

## Blue Ribbon Task Force on Hispanic Ministry

### *Una Misión, Un Mensaje, Un Pueblo*

#### Hispanic Ministry: Bursting with Life and Energy for the Church

*“After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands and they cried out in a loud voice: “Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb” (Rev. 7:9 NIV).*

God is bringing Hispanic people to virtually every community of the United States. In doing so, He is also providing great opportunities for The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod to grow, to be strengthened, and to be enriched.

This report of the Blue Ribbon Task Force for Hispanic Ministry seeks to reflect the hopes and needs of the Hispanic community within the Missouri Synod and their desire to be a growing part of this church body. Indeed, the task force believes this report has implications for ministry with all ethnic populations and within the Synod itself.

We see this challenge: As The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod seeks to “be in mission,” striving toward 100 million “critical events” of its *Ablaze!* initiative, it also has the responsibility to “be in ministry” — to baptize, to teach and to care for those who are introduced to the Savior Jesus Christ. The challenge is to welcome those whom the Holy Spirit draws into our midst, embracing them as fellow citizens with God’s people and members of His household.

*“Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God’s people and members of God’s household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by His Spirit” (Eph. 2:19-22 NIV).*

#### Assignment

---

LCMS President Gerald Kieschnick appointed the Blue Ribbon Task Force for Hispanic Ministry in June 2006. He charged the task force to study and determine the best methodology for the Synod to move aggressively in its mission to Hispanics (Latinos).

Four months later, in October 2006, the U.S. Census Bureau estimated that the U.S. population reached 300 million people, including an estimated 44.7 million people of Hispanic origin.

- Today, about 15 percent of Americans are of Hispanic descent. (Compare this to 1966 when the U.S. population was 200 million and Hispanics totaled only 8.5 million or about 4 percent.)
- Over the past four decades, the U.S. population grew by 100 million people of which 36 million were Hispanics — *and, of them, 29 million were immigrants.*

Two decades ago, few could project what was to come. With the whole of society, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod views an American scene that is increasingly diverse — in color, world origin, language and customs. Because of their numbers, Hispanics are most prominent.

#### History

---

Just as there is no single history of ministry with Hispanics in the Missouri Synod, there is no set of criteria for describing a Hispanic ministry or congregation. Neither does the Synod have a mechanism for identifying Spanish-speaking families within English-speaking congregations. The task force also is aware that some Hispanic worshiping groups have not organized into congregations. We know that the Hispanic population is extremely fluid and while we may be disappointed to see no growth in a Hispanic mission, we realize that 200 to 300 people may pass through such a mission on their way to a better life.

Hispanics are a diverse group. Therefore, the task force understands the term “Hispanic” or “Latino” to be the broad group of people with Spanish-speaking Latin-American heritage. A large number of Latinos are from Mexico, but Spanish-speaking people also come from Central and South America, plus Caribbean countries such as Cuba and Puerto Rico.

The Synod can trace ministry with Spanish-speaking people back at least 80 years. A Rev. Cobian, who was a native of Puerto Rico, began ministries to Mexicans and Mexican-Americans in San Antonio in 1926. Rev. Andrés Melendez, also a Puerto Rican, began ministries in south Texas during the 1930s and 1940s. Both men were products of mission efforts of the Augustana Synod, now part of the ELCA.

About 1910, the Southern District provided financial resources and manpower for work in Cuba. That work continued through the Cuban Revolution, when repatriation of missionaries following the fall of Cuba in 1959 began work among Hispanics in Florida.

Since the 1960s, ministries in New York and New Jersey reached communities of migrants from Puerto Rico, Cuba and the Dominican Republic. In the Midwest, ministries began in Chicago and Milwaukee during the 1950s and 1960s, in Cleveland during the 1970s and in Indiana throughout the 1990s.

On the West Coast, a Rev. Theiss was calling for work among Hispanics in California as early as 1906. Work was conducted in the 1930s in Los Angeles, during the 1940s in Santa Ana and the 1980s in northern California.

Today, Hispanic ministries exist in 24 of the 35 LCMS districts (and it is likely that opportunities exist in all districts). Seventy-three mission projects might be called “stand alone” as a congregation with a Spanish name. Another 70 missions work alongside Anglo congregations. Since the turn of this century, 76 new missions have been established. The Synod has 139 workers of Hispanic origin, including 99 pastors, deaconesses, professors, and lay workers. An estimated 10,000 Hispanics are members of LCMS congregations.

There have been five major suppliers of ordained pastors for Hispanic ministries.

- Of the 40 bilingual Anglos in Hispanic ministry, nearly all come from the St. Louis and Fort Wayne seminaries. Most learned Spanish as undergraduates and served as vicars or called missionaries in Latin America.
- In the 1950s, the Bible Institute in Monterrey, Mexico, trained men for the pastoral ministry. Most of these pastors, who mainly served along the U.S.-Mexico border, are now retired or deceased.
- The Institute for Hispanic Ministries was housed at Concordia University, River Forest, Ill., from 1978 to 1987. It prepared men in Spanish language for ordained public ministry and had a three-person full-time faculty. Functioning under the colloquy program, it prepared men for convertible vicarages after 27 months of full-time instruction. About 20 men finished the program.
- The Hispanic Institute of Theology, established in 1987 with offices in the Chicago area, prepared Hispanic men for certification for ordained ministry and women for deaconess certification. The Institute also trains lay workers. The program successfully combined video with local instruction in more than 30 cities for a 10-course pre-seminary sequence. Typically, 150 men and women take the pre-seminary courses at any given time, and about 15 men and women are enrolled in seminary-level courses leading to pastoral ministry or deaconess certification.
- Since September 2006, the Center for Hispanic Studies at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, has incorporated — and continued — the work of the Hispanic Institute of Theology.

Recognizing the growth of the Hispanic population in the United States, the Synod's Board for Mission Services established a staff position for Hispanic ministry in the late 1970s. Rev. Carlos Puig, followed by Rev. Roberto Gonzalez, served full-time between 1978 and 1994. Rev. Angel Perez served part-time from 1994 to 1998, and Rev. Gonzalez returned full-time between 1998 and 2003. The position was not filled after Rev. Gonzalez accepted a call to a parish in 2003. In the early 1970s, the National Hispanic Conference formed as a triennial gathering of workers in Hispanic Ministry and representatives of Hispanic congregations.

Outreach to Spanish-speaking people is conducted by the International Lutheran Laymen's League through its Lutheran Hour Ministries. A major ministry was the Spanish version of The Lutheran Hour, begun in 1941 and voiced for 31 years by Dr. Andrés Meléndez. The radio program was aired in Latin America, Spain and the United States.

Concordia Publishing House has provided Spanish language materials for more than 50 years. Three scholar-pastor-editors (the now-sainted Dr. Andrés Meléndez, Rev. Carlos Puig, and Rev. Hector Hoppe) have established Editorial Concordia as a primary source for theological works in Spanish. Under the editorship of Dr. Meléndez, CPH published the complete *Book of Concord* in Spanish as well as *Culto Cristiano*, a complete worship resource and hymnal used extensively in both the United States and Latin America. Over the last 13 years, Concordia has flourished as a source of practical as well as original theological works. Especially important is a new series of original theological studies designed from a Hispanic context.

## **Vision**

---

There are more than 44.7 million Hispanics in the United States. They are a diverse group in terms of their country of origin, length of time in our country, culture, and legal status. Many are Roman Catholics by tradition, yet they know little about the Bible or the Gospel message of salvation by faith alone in Jesus Christ. They come to this country for economic opportunity, with the cares and struggles of this life pushing aside their spiritual thirst to know God. Yet that thirst is there.

Although there are millions of Hispanics in the United States, we do not see them in The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. Our estimate is that there are about 10,000 Hispanics as members in the LCMS. By God's grace, that will change.

Since the Hispanic ministries of the Synod are one with the Synod, they reflect the vision of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. The LCMS vision of "One Mission, One Message, One People" is articulated among Latinos as "*Una Misión, Un Mensaje, Un Pueblo.*"

### ***Una Misión (One Mission)***

In the future, we see that hundreds of thousands of unchurched Hispanics are hearing the Gospel and being connected by grace to the church through the ministries of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod including:

- Congregations that are bilingual and bicultural,
- Congregations that are Hispanic specific,
- Lutheran schools and preschools,
- Campus ministries, and
- Social service agencies and many others.

We hear that these new disciples are being energized and unleashed as missionaries to all people to their Jerusalem, their Judea and throughout the world.

In the future, we see thousands of leaders being developed and resourced to conduct effective ministries. They are found in our existing synodical institutions such as the Center for Hispanic Studies, the seminaries, and the Concordia University System, as well as new and existing district extension sites. There is an emphasis on developing mission planting workers who have resources that include:

- Prayer support,
- Ministry skills,

- Sustainable models,
- Mentoring,
- Grants, and
- Legal knowledge, etc.

### ***Un Mensaje (One Message)***

The Hispanic ministries of the LCMS hold in solidarity with the whole Synod the message of salvation by grace through faith. They rejoice in the solid truths of the Scriptures, which they esteem as the inspired and inerrant Word of God. They are eager to take this life-giving message to their people, many of whom are not connected by grace to Christ, even though they may have a Christian heritage. As congregations form and grow, they provide catechism instruction and Bible study for long-term doctrinal formation.

### ***Un Pueblo (One People)***

In the future, we see that these new believers and leaders are welcomed into the church-at-large. Hispanic ministry is sought after and prized. We see that Hispanics are welcomed for the diversity, cultural perspectives, and gifts that they bring to the church. They are accepted as leaders and peers. The church sees itself as doing ministry *with* Hispanics. They are a part of the fabric of our church. The church is patiently and evangelically confronting racism. We see that the doors of our churches, district offices, and synodical entities say, “*Se habla español aquí!*”

## **Issues**

---

By listening to conversations among Hispanic workers and Anglo workers in Hispanic ministry in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, the task force has heard expressions reflecting these issues:

### ***Inclusion***

Hispanics in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod are likely to react negatively to the phrase “ministry to Hispanics” when they strongly desire the objective to be “ministry *with* Hispanics.” This is more than a matter of a preposition: it is the difference between being subjects or partners in mission and ministry.

Among Hispanic workers, congregations, and their members, this desire for partnership includes interest and willingness to assist in identifying mission starts, placing workers, funding, and planning for ministry with Hispanics.

### ***Isolation***

Hispanic people feel a sense of isolation from the church. Language is certainly one issue; economics is another; culture is another. Although its mission and human care efforts are well intended, the traditional middle-class LCMS does not venture into the barrios, either in urban communities or rural towns with Hispanic concentrations. Furthermore, many Anglo congregations and their members have perceptions of Hispanics that may not be entirely accurate.

This isolation is acute among pastors in Hispanic ministries. Within their circuit or district they may feel disconnected because of language and common experiences. Information does not filter to them readily. They often serve alone, distant from resources and mentoring relationships for their ministry.

Organizationally, Hispanics in the Synod express frustration — and, in some cases, anger — at what they see as the loss of progress in Hispanic ministry. Due to budget, the staff position for Hispanic ministry was eliminated from the LCMS World Mission staff several years ago. While Hispanics mourn the loss of a voice on the International Center staff, they are more disappointed at what they perceive to be an elimination of staff without their input.

A sense of abandonment also is expressed regarding the former Hispanic Institute of Theology, begun in 1978. It was originally funded by the Board for Mission Services and the Board for Higher Education and located on the campus of Concordia University, River Forest, Ill. Over the years, both boards dropped direct fund support as their own budgets decreased. Now, this institute is incorporated into the Center for Hispanic Studies at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, and is entirely funded by the seminary.

Desire for a “voice” within the Synod structure is a frequent topic at meetings of this task force and others groups associated with Hispanic ministry.

### ***Access***

Access is a concern. There is desire to have access to the national offices of the Synod, certainly with the board and staff that deal with missions, but also to the national dialog that affects Lutheran schools, fund development, resources, and services for congregations, communications, higher education, and seminary education.

Hispanic workers seek resources. They need someone “at the table” to cite the needs of Hispanic congregations and to channel necessary resources and services to Hispanic ministry. As much as they seek resources, Hispanic workers also seek someone to receive and share information, to give guidance, to encourage fellowship and mentoring, and to provide an administrative connection to the church body. In regions where there are large Hispanic populations, districts may be able to provide these connections. However, opportunities for Hispanic ministry exist even in regions where districts function with volunteer staffs.

In the words of one task force member, “The International Center is an infinitely poorer place because there is no presence to interpret Hispanic ministry theologically, sociologically, and administratively.” Another adds, “And as a result, truly poor decisions have been made with regard to Hispanic ministry.”

Access is frequently limited by language. Many Hispanic pastors were trained in Spanish to minister to a Spanish-speaking community. With limited English, they are less able to obtain resources from the national or district offices, even by phone or by Internet inquiries.

### ***“Mission”***

Hispanic ministry is more than “missions.” Once people are brought into an active relationship with their Savior and with fellow believers and into Word and Sacrament, they form a congregation that needs all the resources that every congregation requires to effectively minister in areas such as evangelism, stewardship, education, fellowship, youth ministry, and human care.

Hispanic ministry is holistic ministry. While they work hard, Hispanic immigrant families — like immigrants before them — arrive with meager finances, work at low-paying jobs, and live in low quality housing. Along with the Gospel, they appreciate food pantries, child care, education for their children, and opportunities to learn the English language. The latter services help prepare people to grow in the Gospel and to assume leadership in their community, including their faith community.

Conscious that Hispanic ministry is largely ministry to immigrants, the task force is also aware that people of Hispanic heritage have been citizens of this nation for two centuries or more. They have found their way to LCMS congregations where they are active and committed members. As such, they have gifts and abilities that can and should be tapped for elected and appointed positions at all levels — national, district, and congregation.

Hispanic ministry has too often been a ministry of “last resort.” As declining inner city congregations see Hispanic immigrants populate their communities, they hope Hispanic ministry can continue their congregation. Unfortunately, these efforts painfully prolong a closing when attempted without realistic strategies, intentional cross-cultural training, or full ownership in the mission. On the other hand, healthy Anglo congregations can nurture healthy Hispanic ministries, especially when they commit to have bilingual Hispanics and Anglos build bridges between the two communities. Healthy

ministries grow from intentional mission strategies that recognize a mission constituency, budget realistically, staff competently, and minister holistically.

Frankly, “mission” is sometimes based on what Anglos perceive it “should be” rather than what is needed. The Hispanic Lutheran community believes it can be the Synod’s strongest resource to reach unchurched Hispanics. Hispanic Lutherans say, “We want to be part of this church!” For the organized Synod, the challenge may be to *listen* early in the process of mission in a Hispanic community.

### ***Second and Third Generations***

The “first generation” worries about the second and third generations. A very large percentage of Hispanics are immigrants and their concerns are perhaps no different from those who founded the Lutheran synods 175 years ago. These successive generations are the fastest growing segment of the U.S. Hispanic population.

Like the children of Anglo — and other ethnic populations — the “generational divides” present both incredible ministry challenges and opportunities in this post-modern society. Families are keenly aware of their young people being pulled away from the positive influences of family and church. This is a challenge that needs to be addressed bilingually and biculturally.

### ***Economics***

Many Hispanic families, particularly immigrant families, have limited incomes. They have limited resources to support their congregation. While national and district offices encourage mission congregations to become self-supporting, this is difficult when the missions are in low-income communities.

Some mission starts use “bi-vocational” workers, which may handicap the ministries. A pastor, deaconess, or lay minister must divide time between study for the ministry, a congregation, and a secular job – plus a family. Such worker-priests may be limited to minimum wage jobs because, despite their theological training, they have limited language, education and work skills.

Questions like these were posed within the task force: “Do we need to provide training in secular trades if we ask a pastor to be employed outside the church?” “Is it fair to train church workers and tell them to never expect to earn a penny from their ministry?” “Are we asking pastors to ‘do church’ on the side?” “Does the Synod or a district try this approach only with ethnic groups ... would the bi-vocational model be used as extensively with Anglo mission starts?”

Given these limitations, the church may have unachievable goals if it expects these start-up ministries to develop sufficient membership or to become self-supporting within a short time, say five years.

### ***Recommendations***

---

President Kieschnick instructed this task force to determine the best methodology for The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod to know and do in order to aggressively move the mission with Latinos. His encouragement was to be bold and forward thinking.

As part of its study, the task force held a “Hispanic Summit” on Jan. 16-18, 2007, attended by 44 individuals. The participants were predominantly Hispanic workers, plus Anglo workers serving Hispanic ministries, and staff from synodical departments. In a process of presentations and round table discussions, this group reacted to a draft report from the task force. Their comments and recommendations are incorporated in the recommendations that follow. The task force ranked these recommendations based on an average of priorities from the Summit participants.

#### ***Recommendation 1:***

##### ***Director for Strategic Development of Hispanic Ministries***

The task force recommends establishing the office of Director for Strategic Development of Hispanic Ministries, funded from the national budget of the Synod, to provide vital leadership and two-

way communication on behalf of Hispanic ministry. With a focus on connecting the Hispanic ministries with one another and connecting them to the Synod-at-large, this office would address three key issues:

- *Leadership* — The Director is a key to opening the potential among the U.S. Hispanic population. The Synod's Hispanic community has requested such a position — most recently in a resolution from the 2006 National Hispanic Conference. Equally important in the opinion of this task force is the leadership a Director provides in encouraging the rest of the Synod to be in mission and ministry with Hispanics. Nothing will happen without focused leadership.
- *Access* — A Director brings the capability to have “a seat at the table” and channel the concerns of Hispanic ministries to staff, boards, and commissions of the Synod. The Director becomes a visible and accessible national advocate for Hispanic ministry and leads in forming a national plan for Hispanic Ministry.
- *Resources* — A Director channels information and resources to congregations and workers in Hispanic ministry. The office identifies and encourages models for ministry with Hispanics and is a clearinghouse for successes, concerns, and needs expressed by the ministries. This office emphasizes intentional ministry and counsels with districts (and through districts to congregations) as they plan Hispanic ministries.

In the past, this position was located in LCMS World Mission. While mission is a critical component, the task force also sees great need to teach and affirm ministries of leadership development, stewardship, evangelism, parish education, fellowship, worship, and parochial schools.

The LCMS President requested this task force to offer methodologies that move the mission with Latinos. Recognizing his concern, the task force recommends the National Director for Strategic Development of Hispanic Ministries be under the supervision of the Synod President during the next triennium. This administrative arrangement would emphasize the Synod's commitment to Hispanic ministry, give opportunity to listen and advise the Council of Presidents, and allow for integrating Hispanic ministry with other synodical strategies.

Three or four persons, elected by the National Hispanic Lutheran Convention, might serve as an advisory board to the Director.

### ***Recommendation 2:***

#### ***Educational access to form workers and leaders***

It is not an overstatement to say that the essence of a mission movement is leadership development, especially training workers to plant and lead new churches. The task force recognizes that the Synod will be unable “to move forward aggressively in Hispanic ministry” without a strong emphasis on forming leaders for this effort.

- *Center for Hispanic Studies* — The former Hispanic Institute of Theology (HIT) was influential in this effort, and the Center for Hispanic Studies (CHS) is now vital for continuing the preparation of pastors, deaconesses, and lay leaders. Building on this foundation, future strides in Hispanic ministry will depend upon increasing the enrollment in training programs and upon monitoring the effectiveness of this training.
- *District partnerships* — Strategic partnerships with districts in this training also will encourage the formation of workers and leaders.
- *Allocation of resources* — The task force recommends that efforts leading to the formation of leaders receive priority in the allocation of resources.

This formation of professional workers — plus preparing lay leaders — likewise calls attention to the importance and value of education. The LCMS educational system — from preschools through university graduate programs — becomes a powerful tool for preparing and integrating Hispanics as church workers and lay leaders.

The task force offers these challenges:

- *Lutheran elementary schools and high schools* — LCMS congregations operate 1,030 elementary schools and 101 high schools. The task force challenges each congregation associated with a

school to recruit and sponsor at least one new Hispanic student a year during the next three years. Lutheran schools are the best opportunities to begin forming future professional church workers and lay leaders. Schools effectively bring parents into the church through the influence of their children.

- *Concordia University System* — The task force challenges the Board for University Education and the Concordia University System to recruit, support, and graduate a minimum of 100 Hispanics within the next 10 years. The task force suggests the Concordia University System consider an educational track for Directors of Christian Education and Directors of Christian Outreach who can work in Hispanic contexts, especially ministry among second and successive generations.
- *Hispanic congregations* — Congregations and pastors strongly influence the decisions of young people to enroll at our Concordia Universities and to become church leaders in lay or professional vocations. The task force challenges each Hispanic congregation and ministry to encourage and support one member to attend a Concordia University, especially to consider a career in church work.
- *All congregations* — The task force challenges all LCMS congregations and schools to have one person on their staffs who is capable of speaking Spanish within the next three years.

The task force recognizes that all congregations will benefit from resources that encourage and guide them in reaching ethnic groups in their communities. Therefore, the Board for District and Congregational Services is encouraged to intentionally include resources for reaching and teaching Hispanic children through its publications and presentations.

The task force also calls on the Association of Lutheran Secondary Schools and Lutheran Education Association to encourage and equip school administrators and educators to lead in reaching Hispanics and other ethnic groups.

### ***Recommendation 3:***

#### ***Hear the Hispanic voices in forming the church's future***

Language guides our attitudes, and the task force urges the Synod to speak of “ministry *with*” rather than from “ministry *to*” Hispanics and other ethnic groups. This is a first step toward including ethnic groups in the life of the Synod — learning to listen to their stories, to experience their response to the Word, to sense their passion for the Gospel, and to welcome their participation.

As a Synod, we must think: “How can we grow together?”

- *Leadership* — The task force encourages the Council of Presidents and synodical officers to lead in effecting change. It begins with consciously saying “ministry *with*” instead of “ministry *to*.” The next steps are to invite participation of Hispanics on boards, task forces, commissions, and committees at district and national levels.
- *LCMS boards and commissions* — As they make plans and decisions regarding ethnic ministries, boards and commissions can invite the input from Hispanic pastors and lay leaders, publish some materials in Spanish, and seek Hispanics to serve on working groups and even in staff positions.
- *National Lutheran Hispanic Mission Society and Hispanic Lutheran Convention* — As gathering points and advocates for the Hispanic voice in the LMCS, these two groups are encouraged to identify and nominate men and women for election to the district and national boards and commissions and to serve as delegates to conventions.

People with Hispanic heritage are dynamic, valuable, and gifted. They can bring fresh blood and new enthusiasm to this church body. The ministry of the whole will be energized through inclusion of this not-so-minority minority.

Hispanic people desire to be part of the whole church and yet desire to connect to their heritage. Many established Missouri Synod Lutherans can understand because they trace their roots to Germany or Slovakia or Scandinavia. If the Missouri Synod is serious about mission with Hispanics, we look for the

day when *tortillas y frijoles* or *lechón moros y cristianos* are as naturally part of church suppers as sausage and sauerkraut.

#### ***Recommendation 4:***

##### ***Address issues related to immigration***

Most Americans are acutely aware of the large numbers of Hispanic immigrants coming to this country. The task force emphasizes that immigration and Hispanic ministry are — and will continue to be — closely connected. A comment from the Hispanic Summit highlights this issue: “To *not* address immigration issues will hinder Hispanic ministries.”

In June 2006, LCMS President Gerald Kieschnick and Rev. Matthew Harrison, executive director of LCMS World Relief/Human Care, issued a statement on immigration. They reiterated the Synod’s affirmation of the right, responsibility, and authority of the government to act as God’s agent, according to what is reasonable and just, in the creation and enforcement of laws. Rev. Kieschnick and Rev. Harrison also recognized that millions of undocumented persons come to the United States because they can work and find dignity in labor. Citing the biblical directive to show loving concern for the “stranger in our midst,” these church leaders voiced their prayer that God grant wisdom and discernment to U.S. leaders as they seek to find appropriate solutions to illegal immigration.

Rev. Kieschnick and Rev. Harrison also requested that “the charitable acts of providing assistance to undocumented aliens not otherwise engaged in illegal activity not be criminalized *ipso facto*.” They said, “We pray that appropriate solutions may be found, so that our assistance to those in need can also include helping persons become legal residents and citizens of this land of freedom and opportunity in which God has so richly blessed us.”

In expressing its own “Amen!” the task force affirms Rev. Kieschnick and Rev. Harrison in their statement and recommends:

- *Welcoming the stranger* — The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod in convention affirm its loving concern for “the stranger in our midst” and request LCMS World/Relief Human Care and District and Congregational Services, working with Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Services, to identify a network of congregational resources for counseling immigrants regarding legal and social services.
- *Theological understanding* — As underscored by the Kieschnick-Harrison statement, immigration brings issues of both governmental authority and Christian responsibility. Professional church workers and laity need a theological guide for responding as individuals and through their congregations. The task force encourages Concordia Publishing House to develop at least one Bible study on immigration. Other guidance can be provided by articles and Bible studies in *The Lutheran Witness* and discussion guides for district pastoral conferences and circuit convocations.
- *Position paper on immigration* — The task force requests the Commission on Theology and Church Relations to prepare a position statement on immigration. Such a study should consider the Christian’s legal and biblical responsibilities for “welcoming the stranger.” The CTCR should also look at related questions of asylum and advocacy.

#### ***Recommendation 5:***

##### ***Cross-pollination in leadership structures***

The task force notes the desire of the Hispanic church to be part of the church-at-large. That will happen much sooner and more comfortably if leaders understand cross-cultural ministry — the kind of learning that happens “in your own skin.” As it often does, the Lutheran Women’s Missionary League is leading the way with its Heart to Heart Committee and cross-cultural awareness training for LWML district presidents and its executive committee.

The task force realizes that cross-cultural training can easily be interpreted as “political correctness” or “diversity training.” However, we note that the LWML was not trying to do social re-

engineering, but to intentionally include ethnic women into their leadership structure. This opened the door to greater appreciation of cultures and to the contributions ethnic women can bring to the organization. To accomplish this, the LWML established a new and innovative path to leadership for ethnic women.

While recognizing this effort and expressing its appreciation to the LWML, the task force encourages other groups in the Synod to include this type of cross-pollination.

- *Bridging cultures* — As part of their own professional growth activities, the Council of Presidents might lead the way. In their districts the presidents could convey the value of bridging cultures in meetings with district boards, circuit counselors, and congregational leaders.
- *Developing resources* — Such an effort requires coordination. The task force suggests that the Board for Mission Services, as leader in the *Ablaze!* initiative, offer resources — both materials and instructional expertise — to help the people and congregations of the Synod grow in their comfort and capability to provide leadership opportunities. This effort reaches far beyond Hispanic ministry; it includes ministry with all immigrant groups, even ministry across economic lines and communities and generations.
- *Identifying potential leaders* — In front of every board and commission, before every elected official, is the task to identify men and women who have leadership potential and to identify means by which their gifts and abilities may be developed for the benefit of the church.

#### ***Recommendation 6:***

##### ***Communication in Spanish***

The task force reminds the church-at-large that many of our Hispanic pastors and pastors-in-training have limited English skills, although they are proficient in Spanish. Simply stated, the church will face an ongoing need for resources in Spanish — both printed and Internet accessible. Hispanic ministry will benefit from communication that allows sharing of information, events, ideas, and resources in *both* Spanish and English.

- *Theological documents* — Certain key theological documents, including Commission on Theology and Church Relations reports, should be translated. A short-term task force should be brought together to select the documents.
- *Internal communications* — As the *Ablaze!* initiative continues, the Board for Mission Services should make some communication available in Spanish. Many Spanish-speaking Lutherans would appreciate portions of *The Lutheran Witness* in Spanish. To save printing and mailing expense, these materials could be posted on the LCMS web site. The web site also should offer some basic information in Spanish.
- *Outreach materials* — Outreach materials, explaining Lutheran teachings and The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, would be most helpful for mission leaders seeking to reach Hispanics. The Board for Communication Services and Concordia Publishing House are encouraged to cooperate in developing some basic material.
- *Staffing* — Such translation will require personnel to do the work and guide the process. CPH may be able to supply some of the work and recover costs through its sales. Perhaps some of this work might be undertaken by the National Lutheran Hispanic Mission Society, which could provide volunteer staffing as well as efforts for fund development.

#### ***Recommendation 7:***

##### ***A strengthened mission society***

The National Lutheran Hispanic Mission Society already exists and the task force notes that mission societies are valuable and healthy ways to support future Hispanic ministries. Ministry that is defined, formed, and moving forward by Hispanics and workers in Hispanic ministry also helps to bring about a healthy and growing church.

- *Partnership for development* — In order for the National Lutheran Hispanic Mission Society to acquire capacity to stand alongside Hispanic ministry, it should enter a relationship with a development entity, such as the LCMS Foundation, to acquire expertise and services for effective development. Enhanced development will lead to many advantages: scholarships for church workers, subsidies for mission starts, and demographic research to guide Hispanic ministry efforts, to name a few.
- *Recognize synodical responsibility* — The task force also issues a caution: a mission society could isolate Hispanic ministry by becoming a depository for problems that the church-at-large would rather avoid. Needing the Hispanic presence at all levels, the Synod cannot delegate its opportunities or responsibilities away from itself by pushing them onto a mission society.

***Recommendation 8:***

***Encourage church workers to acquire a second language***

This nation is increasingly diverse, and the task force believes that church workers should speak more than one language if they are to lead their congregations in serving the communities where God has placed them.

- *Spanish for professional workers* — Aware that the Hispanic population will continue to grow, the task force suggests that Spanish be taught at the seminaries. Spanish also should be encouraged for men and women studying to serve as teachers, Directors of Christian Education, or other commissioned church workers. Additional courses on Latin American theologies and church development might be included.
- *English capability* — Conversely, Hispanics, particularly those in theological education through the Center for Hispanic Studies, should be helped to acquire a working knowledge of English.

The task force notes that Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod now requires all its seminary students to study Spanish. We also note that the Roman Catholic Church has made this a requirement for seminaries west of the Mississippi.

***Recommendation 9:***

***Ongoing efforts to build a strategic plan***

Task forces listen, study, discuss, write, and recommend. Conventions listen, study, debate, and pass or defeat resolutions. Unfortunately, at that point the work is too often considered “done.” Realistically, the task force recognizes that the ministry of proclaiming Jesus Christ will not be finished until He returns to proclaim it “done.”

So, the brief work of this task force — and input for all mission, whether among ethnic communities or Anglo communities — is not finished. It only begins with this report.

- *Continued study* — A final recommendation is that the Synod — whether through a task force appointed by the president or another means — continue to study issues affecting Hispanic ministry during the next triennium. This study should present recommendations to the 2010 convention in order to fully connect and integrate Hispanics into The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.

**Conclusion**

*Una Misión, Un Mensaje, Un Pueblo* — Hispanic Lutherans join in expressing their vision of One Mission, One Message, One People. The prayer of the Blue Ribbon Task Force for Hispanic Ministry is that millions of Hispanics will have the joy of understanding three other themes that undergird all Lutheran heritage: “Scripture Alone,” “Faith Alone,” and “Grace Alone.”

In summarizing its work, the task force reiterates its belief that Hispanic people can — and will — bring new energy and life to The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. We pray that we all will learn to minister “with” as we move into ever stronger partnerships in service to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. We urge the convention to act in three ways:

- Approving the position of a Director for Strategic Development of Hispanic Ministries,
- Guided by the Holy Spirit, to respond to the immigration issue before our nation, including a CTCR position statement on immigration, and
- Ongoing study toward a strategic plan for Hispanic ministry.

Great are the opportunities that God has placed before for the Synod. Great, also is His faithfulness. May the Holy Spirit guide us as we look toward that revelation of “a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people, and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb ... and they cried out in a loud voice: ‘Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.’”

### ***Members of the Blue Ribbon Task force for Hispanic Ministry***

- Rev. Dr. David Benke, Bronxville, N.Y., president, Atlantic District
- Rev. Eloy S. González, (chairman), St. Louis, Mo., associate director, Center for Hispanic Studies, Concordia Seminary
- Rev. Dr. Douglas Groll, Chicago, Ill., retired director, Hispanic Institute of Theology
- Rev. Carlos Hernandez, San Francisco, Calif., districts and congregations director, LCMS World Relief/Human Care
- Rev. Jotham Johann Jhang JD, (ex officio), Alexandria, Va., executive director, Center for Asian Missions and Evangelism and director of Cross Cultural and Ethnic Ministries for LCMS World Mission
- Rev. Dr. Mark Larson, Aurora, Colo., mission executive, Rocky Mountain District
- Rev. Alex Merlo, Aurora, Ill, pastor, San Pablo Lutheran Church
- Rev. Ángel Pérez, (ex-officio), Casselberry, Fla., mission developer, Florida-Georgia District
- Rev. Robert Selle, Fort Meyers, Fla., mission developer, Florida-Georgia District
- Melissa Salomón JD, Chula Vista, Calif., director, Cristo Para Todas Las Naciones, Tijuana, México
- Susan González, North Richland Hills, Texas, (We are grateful for her contributions to the BRTFHM prior to her voluntary withdrawal from the task force.)

### **Bibliographic material**

The Blue Ribbon Task Force on Hispanic Ministry developed its report using interviews, internal documents prepared by members and organizations of the LCMS and other denominations, and research material available to the general public. Readers may access this material through a special Internet site established by the Center for Hispanic Studies of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis. Look for the link on this Internet page:

[http://www.csl.edu/Academics\\_PastoralFormation\\_DistanceEducationPrograms\\_CHS.aspx](http://www.csl.edu/Academics_PastoralFormation_DistanceEducationPrograms_CHS.aspx)

### **Direct references to Hispanic work of the LCMS**

*Understanding Where We Are and Where We Have Been* — a 20-page document tracing the history of the Synod’s Hispanic work prepared as a subcommittee assignment for the Blue Ribbon Task Force On Hispanic Ministry

*Under the Cross of Christ Yesterday, Today and Forever* — Reflections on Lutheran Hispanic Ministry in the United States, Concordia Seminary Publications Monograph Series, Number 6, 2004, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Mo.

*Lutheran Women in Mission* — The Vision of Achieving Diversity Within the LWML, Lutheran Women’s Missionary League, Report of the Heart to Heart Sisters Task Force, Report of 2002. Updated with *LWML Heart to Heart Sisters: District Guidelines*, January 2007

Spanish Language Materials available through Concordia Publishing House — A complete listing of more than 300 books, educational, pastoral, and evangelistic tools available through the Synod’s publishing house

### **Web sites related to Lutheran Hispanic work in the United States**

- [www.churchplantingvillage.net](http://www.churchplantingvillage.net) — See the Church Planting Resource Library for *21st Century Hispanic Realities* by Dr. Daniel R. Sanchez.
- [www.elca.org/multicultural/LATstrategy/index.html](http://www.elca.org/multicultural/LATstrategy/index.html) — The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America has a web site that sets forth its strategies and resources
- [www.lirs.org](http://www.lirs.org) — Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service has resources to inform and direct policy and action of Lutheran congregations related to questions of immigration
- [www.multilanguagepublications.com](http://www.multilanguagepublications.com) — The Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Church works across the United States and Puerto Rico. Its Spanish language resources can be accessed through this site
- [www.nd.edu](http://www.nd.edu) — (Notre Dame University, see the Center for the Study of Latino Religion) The Pew Hispanic Center partners with the university community across the United States to fund in-depth studies of Hispanic religion and culture. The task force used materials prepared by the Center. Titles include: *Strengthening Hispanic Ministry Across Denominations: A Call To Action*, *Hispanic Ministry and the Task of Ministry in Urban America*, *Latino Congregations And Social Service: The Philadelphia Story*, *The Role Of Latino/a Religious Leadership in Social Ministry*, *Equipped to Serve: Latino/a Seminarians*; and *the Future of Religious Leadership in the Latino/a Community*.
- [www.pca-mna.org](http://www.pca-mna.org) — (Presbyterian Church in America) *Mission to North America: Ministering Among the Changing Cultures of North America*, 2005
- [www.pcusa.org/Hispanic](http://www.pcusa.org/Hispanic) — (Presbyterian Church in the USA) Presbyterian study on strategy for ministry with Hispanic-Latino constituencies, 2002
- [www.pewhispanic.org](http://www.pewhispanic.org) — The task force used data available through the Pew Hispanic Center for authoritative, non-biased, non-political research on Hispanic presence, attitudes, and trends in the United States

### **Selected general bibliographic resources**

- Fronteras: A History of the Latin American Church in the USA since 1513, Vol. X* — Sandoval, Moises, San Antonio, TX: MACC, 1983
- Frontiers of Hispanic Theology in the United States* — Deck, Allan Figueroa, New York: Orbis Books, 1992
- The Future Is Mestizo* — Elizondo, Virgil, Bloomington, IN: Meyer-Stone Books, 1988
- Galilean Journey: The Mexican-American Promise* — Elizondo, Virgilio, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1985
- Hear the Cry!* — Recinos, Harold J., Kentucky: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1989
- Latinos (A Biography of the People)* — Shorris, Earl, New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1992
- Latinos in the United States* — Abalos, David T., Notre Dame, IN: University Of Notre Dame Press, 1986.
- The Second Wave* — Deck, Allan Figueroa, New York: Paulist Press, 1989.
- Strangers and Aliens No Longer. Part One: The Hispanic Presence in the Church in the United States* — Hemrick, Eugene, Washington, DC: United States Catholic Conference, Inc., 1993
- Strengthening Hispanic Ministry Across Denominations: A Call to Action* — Edwin J. Hernandez, Milagros Pena, Kenneth Davis and Elizabeth Station, Pulpit & Pew Research Reports, 2005, Duke Divinity School, Durham, N.C.
- The Story of Christianity, Volume 1* — Gonzalez, Justo L., New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1984
- The Story of Christianity, Volume 2* — Gonzalez, Justo L., New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1985

Eloy S. Gonzalez, *Chairman*