

# Christian Latinos in Cambridge

## Communities of Faith that Rise Above

Kerry Biggs  
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Cambridge Latino Oral History Project  
Prof. Pacini-Hernandez

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## Introduction and Methodology

The struggles of the Latino community in Cambridge are not unlike those of any immigrant group moving to a new place, with a new culture and language. Or are they? While this community has faced the same linguistic, racial, and cultural barriers to communication and to foundation building as other immigrant groups, the pages already written for the Cambridge Latino Oral History Project show that the experience of the Latino community here is unique. It is important to determine how the needs of this unique community could be better met.

Beyond my personal interest in the faith aspect of this community in Cambridge, comments from the research done in 2002 drew my attention to the importance of the Church there. Sylvia Saavedra, the director of Concilio Hispano, commented that:

We go to the community. We do it with the churches. The churches, it seems to be, do a much better job than we are doing as community organizations, in organizing the community. Of course there's *something else* that they're giving. They're bringing some sort of spiritual wealth, or peace or something! ... There, at that church, you have—I've seen it because I've been invited—you have up to 500 women, all Latinas, all Saturday at a workshop. *We* cannot do that. Nobody else—nobody can do that! [laughs] They do it. So if they're doing it, then *something's* going on over there (*Interview of Sylvia Saavedra by John Keogh, 2002*).

Based on these statements it seemed important to look into what exactly is “going on over there” in the churches, such that they impact the community at large. As this report will show, a rich history was discovered through my research, which, though far from complete in its facts, reveals a picture of the Latino Christian community and Latino

Churches in Cambridge that in principle and practice strive to engage and uplift the people and populations in their paths.

While any attempt to encompass all aspects of the Latino Christian experience into one document would be nearly impossible, this report aims to provide glimpses of that faith community's history in Cambridge. Neither something as personal as the Christian faith nor something as diverse as the Christian Church could be described sufficiently enough to paint a full picture of its impact on the Latino Community of Cambridge. However, the churches discussed here will present a spectrum of experiences that should give the reader an understanding of the history of Christian Latinos in Cambridge, the challenges and successes the church there has faced, as well as the impact that Latino churches have had on the lives of individuals and the community.

Research for this report was conducted through personal experiences in all of the churches, as well as through interviews with pastors, leaders, and members of those congregations, which include: Congregación León de Juda (originally Iglesia Bautista Central), Iglesia Adventista del Séptimo Día de Cambridge, and Pentecostal Tabernacle. Due to its importance in any discussion of Latino Christians in Cambridge, information about Saint Mary's Catholic Church is also included. Most of this information is drawn from research conducted by the Urban Borderlands 2002 research team.

I have compiled my own personal experiences together with those recounted to me by members of these communities to produce the following report. In it, I strive to accurately tell the history of Christian Latinos in Cambridge. While I attempt to remain neutral and avoid filling these pages with personal beliefs, this report will, when necessary, present a faith-based perspective on the history it recounts. A faith-based

perspective of this community will give the clearer insight into *their* experiences in Cambridge. My personal insight into the beliefs of this community should serve only to enhance the reader's understanding of the experience of Christian Latinos in Cambridge.

## Chapter 1:

### **The Church's Role in a Struggle for Identity, Purpose and Passion**

Christianity, particularly in its recent history, has drawn to its churches and fellowships people from all races, cultures, and ethnicities. Latin Americans are no exception. While there are other religions throughout Spanish-speaking Central America, South America, and the Caribbean, as well as Latin Americans who do not participate in any organized religion, Christianity stands as the belief of prime importance, if for no reason other than its dominance and rapid growth there over the past 30 to 40 years. As Roberto Miranda, Pastor of Congregación León de Juda explained:

Latin America now has very powerful, powerful churches. There are many different denominational backgrounds really... Southern Baptist churches are really large, you have Pentecostal churches, you have Charismatic churches, independent churches, you have churches that have become now whole denominations, that have dozens and dozens of churches that have been planted all over the country and even abroad. And now they've become really more like denominations than churches. They bear the name of the original mother church, but they're very dynamic congregations. Ten, twenty, thirty congregations even, all over a nation or all over the world (*Miranda Interview*).

Christianity—both protestant and Catholic—is also the predominant religion among the Latino community in the United States, including the one in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

The *Religious Expression* section of *The Cambridge Latino Oral History Project: Latino Cultural Expression in Cambridge* from 2002 focuses on the aspect of 'church' being a place that brings Latinos together into a common space. My research further shows that for Christian Latinos, coming together in this way is about more than simply

being in community—it is about being in *Christian* community and what the *Christian* faith offers these individuals and their community. The aims of this report are to narrow in on the impact of Christian community and of individual faith on the Latino population in Cambridge and beyond. This report will also consider the ways in which this Latino Christian community has been impacted by being located in the city Cambridge itself.

### **What is Christianity (in brief)?**

In the case of religion, it is necessary to have some understanding of what members of a faith community believe before the community itself can be understood. The Christian religion, in all of its forms, teaches that Jesus Christ was a man born approximately 2000 years ago who was sentenced to death by hanging on a cross. Christians believe that this man was in fact God become man and that in his death, Jesus chose to take the wrath of God upon himself—a wrath that was intended for the punishment of the sins of mankind. In doing so, Jesus bridged the gap that had been created between God and mankind when mankind first disobeyed God’s command. Christians also believe that Jesus Christ not only died, but then also rose from the dead. In this resurrection, Jesus overcame death for himself and for all of mankind, such that any man or woman who accepts the sacrifice of Jesus in their place would not only be reconciled with God, but would also have eternal life through him. For Christians it is important that God, in Jesus, should do this for humanity because no created being could bear the wrath of God and live—but Jesus, being fully God and fully man, did just that.

However, the mission set forth for Christians is not simply to believe in Jesus, but to serve God by imitating the lifestyle of Jesus that is described in the Bible. As it says in



the book of Mark, “you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.’ The second [greatest commandment] is this, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these” (Mark 12:29-31, *New Revised Standard Version*).

And so Christians are exhorted to love and serve each other and their communities.

Using sheep and goats as a metaphor for mankind, Jesus also claimed that:

“When the Son of Man, [Jesus], comes in his glory...He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.’ Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?’ The King will reply, ‘I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me’” (Matthew 25:31-40 *New International Version*).

Along with a common belief in Jesus Christ, this focus on serving and supporting others is the aspect that most clearly marks a Christian community. It is also the characteristic of the Latino Christian community in Cambridge that has the greatest potential for helping Latinos in that city with the issues they face.

### **The Church Confronts Issues in the Cambridge Latino Community**

Latinos in Cambridge continue to face many different concerns, some that have existed since the community originally began to form here. Beyond racial and language concerns, a deeper problem exists. Lydia Torres, a Latina originally from Brooklyn, New York, described Latinos in Cambridge as a people that have in many ways lost their sense

of purpose and their passion. She said that the problem lies in the contrast between their culture and the lifestyles they are often forced to live in Cambridge. She noted that often the American ideal of focusing on the individual and on personal success, prevalent in Cambridge culture, clashes with the aspect of Latino identity that would have an individual focus on family and community, on culture, language, and faith rather than on him or herself. The lifestyle of multiple jobs and long work hours, common among Cambridge Latinos, inhibits their ability express the community-oriented aspect of their culture and identity, often leaving them feeling void of purpose. She observed that the Latinos who have come to flourish in Cambridge are the people who have refused to let their circumstances cause their passion for others to die.

The church, by its nature, seeks to restore a purpose and passion, and thus has the capacity to positively influence the Latino community in Cambridge. It has not been an easy task for Latino churches to do this on their own, but they hold out hope that they can still be of service to their community.

To be positive influences in the community, we need to work hard as Hispanics, as Latinos. We don't have the same privilege of earning the same amount as someone who maybe speaks English, which is understandable. The majority of us work two jobs and work very hard and besides that we're all members of the church, involved in the church, and we have to take care of our kids. But the fight is to overcome those obstacles by helping others, and in so-doing you help yourself (*Merino and Reyes Lainez Interview*).

The issues that this community is dealing with have not changed, but the community's ability to overcome the challenges of life in Cambridge is greatly affected by the role that the Church can play.

The efforts of Latino churches to serve members of the community at large encounters the strong opposition of deep human struggle.

There are many people whose self-esteem is very low because they think that they're not worth anything. It's what they say when they've come from their country of origin, come here, in this place, alone, they don't have anything, they don't have anyone to help them physically or materially. And we are here to help them, whether it's spiritual, emotional, and if we can help them physically as well, we will. We give to them if we can help them financially, but also so that they don't feel lonely... They think of themselves as a minority, but if they think of themselves as people, just like anyone else, then we believe that we can move forward... We want people to wake up and say: "I am valuable." When that happens we're all worth something, and that's what we mean by raising people up, lifting people up. Without people valuing themselves, we will not be valued and united (*Merino and Reyes Lainez Interview*).

This is what the churches in Cambridge have had to work to do, and they continue to work. María Reyes Lainez, a member of Iglesia Adventista del Septimo Día, said that "the church in and of itself helps people—giving us a reason to live" (*Merino and Reyes Lainez Interview*).

Through the eyes of a Christian, the church places a value on individuals that extends beyond racial, ethnic, cultural, or personal boundaries. The Bible teaches that all people are of great value in God's eyes, not because their skin is a certain color, or because they speak a certain language, or because they eat certain foods and listen to certain types of music, but simply because God values them and created them to be just as they are. Rosa Perez, a member of Pentecostal Tabernacle recounted that: "I feel like I still have this strong accent and it never go away, I never will get this accent out of me. And someone says to me, a Sister in my church says to me: "“You know what? God

gave you that accent, so you know appreciate it and don't worry about it'" (*Perez Interview*). She said that when she looked at herself in that perspective she no longer viewed her accent in such a negative light, but indeed began to value it.

One of the common misconceptions of Christianity is that Christians seek to hide their struggles and problems. In fact, quite to the contrary, Christians openly face much of the same joy and sadness, failure and success as the rest of the world. A member of Iglesia Adventista del Septimo Día noted that:

We came to be a family, such that if one person has a problem, we're all there. Or if anyone—for example the occasion that we're celebrating today—if someone has lived to see one more birthday, we celebrate together. But also, if someone is sick, and is in the hospital, or has an operation, we're there for them, to help them, because we're a family. If someone hurts someone else we share in that as well (*Merino and Reyes Lainez Interview*).

So while the struggles of this the church community are still deep, it is poised to respond. In the case of Latinos in Cambridge, the church is working to provide the spiritual growth and support typical of any other Christian community and *also* struggles to provide material and emotional support to Latinos in Cambridge. At the same time the Hispanic churches themselves often must fight to remain financially viable. Yet while the church must deal with these problems daily, it is still engaging in the struggle faced by Latinos in Cambridge.

### **Christian Latinos in Cambridge like the Exodus of Israel from Egypt**

In light of the struggle of individuals and churches in the Latino Community, it is not surprising that in the research for this project the Biblical story from the book Exodus

was mentioned more than once. In this story the Jewish people, having been enslaved in Egypt for generations, escaped from captivity by packing up their children and their belongings and walking through the Red Sea. They then wandered in the desert for 40 years while new leaders rose up to replace the old ones, and at the end of those 40 years they came into a land flowing with milk and honey—their Promised Land. The Christian Latinos in Cambridge believe in the same God that is said to have delivered the Israelites from slavery and they have more in common with this Biblical history than would first be apparent.

The forty or so years that encapsulate nearly the entire history of Latinos in Cambridge bear witness to this connection. In that timeline we find a people seeking to maintain their cultural identity amidst a vastly different society, like the Israelites in Egypt. In the cases of churches discussed later in this report, it would seem that God has parted the Red Sea of adversity to make a way for Christian Latinos in Cambridge and the greater Boston area. Other stories would tell of the difficult years that Christian Latinos spent trying to find their place in Cambridge, as though in they were in the desert with Moses trying to find the Land of Opportunity they had heard promise of. Ordinary people have risen up to become great leaders and to impart visions that have changed both their faith community and beyond. Just like Moses who, even upon receiving his calling from God to lead the people of Israel out of Egypt, said: “Oh, my Lord, I am not eloquent, either heretofore or since thou hast spoken to thy servant; but I am slow of speech and of tongue" (Exodus 4:10 *New International Version*), because of the Church Christian Latinos have overcome the personal struggles they face in Cambridge to accomplish great things.

## **Chapter 2:**

### **A History of Latinos in the Church in Cambridge**

The history of the Church within the boarders of Cambridge, and specifically in Area 4 predates the Latino community. Many of the churches on Columbia St., such as St. Paul's African Methodist Episcopal (AME) church, Pentecostal Tabernacle, Union Baptist Church, and First Holiness Church have all been serving the Christians in that area and beyond for nearly 100 years. However, the numbers of Latinos attending these churches that have been established for so long on the city's streets is at best minimal. This is because new churches or church services have been started in to serve the spiritual needs of Latinos in Cambridge.

#### **Iglesia Bautista Central & Congregación León de Juda**

Congregación León de Juda, one of the most vibrant Hispanic churches and arguably the one that is having the greatest impact in the greater Boston area, had its beginnings in Villa Victoria (downtown Boston). Juan Vergara, a Cuban man who moved to Massachusetts from Puerto Rico in the early 1980's, started the church in March of 1982. Vergara had planned to take a government job in the area while his wife completed her doctorate work in Physical Therapy. When that job did not materialize he was led to plant a church near where he and his wife were residing.

To that end Juan Vergara made contact with Ralph Key, the head missionary for the Conservative Baptist Home Missions Society (now CB America) who helped him to locate a space in the Emanuel Gospel Center at 2 San Juan Street, Boston. "EGC

provides resources to nurture urban churches and urban ministries and to encourage ministry in urban and ethnic communities” (<http://www.egc.org/>). And so the new congregation remained in that location and grew to 30 members over a period of eight months. In November, 1982, a 19<sup>th</sup>-century church structure at 459 Putnam Avenue, Cambridge, became available. Again through the help of Ralph Key, Vergara’s new Latino church, then called Iglesia Bautista Central (IBC), came to co-own the building along with Cambridgeport Baptist Church—an Anglo congregation.

Under the leadership of Juan Vergara, the church grew to about 60 members in its first year in Cambridge. After about a year and a half as the leader of this church community, Juan Vergara and his wife, Elsie Vergara, were obligated to return to Puerto Rico under a previous agreement about an academic scholarship she had received. At this point the church went without a pastor for a period of about a year. In 1985 it officially came under the leadership of Roberto Miranda, a member of the church since the second or third service it offered in Villa Victoria. He was ordained by the Conservative Baptist Home Missions Society in 1986 and remains the head pastor of the church today.

Iglesia Bautista Central existed in its Cambridge location for 15 years, when it made a very purposeful move to its current location at 68 Northampton St., Boston. The move, which also saw the church’s name change to Congregación León de Juda, came from a vision that the church would begin reaching out to and serving the vast urban Latino population in the downtown area. It is reported that 60% of the Latino population in the Boston area live within a mile of the church’s current location (*Miranda*

*Interview*). The congregation, including about 95% of its membership at the time, moved into its new sanctuary downtown in December of 1997.

In the 15 years that IBC was in Cambridge its membership increased from about 35 to about 225 people. The church drew congregants from all over the greater Boston area and as far away as New Hampshire and Providence, RI. IBC/Congregación León de Juda has drawn people with origins in countries all over Latin America and the Hispanic Caribbean. It is also the spiritual home to a good number of Brazilians, as well as a few African Americans, Asians, and Anglos. Historically, it has also managed to draw members from all ends of the socioeconomic spectrum, from the whole range of conservative to charismatic church backgrounds, as well as continuing to welcome people who have become the first Christian in their family's history.

While the church spent over sixty percent of its history in Cambridge, its vision was never one that focused solely on serving that community. Pastor Miranda described “the Cambridge years as the years of just developing an identity, growing as a church, establishing a solid foundation, developing a critical mass, experiencing certain things that God wanted [them] to experience as a congregation, to fashion [their] identity, [their] sense of being a body and then to send [them] off to what He really wanted [them] to do” (*Miranda Interview*).

The church accomplished these tasks during its 15 years on Putnam Avenue. Moreover, the church achieved influence over not only its own members, but it also impacted the lives of Latinos all over the greater Boston area through church plants<sup>1</sup>. The original Iglesia Bautista Central assisted in the planting of four other churches, which are

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<sup>1</sup> “Church plant” or “planting a church” are phrases used by Christians to denote that a new church is being started, usually in a new location, by members of a pre-existing church community.



all still flourishing. Those churches are in Lawrence, East Boston, Brockton, and Everett. More recently Congregación León de Juda planted a new Iglesia Bautista Central in the same location where the original IBC met for 15 years. Its congregation consists of about 60 members. Congregación León de Juda is currently in the process of planting a church in the Watertown area as well. Each of these church plants involved members of IBC/Congregación León de Juda refocusing their time and membership toward the new community, as well as setting aside funds to sustain the new congregations until they could support themselves.

Congregación León de Juda's current contact with the Cambridge area is down to a personal level. Several Latinos from Cambridge are still members of the downtown Boston church. Beyond that connection, the church also has Cells, which are groups of about six to fifteen church members who meet together on a regular basis with a trained leader. They have a mainly evangelistic outlook, meaning that they provide a personal space in which people can share their beliefs with others not of the Christian faith. A few Cells from Congregación León de Juda meet in the Cambridge area, striving to reach Latinos there with the message of the Gospel and to draw them into their church community.

### **Iglesia Adventista del Septimo Día de Cambridge**

Iglesia Adventista del Septimo Día de Cambridge has a very different story. According to María Reyes Lainez, the congregation began meeting in a park on either Broadway or Hampshire Street, somewhere near Columbia St. A small group of 4 or 5—consisting of 3 men who came from a church in Boston, her husband, and a gentleman

from Miami, to whom the original idea of starting a Hispanic Seventh Day Adventist church in Cambridge is credited—started meeting there during the late summer of 1990. They chose the park because there was no other place in the city where they could meet. In the late fall of 1990, a member of an Anglo Seventh Day Adventist church, Ronald Bates, allowed the small group to meet in his house two or three Saturday afternoons.

In November of 1990 the group was allowed to use a space at 360 Putnam Avenue in Cambridge in the home of one of the church members, and they began meeting more formally there. The tiny congregation battled unfavorable conditions in its early days. The building at 360 Putnam Ave had no heat and the basement—the space that they used—did not have insulation either. Visitors would come and, having discovered the meager surroundings that the congregations met in, would not return. The lack of heat made it difficult for the children and the elderly to attend; often the adults would sit shivering through the services.

In January of 1992 the small congregation of about 15 members began renting an apartment at 144 Columbia Street. Four or five of the original members of the congregation that met on Putnam Avenue still belong to the church today. Despite meager means, the church has seen great growth over the last 11 years. There are currently about 50 adult members in the church, a total that is made up of about 7 families and many men whose families have not yet been able to join them in the area. There is a full age range in their membership, with the oldest official member, Jovita, being upwards of 97 years old, and the youngest official member being a 16 year-old girl who came to join her family in the area just 2 years ago. There are also a great number of younger children who attend the services with their families. The congregation is made

up of mainly Central American immigrants from El Salvador, Peru, Guatemala, and Ecuador.

Iglesia Adventista del Septimo Día de Cambridge was the only non-Catholic, Hispanic church that the research for this project found within Area 4<sup>2</sup>. The congregation continues to meet on Columbia St., though they have outgrown the space. The church had not originally intended to remain in that location on any sort of permanent basis, but members have not been able to find a more suitable space to meet in. They do not have the means to buy a building, so they have been looking into the possibility of renting a different space that would grant them sufficient worship time and that is affordable enough for their congregation to be able to cover the costs. While their purpose and mission as a church has been and still is to reach the Latino community in Cambridge, they have been forced to begin considering other options in the Alston and Brighton areas due to spatial and financial concerns.

The tradition in the Seventh Day Adventist church in the New England Conference is that a pastor will remain in one district for a period of 1-3 years, and then will move on to a different district. Thus Iglesia Adventista del Septimo Día de Cambridge has had 5 pastors throughout its history, beginning with Evaristo Gomez. Ricardo Jorge came next, then Jose Almeda, who passed away in 1998. Pastor Almeda was replaced by Noble Alexander, a Cuban man who passed away just this past year. The current pastor of the Church is Ramón Cabrera. The New England Conference currently does not have sufficient funds to pay one pastor for each of its churches, and so

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<sup>2</sup> While Iglesia Adventista del 7mo Día de Cambridge was the only non-Catholic congregation found to be serving Latinos, it is possible that there are other churches in Area 4 that minister primarily to Cambridge Latinos.

Pastor Cabrera is in charge of two different Hispanic congregations—this one and one in Chelsea—as well as two smaller groups in Everett and East Boston.

Because the pastor serves so many different congregations, and because of the temporary status of any pastors within the church's New England Conference, Church Elders perform the primary leadership duties in the churches themselves. While the pastor may make suggestions for changes within the congregation's ministries or for projects that should be done, it is the Church Committee under the leadership of the Church Elders, and ultimately the whole congregation that would make any final decisions.

### **Pentecostal Tabernacle**

While there are very few Hispanic Churches in Cambridge today, Christian Latinos in Cambridge have not been without places to worship. Churches like Pentecostal Tabernacle, which is located at 77 Columbia St., have opened their doors to many Latino members.

Pentecostal Tabernacle was incorporated as a church in March of 1927. Its original congregation was primarily immigrants of West Indian descent and in its early days the membership numbered around thirty. The church moved to its current location in about 1945, purchasing the building and its pipe organ from a Swedish congregation. Reverend Herman Greene served as the pastor from the early 1980's until 1995 when his son, Pastor Brian Greene, officially took over the ministry.

The first racial diversity in the congregation came in the late 70's early 80's, as people from Poland, the Dominican Republic, and India joined the church. These were

the only signs of diversity that the church saw until it began running a program called Children's Haven. This program, which ran during the summers and over school vacations, served about 75-100 children from the congregation and the community during each session. It offered art programs, field trips, help with schoolwork, and some bible classes, and welcomed a greater diversity of congregants to the church.

In the early to mid 1990's under Brian Greene's leadership the congregation started to grow rapidly, both in size and in diversity. Pastor Brian Greene has intentionally made an effort to have Pentecostal Tabernacle not simply be a "Black church." While this idea was not originally accepted by all of the members—for the church had been a primarily Black congregation for many years—the congregation has since taken to the idea of being a multicultural and multi-racial church. While a small number of Latino members had joined the church by the mid 1990's without much of an effort by the church to serve them specifically, more have begun attending since Lydia Torres, who is of Puerto Rican origin, became a member of the leadership team in about 1995. Currently beyond Deaconess Torres, her husband and their two children, there is a large number of Dominican families who attend the church—a family of 6 from the Dominican Republic, another Dominican woman who brings her son, and Rosa Perez, a Dominican woman who joined the church almost 20 years ago with her two children—as well as a significant number of younger Latinos.

In terms of specific overtures to the Latino community in Cambridge, Pentecostal Tabernacle has only recently begun such outreach events. Every summer they hold a tent service in a park near the church in Area 4. In the years 2000 and 2001, Pastor Brian Green had a sermon translated into Spanish and had Deaconess Torres give a testimony

of God's work in her life in Spanish. Both services were well received by the community, but there was little to no follow-up done in the church afterward to continue to reach the community. A few years ago the church also attempted to have its 8:30am service translated into Portuguese, but it did not draw people from the Brazilian community and the translations ended after about 3 months. An offer was made to translate that early service into Spanish, but the idea never came to fruition.

### **Saint Mary's Catholic Church**

It would be remiss not to mention the Catholic Church in a report on the impact of the Christian faith on Cambridge Latinos. Saint Mary's, the church offering the oldest Spanish service in the Cambridge, has drawn a large membership for a long time. As the *Cambridge Latino Oral History Project: Culture Report* from 2002 went into great deal of detail on this group, it will not be discussed at length here, and the focus of this report will be mainly on the non-Catholic Latino Christians in the area. However, following is a brief summary of the findings from the research conducted in 2002.

While Catholic members of the earliest Latino community from Coamo, Puerto Rico looked for a church to attend, they often felt turned away from English-speaking congregations that they entered. Thus before a Spanish-language mass began to be offered in Cambridge, Roberto Santiago explains: "We went to Boston in the city Cathedral on Washington Street. The Boston community was longer...began very early. And that was a very nice community. In those days there was maybe ten thousand people in Cambridge, in Boston. So by those days, maybe we send about fifty people" (*Roberto Santiago, interviewed by Radhika Thakkar, March 9, 2002. Transcript*).

Eventually this group became large enough that they began to seek out a Priest to come and offer a Spanish-language Mass in Cambridge. Eventually, in about 1968 or 1969, they had found both a priest and a location down by the Riverside in East Cambridge where they were welcomed only for a few months. The congregation then moved to a church on Rindge Avenue in North Cambridge. Eventually, when family and friends of these community pioneers began coming from a second city in Puerto Rico, Jayuya, the demand for a Hispanic Mass in Cambridge finally became great enough that St. Mary's Catholic Church opened up its doors, but the congregation was often allowed to use only the basement, even for special occasions such as weddings.

Though the church in its early days was comprised of a mainly Caribbean Latino population, the congregation has since been diversified, as it is still one of the only, if not the only Catholic Church within the city's borders to offer a Spanish Mass. The tables have however turned slightly in this parish. "Now Latinos are welcomed to a well attended noon Spanish mass in the main sanctuary of the church. The strength of this parish today is supported by statistics in the church newsletter which showed the collection from the Spanish Masses significantly exceeded that of English language services" (Brannigan 25). St. Mary's currently offers CCD religious education programs, as well as a young adults group for its Latino congregation and beyond having other social activities that were geared toward the Latino Community throughout its history, it has also offered many social services including ESL classes and involvement in the foundations of Centro Presente.

### **Other Latino Churches in the Area**

For someone outside the Latino Community in Cambridge, locating a church within the city that holds services in Spanish is no easy task. For example, two separate listings were found for Iglesia de Dios, Missions Board: one on 82 School Street and the other 130A Brookline St. The church located at 82 School Street is the home of Rush AME Zion church, whose local preacher said that the Iglesia de Dios congregation used their sanctuary for 2 or 3 years, and she estimated that was in approximately 1997 or 1998, but they have since left. The other address, 130A Brookline Street, is in an area that has since been renovated into new housing projects. The listings found even gave two different pastors names: Rev. Juan Heredia and Rev. Amaury Abreu.

Two other churches were also mentioned that had not previously been included in the research for this project—one potentially being a Pentecostal Church in the Washington Street area and a second being St. Peter's Catholic Church. So while it is clear that Hispanic churches and services within Cambridge have existed and do exist, they are not easy to locate, and generally members from one congregation will not know of any other congregations in the area that serve the greater Latino community.



**Chapter 3:**  
**Choosing a Church:**  
**The Decision-Making Process of Christian Latinos in Cambridge**

Traditionally churches are a local institutions that will mostly consist of members from one town, or a few surrounding towns. Churches in the Boston area (as in other cities) function quite differently. Public transportation, whether by the subway or by bus, offers easy access to most locations around the city, and there are six pages worth of church listings in the Boston area Verizon Yellow Pages alone. The options seem to be endless for someone who is seeking to attend a church relatively near by. The choices are much less abundant and evident for people seeking language-specific services such as Spanish. So the question begs to be asked: How and why do Latinos choose to be members of the churches that they are attending?

**Pre-established Churches in Surrounding Cities**

What is true about the Latino population in the Greater Boston area is that the community in Cambridge is not the oldest part of it. There are older communities close by in places like Chelsea and downtown Boston. More recently, Latino communities have sprung up in cities all over the area, but it was these older communities outside the Cambridge city limits that offered church communities to the first Latino immigrants in Cambridge. This fact is evident in many of the different church communities discussed in this report. For example, Rosa Perez first attended a Hispanic Church in Chelsea during her first few years living in Cambridge. Soon other factors became important in

her choice of churches and she began attending churches in Cambridge, but only after she first attended a pre-existing, Spanish-speaking church outside of the city's limits.

Pastor Roberto Miranda, who was a graduate student of Romance Languages and Literature at Harvard University in the early 1980's, in much the same way, began attending Juan Vergara's new church in the Villa Victoria section of downtown Boston despite its distance from Harvard. Little did he know that the congregation would move to Cambridge just a few months later and eventually become a model of this same phenomenon within the Greater Boston area.

When we were there in Cambridge, we were there from '82, November of '82 to December of '97, for about 15 years, the church attracted people from all over the greater Boston area. From as far as New Hampshire to the north and to the south, people from Brockton. We even had a couple of families that came from Providence, RI. From the east we got people from Chelsea, Boston, Revere, Lynn, Salem. From the west we had people from Framingham, Marlboro. So it's been a church that's attracted people from all over the greater region (*Miranda Interview*).

The original Iglesia Bautista Central, and later Congregación León de Juda, served as one of the churches like those in Chelsea and Boston, which reached far beyond the boundaries of a single city or of a local community.

The original IBC also reached out to other Latino communities through its church plants in Lawrence, East Boston, Brockton, and Everett. By starting up new Hispanic congregations they provided a space for the Latino Christians in those areas to come together and mobilize to impact the greater community around them. This same give and take was seen in the congregation of Iglesia Adventista del Septimo Día as well. Three of the original members that met when that congregation first started in the park had

originally come to Cambridge from a different congregation on Chelsea St. in Boston with the intention of starting this Hispanic Seventh Day Adventist church.

### **Proximity**

While these Christian communities in other cities may have had an impact on the founding members of the Latino community in Cambridge, other factors often played very strongly into the decision of which church to attend. Despite the cross-community exchange, proximity often came to be a deciding factor for many Latinos in choosing a church community. As is the case in Saint Mary's Catholic Church, the Catholic Church closest to the center of Area 4, which became the home of the first Spanish Mass in Cambridge, the location of Pentecostal Tabernacle and of Iglesia Adventista del 7mo Día played an important role in attracting the Cambridge Latino members there.

For Rosa Perez, it was not until she had moved into Columbia Terrace, a housing complex located on the corner of Washington and Windsor Streets, that she began attending the churches on nearby Columbia St. Her circumstances having changed, it was easier for her to attend a church that she could walk to from her home in Columbia Terrace, rather than making the trip to Chelsea. For Deaconess Lydia Torres, when she first went in search of a church in Cambridge, it was important to her that she could walk to the church if necessary—and so Pentecostal Tabernacle was a good fit for her. While there are other Hispanic Seventh Day Adventist Churches in Chelsea, Everett and East Boston, the same holds true for many of the Cambridge members of Iglesia Adventista del Septimo Día, for whom being able to walk to the church is a necessity.

### **Importance and Impact of Language on Membership**

Language was obviously one of the biggest obstacles for Latinos to overcome in joining pre-existing English-speaking congregations. Many, if not most, of the early Latino community had very limited English skills. The same holds true for some of the more recent immigrants to the area. Most of the early Latinos in Cambridge had limited options regarding churches that offered services in Spanish. Until Saint Mary's began offering its Spanish Mass no church institution within the city limits offered a comfortable place for the Latino community to come together and worship as they had in their own countries.

Research shows that at least a small number of Latinos attended Saint Mary's even prior to the offering of Spanish services and due to the persistence of Catholic Latinos in Cambridge a Spanish mass was finally offered there. Participation in mass and partaking in the sacrament of the Eucharist on a weekly basis are two of the more important aspects the Catholic faith. Worldwide, the Catholic Church places a strong emphasis on these formal aspects of Christian life and requires that ordained priests perform the sacraments in order for them to be valid. Considering the directives of the Catholic Church, it is not surprising that the Latino population attended the Catholic Church closest to this community in Area 4—Saint Mary's—even despite a language barrier. The liturgical nature of the Catholic Mass made the transition, though not easy, at least doable.

If this was the experience for Catholic Latinos in Cambridge, what of Latinos who sought to attend the Protestant churches which can not even rely on liturgical familiarity to overcome language barriers? Rosa Perez, a member of Pentecostal Tabernacle since

about 1984, first attended the church with a couple that was from Puerto Rico. She commented on how difficult it was for her at first because she did not understand everything that the pastor would say, but mentioned that having this couple there with her made the transition a little bit easier. However, even now after nearly 20 years in the congregation, some 28 years living in Cambridge and extensive courses in English at Concilio Hispano, a local community center, and Harvard's ESL program, she continues to take her personal notes in Spanish as the pastor speaks in English.

Rosa Perez's story is one of great success, and yet points to an interesting issue in the Cambridge church communities: there are Latinos attending English-language services that are still more comfortable operating in a Spanish-language environment. On the part of many Latinos, this has been an intentional decision according to Mireya Vasquez, a leader at the new Iglesia Bautista Central. She noted that if an individual already spoke some English, or had in mind the goal of eventually entering a more professional workplace in the area, then they were liable to attend an English-speaking church so that they could work on improving their language skills. An individual with little to no English background and no intention of entering the professional workplace, would be more likely to join a Spanish-speaking congregation.

Lydia Torres, however, did not see this same dichotomy and instead sees Spanish-language services or Spanish translation as a way of showing respect for the Latino culture and also as a method for reaching that community through their own culture and identity. She felt that the churches in Cambridge ought to reach out to the Latino community more in this way. This aligns with the feelings of a member of Iglesia Adventista del Septimo Día who asserts that by attending a Hispanic church she can be in

a community where she feels at ease and she can understand everything that the pastor and other members say.

The number of people drawn to the Spanish Mass at St. Mary's and to the services at Congregación León de Juda, and even to smaller Hispanic congregations like the new IBC and Iglesia Adventista del Septimo Día, reveals the preference of the Latino population to practice Christianity in Spanish. Yet even Rosa Perez, a long-time member of the Cambridge community, could not identify a single church in Cambridge that offered Spanish services and had in fact briefly attended two other churches on Columbia St.—St. Paul's AME and a second one located at 211 Columbia St., that are both English-speaking congregations—before she decided to stay at Pentecostal Tabernacle.

### **Crossing of Denominational Boundaries**

The process of searching for a church is sometimes also complicated by denominational boundaries. Traditionally, the Catholic church is particular about its members attending their own church, whereas some of the newer Protestant and Evangelical denominations have more of an interchange of members. For example, Rosa Perez, who became a Christian in a Baptist church and is currently attending a Pentecostal Church said: "I might be a Baptist some day, but I know that I will love the Lord forever, and I know the I will be a Christian forever" (*Perez Interview*).

Congregación León de Juda has also seen this same denominational crossing throughout its history. The pastor's wife was a devout Catholic before she ended up joining the church while it was still the old IBC. Pastor Miranda attributes this to his church's balance of a charismatic experience with the Holy Spirit and a more traditional,

liturgical theology. He said that striving to achieve this balance opens up the church to people from all backgrounds—from Catholics, like his wife, to former Pentecostals. This balance is valuable for the Congregación León de Juda as it seeks to serve the Latino community here because of the broad range of churches found throughout Latin America and the Caribbean. That same range is not available to Spanish speakers in the Boston area.

However, some Christians remain denominationally oriented. Members of denomination-centered churches, like Catholic and Seventh Day Adventist churches, who relocate would tend to transplant themselves into a new church of the same denomination. The Latinos in Cambridge are no exception. Both Santos Merinos and María Reyes Lainez were baptized into the Seventh Day Adventist church while they lived in El Salvador. Upon arriving in the Cambridge area they sought out and joined a Seventh Day Adventist church here. Sra. Reyes Lainez did, however, note that at first she and her family had a difficult time finding just such a Church, and in fact attended a Portuguese-language Seventh Day Adventists church for two years before joining this beginning Hispanic Congregation.

One fact remains clear in among the different reasons that Cambridge Latinos have for joining particular churches: they are still joining churches regardless of the process that they must go through in order to do so. Even if they become members of a church outside of Cambridge, or if they must adjust to services conducted in English, their persistence in becoming part of a church community gives a clear picture of the importance of faith in the lives of the Christian Latinos in Cambridge.

## **Chapter 4:**

### **Latino Leaders Changing their Church and City**

As with the exchange of leadership between Moses and Aaron that happened among the Israeli people in the desert thousands of years ago, the original leaders in the Christian Latino community, such as veteran church planter Juan Vergara, have been replaced by new leaders with new visions. People like Pastor Roberto Miranda and Deaconess Lydia Torres, have, in fact, become great leaders within the Latino community and have managed to change not only the churches that they are leaders in, but also the community around them.

#### **Pastor Roberto Miranda**

Having come to Cambridge for graduate work at Harvard University, Roberto Miranda became involved in the old Iglesia Bautista Central almost haphazardly. A friend of his from the Dominican Republic was facing deportation and Pastor Miranda went searching in a newspaper for information on a well-known Hispanic attorney who handled such cases. In his search he happened upon an advertisement for a new Hispanic congregation that Juan Vergara had placed in that same newspaper.

Miranda, having been raised in the Church since his mother became a Christian, had been searching for a church in the area to become involved in while he completed his graduate work. He attended either the second or third service offered at IBC and soon became involved in the leadership of it. At the time that Juan and Elsie Vergara returned to Puerto Rico, Pastor Miranda recounts:



I was still a graduate student. I was a third year graduate student at that time, I believe it was and by then very involved in different areas of ministry, and stayed as kind of holding the ship, really. I gave the Wednesday services, I taught Sunday school, I was the administrator of the church. The idea was to have somebody come at some point and take over the work. I'm still waiting for that person to come 20 years later! (*Miranda Interview*)

While he was always quite sure that he would end up serving in the Church later on in his life, Pastor Miranda says that “of all the different ways that I would have wanted the Lord to use me, the Pastor was the least attractive” (*Miranda Interview*). However, about six months prior to the Vergara’s announcement that they would soon return to Puerto Rico, Roberto Miranda said that a strange feeling came over him while standing at the podium teaching the adult Sunday school class. He described it as being “overtaken by a clear sense that I can only verbalize this way, it said to me: ‘This church has been started so that you would pastor it.’ It was, you know, it was the strangest feeling because I never wanted to pastor a church” (*Miranda Interview*).

Pastor Miranda was officially offered the position of Pastor in that church in 1985, and was ordained in 1986. Under his leadership the church flourished in Cambridge, its membership quadrupling. While most Christian leaders will not take personal credit for works accomplished by their ministries and will instead give all the accolades to God, it is fair to say that Pastor Miranda’s choice to serve the Christian community in the Greater Boston area has indeed changed more than simply his personal life and the life of his church.

It was through a vision given to Pastor Miranda that the concept of moving the congregation to downtown Boston emerged. Despite not desiring to work in urban

ministry, he had the following dream one night and felt that it was a strong calling from God for his church and ministry.

I wanted to remain outside of the city. I never had an urban calling really, but one night I had a dream where I saw the skyscrapers of downtown Boston like on a large screen. And from the right side of the screen emerged these huge tarantulas the size of airplanes. They were huge, black spiders that came floating very slowly from the right side of the screen and just settled in a huge swarm, these beings, over the entire skyline of the city. From my vantage point which is sort of on the ground in front of this whole vision, if you will, I could see them. I could see that they were intelligent beings. I could sense that they were conscious intelligent beings that were demonic in nature. They were such, so full of venom that their skin was tight almost to bursting, and shiny. They were just sort of establishing their influences, if you will, over those skyscrapers. But then from the left side of the screen, way above the skyscrapers, way above the spiders, there was the flat figure of the face of a lion. I've often told people that what I saw was like the projection of those Batman signs that you see in the movies or the cartoons. It was just a flat face looking down on this whole sight, looking through the, looking into the spiders and through them into the skyscrapers. And I was able to see a close-up of the face and the eyes of that lion, it was a lion, and the eyes of the lion were very human, very powerful, very serene eyes full of authority looking down, not saying anything, but just asserting authority by the very fact that they were looking down upon that site. And from where I was standing, I pointed my finger three times to that lion, I said three times in Spanish: "You are the Lord.—Tu eres el Señor."... But I knew in the dream that that was the lion of Judah, that was the face of Jesus sort of asserting authority on this city despite this demonic stronghold that was just establishing its influence over it. (*Miranda Interview*)

Choosing to obey what he saw as a calling from God, he shared the vision with his family and congregation and began planning the move to downtown Boston. Whether or not one believes in the same God as that of Pastor Miranda and his congregation, it is hard to deny the impact that his ministry at 68 Northampton St. has had.

Between the growth of his congregation, and their current outreach programs to the community, Pastor Miranda's leadership reaches far beyond the four walls of Congregación León de Juda. The church website describes his work this way:

Sin embargo, él considera el poder trabajar como siervo de Jesucristo el más alto honor de toda su vida. Su trabajo con varias agencias de la comunidad, y su membresía en diversas juntas directivas de instituciones cristianas y seculares al nivel local y nacional, constituyen una extensión del ministerio y la visión espiritual de nuestra congregación. *(Without a doubt, he considers the ability to work as a servant of Jesus Christ as the greatest honor of his life. His work with various community agencies, and his membership in the leadership groups of different institutions, both secular and Christian, on both the local and national level, constitute an extension of the ministry and the vision of our congregation).*  
<http://www.leondejuda.org/historia1.asp>

Also credited to Pastor Miranda's leadership are the community service initiatives run through the Higher Education Resource Center, a project that impacts the lives of Latino and non-Latino youth alike. As a pastor who demonstrates various strengths, along with obedience and humility as a leader, Roberto Miranda's church has profoundly impacted the Christian and secular Latino communities of Cambridge and beyond.

### **Deaconess Lydia Torres**

While the raising up of Hispanic churches in Cambridge has required strong Latinos to take up leadership roles, Latinos Christian leaders in Cambridge have had an impact beyond the Church as well. Deaconess Lydia Torres, who worked with Pentecostal Tabernacle and as principal of the Kennedy School, is an example of Latino Christian leader who has brought about great changes in her church and the society around her.

Deaconess Torres is a Puerto Rican woman who was raised in a multicultural church in Brooklyn, New York. Prior to moving to Cambridge with her husband in 1993 so that he could attend Law School, she had taken on a variety of leadership roles in her church at home and was looking forward to some time off from leadership while she was in Cambridge. She, like Roberto Miranda, originally sought out a Hispanic congregation to join, but ended up attending Pentecostal Tabernacle, which she found through a listing in the local phone book. She began attending the church and became acquainted with a number of the members there. She stood by her original decision to stay out of leadership until one day she felt a received a calling much like Pastor Miranda's.

Before [Pastor Brian Greene] started preaching he said: "I have a word for someone here and the Lord really wants me to give it to that person before I start preaching. I was going to start preaching, but the Lord said 'Do it now.'" So he says: "Would the young woman in the back," and that was me, "wearing the white sweater..." And I'm turning around and then the girl in the back says: "That's you." And so she takes the baby and Christopher, and I come up to the front and the pastor prays for me...he puts his hand on my head, and he says: "You know, the Lord says He has different plans for you. You came here with the intention of just taking it easy, you don't want to get involved... You came here with the intentions to vacation, and God says: 'Yes, He knows you've worked really hard for Him. He has seen everything you've done and He has been well pleased, but you are far from over.' And he says: 'You are far from over, and you're far from being over here. He wants you to work while you're here. He wants you to work. There's so much that you have to give to this place, and there are things that only you are going to be able to establish'" (*Torres Interview*).

As a first step, Lydia Torres decided to become a member of Pentecostal Tabernacle (PT). Though her husband eventually graduated from Harvard Law School, the couple decided to stay in the area. Despite a desire to move back to New York to be closer to

their families, she stated that: “what kept us here in Cambridge was really Pentecostal Tabernacle, and that was really the only deciding factor” (*Torres Interview*).

Having felt a calling to become a member of PT, like Pastor Roberto Miranda at IBC, she had certain leadership strengths and skills that affected the community there. Her first leadership position came as a result of the number of young children in the church. She, along with the pastor’s wife, began caring for toddlers during the sermons so that multiple parents would not have to continually come and go in order to take care of their children during the services. Deaconess Torres, having worked in education in the past, noted the time could be better utilized to give the children spiritual instruction. Thus she began structuring lessons, crafts, and activities for the children and eventually the program was handed over entirely to her care. She has since mentored and trained up the current leaders of Children’s Hour, to whom she handed over the program two years ago.

Having been so successful with Children’s Hour, Lydia Torres was approached by the pastor after about a year or two of membership in the church, about the possibility of becoming a Deaconess. Eventually she accepted that mentoring position, and after her husband’s conversion to Christianity, they also became involved in leading the church’s Marriage Ministry. She was approached a third time by the pastor about beginning a college ministry, and the pastor’s wife also asked her for help in starting a Women’s Ministry. Both of these positions she undertook and has helped toward their success. She has more recently become an Elder-in-training and through that position has written a lot of policy (for example a manual for Deacons) that has transformed the structure and organization of the congregation. A lot of the decision to put such things down in writing

was borne out of her own vision and her skills for organization and planning. Large in part due to this work that she has done in giving structure and a system to the church's leadership, the Pastor and a few Deacons have been invited to give conferences about their Deacon/mentoring structure at other churches as far away as the southern United States.

Deaconess Torres' work has not been limited to a transformation of her church. She herself says that she integrates her faith into every aspect of her life, including the workplace. Serving as principal at Cambridge's Kennedy School for 4 years, she did a lot of restructuring in that school. She worked hard to implement an after-school program that would provide for some of the support that many students, Latinos and non-Latinos, were not getting at home. During her years at the Kennedy school, she also implemented a discipline code that mimicked biblical teaching in its respect for authority, in its insistence that everyone put others before themselves, and in so far as everyone is given the chance for success. She noted that often outsiders would come into the school and were shocked by the sense of peace that the school had developed contrary to its bad reputation from years past. She said that a large part of her work at the Kennedy School involved empowering teachers to regain their passion for teaching and to do the job that they had set out to do in the beginning.

These are just two examples of Christian Latinos who have stepped up into leadership roles in their church and community and accordingly have managed to bring about change. These are not the only stories, but are good examples of ways Latino Christian leaders have and execute a vision that extends beyond themselves. These

stories highlight the desire of Christian leaders to impact not just their own racial and ethnic communities in the Church, but the greater communities around them according to the tenets of Christianity. This has been to the benefit of the churches that they have chosen to belong to and will, as their churches grow in Latino outreach, magnify the Christian impact on the greater community.

## Chapter 5

### Suggestions and Conclusion

The story of a people determined to pursue a relationship with God and to serve their community is contained within the pages of this report and within the memories of many Latinos in Cambridge. While both of these, at times, may have seemed illusive or impossible goals to attain, Christian Latinos in Cambridge have already achieved many of these goals and are still forging ahead by acts of faith and determination.

While by faith and determination they have made great accomplishments, there are many changes on an inter-church and a community-wide scale which could make the job of Christian Latinos in Cambridge easier. One such change is an increase in communication/interaction between churches, both Hispanic and non-Hispanic. This would display respect toward the Latino community that has been established in Cambridge for nearly 40 years. Within the context of a common faith communication would also begin to bridge many of the gaps that still exist in the Church due to differences of race, language and culture. This cross-racial exchange is not unheard of the history of the Church in Cambridge as Reverend Herman Greene, Pastor Emeritus at Pentecostal Tabernacle described his experience as a pastor years ago:

The interaction came with the pastors of the churches. They fellowshiped, they got together once a week, Baptist, Episcopal, Methodist, and they all got together and discussed their movements and the growth of their church... There was an integration between black and white ministers at that time [as well] (*Greene Interview*).



It may be the responsibility of the English-speaking congregations to begin this dialogue seeing as they already have the upper hand in many other aspects. Iglesia Bautista Central and Cambridgeport Baptist Church, who share a church structure, have maintained this type of relationship and could serve as a model for moving forward into such a discussion. A comprehensive listing of Spanish church services available in the city of Cambridge could help with increased communication as well. Such a listing would not only relieve the difficulty that many Latinos have in finding a church, but it would also facilitate increased contact among Hispanic churches and among the greater church community in Cambridge.

While achieving this level of interaction between English-speaking and Spanish-speaking congregations may require more effort on the behalf of each party, breaking down this barrier would greatly contribute to the Church's general ability to serve the people of Cambridge and Latinos in particular. Many English-speaking congregations have come to a point where they can influence politics and policy in the city of Cambridge, and the contact between them and Hispanic congregations is thus even more important. While many Hispanic churches are working overtime already to serve the needs of their community, English-speaking churches could in many ways serve this community by speaking out on their behalf and on the behalf of the Latino community. This means knowing the needs and issues facing these faith communities and the Latino community at large. This is not to say that the Latino community is incapable of political influence—in fact the *Cambridge Latino Oral History Project* proves quite the opposite—but there is no reason that Latino Congregations should not enjoy the support of sister churches.

Rent control is another community-wide issue that has impacted the church, and in a similar way as it has impacted other parts of this community. Whether it is a justified opinion or not, many would say that the removal of rent control was an attempt by the city to ‘clean up’ the streets and neighborhoods of Cambridge. As is seen in this report, however, it has also served to stunt the ability of groups like Iglesia Adventista del Septimo Día to create positive change in the area because they cannot access a building large enough to expand their ministry. Church ministries in Cambridge, such as this one, have good intentions to help the community around them, but need assistance in finding a more appropriate space to carry out their vision.

Another fact to note is that there is a limited amount of intentional outreach to the community by English-speaking churches in prime locations in Area 4. While the Latino community in this area has thrived there for decades, many of the churches on Columbia have chosen not to reach out this portion of the local community. These churches, which sit at the heart of the area of Cambridge with the highest population of Latinos, must not continue to ignore the opportunity to serve the Latino community that surrounds them. This is not to say that every church on Columbia St. and in Area 4 should begin offering a service in Spanish, but the option of beginning a Spanish-translation service or of providing other language specific materials is well worth considering.

## **Conclusion**

Churches that serve Latinos have sprung up, moved into Cambridge and out of Cambridge, and at times gone almost unnoticed by the rest of the community. The trend

of Latinos in Cambridge to attend churches outside the city borders has in many ways been a reaction to the lack of religious services available to them within the city's borders. But despite the struggles of both the Hispanic Church and the Latino community in Cambridge, Christians have still managed rise above their challenges and to form a community that has worked to change the lives of individuals and the community as a whole.

## Appendix A

### **Suggestions for further research include:**

- This report has focused more on the first impact of the church on first generation immigrants as well as the work of an older generation of Latinos in the church. The impact of the Church on Latino youth would be a subject of interest because it would allow for the examination of how this important aspect of the lives of many Latino immigrants is being passed on to subsequent generations.
- Christianity, while perhaps the most widespread religion in Latin America, is certainly not the only one practiced there. A study of other forms of religious expression or religious practice in the Latino community in Cambridge would be interesting and would provide insight into many of the same challenges faced by the early Christian Latinos in Cambridge in terms of finding or forming a community.
- Open air worship, or outdoor services seem to be a common thread that runs throughout the stories told to me. Mireya Vasquez mentioned outdoor concerts of religious music that the old IBC performed in a park in Area 4, Lydia Torres mentioned tent-services (services held outdoors during the summer) during which there was a great response from the Latino community, and the initial founding of Iglesia Adventista del 7mo Día in fact occurred in an Area 4 park as well. It may be interesting to look at the aspects of public and private worship, and how these outdoor services reach the Latino community.

## Appendix B

### Interviews with Community Members

Greene, Herman. He has been a Cambridge resident his entire life. He has been a member, leader, pastor, and is currently the Pastor Emeritus at Pentecostal Tabernacle in Cambridge—an English-speaking church which is seeking to serve a multi-cultural community. (Interviewed by Kerry Biggs on February 19, 2003)

Lopez, Nefretiri. Originally from El Salvador, she is has lived in Cambridge since she moved here in 1992. She has been a member of Iglesia Adventista del Septimo Día for over 10 years now. (Personal Communication with Kerry Biggs on April 12 and 16, 2003).

Merino, Santos. In 1992 he moved to the Cambridge area and is originally from El Salvador. He has worked extensively with Iglesia Adventista del Septimo Día de Cambridge as a leader and a member since that time. (Interviewed by Kerry Biggs on April 19, 2003)

Miranda, Roberto A. He has been the pastor of Congregación León de Juda, an Evangelical church which spent 15 years in Cambridge, since 1985. He is originally from the Dominican Republic and grew up in New York. (Interviewed by Kerry Biggs on April 16, 2003)

Perez, Rosa Maria. She came from the Dominican Republic in 1975 and settled in Cambridge where she has lived ever since. (Interviewed by Kerry Biggs on March 4, 2003)

Reyes Lainez, Maria. She is originally from El Salvador. She moved to the Cambridge area in 1987 with her husband, and they have been involved as founding members and leaders in the Iglesia Adventista del Septimo Día de Cambridge. (Interviewed by Kerry Biggs on April 19, 2003)

Saavedra, Sylvia. Originally from Chile, Ms. Saavedra is currently the Director of Concilio Hispano, an organization that serves to meet the needs of the Latino population in Cambridge. (Interviewed by John Keogh, 2002)

Santiago, Roberto. Among the first Latinos to settle in Cambridge, Mr. Santiago has been very active in the community since he moved here in 1956 from Puerto Rico. Has been involved in St. Mary's Catholic Church since it began offering a Spanish Mass. (Interviewed by Radhika Thakkar on March 9, 2002—  
Transcribed)

Torres, Lydia. Her family is from Puerto Rico and she grew up in Brooklyn, New York. She moved to Cambridge in the early to mid 1990's, has served in numerous leadership positions in Pentecostal Tabernacle, and was the principal of the Kennedy School for four years. (Interviewed by Kerry Biggs on April 17, 2003)

Vasquez, Mireya. Leader in the new Iglesia Bautista Central in Cambridge, she was also a member of the original Iglesia Bautista Central while growing up. (Personal Communication with Kerry Biggs and Interviewed by Elizabeth Butler on April 9, 2003)

## Appendix C

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Emanuel Gospel Center website  
<http://www.egc.org/>

Bible Verses  
<http://www.bible.com>



## Appendix D

### Contact Information

**Samuel Acevedo**—Congregación León de Juda  
Director of HERC and Co-Pastor  
(617) 442-5608  
Fax: (617)541-1357  
E-mail: Judaherc@earthlink.net

**Raymond Exil**—Iglesia Adventista del Septimo Dia  
(617) 834-8802

**Herman L. Greene**—Pentecostal Tabernacle  
186 Lake St.  
Arlington, MA 02474  
Home: (781) 648-0808  
Church: (617) 661-0222

**Aldo Lainez**—Iglesia Adventista del Septimo Dia  
(617) 889-6077

**María Reyes Lainez**—Iglesia Adventista del Septimo Dia  
126 Franklin Ave. #2  
Chelsea, MA 02150  
(617) 889-6077

**Nefretiri López**—Iglesia Adventista del Septimo Dia  
226 Columbia Terrace  
Cambridge, MA  
(617) 834-8802

**Santos Merino**—Iglesia Adventista del Septimo Dia  
65 Chestnut St. #2  
Everett, MA 02149  
(617) 389-2749

**Pastor Roberto S. Miranda**—Congregación León de Juda  
143 Albion St.  
Somerville, MA 02144  
Secretary: Carolina  
68 Northampton St.  
Boston, MA 02118  
(617) 541-4455

**Luis Muñiz**—Iglesia de Dios, M.B.  
E-mail: Lmuniz39@hotmail.com

**Rosa Maria Perez**—Pentecostal Tabernacle  
8 Jackson Gardens #41  
Cambridge, MA 02139  
(617) 354-3105

**Lydia Torres**—Pentecostal Tabernacle  
e-mail: chris.lydia@verizon.net  
Home: (781) 942-3747  
Church: (617) 661-0222

While her current address is on the legal release form, the Torres family is planning on moving to Florida this summer because Mr. Torres is changing jobs.