

INTERNATIONAL MOVEMENT OF CHURCHES DEFENDERS OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH



In 1931 Dr. Winrod, by providential grace, meets Dr. J. F. Rodriguez, who had several years dedicated to directing different churches and evangelism in P.R. and by this time was pastor of a church in Guayama. After a campaign in P.R. by Dr. Winrod, at the invitation of Dr. Rodriguez, he authorized Dr. Rodriguez to use and promote the name and vision of the Defenders of the Christian Faith and thus began the Defenders of the Faith Movement in Puerto Rico. The Guayama church became the first church of the Defenders of the Faith in Puerto Rico.

By 1934, Dr. Rodriguez moved to Rio Piedras, Puerto Rico and there he started the second church in a tent. The famous Evangelistic Campaign was developed with the Mexican preacher, Dr. Francisco Olazabal. After this campaign, which has been one of the most famous in Puerto Rico, Dr. J. F. Rodriguez, began to establish very effective evangelistic and missionary projects, training courses for workers, economic plan to support workers, central office, use of media such as press and radio, a truck chapel for evangelism, a theological seminary and the use of Puerto Rico as a springboard for evangelism in other Hispanic areas.

Within the ranks of the Movement, a visionary group of humble, but holy and full of the power of God, emerged from the ranks of the Movement, watering the seed and establishing powerful congregations. Among them we can point out La Hermosa Temple in San Juan, El Tabor Church in Campo Rico, Canóvanas, Canaán Church in Villa Palmeras and others.

Dr. J. F. Rodriguez registered the International Movement Defenders of the Faith with the Department of State of Puerto Rico. It was registered on December 28, 1934 and Certificate of Incorporation #766 was issued. The incorporators were Dr. JF Rodriguez, Dolores Rosario, José Dolores Candelas, Demetrio Cruz and Angel Serrano.

The work had a rapid development, expanding throughout the island of Puerto Rico. Subsequently, churches were established in the United States, Dominican Republic, Haiti, Central America and Mexico. The motto selected was "Back to the Bible", the hymn: "Give me the faith of my Jesus" and the logo was the helmet with the title in the center of the Defenders. There was also a statement of faith.

In 1940, God moved Gloria and Jose A. Hernandez, pastors in Puerto Rico, to the Big City, New York, USA. Then, with the support of Dr. JF. Rodriguez and Dr. Winrod, in 1944 they began a missionary work in Manhattan, New York. With this work, the Hispanic work of the Defenders of the Faith in the United States began. The Hernandez couple extended their vision and action to other Hispanic areas of the United States and also reached Mexico.

Since that time, this great Defenders of the Faith Movement in the Hispanic world worked for several decades under the superintendence of Dr. J. F. Rodriguez.

Until this stage, the Movement was one, with the element of international unification and economic support of Dr. Gerald B. Winrod, and his office in Wichita, Kansas; and the element of paternal, educational and visionary unification of Dr. J. F. Rodriguez, in his office in Rio Piedras, Puerto Rico.

In 1957 the death of Dr. Gerald B. Winrod occurred and new leaders arrived at the Defenders Office in Wichita, Kansas, who did not have the same vision as Dr. Winrod. Nevertheless, both in Puerto Rico, Dr. J. F. Rodríguez, and in the United States, Dr. José A. Hernández and his wife, Rev. Gloria Hernández, took measures and began work to formalize the institutional and administrative aspects in a more effective manner. A more conciliar character is given to what until now was a kind of association of autonomous churches, united by the filial love of their leaders. They continued to work individually

under an independent organization in each country even though they maintained relations by having the same name: Movimiento Defensores de la Fe Cristiana.

In 1964 the Movement in Puerto Rico was incorporated locally and held its first assembly in which a Board of Directors was elected, with Dr. Licinio Rolón as president. Steps are taken to establish bylaws and other organizational aspects. At the same time, in the United States, the Movement is reorganized in 1964, under the presidency of Rev. Rafael Matos, since Revs. Hernandez, decided to return to Puerto Rico.

Dr. J. F. Rodriguez remained as General Superintendent of the Hispanic work until his death on April 5, 1985. Puerto Rico continued to supervise the foreign works that already existed in the countries of: Dominican Republic, Paraguay, Venezuela. The United States supervised the work in Mexico.

First attempts at unification at the international level again

The first attempt at an International Movement was made by the General Superintendent of the Defenders of the Faith, Dr. J. F. Rodriguez in his vision of a worldwide Movement when he registered it with the Department of State of the Government of Puerto Rico, in December 1934.

It was at a regular assembly of the Movement of the States in June 1972, in Brooklyn County, New York City, at the church led by Rev. Rafael Matos, that a resolution was passed to create an organization of the Defenders of the Faith Movement at the international level with headquarters in Puerto Rico. This resolution was welcomed by the directors of the Movement in Puerto Rico. In the Assembly of February 1973 in the city of Bayamón, Puerto Rico, a resolution was approved with the same purpose of creating a provisional entity to work on the organization of the same.

A committee was appointed composed of the Executive Committee of the Movement in Puerto Rico at that time, Rev. Octavio Pimentel, Rev. Santos Fidel Correa and Rev. In addition, attorneys Dan F. Rodríguez and Rafael Torres Ortega were included. This committee

The committee drafted a set of Rules and Regulations, so that in a future assembly the Defenders of the Faith would be invited from the United States, Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Mexico and other countries where there were Defenders of the Faith churches.

This assembly was held in February 1974 at the Rayos del Sol Temple in San Isidro, Canóvanas, Puerto Rico. In addition to Puerto Rico, there were representations from the United States, Guatemala and the Dominican Republic. Unfortunately there was no consensus among the countries that attended and the International Movement was not established.

International Movement Commission

Melvin L. Torres, to create a commission of ministers to go to the United States, establish contacts with the leaders there and study the possibilities of returning to the international approach. This resolution gave a period of one year to prepare a proposal for the approval or rejection of the assembly.

This resolution was accepted by the assembly and the President, Rev. Luis González Otero, was authorized to appoint this committee. He did so and appointed the following ministers to form this committee: Rev. Elías Urbina, José J. Palacios, Eliezer García, Nicolás Reyes and Luis González Otero. These brothers, in



their first meeting, prepared a proposal to be submitted to the next assembly of the Defenders of the Faith Movement of the United States to be held in July 1991. The committee was called the Dialogue Committee and was chaired by Rev. Luis González

Otero. The assembly of the United States, which met in July 1991 in the city of Boston, Mass., welcomed the resolution and also appointed a dialogue committee which was made up of the following members: Revdos: Raúl Marrero, José A. Hernández, Benjamín Soto, Ángel González, Antonio Plá, David Marrero. Gloria Hernández was appointed as advisor to the group.

The Puerto Rico Dialogue Committee was present at this assembly and after the U.S. Dialogue Committee was appointed, they agreed to hold the first meeting of both committees in Puerto Rico.

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The Puerto Rico Committee submitted a Unification Project to be discussed at that first meeting. It consisted of the following points.

General Purposes:

1. To have something in writing that could provide a basis for the beginning of the dialogue, as a way to channel ideas.
2. To promote the establishment of a specific and clear plan, where opinions and alternatives are presented, considering the interests and ideas of the U.S. group and those of the Puerto Rican group, with an exact equal importance and preponderance.
3. To facilitate the comparison of personal and institutional opinions, with that of the members of the U.S. group, in order to modify them, so that we establish a well-defined collective opinion, which can make future agreements feasible.

Specific purposes:

1. Evaluative reality
2. Actual guidelines
3. Ways of consensus
4. Effective postulates
5. Staggered goals

Current Reality

In our opinion, there are currently two (2) Movements for the Defense of the Christian Faith, one in Puerto Rico and the other in the United States. Both have independent legal personality, different bylaws and executive boards, without elements of subordination.

Historical Reality

From the beginning, the founders of this movement, Dr. Gerald B. Winrod and Dr. JF Rodriguez, educated and set an example of a broad and fruitful vision that transcended borders and regionalisms.

2. Throughout its history for more than six decades, the other leaders and ministers of this Movement were moved by the Spirit to imitate and expand the international vision of our founders.

3. Diverse circumstances led the ministers of the Hispanic areas in the U.S. and those of the P.R. to continue their hard regional work, in close historical and fraternal relationship, but lacking hierarchy in programmatic and administrative correlation.

4. For many years, leaders of the Movement in the U.S. and P. R., had made multiple efforts with the intention of greater organization of the international approach.

Avenues of Consensus:

We recognize that our spiritual and historical origins are the same. 2. We establish that the visionary, ministerial and institutional postulates, motto and emblem, are still the same that God showed to our founders.

Both Movements, their respective assemblies and leaders, have given effective proof that we need to study and practice areas of institutional and ministerial unification.

These areas of unification have not been determined, nor precisely defined.

Both Movements have created their respective committees for dialogue, study, determination and recommendation of these areas of unification.

We understand that the juridical personality, administrative boards and independent regulations of both Movements have had their historical function and effectiveness and will remain unalterable for the present.

The above three elements can only be affected after we explore other areas of unification and prove the need for change or modification of some of them.

We could point out examples of some possible areas of unification:

- Ministerial Administration
- Doctrinal
- Missionary
- Evangelistic
- Future changes in regulatory areas
- Possibility of future changes in board composition
- Possibility in Aspects of International Organization
- One of the most urgent areas for action in unification is the international missionary area.
- We recognize that the financial resources of both Movements are limited and compromised.

Both committees are the product of our corresponding assemblies and we are in the duty of giving an account of good offices, both to those assemblies and to the boards of both Movements. We know that some of our agreements may lead to motions for our respective assemblies.

We must remember that previously, there had been some efforts originated sometimes by leaders of the Movement in the United States, and others by leaders of Puerto Rico, with the attempt to achieve some elements of unification, and for diverse reasons the objective was not achieved. We intend that the memory and effect of those efforts, will not negatively affect the mission that has now been entrusted to us.

Staggered Goals:

We recognize that the plan is visionary, but ambitious. It will require time, study and adaptation. We will not be able to achieve all the objectives at the same time, therefore, it will be necessary to establish and define short, medium and long term goals. For this reason, it is vital to establish an effective work plan. This will be the great challenge for both committees.

Finally, it is suggested that the beginning of this plan should be to unite both Committees into a single Unification Commission.

After the discussion of the proposal in that first meeting by both dialogue committees, a directive was appointed, which was composed as follows: President, Rev. Antonio Pla, Co president, Rev. Elías Urbina and secretary, Brother Ángel González.

The current organization of the Defenders of the Faith Movement for 1991 was as follows: Puerto Rico supervised the works abroad: Costa Rica, Japan, Ecuador, Venezuela, Dominican Republic and Peru. The United States supervised the works abroad: Colombia, Mexico and Honduras.

The work in Guatemala was maintained under the same name of Defensores de la Fe, but none of the Movements of Puerto Rico and the United States were united, although they maintained their relationship of friendship.

During the year 1992 a Unification Project form was prepared to be sent to all the pastors to know their opinion about the union of the two Movements into an International one. There was an endorsement of more than 78% of the pastors of the United States and 97% of the pastors of Puerto Rico.

The dialogue of the committee continues, taking advantage of the assemblies of both organizations to carry out their meetings.

Some procedures are established for the next meetings and the work to be done to achieve some of the points in the short, medium and long term. These points are the following:

- Creation of an international ecclesiastical organization that groups, unifies and solidifies the vision and worldwide effort of the Defenders of the Christian Faith, disseminated multinationally.
- That the organization should be called the International Movement of Churches Defenders of the Christian Faith, Inc.
- Define a general purpose

- Establish a Creed, Constitution and Bylaws.
- Functions of the International Organization
- Administration
- Finances
- Domicile
- Constituent Assembly
- Participation in the Constituent Assembly

All of these work items were addressed at all of the Commission's meetings from 1993 to 1997. . They were long hours of work, where many times there was no immediate consensus, and although there were many differences, final agreements were always reached.

In one of the meetings of the Commission in February 1994, it was agreed to appoint Rev. Elías Urbina as president of the Commission. This was due to the resignation of Rev. Antonio Pla, who due to his multiple occupations, was finding it difficult to continue in this position. He remained part of the Commission.

The first date established for a constituent meeting was proposed for the month of February 1996 in Puerto Rico. The reasons for Puerto Rico were the following:

For being more centrally located and accessible to most countries.

For many, airfare to Puerto Rico was less expensive.

Because it was the place where there were more ministers and workers at the time.

Understanding that several congregations could help in different ways, to reduce assembly costs and to coordinate details.

The Commission begins to work on a plan of action to achieve this constituent assembly. Different working committees are appointed to assist the Commission in discharging its responsibility.

On March 7, 1994, the first official communication is prepared to the national leaders of the Movement in the different countries where there are works of the Defenders of the Faith. These were, in addition to Puerto Rico and the United States, Japan, Dominican

Republic, Venezuela, Costa Rica, Haiti, Colombia, Mexico, Guatemala, Africa, Paraguay, Honduras, Ecuador and Cuba.

Subcommittees were organized for the work of the assembly, such as: lodging and hospitality, promotion, transportation, facilities and equipment, credentials, nominations, scrutiny and food.

Some situations arose to hold the Constituent Assembly in the year originally scheduled and a new date was chosen for the Constituent Assembly. It would be held in February 1998 in Rio Grande, Puerto Rico. .

In its last meetings the Commission received the reports of the different committees and subcommittees of work to finally organize the Constituent Assembly of the International Movement of Churches Defenders of the Faith. It would be held from February 4 to 7, 1998 in Rio Grande, Puerto Rico. The main objective of this Constituent Assembly was to establish the International Movement. This Magna Constituent Assembly would be an event of great historical transcendence, within the vertiginous trajectory of this visionary organization. All countries, territories and districts should not only be well represented, but their entire pastorate should be present and active in it.

Constituent Assembly

Puerto Rico prepared with much enthusiasm and dedication to receive all these delegates; it offered them lodging, and received them with much joy and Christian happiness. The host church was the Iglesia Hija del Tabor Defensores de la Fe de Rio Grande, pastored by Rev. Héctor I. García.

This constituent assembly was presided over by Rev. Elías Urbina, president of the Pro Constituent Assembly Commission of the International Movement of Churches Defenders of the Faith. There were invitations to 17 countries that had already established Defenders of the Faith churches around the world. Of those 17 countries, 13 countries were represented and 192 pastors and ministers attended.

In this Constituent Assembly the new organization was defined as follows: The International Movement of Churches Defenders of the Christian Faith is a non-profit

ecclesiastical organization that integrates National Movements of Churches affiliated voluntarily for the expansion of the gospel worldwide and recognizes the autonomy of its members.

This new organization would be directed by an International Board of Directors which was elected at the Constituent Assembly. Its duties include maintaining communication with the churches and supervising the work of the member countries.

The composition of the newly elected Board of Directors was as follows:

President - Rev. Eliezer García

Executive Secretary - Rev. Raúl Marrero

Director of Finance - Rev. Héctor Colón

Director of Missions - Rev. Alfredo Vallellanes

Education Director - Rev. Carmen V. Sanabria

An International Assembly shall be held every two years and the International Board of Directors shall be elected every four years.

The International Movement of the Defenders of the Faith Churches is the new missionary vision of the Defenders for the last time, before the imminent uprising of the church. We go out in fiery defense of the faith around the world. In this mission we are united with all the Defenders of the Christian Faith from Argentina, Costa Rica, Colombia, Chile, Ecuador, United States, Guatemala, Haiti, Japan, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Puerto Rico, Dominican Republic, Namibia and Venezuela. We hope that with God's help, together with the efforts of all of us, we will be able to reach the ends of the Earth.

The main objectives of the organization will be:

- To preach the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ to every creature and to make disciples of all nations.
- To group all the Defenders of the Christian Faith churches under one International Organization.

- To establish Defenders of the Christian Faith churches in all countries of the world. Promote the integration of the work and efforts of all Defenders of the Christian Faith churches worldwide.
- Promote systematic procedural and action unity to address the operational development of its members.
- To define the philosophical foundations of Christian education.

The main purpose for this constituent was to elect a Board of Directors, approve a Constitution, create an operational regulation and accept a creed.

This great assembly ended with a great concentration in the Ovidio de Jesus Park in Rio Grande where a great number of churches of Puerto Rico attended together with all the representations of the different countries that attended the assembly.

Thus was constituted the International Movement of Churches Defenders of the Christian Faith after so many years of struggle and work to achieve it. TO GOD BE THE GLORY!