis). For long years, Sara, his wife, was the editor of *El Amigo de los Niños* (Our Little Friend). He passed away, along with his wife Sara, in a car accident in 1991.

Frank L. Baer

Born in 1910, Elder Frank Baer very early showed his talents for the printing and publishing work. As a young adult, he successfully established his own printing facilities. Upon the request of the General Conference, he served as manager at the Buenos Aires Publishing House, Argentina, from 1945 to 1954. Then he was asked to serve as manager of Inter-American Publications at the Pacific Press, where he stayed until 1980. During these 26 years he had vision and administrative talent for recruiting personnel and obtaining funds for the production of scores of Spanish books used in the North American and Inter-American Divisions and other countries of the Spanish world. He was a perfect bilingual with an outstanding gift for public relations. He is remembered for his sympathy and love toward the Spanish-speaking people. Elder Baer passed away in 1984.



Elder Frank Baer



Elder Benjamín Riffel

Benjamín Riffel

Elder Benjamín Riffel was born in 1914, in Crespo, Argentina, and belonged to one of the first Adventist families in South America which produced many workers for the church. He dedicated his life to God's service, and worked as a pastor, publishing director, conference president, sales director and promoter of our publications.

Elder Riffel worked 21 years in the South American Division, in Argentina and Peru, and 22 years at the Pacific Press Publishing Association. The circulation of *El Centinela* reached unprecedented heights under his promotional work. Even after his retirement in 1988, he kept giving seminars for literature evangelists

and inspiring church members to use the Press' publications for sharing their faith. He wrote *Exito sin límites* (*Unlimited Success*) and *Providencias de Dios* (*Providences of God*). Both books deal with the ministry of publications and were translated into Portuguese. Elder Riffel was gifted with a contagious enthusiasm, and his attractive personality, together with his dedication to the church, allowed him to raise many resources for the construction of a church and other noble projects. He passed away in 1998, and is remembered with love by his relatives, friends, coworkers, and many literature evangelists and church members.



**Dr. Tulio Peverini
and his wife Lilia.**

Tulio N. Peverini

Dr. Tulio N. Peverini retired in 1997 with 43 years of outstanding denominational service, 37 of which were dedicated to editorial work. He and his twin brother, Dr. Milton Peverini, were born in Uruguay and are fourth-generation Adventists. Their great-grandfather, *Don Pedro Peverini*, was one of the first Adventists in Argentina. Both he and his wife, Cecilia, had been Waldenses. The Peverini twins' grandfather was a literature evangelist in his youth and their father, Héctor, served 47 years as a Seventh-day Adventist pastor, editor and administrator. His dedicated life to the Lord profoundly inspired them.

For the first eight years of Tulio's denominational service, he worked at the South American Publishing House in Argentina (1954-1961). The next eight years (1962-1969) were spent teaching at Instituto Juan B. Alberdi (North Adventist Academy) and River Plate College. It was in 1971 that he became the director and editor of *El Centinela*, a position that he held till 1997. During his tenure at the Pacific Press Publishing Association, he wrote 250 articles and authored two books: *Victoria sobre la muerte* (*Victory Over Death*) and *El mayor descubrimiento* (*The Greatest Discovery*), the missionary book for 1992. He was one of the editors of the seven-volume Adventist Bible Commentary in Spanish. Besides his theological studies, he obtained a doctoral degree in education.

Dr. Peverini's wife, Lilia Wensell de Peverini, has also been a dedicated worker with 21 years at the Pacific Press as a proofreader and designer of both books and magazines. In their retirement, the Peverinis have worked on various projects for the church, one of which was the Adventist Hispanic centennial book—*The Untold Story—100 Years of Hispanic Adventism*.

Miguel Valdivia

The present editor of *El Centinela*, Miguel Valdivia, has added several appealing columns to the outreach magazine: "Talking with the Doctor" "*Hablando con el doctor*," "Health and Nutrition" "*Salud y nutrición*," "Questions, Challenges and Ideals For Young People" "*Para Jóvenes: inquietudes, Desafíos e Ideales Juveniles*," and "Questions from the Readers" "*El Lector Pregunta*". He also is the editor-in-chief of the



Dr. Miguel Valdivia

International Department, and has written the books *Mensajes de un Amigo* (*Messages from a Friend*) and *Rescate del Orión* (*Rescue from Orion*).

Circulation of *El Centinela*

The oldest magazine circulation records show that in 1924 there were 13,000 *El Centinela* subscriptions. Gradually increasing its run, *El Centinela* reached its highest circulation in 1981, with an amazing 650,000. At that time *El Centinela* was published in five different languages: Spanish, French, English, Dutch, and Portuguese. However, because of the financial crisis that took place after that peak, three of these editions were discontinued. At the present time the periodical is published monthly in only two languages: *El Centinela*, in Spanish, with a combined circulation of 212,000 (92,000 in NAD, and 120,000 in IAD), and *La Sentinelle*, in French, with 45,000 subscriptions. Pr. Oscar Hernández is the present Sales Director of *El Centinela* and all the Spanish publications.

El Centinela periodically publishes a special issue on subjects such as: home, health, religious liberty, the twenty-seven fundamental beliefs, prophecies of Daniel and Revelation. Every year the April issue is dedicated to "Semana Santa" ("Holy Week," between Palm Sunday and Easter) which highlights the plan of salvation and Christ's glorious resurrection.

***El Centinela* Seminar**

Each year the director of the Department of International Sales organizes the *El Centinela* seminar for all NAD Hispanic coordinators. At this meeting, marketing strategies, magazine content, quotas, prices and problems relating to *El Centinela* are discussed and acted upon.

Administrators and Editors of the Pacific Press

Pacific Press Managers/Presidents

W. C. White, president	1876
James White, president	1877-1878
J. N. Loughborough, president	1878-1879
S. N. Haskell, president	1880-1888
C. H. Jones, president	1888-1902
C. H. Jones, manager	1891-1905
E. A. Chapman, manager	1906
C. H. Jones, manager	1906-1933
C. H. Jones, president	1912-1933
J. H. Cochran, manager	1933-1940
H. G. Childs, manager	1941-1950
I. J. Woodman, manager	1951-1960
R. P. Rowe, manager	1961-1966
L. F. Bohner, manager	1967-1973
W. J. Blacker, manager	1973-1977



Elder Oscar Hernández

L. J. Leiske, manager	1977-1983
E. M. Stiles, president	1983-1989
R. E. Kyte, president	1989-
Pacific Press Vice Presidents for Editorial Development (including the International Area)	
Humberto M. Rasi	1985-1987 (only for the International Area: 1978-1984)
Ken McFarland	1986-1989
Russell Holt	1989-
Sales Directors, Marketing Department, International Area (beginning with 1959)	
Benjamín Riffel	1959-1980
José L. Campos	1972-1976, associate
Claudio Ingleton, Sr.	1980-1982
Raúl Rojas	1982-1983
José L. Campos	1984-1990
Efraín Pérez	1990-1992
Saúl Agosto	1992-1999
Oscar Hernández	1999-
Associate editors of <i>El Centinela</i>	
Sergio V. Collins	1970-1979
León Gambetta	1976-1981
Raul Villanueva	1980-1983
Juan J. Suárez	1984-1989
Miguel A. Valdivia	1989-1997
Armando Juárez	1998-

The NAD Hispanic leadership and members are indebted to the Pacific Press administration and Spanish language editorial staff for their interest, support and the voluminous number of Hispanic publications that they have produced through the years to advance the Hispanic work in the North American Division.

We also want to pay a grateful tribute to the army of literature evangelists who, through the one hundred years of Spanish work in this Division distributed thousands of books, gave Bible studies, made converts, started groups and churches, and contributed unselfishly to the spreading of the Gospel. The reader will find in the different chapters of this book thrilling experiences about these unsung and dedicated heroes of our church.

Endnotes

1. The major source for the Pacific Press account was provided by Tulio Peverini (retired editor of *El Centinela*), in an unpublished manuscript, "The Pacific Press and Spanish Publications." April 14, 1998.
2. Richard B. Lewis, *Streams of Light, The Story of Pacific Press* (Mountain View, California: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1958), p. 31.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 56.
4. "Un Siglo en la Vida de *El Centinela*," *El Centinela*, March, 1996.
5. Lewis, p. 55.
6. "Thirteenth Annual Meeting of the Pacific Press Publishing Association," *Pacific Union Recorder*, Loma Linda, California, Vol. 16, No. 31, March 8, 1917, p. 3.
7. *Ibid.*
8. Minutes of the Secretary, Board of Directors, Pacific Press Publishing Association, May 28, 1919, p. 264.
9. *Ibid.*, May 25, 1919, p. 259.
10. *Ibid.*, December 16, 1919, p. 311.

16

Hispanic Media

"The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God." Isaiah 40:3

INTRODUCTION

THE history of Adventist Hispanic Media is both remarkable and inspiring. Only eight years after Adventist radio pioneer Harold Marshall Sylvester Richards (better known as H. M. S. Richards) went on the air (1930), with his radio broadcast *The Tabernacle of the Air* in Long Beach,¹ California, Pastor Carlos Nicolás began a Spanish radio broadcast, *La Hora Cristiana*, in Los Angeles. That same year (1938), Pastor C. A. Robaina also had a Spanish radio program in Brawley, California, called *La Voz de la Verdad*.

In 1942 when *The Voice of Prophecy* radio program went coast-to-coast for the first time, airing on 89 stations, Pastor Braulio Pérez Marcio, went international with the Hispanic program *La Voz de la Profecía*.²

This chapter will highlight those Adventist Hispanic media pioneers and entrepreneurs who have dedicated their lives, time and talents to reaching Hispanics with the gospel through mass media, both in this Division and beyond.

LA VOZ DE LA ESPERANZA

La Voz de la Profecía/La Voz de la Esperanza, the Spanish *Voice of Prophecy*, is **the only North American-based Adventist Hispanic media program to transcend its own Division territory and become an international radio program** at its very outset in 1942. Today, *La Voz* is broadcast on over 700 radio stations across the United States, Canada, Latin America, Australia and Europe—30 countries in all, including some non-Spanish-speaking countries.

Forerunner of *La Voz de la Esperanza*

In 1938, Pastor C. A. Robaina conducted a three-month Spanish evangelistic effort in Brawley, California. His radio program *La Voz de la Verdad*, had captured the interest of many Hispanic people in and around Brawley. When he was in his last few weeks of meetings, however, he encountered opposition from the other Mexican Protestant pastors in the area. He had already baptized ten precious believers and was preparing 17 others. But just when he needed the radio program the most, he ran out of funding and had to discontinue it.

The following Sunday the Mexican preachers, both in Brawley and in Calexico, got together and started their own radio religious radio program, to counter Pastor Robaina's preaching. They even called their radio program, *La Voz Evangélica*, and requested the same time slot that Pastor Robaina had, hoping that the Hispanic radio listeners would think it was the same program. However, the station manager told them that he was saving that time slot for Pastor Robaina.

In a letter to Elder E. F. Hackman, president of Southeastern California Conference, Robaina wrote; "When I saw what these preachers were trying to do, I wanted to go back to preaching on the radio. I did not have the money but I knew the Lord wanted me to use the radio to defend His message. So I went to Calexico and told the church there that we were responsible before the Lord to see that the truth is preached and protected. I wanted them to pay for the radio hour for some time. I am glad to tell you that the Calexico church will pay for ten lectures. I was so glad to go back to El Centro last Sunday morning and start a new series of Bible lectures. At 8 o'clock we were on the air—just a half hour before the other preachers came on."³

Pastor Carlos Nicolás, a Spaniard pastoring in Los Angeles, realized the potential that radio had to diffuse the Adventist message to the more than a quarter of a million Spanish-speaking Hispanics in Los Angeles. So in 1938, when he launched out with a religious radio program called *La Hora Cristiana*, he became the Adventist pioneer of Hispanic radio broadcasting in the North American Division. This 15-minute program, airing from 7:00 to 7:15 a.m. every Monday, Wednesday and Fri-

day on KFDV, began receiving thousands of inquiries from Hispanic radio listeners. Pastor Nicolás' congregation began rapidly growing through the interests generated from this media.⁴

In 1940, Pastor Nicolás unofficially renamed his program *La Voz de la Profecía*, patterning it after H. M. S. Richard's program *The Voice of Prophecy*. He enlisted a young pastor from Peru, Merardo León, to assist him as the announcer. Two years later, in 1942, Pastor Nicolás received a call to Central California where he pastored the Fresno Spanish Church until his death in 1955 from a heart attack.

General Conference Actions Concerning International Spanish Radio Broadcast

Meanwhile, at the General Conference, plans were being developed for the extension of the English *Voice of Prophecy* radio program into the Spanish-speaking countries of Central and South America. The General Conference brethren were primarily concerned with reaching the Spanish-speaking masses in the Latin countries because at that time the Hispanic work in the North American Division was comparatively small.

On April 5, 1942, the 107th meeting of the General Conference Committee voted to request that Elder William Gordon Turner, a GC vice president responsible for North America, and those associated with him in the radio work, begin arranging for the *Voice of Prophecy* to broadcast in the Spanish-speaking countries of Central and South America. The Pan-American Broadcasting Company had offered to do that for \$55,000 a year.⁵

On June 4, 1942, at the first session of the Comisión Latinoamericana de Radio (Latin American Radio Commission) of the General Conference, it was officially voted that the name of the Spanish *Voice of Prophecy* program be called *La Voz de la Profecía*.⁶

Then **on September 3, 1942**, the Commission voted to adapt and translate the English *Voice of Prophecy* Bible lessons and produce them in Spanish to be used by *La Escuela Radiopostal* (the Radio Bible School).⁷

Three days later, the fifth session of the commission convened, this time to choose the speaker for the proposed international *Voz de la Profecía*. One of the General Conference leaders, while in Cuba, had heard Pastor Braulio Pérez Marcio on his religious radio program there and was very much impressed. So he suggested Pastor Pérez Marcio's name and the committee was impressed with the recommendation. They voted to extend the call to Pastor Pérez Marcio, and he enthusiastically accepted. At the same meeting, they voted that young Pastor Merardo León continue as the program's announcer.⁸ Pastor Pérez Marcio would later be given the authority to adapt the language, illustrations and poetry of the new international radio broadcasts to appeal to the largely Catholic audiences in the Latin countries. That same year Pastor Pérez Marcio moved to Glendale, California with his family where *La Voz de la Profecía* was being recorded.

In 1944, Mexican-born Pastor Juan Eduardo Pérez was called as the announcer and he remained with Pastor Pérez Marcio until 1950. An interesting sideline is that Pastor Juan Eduardo Pérez is married to Lydia Sánchez. She is the 14th of 15 children born to Adiel Sánchez of the Arizona Sánchez family, who were charter members of the first Hispanic Adventist church in North America.

Braulio Pérez Marcio⁹

Braulio Francisco Pérez Marcio was born into a Catholic family in 1904 in Salamanca, Spain. When he was eight years old, his father moved the family from Spain to Florida, Argentina, in the suburbs of Buenos Aires, where Braulio was reared and educated. The Pérez family was poor in earthly goods but had high moral and ethical standards with a strong belief in honesty and hard work. At the tender age of ten, young Braulio felt he needed to do something to help make ends meet for the family. So he went out looking for a job and found one—cleaning up after hours at the local theater.

When Braulio was 19 years old, his six-year-old sister, Isabelita, became ill. Upon learning of the little girl's illness, a Seventh-day Adventist neighbor, Mrs. Oppegard, went to the Pérez house to visit the child and offer whatever help she could. But Isabelita's illness took a turn for the worse and within a short time, she died. Mrs. Oppegard continued to visit the family, consoling them and again offering her assistance. When she shared with them the Bible teachings on the state of the dead, the family became so interested that they began attending the Adventist church to learn more. Soon after, the whole family was baptized.

Following his baptism in 1923, Braulio decided to discontinue his studies at the government school and enroll in Colegio Adventista del Plata (River Plate Adventist College) in Libertador San Martín, Argentina. But he needed to raise the money for his schooling. So Braulio entered the literature evangelist work, one in which his father was already engaged. For three years Braulio worked and saved his money to study at the Adventist college.

Felisa García Pérez

While colportoring, Braulio met and worked with Sotero García, an older literature evangelist. Mr. García just happened to have a beautiful daughter, Felisa, and Braulio fell in love with her. Felisa García and her family had also migrated from Spain (Naval Moral de la Mata) to Buenos Aires, Argentina so the two had something in common. But they were both young and needed to get their education, so they continued dating for the next six years. Braulio Pérez Marcio graduated with a bachelor's degree in theology in 1930, and the following year they were married. Felisa finished her studies in 1932, graduating with a degree in education.

That same year they were both called to teach in Tres Rios, Costa Rica at El Colegio Adventista Latino (Central American Adventist Academy), which served as a worker training school. Pastor Pérez Marcio became a professor of theology and also served as principal of that institution. Felisa was an education professor. In 1941 they went to Cuba where Braulio served as a pastor/evangelist as well as director and speaker of a local radio outreach program there.

La Voz Broadcasts Hope

In 1942 on world scene, the Germans had overrun and occupied nearly all of the Eastern and Western countries in Europe, taking control of Norway, Finland, and the North-western countries of Africa. There was world-wide concern that Hitler's master plan to conquer the world was very possible. Nevertheless, the program *La Voz de la Profecía* began broadcasting hope to Hispanics around the world.

Pastor Pérez Marcio felt that the name of the radio program should be changed be-

cause, to the non-Adventist Hispanic public (most of whom were Roman Catholics), the name sounded too much like a Bible study class. "There is a world war going on. What our people need," he argued, "is a religious program that deals with practical, every-day issues and gives them *esperanza* (hope) to live by."

Although the brethren continued to discuss the name change during the ensuing years, the actual change to *La Voz de la Esperanza* (*The Voice of Hope*) did not take place until 1954.¹⁰ Although **Pastor Braulio Pérez Marcio** had been speaking and directing *La Voz de la Profecía* for 12 years, he **now became the first speaker and director of the radio program under its new name.**



Braulio Pérez Marcio and Los Heraldos del Rey (left to right): Bob Edwards, Jerry Patton, Jack Veazey, and Jim McClintock.

The King's Heralds Learn to Sing in Spanish

In planning for ways to enhance the radio program, Pastor Pérez Marcio began dreaming of incorporating music into the format. He had been captivated by the music of The King's Heralds Quartet who were singing for the English *Voice of Prophecy*: George Casebeer, Jr. - first tenor, Bob Seamount - second tenor, Wayne Hooper - baritone, and Ray Turner - bass. That's when he came up with a unique idea.

"Why not use them on the Spanish program?" he thought. "I could teach them to sing in Spanish." When he approached the quartet, they thought it was a terrific idea and that's how Los Heraldos del Rey came into being.¹¹

So Pastor Pérez Marcio began teaching them to sing in *español*, "the language of heaven." Wayne Hooper remembers, "Braulio's goal, and our goal too, was to have us sing without an accent, so the Spanish listeners would not know we were 'gringos.' He wanted us to sound like Hispanics." In order to accomplish that, Pastor Pérez Marcio

would record them singing in Spanish and they would listen to critique their pronunciation. "Sometimes," Hooper recalls, "there would be a word with two 'r's' in it and if we didn't roll those 'r's' enough, Braulio would say, 'There are not enough 'r's' in that word.'" But Los Heraldos all recognized that Pastor Pérez Marcio had a unique sense of humor. From 1944-1947 the quartet sang in Spanish for the *La Voz* programs.

In 1949 Pastor Pérez Marcio decided to go a step further with the quartet. In order to help them endear themselves to his radio listeners, Pastor Pérez Marcio decided to christen each of them with a Spanish name. The members of the quartet at that time were: Bob Edwards - first tenor who became Roberto Luis Eduardy; Bob Seamount - second tenor, was given the name Roberto Miramontes; Wayne Hooper - baritone, was christened Eduardo Lima Fuentes; and Jerry Dill - bass, took the name Juan Antonio Díaz.

This group sang in Spanish for *La Voz* for 12 years as Los Heraldos del Rey and did so without the use of phonetics, something they had to do with other foreign languages. Wayne Hooper, speaking for the quartet, said "We all loved Braulio. He was just as inspiring and great to work with as H. M. S. Richards was."¹²

Later, as the members of the quartet changed, they were also given Spanish names: Jerry Patton, second tenor, became Francisco del Aguila. Jack Veazey, baritone, took on the name Pedro Antonio Gómez. Big Jim McClintock, bass, became known as Santiago Marco Hernández. Later, when John Ramsey replaced Bob Edwards, he was given the name of Juan Angel Marín. For many years this "Spanish" quartet blessed Hispanic listeners through their radio music, recordings and live performances.

Brad Brailey, the VOP organist, also became the organist for *La Voz* between 1955-1978 and was known as Ernesto de Miranda. When Brad would accompany the quartet at Spanish churches, Pastor Pérez Marcio would introduce him by saying "Hasta con un 'de' por 'ay'," meaning that Brad's Spanish name was authentic because the *de* (of) is only used with Spanish names.

In 1948 another recording artist from *The Voice of Prophecy*, Del Delker, learned to sing in Spanish for *La Voz* radio programs and occasionally appeared with Pastor Braulio Pérez Marcio at *La Voz* rallies. Through her personal appearances and more than 70 recorded Spanish songs, God used Del's rich and warm contralto voice to touch innumerable Hispanic lives and lead them to Christ.

Honorary Doctorate Bestowed

During his tenure at *La Voz*, Pastor Pérez Marcio visited all twenty Hispanic countries in the world, holding evangelistic efforts in every one of them. As the founder and speaker of the international *La Voz de la Esperanza*, Pastor Pérez Marcio was instrumental in developing four aspects of the radio ministry: the programming format, musical ministry, radio correspondence school and public evangelism. In 1970, Andrews University recognized Pastor Pérez Marcio's outstanding international Hispanic radio contributions by bestowing on him an honorary doctorate.

Dr. Pérez Marcio was a wide reader, keeping in touch with the news from the major Latin countries by reading five or six of their newspapers every day. He also had a love of poetry which is evident from his collection of more than 4000 poems from various poets. He himself composed more than 300 poems. His love of poetry was shared by his wife, a poet in her own right, who wrote 500 poems.

The Passing of Dr. Braulio Pérez Marcio

In December of 1973, Dr. Pérez Marcio retired. Through his foresight, however, *La Voz* enjoyed a smooth transition of leadership. Four years before, in 1970, Dr. Pérez Marcio had requested that the *Voice of Prophecy* officials assist him in the search for and selection of someone to take over the reins of *La Voz*. Following an intensive search, Milton Peverini García, a promising young pastor in Los Angeles, was chosen to be mentored and groomed for the leadership of *La Voz*.

On January 1, 1974, Dr. Pérez Marcio passed the torch to Dr. Milton Peverini. A few months later, while conducting a "Semana Santa" (holy week) Easter effort at the Pasadena Spanish Church, he preached his last sermon on Sunday night, April 7, 1974. The next morning he passed away at his home in La Crescenta, California, a victim of a massive heart attack. More than one thousand people attended his funeral on Saturday, April 13, and caught anew the vision of this man of God who had preached to millions of Hispanics around the world.

This mighty man of God was eulogized by many church leaders, one of which was Elder Walter R. L. Scragg, then General Conference Communications Department Secretary. At the grave site he stated: "The church has lost one of the most influential figures that it has possessed in recent years."¹³

The *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia* records an impressive statement about Braulio Pérez Marcio: "His life and ministry did much to change the image of Adventism and Protestantism in Latin America. It is estimated that in excess of 40,000 Hispanics around the world joined the church largely as a result of his ministry."¹⁴ Dr. Pérez Marcio was survived by his wife, Felisa García, his son, Rolando, and his daughter, Isabel Pérez de Dupertuis.



***Dr. Milton Peverini García, speaker
of La Voz de la Esperanza.***

Milton Peverini García

Milton Peverini García, along with his twin brother, Tulio, was born in Paysandú, Uruguay, where his parents were serving as missionaries. The twins were raised in a profoundly religious Christian home. Their father was a God-fearing man who set a good example for his sons as a pastor, evangelist, and writer. At a very early age Milton dedicated his life to the cause of Jesus Christ. God blessed that decision and prepared him for what would become his major contribution to the church—radio ministry.

In 1952 Milton completed his studies in theology at El Colegio del Plata in Argentina where he met his future wife, Eunice Meier. In 1955, he received a law degree at La Facultad de Derecho y Ciencias Sociales de la Universidad de Buenos Aires. His studies in theology and law, plus his experience as an educator, youth counselor and pastor broadened his leadership as speaker of *La Voz*.

Dr. Milton Peverini, New Director and Speaker for *La Voz*

Dr. Milton Peverini, as the new director of *La Voz*, went on to carry the international radio ministry to even greater heights during the next 24 years. He not only became the new speaker and manager of *La Voz*, but exhibited admirable qualities as an evangelist and author, writing many articles and books, the last of which was entitled *Del Abismo a la Gloria* (*From the Abyss to Glory*).

***La Escuela Radiopostal* (Radio Correspondence School)**

It was in February of 1942 that evangelist Fordyce Detamore developed and inaugurated a radio Bible correspondence school for the *Voice of Prophecy*.¹⁵ Radio listeners who wished to study the Bible in the privacy of their own home could now do so, with the help of correspondence courses. Following closely behind, the Spanish *Voice of Prophecy* established its own correspondence school in 1943 and called it *La Escuela Radiopostal*. By the following year, *La Escuela Radiopostal* had 30,000 registered students worldwide. The first Bible correspondence courses they offered were translated *Voice of Prophecy* lessons: *Universal* for adults and *Juvenil* for the youth, which for the next 20 years were the only two courses available in Spanish.

In 1963, *La Escuela Radiopostal* introduced *Tesoros de Vida* (*Treasures of Life*) Bible correspondence course which they developed specifically for the non-Adventist listeners of *La Voz*. This third course was very well received and still continues to fill a very important need in the correspondence school today.

Pastor Juan Armando Bonjour

In 1971, Pastor Juan Armando Bonjour came from Argentina to join the *La Voz* Bible Correspondence School in Glendale, California, as a pastoral consultant for its thousands of Bible students. This mild-mannered man of God brought with him the expertise and experience he had gained from having occupied the same position for 20 years in the Bible School for *La Voz* in Argentina. Under Dr. Peverini's administration, Dr. Bonjour continued giving personal attention to each letter the Bible School received. This tremendously enhanced the popularity of *La Voz* and Pastor Bonjour endeared himself to its listeners. During the 18 years that Pastor Bonjour served in that position (1971-1989), he wrote a total of 53,624 personal letters¹⁶, averaging over 60 letters a week. While still active at his post of duty at *La Voz*, this beloved pastor unfortunately suffered a stroke and passed to his rest in 1989.

International Bible Correspondence Schools

In addition to the main Bible correspondence school in Simi Valley, California, 37 affiliates operate in the Latin countries, handling 100,000 letters per year. As of this writing, *La Voz* has surpassed the one million mark of Bible correspondence enrollees.¹⁷ In 1979 Dr. Peverini visited 20 cities in Mexico where 7,470 *La Voz* Bible correspondence students graduated. In 1996, 8,520 Bible correspondence students graduated in 22 cities in Argentina, Uruguay and Chile.¹⁸

In the decade between 1981-1991, and under the leadership of Dr. Peverini, *La Escuela Radiopostal* greatly increased its number of students with the creation of four new Bible correspondence courses:

1. *Hogar Feliz (Happy Home)* introduced to the Hispanic public at El Festival de la Familia (the Festival of the Family) in Los Angeles, California, March 7, 1981.
2. *Buena Salud (Good Health)* in 1983.
3. *Tiempo Joven (Young Life)*, introduced for the first time at a youth rally in New York City May 11, 1991.
4. *Descubra (Discovery)*, a translation of the 26 Discovery lessons in English used in the Spanish churches for the Net '96 and Net '97 satellite efforts.

Much of the success of the *La Escuela Radiopostal* is due in part to its outstanding and dedicated directors: Pastor Manuel Nestares, 1955-1965; Rebeca Mazlumián, 1965-1977; José Alberto Díaz, 1978-1980; Dr. Rubén Darío Sánchez, 1980-1985; Anita Requénez Moses, 1985; Oscar Hernández, who served as the Bible school director from 1985-1989, also carried the responsibilities of director of development and field services. Rolando Morelli directed the school from 1989 to 1993 while also serving as Production Assistant, Public Relations and Field Services Director. From 1998-2000, Louis Torres, an authority in training lay persons, was the Director of *La Escuela Radiopostal* and Field Services Director.

La Voz Enters Public Evangelism

Although the primary mission of *La Voz* was to sow seeds of truth through the media of radio, it of necessity became involved in public evangelism at its very inception in 1942. Each of the director/speakers (Braulio Pérez Marcio, Milton Peverini and presently, Frank González) were and are successful evangelists in their own right. Taking advantage of the good will and trust created through the radio programs, the speakers on *La Voz* invited thousands of their listeners, plus the students and graduates of the Bible Correspondence School to attend *La Voz*-sponsored evangelistic crusades in selected cities. Through this avenue, they "harvested" many souls who had already accepted the seeds of truth received through the radio waves.

Pedro Arano, Field Director

In 1977 *La Voz* expanded its evangelistic outreach by inviting Pedro Arano, president of the North Mexican Mission, to be the Field Service Director of *La Escuela Radiopostal* and evangelist.¹⁹ Pastor Arano brought to this new position not only his administrative experience, but also his talents as a seasoned journalist and radio speaker. For four years, Pastor Arano worked directly with literature evangelists, pastors and lay persons, helping them maximize the benefits of the soul-winning materials of *La Voz*. He would hold an average of four crusades a year in the cities where *La Voz* was successfully broadcasting and reap the harvest which had been faithfully sown. In 1981, following his tenure with *La Voz*, Pastor Arano went on to pastor several Spanish churches in Southern California.

Armando James Collins, Researcher and Writer

Another staff member who joined *La Voz* in 1977 was Armando James Collins. Collins served as a researcher and writer in the programming and production departments preparing materials for the broadcasts. Another area of responsibility was editing new Spanish Bible correspondence courses. Collins, originally from Chile, came to *La Voz* from the Pacific Press Publishing Association where he had been working since 1969 as a very

capable translator and copy editor in the Spanish department.²⁰ Today, Collins continues to work for *La Voz* on a contract basis. He and his wife, Ruth, also own and operate El Camino Publishing in Newbury Park, California.

Los Heraldos del Rey

La Voz reached several milestones during 1984. After 42 years of continuous broadcasting and borrowing the King's Heralds from the English *Voice of Prophecy*, *La Voz* finally acquired its own Spanish quartet. Armando Cordero, bass; Rafael Parrilla, baritone; Sóstenes Valenzuela, first tenor; and Fernando Vargas, second tenor joined *La Voz* as "Los Heraldos del Rey" on a contract basis. Their harmony and Latin-spirited music gave a true Spanish flavor to the program. However, because of time and finances, they were only able to sing with speaker Milton Peverini on the weekends and for special events.²¹

Theirs was a ministry of sacrifice and dedication, since they were all privately employed. Traveling after work once a week to the Media Center in Thousand Oaks, they would practice from 7:30-11:30 p.m. The satisfaction they received, however, was the knowledge that now not only was the Hispanic audience able to identify with them as fellow Hispanics, but they were also able to converse fluently with them in their own language. Los Heraldos del Rey continued singing with *La Voz* until 1987.

La Voz has also featured on its program guest singing artists such as: Evangelina Pérez, Francisco Priano, Elsa Schulz, Saul Silva, El Cuarteto Decisión (Decision Quartet), El Cuarteto Melodías (Melodies Quartet), marimba groups, and Los Mensajeros de Paz (Messengers of Peace). In 1988 Brazilian-born Alex Reichert, a very accomplished musician, became the organist for *La Voz*.

La Voz Gains Its Own Legal Identity

During 1984, *La Voz* gained its own legal identity, another very important milestone. Previously, it had operated as a department of the English *Voice of Prophecy*. After 42 years of continuous broadcasting, however, the General Conference recognized the importance of the role that *La Voz* was playing in the "over-all world evangelism program," and in January of 1984, voted to give *La Voz* its own legal, administrative identity, and executive committee. Thus it became the fifth component of the Adventist Media Center.²²

Branching Out Into Television Media

It was during Dr. Peverini's tenure that *La Voz* branched out into Spanish television media. In December of 1984, *La Voz* for the first time reached out to the Hispanic community via television with a 30-minute Christmas special entitled "El Mejor Regalo de Navidad" (The Best Christmas Gift). The following year, Dr. Peverini filmed two more video specials, this time in Palestine, the birthplace of Jesus. They were entitled "Semana Santa en Jerusalén" (Holy Week in Jerusalem) and "Hace Dos Mil Años--Navidad en Belén" (2,000 Years Ago--Christmas in Bethlehem).

The real break-through, however, for *La Voz* to do television video programs came in 1994 when Mark Finley, the director and speaker for *It is Written*, offered to co-produce Spanish videos for television with *La Voz*.²³ *It is Written* and Elder Finley produced 37 videos with Dr. Peverini's voice-over, using Spanish announcers and guest singers. Since then *La Voz* has produced 33 additional videos with Dr. Peverini as the speaker, for a total

of 70 Spanish TV videos. These are not only used by television stations in the United States and Canada, but have been transmitted from Buenos Aires to all the Latin American countries. In Costa Rica, "Enlace" TV network is transmitting these programs via satellite to more than 200 Latin American TV stations.

Frank González Chosen as Successor

Just as Dr. Pérez Marcio had made provisions for his successor, Dr. Peverini would do the same as his retirement drew near. In 1995 *La Voz* began a search for an associate director and speaker who would be groomed for the director/speaker position. After the preliminary search and a long elimination process, Cuban-born Frank González, who was serving as Hispanic coordinator for the Pennsylvania Conference, was selected.

In January of 1996, Pastor González joined *La Voz* as associate director and speaker. Two years later, in January of 1998, the *La Voz* leadership torch was once again passed on when Dr. Peverini retired and Pastor González became the full director and speaker. Dr. Peverini still continues his association with *La Voz* as speaker emeritus.

Although Frank was born in Cuba, at the age of nine he, along with his mother, migrated to the United States where he received his formal education. He graduated *summa cum laude* from Andrews University with his Master of Divinity degree in 1984, the same year that *La Voz* gained its legal identity.

Besides his work as coordinator in Pennsylvania, Pastor González created and directed his own TV outreach program for Hispanics entitled *Vida Abundante* (Abundant Life). He has also written numerous articles in both English and Spanish in several church journals.

Pastor González is a gifted and fully bilingual worker who came to this position with a rich pastoral, evangelistic and administrative background. He is married to Evelyn Camerón who has given her total support to her husband's ministry and goals.

For more than 56 years *La Voz* has been a tremendously successful Adventist Hispanic outreach, bringing hope to countless Hispanics in all 20 Hispanic countries of the world.

AYER. . .HOY. . .MAÑANA TELEVISION PROGRAM

Ayer. . . Hoy. . . Mañana²⁴

Years before *La Voz de la Esperanza* launched out into television in 1984, Elder Jorge Grieve and his wife Nila, both from Argentina, had co-created and produced a local Spanish-speaking television program in New York City. *Ayer. . .Hoy. . .Mañana* eventually went nationwide and then international. During its nearly two decades of telecasting (1975-1992), it proclaimed the Adventist message to millions of Hispanic TV viewers in the North American Division as well as in most of the Spanish-speaking countries in Central America.

The *Ayer. . .Hoy. . .Mañana* radio program was already broadcasting in 1971 when Ted Wilson, then director of the Greater New York Metropolitan Ministry Evangelism Center, asked Pastor Jorge Grieve to join the NYMM as Hispanic Director of Radio and Evangelism. The NYMM was a General Conference entity serving the entire area of Greater New York City, located at 227 W. 46th Avenue, across the street from the famous Helen Hays Theater, and just one block from Times Square.



**Jorge, Nila and
Omar Grieve of
Ayer . . . Hoy . . .
Mañana.**

Pastor Norberto Mulinari from the Brooklyn Spanish Church, along with a group of laymen, had initiated the *Ayer . . . Hoy . . . Mañana* radio program. It had been successfully broadcasting for a year and one-half when a family tragedy forced Mulinari to leave the program and return to Argentina.

Not wanting to drop the program altogether, the conference asked Pastor Grieve if he and his wife Nila would take it over. They agreed to do so. The Embajadores Reales quartet, who had been regulars on the program, agreed to stay. They continued singing on the program from 1969-1974. The members were: Ramón Colón - first tenor, Francisco Ramos - second tenor, Luis Cádiz - baritone, and Ricardo García - bass. Francisco Ramos also served as the Associate Director of the radio program. Freddy Sosa, a second tenor, also sang as one of the quartet members for a time.

The Grieves put everything they had into this program and built up the radio audience until it became one of the most listened to Hispanic religious programs in New York City, New Jersey, and Philadelphia. At that time *AHM* aired every Sunday from 9:00-9:15 a.m. on station WADO. It was popular not only among evangelical churches, but also among the Catholic people. Practically every Sunday Pastor Grieve had invitations to preach in different evangelical churches, who gave him the liberty of presenting whatever theme he chose to speak on.

Ayer . . . Hoy . . . Mañana Launches Into Television

As the radio program became more successful, Nila Grieve, began thinking of ways to expand its influence. "Perhaps," she thought, "a television program would be more effective in reaching all levels of the Hispanic population in Greater New York." When she told her husband, at first he was skeptical, thinking it would be too big of a project and too costly to make it a reality. Nevertheless, upon Nila's insistence, he finally agreed to go to Channel 47, the Hispanic television station of Greater New York to discuss the possibilities with them.

When Pastor Grieve met with the TV program director, he laid out his whole vision and program plan for *Ayer . . . Hoy . . . Mañana*, ending with his desire to secure a time slot at the TV station. The director looked at him incredulously and asked, "Where have you people been all these years, with such a marvelous program to offer to the Hispanic public?" Pastor Grieve was overjoyed at his response. The director immediately arranged for a time slot for the program and told Pastor Grieve, "I want you to begin as soon as possible." So it was that in 1975 *AHM* began simultaneous radio and television programs.

The radio program continued under the Grieves' direction until 1988. The TV program began airing over the great and densely populated city of New York on Channel 47 every Sunday from 2:00-2:30 p.m., impacting thousands of Hispanics with the gospel.

The first part of the *AHM* TV program was a dramatization of a social problem such as divorce, financial crises, drug abuse, etc. Pastor Grieve, his wife, Nila, and their son Omar, plus many other members of the church formed the drama team. After the presentation of the problem, Pastor Grieve would present a solution from the Bible.

Following the airing of the first program, letters and phone calls began pouring into the station, thanking the Grieves for the marvelous program. Thousands of Hispanic families now had a program that would help them, not only socially, but morally and spiritually.

Ayer . . . Hoy . . . Mañana Makes Cover of TV Guide

The program, became so popular, in fact, that *Canales de Televisión*, the Spanish *TV Guide*, featured it in their magazine, with a picture of the Grieves on the front cover.²⁵ The assistant editor praised the Grieve family by saying that their program "has come to fill a great need in our Hispanic community." "The program," he said "has a cultural, educational and spiritual focus."²⁶ Thus, both the radio and the TV *Ayer . . . Hoy . . . Mañana* programs became two of the most listened to and watched Spanish programs in Greater New York.

Pastor Grieve served as speaker and general director, while his wife Nila was program director. During the first years, Francisco Ramos, and later José Taña, were associate directors. Others who participated in the program from the very outset were: Angel Luis Rodríguez, Dolores Cuadrado, Omar Grieve, Nessy Grieve, Esteban Galarza and Lorena Bustos. *AHM* also acquired some notable evangelists to work with them: Hearley Roscher, Rolando de los Ríos and Angel Luis Rodríguez.

AHM Goes International

If 1984 had been a milestone year for Hispanic radio, it was equally important to Hispanic television. By 1984, *Ayer . . . Hoy . . . Mañana*, which was part of the Greater New York Metro Ministries, had already extended its television viewing capacity to reach beyond the territory of the Greater New York Conference, to the West Coast and to the Inter-American and South American Divisions.

According to a religious media survey, *AHM* was rated as the number one Hispanic religious TV program in Greater New York. Because of this, *Univisión*, the national Spanish television network, offered them a national time slot on its network. Elder Grieve immediately communicated this to Elder Neal Wilson, then the president of the General Conference, who liked the idea and presented it to the GC Executive Committee. They voted financial assistance to the project. Thus, *Ayer . . . Hoy . . . Mañana* became the **first**

national-wide Hispanic Adventist television program in the North American Division. Because of its tremendous success as a national program, *Ayer. . . Hoy. . . Mañana* became a TV media entity of the General Conference.

Ayer. . . Hoy. . . Mañana Moves to Florida

For ten years, Pastor Grieve had been producing the *AHM* television programs outside of New York City due to the prohibitive production costs there. Of all places where *AHM* was producing the programs, Orlando, Florida seemed to be the best. It had good predictable weather, lower cost of living, affordable production costs and a large Hispanic membership base. With this in mind, Pastor Grieve requested that the General Conference allow them to move to Orlando. In January of 1988, the General Conference granted the request and March the move had been made.

In order to cut costs further, instead of building costly TV stage sets, Director Grieve would rent unoccupied, furnished houses for 30 days at a time to film in. Every work day they would produce one complete TV program. Averaging \$3000-\$5000 per program, this was a tremendous savings, compared to the production costs of some of the other church TV programs at the Media Center.

Ayer. . . Hoy. . . Mañana Moves to California

But promising as it first seemed, 1988 turned out to be the “beginning of the end” for *Ayer. . . Hoy. . . Mañana*. Within six months of the move, there was great concern by some at the Media Center over the fact that *AHM*, being a General Conference media, was allowed to operate outside of Thousand Oaks, California where the Adventist Media Center was located. *It is Written* had moved from the East Coast to Thousand Oaks in 1971, *Faith for Today* had relocated to California in 1972 and in 1978 the *Voice of Prophecy* had been moved from Glendale to the Media Center. Elder Neal Wilson informed the Grieves that they needed to move again—this time to the Media Center in Thousand Oaks, California. Elder Grieve was very reluctant, realizing that it would be virtually impossible financially to operate out of the Media Center in California where the operating and production costs would be prohibitive and the donor base was smaller. But he had no choice. Reluctantly the Grieves and the *AHM* team pulled up stakes and moved their operation across the country.

The End of AHM

Financially *Ayer. . . Hoy. . . Mañana* never recovered from the effects of their two major moves in 1988. In the process of moving to California, they lost virtually all their East Coast donor base. Finances eventually went from bad to worse, even with some financial support from the GC. In 1991, it was sadly voted to end the once tremendously successful TV outreach ministry of *AHM*. The Southeastern California Conference attempted to save the program by taking it under their wing for a couple of years. But the financial strain was too great and in 1993 they too had to drop their sponsorship. Thus the production of a Hispanic TV program which had such great potential sadly came to an end.

However, evangelistic efforts sponsored by *AHM* continued, not only in the North American Division, but also in the Inter-American Division. *AHM* videos that included SDA doctrines, are still being circulated and used in various Spanish-speaking countries

and their messages continue to win souls for the kingdom of God. Through these efforts, thousands of Hispanics have joined the Adventist Church.

The Death of Jorge Grieve

In February of 1998, upon returning from Chiapas, Mexico where he had held a mega-evangelistic crusade, Pastor Jorge Grieve became ill. When he did not improve, his family arranged for him to go to the Loma Linda University Hospital in California. His illness, however, eventually proved fatal and after four months he passed to his rest on Tuesday, June 2, 1998. Pastor Grieve was a man totally dedicated and committed to evangelism, both through media and public efforts. He was loved by thousands and his death was indeed an enormous loss for Hispanics both in the North American and Inter-American Divisions.

His widow, Nila Grieve, lives with her son, Omar Grieve, and her daughter-in-law, Nussy, in Tucson, Arizona, where Omar pastors the Tucson Spanish Church, **the oldest existing Adventist Spanish congregation in the North American Division.**

Ayer. . Hoy. . Mañana Health Videos

During the 18 years that the television program was aired, dozens of Spanish churches were raised up across the Division through the *AHM* evangelistic crusades conducted by Pastor Grieve and his wife Nila. Besides their regular television programs, they produced seminar videos on health, sponsored by the Pacific Health Foundation, supervised by Dr. J. A. Scharffenberg, a medical counselor for the General Conference. These videos were used by the laity in the various Latin countries to help break down prejudice against the Adventist Church, thereby opening the way for evangelism.

Others who worked with Ayer. . Hoy. . Mañana

Some of the notable persons who worked with *Ayer. . Hoy. . Mañana* were: In production, Riquelme Casali, as director of productions (part time from 1976-1980 and full time from 1980-1990); Jorge Souza Ferreira as camera director from 1978-1988; Tati López, secretary from 1975-78; Alicia Márquez, secretary from 1978-1988; Omar Grieve, associate director from 1988-1990 and actor from 1975-1990; script writer Rosa Casali, 1975-1976; Nila Grieve, script writer and actress from 1975-1990; actress Dolores Cuadrado, 1976-1990; evangelist Hearley Roscher, 1978 to 1981; Angel Luis Rodríguez, evangelist and actor from 1987-1990; Carmencita Padilla, a convert from the *AHM* radio program who served from 1976-1982 as the toll-free number operator and mail clerk; secretaries Lina Sánchez, 1989-1991, and Loyda Vargas, 1992-1998; Daniel Paez, mail and outreach department, 1993-1998; plus hundreds of other Hispanics who participated from time to time to make *AHM* a successful soul-winning outreach.

AL DIA TELEVISION PROGRAM

Al Día Hispanic Television Program

In 1972, Pedro Geli was a young associate pastor, working in the Ceres, California English-speaking church with Elder David Parkhurst. There were only six Hispanics in the Ceres Church at that time but Pastor Geli knew in his heart that there could be a lot

more if someone would only reach out to them. Pastor Geli and his wife, Vesta, came up with the idea of a Spanish television outreach, one which would focus on social and personal problems, then offer both practical and biblical solutions.

With the funding of the local church, they put together a program and in September, 1972, *Al Día* (*Up to Date*) began airing on KLOC, Channel 19 in Ceres. They secured a strategic time slot, on prime time (6:30), every Wednesday following the evening news. *Al Día* also aired on Friday at 9:30 p.m. and Sunday at 11:00 a.m. The format of the live program began with a dramatized skit presenting the problem for the day (such as marriage problems, work problems, etc.). Pastor Geli would then interview local Hispanic professionals (doctors, counselors, ministers) arriving at a practical solution to the problem. Finally, he would wrap up the program by giving a biblical solution. Interspersed throughout was special music and recitation of poetry.

Al Día was so well received in the community that the small Hispanic group in Ceres immediately began seeing many of the viewers attend their church service. During *Al Día*'s first year of airing (1972-1973), the Hispanic group grew from 30 to 68 members as a direct result of baptisms from the television program's interests. By the end of the program's third year, in 1975, it had grown to 110 members.²⁷ Two Bible workers, Margarita Lapostol and Humberto Ibáñez, were hired to do follow-up for the program.

Pastor Geli received his inspiration for the programs by visiting the program interests. In their homes, he discovered what their pressing needs and problems were and would then go home and write the script for the next program based on that information. Vesta would type up the script and Pedro, Sr., his father, who was a pastor and educator, would go over it, making any needed grammatical changes. *Al Día*'s success proved so great that soon the Central California Conference began funding it and eventually made it a conference program on May 16, 1973.²⁸

Al Día Goes Union-wide²⁹

By 1975 the popularity of the program reached the attention of Pastor Eliezer Benavides, then Hispanic Coordinator of the Pacific Union Conference. On the East Coast, *Ayer . . . Hoy . . . Mañana* had just launched out as a Spanish TV program and had become an instant success. Pastor Benavides envisioned the possibility of utilizing *Al Día*'s programs as a Spanish TV outreach to conferences on the West Coast. When he shared the concept of having *Al Día* as a union-wide program with Shirley Burton, the Union Communications secretary, she wholeheartedly agreed. It was then presented to the Union and conference presidents who in turn officially voted that it become a Union-wide Hispanic TV program.

In May of 1975 Pastor Geli was invited to Southern California to produce and direct *Al Día* and at the same time pastor the Pico Rivera Spanish Church.³⁰ The format of *Al Día* would basically stay the same, but many things would obviously be different. Unlike the live, "homemade," black-and-white programs that had been produced in Ceres, the 30-minute *Al Día* programs were now professionally taped and in color. Armand and Christine Lamont from Los Angeles, were the producers, using three professional cameramen with a variety of sets around the Greater Los Angeles area, which was very costly. Some programs were filmed at the Adventist Media Center in Thousand Oaks, while others were produced in a Hollywood studio. In Ceres, the program had aired on "free" time with a

church member as the cameraman and dedicated church members assisting. *Al Día* aired in Los Angeles, San Francisco and San Bernardino.

Guests on *Al Día* were: Dr. Milton Peverini from *La Voz*; The King's Heralds singing in Spanish; the Benavides Marimba Conjunto, which provided lively marimba music; Pastor Gilberto Bustamante who recited poetry and sang with his stringed instruments; Esther Ayala also recited beautiful poetry. Even Los Camperos, the nationally-known mariachi group from the famous La Fonda Restaurant in Los Angeles, performed on the program to the delight of the listening audience. "*Al Día* is the best public service program the Spanish International Network has ever aired," said the manager of Channel 60 in San Francisco.



Al Día speaker, Pete Geli, and Marimba Band.

As response to the program grew, Elizabeth Cruz was hired to serve as secretary and to follow up interests. The need of the people to study the Bible on their own was recognized by Pastor Geli's father who encouraged the establishment of the *Al Día* Bible School. Hundreds began studying the *La Voz* Bible lessons through the school. Humberto Ibáñez, from Chile, was brought in as a Bible instructor. While in Ceres, *Al Día*'s influence was used to promote Spanish evangelistic meetings in many cities throughout the union and hundreds of Hispanics came to know the truth through the meetings.

Hispanic pastors and churches throughout the union were viewed as associates of the *Al Día*'s telecast whose motto was "Winning friends to influence people to Christ." Every pastor became an associate and the church a "center" for *Al Día*.

Al Día Comes to an End

At the height of *Al Día*'s success, in April of 1977, a call was sent to Pastor Geli from Chile to teach theology at *Centro Educacional Adventista de Chile* (Chile Adventist Educational Center) in Chillán, Chile. When Pastor Geli accepted the call, the future of *Al Día* seemed uncertain. The popular program continued, however, for approximately another

year while Pastor Antonio Arteaga, Spanish coordinator for the Southern California Conference, aired reruns of the 43 previously taped programs. Many Hispanics now attending the Ceres/Modesto church can trace their first contact with Adventism to the TV program *Al Día*, as many others in the Southern California Conference Spanish churches can.

Pastor Geli currently pastors the St. Helena English Church in St. Helena, California, along with his wife Vesta. They have two children: John and Janene. His son continues in media as manager of KADV radio station 90.5 which operates from the campus of the SDA academy in Ceres, California.

KSBN-TV (Safe Television for All Ages)

In 1977, Mary Dorr, president and founder of Excellence in Media, became concerned about all the sex, violence and profanity that comes across the American TV networks and decided to do something about it. So she founded the "Angel's Awards" to recognize and honor those in media who exclude all of the above from their programming, producing instead high moral programs to make this a better world.³¹

The Angel's Awards recognition has become an event more "electrifying emotionally than the Oscars." More than 100 of the world's television, radio and newspaper reporters, along with hundreds of others, attend this annual Hollywood event.

In 1998, two of the top awards went to an Adventist Hispanic, Carlos Pardeiro, president and general manager of KSBN-TV in Springdale, Arkansas. Carlos, who had also decided to do something about the sex and violence that comes across the "tube," coined the term "Safe Television for All Ages."

At the 21st anniversary ceremony of the International Angel Awards, celebrated at the Hollywood Roosevelt Hotel in Hollywood, California, KSBN was given the key award for its "Excellence in Media" because of the airing of Safe Television for All Ages; and the "Excellence in Video" award for producing and directing the video Bible study series designed specifically for Native Americans entitled "Native New Day." Others who won awards that evening were: "Touched By an Angel" the Golden Angel Award for "most inspirational series" and "Dr. Quinn, Medicine Woman," for best drama.

On February 25, 1999, at the 22nd International Angel Award ceremonies, held at the Hollywood Roosevelt Hotel in Hollywood, California, Carlos Pardeiro (CEO of KSBN) was awarded two "Angel Awards:" one for the "Best Program on Local TV," for the Northwest Arkansas town hall KSBN radio program. This popular town hall is moderated by Arkansas senator, John Brown III. Brown was formerly the president of the well-known Brown University before he became a senator. The other was for "The Best Public Service Announcement" which KSBN produced for the Cowboy SDA Campmeeting in Arkansas.

Carlos Pardeiro and Nancy Lane Griffin

Who is this successful entrepreneur (Carlos Pardeiro) and how did he get to be president of the only full-power television station, owned and operated by Adventist laypersons? Carlos was born in Montevideo, Uruguay. His father, Anibal Pardeiro, was an actor and a handsome leading man in the movie industry of Uruguay, starring in several movies and television shows as well as having a leading part in a popular radio program where he was called "*El Galán de la Radio*" (the leading man in radio). In 1962 Anibal Pardeiro won the "Ariel" (Oscar) award for best actor of Uruguay. Carlos, who had inherited his father's good looks,

remembers, "I grew up in the glamor world and I tried to imitate my father."

At a very early age, Carlos took up surfing as a sport, which was virtually unheard of in his country. He and his young friends, however, made this sport popular in Uruguay. Carlos developed into an excellent surfer and in 1970 he went to the world champion surfing contest in Punta Rocas, Perú, representing Uruguay. That same year he went to live in Hawaii, the surfing state. While there on the Islands, Carlos experienced a "spiritual awakening," a longing to know God in a more personal way. He remembers seeing Billy Graham on TV and thinking to himself, "It must be really great to experience God the way all those people do."

It was at this time that he met Nancy Lane Griffin, a tall, slender young lady, who was the "Miss Nebraska Centennial Queen." At the time, she was studying at the University of Hawaii. Although already a Christian, she was also longing for a closer walk with God, and in the process began studying with the Jehovah's Witnesses. Carlos, on the other hand, was introduced to the Mormons.

Carlos and Nancy often shared their religious concerns and longings with each other, and in the process, they fell in love. Nancy wanted Carlos to meet her parents who lived in the little town of Atkinson, Nebraska. So just before Christmas in December of 1972, they boarded a plane in warm, tropical Honolulu, where it was 80 degrees, for Omaha, Nebraska where the thermometer registered 20 below zero.

Carlos had rarely seen snow or even below zero weather before, so this was a new experience for him. Nancy's father loaned him boots, a coat and heavy gloves, but it would take more than that to help him cope with the cold weather. Carlos recalls, "One night when we came back to Nancy's house, I went to open the front door for her when, for some reason, I pulled off my glove before reaching for the door knob. My hand was moist with condensation and when I grabbed the metal door knob, my hand stuck to it. For a second, I didn't know what to do. Although in retrospect it seems funny, it was a rather shocking experience for me then." Carlos then invited Nancy to meet his parents. So they flew to Uruguay where it was summer all over again.

Carlos and Nancy Meet the Mattisons

In Uruguay, Nancy suggested that they try to find someone to teach them the Bible. Little did Carlos know that only a mile or so away from where his parents lived, the South American Division of Seventh-day Adventists had their headquarters. One Saturday, Carlos and Nancy went to church there and were invited to stay for potluck. Elder Reggie Mattison and his wife Ellen, both of whom worked at the South American Division headquarters, introduced themselves to Carlos and Nancy. Recognizing in those young people the sincere desire to know Christ as the Savior and to do His will, the Mattisons quickly took them under their wing.

A Baptism and a Wedding

Carlos and Nancy were making plans to get married and they asked Elder Mattison to solemnize their marriage. "I would love to," Elder Mattison said, "but I have a previous commitment." He then recommended Elder Delmer Wood, who was treasurer of the South American Division, to perform their marriage, which he did on February 17, 1973 on La Paloma Beach in Uruguay. The wedding was performed at sunset, and a full moon lit up

the beach that night. It was a beautiful ceremony and only later did the Pardeiros discover that Elder Wood had never performed a wedding ceremony before.

Elder Mattison continued to study with the new couple but in the summer of 1973, Reggie and Ellen went to Southern California on their furlough. That same summer, Carlos and Nancy had an opportunity to go to Hollywood, California where Carlos was composing the sound track for a movie. It was there that the Pardeiros and the Mattisons reconnected. Elder Mattison finished giving them Bible studies and before the summer was over he baptized them (August 4, 1973). Carlos wanted to be baptized in a river like Jesus had been but settled for Silver Lake in the Loma Linda mountains instead.

Witnessing in Hawaii

The newly-wed couple then flew to Kauai, Hawaii where Carlos became a full-time literature evangelist for the next five years. When Carlos was not selling books, he and Nancy were witnessing or giving Bible studies to young marrieds and singles. As a result, they had 30 baptisms and started a little church on the northern-most side of Kauai called "Hanalei." The Pardeiros' four children were born in Hawaii: Nátali, Rafael, Emily and Ryan.

The Funding of Creation Enterprises

In 1982 the Pardeiros move to central California where Carlos joined Concerned Communications and became the Vice President for Development and International Department. In 1986, Concerned Communications moved to Arkansas where Carlos continued working until 1990. That same year Carlos and Nancy decided to strike out on their own and founded "Creation Enterprises, International." Their company has produced literally hundreds of thousands of Adventist printed materials such as books, booklets and videos, both in English and Spanish.

The Idea for a TV Station

Richard Shadduck, a good friend of Carlos', began talking to Carlos about starting a TV station for the area. The more Carlos and Shadduck talked about a TV station designed to meet people's needs and to reach the secular mind with the gospel, the more enthused they became as they made it a matter of earnest prayer.

Although Carlos had experience in show business, he knew little about developing a television station. But on April 26, 1991, he and a group of dedicated laymen formed a non-profit corporation and began searching to acquire a frequency from the Federal Communications Commission to build a TV station. After two unsuccessful attempts, they were finally able to uncover a full-power frequency that had been available in the area all along. But since this frequency was open to anyone who may apply for it there could be competition in securing it.

As soon as Carlos made an offer to the FCC, another buyer appeared on the scene. He was a wealthy businessman who was very determined to get the frequency. Carlos recalls "It was like a David and Goliath confrontation." But like David, Carlos knew that God was with him and during a telephone conversation with the businessman, Carlos confidently told him, "Money is not a problem because my Father is very wealthy. He owns lots of cattle and gold around the world. If I need to ask Him for a loan, I know He will give it

to me.” Carlos, of course, was talking about his Heavenly Father. “Furthermore,” Carlos added, “I am going to pray to God that He will make you withdraw your offer.” A few days later, for some reason, the man did just that. And the FCC permit was awarded to Carlos Pardeiro, Richard Shadduck, Harold Harris and Debra McKee, board members of the Corporation.

Locating a TV Tower

In September of 1993, following the unfortunate loss of a donated property that had already been surveyed to build a tower for the station, Carlos was driving around and spotted a 400-foot tower in the middle of a 14-acre cow pasture. This tower was being used by an FM radio station. He stopped the car to get a closer look. As he walked across the meadow toward the base of the tower, he tripped over a rusty piece of metal that was half covered with dirt. Turning it over, he discovered that it was a “for sale” sign from a local realty company. At this point he knew that God was leading and opening a new door.

Governor of Arkansas, Mike Huckabee, declaring “KSBN Safe TV for All Ages Day,” with Carlos Pardeiro.



Contacting the realtor, Carlos found out that there were four lots for sale, totaling 14 acres. Harold Harris, CFO of the Total Life Community Educational Foundation, Inc., was then assigned to finalize the deal with the tower owner. This site became the headquarters for “KSBN Safe Television for All Ages.” It was dedicated on May 8, 1996.

Today, Channel 57, “KSBN Safe Television for All Ages” is the first and only one of its kind in the world operated by Seventh-day Adventists. It televises 24 hours a day and includes some of the church-produced TV outreach programs. On May 8, 1997, Mike Huckabee, the Governor of Arkansas, at a special ceremony declared that day “Safe Television for All Ages Day” in Arkansas. The Governor repeated the same proclamation for 1998 and 1999. Carlos has written President Bill Clinton, urging him to make the same one-day proclamation for the entire nation. On November 10, 1999, KSBN reached another significant milestone when it went nationwide.

MANY OTHER PROGRAMS

In addition to the media ministries mentioned in this chapter, there are many other Hispanic pastors across the division who have produced their own local radio and TV outreach programs, most of which have been sponsored by their own churches. These, too, are being used by the Lord to carry the message to Hispanics. Although space does not allow the highlighting of these unsung heroes in the Lord's work, we salute them for their valiant efforts and encourage them to continue their local radio and TV ministry outreach.

Endnotes

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7. Minutes of the Fourth Session of the Latin American Radio Commission, September 3, 1942.
8. Minutes of the Fifth Session of the Latin American Radio Commission, September 6, 1942.
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12. Telephone interview with Wayne Hooper, January 31, 1999.
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18. *Ibid.*
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20. *Ibid.*
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22. "La Voz de la Esperanza Will Share in Offering," *Pacific Union Recorder*, October 1, 1984. "La Voz de la Esperanza Celebrates 45 Years of Radio Evangelism," *Pacific Union Recorder*, May 4, 1987, p. 10.
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24. "Ayer. . . Hoy. . . Mañana (Su Pasado, Su Presente y Su Futuro)." No author noted. Unpublished manuscript.
25. "Te Ve Portada," *Canales de Televisión*, 8-14 de Noviembre, 1975, p. 4.
26. *Ibid.*
27. "Al Día Telecast Moves to Southern California," *Pacific Union Recorder*, July 14, 1975.
28. "Spanish Adventist Program Continues," *Ceres Courier*, May 30, 1973.
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Section V

HISPANIC ADVENTISTS IN THE New MILLENNIUM

17

Hispanic Adventists in the New Millennium

Reflections, Phenomenal Growth, and Challenges

"I returned, and saw under the sun, that the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, neither yet bread to the wise, nor yet riches to men of understanding, nor yet favor to men of skill; but time and chance happeneth to them all."
Ecclesiastes 9:11

Division Coordinators of the Multilingual Ministries Department

THE history of the department in the General Conference and North American Division that has been responsible for the minority groups in the territory of the NAD, is almost as old as the Spanish work itself. It was in 1905 that the General Conference established the *North American Foreign Department* which

through the years has gone through various name changes. The following is the list of those who served as directors of this department. It is noteworthy that seven of these leaders were former missionaries to Latin America.

North American Foreign Department: I. H. Evans, 1905-1909; O. A. Olsen, 1909-1916; Steen Rasmussen, 1916-1918; *Bureau of Home Missions for North America*: L. H. Christian, 1918-1919; P. N. Broderson, 1919-1921; Homer David Casebeer, 1921-1923; M. N. Campbell, 1923-1932; W. H. Branson, 1932-1936; M. N. Campbell, 1936-1939; H.T. Elliott, 1939-1941; L. Halswick, 1941-1950; *Home Foreign Committee*: E. J. Lorntz, 1951-1956; *North American Missions Committee*: Wesley Amundsen, 1956-1968; C. H. Lauda, 1968-1975. *Field Secretary With Responsibility for NAMCO*: R. A. Wilcox, 1975-1980; *Secretary, North American Division Multilingual Ministries Department (NADMM)*: Joe Espinosa, 1980-1990; *Vice President for Special Ministries*: Manuel Vásquez, 1990-.

Other Hispanics Making a Difference

Besides the hundreds of Hispanics mentioned in this volume, there are many more who have made and continue to make significant contributions to the church at large. Hispanics like:

- Adly Campos, who has set an unprecedented record as an international female evangelist, preacher and seminar presenter, responsible for more than 10,000 baptisms to date.

- Juan Carlos Gaviria, a native of Colombia, who created and funded *Jesús es la Solución* (Jesus is the Solution), an outreach ministry of 160 young Hispanic lay preachers and singing evangelists. In the past five years this ministry has sponsored more than 40 evangelistic reaping efforts across the United States and into Inter-America and baptized over 1,500 souls. Gaviria, who himself is one of the main lay evangelists, is also the CEO of his own telecommunications company, LGIT (Love God International Telecommunications).

- Dr. Edwin Hernández, who conducted the largest and most extensive random sampling study of Latinos within any religious organization in the United States. "AVANCE," a study of Hispanic Adventist youth, was a follow-up to "ValueGenesis," a national study of Adventist youth in the North American Division.

- Elder Louis R. Torres, who is probably the most widely-acclaimed lay trainer in the Division. He and his wife, Carol, operate the Mission College of Evangelism in South Dakota, which has turned out some of the finest lay evangelists in the Division.

- Elder José V. Rojas, the youngest Division youth director to date. This Latino has not only made a positive impact on Adventist young people, but on the church as a whole as well. Elder Rojas has also become a consultant to the White House in recent years on matters of youth and religion.

- We also want to salute the many Hispanic educators, from elementary to graduate schools, for their dedication, role modeling and contributions to the academic learning and preparation of our youth for church and society.

Reflections

As Hispanic Adventists in the North American Division began the 21st century, they looked back over more than one hundred years of growth from their inconspicuous beginnings in Arizona and New Mexico. The first converts from the Spanish-speaking

population attracted hardly anyone's notice at the time. Nevertheless they formed the first links in a chain of events that has played a significant role in the history of Adventism in the NAD.

The general trend during the early history found returned missionaries from Latin America nurturing and guiding the emerging Hispanic movement in North America. This practice prevailed into the 1940's. But signs that Hispanic leadership was developing began to appear as early as the 1930's when a number of individual Hispanics were trained and took pastoral responsibilities. It was also at that time that literature evangelists, both Anglo and Hispanic, played a significant role in spearheading the Spanish work in the Southwest.

The decades of the 1940's and 1950's were a time of transition when both Anglos and Hispanics were sharing the work. By the 1960's, the period of transition had given way to a new era when a few North American Latinos were given opportunity to lead their own people on the conference level. The prevailing trend from the 1970's onward was to continue giving Hispanics more latitude to develop their own initiatives and to coordinate the Spanish work within their assigned territories.

The 1980's saw the appointment of two Union Hispanic vice presidents and the election of the first Hispanic conference president, a milestone for the Spanish work. In that same decade, several more conferences and some unions appointed Hispanic coordinators and departmental associates. It wasn't until the last decade of the century, however, that a significant number of Hispanics were appointed to administrative leadership positions all the way up to the Division. Whereas in 1989 there were only 27 Hispanics in leadership positions in conferences and unions, in 2000 there were 64. These appointments ceased to be a matter of news and became commonplace. In 1989 there was only one Hispanic serving in the Division office. In 2000 there were six, including the treasurer.

Returning the Favor

Another phenomenon that took place in the 1980's and 1990's was that Adventism among the Spanish-speaking constituency came full circle. With growing frequency, bilingual Hispanic pastors that were once seen only as "Hispanic" ministers, have now become shepherds of some Anglo congregations. In this role they are returning to the English-speaking churches the favors of Anglo pioneers and congregations who gave the early Hispanic congregations the care and support they needed at the time.

This exchange of cultural influence has not only enriched the cosmopolitan character of the Division, but has also served as a reminder to all members throughout North America that the church is a place where the entire world is welcome to participate in the sharing of the gospel and the blessings of salvation.

Phenomenal Hispanic Growth

The last decade of the century was also a time of phenomenal growth for Hispanics. Their membership grew from 59,050 to 105,000 for a 78 percent increase. With over 105,000 Hispanic members at the beginning of 2000, they have become the third largest segment of the NAD. One in nine members in this Division is an Hispanic.

The 1990's were a decade of harmonious synergism between *La Voz de la Esperanza*,

the Pacific Press, and the NAD Hispanic leaders as they teamed up to plan, organize and launch three major satellite “Net” evangelistic efforts.

The 11,198 Hispanic baptisms for 1999 were an all-time high. Hispanic members represent only 11 percent of the total NAD membership, yet they have consistently had 25 percent or more of all the NAD baptisms for the last several years—for a rate of more than double their proportional size. The baptismal reports of many conferences today are greatly enhanced because of their Hispanic baptisms. They are among the fastest-growing segments of the church. Many church leaders are recognizing Hispanics as the pacesetters for soul winning, at the vanguard of the cause of God in the United States, as Ellen White, through inspiration, saw them.

Challenges

As Hispanic Adventists in the NAD look to the future, some of the challenges they see facing them in the 21st century are:

- Providing Christian education for Hispanic youth at all levels
- Obtaining church buildings to accommodate the growing Hispanic congregations
- Meeting the needs of their second- and third-generation Hispanics
- Training laity for the mission of the church
- Mentoring Hispanics for administrative leadership positions
- Utilizing modern technology and media for evangelism
- Maintaining the evangelistic fervor of their members

But even with these challenges, Hispanics face the millennium with courage and confidence that they have “nothing to fear for the future, except that we forget how the Lord has led us. . . in the past.”

Our Prayer

Beginning their journey in this new millennium, Hispanics do so with gratitude for all of God’s blessings and take pride in their heritage, progress and contributions to the Church and society. But more importantly, they are honored for the opportunity to take the flaming torch of the Advent Message and continue to run with it with the same spirit that their predecessors did.

It is our prayer that the *Untold Story* will be shared with succeeding generations and new members so they, too, can appreciate how the Lord has led and take courage for the future of the Spanish work in the NAD. This is not the end of the *Untold Story*. It will continue to unfold throughout this new millennium and the last chapter will be written when the Lord returns to take His glorious church home.

THE HISPANIC LEADERS OF THE NORTH AMERICAN DIVISION



Juan Prestol
North American Division
Treasurer



Manuel Vásquez
North American Division
Vice-President
for Special Ministries



José Rojas
North American Division
Youth Ministries Director



Eradio Alonso
North American Division
Associate Ministerial Director



Louis Torres
North American Division
ASI Lay Training Director



Stephen Chávez
North American Division
Assistant Editor, *Adventist Review*

Section VI

APPENDIX

How the Adventist Church Is Organized

As "God's appointed agency for the salvation of mankind," the Seventh-day Adventist Church was organized for service. Its mission is to carry the Gospel to the world. In order to fulfill its divine purpose, the Church has a structure of five administrative levels:

- (1) the local church
- (2) the local conference of churches
- (3) the union conference
- (4) the division
- (5) the General Conference

The Local Church

This is the grassroots level, the church home. Each year the church elects its officers. Some of these are elders, deacons, deaconesses, Sabbath school officers, treasurer, church clerk, etc. The key church officers are members of the church board, which takes care of the official church business and plans outreach activities.

The Local Conference

The local conference is made up of the local churches, generally within a state or province, such as Illinois or Manitoba, but also in a territory such as a regional conference, or a smaller area such as Southern California. The conference president and his officers lead out in the conference. These officers are chosen at constituency meetings every three or four years by representatives from the local churches. Churches are also represented on the conference executive committee.

Conferences employ pastors, teachers, evangelists and youth camp workers. They oversee church schools, academies, youth camps and book centers. They hold title to the churches and properties that serve the conference.

The Union Conference

Conferences in a region, such as Canada or southern United States, make up a union conference, often simply called a "union." The primary function of the union is to coordinate the work among the conferences. A Union is led by a president and other officers and leaders of various church activities, who are elected every five years. The union executive committee meets several times a year. They own property titles to colleges and other institutions that serve the union rather than a single conference. The North American Division has nine unions.

The Division

The General Conference has divided itself into "divisions of the General Conference," such as the North American Division or the South American Division, each functioning as a branch of the General Conference in its part of the world. Divisions are made up of all the unions within their territory. A president and other officers lead each division with the help of an executive committee that meets periodically. Their primary duty is to carry out the work of the General Conference among the unions in their territory.

The General Conference

The General Conference is made up of twelve world divisions. With headquarters in Silver Spring, Maryland, it oversees the work of the worldwide church, helping to bind the church together. It is led by a president, vice presidents and other leaders who lay plans and form policies for church activities around the world. It also controls some institutions that serve the world church, such as medical schools, some universities and publishing houses.

A General Conference Committee meets frequently to make administrative decisions about the world church and its activities. Every five years a General Conference session takes place with delegates from around the world attending. At that session General Conference leaders are chosen and policy changes that affect the world church are voted.

27 Doctrines of the Seventh-day Adventist Church

The following are the fundamental doctrines of the Seventh-day Adventist Church taken from the book *Seventh-day Adventists Believe... 27, A Biblical Exposition of Fundamental Doctrines*. (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1988). The Bible texts for each doctrine, however, were selected and arranged by the author of this book. They are not meant to be an exhaustive list, but only a brief overview of these divine truths.

1. The Inspiration of the Bible
2. The Holy Trinity
3. God the Father
4. God the Son
5. God the Holy Spirit
6. Creation
7. The Nature of Man
8. The Great Controversy
9. The Life, Death, and Resurrection of Christ
10. The Experience of Salvation
11. The Church
12. The Remnant and Its Mission
13. Unity in the Body of Christ
14. Baptism
15. The Lord's Supper
16. Spiritual Gifts and Ministries
17. The Gift of Prophecy
18. The Law of God
19. The Sabbath
20. Stewardship
21. Christian Behavior
22. Marriage and the Family
23. Christ's Ministry in the Heavenly Sanctuary
24. The Second Coming of Christ
25. Death and Resurrection
26. The Millennium and the End of Sin
27. The New Earth

THE INSPIRATION OF THE BIBLE

The Holy Scriptures, Old and New Testaments, are the written Word of God, given by divine inspiration through holy men of God who spoke and wrote as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. In this Word, God has committed to man the knowledge necessary for salvation. The Holy Scriptures are the infallible revelation of His will. They are the standard of character, the test of experience, the authoritative revealer of doctrines, and the trustworthy record of God's acts in history. *Fundamental Beliefs, 1.*

- | | |
|--------------------------|---|
| 1. 2 Timothy 3:16 | All Scripture is inspired by God |
| 2. 2 Peter 1:21 | Holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost |
| 3. Matthew 24:35 | God's Word is eternal |
| 4. John 17:17 | Truth is contained in God's word |
| 5. 2 Timothy 3:15 | The Scriptures make us wise unto salvation |
| 6. John 5:39 | The Scriptures reveals Jesus as Savior |
| 7. Psalm 119:9,11 | The Word of God can keep me from sinning |
| 8. John 16:13 | Jesus has sent the Holy Spirit to guide us into all truth |
| 9. 1 Corinthians 2:10-13 | God reveals His word to us through His Holy Spirit |
| 10. John 7:17 | If we desire to do God's will, we will know if doctrines are of God |

THE HOLY TRINITY

There is one God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, a unity of three co-eternal Persons. God is immortal, all-powerful, all-knowing, above all, and ever present. He is infinite and beyond human comprehension, yet known through His self-revelation. He is forever worthy of worship, adoration, and service by the whole creation. *Fundamental Beliefs, 2.*

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| 1. Deuteronomy 4:39 | The Lord, He is God. . . There is none other. |
| 2. Genesis 1:1 | In the beginning God. . . |
| 3. Genesis 1:2 | The Spirit of God (Holy Spirit) moved upon the waters |
| 4. Genesis 1:26 | "Let us make man in our image" |
| 5. Matthew 3:17 | God the Father and the Holy Spirit present at Christ's baptism |
| 6. John 14:8-10 | "He that has seen Me has seen the Father. . ." |
| 7. John 20:28 | Thomas declared "My Lord and my God." |
| 8. John 15:26 | Jesus mentioned the other two Members of the Trinity |
| 9. 2 Corinthians 13:14 | Paul's benediction includes all three persons of the Trinity |

GOD THE FATHER

God the Eternal Father is the Creator, Source, Sustainer, and Sovereign of all creation. He is just and holy, merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness. The qualities and powers exhibited in the Son and the Holy Spirit are also revelations of the Father. *Fundamental Beliefs, 3.*

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| 1. Isaiah 40:28 | God is the Creator |
| 2. Psalm 33:6, 9 | By the word of the Lord were the heavens made |
| 3. Hebrews 11:3 | World formed by the word of God |
| 4. Exodus 34:6,7 | God's attributes (holy, slow to anger) |

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| 5. Matthews 6:30-33 | God provides for His creation |
| 6. John 14:9 | He who hath seen Me hath seen the Father |
| 7. Hebrews 1:1-3 | God revealed in Jesus |
| 8. 1 John 4:8 | God is love |
| 9. Romans 5:8 | God commended His love toward us while we were yet sinners |
| 10. 2 Peter 3:9 | God . . .not willing that any should perish |

GOD THE SON

God the Eternal Son became incarnate in Jesus Christ. Through Him all things were created, the character of God is revealed, the salvation of humanity is accomplished, and the world is judged. Forever truly God, He became also truly man, Jesus the Christ. He was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. He lived and experienced temptation as a human being, but perfectly exemplified the righteousness and love of God. By His miracles He manifested God's power and was attested as God's promised Messiah. He suffered and died voluntarily on the cross for our sins and in our place, was raised from the dead, and ascended to minister in the heavenly sanctuary in our behalf. He will come again in glory for the final deliverance of His people and the restoration of all things. *Fundamental Beliefs, 4.*

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| 1. Hebrews 1:1-3 | God manifested Himself through Christ |
| 2. John 14:9 | He who has seen Christ has seen the Father |
| 3. Matthew 1:20 | Conceived of the Holy Spirit |
| 4. Matthew 1:23 | Emmanuel - God with us |
| 5. John 1:1 | The Word was God |
| 6. John 1:41 | Christ is the Messiah |
| 7. Colossians 2:9 | In Him was all the fullness of the Godhead |
| 8. 1 Corinthians 15:3, 4 | Christ died, was buried and rose again |
| 9. Hebrews 8:1,2 | Christ is interceding in the sanctuary |
| 10. John 14:1-3 | Christ's promise to return |

GOD THE HOLY SPIRIT

God the eternal Spirit was active with the Father and the Son in Creation, incarnation, and redemption. He inspired the writers of Scripture. He filled Christ's life with power. He draws and convicts human beings; and those who respond He renews and transforms into the image of God. Sent by the Father and the Son to be always with His children, He extends spiritual gifts to the church, empowers it to bear witness to Christ, and in harmony with the Scriptures leads it into all truth. *Fundamental Beliefs, 5.*

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| 1. Matthew 28:19 | The Holy Spirit is part of the Godhead |
| 2. John 14:16 | The Father gives us the Comforter (Holy Spirit) |
| 3. John 15:26 | The Comforter (Holy Spirit) will testify of Jesus |
| 4. Luke 11:13 | If we ask the Father, He will give us the Holy Spirit |
| 5. John 16:8-11 | The Holy Spirit convicts of sin |
| 6. Matthew 12:31, 32 | Rejecting the Holy Spirit is the unpardonable sin |
| 7. John 16:13, 14 | The Holy Spirit guides us into all truth |
| 8. Acts 5:32 | The Holy Spirit is given to those who obey Him |
| 9. Romans 8:26 | The Holy Spirit intercedes for us |
| 10. Ephesians 4:30 | We are not to grieve the Holy Spirit |

CREATION

God is Creator of all things, and has revealed in Scripture the authentic account of His creative activity. In six days the Lord made "the heaven and the earth" and all living things upon the earth, and rested on the seventh day of that first week. Thus He established the Sabbath as a perpetual memorial of His completed creative work. The first man and woman were made in the image of God as the crowning work of Creation, given dominion over the world, and charged with responsibility to care for it. When the world was finished it was "very good," declaring the glory of God. *Fundamental Beliefs, 6.*

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| 1. Genesis 1:1 | God is the Creator of heaven and earth |
| 2. Psalm 33:6-9 | God commanded His creation into existence |
| 3. Colossians 1:16 | God created all things through His Son |
| 4. Genesis 1:3-28 | God created the heavens and the earth |
| 5. Psalm 19:1, 2 | The heavens declare the glory of God |
| 6. Genesis 2:2, 3 | The 7th day, God created the Sabbath as a memorial to His creation |
| 7. Genesis 1:26, 27 | God created man in His own image |
| 8. Psalm 8:4-6 | Man made a little lower than the angels |
| 9. Genesis 1:28 | Man given dominion over the earth |
| 10. Genesis 1:31 | When God finished His creation, He pronounced it "very good." |

THE NATURE OF MAN

Man and woman were made in the image of God with individuality, the power and freedom to think and to do. Though created free beings, each is an indivisible unity of body, mind, and spirit, dependent upon God for life and breath and all else. When our first parents disobeyed God, they denied their dependence upon Him and fell from their high position under God. The image of God in them was marred and they became subject to death. Their descendants share this fallen nature and its consequences. They are born with weaknesses and tendencies to evil. But God in Christ reconciled the world to Himself and by His Spirit restores in penitent mortals the image of their Maker. Created for the glory of God, they are called to love Him and one another and to care for their environment. *Fundamental Beliefs, 7.*

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| 1. Genesis 1:27 | God created man in His image |
| 2. Genesis 2:7 | Formed man from the dust of the ground and the breath of life |
| 3. Genesis 3:1-6 | Man sinned and became a mortal human being |
| 4. Genesis 3:7-10 | The immediate consequences of sinning |
| 5. Romans 5:12 | The sinful nature of man passed on to all mankind |
| 6. Romans 7:14-24 | The struggle of the human nature and the spiritual law of God |
| 7. Romans 3:23 | All have sinned |
| 8. 1 John 1:8 | If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves |
| 9. Romans 7:19 | Through Christ we are made right with God |
| 10. Jude 24 | Christ is able to keep us from sinning |

THE GREAT CONTROVERSY

All humanity is now involved in a great controversy between Christ and Satan regarding the character of God, His law, and His sovereignty over the universe. This conflict originated in heaven when a created being, endowed with freedom of choice, in self-exaltation became Satan, God's

adversary, and led into rebellion a portion of the angels. He introduced the spirit of rebellion into this world when he led Adam and Eve into sin. This human sin resulted in the distortion of the image of God in humanity, the disordering of the created world, and its eventual devastation at the time of the worldwide flood. Observed by the whole creation, this world became the arena of the universal conflict, out of which the God of love will ultimately be vindicated. To assist His people in this controversy, Christ sends the Holy Spirit and the loyal angels to guide, protect, and sustain them in the way of salvation. *Fundamental Beliefs*, 8.

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| 1. Isaiah 14:12-14 | The origin of the controversy |
| 2. Ezekiel 28:14, 15 | Lucifer created perfect until iniquity was found in him |
| 3. Revelation 12:4 | Lucifer draws one-third of angelic host to join his rebellion |
| 4. Revelation 12:7-9 | There was a war in heaven |
| 5. Genesis 3:1-7 | Satan caused the fall of man |
| 6. 1 John 3:8 | Christ came to destroy the works of the Devil |
| 7. John 14:30 | Satan has no hold on Christ |
| 8. Revelation 20:7-10 | The Devil will be destroyed |
| 9. Revelation 21:1-5 | No more sorrow and pain |
| 10. Nahum 1:9 | Sin will not occur again |

THE LIFE, DEATH, AND RESURRECTION OF CHRIST

In Christ's life of perfect obedience to God's will, His suffering, death, and resurrection, God provided the only means of atonement for human sin, so that those who by faith accept this atonement may have eternal life, and the whole creation may better understand the infinite and holy love of the Creator. This perfect atonement vindicates the righteousness of God's law and the graciousness of His character; for it both condemns our sin and provides for our forgiveness. The death of Christ is substitutionary and expiatory, reconciling and transforming. The resurrection of Christ proclaims God's triumph over the forces of evil, and for those who accept the atonement assures their final victory over sin and death. It declares the Lordship of Jesus Christ before whom every knee in heaven and on earth will bow. *Fundamental Beliefs*, 9.

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|----------------------|---|
| 1. Matthew 1:18-25 | The birth of Jesus |
| 2. Luke 2:21-40 | Jesus presented at the temple |
| 3. Matthew 3:13-17 | Jesus' baptism |
| 4. Luke 4:1-13 | Jesus tempted by Satan |
| 5. Matthew 4:18-22 | Jesus calls four fishermen to be fishers of men |
| 6. John 14:1-3 | Jesus promises to return for His own |
| 7. Matthew 26:36-46 | Jesus' agonizing in Gethsemane |
| 8. Matthew 27:27-56 | Jesus' crucifixion and death |
| 9. Matthew 28:1-10 | The empty tomb - Christ is risen |
| 10. Matthew 28:16-20 | Jesus' great commission to the church |

THE EXPERIENCE OF SALVATION

In infinite love and mercy God made Christ, who knew no sin, to be sin for us, so that in Him, we might be made the righteousness of God. Led by the Holy Spirit we sense our need, acknowledge our sinfulness, repent of our transgressions, and exercise faith in Jesus as Lord and Christ, as Substitute and Example. This faith which receives salvation comes through the divine power of the Word and is the gift of God's grace. Through Christ we are justified, adopted as God's sons and daughters, and delivered from the lordship of sin. Through the Spirit we are born again and sanc-

tified; the Spirit renews our minds, writes God's law of love in our hearts, and we are given the power to live a holy life. Abiding in Him we become partakers of the divine nature and have the assurance of salvation now and in the judgment. *Fundamental Beliefs, 10.*

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| 1. Romans 3:23 | All have sinned |
| 2. Romans 5:12 | Sin entered the world through man's sin |
| 3. Isaiah 59:2 | Sin has separated us from God |
| 4. Romans 6:23 | The gift of God is eternal life |
| 5. Romans 5:8 | God loved us while we were yet sinners |
| 6. John 3:16 | For God so loved the world |
| 7. 2 Corinthians 5:21 | God made Him, who knew no sin, to be sin for us |
| 8. 1 John 2:9, 10 | If we confess our sins, He will forgive us |
| 9. Romans 10:13 | He who calls on the name of Jesus will be saved |
| 10. John 6:37 | He who comes to me will not be turned away |

THE CHURCH

The church is the community of believers who confess Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. In continuity with the people of God in Old Testament times, we are called out from the world; and we join together for worship, for fellowship, for instruction in the Word, for the celebration of the Lord's Supper, for service to all mankind, and for the worldwide proclamation of the gospel. The church derives its authority from Christ, who is the incarnate Word, and from the Scriptures which are the written Word. The church is God's family; adopted by Him as children, its members live on the basis of the new covenant. The church is the body of Christ, a community of faith of which Christ Himself is the Head. The church is the bride for whom Christ died that He might sanctify and cleanse her. At His return in triumph, He will present her to Himself a glorious church, the faithful of all the ages, the purchase of His blood, not having spot or wrinkle, but holy and without blemish. *Fundamental Beliefs, 11.*

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| 1. Matthew 16:16-18 | Christ established His church on Himself |
| 2. Colossians 1:18 | Christ is the head of the church |
| 3. Ephesians 2:20 | Christ is the Cornerstone of His church |
| 4. Ephesians 4:11, 12 | Christ gave leaders to edify His church |
| 5. Acts 6:1-4 | How the church should operate |
| 6. Matthew 4:23 | The triple mission of the church |
| 7. Matthew 28:19, 20 | The great commission of the church |
| 8. Matthew 16:19 | The authority of the church |
| 9. Hebrews 10:25 | Don't neglect going to church |
| 10. Ephesians 5:27 | Christ is preparing a glorious church for Himself |

THE REMNANT AND ITS MISSION

The universal church is composed of all who truly believe in Christ, but in the last days, a time of widespread apostasy, a remnant has been called out to keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus. This remnant announces the arrival of the judgment hour, proclaims salvation through Christ, and heralds the approach of His second advent. This proclamation is symbolized by the three angels of Revelation 14; it coincides with the work of judgment in heaven and results in a work of repentance and reform on earth. Every believer is called to have a personal part in this worldwide witness. *Fundamental Beliefs, 12.*

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| 1. Revelation 12:13 | Satan begins persecuting the woman (the remnant church) |
| 2. Revelation 12:17 | Remnant keep commandments and have testimony of Jesus |
| 3. Revelation 19:10 | Testimony of Jesus is the Spirit of prophecy |
| 4. Revelation 14:12 | Remnant keep commandments and have faith of Jesus |
| 5. Revelation 12:14-17 | Remnant church emerges in the last days |
| 6. Revelation 14:6 | Responsibility to proclaim the everlasting gospel to every nation |
| 7. Revelation 14:7 | 1st angel's message - hour of judgment and the Sabbath |
| 8. Revelation 14:8 | 2nd angel's message - Babylon is fallen |
| 9. Revelation 14:9, 10 | 3rd angel's message - Warning against receiving mark of the beast |
| 10. Revelation 18:4 | A call to come out of Babylon and not participate in her sins |

UNITY IN THE BODY OF CHRIST

The church is one body with many members, called from every nation, kindred, tongue, and people. In Christ we are a new creation; distinctions of race, culture, learning, and nationality, and differences between high and low, rich and poor, male and female, must not be divisive among us. We are all equal in Christ, who by one Spirit has bonded us into one fellowship with Him and with one another; we are to serve and be served without partiality or reservation. Through the revelation of Jesus Christ in the Scriptures we share the same faith and hope, and reach out in one witness to all. This unity has its source in the oneness of the triune God who has adopted us as His children. *Fundamentals Beliefs, 13.*

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| 1. John 17:9-11, 20-23 | Jesus prayed for unity among His followers |
| 2. John 13:34, 35 | If we love one another, all men will know we are His disciples |
| 3. John 15:12 | Love one another as I have loved you |
| 4. 1 John 4:20, 21 | He who loves his brother, loves God |
| 5. 1 Corinthians 12:12,13 | We are members of one body |
| 6. Galatians 3:26 | We are children of one God |
| 7. Galatians 3:27, 28 | In Christ there is no distinction of race or gender |
| 8. Galatians 6:2 | Carry each other's burdens |
| 9. John 12:32 | If Christ is lifted up, He will draw all people to Himself |
| 10. Revelation 14:6 | Everlasting message to all the people of the world |

BAPTISM

By baptism we confess our faith in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and testify of our death to sin and of our purpose to walk in newness of life. Thus we acknowledge Christ as Lord and Savior, become His people, and are received as members by His church. Baptism is a symbol of our union with Christ, the forgiveness of our sins, and our reception of the Holy Spirit. It is by immersion in water and is contingent on an affirmation of faith in Jesus and evidence of repentance of sin. It follows instruction in the Holy Scriptures and acceptance of their teachings. *Fundamental Beliefs, 14.*

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| 1. Matthew 28:19, 20 | Jesus' commission to go, teach and baptize |
| 2. Mark 16:16 | He that believes and is baptized shall be saved |
| 3. Ephesians 4:5 | One Lord, one faith, one baptism |

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| 4. Matthew 3:13-17 | Jesus was baptized as an adult in Jordan |
| 5. Mark 1:9, 10 | Jesus was fully immersed in the water at his baptism |
| 6. Colossians 2:12 | Buried with Christ through baptism |
| 7. Romans 6:3-6 | Baptism is a symbol of the resurrection |
| 8. Acts 2:38 | Repent and be baptized |
| 9. 1 Corinthians 12:13 | Baptism is into the body (the church) |
| 10. Acts 22:16 | Arise and be baptized and wash away your sins |

THE LORD'S SUPPER

The Lord's Supper is a participation in the emblems of the body and blood of Jesus as an expression of faith in Him, our Lord and Savior. In this experience of Communion, Christ is present to meet and strengthen His people. As we partake, we joyfully proclaim the Lord's death until He comes again. Preparation for the Supper includes self-examination, repentance, and confession. The Master ordained the service of foot washing to signify renewed cleansing, to express a willingness to serve one another in Christlike humility, and to unite our hearts in love. The Communion service is open to all believing Christians. *Fundamental Beliefs, 15.*

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| 1. 2 Corinthians 11:23-26 | The purpose of the Lord's Supper (Communion) |
| 2. John 13:5-17 | Jesus washed feet of His disciples in preparation for the Supper |
| 3. John 13:14, 15 | We are to follow Christ's example in washing each other's feet |
| 4. John 13:8-10 | The Lord's Supper is a symbolic, mini-baptism |
| 5. 1 Corinthians 11:27-29 | Examine yourself before taking eating of the Lord's Supper |
| 6. 1 Corinthians 11:23,24 | Meaning of the bread - His broken body on the cross |
| 7. 1 Corinthians 11:25,26 | Meaning of the wine - His blood shed for our sins |
| 8. Matthew 26:29 | Christ will not drink the fruit of the vine until His kingdom comes |

SPIRITUAL GIFTS AND MINISTRIES

God bestows upon all members of His church in every age spiritual gifts which each member is to employ in loving ministry for the common good of the church and of humanity. Given by the agency of the Holy Spirit, who apportions to each member as He wills, the gifts provide all abilities and ministries needed by the church to fulfill its divinely ordained functions. According to the Scriptures, these gifts include such ministries as faith, healing, prophecy, proclamation, teaching, administration, reconciliation, compassion, and self-sacrificing service and charity for the help and encouragement of people. Some members are called of God and endowed by the Spirit for functions recognized by the church in pastoral, evangelistic, apostolic, and teaching ministries particularly needed to equip the members for service, to build up the church to spiritual maturity, and to foster unity of the faith and knowledge of God. When members employ these spiritual gifts as faithful stewards of God's varied grace, the church is protected from the destructive influence of false doctrine, grows with a growth that is from God, and is built up in faith and love. *Fundamental Beliefs, 16.*

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| 1. 1 Corinthians 1:4-7 | God's church will not lack in any spiritual gifts |
| 2. Matthew 25:14, 15 | God has given talents to everyone |
| 3. 1 Corinthians 12:1-11 | The diverse spiritual gifts |

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| 4. Ephesians 4:11-13 | The gifts of the Spirit and their purpose |
| 5. Galatians 5:22, 23 | The fruits of the Spirit |
| 6. 1 Corinthians 13:4-13 | The greatest gift is love |
| 7. Acts 1:4-8 | Christ promised the gift of the Holy Spirit for witnessing |

THE GIFT OF PROPHECY

One of the gifts of the Holy Spirit is prophecy. This gift is an identifying mark of the remnant church and was manifested in the ministry of Ellen G. White. As the Lord's messenger, her writings are a continuing and authoritative source of truth which provide for the church comfort, guidance, instruction, and correction. They also make clear that the Bible is the standard by which all teaching and experience must be tested. *Fundamental Beliefs*, 17.

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| 1. Amos 3:7 | God reveals Himself through His prophets |
| 2. 1 Corinthians 1:7 | God's last-day church will not lack any gifts |
| 3. Revelation 12:17 | Gift of prophecy is an identifying pillar of God's remnant church |
| 4. Revelation 19:10 | The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy |
| 5. Ephesians 4:8, 11-15 | Gift of prophecy will remain in the church until the end |
| 6. Isaiah 8:20 | The test of a prophet |
| 7. Matthew 7:15, 16 | By their fruits you should know them |
| 8. Judges 4:4, 5 | One of several women prophetesses mentioned in the Bible |
| 9. Proverbs 29:18 | Without a vision, the people perish |

THE LAW OF GOD

The great principles of God's law are embodied in the Ten Commandments and exemplified in the life of Christ. They express God's love, will, and purposes concerning human conduct and relationships and are binding upon all people in every age. These precepts are the basis of God's covenant with His people and the standard in God's judgment. Through the agency of the Holy Spirit they point out sin and awaken a sense of need for a Savior. Salvation is all of grace and not of works, but its fruitage is obedience to the commandments. This obedience develops Christian character and results in a sense of well-being. It is an evidence of our love for the Lord and our concern for our fellow men. The obedience of faith demonstrates the power of Christ to transform lives, and therefore strengthens Christian witness. *Fundamental Beliefs*, 18.

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| 1. Exodus 20:1-17 | The Ten Commandments |
| 2. Exodus 31:18 | Written by the finger of God (also Exodus 32:15,16) |
| 3. Psalm 19:7-12 | The Law of the Lord is perfect. In keeping it, there is great reward |
| 4. Matthew 5:17, 18 | Nothing will change in the law, not even a jot or tittle |
| 5. Matthew 22:36-40 | God's commandments based on love (Deuteronomy, 20:12) |
| 6. Matthew 19:17 | Jesus told the rich young ruler to keep God's commandments |
| 7. John 15:10 | Jesus kept the commandments |
| 8. 1 John 5:2, 3 | God's will for us is that we keep His commandments |
| 9. Ecclesiastes 12:13, 14 | The conclusion: Fear God and keep His commandments |
| 10. Revelation 14:12 | God's last day church keeps His commandments |

THE SABBATH

The beneficent Creator, after the six days of Creation, rested on the seventh day and instituted the Sabbath for all people as a memorial of Creation. The fourth commandment of God's unchangeable law requires the observance of this seventh-day Sabbath as the day of rest, worship, and ministry in harmony with the teaching and practice of Jesus, the Lord of the Sabbath. The Sabbath is a day of delightful communion with God and one another. It is a symbol of our redemption in Christ, a sign of our sanctification, a token of our allegiance, and a foretaste of our eternal future in God's kingdom. The Sabbath is God's perpetual sign of His eternal covenant between Him and His people. Joyful observance of this holy time from evening to evening, sunset to sunset, is a celebration of God's creative and redemptive acts. *Fundamental Beliefs, 19.*

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| 1. Mark 2:27, 28 | Sabbath made for the benefit of all mankind |
| 2. Genesis 2:1-3 | God rested on the Sabbath day and blessed it |
| 3. Exodus 20:8-11 | Fourth commandment says "remember" to keep the Sabbath holy |
| 4. Ezekiel 20:12, 20 | Sabbath established as sign between God and His people |
| 5. Luke 4:16 | Jesus faithfully kept the Sabbath |
| 6. Acts 17:2 | Paul kept the Sabbath |
| 7. Luke 23:54-56; 24:1 | Sabbath clearly defined as the seventh day of the week |
| 8. Isaiah 56:13, 14 | Principles on how to keep the Sabbath holy |
| 9. Isaiah 66:22, 23 | The Sabbath will be kept in the earth-made-new |

STEWARDSHIP

We are God's stewards, entrusted by Him with time and opportunities, abilities and possessions, and the blessings of the earth and its resources. We are responsible to Him for their proper use. We acknowledge God's ownership by faithful service to Him and our fellowmen, and by returning tithes and giving offerings for the proclamation of His gospel and the support and growth of His church. Stewardship is a privilege given to us by God for nurture in love and the victory over selfishness and covetousness. The steward rejoices in the blessings that come to others as a result of his faithfulness. *Fundamental Beliefs, 20.*

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| 1. Deuteronomy 8:18 | God grants the ability to get wealth |
| 2. Haggai 2:8 | The silver and the gold in this world belongs to God |
| 3. Malachi 3:8-11 | Man robs God by withholding tithes and offerings |
| 4. Genesis 14:20 | Abraham paid tithe to Melchizedek, who was a type of Jesus |
| 5. Leviticus 27:32 | A tithe is equal to one-tenth |
| 6. Matthew 23:23 | Jesus commended tithing but condemned neglecting mercy |
| 7. 1 Corinthians 9:13, 14 | Preachers of the gospel should be paid from tithes and offerings |
| 8. Proverbs 11:24, 25 | The person who gives freely is blessed by God and is given more |
| 9. 1 Peter 4:10 | Good stewards |
| 10. 2 Corinthians 9:7 | God loves people who give cheerfully |

CHRISTIAN BEHAVIOR

We are called to be a godly people who think, feel, and act in harmony with the principles of heaven. For the Spirit to recreate in us the character of our Lord, we involve ourselves only in those things which will produce Christlike purity, health, and joy in our lives. This means that our amusement and entertainment should meet the highest standards of Christian taste and beauty. While recognizing cultural differences, our dress is to be simple, modest, and neat, befitting those whose true beauty does not consist of outward adornment but in the imperishable ornament of a gentle and quiet spirit. It also means that because our bodies are the temples of the Holy Spirit, we are to care for them intelligently. Along with adequate exercise and rest, we are to adopt the most healthful diet possible and abstain from the unclean foods identified in the Scriptures. Since alcoholic beverages, tobacco, and the irresponsible use of drugs and narcotics are harmful to our bodies, we are to abstain from them as well. Instead, we are to engage in whatever brings our thoughts and bodies into the discipline of Christ, who desires our wholesomeness, joy, and goodness. *Fundamental Beliefs, 21.*

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| 1. 2 Corinthians 5:20 | Ambassadors for Christ |
| 2. Isaiah 62:10 | We're commanded to lift up a standard for the people |
| 3. 1 John 2:15-17 | Love not the world for it will pass away |
| 4. Psalm 11:5 | He who loves violence displeases God |
| 5. Romans 12:1, 2 | Don't be conformed to the world |
| 6. 2 Corinthians 3:18 | By beholding Christ we become changed |
| 7. 1 Timothy 2:9, 10 | Dress modestly and decently |
| 8. 1 Peter 3:2-5 | True adornment comes from the heart |
| 9. 1 Corinthians 6:19,20 | Our bodies are the temple of the living God |
| 10. Philippians 2:5 | Let this mind be in you which was in Jesus Christ |

MARRIAGE AND THE FAMILY

Marriage was divinely established in Eden and affirmed by Jesus to be a lifelong union between a man and a woman in loving companionship. For the Christian, a marriage commitment is to God as well as to the spouse, and should be entered into only between partners who share a common faith. Mutual love, honor, respect, and responsibility are the fabric of this relationship, which is to reflect the love, sanctity, closeness, and permanence of the relationship between Christ and His church. Regarding divorce, Jesus taught that the person who divorces a spouse, except for fornication, and marries another, commits adultery. Although some family relationships may fall short of the ideal, marriage partners who fully commit themselves to each other in Christ may achieve loving unity through the guidance of the Spirit and the nurture of the church. God blesses the family and intends that its members shall assist each other toward complete maturity. Parents are to bring up their children to love and obey the Lord. By their example and their words they are to teach them that Christ is a loving disciplinarian, ever tender and caring, who wants them to become members of His body, the family of God. Increasing family closeness is one of the earmarks of the final gospel message. *Fundamental Beliefs, 22.*

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| 1. Genesis 2:21-25 | Marriage, a divine institution |
| 2. 2 Corinthians 6:14-16 | Do not be yoked together with unbelievers |
| 3. Ephesians 5:25,28,33 | New Testament models for husbands and wives |
| Colossians 3:19 | Paul states that men should love their wives |
| 4. Titus 2:4 | Wives are admonished to love their husbands |

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| 5. Ephesians 5:21 | Submitting yourselves one to another |
| 6. Ephesians 6:1-4 | Parents are to raise their children to love the Lord |
| 7. Ephesians 4:26 | Settle your differences before the day is over |
| 8. Matthew 5:32 | Jesus' teaching on divorce and remarriage |
| 9. Matthew 19:6 | What God has joined together, let not man separate |

CHRIST'S MINISTRY IN THE HEAVENLY SANCTUARY

There is a sanctuary in heaven, the true tabernacle which the Lord set up and not man. In it Christ ministers on our behalf, making available to believers the benefits of His atoning sacrifice offered once for all on the cross. He was inaugurated as our great High Priest and began His intercessory ministry at the time of His ascension. In 1844, at the end of the prophetic period of 2300 days, He entered the second and last phase of His atoning ministry. It is a work of investigative judgment which is part of the ultimate disposition of all sin, typified by the cleansing of the ancient Hebrew sanctuary on the Day of Atonement. In that typical service the sanctuary was cleansed with the blood of animal sacrifices, but the heavenly things are purified with the perfect sacrifice of the blood of Jesus. The investigative judgment reveals to heavenly intelligences who among the dead are asleep in Christ and therefore, in Him, are deemed worthy to have part in the first resurrection. It also makes manifest who among the living are abiding in Christ, keeping the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus, and in Him, therefore, are ready for translation into His everlasting kingdom. This judgment vindicates the justice of God in saving those who believe in Jesus. It declares that those who have remained loyal to God shall receive the kingdom. The completion of this ministry of Christ will mark the close of human probation before the Second Advent. *Fundamental Beliefs*, 23.

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| 1. Exodus 25:8-40 | Earthly sanctuary, a pattern after the heavenly sanctuary |
| 2. Hebrews 9:1-24 | Earthly sanctuary, a copy of the heavenly |
| 3. Leviticus 16:33, 30 | Earthly high priest making atonement for Israelites |
| 4. Hebrews 8:1, 2 | Christ ascends into heaven and becomes our heavenly High Priest |
| 5. 2 Corinthians 5:21 | Christ made sin for us so we could be made righteous |
| 6. Hebrews 4:15, 16 | We can come boldly to the throne of God |
| 7. Hebrews 7:25-27 | Christ intercedes for us as our High Priest |
| 8. 1 John 2:1 | Christ is our Advocate with the Father |
| 9. Daniel 8:14 | 1844 marks the beginning of Christ's investigative judgment |
| 10. 1 Timothy 2:5 | There is only one Mediator between God and man |

THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST

The second coming of Christ is the blessed hope of the church, the grand climax of the gospel. The Savior's coming will be literal, personal, visible, and worldwide. When He returns, the righteous dead will be resurrected, and together with the righteous living will be glorified and taken to heaven, but the unrighteous will die. The almost complete fulfillment of most lines of prophecy, together with the present condition of the world, indicates that Christ's coming is imminent. The time of that event has not been revealed, and we are therefore exhorted to be ready at all times. *Fundamental Beliefs*, 24.

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| 1. John 14:1-3 | Jesus promised He would return |
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| 2. Acts 1:9-11 | Angels confirmed His promise and testified to its truthfulness |
| 3. Jude 14 | Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of Jesus' return |
| 4. Revelation 1:7 | When Jesus returns, every eye shall see Him |
| 5. Matthew 24:23-26 | His return shall be like lightning flashing across the sky |
| 6. Matthew 16:27 | He shall come in the glory of His Father and His angels |
| 7. Matthew 24:30 | He will come in the clouds of heaven |
| 8. Revelation 6:14-17 | There will be only two classes of people when He returns |
| 9. 1 Thessalonians 4:16,17 | The dead in Christ shall rise first |
| 10. 1 Corinthians 15:51-54 | God will clothe His people with immortality |

DEATH AND RESURRECTION

The wages of sin is death. But God, who alone is immortal, will grant eternal life to His redeemed. Until that day death is an unconscious state for all people. When Christ, who is our life, appears, the resurrected righteous and the living righteous will be glorified and caught up to meet their Lord. The second resurrection, the resurrection of the unrighteous, will take place a thousand years later. *Fundamental Beliefs, 25.*

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| 1. Genesis 2:7 | Dust + breath = living being |
| 2. Genesis 3:19 | Unto dust shalt thou return" |
| 3. Genesis 7:21, 22 | All flesh died that in whose nostrils was the breath of life |
| 4. Ecclesiastes 3:19, 20 | All have one breath (Hebrew "Ruash" = breath) |
| 5. Ecclesiastes 9:5, 6-10 | The dead know nothing |
| 6. Ecclesiastes 12:7 | Dust returns to earth, spirit returns to God who gave it |
| 7. John 5:28 | All that are in the grave will hear His voice |
| 8. 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 | The dead in Christ are raised first |
| 9. 1 Corinthians 15:51,52 | The dead in Christ will be raised incorruptible |
| 10. Revelation 21:4 | No more death |

THE MILLENNIUM AND THE END OF SIN

The millennium is the thousand-year reign of Christ with His saints in heaven between the first and second resurrections. During this time the wicked dead will be judged; the earth will be utterly desolate, without living human inhabitants, but occupied by Satan and his angels. At its close Christ with His saints and the Holy City will descend from heaven to earth. The unrighteous dead will then be resurrected, and with Satan and his angels will surround the city; but fire from God will consume them and cleanse the earth. The universe will thus be freed of sin and sinners forever. *Fundamental Beliefs, 26.*

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| 1. John 5:28, 29 | Two resurrections: resurrection of life, resurrection of damnation |
| 2. 1 Thessalonians 4:16,17 | Dead in Christ and righteous living meet Jesus in the sky |
| 3. 2 Thessalonians 1:8 | The wicked destroyed when Jesus returns |
| 4. Revelation 20:1,2 | Satan bound for 1000 years. |
| 5. Jeremiah 4:23-27 | Earth is desolate (without form and void) with no one inhabiting it |
| 6. Revelation 20:4 | Righteous dwell with God in heaven for 1000 years |
| 7. 1 Corinthians 6:2 | The saints shall judge the world |
| 8. Revelation 20:5a | Wicked resurrected to receive their final reward after 1000 years |

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| 9. | Revelation 20:7 | Satan leads the resurrected wicked in a final attack against God. |
| 10. | Revelation 20:9 | Satan and his evil hosts are finally and completely destroyed |

THE NEW EARTH

On the new earth, in which righteousness dwells, God will provide an eternal home for the redeemed and a perfect environment for everlasting life, love, joy, and learning in His presence. For here God Himself will dwell with His people, and suffering and death will have passed away. The great controversy will be ended, and sin will be no more. All things, animate and inanimate, will declare that God is love; and He shall reign forever. Amen. *Fundamental Beliefs*, 27.

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| 1. | John 14:1-3 | Heaven is a real place |
| 2. | 2 Peter 3:10-13 | Our Lord has promised to create a new heaven and a new earth |
| 3. | Matthew 5:5 | The meek shall inherit the earth |
| 4. | Isaiah 35:3-6 | All physical deformities will be cured |
| 5. | Isaiah 65:21-23 | We will build houses and plant vineyards |
| 6. | Isaiah 65:25 | The wolf and the lamb shall feed together |
| 7. | Revelation 21:1-5 | The Holy City descends from God out of heaven |
| 8. | Revelation 22:3, 4 | We shall lovingly serve God forever |
| 9. | Revelation 21:18-21 | Streets of gold and gates of pearls |
| 10. | Revelation 22:1-5 | Tree of life will be there and best of all we shall see His face |

A more detailed and complete study on the 27 Doctrines of Seventh-day Adventists can be found in *Seventh-day Adventists Believe. . .27, A Biblical Exposition of Fundamental Doctrines*. (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1988).

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photographs of “faces and images” of Hispanic Adventists from the past century.

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brief summaries of the 27

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100 YEARS OF
HISPANIC ADVENTISM

The Untold Story



HISPANICS AT THE VANGUARD

This account of the birth and development of the Adventist Hispanic work in North America is more than just a history book of names, dates, and facts.

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✱ It is about “the rest of the untold story” of how Hispanics are impacting the church today in every conference of the division.

✱ It is a challenge for young Latinos who will continue to move the work forward in the 21st century until the Lord cries, “It is finished.”

Hispanics are one of the fastest growing segments of the Adventist Church, constituting the third-largest constituency in the North American Division. Their zeal for soulwinning has placed them at the vanguard of evangelism. In the last five years, besides the hundreds of local church evangelistic efforts, Hispanics have sponsored or participated in three Spanish language international satellite evangelistic efforts, resulting in thousands of baptisms. Hispanic leadership at all levels of church administration is making a significant contribution to the overall growth and progress of the Adventist work in this division.

The author, Dr. Manuel Vázquez, is an American-born Hispanic whose father emigrated from Mexico. He is a convert to the Adventist faith and earned his doctoral degree in administrative leadership from Andrews University. His 32 years of denominational service have been involved with the Hispanic work, either directly or indirectly, in two world divisions. His heritage, education, and experience, tempered with his love for all Hispanics, has made him a strong advocate for Hispanic concerns in the Adventist Church. His wide range of experience includes military service, pastoring, missionary service, departmental director, lecturer, author, and administrator. Presently he serves as one of the Vice Presidents of the North American Division and director of the Multilingual Ministries Department.



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