



Renovación Pastoral

A Program of Esperanza funded by the Lilly Endowment

"Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood."

- Acts 20:28

Executive Summary

Renovacion Pastoral (Pastoral Renewal) is a program of Esperanza funded by the Lilly Endowment. It is one of 74 similar pastoral care initiatives supported by the endowment. Renovación Pastoral aims to support new pastors in their first years of service to the Latino communities of Philadelphia, Allentown, Bethlehem, Lancaster, and Reading. Through Renovación Pastoral, we offer these pastors a sacred space to be affirmed, to learn, and to be nurtured through mentoring that is focused on both spiritual and practical matters. Esperanza connects pastors in their first years of ministry with active and retired veteran pastors who have demonstrated longevity and success in local ministry, helping the younger pastors to transition successfully into congregational leadership, while building a pastoral legacy for the well-seasoned religious leaders of the Latino communities of Southeastern Pennsylvania.

Marks of Thriving in Ministry

The agricultural nuance of John 10 describes in large part the purpose and nature of "pastoral" ministry. Jesus, identified as the "good shepherd", typifies the role(s) and posture of a leader called to live on behalf of others (vs. 11). The shepherd is life-giving (vs. 10) and protector (vss. 12,13). The shepherd leads relationally (vs. 14), and ultimately has a heart for those that are not outside of his flock (vs. 16). This concept is further emphasized in John 21, when Jesus tells Peter several times to feed His sheep. The Esperanza approach to ministry begins with premise that we, as the Body of Christ, are the *hands and feet* of our Creator, called to serve the least of these.

Serving the most vulnerable as *hands and feet* in the community has been integral to our work since Esperanza's founding in 1987 by the Hispanic Clergy of Philadelphia. Pastors act as *hands and feet* through the activities of evangelization, discipleship, worship, prayer and service. It is in the convergence of bringing into the "flock" the outsider or the "other" through the introduction of the Word of God that pastors and congregations bring God's Word to life in our community. We sense that thriving pastors are those that have clarity of calling, defined and balanced ministerial roles, maintain close personal relationships, and continue to grow in knowledge as well as in their personal relationship with God.

In our experience, when pastors—particularly new pastors—integrate the values we espouse,

such as accountability, balance, faith, excellence, interdependence, and empowerment, they are more likely to thrive personally and in their ministerial roles.¹ *Renovacion Pastoral* activities serve as the most critical in supporting pastors in their ability to thrive while learning to lead their congregations more effectively. Being mentored by a more seasoned or veteran minister with shared experiences will serve as important catalysts for growth especially during significant transitions of a new pastor's life.² Peer to peer group dialogue engages new pastors as participants in a "culture of involvement" creating a sense of family among peers serving as an anchor point and source of support when navigating challenging congregational conflicts.³ We believe that these pastors will become better equipped to deal with challenges and build their ministerial competence. Proposed trainings and practice labs, defined by Etienne Wenger as Communities of Practice, offer practical and tactical application of learning while offering space for collaborative experiences with other new pastors and congregations.⁴

Current State of Pastoral Ministry

Esperanza was founded by the Hispanic Clergy of Philadelphia and Vicinity more than 30 years ago. Then and now, local clergy have always played a significant role in the life of Esperanza, and we have worked through their congregations to promote change in the Hispanic community. After three decades of collaboration, we have a powerful sense of the challenges and rewards of pastoral leadership in the Latino communities of Philadelphia and the surrounding municipalities.

Local pastoral ministry is going through a tenuous generational shift. What once was mostly a Puerto Rican community of faith has now become more multi-ethnic, with the growing presence of Caribbean, Central American, South American and Mexican immigrants. Where we once saw Latino pastors leading primarily Latino congregants we now see Latino pastors leading Cambodian, African-American, as well as multi-ethnic congregations. This shift is also linguistic. Although most Latino churches in our region are Spanish speaking, over the past 20 years, there has been a marked shift toward second generation pastoral leaders, who are predominately English speaking and educated here in the United States instead of abroad.

Additionally, there have been seismic geographic shifts of our population which in turn are followed by Latino congregations. For example, most Latinos migrated and immigrated in the late 1950's and 1960's to neighborhoods slightly north of Center City (downtown) Philadelphia. Churches were soon planted in those districts. From the 1970s to the 1990s, the Latino population shifted further north toward new neighborhoods, such as Nicetown, Kensington, and Hunting Park. Latino churches followed. Since the 1990s, the migration has moved even further north and into sections of Northeast Philadelphia. There are early signs of a Latino middle class developing. If history repeats itself with our community as it did with other ethnic groups, the pathway of "success" is mobility outside of the city, reaping benefits for those who are able to move out and leaving behind a vacuum for those that are unable to.

These shifts pose demographic, economic, and educational challenges for pastors. Most Latino

¹ Miller, Holly G. "Sustaining Pastoral Excellence." *A Progress Report on a Lilly Endowment Initiative*, May 2011, 10.

² Wind, James P., and David J. Wood. "Becoming a Pastor." *Reflections on the Transition into Ministry*, 2008, 17, 29.

³ Austin Presbyterian Seminary College of Pastoral Leaders. "A Study of the Effects of Participation in SPE Pastoral Leader Peer Groups." *Survey Report and Analysis*, April 2010, 3, 4, 24, 25.

⁴ Wind, James P., and David J. Wood. "Becoming a Pastor." *Reflections on the Transition into Ministry*, 2008, 17, 29.

churches are small (an average of 68 members each), located in storefront buildings, and are still attended by a primarily low-income population. Many pastors in our network are not members of formal denominations, and therefore do not have access to the support provided by denominational leadership. Even those pastors who are members of larger denominations often struggle to obtain the support they need, as their denominational leaders may not understand the urban Latino context in which they operate. As a result, pastors become isolated and frustrated trying their best to cope with limited resources.

These pastoral challenges were illustrated starkly in Ram Cnaan's 2002 study *Latino Congregations and Social Service – The Philadelphia Story*. Cnaan and his colleagues found that pastors in Latino congregations were facing an array of social and economic challenges, such as poverty, unemployment, drugs, crime, teen pregnancy, and family violence. With so many troubles plaguing their congregants, many pastors have struggled with how to structure their leadership role. As reported by Matt Bloom in his 2013 report *Flourishing in Ministry – Emerging Research Insights on the Well-Being of Pastors*, pastors in Philadelphia and elsewhere are coping with feelings of intense isolation, a sense that they are not well understood by their parishioners, and ultimately are in danger of career burnout. Esperanza's interactions with local pastors reinforce these findings and suggest that intervention is urgently needed to assist pastors in our local Hispanic communities.

Program Purpose and Goals

The purpose of *Renovación Pastoral* is to respond to the challenges facing pastors serving the Latino communities of Southeastern Pennsylvania. Through intergenerational mentoring, we will affirm, nurture, and provide educational opportunities for pastors new to ministry within the Latino context. Our goals are to reduce isolation, increase pastoral understanding, and avoid burnout through networking, mentoring and training/educational opportunities. The primary target audience are pastors with less than 10 years in pastoral ministry. Our goal is to serve 72 of these pastors in Pennsylvania throughout the life of the grant. We will recruit pastors primarily from the cities of Philadelphia, Allentown, Bethlehem, Lancaster, and Reading. They will be mentored at a 1:3 ratio by well-seasoned pastors within our broader network who have been in ministry for more than 20 years. Several of these potential senior mentor pastors have been in ministry close to 50 years. We will recruit and provide orientation to 24 of these well-seasoned veteran pastors over the life of the project.

Program Activities

Through *Renovación Pastoral*, Esperanza proposes to organize three cohorts of approximately 24 new pastor-participants, with each cohort working together for a period of about 18 months. We will recruit these new pastors through our extensive networks within the Latino faith communities of Philadelphia, Allentown, Bethlehem, Lancaster, and Reading (all cities in Southeastern Pennsylvania with significant Hispanic populations). These new pastors will be matched with veteran pastors who have at least 20 years of experience in congregational leadership. Each veteran pastor will mentor three new pastors, meeting with them regularly throughout the 18-month program period for both formal and informal activities.

Each cohort would kick off with a program orientation for participating pastors, at which they would receive a comprehensive introduction to *Renovación Pastoral*, meet and build

relationships with the other members of their cohort, and become acquainted with the Esperanza program team. Following the orientation, participants would be introduced to their veteran pastor-mentors in an organized group setting, where Esperanza staff can help to facilitate the meetings and set realistic expectations for the mentoring relationship.

Throughout the 18-month period, each of the 24 new pastors would meet on a bi-monthly basis with his/her veteran pastor-mentor. These meetings could be as simple as an informal conversation over a cup of coffee, or might involve more formal activities, such as attending a relevant lecture or seminar together and discussing its implications. The veteran pastor-mentors might visit with their mentees at their congregations, and even help their mentees to speak with congregational lay leaders about difficult subjects or challenges facing their churches.

During the months when they are not meeting with their mentors, the new pastors would gather together as a group for networking, which we believe will have both personal and professional benefits. Esperanza will host bi-monthly gatherings in “lab and training” style. The mornings of these gatherings will be facilitated by experts in specialized fields, such as theologians, psychologists, sociologists, and therapists to share in a more intimate setting than at conferences. The afternoons are designed as labs for engaging in small group dialogues, practicing with helpful tools and breaking bread together for some relational time. As they begin to build relationships with their fellow participants, we will encourage the new pastors to consider engaging in small joint projects, and Esperanza will offer small grants ranging from \$500 - \$1,000 to these new pastors for collaborative projects with other clergy or congregations.

In addition to the bi-monthly networking sessions, we will host annual “vision trips” for the new pastor cohorts. Part of the goal is for these pastors to observe how other pastors and ministries have managed through their transitions. Esperanza has organized similar trips in the past. For example; in Boston, we’ve taken a group of 14 ministers to visit Leon de Juda (a large Latino congregation in Boston) and learn about their work with pastors and youth leaders. We met with their leadership to dialogue about their pastoral team structure and how this structure helps urban churches share the pastoral burden and avoid isolation and burnout. These trips are intended to help pastors better engage with the culture of their churches and to address the social and ethical changes in the society surrounding them. In our experience, a side-benefit of these overnight trips is that they help build camaraderie and long-term friendships among clergy.

Leadership

Renovación Pastoral is led by Project Director Rev. Ruben Ortiz, who is Esperanza’s Director of National Programs and also serves as Executive Director of the Hispanic Clergy of Philadelphia and Vicinity. Rev. Ortiz was Senior Pastor of Iglesia Del Barrio in Philadelphia for more than ten years and has administered a wide range of mentoring and training programs at Esperanza, Big Brothers Big Sisters of America, and Public/Private Ventures. He sits on the interfaith Religious Leaders Council of Greater Philadelphia, regularly conducts trainings for pastors around the country, and founded the Barrio Youth Initiative – a program to prepare the next generation of youth ministers. Rev. Ortiz holds a Master’s of Theology from Palmer Theological Seminary.

Assisting Rev. Ortiz will be Associate Project Director Anthony Ramos, who has worked on Esperanza’s National Programs team for two years, overseeing youth mentoring programs in 14

cities across the country, helping to develop and launch the Barrio Youth Initiative, and spearheading the highly successful online #GoAndDo Campaign to encourage acts of kindness among people inspired by biblical teachings. Anthony holds a Bachelor's in Social Work from Eastern University, and is pursuing a Master's of Divinity from Biblical Theological Seminary.

Expected Outcomes

Esperanza expects that by the end of the proposed five-year grant period, we will have taken three cohorts of 24 new pastors (72 pastors in total) through the complete Renovación Pastoral training, mentoring, and networking process. As a result of their trainings and vision trips, we believe that the new pastors will have developed new skills and approaches for dealing with the challenges they face on a day-to-day basis. Through their networking with other new pastors, they will have sparked important long-term relationships that serve to reduce feelings of isolation and make pastors feel that they are part of a true community of faith. By meeting regularly with their veteran pastor-mentors, the new pastors will gain a broader perspective on their roles, and they will have established connections with parental figures who they can approach for advice for many years to come. We believe that together, these three program components will make a significant measurable impact on the feelings of isolation, lack of understanding, and burnout that so many pastors in the Latino community seem to face.

Evaluation

Esperanza is committed to constant evaluation and improvement of its programs, and we see evaluation as an integral component of every project our organization undertakes. For Renovación Pastoral, we will conduct extensive qualitative evaluation of the program to assess its impact on the participants. We envision two kinds of evaluation:

1. All participants in the program (both mentors and mentees) will be asked to complete surveys at the beginning of the initiative, which will measure their current comfort level in pastoral leadership, explore any challenges they may be facing, and examine their expectations for the program. After they have participated in Renovación Pastoral, we will ask them to fill out a second survey, which will be used to assess the changes brought about by the program, and to determine how closely it held to their expectations.
2. In addition to the surveys, a randomly selected group of pastors will be asked to participate in focus groups led by experienced Esperanza staff people. These focus groups will encourage participants to talk about the impact and value of the program in a safe and open environment and will generate more detailed and personal reactions than is possible with written surveys.

After the surveys and focus groups are complete, Esperanza staff will collect and process the survey data and summarize the focus group feedback. At that point, an outside Evaluation Consultant will be brought in to examine the data and develop a series of findings about the effectiveness of the Renovación Pastoral program and about ways that it can be strengthened for future cohorts. We feel confident in using this hybrid staff-consultant model based on many years of conducting evaluations of our mentoring programs. This experience has taught us a great deal about how best to structure survey questions and to organize and facilitate focus groups. However, we believe it is important to rely on outside expertise in making the final judgements about the quality of the program.