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Development* IN TEXAS



# Hispanic Church & Leadership



Redeemer Assistant Pastor Benije Slaton & Associate Pastor Victor Martinez (R) serve the Lord's Supper

When Redeemer Presbyterian Church in San Antonio TX called Victor Martinez as Associate Pastor for Mission and Cultural Engagement, they quickly found that his English and Spanish bilingual skills, along with his experience in both Hispanic and mainstream United States cultures, opened many doors into the community. Redeemer's goal is not to develop a dual language church but to trust God for a growing ministry among the people of Hispanic lineage



Redeemer Church in San Antonio

who have lived in the city for generations. "The idea is to explore the city, to see the city as a place to explore, not a place to get away from," Martinez says. "Know that the Lord has worked there ahead of us, and is working among the people. We are finding that mercy ministry is a great place to begin."

San Antonio is 63 percent Hispanic; Redeemer's leadership is committed to

reaching the people of the city. That's an issue that many other churches throughout Texas are facing. "Our first priority is to learn and listen to the people of our city and their cultures so that we can better engage in the pursuit of the Gospel," says Redeemer's Senior Pastor Tom Gibbs.



Committed to serving the city, Redeemer purchased a building close to downtown San Antonio

In addition to Victor's leadership, Redeemer in San Antonio has a growing number of pastors and candidates who are able to work in a bicultural community with a firsthand understanding. Manny Alaniz was raised Roman Catholic. He is a ruling elder and third generation Mexican-American who



Redeemer Senior Pastor Tom Gibbs



Hispanic ministry candidates (from left to right) Curtis Castleberry, William Morales, Jaciel Castro, Vicente Jaime, and Manny Alaniz

is establishing, with Victor's mentoring, an English-language suburban worship and ministry site for Redeemer.

After California, Texas has the highest Hispanic population among the 50 United States. Many are first generation immigrants. Many are descendants of fami-



Westover Hills Community Group, led by Manny Alaniz

lies who have lived in Texas for generations. Increasingly, a key commitment of the PCA churches is to trust God for a steadily growing Hispanic PCA leadership.

*"Our first priority is to learn and listen to the people of our city and their cultures so that we can better engage in the pursuit of the Gospel."*

*-Tom Gibbs, Senior Pastor of Redeemer Church*

# Development in Texas

Josh Geiger, a bilingual Anglo, came to Dallas with a call to plant a church in the Hispanic community. "People were very humble about it and said, 'You know, we really don't know how to do this. If you're willing to try, we'll fund it,'" recalls Geiger, who grew up in Latin America while his father worked as a US Latin American Foreign Service officer.



Cristo Rey Pastor Josh Geiger

Geiger spent a year and a half connecting with people in the Latino community, spending time with them and joining organizations such as the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce. In 2002, Geiger began formation of Cristo Rey Presbyterian Church, which grew from two separate Bible studies to become a particular church in 2013.



Cristo Rey congregation

The church now holds a weekly bilingual worship service, with guided prayer services taking place as Geiger repeats the sermon in each language.

*"We would have had to shut our doors a long time ago were it not for committed, faithful support from other churches."*

*-Cristo Rey Pastor Josh Geiger*

Even after 12 years in the community, Cristo Rey still faces challenges that other churches might not. "We would have had to shut our doors a long time ago were it not for committed, faithful support from other churches," Geiger says. A number of area churches have committed financial resources and prayer to Cristo Rey, recognizing the necessity of long-term commitment.



Cristo Rey Spanish-language prayer group



Christ Presbyterian Pastor John Canales, right

"You don't have a very vibrant Hispanic middle and upper class in many communities. Usually when people get to that level, they assimilate," explains Pastor John Canales of Christ Presbyterian in Flower Mound, near Dallas. Canales grew up in the first Hispanic PCA church in Miami FL. "Here in Dallas, there are Hispanic upper-class folks for sure. They assimilate into the English-speaking culture." As a result, it's difficult for such churches to become self-sustaining, especially as immigration ebbs and flows.

"We've chosen an approach where the Spanish-speaking church is embedded within a larger English-speaking congregation. Associate Pastor Jahaziel Cantu leads the Spanish-language worship and ministry, called Iglesia Gracia. At Christ Presbyterian, Hispanics are a part of the church; they're not an independent congregation just renting there," Canales says. Since Canales himself is bilingual, he also moves naturally between the two languages in the congregation. VBS includes church members of all backgrounds, and is a major outreach event.

Many communities are home to first-generation immigrants, but second- and



Christ Presbyterian Vacation Bible School participants



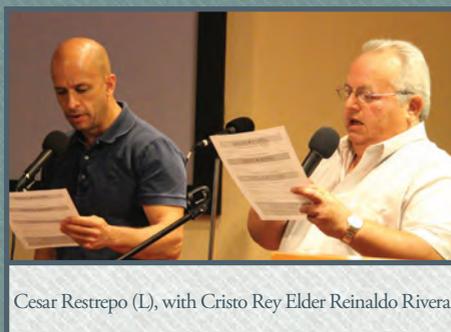
third-generation people are also well represented. Often, the first generation exclusively speaks Spanish, the second Spanish and English, and sometimes the third speaks barely any Spanish.

By offering bilingual services or separate services for each language, churches are able to keep generations of families together. “Within one church, you can minister to several generations. You have something in Spanish for mom and dad, who wouldn’t go unless the message was taught in their heart language,” says Hernando Saenz, MNA Hispanic American Ministries Coordinator. “The children will fluctuate in their fluency in language depending on when they came to the United States.”



Christ Presbyterian Associate Pastor Jahaziel Cantu serves as church planter for Iglesia Gracia

Bringing two languages and cultures together in one church presents unique challenges and requires the realization that this is what God has called us to do. As the populations of the communities served by PCA churches steadily change all across North America, churches increasingly search for direction in ministering across cultural lines and among different ethnic and language groups. In addition to addressing language and



Cesar Restrepo (L), with Cristo Rey Elder Reinaldo Rivera

socioeconomic challenges, understanding an individual’s religious background is important. Many Hispanic people come from a Roman Catholic background, where they attend a service once or twice a month and are passive participants. The regular participation that PCA churches expect is

a new experience even for those who have a church background.

Investment of time in the training and mentoring of leadership is crucial. In a busy society, many pastors and church officers assume that those who desire leadership training will seek it on their own time. “To meet with someone who is not of your culture requires more effort,” Saenz explains. That extra effort is required of both the leader and the student; relationship building and cultural understanding comes as both work together at it.

“A majority-culture American might look at a Hispanic and think ‘undocumented, uneducated.’ But that’s not necessarily true, and you wouldn’t know that unless you engage in a conversation with that person. Through that kind of engagement, he or she no longer remains a statistic but becomes a real person,” Saenz says. Likewise, Redeemer pastor Tom Gibbs notes, “Anglos are perceived by Hispanics as often cold and distant because they tend to be less expressive in almost every way.” Working through such cultural differences is essential to forming a church together.

*“A majority-culture American might look at a Hispanic and think ‘undocumented, uneducated.’ But that’s not necessarily true, and you wouldn’t know that unless you engage in a conversation with that person. Through that kind of engagement, he or she no longer remains a statistic but becomes a real person.”*

*-Hernando Saenz, Hispanic American Ministries Coordinator*

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1700 North Brown Rd. • Suite 101 • Lawrenceville, GA 30043 • P: 678.825.1200 • F: 678.825.1201 • [mna@pcanet.org](mailto:mna@pcanet.org) • [www.pcamna.org](http://www.pcamna.org)



Hispanic leadership is growing in PCA churches in other Texas cities. Here is a quick current overview.

- The Southwest Church Planting Network (SWCPN) was formed in 1998 to serve the churches and presbyteries of Texas, Arizona, New Mexico and Oklahoma. The idea for the Hispanic Leadership Initiative (HLI) originated in 2009 in conversations between Josh Geiger, Curt Dobbs of Park Cities Presbyterian Church and Bill Thomas of SWCPN, forming a leadership team in 2010 and a partnership with SWCPN. HLI was launched in 2013. With Gene Bowman as Executive Director, HLI's purpose is to provide resources for Hispanic leadership development.
- HLI originated at Cristo Rey, in Dallas, Cristo Rey and Redeemer in San Antonio,



Hispanic Leadership Group meeting at 2014 General Assembly in Houston

as well as Las Tierras in El Paso, serve as HLI training sites. HLI works closely with key partners, including MNA Hispanic American Ministries, to identify candidates with the leadership qualities to become HLI pastoral and church planting apprentices. The organization then helps place these apprentices in leadership positions at PCA churches. For example, Jahaziel Cantu served as an apprentice at Cristo Rey before being called as associate pastor at Christ Presbyterian in Flower Mound.

- MNA Leadership and Ministry Preparation (LAMP) has worked with MNA Hispanic American Ministries to develop SpanishLAMP, a Spanish-language seminary level training program that prepares men for ordination as PCA pastors. Victor Martinez coordinates the LAMP Seminary program at Redeemer. In addition, Redeemer Seminary, which originated in Dallas, now has a branch in San Antonio. Both Redeemer Seminary and LAMP Seminary are now available to provide the training necessary for candidates to seek ordination to the pastoral ministry.
- Cesar Restrepo is currently serving as an apprentice with Cristo Rey, sponsored through HLI. Such apprenticeships help leaders develop ministry experience in a cross-cultural context.
- Victor Martinez serves as mentor to three men in training for ministry through Redeemer Church. Curtis Castleberry is bilingual and bicultural; he is sponsored by HLI as a pastoral intern at Redeemer Church in San Antonio and is taking courses at Redeemer Seminary. Vicente Jaime is a SpanishLAMP Seminary student working in immigrant ministry; and Jaciel Castro, who is also in SpanishLAMP seminary training, is working with charter schools.
- San Antonio's Faith Presbyterian Church in 2013 called Carlos Ireta, who currently works for the Children's Hunger Fund, as a bi-vocational pastor to launch the church's Spanish-language outreach.
- Oaklawn Presbyterian in Houston's Second Ward is also working to develop leaders and church planters. Under former Pastor David Moran's leadership, the church became bilingual. Moran now serves as a pastor in Miami FL. His successor at Oaklawn, Alex Villasana, is now planting a church in Atlanta GA, sponsored by Perimeter Church. Tim Stiemann, who is bilingual, now serves



Oaklawn Presbyterian current and previous Pastors (L to R): Tim Stiemann, Alex Villasana, David Moran

- as pastor at Oaklawn, and Linc Ashby helps with leadership development. Oaklawn launched Hosanna, a PCA church in the Houston suburb of Tomball.
- Christ the King Presbyterian Church in Houston called Juan Carlos Martinez as Assistant Minister of Mission and Mercy; Edgardo Avila is the church's first Hispanic church planting intern.
- In El Paso, Las Tierra Community Church was planted by current Pastor Manuel Padilla. Pablo Ayllon completed an HLI sponsored internship at Las Tierras prior to being called by Grace Presbyterian Church in Dalton GA to serve as their Hispanic ministry director.
- Esperanza is a newly formed 501(c)(3), led by Mark Newcomer, that will serve to expand Cristo Rey's outreach. Their initial focus will be addressing educational needs through English as a Second Language (ESL) classes and a preschool program for children in the community.

God is working through PCA churches and presbyteries in Texas to advance the Gospel in Hispanic communities. Anything effective and lasting will be done by the power of God's Spirit, working through the proclamation of the Gospel in word and deed. God's Spirit will work as PCA churches invest time and resources in training and mentoring leadership to advance His work.



Mission to North America  
Presbyterian Church in America

1700 N. Brown Road, Suite 101  
Lawrenceville GA 30043  
T: 678.825.1200 • F: 678.825.1201  
[www.pcamna.org](http://www.pcamna.org)

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### INSIDE MULTIPLY WINTER 14/15

HISPANIC CHURCH AND LEADERSHIP  
DEVELOPMENT IN TEXAS

- REDEEMER PC IN SAN ANTONIO
- CRISTO REY IN DALLAS
- CHRIST PC IN FLOWER MOUND

## From the Coordinator

*After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, “Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!”*

— *Revelation 7:9-10*



Dear Friend,

When you walk through the streets of your city, what do you see? Do the people surrounding you all look alike? Do they all look like you? Or do you see many nations and peoples and hear many languages?

Our Lord has called us to minister among all peoples, not just the ones who are most like us, but even those who may have different cultural practices, or speak another language, or for some other reason wonder about you.

In this issue of *Multiply*, Texas leaders share how they are trusting God to work through them across cultural lines. All people need the Gospel. These churches seek to proclaim the Good News among all the people groups of their communities.

Thank you for continuing to pray and support these and other ministries. Your participation helps advance the Gospel to people throughout the cities of North America.

In His Name,  
Jim Bland, MNA Coordinator