

Council becomes National Hispanic Baptist Network

October 3, 2022

(BP)—There are more than 64 million Hispanics in the United States. The majority—48 million—do not know Christ as their Savior. This is an alarming indication that we live in a time of grave urgency regarding the gospel.

The task of reaching Hispanics without Christ is not an ethnic issue but a kingdom issue encompassing a particular key ethnicity. That is, since 7 out of 10 Hispanics are bilingual and cross-cultural—and appear to look white, Indian, African, Asian, and a host of combinations—the Hispanic population represents a possible large cross-cultural missionary force; but only if we evangelize and disciple them.

Although Hispanics make up 20 percent of the nation's population, they only make up 7 percent of the churches of the Southern Baptist Convention. Although a good number of the churches we plant are Hispanic churches, there is a 13 percent deficit in Hispanic representation.

Our convention's Hispanic Baptist Leadership Council was formed in 2017 to better coordinate the efforts of various Hispanic entities to fulfill the great commission and improve communication between Hispanics and the executive committee.

Our convention's Hispanic Baptist Leadership Council was formed in 2017, led by Dr. Bob Sena, professor and director of Spanish-language programs at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, and Dr. Daniel Sanchez, professor emeritus at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

The purpose of the council was to better coordinate the efforts of Hispanic

churches and various Hispanic entities to fulfill the great commission and improve communication between Hispanics and the executive committee.

Currently, the council is in the process of revitalization, and legal incorporation, and has changed its name to “The National Hispanic Baptist Network.”

Leadership team selected

The network has a leadership team chosen by its members who are: President Bruno Molina, language and interfaith evangelism associate for the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention and an adjunct professor at Southwestern Seminary and Midwestern Seminary; Vice President Eloy Rodriguez, pastor of Idlewild Church *en Español* in Florida; Secretary Sergio Guardia, director of Hispanic Ministries for the Southern Baptists of Virginia Convention; and Treasurer Jesse Rincones, the executive director of the Hispanic Baptist Convention of Texas.

The reason for these changes is due to the need to emphasize the importance of the purposes of the National Hispanic Baptist Network: to **connect** churches to the mission, to **contribute** and share resources; and to **celebrate** what God is doing among Hispanic Baptists.

The network also will focus on facilitating communication and collaboration among Hispanic pastors, entities that are affiliated with the convention, and with the office of the president and the SBC Executive Committee.

Team helps serve Hispanic Baptists

The National Hispanic Baptist Network consists of several teams that will serve the Hispanic Baptist community to fulfill the Great Commandment and the Great Commission. The Network already has several of these teams

formed which can be called, “sub-networks”:

- The Emerging Leaders team led by Sergio Guardia and Jose Daniel Fasolina
- The Women’s Ministry team led by Dr. Clara Molina and Ana Meléndez
- The State Leaders team led by Emanuel Roque and Dr. William Ortega

The network also is forming other teams: evangelism, revitalization, stewardship, church planting, training—this is discipleship and mentoring in leadership—and mobilization. This will be done in collaboration with the executive committee, the convention president, and leaders who support the Hispanic community at the national level through the convention entities.

The network also recognizes the need and the opportunity to address certain challenges within the Hispanic community: single mothers, retired Hispanic pastors, and health issues. Addressing these challenges will facilitate the flourishing of the Hispanic community.

One of the ways the National Hispanic Baptist Network will be able to contribute and share resources with Hispanic churches and ministries will be through its website, where they will be able to share written resources, videos, strategies, and methods, so churches won’t have to reinvent the wheel every time a new opportunity to do something presents itself.

Although the National Hispanic Baptist Network meets monthly via Zoom, it convenes in person during the SBC annual meeting. The next one will be held in New Orleans, from June 11 to 14, 2023. On Sunday, June 11, there will be a pastor and wife dinner for Hispanic pastors, a celebration service. On Tuesday, June 12, workshops will be offered.

The fact is that the harvest is plentiful, the workers are few, and the need

for the gospel is urgent. However, from God's point of view, these challenges are nothing more than opportunities disguised as problems.

God has given us the ability and the resources to not only address these issues, but also to be achieve success for his glory and the benefit of our community. We must respond to these opportunities as Joshua responded by saying, "As for me and my house, we will serve the LORD."

It must be done, it can be done, and with God's favor, united, we will do it. After all, if God is for us, who can be against us?