

Half a Million Hispanic Churches Come Together in Evangelical Merger

The National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference (NHCLC), the largest Hispanic Christian organization in the U.S. representing millions of evangelicals and over 40,000 churches, announced May 5 that it will merge with Conela, a Latin America-based organization that serves over 487,000 Latin churches across the world.

“This merger is a win-win for both NHCLC and Conela, and we are thrilled to join together to better serve Hispanic evangelicals worldwide,” says Dr. Samuel Rodriguez, president of the NHCLC. “Under the new NHCLC, we will continue to unify, serve and represent the Hispanic evangelical community with the divine and human elements of the Christian message, all while advancing the Lamb’s agenda.”

This merger, which came at the request of Conela President Ricardo Luna, will result in a worldwide organization that represents over half a million churches and millions of individuals, making it the largest evangelical association in the world.

“Party delegates from 16 Latin nations, including Spanish-speaking, Portuguese-speaking and Spain, enthusiastically approved our fusion and merger with NHCLC,” Luna says. “It is an affirmation that our identity is now global. We have three continents of the five that will be part of this expression of unity. From this platform we will establish a dialogue with the East-South church, which is now the majority church.”

Through this merger, Conela will bring excellent research capabilities to NHCLC’s strong organizational structure. Conela has conducted several studies among Latin Americans,

including surveying 7,500 Latino pastors about the priorities they believe are important for the church. Of the 10 priorities they identified, seven coincided with the NHCLC's seven directives of life, family, compassionate evangelism, stewardship, justice, education and youth.

"Our merger with Conela is momentous because it expands our network and hence opportunities for all our members," says Carlos Campos, chair of the Alliance for Hispanic Education. "As the chair of our education directive, I especially look forward to connecting our member churches with educational opportunities for students throughout Latin America."

The new organization will have shared governance and leadership under the NHCLC name. World headquarters will be in Sacramento, California.

"Dr. Phillip Jenkins, distinguished professor of history at Baylor University, has forecasted the global south as the zone for the future of Christianity in his book *The Next Christendom: Global Christianity in the 21st Century*," says Dr. Albert Reyes, NHCLC board member and president and CEO of Buckner International. "The merger between the NHCLC and Conela creates a global network of local churches with a common vision, faith and cultural ethos connecting the global north with the global south for all the interests of the Redeemer's kingdom."

Conela is currently based in Latin America with associational churches around the world. The organization has regional chapters in several global cities, including in Spain and Brazil, and represents 487,000 churches worldwide. The fundamental vision of Conela since its inception in 1982 has been the evangelistic legacy of the words and life of Jesus Christ.

The NHCLC is the largest Hispanic Christian organization representing millions of evangelicals and more than 40,118

U.S. churches. Seeking to reconcile evangelist Billy Graham's message of salvation with Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s march of prophetic activism, the NHCLC emphasizes seven directives of life, family, compassionate evangelism, stewardship, justice, education and youth. For additional information, visit their site.