

A Brief History of the Los Angeles District

By Ismael Martín del Campo III



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INDEX

INTRODUCTION	7
I. The First Los Angeles Churches	9
II. The Church's First Urban District (1969)	25
III. The New Los Angeles District (1985)	28
IV. Conclusion: Our District in the New Millennium	31

INTRODUCTION



It is an honor for me to present this Brief History of the Los Angeles California District. The Los Angeles district is the Apostolic Assembly's oldest and most storied region, our first churches originating from the Azusa Street Revival itself. My prayer for you, the reader, is that the testimonies found in this brief history would motivate you to continue expanding God's Kingdom by sharing this Gospel with your neighbors and making disciples in your community.

My gratitude first to King Jesus, this District's only Lord. Secondly, my thanks to my father Bishop Ismael Martín del Campo. I shared this article I prepared for the District Convention's legacy night, I had written it just to organize my thoughts, and he encouraged me to publish it. I thank Bishop Felipe Velasco and his district board for their interest in our history. Their initiative was the opportunity that made this brief history possible. My deepest

admiration to our pastors, brothers, and sisters whose stories and help made this history possible.

To my twin daughters Elizabeth and Hadassah, I pray that they may someday read this history, and be so moved to serve the Lord with all their lives, as I have been by all the testimonies, miracles and stories I have heard since my childhood at church and at the table with my parents, pastors, and evangelists. Finally, I thank my beloved and beautiful wife Elizabeth, whose wise counsel and sincere friendship are essential to my ministry and life.

Ismael Martín del Campo III

July 12, 2017

South Gate, California

I. THE FIRST LOS ANGELES CHURCHES

The Los Angeles District is the Apostolic Assembly's heart. Former President Baldemar Rodríguez wrote once that the "Los Angeles District is considered the Apostolic Assembly's headquarters."¹ There are only two districts that are concentrated in a metropolitan area, the East Los Angeles and Los Angeles California District. Furthermore, it is the metropolitan area of Los Angeles-Long Beach that has the nation's greatest Hispanic population at 5.8 million Latino-Americans, about 10% of Los Angeles City's population is undocumented.² This is significant not only as a passing curiosity, but because it envisions the fu-

¹ Baldemar Rodríguez. *El Comienzo De La Asamblea Apostólica En La Área De Los Ángeles, CA*. May 29, 1986.

² Anna Brown and Mark Hugo Lopez, "IV. Ranking Latino Population's in the Nation's Metropolitan Areas," Pew Research Center's Hispanic Trends Project, August 29, 2013, accessed July 13, 2017, <http://www.pewhispanic.org/2013/08/29/iv-ranking-latino-populations-in-the-nations-metropolitan-areas/>.

ture of our church. 50% of the world's population lives in cities, as opposed to how the great majority of humanity has lived throughout history. By 2050, 70% of all humans will live in a city.³ God's vision is the city, his kingdom's consummation (Revelation 21:9-27), and as his vision, it is also our vision. How the Apostolic Assembly organizes and advances God's mission within a city is one of the greatest challenges and opportunities for our district and every constituent local church.

The First Two Recorded Churches

Los Angeles is the cradle for both the Pentecostal and Apostolic revivals at the beginning of the 20th century. God had providentially prepared Los Angeles and the Azusa Street Revival as a Kairos opportunity.⁴ It was in 1906 that William J. Seymour founded his Apostolic Faith Mission first at a home on Bonnie Brae Street, and then to a stable on Azusa Street. From this mission came the first

³ Mark Wilson. "By 2050, 70% Of The World's Population Will Be Urban." Co.Design, March 12, 2012. Accessed July 11, 2017. <https://fastcodesign.com/1669244/by-2050-70-of-the-worlds-population-will-be-urban-is-that-a-good-thing>.

⁴ Ismael Martín del Campo, *Cosechando en el Field* (Norwalk: Editorial Nueva Visión), 14.

Apostolic believers. We know that in 1909 a group of Mexican-American believers was expelled from the Apostolic Faith Mission by Seymour himself.⁵ A scant three years later, in 1912, the Los Angeles City directory records two churches: one led by Juan Navarro, “The Star of Bethlehem,” and the other by Genaro and his wife Romanita Valenzuela, the “Spanish Apostolic Faith Mission”.



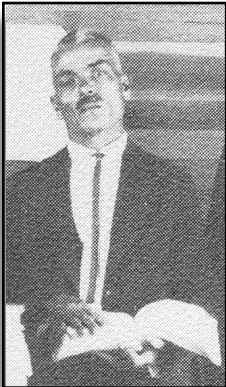
Genaro y su esposa Romanita Valenzuela

It is important to mention the Arroyo Seco Camp in April 1913. The purpose of the camp was to unite the gather the different Pentecostal churches that had begun. At this camp a preacher by the name of R.E. McAllister delivered a sermon on baptism in the name of Jesus. This was heard by John G. Schaepppe, a German born immigrant, who that night received the revelation of the “name of Jesus” (Schaepppe would go on to marry Francisco Llorente to his first wife, Josefina, in 1916). Frank

⁵ Frank Bartleman, *Another Wave Rolls In!* (Monroeville, PA: Whittaker Books, 1962), 104.

Ewart, one of the attendees at the camp, studied the matter of baptism in Jesus' Name and received the revelation that not only was Jesus the name used by the Apostles for baptism, but that the name of God is Jesus, and thus there were no persons in the Godhead, there was only one God who manifested himself in different ways or modes throughout salvation history. This narrative has been the standard of how Apostolic churches received the doctrines of Jesus Name Baptism and God's Oneness, but it was only until 1914 that Frank Ewart and Glenn Cook began to preach both doctrines. Thus, it is highly likely that these two key Apostolic doctrines God revealed to the first immigrant Mexican-American preachers, or that perhaps, both groups

of believers arrived at the same truths by an exchange of biblical studies and prayer.



Juan Navarro

Juan Navarro, full of the Holy Spirit, baptized Francisco Llorente in 1912 in San Diego, California. Llorente would become the Apostolic Assembly's first Bishop President.

Llorente in turn would evangelize Marcial de la Cruz, the church's first great hymn writer, in 1914, also in San Diego, California. Finally, brother Marcial de la Cruz would evangelize brother Antonio Castañeda Nava, the Apostolic Assembly's paramount founder. Brother Navarro worked for years in San Diego thus establishing the historic Otay Apostolic Assembly, which still stands until today.



Francisco Llorente 1er. Obispo Presidente

Our district's history takes a turn to south of the border. Romanita Valenzuela visited family in Villa Aldama, Chihuahua, Mexico in 1914. The Holy Spirit descended for the first time in recorded history on November 1, 1914 upon her family members and others there. In this group was Miguel García, a nephew of Romanita, who would establish the "Mother Church" for Mexico's Apostolic Church (Iglesia Apostólica de la Fe en Cristo Jesús) in 1918. Yet in 1925 Miguel García immigrates first



Miguel García

into California's border region of the Imperial Valley and later makes his way in the thirties to Los Angeles, he is the founder of the First Apostolic Assembly in Oxnard, California and an important catalyst for many of the other Los Angeles assemblies.

From 1910 to 1930 we see that the first ministers and believers concentrate their efforts in Downtown Los Angeles, the San Fernando Valley, and Ventura county. The first ministers had no temples to preach from, all they had were homes, the air in their lungs, the Holy Spirit's power, and the Bible. The first preachers were itinerant, we see Juan Navarro as a pastor in 1912 in the City of Los Angeles and yet, we know that he baptized Francisco Llorente also in the same year, in San Diego, which was typical of the preachers of that time. Francisco Llorente made his way to Los

Angeles, and in 1917 he forms “Casa de Luz”.⁶ He would in turn move to San Francisco by 1918 and return to Southern California by 1925. In 1918, the historic church of Watts was founded by Vicente García.⁷ In the San Gabriel Valley, the first church to be planted was in Whittier (then Jimtown), by Bernardo Hernández. The Watts church in the 1920’s was a biracial church, pictures demonstrate that African-American believers were there with Mexican-American believers. José Montellano and Agustín Cerros, a pair of ministers who began their ministry in the Imperial Valley under Miguel García proceeded northwards to Los Angeles and to El Rio, California, a small town that has been absorbed by Oxnard. Here Francisco Llorente had expanded his preaching campaign, and Cerros and Montellano participated in the evangelization of this town and other Ventura towns.

⁶ Arlene Sánchez Walsh. “Latino Pentecostal Identity” (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 36.

⁷ Ismael Martín del Campo, ed., *The First Sixty Years of the Apostolic Assembly* (Rancho Cucamonga, CA: Apostolic Assembly Christian Education Department, 2014).

The Apostolic Assembly begins

Our district began as a sector. The Apostolic Assembly had its first General Convention in 1925 in San Bernardino, California and in the 1926 General Convention, Jesús P. Torres was elected as Sector Elder for all Southern California. There were only three sectors in our church at its beginning: Southern California, Northern California, and the Eastern Sector (mostly comprised of Arizona and New Mexico). The Apostolic Assembly was incorporated in 1930 by the General Board, then comprised of three men: Antonio Nava as President, Bernardo Hernández as General Secretary, and Arthur Y. Hermosillo as Executive Elder. These three served as



Antonio Nava

the General Board virtually for two decades: from 1929 to 1948. All three men were pastors in Los Angeles, brother Nava in East Los Angeles (currently El Siloé Apostolic Assembly), brother Hernández in Jimtown (now Whitter,

currently City of Refuge Apostolic Assembly), and brother Hermosillo held no church, but resided in Los Angeles. Brother Hermosillo, as Executive Elder, dedicated himself to visiting the different churches, and to planting new



Bernardo Hernández

ones throughout the American Southwest. Eventually as the Apostolic Assembly grew the General Board appointed Arthur Hermosillo not only as Executive Elder, but Bishop of all of California, the only man in our church's history to serve in this



Arturo Hermosillo

capacity. In 1928 Celso Medrano, one of the first Apostolic Assembly ministers began Templo La Hermosa in Canoga Park, which represents the first Apostolic Assembly founded in the San Fernando Val-

ley. Finally, Guadalupe Lara along with Fidel García, set up a tent revival in Maravilla (now East Los Angeles), a key preaching point where many people were saved. It was here in Maravilla where bishop Francisco Meza's parents were saved in 1929.⁸ So that by the beginning of the Great Depression there was a church in Downtown, Watts (South Los Angeles), the San Gabriel Valley, the San Fernando Valley, East Los Angeles, and preaching points in Ventura. The number of churches had tripled since 1912, just a decade earlier.

A Decade of Hardships

The thirties were a difficult decade for the Apostolic Assembly, this is the decade of the Great Depression's aftermath. If the depression was terrible on Euro-Americans, it was punishing upon



⁸ Rodríguez, "Comienzo," 9.

the Mexican immigrants and Mexican-Americans. 500,000 Mexicans were forcibly deported during this decade back to Mexico, among them American citizens, Apostolic pastors, ministers, and members.⁹ 1935 would prove to be a year of trial for our church. The Apostolic Assembly was headquartered at First Whittier, but the church's first temple was burned down by an arsonist, and with it, the earliest records of the General Secretary. Bishop Bernardo Hernández requested permission to suspend his activity as General Secretary for a year, and this was accepted by brother Nava. That same year President Nava called an emergency election for the General Secretary, and brother Arthur Hermosillo was elected General Secretary.¹⁰ Guadalupe Lara is reported to have begun having administrative disagreements with brother Nava in 1933, an issue that was dealt with at the General Convention that year.¹¹ By the end of 1935 Lara, joined by the then pastor of Watts, and a group of ministers began a

⁹ Juan González, *Harvest of Empire* (Penguin Books: New York, 2011).

¹⁰ Antonio C. Nava, "1935 General Secretary Election Results," Antonio C. Nava Collection, Apostolic Assembly Historical Archives.

¹¹ Martín del Campo, "First Sixty Years," 60.



1935 Convención General

division in the church. Brother Nava, immediately began to receive the confused brothers and sisters at his home in East Los Angeles. Thus, he began El Siloé Apostolic Assembly in East Los Angeles and commissioned a new pastor to Watts, and Downtown Los Angeles. El Siloé's founding was not only important to preserve the Apostolic Assembly in Los Angeles, but it has been the fountainhead for a dozen churches in the area, it was the headquarters of the church from 1936 to 1968, and a meeting place for General Convention through the forties. For this reason, El Siloé is recognized as the Apostolic Assembly's "Mother Church," and I include it

in this history because a great number of churches began from here like Carson, Pasadena, and Family Life Center.

Ventura and Santa Barbara Churches Are Planted

In 1938 Francisco Vásquez, sponsored by Pastor Miguel Acuña from Canoga Park and Evangelist Miguel García, founded the Apostolic Assembly in Moorpark, which is the first permanent church to be established there in 1938. Different evangelists had preached in El Rio and Oxnard but no church had formed yet. Two years later in 1940, Miguel García established Ventura county's second church which was First Oxnard, now Oxnard Revival Center. Ministers García, and Vásquez, would switch from time to time to care for the church, and evangelize different towns in Ventura and the San Fernando Valley. This would be followed with the planting of Santa Paula church in 1955. We know that before this church was established, Bernardo Hernández was preaching in this city, this is recorded by the minutes of the 1926 General Convention.

The Apostolic Assembly would reach Santa Barbara County in 1961 when brother Roberto Valverde, a pastor from Northern California, moved to this city and planted a church.

The Harbor of Los Angeles

Brother Pedro Martínez, father of Pastor Samuel Martínez, is reported to have begun the church in Wilmington in the year 1930. This is also a key moment for our district's development because from Wilmington, the church of Culver City was founded by John Carrillo out of this church. Culver City was the first church to be founded to the West of Downtown Los Angeles. Most of the churches were in the San Fernando Valley East and South of Los Angeles. Pastor Frank Ramírez Sr. also began out of Wilmington church. Pioneer Martinez's planting of the church in Wilmington is also important because his was the first church to be established in Harbor region of Los Angeles County (Long Beach, Carson, San Pedro).

Though the church had incorporated in 1930 it wasn't until 1945 that the Apostolic Assembly



Convención en Los Angeles 1948

adopted its first bylaws. From 1929 until the Constitution's ratification the agreements of the General Convention and the General Board served to regulate the church's work. The 1945 Convention saw the establishment of the Southern California District, which ranged from Bakersfield down all the way to the border. Bishop Arthur Hermosillo continued as Bishop of California State. Our district also said farewell to many young men who went to the Second World War to serve in the armed forces, many of them returned to pastor in our district like Bishop Lorenzo Salazar. Our district was also greatly benefited by the fact that Bishop Benjamín Cantú, upon his election in 1950 as President

of the Church, moved to Los Angeles to dedicated himself in this office. In 1956, after a series of Constitutional reforms, Jesús Torres was elected as the first Bishop Supervisor of the Southern California District, a district that ranged from Bakersfield all the way to San Diego. Brother Torres founded the Apostolic Assembly in the Coachella Valley, and he travelled extensively through that Valley, the Imperial Valley, San Diego, and Los Angeles. When Pioneer Jesús Torres resigned due to an illness that paralyzed him in 1959, Bishop Nava became our Bishop Supervisor until 1963. Though Bishop Nava had been President and an area pastor in East Los Angeles for many decades, this would be the only time he would be Bishop Supervisor over the churches of Los Angeles and Ventura.

In 1963 Bishop Antonio Nava became, one again, the President of the Apostolic Assembly. Bishop Sepúlveda was elected Southern California Bishop Supervisor for the first time, and Bishop Nava became President for the last time. Bishop Cantú on the other hand dedicated himself to start a new church in Downtown Los Angeles, Emmanuel. Emmanuel has been the source of many churches

within our district, so his decision to plant a new church also changed the face of our district.

II. THE CHURCH'S FIRST URBAN DISTRICT

Bishop Francisco Meza was elected Bishop Supervisor in 1967 of the Southern California District. This was to be short lived however. In 1969 Bishop President Efraím Valverde, elected in 1966 to succeed Bishop Nava, created several of our current districts. The Southern California District was split at the 1969 Southern California District Convention held in San Bernardino, California, between the Interior California District, comprised of the Inland Empire and Coachella Valley, the Los Angeles District, comprised of Santa Barbara, Ventura, Los Angeles, and Orange Counties, and a new Southern California District, comprised of San Diego and the Imperial Valley. Bishop Francisco Meza continued to be Bishop Supervisor in the new Southern California



Lorenzo Salazar

District, Bishop Thomas Ramírez was appointed to the Interior California District, and Lorenzo Salazar was appointed to be Bishop Supervisor for the new Los Angeles District. Bishop Lorenzo Salazar was raised in Pasadena, his mother was an early convert at El Siloé so he grew up spiritually under brother Nava. Bishop Salazar was a natural fit for first Bishop of the new district given that he was our first Bishop born in this district. His first episcopal administration of our district was cut short though, he would be elected Bishop President in 1970, and he appointed David Palma, pastor of First Whittier, to serve the duration of his term.

The seventies saw the district expand to whole new areas of the city as the Hispanic population grew across Los Angeles county. The First Apostolic Assembly of Long Beach began in 1972 by Frank Ramírez Sr., this added a new church to Los Angeles's Harbor region. Lennox also began dur-

ing this decade, out of Watts. The First Apostolic Assembly of South Gate began in 1977. Bishop Francisco Meza who had been appointed pastor of First Santa Ana was elected in 1971 as Bishop Supervisor. He was succeeded in 1975 by Bishop Leonardo Sepúlveda. Both men had already been bishops of the area in the old Southern California District. Bishop Lorenzo Salazar was appointed our District Bishop in 1979, given that the Constitution used to state that the Bishop Vice President would also serve as Bishop in the district he pastored. Brother Lorenzo Salazar had served from 1970 to 1978 as President and been elected Vice President in 1978. Bishop Salazar resigned as our District Bishop in 1981 and Bishop Francisco Meza was appointed one last time as Los Angeles Bishop Supervisor until 1983.

III. THE NEW LOS ANGELES DISTRICT

A third generation rose to leadership in our district. Bishop Nava, Torres, and Hermosillo had been the leaders of the first generation. Bishops Sepúlveda, Meza, and Salazar had been the leaders of a second generation. And now the generation born after 1930 assumed the reins of our district's leadership. Bishop Alfred Rodríguez, then Pastor of Canoga Park, became our District Supervisor in



Leonardo Sepúlveda

1983. He was exemplary of many of our now veteran pastors: Val Jiménez, Frank Ramírez Sr., Rogelio Hernández, Lupito Vasquez, and many others. However, with a new generation, came a new change in our district. 1985 was

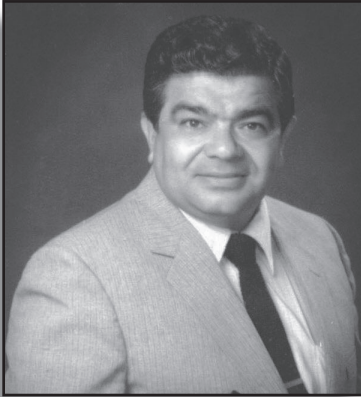
the year Bishop Alfred Rodríguez and the District Board launched a city-wide crusade in Downtown Los Angeles. This was attended



Alfred Rodríguez

by Mayor Tom Bradley. Church after church paraded down the streets where only 70 years ago the first churches had begun. In the same year, 1985 the General Board led by Bishop President Balde- mar Rodríguez once more split our district, estab- lishing an East Los Angeles and a new Los Ange- les district. Bishop Rodríguez finished out his term in 1987, he was elected to the General Board of Directors as National Missions Secretary in 1986. Martín Calderón Sr., pastor of Compton Apostolic Assembly, was elected in 1987 but turned in his responsibility in 1989. Bishop Gilbert Diaz was ap- pointed for a brief two years as our District Bishop until 1991 when Bishop Oscar Barbosa succeeded Bishop Diaz.

Bishop Barbosa was our first District Supervisor to really establish our district in its current form, with four sectors, then corresponding to Ventura



Oscar Barbosa

County, the San Fernando Valley, the City of Los Angeles, and the South of Los Angeles. Counting with experience as first Bishop Supervisor of a completely new district (he was East Los Angeles District Supervisor from 1985 to 1989), he came in at a time in our city's and district's history. Bishop Barbosa was our District Supervisor during the Los Angeles Riots and the O.J. Simpson Trial, a time when racial tensions were in our city at an all-time high, his leadership kept our members and churches safe.

When Bishop Barbosa's term ended, Bishop Richard Galaviz of Oxnard Apostolic Assembly was elected in 1995 until 2003, our first District Supervisor to serve for eight years in thirty-



Richard Galaviz

five years! Bishop Galaviz began Pastoral Retreats and was known for his kind nature. Always bearing a calm smile he passed the torch of leadership to a new generation. The Nineties saw the greatest number of churches planted, compared to any decade in our district's history, ten new churches began.

IV. CONCLUSION: OUR DISTRICT IN THE NEW MILLENIUM

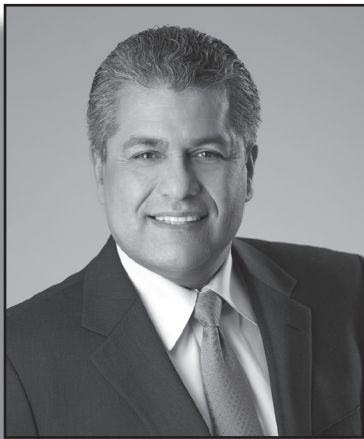
In 2003 Bishop Ismael Martín del Campo, pastor of First South Gate, and currently our church's Vice President, was elected to be District Supervisor. He marks a new generation of district leadership that was born after 1959.



Ismael Martín del Campo

His episcopal administration saw District Family and Preaching Conferences, the District Missionary trips to the Dominican Republic and Italy, and the celebration of the Centennial Anniversary of the Azusa Street Revival in 2006. Our district grew to fifty churches in his term. A fifth sector was created during his administration and have since been renumbered:

Sector	Pre-2006	2006	Current
Sector #1	Santa Barbara & Ventura	Santa Barbara & Ventura	Santa Barbara & Ventura
Sector #2	San Fernando Valley	San Fernando Valley	San Fernando Valley
Sector #3	Los Angeles City & South	South Los Angeles	Los Angeles City
Sector #4	Los Angeles Harbor	Los Angeles Harbor	South Los Angeles
Sector #5		Los Angeles City	Los Angeles Harbor



Felipe Salazar

Bishop Felipe Salazar, former Los Angeles District Messengers of Peace President and current pastor of Hosanna Apostolic Church in Compton, California, was elected to succeed Bishop Martín del Campo. He served

for eight years. During his term a special emphasis was given to the Strategy of Jesus and Church Growth conferences. Also, the sectors were reorganized. He authorized the planting of the churches in Chatsworth, Torrance, Watts, and Camarillo.

Our current Bishop Supervisor, Felipe Velasco, was elected in 2015. He is the Pastor of Templo Hermosa in Canoga Park, CA. Our Bishop has great experience in the district's administration, having been Los Angeles District Messengers of Peace Presi-



Felipe Velasco

dent, Auxiliary Elder for the churches in Central Los Angeles, and District Secretary for eight years. Bishop Velasco has placed a special emphasis on our district's history and the apostolic songs. He himself is a talented piano player and singer. Bishop Velasco is also working hard to strengthen our district's unity and the growth of each local church. Our district has grown from three churches eighty

years ago, to fifty churches with 6,600 members in the church wide census of 2016.

Bishop Supervisors of Los Angeles, Ventura, and Santa Barbara

California District

1. Arthur Y. Hermosillo (1892 - 1960):
1944 – 1956

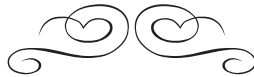
Southern California District

2. Jesús P. Torres (1884 - 1964):
1956 – 1959
3. Antonio C. Nava (1892 - 1999):
1959 – 1963
4. Leonardo T. Sepúlveda (1911 - 2006):
1963 – 1967
5. Francisco Meza (1920 - 1990):
1967 – 1969

Los Angeles California District

6. Lorenzo E. Salazar (1924 - 1991):
1969 – 1970
7. David Palma (1926 - 2002):
1970 – 1971
8. Francisco Meza:
1971 – 1975
9. Leonardo T. Sepúlveda:
1975 – 1979
10. Lorenzo E. Salazar:
1979 – 1981
11. Francisco Meza:
1981 – 1983
12. Alfred Rodríguez (1938 - 2010):
1983 – 1987
13. Martín Calderón (1935 - Living):
1987 – 1989
14. Gilbert Díaz (1927 - 2013):
1989 – 1992
15. Oscar Barbosa (1933 - Living):
1992 – 1995

16. Richard Galaviz (1947 - 2011):
1995 – 2003
17. Ismael Martín del Campo (1963 - Living):
2003 – 2007
18. Felipe Salazar (1959 - Living):
2007 – 2015
19. Felipe Velasco (1964 - Living):
2015 – Current



Ismael Martín del Campo III is Assistant Pastor of the First Apostolic Assembly of South Gate, California. He was born in Mexico City and graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in Communication Studies from California State University, Long Beach. Currently, he is the Apostolic Assembly Historical Archives' Deputy Director. He and his wife Elizabeth have two twin daughters, Hadassah & Elizabeth.



