

# GB-2202

**Name of ministry:**

Central Pastoral Office for Hispanic Ministries

**Ministry**

**Executive/Regional**

Rev Lori Tapia

**Minister name:**

**Ministry**

**Executive/Regional**

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**Minister email:**

**In what ways is your  
region/ministry thriving?**

The Central Pastoral Office for Hispanic Ministry serves the Obra Hispana, which represents the whole church in local congregations, in Hispanic Conventions which are geographic groupings of Spanish speaking and Hispanic bilingual/multicultural congregations, and individuals who identify as Latino/a serving in different areas throughout the church whether in Latinx ministry or not.

This ministry exists to accompany, empower, and equip for the work entrusted to the body of Christ. In unprecedented times and circumstances, we sought to live into something new naming a theme for the Obra Hispana to share and live into for 2021, understanding our connection was critical for the times we were living and for moving us forward together. Grounded in the Luke 9:23 scripture, we name "Total Surrender" as a message of challenge, hope and faith. All programs and initiatives were tied to this theme. We have experienced a Church surpass herself, pastors leading the church in new directions and towards new horizons. We have also seen the lay church awaken to grow, empower and connect in exciting ways. We lived in total surrender in new ways and have learned to take risks associated with this lifestyle, growing in trusting God and trusting each other.

Additionally, the Central Pastoral Office for Hispanic Ministries has experienced yet another year surpassing financial goals. Initial assessments provide a clear understanding that the more relevant, relational, and interactive we are as a ministry for the Church, the greater the giving. People give to passion, people sow into vision and where things are happening. There are great things happening in, through, and for the Obra Hispana and the CPOHM is leading the way.

While the Central Pastoral Office for Hispanic Ministry has always had a similar purpose, understanding the need to shift to allow for creating new methods was critical for moving the ministry forward and for relevance in this time. We have shifted to include more direct programming that is available for the whole church and that supports the work of the local church. This programming has been directed at clergy and lay leadership but did have an intentional focus on supporting the local church pastor.

2020 taught us that we needed to respond differently to the needs, but of equal importance, we needed to have a consistent presence and a pastoral accompaniment that would provide care, training, information, inspiration, and empowerment, without being able to be physically present. We learned this throughout 2020 and have worked throughout 2021 to understand how to best create practices moving forward into 2022 and beyond to help us be the most effective ministry and efficient stewards possible.

Examples of this programming are below:

PASTORS OF TOTAL SURRENDER: Pastors Retreat 1-18-21 (virtual)

Kicking off the theme for 2021, Total Surrender, programming began intentionally with a virtual retreat

for pastors. This was well attended and provided the foundation for the monthly pastor to pastor prayer initiative.

#### PASTOR TO PASTOR PRAYER- (1st Monday)

Hosted the 1st Monday of every month, this space utilizes zoom breakout rooms to create small group, intimate space for pastors to connect in praying for one another, in addition to building and strengthening relationships and connections among the pastorate. Stories are shared, authentic conversations are had, and support is provided by others who are navigating and living in similar realities.

#### YOUNG ADULT CONNECT- (4th Thursday)

A space for young adults to find connection, empowerment, and authenticity, this space has been transformational and life-giving for those who seek to connect each month. Through zoom, young adults from all across the country gather, relationships of trust and support are being built and this supports their lives and wellbeing, in addition to supporting the ministry of the Obra Hispana and they engage their gifts, talents, and hearts.

#### SEVEN LAST WORDS OF JESUS-

A virtual event that brought seven voices that challenged, blessed, and encouraged the Obra Hispana. First provided in 2020 as an opportunity to bring hope in the midst of despair, the Obra will continue to provide this space for years to come as we have received such positive feedback, particularly from cultures within the Obra where this was not traditionally experienced before.

#### CONTIGO-

This program launched on April 17, 2020, in response to the pandemic, continued through 2021 and has become an important space for connection, sharing our stories to

strengthen our relationships, to share information, and hear from experts in different fields, and much more. The program is live every Friday at 1 pm EST on the Obra Hispana Facebook page, YouTube channel simultaneously.

#### CONTINUING EDUCATION-

Birthing out of concern of our pastors not being able to complete hours of continuing education for their credentials due to the pandemic, we launched a pilot in 2020 to address this through the CPOHM, and has continued throughout 2021. Courses are virtual, enhancing the learning experience by creating an environment of diversity geographically and culturally within the Latino context. Courses ranging from theological thinking to understanding church finance, and plans for the development of this program are underway. A hunger for learning and development opportunities was discovered and this has turned out to be a very powerful tool, even beyond content and learning, because of the way that it helped us build greater connections with each other. Pastors and leaders met to continue growing together. Our plans continue to develop this resource according to the pertinent needs of the local Church, and in innovative areas that train us for our new shared reality.

#### TOTAL SURRENDER CONFERENCES: Women (May) Men (June)

In a virtual platform and utilizing the gifts of the Obra Hispana, this initiative brought people together for conferences under the annual theme, Total Surrender. Four different preachers in each event, a host that provided much-needed inspiration, these conferences provided worship experiences outside of the norm of the local congregation and brought encouragement, hope, and connection, strengthening relationships that are at the forefront of the ministry of the Obra Hispana.

**What are the biggest challenges facing your region/ministry this year?**

Recognizing the need for change, the Central Pastoral Office for Hispanic Ministries was faced with the reality that the present organizational structure is not equipped to meet the needs of our times and the growing demands within the Obra Hispana. During the annual board meeting, the decision was made to undertake a re-structure moving away from a thirty-year structure that included one Administrative Assistant and a National Pastor, in order to create a team environment with specialized staff. Within the Church, there are so many individuals with gifts and talents to serve, yet the number of access points, or entryways for them to serve is extremely limited. In order to address this and create a culture of "bringing your gifts to the table to serve," this new structure will shift the roles and responsibilities in order to expand efforts to recruit, equip and empower up and coming leaders and others to join in the work we all share in building the world and Kingdom of God we want to live in.

Increased connectedness is a priority for this ministry, connectedness from the local church to other local churches, to the region, to the general church, and beyond. The more proactive we are in creating a culture shift in our operations at the Central Pastoral Office for Hispanic Ministries, the more effective we are in modeling this for the rest of the church, helping increase the opportunities to grow together in ministry and relationship.

This shift will take a focus on developing more long-term educational opportunities that support life in the local congregation, as well as continuing education for clergy and others. An Education Coordinator will focus on these efforts, removing the logistical and practical day-to-day tasks of this from the National Pastor, who can then provide vision and leadership, and strengthen the pastoral presence and other areas of ministry. Additionally, a Branding and Content Creator will join the

team to ensure clear and relevant messaging for all Obra Hispana initiatives and programming. In a digital era, this is critical in strengthening identity and helping to create a culture that represents who we are, what we do, and why in all communication efforts. Who we are must be clear in communication and it must be represented in word and image consistently.

This shift takes the team of two present in the structure, to a four-person team approach to ministry under the leadership and direction of the National Pastor, supported by the board which is representative with membership from each of the Hispanic Conventions and across the life of the Church. This shift in structure requires financial shift as well, and while the Central Pastoral Office for Hispanic Ministries is healthy financially at this time, there is an understanding that work must be done to ensure not just future sustainability, but future growth.

The Central Pastoral Office for Hispanic Ministries has placed an emphasis on caring for the local church pastor. This will take place through several pathways:

**What is something you hope to accomplish in the next year?**

- 1) Continue the monthly pastor to pastor prayer initiative
- 2) Realign the role of National Pastor to provide space for more focus on one-on-one pastoral care with clergy, developing a core pastoral support team to work in the team approach with the National Pastor- (included in organizational restructure)
- 3) Sponsoring a Pastor Retreat in each of the nine Hispanic Conventions
- 4) Continue to provide resources that support healthy and balanced living for clergy and leaders, and partner

with other ministries to do so effectively and collaboratively.

**What is something you would like the General Board to know about your region/ministry?**

While we focus on providing ministry that supports the Hispanic/Spanish Speaking/Bilingual community of faith, we serve the whole Church. The ministry is about empowering the Hispanic community to fully engage in serving Christ in whatever and where ever called to serve. The empowerment of a people who have been marginalized, minimized, and underestimated is to do the work of Jesus. It is the goal of this ministry to do so, and we seek to be Spirit-driven, justice-driven, love-driven, and action-driven in all we do and we are proud to call ourselves the Obra Hispana.

In 2022, the Central Pastoral Office for Hispanic Ministries turns 30 years old. The road to fruition thirty-some years ago was a difficult and tumultuous one, yet determination and perseverance saw it happen. As we enter this 30th year as a General Ministry, we recognize that the structure approved upon its establishment placed an oversight arm over the ministry as a check and balance of the ministry to the General Church. This structure continues to this date and while we have lived into it faithfully, we recognize that the need to "prove ourselves" has past and we will seek to develop a board structure that more faithfully represents who we are as the Church. This process to explore alternative structure was approved by the present structure under the Pastoral Commission in our annual meeting December 2021 and will work in partnership with the appropriate governing bodies of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), namely this General Board and the General Assembly to bring this to fruition. We request the prayers of the General Board for this process.

**How can we pray for your region/ministry?**

As we enter a time of restructure and renewal, may the General Board continue to pray for wisdom and

discernment, for the leadership during this process and for the continued growth of the Obra Hispana. May we continue to strengthen our mutual bond of peace through the unity of the Spirit and be the church we say we are.