

**GB-2602- Obra Hispana**  
**Annual Report to the General Board**  
Rev. Lori Tapia, National Pastor and President

## **Introduction**

Greetings in the name of Jesus Christ.

It remains a profound privilege to serve as National Pastor and President of Obra Hispana within the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). I give thanks for the congregations, pastors, leaders, and partners across the life of the church who walk alongside Obra Hispana's ministry. Together, we seek to embody the Gospel in ways that honor the dignity of every human being and strengthen the church's witness in our communities.

During 2025, we lived under the theme “Imago Dei: God, My Neighbor, and Me.” This theme invited us to center our work on recognizing the image of God in one another and responding with dignity, compassion, and justice in a time marked by division and polarization in our society. For Hispanic/Latino communities in the United States, these realities are deeply personal and shape daily life in our congregations. Amid these realities, the ministry of Obra Hispana has continued to grow, serve, and respond faithfully to the needs of the church and our communities.

## **An Accomplishment from 2025**

One of the most significant accomplishments of 2025 was the launch and early implementation of the **25:5 Initiative**, an intentional effort to plant 25 Hispanic congregations within five years.

Hispanic congregations within the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) have historically grown through relationships, community engagement, and organic ministry. Church planting happens organically and continually. The 25:5 Initiative seeks to strengthen this growth by providing intentional training, mentoring, and collaborative support for new church leaders.

A major milestone for this initiative in 2025 was the first Obra Hispana Church Planters Academy, held in Kansas City, Missouri, with 32 participants representing nine regions of the denomination and seven Hispanic national backgrounds. These leaders are envisioning ministries that reflect both tradition and innovation, including community-based ministries, congregations beyond traditional church walls, and virtual ministry expressions. This is also a highlight of collaboration as the New Church Ministry of Disciples Church Extension Fund partnered to bring this to fruition, both with financial and human resources.

This initiative reflects not only growth in numbers but a commitment to planting congregations whose foundation includes justice, community engagement, and transformative ministry.

## **A Hope for 2026**

Looking ahead to 2026, one of our primary hopes is the development of a formal Ministry and Biblical Institute through collaboration with the Association for Hispanic Theological Education (AETH).

The vision for this initiative includes expanding access to theological education for Hispanic leaders outside of the formal structures, strengthening ministerial formation, and providing culturally and linguistically relevant training for pastors and lay leaders. This work will support both current congregational leadership and the development of future leaders within the church. It will not replace existing programs that serve our community with excellence, such as the Certificate in Hispanic Ministries from Lexington Theological Seminary, rather it will continue to build upon and enhance what is already in existence. Where there are limited doors to enter, we must not simply seek those who can enter and support them, we must build more doors.

We also hope to expand our ministry with youth, particularly those within immigrant families. Many Hispanic young people are carrying emotional burdens related to the uncertainty and stress their families experience in the current immigration climate. In response, Obra Hispana is working toward developing regional youth summits that will provide safe spaces for young people to share their experiences and receive support from counselors, pastors, chaplains, and community leaders.

These gatherings will seek to nurture resilience, faith, and leadership among the next generation.

## **Challenges Ahead**

The most pressing challenge facing our congregations continues to be the ongoing immigration crisis and its impact on Hispanic families and churches.

Many of our congregations include families with mixed immigration status. Parents may be undocumented, children may hold DACA status, and other family members may be U.S. citizens. These complex realities create deep anxiety and uncertainty within our communities.

The climate surrounding immigration has intensified fear and emotional strain among families, pastors, and congregations. This reality has also highlighted the growing challenge of pastoral exhaustion and emotional trauma. We are working tirelessly to support the emotional, physical, and financial well-being of our clergy, as many pastors care for congregations while navigating these pressures within their own families, are caring for others while receiving reduced or no salary due to the financial stress on the congregation, and much more.

Responding faithfully requires continued advocacy, pastoral care, and collaborative support across the wider church.

## **A Story of Collaboration**

I lift up two powerful stories of collaboration in 2025.

Recognizing the profound impact of immigration-related challenges on Hispanic congregations and pastoral families, the Pension Fund provided substantial financial support to Obra Hispana to strengthen clergy wellness, support congregations through immigration challenges, and aid congregations facing economic and emotional strain in meaningful ways. Additionally, this support provided funding for clergy whose salaries have been negatively impacted by this crisis.

This partnership represents the church at its best when one part of the body recognizes the struggles of another and responds in meaningful, tangible ways.

Another meaningful collaboration occurred during the General Assembly in Memphis, where Obra Hispana partnered with Week of Compassion and Disciples Justice Ministries to host a prayer vigil outside a federal immigration court. Together we lifted prayers, shared stories of impacted families, and offered a public witness of faith, solidarity, and hope.

As a byproduct of this partnership, the Obra Hispana, in collaboration with Week of Compassion and the Proclamation Project of the Office of General Minister and President, has created a bible study for children and youth, written from the immigrant/migrant context, to support young people in healthy ways as they find themselves and their context in biblical stories. This initiative, named *Operation Cacti*, is available in Spanish and English and includes an accompanying study for congregations seeking to be in solidarity with impacted communities and commentary for pastors and leaders.

Materials available: <https://www.weekofcompassion.org/operationcacti.html>

## **Closing**

If there is one message I would invite every member of the General Board to carry back to their congregations, it is this:

The Hispanic/Latino church within the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) is vibrant, diverse, and faithful, and we are helping shape the future of our denomination.

Hispanic congregations bring spiritual vitality, deep community commitment, strong family ties, and a missionary spirit that continues to plant new ministries and welcome new generations into the life of the church. The experiences of Hispanic communities also call the church to deeper compassion, justice, and solidarity.

Obra Hispana remains committed to strengthening the church, nurturing leaders, and expanding the witness of Christ's love in communities across the United States and Canada.

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