

**Hispanic Church Planting Initiative in
The North Carolina District of the Assemblies of God**
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ABSTRACT

Aubrey Malphurs quotes a denominational executive who was overheard saying sarcastically, “The church is organized for the 1950s and if the 1950s ever come again, we will be ready.”¹ What has happened in the last fifty years has transformed the composition of the American population. “No nation in the world is as culturally diverse as America with some 500 distinct groups who communicate in over 600 different languages.”² Presently our nation is experiencing the greatest cultural change in its history.

Churches that fail to adapt to the realities of cultural change become increasingly irrelevant. Many churches pride themselves in their involvement in foreign missions, but choose to ignore the need to reach the hundreds of people from foreign countries that reside in their own communities. Unfortunately, the Assemblies of God, for the most part, is guilty of the same and being left behind in ministering to the ethnic groups at their own doorstep, preferring to continue to do business as usual. One of the most populous ethnic groups in America is the Hispanic community, which during the 1990s grew to 35.5 million, making it equal to the African American population. Presently, there is only one Hispanic church for every 20,000 Hispanics.

¹Aubrey Malphurs, *Developing a Vision for Ministry in the 21st Century*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 2001), 21.

²Charles Hackett, Homes Missions *Mission America Publication*, December 2001.

This project addresses the problem of reaching the Hispanic population of North Carolina which totals 378,963.³ The outreach to the Hispanic population by the North Carolina District of the Assemblies of God officially began in January 1996 when the district presbytery formally initiated a Hispanic section. The author of this project was appointed as the coordinator of the new section. The number of Hispanic churches and missions of the section has grown to twenty five. The leadership of the Hispanic section has developed a five-year vision plan to plant twenty five new Hispanic churches, and the author has been chosen to direct the coordination of the church planting vision.

This project will serve the achievement of that goal in the following ways:

- Focusing on the need for evangelizing the Hispanics in North Carolina.
- Reviewing the biblical-theological justification for evangelizing this large ethnic group
- Addressing the cultural characteristics of the Hispanics that affect the approaches that will be employed in Hispanic church planting
- Describing the proposed field test intervention and subsequently the actual field test intervention
- Summarizing the progress of the project and concluding with a wrap-up of lessons learned along with suggestions on how the Assemblies of God nationally could more effectively evangelize the Hispanic population in the United States

³US Department of Commerce, Economics and Statistics Administration, United States Census 2000, *The Hispanic Population*, 4.