

Samuel Rodriguez 'Heartbroken' Over Death of Rev. Benjamin Peña Due to COVID-19

Rev. Benjamin Peña, Alabama chapter director for the National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference, died Thursday, May 14, in Birmingham, Alabama, announced the NHCLC. He was 56.

Mrs. Sandra A. Acosta, wife of Rev. Peña, informed the NHCLC that he passed on to be with the Lord after a one-week bout with pulmonary complications caused by COVID-19. Rev. Peña is survived by his wife Sandra and his five children, Avdiel, John, Daniel, Alexandra and Eric.

"I'm heartbroken by the news of the passing of our brother and co-laborer, Rev. Peña," said Rev. Samuel Rodriguez, president of NHCLC. "He was an influential leader within the NHCLC and advanced the Lamb's agenda throughout his region. Our peace comes from knowing that yesterday morning he heard the words 'Well done.'"

Born in Mexico City, Rev. Peña led a long, fruitful career as a pastor, missionary, schoolteacher, dean and ministry leader. He joined the NHCLC as the Alabama chapter director in 2017, and within three years he became one of the strongest and most efficient chapter directors in the movement.

"The Hispanic evangelical church of Alabama is in mourning as it has lost one of its finest spiritual leaders," said Rev. Abraham Hernandez, NHCLC National Chapter Director.

Rev. Hernandez recounted receiving a call from Rev. Peña late one evening in the fall of 2018 to inform him about a miscarriage of justice with Hispanic children in Alabama. The

Birmingham Board of Education had proposed segregating English language learners into a handful of schools. Rev. Peña led the effort to push back on this initiative, and his activism and prophetic leadership led the district to reconsider and withdraw the initiative. He represented and supported the immigrant community before many other injustices in multiple facets including law enforcement and the courthouses.

“Pastor Benjamin Peña’s unwavering commitment to speak up and defend the rights of the church, the immigrant and Hispanic communities leaves a long-lasting legacy of true prophetic activism. His life has left an indelible mark in Alabama and nationally via his work as our NHCLC chapter director. We pray for his wife, Sandra, and children,” Rev. Hernandez said.