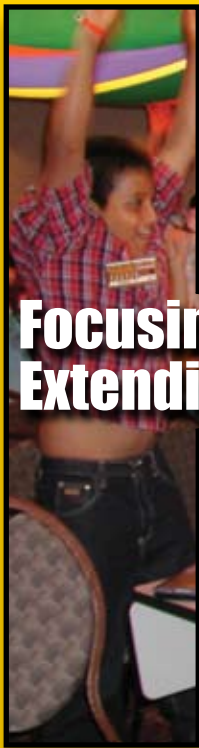


National Hispanic Pastors' Conference



**Focusing on
Extending the**



By Shirley G. Spencer

San Antonio, Texas, with its blend of historical sites and modern marvels, as well as its amalgamation of cultures, was an appropriate setting for the 2006 Hispanic Pastors' Conference. David Avila, director of Hispanic Ministries, welcomed over 400 people to the conference, held August 3-4, in the LaQuinta Conference Center.

Under the banner "Extendiendo el Reino" ("Extend the Kingdom"), the event included training for pastors and their wives, as well as a special festival for the next generation of leaders. While Pastor Carlos Mexia of Hermosillo, Sonora, Mexico, and other speakers ministered to the adults in the banquet hall, Tony and Gladys Lara, with New York's Metro Ministries, held a roomful of children spellbound in the "Festival Infantil."

Though the program focused largely on church planting, which, of

course, is a major part of extending the kingdom of God, an underlying theme placed a strong emphasis on reaching and discipling future church leaders.

Jaime Trevino, bishop of the Texas Latin Conference, was introduced early in the conference with a workshop for church planters entitled "How to Make the Church Grow." Trevino, himself a successful pioneer, underscored such practical strategies as training leaders, instituting home Bible study groups, launching a workable plan for evangelism, offering community services, recognizing visitors, and taking the church outside the church building. "These are things that work," he said.

Thursday morning's breakout sessions divided the men and women into separate rooms for specialized training. Marivel Reyes, pastor of El Shaddai in Austin, Texas, led a workshop entitled "Women in Leadership." In an adjoining room,

Freyman Valdez, bishop of the West Coast Hispanic Conference, addressed the men on the topic "Administration."

Following praise and worship led by Kairos, a worship team from North Carolina, guest speaker Carlos Mexia captured the essence of the conference theme on Thursday evening with the question, "What vision has God given you?" He explained that a vision is God's plan revealed to you. "How do you see yourself in five years?" he asked. "We are part of God's marvelous plan to extend His kingdom around the world. He will bring it to pass if we are willing to cooperate with Him and give Him the glory."

Mexia shared his testimony of how God helped him extend the kingdom in Hermosillo to create a statewide influence. "If the vision is divine, the provision also will be divine," he said.

Friday morning's breakout session dealt with the issue of the character



of a leader. Juan Lopez, pastor of Centro Cristiano de Alabanza in Yapato, Washington, led the session, which was open to both men and women. Formerly, Lopez served as superintendent of the Northwest Latin Conference.

In Friday's plenary session, Lemuel Garcia approached the conference theme from a different perspective with a message entitled "Manifestando el Reino" (Manifesting the Kingdom). "If you don't understand what a kingdom is, you don't understand the Bible," he said. "Adam lost a kingdom, not a religion." Garcia pastors Catedral de Adoración in Oklahoma City. His message, like all of the general sessions, was bilingual. Juan Ponce, youth pastor at Catedral de Adoración, served as translator.

Mexia returned to the pulpit on Friday night. He concluded the conference by ministering tirelessly to individuals. He specifically targeted

women in leadership, including pastors' wives.

Representatives from most of IPHC ministries were given a platform to promote their resources both through exhibits and as part of the program. Women's Ministries, Men's Ministries, Church Education Ministries, World Missions, Stewardship, and Evangelism USA (EVUSA) introduced themselves and various aspects of their vision to Hispanic leaders and guests.

INE (Instituto Nacional de Entrenamiento) hosted one of two banquet meals during the conference. INE, initiated to train Hispanic leaders, is one of the greatest success stories in the IPHC. The school began in 2000 with 20 students. Last year, it graduated 40 students, bringing the total to 225 who have completed the training.

The IPHC Loan Fund (another major success story) hosted the other banquet.

Dr. Ronald Carpenter, executive director of EVUSA and vice chairman of the IPHC, commended David Avila and his Hispanic Ministries team for hosting such a well-planned and -executed event. "The Hispanic Pastors' Conference has become the lightning rod of the IPHC for networking the Hispanic community of our denomination," he said. "It is a powerful event fulfilling its mission of providing resources, fellowship, and inspiration for the fastest-growing segment of the church."

While San Antonio, Texas, may be a microcosm of blended cultures, the IPHC is a church of blended cultures ministering to the diverse people groups of our nation. We are just beginning to see the powerful impact the Hispanic church is having as it "Extends the Kingdom" by evangelizing Spanish-speaking people in the Americas and beyond. 🕯