Hispanic Methodism in the Northern Illinois Conference and Beyond
I. Brief History of Hispanic Methodism in NIC & Beyond
Hispanic-Latinx Americans were mostly located in the Southwestern United States until around 1920.

Then, they started moving to other parts of the country including the Midwest, looking for jobs.

Over a thousand, most of whom were from Mexico, settled in Chicago area during this time, forming their own neighborhoods and communities.

During WWII and into the 1950s, many more, Puerto Ricans in particular, migrated to Midwestern cities including Cleveland, Detroit, and Toledo.

By 1960 the H/L population of Chicago grew to around 55,000; by the 1990s it reached a half a million in Chicago.

In 2017 the Hispanic population jumped to over 800,000, meaning that about 30 percent of Chicago population is now of Hispanic or Latinx descent.
Responses of the Methodist Church to the Growing H/L Population

- In the 1920s Charles A. Parkin began working with the arriving Mexican immigrants.
- In 1926, an Italian UMC named Good Shepherd was converted into a Hispanic ministry.
- Under the leadership of two pastors, Bernard O’Neil and then Costantino Gonzalez, Mexican Iglesia del Buen Pastor grew and even reached the average attendance of over three hundred in the 1950s.
- In 1935, the Chicago Home Missionary and Church Society published a six-page pamphlet entitled “Chicago METHODISM’s Responsibility for Spanish Speaking People.”
In the mid-1950s, two youth attended a program called *Youth for Christ* and they heard a call to ministry among H/L people. **Jose Velasquez** went to Asbury and **Finees Flores** went to Garrett (GTS ’67). They both came back to Chicago after their seminary studies. Velasquez pastored *Juan Huss UMC* while Flores led *Albany Park UMC*. They both left a lasting impact on the conference and were instrumental in the founding of **La Junta Hispano-Americana** – an organization to promote leadership among clergy and laity - in 1969.

The NIC funded $100,000 to organize La Junta which helped to establish 13 additional ministries throughout the conference. This increased the visibility of H/L people within the conference and the jurisdiction.
Both Jose Velasquez and Finees Flores were leaders in the renewed efforts for H/L ministry within the NIC in the 1960s and 70s.

Rev. Jose Velasquez of Juan Huss UMC

Rev. Finees Flores of Albany Park UMC; Co-founder of the Spanish COS at Garrett; Instrumental in the founding of MARCHA.
- Recognizing similar needs in other conferences, La Junta initiated a study with H/L communities throughout the NCJ, helping establish churches and ministries.

- In the 1960s and 1970s, significant work was done among migrant workers in Racine and Kenosha, Wisconsin; Ilda and Fred Thomas were important to this work.


- In 1984, the *Hispanic Task Force* (aka Hispanic Caucus) was created to help the college of bishops communicate and share needs and hopes; it is officially funded by and receives support from the NCJ.
II. Hispanic Congregations & Key Pastor Leaders
From the NIC Archives

- There are currently 24 Hispanic-Latinx ministries/congregations in the NIC.
- In the NIC archives, there are four files of H/L churches in Chicago: Central Spanish, Centro La Paz, Good Shepherd, and Lake View.
Rev. Ariel Curet of Iglesia Methdista Central in Chicago helped to settle immigrants from Puerto Rico who arrived with nothing in the 1960s.
Tour City Missions...

The Central Spanish Methodist church was one of those visited by the group which toured City Mission projects Jan. 30.

From Rock River Methodist, V.9, no.2, Mar. 1960
This church was established in the late 90s after an English speaking congregation, Peace UMC, which had been founded in 1893, burned down.

The congregation was headed by Phillip and Diana Wingeier-Rayo who helped to reestablish the church to meet the needs of the community’s changing demographics.

They became an official mission of the NIC in 1999.

Now, they serve the local residents who are predominantly H/L with ESL classes.
• The first Spanish-Mexican Church of Chicago was established by Rev. Bernard (Wiliam B.) O’Neil and his wife. He was from Puerto Rico and had extensive knowledge of Mexico and the experiences of Spanish-speaking people. He was charged with ministering and extending the church to those who had immigrated to Chicago, possibly fleeing bad circumstances and seeking a new home in the city. He offered them social services to help them establish themselves here.

• The church was located at Polk and Sholto streets, in a church that was originally established for ministry among Italian-speaking people.
Bernard O’Neill, founder & 1st pastor of Good Shepherd (1926-46)

Constantino Gonzalez, 2nd pastor of Good Shepherd (1946-56)
• This congregation was started on the northside of Chicago in 1962.

• Membership shrank in the early 70s, forcing the congregation to sell and relocate to the Ravenswood UMC in the Uptown neighborhood; two churches shared the space together.

• Under the pastoral leadership of Evaristo Loaiza, who graduated from G-ETS in 1978, the congregation grew slowly and started offering a food pantry.
NUESTRO PASTOR & FAMILIA
REV. EVARISTO LOAIZA, SRA. LILIAN LOAIZA
HIJOS: ALVARO & SANDRA JANET
CULTO EN ESPAÑOL
El Domingo, Día 4 de Septiembre, 1966
7:30 P.M.

Preludio
Llamado a la Adoración
Himno de Alabanza "Te Loamos" No. 3
Invocación
El Credo de los Apóstoles Pagina 241
Lectura Antifonal: No. 36 Pagina 282
Gloria Patri: "Gloria Deos" No. 246
Himno de Oración "Dulce Oración" No.139
Oración Pastoral
Ofrenda: Ofertorio Organo
Doxología: "A Dios el Padre C." No. 247
Himno de Preparación "Cuando Andemos con Dios". No. 165

Anuncios y Presentaciones
Numero Especial
SERMON: "El Patro y el Obrero y la Ley de Cristo"


La Santa Cena Pagina 250
Bendición Postludio Organo

Habrá un culto de oración en casa de los hermanos Alfonso Diza y sra., 826 W. Cuylor St., Chicago, el Viernes, Sept 9, 7:30 P.M. Se invitan todos.

COMPARTIMOS el dolor del hno. Jose Pina y familia en el fallecimiento de su padre, el St. Raul Pina en la Habana, Cuba, el día 15 de Agosto, 1966. El hno Raul tenía 76 años y tres hijos: Raul, Lillian, y Jose. ¡Que Dios de sus consuelo y paz!

We are labourers together with God.

LAKEVIEW METHODIST CHURCH—1 Corinthians 3:9 KJV
1015 W. Barry Avenue Phone 525-3300
Rev. Carl D. Stewart, Th.D., LL.D., Minister
Harold H. Vines, Organist

On the front: Labor Window, design by Willet
III. Conference Initiatives & Make-Up
Hispanic/Latino Ministry in the NIC

- **Mission** – To make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world
- **Vision** – A multicultural church family that is God-centered, values all people, and is a vital part of the life of the community by sharing God’s love
- **Values** – passion, humility, communication, excellence, Wesleyan tradition

The NIC currently has 2 H/L Deacons, 10 Elders, and 12 licensed local pastors.

The NIC has organized/founded at least nine new H/L congregations/ministries since 2009, and there are now 24 H/L congregations.
In the 2016 *Historical Report* for the NIC Board of Trustees (p. 11), the Connectional Ministries Office reports that in partnership with the National Hispanic Plan, it is giving much effort to the development of the H/L Ministry Team. “As we move into a time of increased concern for refugees and the undocumented, these efforts have taken on urgency for the work of congregations, our Hispanic Latino communities and the ministry of *Justice for Our Neighbors (JFON).*” With guidance and financial support from the General Council on Religion and Race, the Office continues training and a pilot project on cultural competencies.
The Conference Academy (Hispanic/Latino) for Faith Community Development is a two-year program for pastors and lay persons who feel called to start a “new thing” with the Hispanic/Latino community of Northern Illinois.

It provides support, ministry skills development, and leadership training in order to prepare a pool of leaders for reaching out to religious “nones” through Hispanic/Latino ministries.
In 2017 the NIC passed legislation (p. 16-17) – “Supporting Sanctuary in NIC” – to affirm that a sanctuary is not only a space for worship, but is also a place of refuge and safety; “The NIC has a strong history of advocating for and with all persons, regardless of their country of origin and regardless of their immigration status or documentation, through the work of Justice For Our Neighbors and recent training events....”

Two churches in Chicago – Lincoln UMC and Adalberto UMC – have declared themselves as Sanctuary Churches.
IV. Hispanic-Latinx Center at Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary
In response to the urgent need for more ordained and lay leaders for churches in the Hispanic community, the Board of Trustees established the Center in 1988.

The main purpose of the Center at the time was to recruit and provide programs for Hispanic Seminarians and bring Hispanic culture and experience into the life of the Seminary.

In 2015, Dr. Débora Junker was hired to direct the Center, now called “Hispanic-Latinx Center,” to reflect the rich heritage and diversity of the community.
Mission & Goals

- **Mission** – ... bringing together a community of friends who have a heart and concern about the realities of Latin-x communities across the U.S., Latin America, and beyond. It strives to serve the needs of Hispanic-Latin-x students, pastors, parishioners, and community leaders in ways that are resourceful, insightful, helpful, and organic.

- **Goals** – To provide resources and scholarly discussions on pertinent themes that address both theological and practical perspectives for effective ministry in cross-cultural setting. To cultivate a deeper, fuller, and better understanding of the complex issues regarding Latin-x experiences, while fostering dialogue and partnership with community leaders and non-profit organizations working for the common good.
Programs & Initiatives

- National Hispanic Heritage Month Celebration
- Cátedra Paulo Freire
- Brown Bag Lecture Series
- Young Clergy Initiative (YCI)
- Partnership with Hispanic Youth Leadership Academy (HYLA)
- Collaboration with NIC – Hispanic/Latinx celebration, Lay Academy, etc.
- Mentoring and networking
Resources

