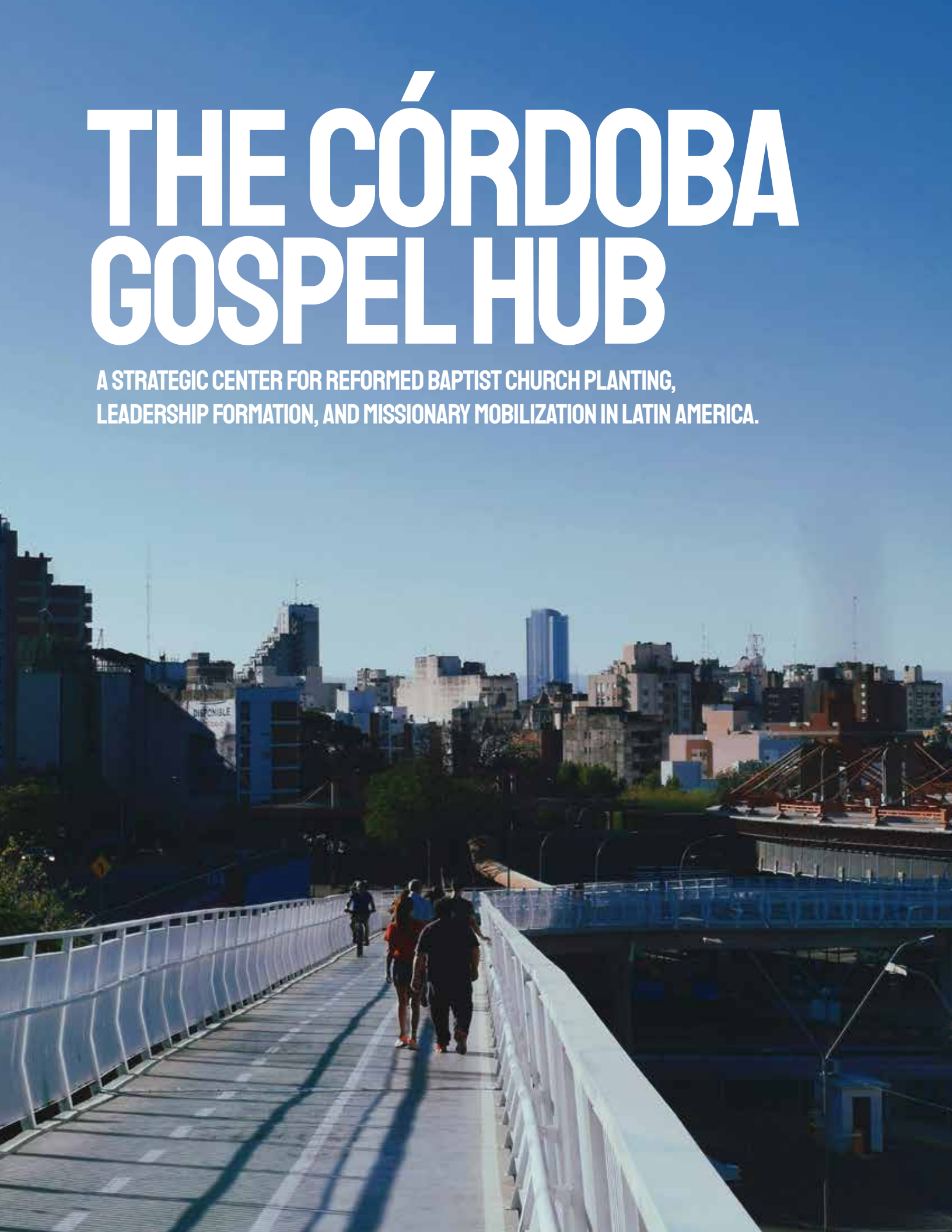
THE CÓRDOBA GOSPEL HUB

A STRATEGIC CENTER FOR REFORMED BAPTIST CHURCH PLANTING, LEADERSHIP FORMATION, AND MISSIONARY MOBILIZATION IN LATIN AMERICA.



Executive Summary

The global missionary movement is entering a new phase. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, missionary initiative flowed primarily from Europe and North America to the rest of the world. Today, however, churches in Latin America, Africa, and Asia are increasingly becoming missionary-sending communities in their own right. This transition presents a strategic opportunity: strengthening centers of theological formation and church planting in the Global South can significantly accelerate the next generation of global missionary expansion.

This document proposes strengthening one such center: the Córdoba Gospel Hub, a coordinated network of churches, training institutions, associational partnerships, and missionary initiatives based in Córdoba, Argentina. Over several decades, Iglesia Crecer and its related ministries have developed the essential components of a regional missionary platform, including church planting throughout the province of Córdoba, the formation of the Crecer Family of Churches, leadership development pipelines, the establishment of Seminario Carey, and the founding of the Asociación Bautista Reformada Argentina (ABRA), a national association of churches. Together, these developments position Córdoba as a strategic missionary-sending center for the Spanish-speaking world and beyond.

The proposals outlined here focus on several key areas: expanding facilities for Iglesia Crecer, the network's central sending church; strengthening the revolving Crecer Fund to support church property acquisition; supporting theological education through Seminario Carey; developing associational infrastructure within ABRA; expanding church-based university ministry as the entry point to the leadership pipeline; and strengthening training systems for future pastors, church planters, and missionaries. Together, these initiatives form a coordinated strategy to multiply leadership, strengthen congregations, and extend missionary reach across Argentina and beyond. They also advance three expanding horizons of ministry flowing outward from Córdoba: the Argentine Northwest, the global city of Buenos Aires, and the sending of missionaries from Argentina to the nations.

To support the next phase of expansion, the proposal envisions a strategic shift in mission financing from primarily operational support (OPEX) to targeted capital investment (CAPEX). Rather than sustaining isolated projects, capital investment strengthens the institutional structures that enable churches to become stable, self-supporting, self-reproducing, and missionary-sending communities. Investments in facilities, educational infrastructure, leadership development, and church-planting capacity create enduring assets that continue to bear fruit long after the initial funding is deployed. This approach builds long-term capacity while preserving meaningful partnerships between churches in North America and Latin America.

The total investment required to implement these proposals is outlined in the companion Strategic Implementation Plan.

Historically, integrated missionary centers such as the Serampore Mission, founded by William Carey, played decisive roles in shaping regional and global missionary movements. The Córdoba Gospel Hub offers a comparable opportunity for the present generation. Strategic investment at this stage will strengthen existing institutions and enable them to serve as platforms for future missionary expansion from Latin America to the nations.

Index

Read from top to bottom; the entries below form a continuous précis of the entire paper. Each names what the section does and how it advances the argument.

PAGE 2

Executive Summary—Compresses the whole proposal into a single page: the global shift toward Global-South missionary sending, Córdoba as an emerging gospel hub, and the reorientation of missions funding from operational support to capital investment. Contribution: orients the reader and states the ask in miniature.

PAGE 6

Introduction — Opens with William Carey's missionary vision and presents the Córdoba Gospel Hub as a contemporary expression of the same logic. Contribution: establishes the historical-theological lens—Carey and Serampore—that governs the entire paper.

PAGE 8

Part I · The Changing Landscape of Global Missions — Surveys the shift from "the West to the rest" to "everywhere to everywhere," shows that Latin America has become a major missionary-sending force, and identifies four structural obstacles: church facilities, theological education, national associations, and sending structures. Contribution: defines the problem the Hub is designed to solve.

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Part II · The Missiological Framework — Lays the theological and missiological foundation—missions, the gospel's translatability into every culture, the Serampore model of contextualization, the nature of the missionary task, and the case for long-term investment. Contribution: supplies the convictions from which the strategy is derived (theology → missiology → strategy).

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Part III · The Gospel Hub Strategy — Defines a "gospel hub" as a sending church at the center of a coordinated network of auxiliary ministries and institutions, using Carey's Serampore as the historical model. Contribution: names and frames the paper's central concept.

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Part IV · Developing the Córdoba Gospel Hub — Shows the model already at work in Córdoba: the city's strategic significance; the founding and growth of Iglesia Crecer, Seminario Carey, the ABRA association, the church-planting network, and university ministry, which serves as the front door of the pipeline opening onto the three expanding horizons of Part VII. Contribution: demonstrates that the hub is functioning, not theoretical.

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Part V · A Paradigm Shift in Missions Financing — Argues for reorienting funding from operational support (OPEX) to capital investment (CAPEX), illustrated by the revolving Crecer Fund and the LeTourneau precedent. Contribution: provides the financial logic that makes the proposals strategic rather than charitable.

PAGE 75
Part VI · Strategic Direction — Outlines the Hub's strategic architecture: Iglesia Crecer's three-level structure, its facilities strategy, the Crecer Family of Churches, the Crecer Fund, the partnership model, the role of ABRA, and the leadership and continuity that sustain the work. Contribution: shows how the pieces are organized to deliver the mission. (The concrete five-year program of fundable projects is detailed in the companion Strategic Implementation Plan.)

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Part VII · Expanding Horizons — Brings the project's three forward horizons together into a widening movement: the Salta and Northwest Initiative, the Buenos Aires Global City Project, replication in further provincial capitals, and Argentina and ABRA sending missionaries to the nations. Contribution: the culmination toward which the five-year plan builds—from the ends of the earth to the ends of the earth.

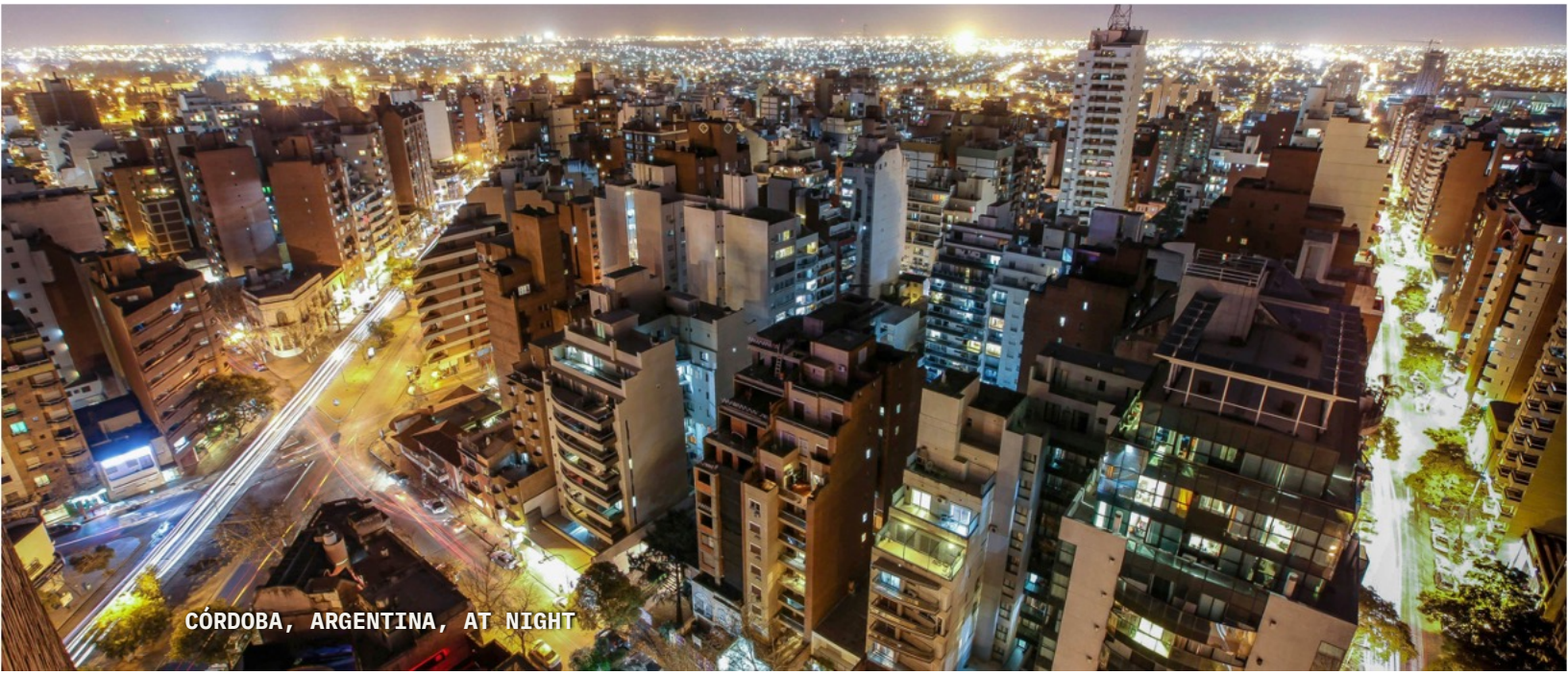
PAGE 101
Conclusion — From Receiving Fields to Sending Centers — Recaps the movement from receiving mission to sending it and calls for partnership-based capital investment in maturing Global-South centers. Contribution: returns to the Serampore vision and frames the decision for the reader.

Companion Document — Strategic Implementation Plan — Translates this strategy into a concrete, fundable five-year program: the line-item proposals (Categories A–F), the development team, and the consolidated budget and timetable.

INTRODUCTION

A Strategic Opportunity in Córdoba, Argentina

William Carey was driven by a historic vision. Though he came from a small village in the English Midlands, far from centers of power and influence, his evangelical Calvinism taught him to expect great things from God and to attempt great things for Him. In 1793, shortly after arriving in India, Carey wrote to the Baptist Missionary Society urging them to expand their efforts: "Africa is but a little way from England, Madagascar but a little farther. South America, and all the numerous and large islands in the India and China seas, I hope will not be passed over."



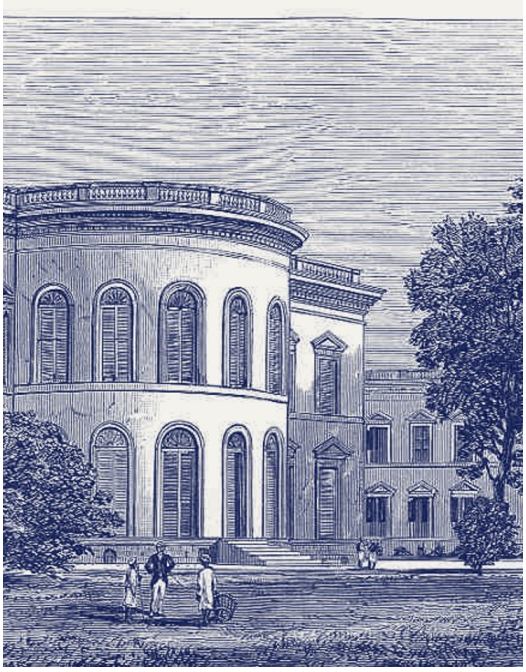
CÓRDOBA, ARGENTINA, AT NIGHT

Carey had only recently completed the long voyage to India, yet under the weight of his missionary vision, the world's vast distances seemed to shrink, and the opportunities for the gospel appeared larger than ever. He continued with words that still serve as a fitting prayer for the work of missions today: "A large field opens on every side. Oh, that many labourers may be thrust out into the vineyard of our Lord Jesus Christ, and that the Gentiles may come to the knowledge of the truth as it is in him."

More than two centuries later, that same vision continues to shape gospel work around the world. In recent decades, a providential opportunity has emerged in Córdoba,

Argentina, where a network of ministries has gradually developed and now serves as a strategic center for church planting, leadership development, and missionary mobilization.

This document outlines the theological convictions, historical development, and strategic vision behind what may be called the Córdoba Gospel Hub—a ministry ecosystem designed to advance the gospel in Argentina, throughout Latin America, and ultimately to the nations.



SERAMPORE COLLEGE

A gospel hub is not merely a single church or institution. Inspired by William Carey's Serampore Mission, it seeks to bring together several complementary ministries within a common strategic framework: local church evangelism, church planting, theological training, national church association, and missionary mobilization. When these elements work together, they create a sustainable structure capable of producing long-term gospel expansion.

In Córdoba, what began as a pioneering missionary effort has evolved into a growing network of churches, training institutions, and cooperative ministries.

This paper argues that the ministries developing in Córdoba already function as an emerging Gospel Hub and now require intentional strengthening to serve the next phase of global mission from Latin America.

PART I

The Changing Landscape of Global Missions

In brief: The era of missions has shifted from "the West to the rest" to "everywhere to everywhere." Latin America has become a major missionary-sending force—yet it is held back from sustained global effectiveness by four structural obstacles: church facilities, theological education, national associations, and sending structures.



A MARKETPLACE IN THE MUSLIM WORLD

A New Missionary Era

We live in a new missionary era. The modern missionary movement began in 1793, when William Carey became the first Baptist missionary to India, launching the greatest period of missionary expansion in history. Throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, the gospel spread to the four corners of the earth.

For much of the modern missionary era, the dominant pattern was "the West to the rest." Today, however, the emerging pattern is better described as "everywhere to everywhere."

To understand the significance of this transition, it is helpful to consider three perspectives: history, culture, and geopolitics. More importantly, this transition presents a strategic opportunity that should not be overlooked. If the growing missionary capacity of regions such as Latin America is intentionally cultivated, it can become a powerful multiplier for global missions. Thoughtful investment at this stage can

strengthen not only regional initiatives but also the broader worldwide advance of the gospel.

Historical Perspective

A brief survey of the history of world mission highlights several major phases. The gospel first spread outward from Jerusalem in all directions before gradually consolidating around the Mediterranean basin. The rise of Islam later reduced Christendom largely to a European footprint, followed by the expansion of Reformation churches in Northern Europe.

The nineteenth century saw a dramatic reversal of these trends. Evangelical missionary efforts spread to every corner of the globe during what has often been called the "Great Century" of missions. Although earlier efforts from Calvin's Geneva, the Moravians, and the New England Puritans anticipated this development, the modern missionary movement was decisively launched when the Northamptonshire Baptists sent William Carey to India.

During this period, missionary initiative shifted first from continental Europe to the British Isles and eventually to North America. The twentieth century therefore became the high point of North American missionary leadership.

Today, the success of those earlier efforts has ushered in a new phase in which missionary initiative increasingly arises from churches across the global South. Latin America, Africa, and parts of Asia are now sending missionaries to other regions of the world. The center of missionary activity no longer lies in a single place; it is spreading outward through a widening fellowship of sending churches as the gospel advances from everywhere to everywhere.

Cultural Perspective

William Carey recognized early that India could never be reached by an exclusively European missionary force. Indian pastors and evangelists were essential because they possessed cultural understanding that foreign missionaries lacked. A similar dynamic persists in cross-cultural missions today.

Latin Americans often share cultural affinities with societies that differ significantly from those of North America or Europe. In part, this reflects the historical formation of

Hispanic culture. Spain's long interaction with the Islamic world left enduring marks on its social patterns, vocabulary, and modes of relationship—marks that, in turn, shaped Latin American societies. As a result, Latin Americans often find points of contact in regions where Western Europeans or North Americans may seem culturally distant.

An important feature of Latin culture is its relational orientation. Hispanic societies tend to emphasize personal relationships, hospitality, and strong family structures. These relational dynamics often enable Latin American missionaries to build trust quickly in cultures where community identity and interpersonal connections shape social life. Many societies in Africa, the Middle East, and parts of Asia share similar relational patterns, including extended family networks, respect for elders, and communal responsibility. These similarities often make cultural adaptation more natural for Latin American missionaries than for those formed in more individualistic Western contexts.

Cultural proximity provides natural bridges for the advance of the gospel — from everywhere to everywhere.

Observers have also noted that Latin Americans sometimes find unexpected points of connection within Muslim societies. Shared emphasis on hospitality, family cohesion, and socially expressive interaction can create opportunities for meaningful engagement. Even something as simple as a shared passion for fútbol can open doors to a sense of identity and trust.

Cultural proximity provides natural bridges for the advance of the gospel — from everywhere to everywhere.

The global presence of Spanish-speaking populations further strengthens these connections. Large Hispanic diaspora communities are now found throughout Europe, North America, and parts of the Middle East, often serving as natural bridges for missionary outreach and church planting.

Linguistic and Team Advantages

Spanish is one of the most widely spoken languages in the world, and Portuguese extends its reach through Brazil and parts of Africa. This linguistic presence enables

Latin American missionaries to work effectively across large regions of the Global South.

In addition, many Latin American missionaries speak English as a second language, enabling them to participate in multinational missionary teams. These teams are increasingly common in contemporary missions, combining the institutional resources of Western churches with the cultural adaptability of missionaries from Latin America and other regions of the Global South.

For these reasons, cultural proximity—sometimes subtle, sometimes immediately visible—can be a strategic advantage. When it is intentionally recognized and developed, it provides natural bridges for the advance of the gospel and strengthens the emerging global partnership of churches that send missionaries from everywhere to everywhere.

FROM THE FIELD

Older missionaries often retell the same stories. Here is one of mine.



Some years ago, I visited Latin American missionaries serving in a country within the 10/40 window. One of them invited me to observe a soccer ministry he had developed. Early one morning, we met in a large city park, where a group of boys was already running drills in the cool air. My friend was working with the younger group, and he said to them, "I want you to meet my friend from Argentina." The boys were wearing maroon soccer jerseys. At the mention of Argentina, about half of them immediately raised their jerseys to reveal the blue-and-white stripes of Argentina's national team. Then they began the familiar chant: "Argentina, Argentina!"

A moment later, another group raised their jerseys to show Brazil's bright yellow, and the park filled with a lively reenactment of South America's greatest soccer rivalry. I am quite sure my friend had arranged this for my benefit. Even so, the boys' reaction was genuine and unmistakable, revealing how deeply they loved these South American teams.

What struck me most in that moment was how strongly these young people, living on the other side of the world, identified with Latin American culture.

— Sam Masters

Geopolitical Perspective

During the nineteenth century, missionary expansion was sometimes intertwined with European colonial structures, though the relationship between the two was often complex and even hostile.

In the twenty-first century, global political realities create diverse challenges. In certain contexts, it is advantageous for missionary work to be clearly multinational rather than associated primarily with any single country. These developments highlight the value of international missionary teams in which believers from many nations cooperate in gospel ministry.

These developments raise an important question about the future of world missions. If missionary initiative is becoming increasingly decentralized, which regions of the world are best positioned to contribute to the next phase of the global missionary movement? In recent decades, Latin America has emerged as a leading answer to that question.

The Emergence of Latin America as a Missionary Force

For much of the modern missionary movement, missionary sending was dominated by Europe and North America. However, in the late twentieth century, the center of global Christianity shifted decisively toward the Global South. Today, the majority of the world's Christians live in Africa, Asia, and Latin America rather than in Europe or North America.

Within this broader transformation, Latin America has emerged as a significant missionary-sending region. In 1987, the first Congress on Ibero-American Missions (COMIBAM) estimated that about 1,300 Latin American missionaries were serving cross-culturally. Over the following decades, that number grew dramatically. Recent COMIBAM research now estimates more than 30,000 Latin American missionaries serving in over 200 countries and territories.



Latin American missionaries serving cross-culturally, per COMIBAM research.

Brazil alone accounts for a substantial share of this missionary force. Some estimates suggest that about 17,000 Brazilian missionaries are currently serving worldwide, making Brazil one of the largest missionary-sending nations outside North America. These developments mark a remarkable shift. Regions that once received missionaries from Europe and North America are now active participants in the global missionary movement.

Current Limitations—and Four Strategic Obstacles

Despite these strengths, the Latin American missionary movement also faces several significant challenges. One of the most pressing limitations is the limited availability of advanced theological training. Although theological education has begun to expand across Latin America, many missionaries still depart for the field with less formal theological preparation than missionaries from North American or European institutions.

A second challenge concerns missionary sending structures. In North America and Europe, missions have historically been supported by well-developed institutional systems, including mission boards, administrative infrastructure, and stable financial networks. In many Latin American contexts, these structures are still developing. Another important factor is theological representation. Although Latin America sends a growing number of missionaries, relatively few come from confessional Reformed or Baptist churches, particularly in the Spanish-speaking world.

While significant progress has been made, large parts of Latin America still need to be reached with the gospel. Increasingly, the greatest need is not only for new missionaries but also for leaders who are fluent in Spanish and well-trained in theology to strengthen the church's doctrinal and institutional foundations.

Taken together, these challenges boil down to four major structural obstacles that hinder Reformed Baptist churches in Latin America from achieving sustained, global effectiveness. Contrary to what might be assumed, the primary issue is not a lack of missionaries. While there are still important roles for workers from the north, Latin American believers are increasingly capable of advancing the work within their own context. The more pressing needs lie elsewhere.

1 **Church Facilities for Long-Term Growth**

Many churches face significant barriers to securing adequate facilities. Without stable, suitable spaces for worship, training, and community life, sustaining long-term growth or developing mature, sending congregations is difficult.

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2 **Quality Theological Education**

There remains a critical need for high-quality theological education, grounded in a confessional understanding of the Bible and attuned to the Latin American context. Strengthening and expanding these institutions is essential to forming pastors and leaders equipped for both local ministry and global engagement.

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3 **National Church Associations**

The development of robust, indigenous church associations is vital. These associations can support pastors through ongoing education and fellowship and provide structures for church revitalization, church planting, and coordinated mission efforts.

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4 **Mission-Sending Structures**

There is a clear need for mission agencies capable of establishing a reliable pipeline to send Latin American missionaries beyond their region. Such structures would facilitate training, deployment, and long-term support for cross-cultural missions.

The development of the Córdoba Gospel Hub aims to address this need by serving as a strategic center for theological training, church planting, and missionary mobilization in the Spanish-speaking world. The following sections examine the missiological framework underpinning this vision and lay the groundwork for specific proposals to overcome these four obstacles.

The next section transitions from a global survey to a theological and missiological framework. Before addressing the specific Latin American opportunity described above, the theological convictions that undergird all missionary work must be established. The following section sets out those convictions, which, in turn, give rise to the missiological commitments and strategic structures developed in Parts III through VI.

PART II

The Missiological Framework

In brief: Sound strategy flows from sound theology. Part II sets out the convictions and missiological commitments —above all the gospel's translatability into every culture—from which the entire Córdoba Gospel Hub strategy is derived. Because this Part is necessarily fuller than the others, readers chiefly interested in the plan itself should feel free to move ahead to the next Part and return to scan this section at their leisure; the theology here grounds the strategy but is not a prerequisite for following it.



AN INDIAN VILLAGE IN THE TIME OF WILLIAM CAREY

The Logic of Missions

The development of missionary work typically follows a recognizable sequence: theology gives rise to missiology, which in turn gives rise to strategy.

This pattern is already evident in the emergence of the modern missionary movement. William Carey did not begin with methods but with theological conviction—especially the continuing obligation of the Great Commission and the confidence that God accomplishes his purposes through the appointed means of his people. From these commitments, he developed a coherent understanding of the task of missions and, from that missiological framework, proposed practical structures to sustain long-term missionary expansion. The Córdoba Gospel Hub should be understood within the same logic. It is not primarily an organizational innovation but a strategic expression of

theological and missiological commitments that shape the nature and goals of missionary work.



I. Theological Assumptions

This section identifies several theological convictions that shape the nature, message, and goal of missions. These convictions set the boundaries within which missionary practice must operate. It is not intended to be exhaustive—for a fuller treatment of missiological issues, see the Southgate Fellowship Affirmations and Denials Concerning World Mission. The present section focuses on those issues that bear most directly on the Córdoba Gospel Hub project.

What Is Missions?

Missions is the church's obedience to the Great Commission of Jesus Christ. At its center is the proclamation of the gospel to those who do not yet believe and the formation of churches through which that gospel continues to be proclaimed.

The Great Commission has global dimensions. As Acts 1:8 shows, the expansion of the gospel follows a pattern of outward movement from Jerusalem to Judea, Samaria, and ultimately to the ends of the earth. Missions, therefore, involve deliberately crossing geographic, cultural, and linguistic boundaries to establish the church where it is not yet firmly rooted.

This vision of the worldwide spread of the gospel shaped the thinking of William Carey and the early leaders of the modern Protestant missionary movement. The ordinary fruit of this work is the gathering of believers into visible congregations, where they are baptized and taught to observe all that Christ commanded. Ultimately, the church's growth depends on the power of the Holy Spirit, who alone brings conviction of sin, new birth, and spiritual life.

The Priority of the Cross

The central message of missions is Christ crucified and risen. Missionary proclamation must remain anchored in the doctrine of substitutionary atonement—the biblical teaching that Christ died in the place of sinners, bearing the judgment they deserved, and that forgiveness of sins and reconciliation with God are granted through faith in him. Missions exist to proclaim the saving work of Christ among all nations so that men and women may come to repentance and faith.

Evangelism and the Call to Conversion

If the cross is the content of the missionary message, evangelism is its proclamation: the announcement that Jesus Christ, crucified and risen, saves all who repent and believe. It is more than the communication of religious information; it is a personal appeal to the whole person, calling men and women to repent, believe, and follow Christ, grounded in the confidence that God uses the preached Word to bring the spiritually dead to life.

Christ is not merely one answer among many; he is the answer for which human beings were created.

Because conversion is the work of the Holy Spirit rather than the result of human persuasion, evangelism must be carried out with prayerful dependence and patient perseverance. Yet dependence on the Spirit does not lessen the missionary's responsibility to proclaim the gospel; it affirms it. The God who ordains the end—the salvation of his people—also ordains the means by which they are reached. Faithful evangelism is therefore marked by both urgency and patience: urgency because men and women are perishing, and patience because the harvest belongs to God.

Within a gospel hub, evangelism is the first stage of the ministry pipeline and the foundation for every other ministry. Church formation, discipleship, and missionary sending all presuppose people who have first heard and believed the gospel. For this reason, a gospel hub must never allow institutional maturity to displace the steady work of proclaiming Christ to the lost—in the university, the plaza, and the home. Organizational structures exist to facilitate proclamation, never to replace it.

Because every human being bears the image of God, the gospel addresses needs already woven into the human heart. Drawing on insights from missiologists such as J. H. Bavinck, Iglesia Crecer recognizes that people everywhere wrestle with questions of meaning, guilt, belonging, purpose, hope, and destiny—longings that cannot ultimately be suppressed. The gospel speaks directly to these realities, not because it has been skillfully adapted to them, but because the God who created humanity has provided, in Christ, the one remedy for humanity's deepest need. Christ is not merely one answer among many; he is the answer for which human beings were created. Cultural understanding, apologetics, and worldview analysis play an important but subordinate role: they remove obstacles to the message without ever becoming a substitute for it.

Ordinary believers, not professional evangelists, are the primary agents of this work. Every Christian has a network of relationships—family, friends, classmates, coworkers, and neighbors—that no pastor or program can replicate. A transformed life remains one of the most persuasive testimonies to the truth of Christ. Therefore, the church's task is to equip its members to carry the gospel naturally into those relationships, trusting the Spirit to apply it to the heart. Accordingly, our approach is to encourage believers to share the message through their own relationships while the church provides contextualized tools, training, and support, trusting God to bring the results.

The Church and the Great Commission

The Great Commission is first and foremost Christ-centered. Missions flows from the saving work of Christ, who, by his death and resurrection, redeems a people for himself from every tribe, language, people, and nation. Because Christ's redemptive purpose is to gather and perfect his people, missionary labor necessarily aims to establish and strengthen local churches. Churches send missionaries, and missionaries labor to make disciples, baptize them, and gather them into faithful congregations. In this sense, the local church stands at both the beginning and the intended outcome of missionary work. Strengthening churches is therefore not an alternative to missions but the primary means by which Christ advances his kingdom among the nations.

The Use of Means

William Carey summarized the church's missionary responsibility in his 1792 sermon on Isaiah 54:2–3 with the well-known appeal: "Expect great things from God; attempt great things for God." Carey argued that believers should make diligent use of the means God

provides to spread the gospel—education, translation, printing, financial resources, and especially auxiliary organizational structures. At the same time, he insisted that these means are powerless apart from God's work. Effort must therefore be accompanied by sustained prayer. The use of means rests on confidence in God's providence, who ordinarily accomplishes his purposes through the faithful actions of his people. These include training institutions, publishing efforts, associational cooperation, and financial mechanisms capable of sustaining long-term missionary expansion.

II. Missiological Commitments

If the prior section establishes what missions is theologically, this section defines what missionaries are commissioned to do in practice. It translates theological convictions into concrete missionary aims and responsibilities. The principles that follow are not parallel items on a checklist. They are best understood as a single line of thought: the gospel is, by its nature, translatable into every culture, and that conviction shapes every other commitment that follows. For this reason, the section opens with a treatment of contextualization, from which the remaining principles emerge as concrete applications. The contextualization section is presented in greater length than those that follow; the others are summarized here and may be expanded in subsequent iterations of the document.

The Gospel in Cultural Context

Missionaries must communicate the unchanging gospel within the cultural frameworks of the societies they serve. This requires careful contextualization grounded in biblical theology and in humility about the limits of one's cultural perspective. Yet contextualization is not merely a practical concession to the circumstances of mission. As this section argues, it flows directly from the theological convictions at the heart of the Christian faith—especially the logic of the incarnation.

Three related ideas undergird a sound theology of contextualization. First, Christianity is, by its very nature, a translatable faith. Second, the work of William Carey and the Serampore missionaries offers a tested, biblical model for engaging culture without surrendering to it or imposing foreign forms. Third, the Serampore Form of Agreement (SFA) reveals that the deepest motivation for cultural adaptation is not missiological strategy but love—love for God and for souls. Such love cultivates the Christ-like character essential to faithful missionary service. Together, these principles point to a

particular vision of the local church: one with an unchanging doctrinal core and a warm, culturally accessible welcome.

1. The Gospel and Cultural Translatability

The missionary scholar Andrew Walls observed that Christianity is unique among the world's major religions for its relationship to language and culture. From its earliest days, the gospel moved across linguistic boundaries not reluctantly but by design.

Jesus likely taught primarily in Aramaic. The New Testament was written in Greek. The Old Testament had already been translated into Greek centuries earlier in the Septuagint. Within a generation of Pentecost, the gospel was proclaimed and recorded in Latin, Syriac, Coptic, and other languages. This pattern was not accidental. For Walls, it reflected something essential about the gospel itself.

In some religious traditions, the sacred language is fixed. Arabic holds a special status in Islam; Sanskrit in classical Hindu thought. Translation is, at best, a concession and, at worst, a corruption. In Christianity, no language holds permanent sacred status. Translation is not a departure from the faith—it is, as Walls argued, built into the very structure of revelation.

This conviction has its deepest roots in the incarnation. Just as the eternal Word of God took on a particular historical and cultural form in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, the written Word can take on genuine cultural form in every language and society. Translation, therefore, is not merely a practical missionary tool. It is an extension of the gospel's incarnational logic.

The gospel does not merely visit a culture as a foreign guest — it settles there and calls the culture to transformation.

The gospel does not merely visit a culture as a foreign guest — it settles there and calls the culture to transformation.

Walls developed this insight in connection with two complementary principles he traced throughout the history of Christian mission. The first is the indigenizing principle: the gospel takes genuine root in every culture it enters, becoming truly at home. The second is the pilgrim principle: the gospel also speaks from within that culture to

challenge it, calling it toward the kingdom of God. Together, these two principles describe the dynamic that healthy contextualization should always produce. The gospel does not merely visit a culture as a foreign guest. It settles there, speaks the language, inhabits the forms—and then, from within, calls the culture to transformation.

2. Redeeming the Culture: The Serampore Model

Christians have long debated how the church should relate to culture; H. Richard Niebuhr's Christ and Culture famously sorted the debate into five paradigms, from "Christ against culture" to cultural transformation. But a more practical lens comes from the nineteenth-century missionary movement itself.

The historian A. H. Oussoren offers a different perspective. Rather than constructing a theological typology of church-culture relations, Oussoren examines the practical attitudes toward culture that emerged within the nineteenth-century missionary movement. He identifies three basic missionary postures, each of which shaped how missionaries engaged the peoples and societies they sought to reach. Examining these approaches provides a useful context for understanding the distinctive contribution of William Carey and the Serampore missionaries, whose method reflected a coherent theological vision expressed in the actual practice of mission.

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1 **The Moravians**

The first, represented by the Moravian leader Count Zinzendorf, was one of cultural leveling. For Zinzendorf, conversion meant conformity: "A Hottentot must lead exactly the same life as an Englishman or German." In this view, culture is essentially corrupt and must be replaced by the cultural forms of the missionary's home. The result of such an approach is not the gospel taking root in new soil but a foreign transplant that can never truly belong.

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2 **The Catholic Church**

The second posture, as illustrated by certain Catholic missions, erred in the opposite direction. In his Enquiry, Carey observed that some missions had preserved local cultural forms at the expense of Christian truth—allowing converts, for example, to honor Confucius alongside Christ—until the very gospel was obscured beyond recognition. The attempt to avoid cultural offense had produced theological compromise.

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3 **Serampore**

Carey and his colleagues at Serampore charted a different course. Their goal was neither to impose European culture nor to baptize existing cultural practices wholesale. Instead, they sought to "lead native culture to the cross"—to bring all elements of Indian culture into encounter with Scripture and to evaluate each against biblical principle. Some elements would need to be abandoned. Others could be retained and even enriched within a Christian framework. The result would be neither purely European nor unreflectively Indian: a new culture, uniquely Bengali and genuinely Christian.

The practical application of this principle required both theological discernment and pastoral patience. The Serampore missionaries did not require new converts to abandon their Hindu names, and they allowed Brahmin converts to keep wearing the poita—the sacred thread of the twice-born castes—while working through its meaning in light of their new faith. Though controversial, their patience was vindicated: after nearly three years, two Brahmin converts voluntarily laid aside their threads. As the missionary Ward reflected, "How much better is love and illumination than force!" [3]

It is neither syncretism nor cultural imperialism. It is a faithful, patient, love-driven mission.

The Serampore model holds in productive tension both the unchanging truth of the gospel and genuine respect for the culture in which the gospel must take root. It is neither syncretism nor cultural imperialism. It is a faithful, patient, love-driven mission.

3. The Serampore Foundation: Love and Character

The Serampore Form of Agreement, drafted in 1805 as a covenant among the Serampore missionaries, reveals the spiritual foundations of their approach to culture. Two themes illuminate the why and how of cultural adaptation.

Love for Souls: In the introduction to the SFA, the missionaries describe the spiritual disposition that must underlie all missionary work:

> *"It is absolutely necessary that we set an infinite value upon immortal souls; that we often endeavour to affect our minds with the dreadful loss sustained by an unconverted soul launched into eternity… Oh! may our hearts bleed over these poor idolaters, and may their case lie with continued weight on our minds."*
>
> *— THE SERAMPORE FORM OF AGREEMENT, 1805*

This is the root of all genuine contextualization. The missionary adapts to the culture not as a matter of missiological technique but because he loves the people he seeks to reach. He wants them to hear and understand the gospel. He is willing to become uncomfortable, set aside his preferences, and learn a new language and inhabit an unfamiliar world—because he has set an infinite value on their souls. Cultural flexibility, rightly understood, is an expression of love.

Character—Christ-like Humility: The Agreement is equally clear about what this love requires in practice. The same document that calls missionaries to bleed for lost souls also describes the kind of person a missionary must become: "A competent knowledge of the languages current where a missionary lives, a mild and winning temper, and a heart given up to God in closest religion—these, these are the attainments which, more than all knowledge or all other gifts, will fit us to become the instruments of God in the great work of Human Redemption."

In practical terms, this means setting aside the cultural pride that tempts a missionary into demanding that others conform to him. "We ought to be easy of access, to condescend to them as much as possible, and on all occasions to treat them as our equals."

The Serampore missionaries pointed to Paul's example: his readiness to become "all things to all men"—a Greek to the Greeks, a Jew to the Jews—was not compromise but compassion. They drew the conclusion directly: "He who is too proud to stoop to others, in order to draw them to him… is ill qualified to become a Missionary."

This is demanding language. It calls not for cultural technique but for personal transformation—for the kind of Christ-like character that can genuinely embrace a different culture, not merely adapting to it from the outside, but learning to love its people from within.

4. Doctrinal Core, Cultural Welcome: The Church in Context

These three streams—the translatability of the gospel, the Serampore model of cultural engagement, and the foundation of love and character—converge on a single vision for what an effective local church in Córdoba should be.

Truth and Love Together: At its center is an immovable doctrinal core. The gospel itself is not negotiable. The great truths of the Reformed confessions—justification by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone—are not cultural preferences to be adjusted to local tastes. They are the very substance of what we have been entrusted to proclaim. Truth and love do not stand in opposition here: precisely because we love the people of Córdoba, we refuse to offer them a diluted or distorted gospel. We want them to know the true Christ. Love without truth is not love at all.

At the same time, the Serampore model—and the logic of the incarnation itself—calls the church to hold this doctrinal core within a genuine cultural embrace. Much can and should adapt: the language we use in worship, the musical idioms we draw on, the physical spaces we inhabit, and the rhythms of communal life. These are not compromises of the gospel; they are expressions of love for the people we seek to reach.

Practical Applications: Consider a few concrete examples. We hold firm to Reformed doctrine—but it would be poor missional wisdom to put the five solas or the five points of Calvinism on the church sign. These are truths we teach with joy in discipleship. But the first encounter a visitor has with the church should communicate something else: warmth, welcome, and belonging.

The doctrinal core is what the church is. The cultural membrane is how it is known.

Or consider the question of maté. In the southern cone of South America, sharing maté is not merely a habit—it is a form of communal belonging. To prohibit it at the church gathering would, at best, be a failure of cultural imagination; at worst, it would suggest a slightly gnostic suspicion of ordinary creaturely life. The God who made all things good—the Father of lights from whom every good and perfect gift descends—surely has no objection to yerba and warm water shared among his people. If Jesus shared meals with his disciples as a context for teaching and fellowship, it is not difficult to imagine him

sharing maté. Allowing it communicates something true: this place is yours; you belong here; the gospel has come home to Argentina.

Or consider the current property of the Iglesia Crecer—an old Italian house, remodeled yet retaining its domestic character. When people walk through the door, they feel as if they have come to someone's home, perhaps a grandmother's. That feeling is neither accidental nor trivial. It is the architectural embodiment of a theological conviction: the gospel makes people belong.

✷ FIG. — THE CHURCH IN CONTEXT



A fixed doctrinal core held within a permeable cultural membrane — confessionally anchored, culturally accessible.

A Fixed Nucleus and a Permeable Membrane: This vision of the church—doctrinally firm, culturally welcoming—can be pictured as a living cell.

At its center is the nucleus, the genetic code that defines the organism and cannot be lost without its ceasing to be itself; around it lies not a wall but a selectively permeable membrane that allows the cell to exchange with its environment and remain alive and responsive. The church we seek to build has the same structure: its nucleus—Christ crucified and risen, the authority of Scripture, the means of grace, and the Reformed confessional heritage—is fixed and non-negotiable, while its membrane—the language of worship, the rhythms of community, the warmth of the gathering space, and the customs of belonging—is alive, responsive, and designed to welcome people in.

The doctrinal core is what the church is; the cultural membrane is how it is known. A church with no nucleus loses its identity and is absorbed into the surrounding culture; a church with no membrane may keep the truth but struggle to make it understood. What we seek is a church both confessionally grounded and culturally accessible—its foundations immovable, its doors open.

The Missionary and the Missionary Task

Definition of a Missionary

The Great Commission was given to the apostles and, through them, to the church. A missionary is a person commissioned by a local church to carry out the Great Commission in a specific field. The missionary serves under the sending church's authority and crosses geographic, cultural, and often linguistic barriers to proclaim the gospel, gather converts, and help establish churches.

Not every Christian who shares the gospel is a missionary, though every church member shares responsibility for the Great Commission as part of the local church's life and mission. More specifically, a missionary is one recognized, commissioned, and sent by a church for sustained gospel ministry in a defined field of service beyond the ordinary life setting of the sending church.

Deep Missions

Missionary work must extend beyond initial evangelism and conversion. In some fields with a long missionary presence, Christianity has at times become “a mile wide and an

inch deep." Missionaries are called to teach "all things whatsoever I have commanded." Therefore, deep missions involve planting churches, nurturing them toward maturity, and forming believers through sustained discipleship and theological instruction.

Simple church planting is insufficient. The aim is to develop congregations that are theologically grounded, ecclesiologically ordered, and capable not only of sustaining their own life but also of faithfully transmitting the Christian faith to future generations.

Deep missions, therefore, address not only the origins of church life but also its long-term theological and institutional maturity. This task includes transmitting the full theological inheritance—the Augustinian and Reformed heritage of historic Protestant Christianity. That inheritance does not belong uniquely to the churches of Europe and North America but is the birthright of Protestant Christians in every nation.

This claim serves two purposes. First, it critiques the often-superficial theological formation given to converts and leaders on the mission field. In many cases, well-intentioned missionary efforts have limited leadership development by settling for a shallow training model.

Second, it rejects the idea that the Augustinian and Reformed heritage belongs exclusively to Europeans. Restricting access to that tradition on cultural grounds rests on a questionable assumption. While theologians in the global South will undoubtedly contribute distinctive and valuable perspectives, theology must be done not only in conversation with present cultural contexts but also in continuity with the church's historic theological reflection.

The concept of deep missions should not be confused with holistic missions. The focus of deep missions is primarily ecclesial and gospel-centered, not social. A missionary may establish a platform that provides tangible social benefits to gain access to a field or a particular social group. Such efforts may be appropriate, but they do not define the central task. Deep missions will ordinarily produce real social benefits over time, but these are better understood as byproducts of sustained gospel ministry rather than its primary objective.

Deep missions and the strategic expansion outlined in this document are complementary, not competing priorities. Deep missions consist of evangelism,

discipleship, leadership development, and pastoral formation—work that would continue even without permanent facilities. The investments proposed here provide the tools, structures, and infrastructure needed to make that ministry more durable, scalable, and reproducible across generations. Lasting growth is only possible when rooted in deep missions.

Deep missions focus on the vine; the investments proposed here concern the trellis that supports its growth.

This distinction may be clarified by the categories developed in The Trellis and the Vine. That work distinguishes between the vine—the living work of ministry itself—and the trellis, the organizational structures, facilities, and support systems that enable the vine to flourish. Deep missions focus on the vine. The investments proposed in this whitepaper concern the trellis that supports the vine's long-term growth.

This distinction closely aligns with William Carey's principle of the use of means. The spiritual vitality of the mission remains primary, but prudent investment in appropriate means strengthens the church's capacity to sustain and extend that ministry over time.

Local Knowledge, Endurance, and the Long View of Missions

The mature churches envisioned by deep missions do not arise from brief engagements. They emerge through sustained evangelism, discipleship, leadership formation, and theological instruction. Developing capable leaders, cultivating theological depth within congregations, and transmitting the faith across generations all take time. Consequently, deep missions requires more than sound theology and effective structures. It also depends on local knowledge and the endurance needed for sustained presence.

Missiology from orbit — able to map broad contours but never the byways locals have always known.

Local Knowledge

There is a distinction between theoretical missiology and local knowledge. One form is acquired through study—reading ethnographies, analyzing cultural patterns, examining demographic data, synthesizing reports from prior missionaries, and attending

conferences where missiological frameworks are debated and refined. This knowledge is valuable and should not be dismissed. But it remains, in an important sense, knowledge acquired from a distance. It might be described as missiology from orbit—or Google Earth missiology: a view of the terrain that can identify large features, map broad contours, and locate general boundaries, but cannot navigate the byways locals have always known.

Missiology from orbit — able to map broad contours but never the byways locals have always known.

Local knowledge is of a different order. It comes from sustained presence—from years of conversation, relationships, failures, observation, and patient experience. It understands not only a society's formal structures but also the informal dynamics that govern its life. It recognizes what is said and what is left unsaid, and why. This kind of knowledge cannot be acquired at a distance, nor can it be accelerated. It is valuable and irreplaceable because it takes time.

Time Required

Language acquisition is just one part of achieving cultural fluency, but it offers a useful illustration. Research from second-language acquisition studies and the U.S. Foreign Service Institute—which has trained diplomats for decades and tracked the hours required to reach professional working proficiency—indicates that for English speakers, conversational independence in a new language typically requires six to eighteen months of immersion; professional working fluency, two to four years; and deep idiomatic command—including the ability to understand humor, register, irony, and cultural nuance—only after five or more years of sustained daily engagement. Near-native mastery, if achieved at all, often requires seven to fifteen years.

The distance between languages matters considerably: a missionary moving from English to Spanish navigates a shorter path than one moving to Russian, and one moving to Arabic or Mandarin faces an even longer path. This evidence illustrates not merely a logistical challenge but a broader principle: genuine fluency that enables a missionary to preach, counsel, disciple, and think in another language with precision and cultural sensitivity is the product of years, not months. This linguistic challenge is only the beginning.

The significance of these timelines becomes even clearer when set against the reality of contemporary missions: by some accounts, the average missionary tenure in the field is about seven years. Missionaries often reach genuine effectiveness—in language, cultural intuition, and relational depth—precisely when many leave. The investment in formation and deployment, which takes years to mature, is often lost just as it begins to bear fruit. This is not an argument against new missionaries; it is an argument for structures, support, and institutional cultures that make long tenures possible.

Character and Endurance


A CONGREGATION IN CACHI

The implications of this extended timeline are significant for missionary formation. A missionary who arrives on the field—even one with strong academic preparation, genuine theological depth, and real strategic capacity—must in an important sense begin again as a learner. For years, his capacity to serve will be meaningfully constrained by his still-developing competence.

This requires more of the missionary than intelligence. It requires character. The ability to learn a language, internalize a new cultural framework, and persevere through years of sustained disorientation cannot be separated from the deeper qualities of patience, humility, resilience, and genuine love for the people one has come to serve. Without these, even a gifted missionary will not remain long enough to become effective. Therefore, spiritual maturity is not a secondary consideration alongside theological formation and strategic capacity. It is a precondition for all the rest.

The Long Arc of Gospel Ministry

The temporal horizons of deep missions are measured not in quarters or strategy cycles but often in generations. This is not a call to passivity but to realism—and to the faith required for long obedience.

While we plan gospel hubs in more advanced fields, some contexts may require years of patient labor to win even a single convert. William Carey's early experience in India illustrates this point. In such settings, the need is not rapid scaling but faithful perseverance.

Gospel ministry resembles planting oaks. Growth may be slow, and its effects may not be fully visible for years, yet sustained labor can yield far-reaching results. Deep missions, therefore, require a generational vision as much as strategic planning.

Targeted and Long-Term Investment

If missionary effectiveness develops over decades rather than years, missionary investment strategies must align with the same time horizon.

The argument developed throughout this paper calls for a reorientation of missionary investment: a strategic shift from predominantly operational expenditure toward carefully targeted capital investment in established gospel work. This is not an argument against sending new missionaries. The formation pipeline must remain active because the long timelines required for linguistic competence, cultural understanding, theological maturity, and ministry effectiveness mean that investment in new workers must begin years before their contributions reach full strength. Moreover, missionaries with particular theological, linguistic, strategic, or vocational gifts will always be necessary, especially in frontier contexts.

The primary proposal, however, concerns a different approach to missionary stewardship. The issue is not whether to send new missionaries, but how the overall structure of missionary investment is organized. Strategies shaped primarily by short funding cycles tend to underinvest in the slow, cumulative work that produces durable ecclesial structures and intergenerational continuity. Such frameworks naturally privilege the visible and immediate over the enduring. By contrast, the investments proposed here are intentionally oriented toward long-term outcomes: strengthening existing gospel works, extending the influence of proven workers, and building national leadership pipelines capable of sustaining the church across generations.

Within this framework, institutional investment holds a strategic place. Churches, associations, seminaries, and training networks must ultimately develop along fully indigenous lines; nevertheless, at key moments in their development, they are among

the most fruitful recipients of missionary capital investment. Carefully placed support for facilities and institutional infrastructure can serve not only a single congregation or ministry initiative but entire networks of churches across multiple generations. Properly conceived, such investment does not create dependency but accelerates maturation, stabilizes leadership formation, and multiplies the long-term reach of faithful national ministry.

The Church, Auxiliary Institutions, and Cooperation

The commitments outlined above define the missionary's task, priorities, and methods. Yet missionary work is never carried out in isolation. The same convictions that guide the missionary must also inform the churches and institutions that support, strengthen, and sustain that work over time.

Indigenous Leadership

The long-term health of church-planting efforts depends on developing national leaders. Missionaries must therefore prioritize training pastors, teachers, and evangelists to lead churches faithfully within their own cultural contexts. The goal is not the permanent control of foreign missionaries but the flourishing of congregations shepherded by mature local pastors and teachers.

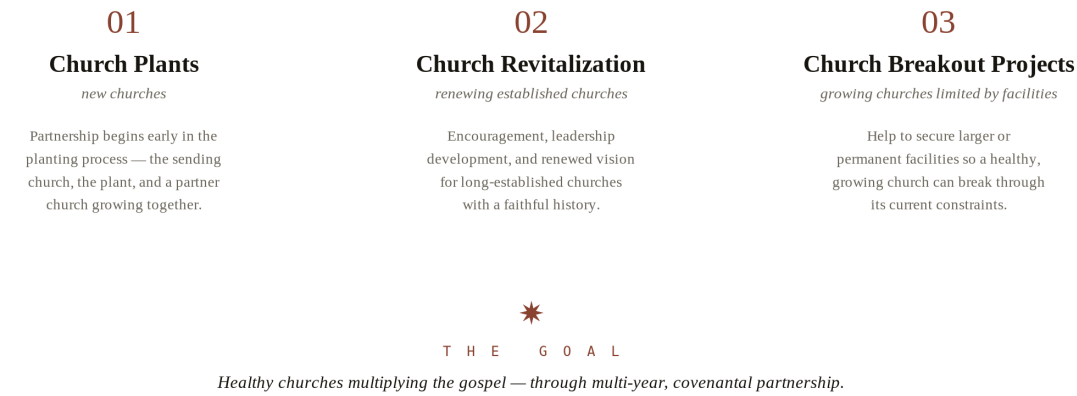
The central concern of this principle is spiritual rather than political. The aim is not to conform to a postcolonial agenda but to ensure that the national church produces gifted and faithful leaders capable of sustaining its life and mission. The example of Paul the Apostle is instructive: a Jewish missionary with significant cross-cultural capacity, he devoted his ministry to raising up Gentile leaders and continued serving the churches until his death.

Associational Cooperation

Although the local church stands at the center of missionary activity, Baptist missiology has long recognized the importance of cooperation among churches, a principle dating back to William Carey and the Northamptonshire Association. Associational structures enable congregations to pool resources and sustain long-term efforts that would be difficult for a single church to undertake alone. A key mark of mature mission work is the emergence of an indigenous association of churches that assumes responsibility for evangelism, church planting, and missions.

FIG. — THE CHURCH PARTNERSHIP MODEL

Three kinds of church that benefit from partnership



Church Partnerships

Church partnerships are a natural expression of associational cooperation. While associations provide the framework for shared identity, accountability, and coordination, partnerships enable churches to collaborate directly on specific ministry initiatives. Through these relationships, congregations pool their resources and strengths to support church planting, strengthen existing ministries, and extend missionary outreach across regions.

In practice, such partnerships often involve new church plants, the revitalization of established congregations, and strategic facility development that enables growing churches to expand their ministry capacity. These efforts advance the gospel and foster long-term cooperation that contributes to the development of durable missionary networks. The strategic significance of these partnership projects will be examined further in later sections of this paper.

Auxiliary Organizations and Institutions

Carey's commitment to the use of means extended beyond adopting technologies such as the printing press. It also encompassed the development of auxiliary institutions to sustain long-term missionary expansion. He understood that a missiology faithful to Baptist ecclesiology must recognize local churches as both the origin and the goal of

missionary work. At the same time, because Baptists lacked the hierarchical structures found in other denominations, intermediary organizations were necessary to support and coordinate that work.

The Baptist Missionary Society, Serampore College, and the printing and translation enterprises at Serampore were all expressions of this principle. These structures are not peripheral to missionary work but integral to it. They provide the institutional capacity that individual congregations, no matter how faithful, cannot generate on their own. Comparable structures remain essential to missionary effectiveness today.

The Three-Self Principle Extended

The Three-Self Movement in missions promotes church autonomy through self-governance, self-support, and self-propagation, fostering sustainable, locally led churches. This framework is a practical expression of goals already implicit in associational cooperation and indigenous leadership. This principle does not conflict with deep missions. Rather, deep missions emphasize that genuine self-sustainability is a gradual, even generational, process. Instead of imposing arbitrary timelines, deep missions ensure that the church becomes healthy and truly capable of long-term independence.

Although the Three-Self principle has historically been applied primarily to local churches, the same logic naturally extends to the institutional structures that sustain church life across generations. If churches are to become self-governing, self-supporting, and self-propagating, the associations that coordinate their work and the seminaries that train their leaders must likewise move toward that maturity. Otherwise, dependency is not eliminated but merely transferred from the congregational level to the auxiliary institutional level.

Indigenous associations are not external administrative agencies but expressions of voluntary cooperation among churches. Their long-term health depends on local leadership, initiative, and responsibility. Therefore, developing indigenous associations is an essential stage in the maturation of a missionary movement.

Theological education plays a decisive role in shaping the church's long-term character. Seminaries do not merely transmit information; they form pastors, set doctrinal

priorities, and cultivate the theological instincts of future leaders. Developing strong national seminaries is essential to the health of an indigenous missionary movement.

Much of the theological training available in Latin America today falls into two broad categories. The first comprises programs established by individual churches or missionaries. These efforts often reflect remarkable vision, sacrifice, and commitment, and many have borne significant fruit despite limited resources and institutional infrastructure. The second comprises distance-learning programs offered by North American seminaries. These programs have made valuable theological education accessible to many pastors and church leaders who might otherwise have had little opportunity for formal training, thereby substantially strengthening the church across the region.

We are grateful for the foundation these efforts have laid. At the same time, there is an opportunity to further strengthen theological education through indigenous institutions that have deep local roots, resident faculty, and the resources needed to serve the church over the long term. Like theological schools everywhere, such institutions must also learn to integrate new technologies while preserving the personal mentoring and community life essential to pastoral formation.

Cultural Proximity and Strategic Centers

Modern missiology has rightly celebrated the crossing of great cultural, linguistic, and geographic distances, and the pioneer work of this kind remains indispensable wherever the gospel has no witness at all. Yet an exclusive emphasis on cultural distance can obscure a principle of great strategic weight: the value of cultural proximity. Those who share family, language, region, or social world with the people they hope to reach possess credibility and access that outsiders, however gifted or devoted, can rarely replicate.

When Andrew first brought his brother Simon to Christ (John 1:40–42), he illustrated how the gospel ordinarily travels: along the lines of trust that already run between people. This is not the homogeneous-unit principle in another guise. To recognize that faith commonly spreads through cultural affinity is not to say that churches should be gathered around a single cultural identity; the New Testament vision of the church is emphatically multiethnic. Cultural proximity describes not how the church should be

composed, but how, in God's ordinary providence, the gospel moves from one life to the next.

Missiological frameworks that rank missionary projects by cultural distance, such as Ralph Winter's E-scale, capture real challenges in cross-cultural ministry. Effectiveness depends on identifying who is best positioned to bridge those gaps. The gospel often advances most effectively when family members reach family members, believers reach their own communities, nationals reach kindred peoples, and regional workers reach neighboring cultures. Diaspora communities can also create strategic opportunities, as hard-to-reach peoples may become more accessible after migrating from countries closed to traditional missionary activity. Those reached through diaspora ministry may, in turn, maintain family, social, economic, and digital connections with their countries of origin, creating pathways for the gospel to flow back into otherwise inaccessible societies.

The gospel typically travels the roads family and friendship have already built.

Yet pioneers remain indispensable for opening new ground where no witness yet exists. This is also why the indigenous leadership discussed in the previous section is a strategic necessity rather than merely a courtesy to the national church: local believers possess networks of proximity that no outsider can replicate. The same principle has the potential to reshape the global missiological map, as missionaries from the Global South increasingly draw on cultural, historical, linguistic, and geographic affinities that provide access and credibility often unavailable to Western workers.

Cultural proximity also explains the enduring strategic importance of cities. Large urban centers function as cultural crossroads, where economic, educational, and migratory networks intersect and where social mobility and openness to new relationships are higher than in smaller or more closed communities. Córdoba is precisely such a place. Men and women come to faith here while still maintaining family and social ties to the more inaccesible regions from which they came, so that a church planted in the city reaches not only its own neighborhood but also the wider networks radiating outward from it.

Those networks often lead to people that the maps fail to highlight. Iglesia Crecer's own ministry among families from La Rinconada—a remote and isolated rural community—did not begin with a people-group study but with the concern of a young woman whose family ties opened a door no survey had marked. The strategic urban church often discovers the overlooked population and the migrant from an isolated region who takes the gospel home.

The relationship between pioneer missions and cultural proximity is therefore complementary rather than competitive. Cross-cultural missionaries open what would otherwise remain closed; those near at hand carry the work further than any outsider could. The most fruitful movements will hold the two together—through pioneer engagement, the formation of indigenous leadership, ministry in strategic centers, and the patient use of existing cultural networks to extend the gospel into surrounding and still-unreached communities.

A final caution: the cultural proximity principle is a prudential guide, not an iron law. Old grievances, rivalries, and historical wounds can make it harder, not easier, for an insider to be heard, while a foreigner may be welcomed as a trusted outsider free of local entanglements; and migration, education, and digital life are steadily redrawing the boundaries of culture itself. The principle is best applied, then, with attention to the particular circumstances and providential openings of each field—held with conviction, yet with humility before the real complexity of human societies.

PART III

The Gospel Hub Strategy

In brief: A gospel hub is a sending church that has become the organizing center for a coordinated regional network of churches, training institutions, and missionary initiatives. Carey's Serampore mission is the clearest historical model.



THE NUEVA CÓRDOBA DISTRICT AT NIGHTFALL

Developing a Gospel Hub

Having considered the theological foundations of mission and the nature of the missionary task, we now turn to the question of sustainability. How can missionary work be carried forward across generations? The concept of a gospel hub offers one institutional answer to that question.

Churches engaged in missionary work may progress through identifiable stages of maturity:

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1 **Pioneer Church**

A newly planted congregation established by a missionary or a national church planter.

2 **Established Church**

A congregation that has reached basic maturity, is self-governing and self-supporting, and can reproduce itself through church planting.

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3 **Sending Church**

A church that intentionally commissions missionaries and church planters to new fields, often described as an Antioch church (Acts 13:1–3).

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4 **Gospel Hub**

A sending church at the center of a coordinated network of auxiliary ministries and institutions designed to multiply missionary effectiveness across a region.

These stages describe not only numerical growth but also increasing institutional capacity for participation in the Great Commission.

Ideally, a gospel hub develops at a major cultural and geographic crossroads, where gospel influence can naturally extend into multiple regions and across society's networks. Its development typically requires decades—and often generations—of sustained labor. For this reason, gospel hubs are not always planned from the outset; they may be recognized only after years of providential development. The critical distinction is the adoption of Carey's philosophy of using means: the creation of auxiliary organizations to work across large geographic areas.

Serampore as a Historical Model

Ideally, a gospel hub develops at a major cultural and geographic crossroads, where gospel influence can naturally extend into multiple regions and across society's networks. Its development typically requires decades—and often generations—of sustained labor. For this reason, gospel hubs are not always planned from the outset; they may be recognized only after years of providential development. The critical distinction is the adoption of Carey's philosophy of using means: the creation of auxiliary organizations to work across large geographic areas.

The work William Carey established at Serampore marks the first mature historical expression of what may be described as a gospel hub. Around the first Baptist

congregation in India, a coordinated network of institutions—schools, a seminary, Bible translation projects, a printing press, and an expanding system of mission stations and church plants—developed. Together, these institutions formed a strategic center from which missionary labor radiated across the subcontinent.

Without implying comparable historical scale or importance, the Córdoba Gospel Hub has consciously sought to follow the same underlying logic. It is the product of more than three decades of sustained work and, in many respects, rests on foundations laid by a previous generation of missionaries. The structural parallel between Serampore and Córdoba is therefore not incidental; it serves as the controlling analogy for this project.

Carey's genius lay not in founding a single institution but in cultivating an integrated ecosystem of churches and institutions.

Carey's genius lay not in founding a single institution but in cultivating an integrated ecosystem of mutually reinforcing churches, institutions, and missionary initiatives. Although the Serampore missionaries inevitably made mistakes—some significant—their failures are as instructive as their successes. The Serampore Mission remains a paradigm for coordinated missionary effort and has seldom been matched for scope, coherence, or durability. Its distinctive strength lay in integrating multiple ministries into a unified missionary enterprise. The Serampore missionary team—including Joshua Marshman and William Ward—exhibited several characteristics that remain instructive for missionary work today:

- A theological foundation rooted in Evangelical Calvinism
- The translation of theological conviction into sustained practical labor
- A consciously Baptist ecclesiological framework that shapes missionary structure and priorities
- A disciplined and creative use of means in service of gospel advance
- Serious, respectful cultural engagement without theological compromise
- A strategic vision extending beyond local ministry to regional transformation
- Lifelong perseverance in a shared missionary vocation.

Taken together, these elements make the Serampore Mission an exceptional historical model for missionary work—one rarely equaled yet still capable of informing and guiding comparable efforts today. The relevance of Serampore lies not in its uniqueness but in the reproducible missionary logic it embodies.

Historical Hubs: Mission history includes several remarkable gospel hubs that flourished for a time before declining, such as the Basel Mission, the Francke Foundations in Halle, and the Moravian community at Herrnhut. Although these centers operated under different theological parameters than the Baptist work at Serampore, they offer instructive lessons for institutions. Gospel hubs tend to decline for several identifiable reasons: dependence on a founding generation whose vision proved difficult to reproduce; reliance on external funding streams that later diminished; absorption into denominational bureaucracies; theological drift over successive generations; and political or cultural transformations that reshaped operating conditions. These examples demonstrate that gospel hubs are not theoretical constructs but recurring features of missionary history. Their demise, however, raises the issue of continuity.

Durability: Recognizing these patterns clarifies the conditions for durability. A gospel hub must be intentionally structured to outlast its founders, remain anchored in confessional theology, avoid long-term dependence on external subsidies, and maintain clear integration among church life, ministerial training, and missionary practice. However, it is best understood not as a permanent institutional structure guaranteed to endure indefinitely, but as a generational engine for theological formation, church strengthening, and missionary expansion. Its success is measured less by institutional longevity than by the churches, leaders, and movements it produces.

Gospel Hub Logistics

People in the military are known to say, "Amateurs talk strategy; professionals talk logistics." The statement may be an exaggeration, but in missions the underlying insight holds. Strategy must flow from clear theology and be translated into concrete, executable plans. The Holy Spirit must guide and empower every stage of the process. Still, it is worth stating plainly that where the Spirit is truly at work, missionary shoe leather will meet the road: the church will lay hands on Paul and Barnabas, sea passage will be secured, and the team will sail for Cyprus (Acts 13). Lived theology presses toward action.

Auxiliary Organizations: One of William Carey's most important insights was that sustained missionary expansion required more than the efforts of individual congregations acting in isolation. Durable logistical structures were necessary. The ecclesiology of Baptist churches—with its strong commitment to congregational independence—made auxiliary "bridge" institutions essential for coordinating and resourcing work across a wider field. This conviction lay at the heart of what Carey called the use of means and decisively shaped the institutional architecture of the Baptist Missionary Society and the Serampore Mission. Without such structures, missionary expansion rarely extends beyond a single generation's influence.

The work in Córdoba was established with the ministry of Rudy Johnson (see sidebar) serving as an important model. Iglesia Crecer was planted as a model congregation from which additional churches could be established. The Seminario Bíblico William Carey was founded to train pastors and ministry leaders. Crecer Ministries fulfills a role similar to Johnson's construction company, linking ministry initiatives with strategic partners and supporting the development of churches, seminaries, and broader ministry infrastructure.

Auxiliary organizations are therefore not peripheral to missionary work but central to it. They address some of the most persistent barriers to sustained gospel expansion—especially in two areas examined later in this paper: theological education for the formation of pastors and missionaries, and partnership structures that replace patterns of external subsidy with capital investment to promote long-term institutional sustainability.

FROM THE FIELD

The Work of Rudy Johnson in Peru

I saw a pattern similar to Serampore at work in the ministry of Rudy Johnson, an Independent Baptist who began his work in Lima in the early 1960s and whose example shaped my early years in ministry. When I once asked him what made the Peruvian work so fruitful, he pointed not to a single strategy but to three coordinated structures: a healthy "mother church" that served as both a model and a sending base for church planting, a Bible institute dedicated to leadership formation, and a construction company that enabled the development of church facilities as the work expanded. Together, these structures created a framework for sustained growth rather than isolated efforts.



RUDY JOHNSON (CENTER) WITH FELLOW WORKERS IN PERU

Years later, I had the opportunity to visit the ministry in Lima. Although I do not have access to formal statistics, my observations confirmed that the work remained strong decades after its founding. The original sending congregation, Iglesia del Bosque, was still active and influential when I visited in the 2000s, and its legacy continues today. In fact, one member of our church in Córdoba first came to faith and was discipled there before moving to Argentina and joining our congregation.

From conversations over the years, I understand that more than 200 churches have grown out of that original ministry, many in Lima and some now planting churches of their own. The work also extended beyond the capital. After a brief retirement in his late seventies, Johnson returned to Peru and began a new phase of ministry in Cusco, where he helped establish another church and a Christian retreat center. Even into his nineties, he remained engaged in gospel work.

I include this example not as a formally documented case study but as a firsthand observation that a coordinated ministry structure can continue bearing fruit across generations. In many respects, the Córdoba Gospel Hub has developed along similar lines.

Distinguishing Characteristics of a Gospel Hub

These characteristics distinguish a gospel hub not by size but by function. A sending church advances gospel expansion by commissioning missionaries and supporting church planting beyond its immediate context. A gospel hub represents a further stage

1 of development: it is a sending church that has become the organizing center of a coordinated regional network.

It sustains auxiliary ministries that extend beyond the life of a single congregation—such as theological training, publishing, leadership formation, associational cooperation, and missionary mobilization.

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2 It serves not only its own membership but also a wider network of churches, strengthening their capacity for church planting and missionary sending.

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3 It contributes to the formation of regional structures that enable long-term cooperation, including associations, training institutions, and shared funding mechanisms.

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4 It serves as a channel for capital investment in ministry infrastructure, supporting the establishment of durable congregations rather than temporary mission outposts.

A gospel hub, in short, is the point at which a local church becomes the organizing center of a broader missionary movement sustained across generations.

The Gospel Hub Pipeline

The internal logic of a gospel hub follows a recognizable ministry pipeline that sustains and multiplies the work of the Great Commission:



Evangelism gathers · church planting establishes · discipleship matures · sending commissions.

These stages define the hub's operational logic. In the spirit of William Carey, the hub seeks to strengthen and accelerate these processes by founding or partnering with auxiliary organizations that support the local church's mission. An effective gospel hub emerges from the coordinated work of the local church and its auxiliary ministry partners. Part IV describes the Córdoba Gospel Hub's concrete implementation of this

pipeline. The hub's strength depends on the continuity of this pipeline across multiple generations of leaders.

The remaining sections of this paper describe how this gospel hub model has taken concrete form in Córdoba and how strategic investment can strengthen its capacity for future expansion.

PART IV

Developing the Córdoba Gospel Hub

In brief: What Part III describes in principle, Córdoba already embodies in practice. Over three decades, Iglesia Crecer has grown into a network of churches, a seminary, an association, and a missionary pipeline—an emerging gospel hub



A SPECIAL SUNDAY IN RENTED FACILITY FOR IGLESIA CRECER

Córdoba: A Strategic Center

It is no accident that the Córdoba Gospel Hub has developed in a city that has long served as a cultural and intellectual crossroads in Argentina and the broader Southern Cone. Córdoba is sometimes called the "República de Córdoba" for its long history of intellectual independence and cultural influence in Argentina. Although Buenos Aires is the country's largest city, Córdoba exerts an influence on Argentine society and the Southern Cone disproportionate to its size.

La Docta: An Intellectual and Educational Hub

Founded in 1573 as Córdoba de la Nueva Andalucía, the city quickly became an administrative and cultural crossroads within the Spanish colonial system. It developed into one of Latin America's most important intellectual centers, earning the nickname "La Docta" for its strong academic traditions. The founding of the University of

Córdoba in 1613 cemented the city's status as a major educational center. Today, the National University of Córdoba remains one of the largest universities in Latin America, with well over 100,000 students. Together with numerous other universities and technical institutes, the city draws more than a quarter of a million students to the metropolitan area each year.

Córdoba exerts an influence on Argentine society disproportionate to its size.

Political, Economic, and Geographic Influence

Córdoba has also played a prominent role in Argentina's political history. Events such as the 1918 University Reform Movement and the 1969 Cordobazo uprising reinforced the city's reputation for civic independence and social activism.

FIG. — CORDOBA IN THE SOUTHERN CONE



Córdoba sits at the crossroads of the Southern Cone — central to Argentina and its neighbours.

Geographically, Córdoba occupies a central position within Argentina and serves as a transportation hub connecting multiple regions of the country and the Southern Cone of South America.

In the knowledge economy, Córdoba has also emerged as a leading hub for IT outsourcing and software development. The city hosts major firms such as Intel, along with hundreds of specialized technology companies,

and its universities produce thousands of STEM graduates each year. These strengths give Córdoba unusual strategic importance for initiatives focused on education, leadership development, and regional influence.

For these reasons, Córdoba offers a particularly favorable setting for ministries focused on training leaders and on fostering movements that extend beyond a single local context.

Founding Iglesia Crecer

While Iglesia Crecer was shaped by earlier examples of what this paper describes as gospel hubs—especially the ministries of Rudy Johnson in Lima and William Carey in Serampore—it was not conceived as a simple imitation of either. From the beginning, the goal was to adapt the underlying logic of those works to the particular realities of Córdoba.

Like Johnson's ministry, the project envisioned a coordinated structure linking a model congregation, leadership development, and supporting institutional ministries. Like Carey's work at Serampore, it assumed that sustained missionary expansion requires durable structures that extend beyond the life and capacity of a single local congregation. At the same time, the project differed from Serampore in one significant respect: the mother church was intentionally placed at the center of the enterprise from the outset. Rather than allowing auxiliary institutions to become the primary engines of expansion, Iglesia Crecer was conceived as the theological, spiritual, and missionary hub from which the broader network would develop.

In this respect, the project sought to recover and emphasize a biblical pattern in which a healthy local church serves as the organizing center for church planting, leadership formation, and missionary sending.

The Founding Commitments of Iglesia Crecer

From its inception, Iglesia Crecer was intentionally structured as a church capable of sustaining future ministry expansion. Several foundational commitments defined its character and direction:

1 **A biblical church**

The church was established with a strong commitment to Scripture-centered ministry, expressed first through expository preaching and later strengthened by access to emerging confessional Reformed theological resources in Spanish.

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2 **A missionary church**

From the outset, the vision extended beyond local congregational life to include church planting in Argentina and the eventual sending of missionaries abroad.

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3 **A strategic urban location**

The decision to locate the church in downtown Córdoba reflected a commitment to accessibility, public engagement, and proximity to the National University—placing the congregation at a natural crossroads of transportation, culture, and student life. It was especially important to begin near the university to reach students who could join the leadership pipeline for future ministry. At the same time, the church envisioned, from the beginning, a broader strategy in which additional congregations would eventually be planted in other key areas of the city.

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4 **Small groups as part of the church's DNA**

Weekly small groups became a primary structure for discipleship, pastoral care, and evangelistic outreach. What was not anticipated at the outset—but soon became evident—was that this small-group structure would also sow the seeds for planting churches in other cities across the province of Córdoba, as the church's commitment to biblical preaching began to draw people from ever-greater distances.

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5 **A strong sending church rather than a large church**

conversations, the goal was not numerical prominence as an end in itself but institutional strength—a church able to plant congregations and send workers over time.

Taken together, these commitments reflect a deliberate decision to build a gospel hub with a sending church—not its auxiliary institutions—at the center.

The Córdoba Gospel Hub Pipeline

The church eventually adopted the phrase "We are a biblical church that plants biblical churches around the world" as its purpose statement. As noted earlier, to fulfill this purpose, Iglesia Crecer envisioned, from its inception, a ministry pipeline that moves from evangelism to global mission mobilization.



The development of this pipeline in the context of Córdoba required particular attention to the university as a strategic source of future leaders, without reducing the ministry to a university-focused endeavor. The church, therefore, developed a structure intentionally shaped to be biblical, Baptist, and culturally appropriate to the urban realities of life in Córdoba. It also prioritized leadership formation by developing programs that eventually included a full theological seminary, while simultaneously planting churches in the province and in northern Argentina.

Timeline of the Ministry



Three phases trace the ministry from a pioneer work, to an established church, to a sending gospel hub.

PHASE 1: FOUNDATION (1973–1997)

The foundations of this work were laid long before Iglesia Crecer was formally established. In 1973, Sam Masters arrived in Argentina as the child of independent Baptist missionaries serving in Buenos Aires. In 1978, his family moved to Córdoba, sensing a call to serve in the country's interior. There, they planted a church in the city and another congregation in the nearby town of Santa Ana.

After graduating from high school in 1981, Sam spent a year helping lead the work in Santa Ana before returning to the United States for pastoral training. During the 1980s, he and his wife, Carita, served in churches in Wyoming and Miami. In 1992, they returned to Argentina as missionaries. After assisting with the existing ministry in Córdoba, they began planning a new work near the university—an area Sam had long considered strategic, even as a teenager playing neighborhood fútbol with university students. That vision culminated in the founding of Iglesia Crecer in downtown Córdoba on Calle Rivera Indarte in 1997.

PHASE 2: EXPANSION (1997–2020)

The establishment of Iglesia Crecer marked the start of a new phase of ministry growth. The church was intentionally located in the city's downtown transportation hub and near the National University of Córdoba, enabling outreach to students and young professionals from across Argentina. Small groups gradually became central to the church's life, providing settings for discipleship and evangelism. Over time, these groups began to serve as seeds for church planting as believers from other towns returned to their communities and started new works.

During this period, several key initiatives emerged. The Crecer Fund was established when a businessman who had helped finance the church’s first property purchase eventually forgave the remaining debt. Rather than canceling the payments, the church continued contributing the same monthly amount to a fund dedicated to capital investment in future church plants. This initiative has since helped two other congregations acquire property and build long-term ministry infrastructure.

The ministry expanded its church planting efforts, founded Seminario Carey, and established Crecer Ministries, a US-based 501(c)(3) to facilitate international cooperation.

PHASE 3: MULTIPLICATION (2021–PRESENT)

In recent years, Iglesia Crecer has entered a new stage focused on broader collaboration and missionary mobilization. In 2021, the Asociación Bautista Reformada Argentina (ABRA) was established to strengthen fellowship among churches connected to the ministry. What began as a network of church plants soon expanded as other congregations sought to participate, and the association now includes dozens of churches across Argentina.

In 2024, the ministry became involved in the leadership of La Cumbre, a missions mobilization conference that encourages Spanish-speaking young people to consider missionary service.

Taken together, these three phases trace the ministry's natural progression from a pioneer church to an established church and, ultimately, to a sending church functioning as a gospel hub in the fullest sense.

The Córdoba Gospel Hub Today

1. EVANGELISM

From its earliest years, Iglesia Crecer has combined citywide evangelism with intentional outreach to the students of the National University of Córdoba. University students have been a primary source of leadership development and congregational growth. This ministry is carried out through the weekly Jóvenes group and a close partnership with ABUA, a student ministry led by an Australian missionary who is a member of the church. Currently, one team conducts weekly outdoor evangelism, another leads children's outreach each Saturday in local plazas, and the church maintains a regular evangelistic presence through social media. Partnerships with evangelistic networks and student ministries further strengthen outreach to the university community.

The fruit of this sustained commitment is evident. The church now draws nearly 400 attendees across two full Sunday services, and the college ministry has grown substantially, with more than 100 young adults attending the most recent annual

retreat. While university outreach remains strategically important, it is only one part of the church's broader evangelistic mission.

2. CHURCH STRUCTURE

Iglesia Crecer was formally constituted in August 1997, when 12 people signed its membership covenant. From its inception, the church has maintained a deliberately minimalist structure centered on two weekly rhythms: Sunday worship and Grupos Crecer (small groups), which meet at various times and locations to maximize flexibility.

The church understands itself as a spiritual body formed by Christ through a mutual covenant among its members. At the same time, it regards the gathering of the whole congregation in a single service as an important ideal. For this reason, when the budget permits, the church incurs the significant expense of renting larger facilities so the entire body can meet. The church is currently seeking a larger permanent property.

Small groups provide more intimate settings for discipleship, evangelism, and mutual care, generally reflecting cross-sections of the congregation and primarily focusing on reviewing and applying the Sunday sermon.

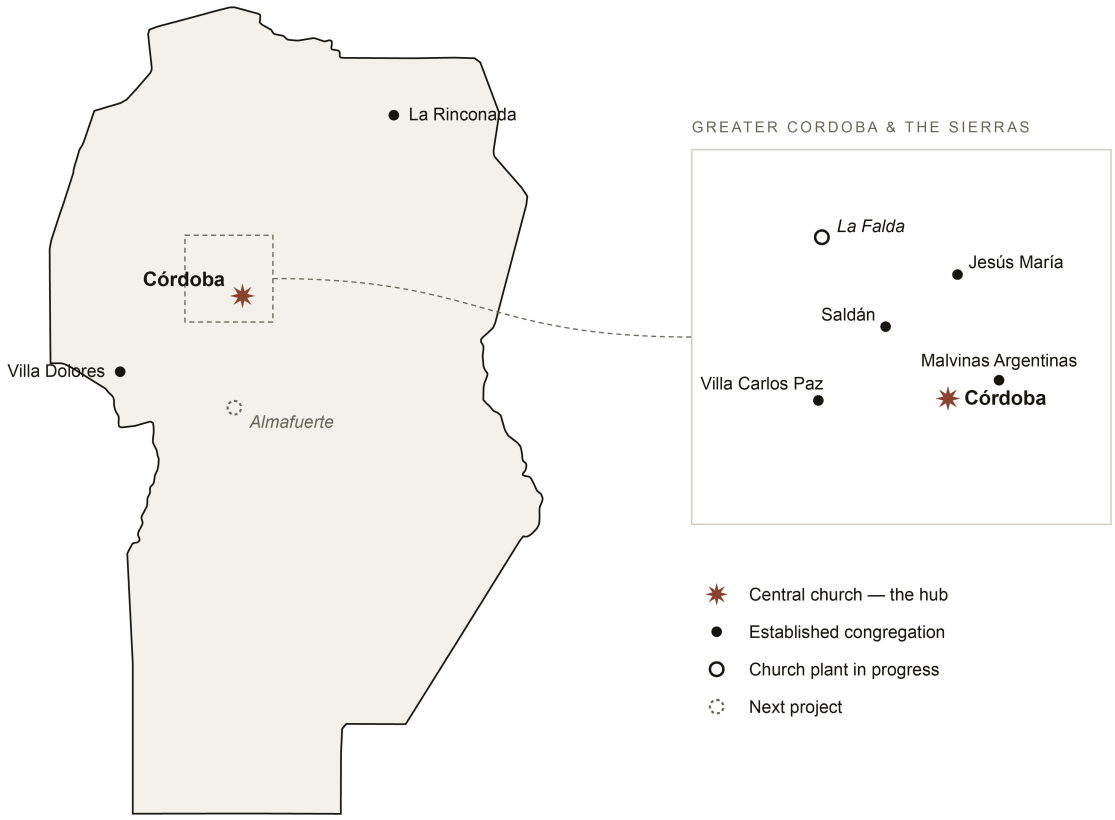
3. THE CRECER FAMILY OF CHURCHES

As congregational life and small groups took root, the ministry began attracting families not only from the city of Córdoba but also from across the province. As concentrations of members developed in other cities, small groups were established there as well. This expansion led to continued growth and created opportunities for additional church plants.

What began as a single congregation has grown into a network of church plants spanning the province of Córdoba and extending into northern Argentina. The current state of this network is as follows:

This family of churches shares the theological vision, ministry philosophy, and relational DNA of the Córdoba hub church. At the same time, it is fully integrated into the life and ministry of ABRA.

✷ FIG. — CORDOBA PROVINCE · THE CRECER NETWORK



The Crecer family across Córdoba Province — from the central church outward to new plants and future projects.

- Hub Church, City of Córdoba
- Mission Churches with full-time pastors sustained by Iglesia Crecer: Cachi, Salta, and La Rinconada, Córdoba
- Projected new plants in process: City of Salta; Payogasta, Salta; Perico, Jujuy; and Alma Fuerte, Córdoba
- Self-Supporting Churches: Villa Dolores, Córdoba; Saldán, Córdoba; and La Falda, Córdoba; and Jesús María, Córdoba
- Church Revitalization: Carlos Paz, Córdoba

Church Growth Limitations: Many of the church plants in the network have reached a growth ceiling, often at fewer than 60 people. Like a plant constrained by the size of its pot, a congregation often struggles to grow beyond the limits of its physical facilities and financial resources. Iglesia Crecer itself provides a clear example: its auditorium was designed to seat about 180 people, yet the church currently averages about 400 attendees across two Sunday services. Similar patterns are evident throughout the network.

The Crecer Fund: Established to address these structural limitations and strengthen church development across the network, the Crecer Fund is a central component of the strategy. As discussed later in this paper, the strategy aims to help network churches break through their current growth ceilings by expanding the Crecer Fund to increase their financial capacity. Greater resources will enable congregations to improve facilities, expand ministry opportunities, and pursue new church-planting initiatives.

Together, Iglesia Crecer and the Crecer Family of Churches form a growing cooperative of congregations united by a shared commitment to advancing the gospel throughout Argentina.

4. DISCIPLESHIP AND LEADERSHIP TRAINING

The Sunday worship service is the primary setting for instruction each week. The message is reinforced and applied more personally throughout the week through the Grupos Crecer. The church also offers a series of tailored courses through its Sunday Institute, including a membership class and additional courses designed to deepen understanding of Scripture, theology, and their practical application. Seasonal training is also provided for leaders in small-group ministry, children's ministry, biblical counseling, and other areas of service. The church also offers a ministry internship for young adults and an intensive pastoral residency program.

This internal training pipeline is significantly strengthened by a network of auxiliary institutions that extend the church's capacity without replacing its central role.

Seminario Bíblico William Carey: Approximately twenty years ago, Iglesia Crecer founded Seminario Bíblico William Carey (SBWC) to equip church planters and leaders. The seminary now enrolls more than 600 students across 24 countries, including Spain and Cuba, and operates 12 study centers where students meet in regional cohorts.

Degree programs include a Diploma level and a Master Arts in Theological Studies, with majors in Biblical Studies, Missions, Biblical Counseling, and Church Planting. The seminary is affiliated with AETAL (accrediting agency), The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary (articulation agreement), and ACBC (approved biblical counseling training site).



GRADUATION CEREMONIES AT THE SBWC STUDY CENTER IN MARON, BUENOS AIRES

Training offerings include Church Planting, Biblical Counseling, Expository Preaching, and Ecclesiology, with key partners including 9Marks (ecclesiology), Simeon Trust (expository preaching), and ACBC (biblical counseling). The seminary's publishing arm, comprising Prensa Carey, Poimea, and the Bible Society of Argentina, further extends its doctrinal influence. These resources reinforce and deepen the formation already underway within the local congregation.

National Church Association: Iglesia Crecer founded ABRA, a network that now includes 43 churches and 50 pastors serving in 15 of Argentina's 23 provinces. ABRA fosters cooperation among like-minded churches through mutual encouragement, accountability, resource sharing, and church-planting initiatives. It also partners closely with the Pillar Network to strengthen partnerships and expand ministry opportunities. For the Crecer Family of Churches, ABRA provides a broader framework for fellowship and collaboration, connecting local congregations to a growing national network of churches committed to gospel ministry.

Crecer Ministries (**US 501c3**)**:** To facilitate

international partnerships and the movement of funds, Crecer Ministries was established as a US-based 501(c)(3) organization. It plays a vital role in helping American churches form partnerships with churches in Argentina. One active example is a partnership with a Pillar church in South Carolina that is currently supporting the construction of a building for one of ABRA's key churches in Tucumán. This infrastructure enables strategic capital investment at critical points of growth across the network.

5. SENDING CHURCH PLANTERS AND MISSIONARIES

The long-term goal of this ministry pipeline is to develop a missionary-sending church capable of planting congregations throughout Argentina and beyond. Several strategic partnerships now support this objective by bridging the training pipeline and the sending mandate and by formalizing Córdoba's role not only as a hub for church formation but also as a base for global mission deployment.

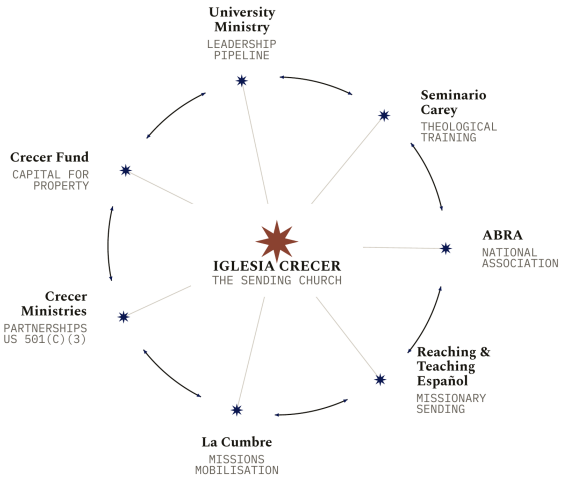
La Cumbre Misionera Juvenil is a missions mobilization conference that Iglesia Crecer partners with. The church hosted the 2026 gathering in Córdoba. The conference rotates annually among Guatemala, Spain, Argentina, and Colombia. Initiatives like La Cumbre help identify individuals called to missionary service and connect them with pathways for preparation and deployment.

Reaching & Teaching Español represents a further milestone in this vision. Formed in principle in cooperation with Reaching & Teaching International Ministries, this initiative is designed to send Latin American missionaries to the nations. Partnership with R&T marks the culmination of decades of work toward the emergence of Reformed Baptist churches in Latin America as active sending centers to unreached peoples worldwide. Together, these components form a coherent system of multiplication: the church forms leaders, the network strengthens them, and partnerships deploy them for wider service. This is the operational logic of the Córdoba Gospel Hub.

University Ministry: The Strategic Hinge

University focus has been an essential component of the gospel hub strategy from the beginning. Although the pipeline lists it among several entries, its strategic weight is greater than that placement suggests. In practice, it has been the front door through which much of the hub's leadership—pastors, church planters, and ministry workers—first entered the wider ministry ecosystem.

✷ FIG. — THE GOSPEL HUB ECOSYSTEM



A sending church at the centre of a coordinated network — the training, association, funding, and sending institutions that together multiply its reach.

One of the earliest strategic decisions was to locate the Iglesia Crecer near the University of Córdoba, and that decision has compounded over time. Many of today's leaders first encountered the gospel as university students, then became members of the church, received theological and ministry training, and went on to help plant churches across the network. This pattern has reinforced our conviction that the university is not a peripheral focus but a critical component of the project's long-term health and expansion.



IGLESIA CRECER'S COLLEGE RETREAT

The next phase has a concrete catalyst: the arrival of a missionary couple with extensive experience developing church-centered university ministries. Their expertise will help refine a model that integrates evangelism, discipleship, and leadership development within the university context. Although the details are still being developed,

their arrival presents a significant opportunity to strengthen and expand this strategic focus.

The significance of university ministry, moreover, extends well beyond Córdoba. The model proven here is designed to be adapted in other strategic cities—Salta, with its concentrated student population—and ultimately in the universities of greater Buenos Aires—so that the development of university ministry in Córdoba over the coming years is best understood not as a local initiative but as a pilot with national implications.

Seen in this light, university ministry is the hinge on which the next phase of the project turns. The leaders it forms, the model it refines, and the church plants it seeds all point beyond Córdoba toward three widening horizons: the Salta and Northwest Initiative, the Buenos Aires Global City Project, and the sending of Argentine missionaries to the nations. However, realizing these horizons depends first on a financial model capable of sustaining such growth—the subject to which the paper now turns.

PART V

A Paradigm Shift in Missions Financing

In brief: The most strategic help a maturing church needs is not ongoing operational subsidy (OPEX) but one-time capital investment (CAPEX)—property and institutional infrastructure that build durable, self-sustaining, missionary-sending churches.



CHURCH BUILDING CONSTRUCTION IN CACHI, SALTA

Introduction

Before presenting the specific investment proposals that follow, it is necessary to clarify the strategic framework that gives them coherence. The needs described in the previous section are not merely organizational or financial; they reflect a broader shift in how missionary work is unfolding globally. This section therefore introduces the conceptual reorientation underlying the recommendations that follow and explains why a revised approach to missions financing has become both timely and necessary.

A New Approach

Questions about foreign aid have long occupied the fields of international development and global policy. Despite the enormous financial resources transferred from wealthy nations to the Global South over the past century, the long-term effectiveness of such aid remains debated. Similar concerns arise in Christian missions. While foreign

financial support has often enabled remarkable gospel advance, its long-term structural effects on churches are not always carefully evaluated.

Some current approaches to missionary financing unintentionally weaken the very maturity, accountability, and self-sustaining growth they aim to promote. A strategic reorientation is therefore necessary. The goal is not to reduce commitment to the Great Commission but to align missions funding with the development of durable, responsible, and missionary-sending churches in the Global South.

This proposal marks an important paradigm shift for missions in the twenty-first century. The modern missionary movement developed in a context where resources, initiative, and theological formation flowed primarily from the West to the rest. That world no longer exists. Today's missionary environment is global, interconnected, and increasingly decentralized—we may properly speak of a new era of multipolar missions.

Strengthening established confessional churches in the Global South may be among the most effective strategies for reaching the unreached.

Paradoxically, strengthening established confessional churches in the Global South may prove to be among the most effective strategies for reaching the unreached. Mature missionary churches in the Global South are often best positioned to engage nearby unreached peoples because of cultural proximity, linguistic access, and shared historical experience. What follows is an argument for aligning missions funding with this emerging reality.

The Three-Self Ideal: A Historical Framework

The Three-Self principle was discussed in Part II. The following section applies that framework to the question of missions financing.

The conviction that churches should be self-governing, self-supporting, and self-propagating has deep roots in Protestant missiology. Known as the "three-self" principle, it emerged in the nineteenth century as missionaries reflected critically on the long-term outcomes of their work. Key proponents, including Henry Venn and Rufus

Anderson, observed that missionary efforts often stalled when local churches remained dependent on foreign leadership and resources.

The principle also arose in response to concrete problems on the mission field. In China, patterns of economic dependency sometimes incentivized nominal conversion. John Nevius famously resisted such practices and argued that churches should develop patterns of local responsibility and financial support. Such distortions were not unique to Asia; similar incentive structures had long existed in Europe. The parish system, in which wealthy patrons controlled the advowson and thus provided the living for a curate or incumbent, is one example. The Three-Self principle therefore reflected not cultural suspicion but a sober recognition of ordinary human tendencies within church structures.

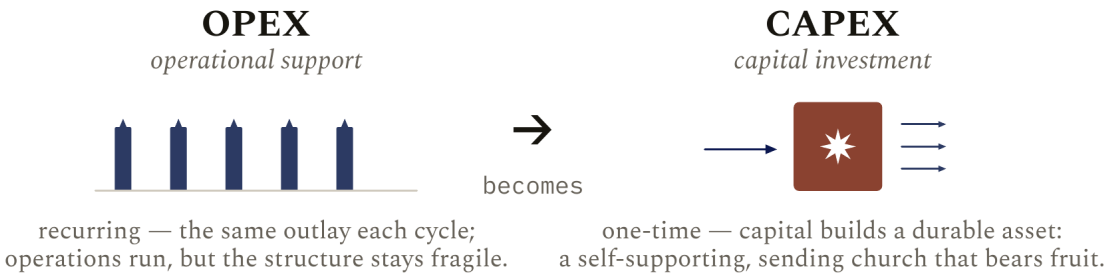
The Error of No Help at All

One response to concerns about dependency has been the conviction that missionaries should provide little or no financial assistance to emerging churches. In practice, however, this approach often produces fragile congregations rather than mature, self-sustaining ones. Artificial timetables have likewise become common. Based on a misapplication of Pauline methodology, missionaries are sometimes expected to plant a church and withdraw within a predetermined period, regardless of local circumstances. Such expectations seldom allow adequate time to develop qualified elders, establish doctrinal stability, or cultivate patterns of Christian generosity. A healthy missions strategy, therefore, does not require eliminating support but rather its prudent and purposeful stewardship.

The Error of Misdirected Help

More common than the error of insufficient help is the error of misdirected help. One of the most damaging forms is long-term pastoral salary support from foreign donors. This reflects a fundamental category confusion: pastors are pastors, not missionaries. When their primary financial support comes from outside their congregation, accountability subtly shifts away from the local church. Such arrangements also create selection problems—external donors often make decisions based on compassion rather than sustained knowledge of character and gifting. Over time, this weakens pastoral oversight, delays ecclesial maturity, and perpetuates dependency.

A Necessary Shift: From OPEX to CAPEX



The shift from recurring subsidy (OPEX) to one-time capital investment (CAPEX).

Historically, most missionary funding has been used for operational support (OPEX). The model proposed here emphasizes capital investment (CAPEX) in structures that strengthen long-term missionary capacity.

Such support is often necessary, especially in pioneering contexts, but by itself it rarely produces institutions capable of sustaining missionary expansion across generations.

Capital investment strengthens the churches and institutions from which future missionaries and church planters can emerge.

Financing Church Property

For this reason, a more sustainable model shifts from operational subsidies to capital investment. In economic terms, this reflects the difference between revenue support (OPEX), which stabilizes current operations but often leaves underlying structures fragile, and capital investment (CAPEX), which strengthens long-term viability and promotes local ownership.

In practical terms, this shift prioritizes one-time or time-bound investments rather than indefinite subsidies. Particular emphasis should be placed on assets that strengthen the church's long-term ministry platform, especially the acquisition of property and the development of infrastructure for training and sending. In some cases, support structures can be designed to reinforce sustainability through mechanisms such as loans rather than grants, or "pay-it-forward" models in which resources are recycled into future church plants.

It should be noted that the CAPEX argument does not suggest that capital investment in property is the only—or even the decisive—factor in church stability. Other elements are also significant, including the inability of many small congregations to provide a full-time pastoral salary. The argument is rather that property acquisition is one area in which donors from the United States can make a meaningful contribution without creating the kind of long-term dependency that ultimately harms the church.

A single investment enables a congregation to secure property and facilities, providing stability, boosting credibility, and eliminating rent costs. This frees the church to pay its own pastor. Moreover, the church can avoid dependency by repaying the purchase cost —on reasonable terms—into a revolving fund that assists other congregations. This move would produce a historic paradigm shift for churches in Latin America.

The purpose is not to suggest that churches discontinue support for national pastors. Many Argentine pastors serve under significant financial constraints, and outside assistance may at times make a decisive difference. When such support is needed, however, it is generally healthier to channel it through the local church so that the pastor is supported by his own congregation rather than becoming directly dependent on another church or individual. This strengthens the relationship between the pastor and the congregation while preserving the local church's responsibility for its ministry.

At the same time, we should reconsider how generosity is directed over the long term. The familiar proverb says that giving a man a fish feeds him for a day, while teaching him to fish feeds him for a lifetime. We might add a third step: providing access to the capital needed to acquire the fishing boat can create the conditions for lasting economic productivity. Applied to church partnerships, recurring pastoral support may sometimes be appropriate, but strategically moving resources from OpEx toward CapEx can strengthen both the pastor and the congregation for years to come.

The Situation in Argentina

This paradigm shift is especially significant in the Argentine context. Chronic economic instability makes long-term planning difficult, and churches often lack access to financing for property acquisition. Historically, mortgage financing has been largely unavailable to churches—and when available, it has rarely been on affordable terms. At the same time, volatile rental markets leave congregations structurally vulnerable. Yet

experience shows that many churches can sustain pastoral support once the ongoing burden of rent is lifted.



The constraint is access to capital, not generosity.

Many churches can support their own pastor the moment the burden of rent is lifted.

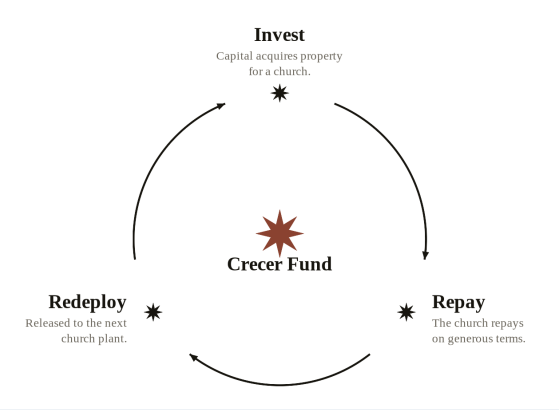
Faced with the obvious financial need, the compassionate instinct is to support local church pastors. Counterintuitively, however, supporting a pastor may not be the best way for a church in the U.S. to partner with a church in Argentina. Generally, it is healthier for an Argentine church to support its pastor and manage its monthly budget. This is where a one-time capital investment in property can change a congregation's future. Churches in the United States often have advantages when purchasing property for their own use that are simply unavailable in Argentina, where long-term loans for church buildings do not currently exist. A donation, or better yet, a loan, can make a significant impact—and be amplified further if the donor and the Argentine church agree to pay part or all of the loan forward to help other Argentine churches, thereby fueling the church-planting cycle.

Case Study: The Crecer Fund

After Iglesia Crecer had met for about eighteen months in a rented facility on Rivera Indarte in downtown Córdoba, the congregation saw a providential opportunity to acquire a permanent property on Lima Street. Like many churches in Argentina, however, it faced a structural constraint: while it could cover monthly rent—about $800 at the time—it lacked access to credit and could not afford the upfront capital required to purchase the property. Property purchases invariably require cash on the barrelhead.

A businessman from the United States offered to lend the necessary funds, with repayment structured at the same monthly rate as the existing rent. This arrangement effectively converted a recurring operational expense into a capital investment. After about two years, the lender generously offered to forgive the remaining balance, citing God's blessing on his business.

The church declined full loan forgiveness. While expressing gratitude, they urged the church to continue bearing financial responsibility to foster maturity and ownership. Instead of repaying the original lender, the church redirected those payments to a dedicated fund—later known as the Crecer Fund—for capital investment in future ministry work.



The long-term results have been significant. Since then, Iglesia Crecer has acquired property and built facilities for two church plants in areas of substantial poverty, where even well-established congregations often struggle to support a full-time pastor.

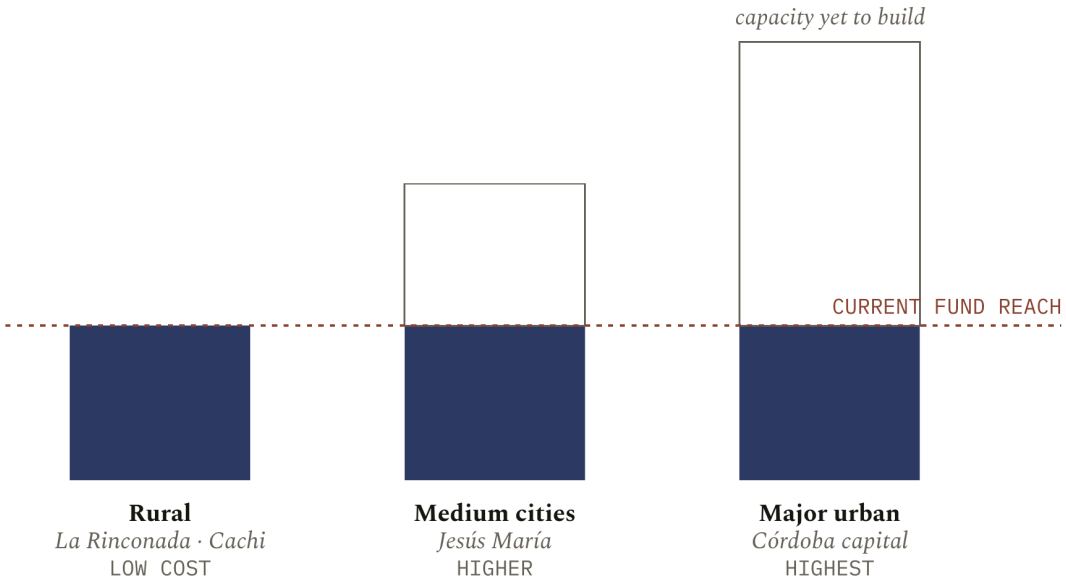
This experience has led to a clear strategic conviction: the most critical form of external support for Latin American churches is not ongoing operational funding (OPEX), such as salary subsidies or monthly budget assistance. Rather, the greater need is access to capital investment (CAPEX) to enable churches to acquire property, establish a stable, permanent presence, and build the foundation for long-term financial and ministerial sustainability.

Current Limitations and Future Potential

The Crecer Fund has already demonstrated its effectiveness as a capital investment model. The original loan capital has been recycled through the fund twice, confirming the viability of a revolving, CAPEX-oriented approach. At the same time, this experience has revealed structural limitations. The primary constraint is the scale of Iglesia Crecer itself. While the fund has been sufficient to support projects in rural contexts, it has not yet been able to underwrite significant property acquisitions in more urbanized areas.

This reality reflects a clear three-tier structure in Argentina's property landscape: rural areas (e.g., La Rinconada, Cachi), where costs remain comparatively low; medium-sized cities (e.g., Jesús María), where property values increase substantially; and major urban centers (e.g., Córdoba capital), where costs have risen dramatically since the purchase of the first property on Lima Street. To date, the Crecer Fund has functioned effectively within the first tier. Expansion into the second and third tiers will require significantly greater capital capacity.

✷ FIG. — PROPERTY-COST TIERS



The fund reaches rural property today; medium cities and major urban centres require greater capital capacity.

Sidebar

R. G. LeTourneau and Capital Investment in Mission

A compelling example of productive capital investment in missions is found in the work of American industrialist R. G. LeTourneau (1888–1969). Known throughout the construction world as the "Dean of Earthmoving," LeTourneau built a multi-million-dollar equipment manufacturing empire while channeling the majority of its proceeds toward Christian mission and education. Through what he and his wife Evelyn called a "reverse tithe," they gave 90 percent of their income to the Lord's work—keeping only 10 percent for themselves—administering these funds through the LeTourneau Foundation (LeTourneau, 1960).

His most ambitious missionary venture, Tournavista (est. 1954), was a land development concession of approximately 990,000 acres in the Peruvian Amazon—specifically along the Ucayali River basin—granted by the Peruvian government in exchange for building a 31-mile road through the rainforest. The project integrated technical training, agricultural colonization, and evangelism, staffed by what LeTourneau called "technical missionaries"—men who could, in his words, handle a bulldozer as well as a Bible. Though Tournavista ultimately dissolved as a going concern by the time of LeTourneau's death in 1969, it remains the most cited example of his industrial mission model.

The more durable legacy of LeTourneau Foundation capital investment was in Lima, Peru. In the mid-1960s, the Foundation funded the purchase of a property at Block 23 of Avenida Arequipa in the Lince district, providing the Alianza Cristiana y Misionera del Perú (C&MA Peru) with its first owned facility in the capital. This was not a passive donation but a strategic CAPEX decision: securing a permanent institutional base in an urbanizing Lima at a moment when the city was absorbing large-scale rural-to-urban migration. The Lince property became the seedbed of the Lima al Encuentro con Dios (LED) movement, launched formally in 1973 by a team that included Roy LeTourneau—grandson of R. G.—as Finance Promoter, alongside missionaries Kenn Opperman, Eugenio Kelly, Ricardo Abrams, and Alfredo Smith.

The LED movement applied a deliberate principle of "concentration of resources": rather than distributing thin support across many sites, it invested human and financial capital sequentially into a succession of strategic districts—Lince, then Pueblo Libre, then Miraflores and El Agustino, and eventually more than a dozen neighborhoods in Lima. From a single congregation of roughly 120–130 people in 1973, the movement grew to 1,000 within two years. Today the network encompasses more than 80 congregations in the Lima area, with approximately 47,000 members, and has inspired parallel movements in Arequipa, Trujillo, Iquitos, and other Peruvian cities.

The LeTourneau case illustrates a principle that missiologists often undervalue: the catalytic effect of well-placed capital expenditure on institutional church growth. The Foundation's investment in the Lince property did not merely provide a meeting space—it gave the C&MA an owned asset in Lima at a critical moment, enabling the kind of long-term planning and concentrated resource deployment that organic, house-based structures cannot sustain at scale. The return on that initial investment, measured in congregations, trained leaders, and evangelical influence across Peru, is one of the more instructive examples of missional CAPEX in twentieth-century Latin American church history.

LeTourneau, R. G. Mover of Men and Mountains. Prentice-Hall, 1960. (Moody Press reprint, 1972.)

Break Out Facilities for Iglesia Crecer and the Crecer Fund

These limitations point directly to the next strategic step. For the Crecer Fund to scale its impact, Iglesia Crecer itself must grow—both in size and in financial capacity. A critical step is securing adequate facilities for the church in Córdoba. A larger, well-located property would enable the congregation to reach its growth potential and increase its capacity to generate and reinvest capital through the fund. The specific facilities plan is set out in Part VI.

This step would also position Iglesia Crecer to help its church plants make similar property investments. As these congregations grow toward financial stability, they will strengthen the Crecer Family of Churches and provide additional financial allies for expanded church planting and mission work. In addition, as the Crecer Family of Churches strengthens throughout the province of Córdoba, it will become an important source of support for ABRA churches nationwide.

The long-term vision is to expand the fund's revolving capital capacity to support investments in strategic locations where churches can grow to financial maturity and formally commit—through covenantal agreements (MOUs)—to repay capital to the fund. In this way, the Crecer Fund can serve as a revolving instrument for investment, repayment, and redeployment, enabling sustained multiplication over time. Each successful repayment cycle increases the number of future church-planting projects the fund can support.

Other Areas of Capital Investment

Specific capital investment objectives are detailed in a separate document (Strategic Implementation Plan). The following paragraphs summarize the investment categories supported by the CAPEX model. Not all of these require large financial commitments; in many cases, modest but well-targeted investments can produce long-term structural gains.

> **Associations:** Church associations have long played a decisive role in advancing missions. The Northamptonshire Association was central to the formation of the Baptist Missionary Society. Associational structures foster accountability, cooperation, and a shared vision across congregations. Strategic partnerships between associations in the United States and emerging associations in Latin

America can therefore be highly fruitful. At the same time, the goal should always be to develop indigenous, self-sustaining associational life. Missions strategy should focus not only on planting churches but also on planting associations. ABRA has both the potential and the responsibility to become self-sustaining; however, targeted initial investments—and, even more importantly, strategic partnerships—can significantly strengthen and accelerate this process.

Training Systems: Partnerships with international organizations dedicated to theological training can be highly beneficial, especially in the early stages of institutional development. Such partnerships enable levels of specialization that are often difficult to cultivate locally at first. At the same time, best practice requires the intentional formation of indigenous trainers over time. The goal is not permanent dependence on external instructors but the emergence of national leadership capable of sustaining theological education within its own ecclesial and cultural context. Churches in Argentina have already benefited substantially from partnerships with organizations such as 9Marks and the Simeon Trust.

Seminaries: If churches are to teach "all that Christ has commanded," they must eventually develop institutions capable of transmitting the full theological inheritance of the Christian tradition. Theological education should remain closely connected to the life of the local church. Distance programs delivered from North America can be valuable supplements, but they cannot replace indigenous institutions that form pastors within their own cultural and social contexts.

The North American theological system has benefited for generations from grants, facility donations, and endowed chairs that sustain long-term teaching and research. This is partly why a large majority of global theological resources remain concentrated in the Global North. Comparable visionary investment in the Global South would likewise yield generational benefits for the church.

At the same time, the South's relative lack of infrastructure may prove an advantage. New institutions such as Seminario Carey are emerging in the wake of recent technological transformations in education and are therefore not burdened by the need to maintain extensive legacy real estate. This creates an

opportunity to build flexible, sustainable, and contextually grounded models of theological formation for the future.

Repayment, Maturity, and Responsibility

Whenever possible, investments in church infrastructure should include repayment on generous, carefully structured terms. Repayment fosters ownership, maturity, and long-term stewardship. Ideally, funds returned from these investments can be recycled to support additional church planting projects. These investments should be limited to churches that demonstrate confessional clarity, proven leadership, participation in recognized training systems, and a record of faithfulness. All arrangements should be governed by formal memoranda of understanding and solemn covenants approved by the receiving churches.

What About North American Missionaries?

Should North American churches support missionaries in Latin America? Does this simply create greater OPEX dependence?

The answer depends largely on the nature of the missionary's work. When a missionary brings skills that act as multiplying factors for the church's growth and maturity, missionary support should be viewed not as an operating expense (OPEX) but as a form of capital investment (CAPEX). By contrast, if a missionary plants a single congregation and remains indefinitely as its pastor, it is reasonable to ask whether that ministry should eventually be supported primarily by the local church.

Missionaries who serve as multipliers generally fall into two broad categories.

The first category includes church planters and institution builders. When a missionary's long-term ministry focuses on multiple church plants, leadership development, training systems, and institutions that strengthen the national church, the work clearly constitutes CAPEX-oriented investment—even if the missionary serves for many years as a pastor or elder in a local congregation. The benefits extend far beyond a single church and contribute to the long-term missionary capacity of the wider body of Christ.

The second category concerns specialized skills and theological formation. Across Latin America, there is a pressing need to develop pastors, writers, theologians, and scholars

The enduring legacy will be defined not by foreign missionaries, but by the leaders who carry the gospel to their own nations.

capable of producing robust Reformed resources rooted in the region's realities. This requires seminaries that can train pastors at the master's level and scholars at the doctoral level. Missionaries who acquire the necessary missiological understanding, cultural competence, language proficiency, and academic preparation—and who devote their lives to forming future generations of leaders—represent investments of exceptional strategic value.

Importantly, such missionaries need not be North American. Many may be Latin American. What matters is not nationality but theological preparation, institutional vision, and the entrepreneurial capacity needed for long-term impact. At the same time, missionaries from the Global North can play a distinctive bridging role by connecting Latin American churches with resources, networks, and opportunities that might otherwise remain inaccessible. In this sense, they serve both the churches that send them and those that receive them. When exercised with humility and cultural sensitivity, this role can strengthen the church in Latin America while providing meaningful opportunities for strategic investment by Christians in the North—investments capable of yielding lasting fruit for the church's global mission.

If the CAPEX nature of such ministries is not immediately obvious, consider the analogy of an endowed chair at a theological seminary. An endowment is a capital investment that creates a resource benefiting the church for generations. In much the same way, missionaries who function as theological trainers, institution builders, and catalysts for multiplication should be understood as generational investments. Supporting churches must therefore recognize that such work requires more than short-term assistance; it demands sustained commitment to long-term formation and partnership.

Ultimately, national pastors and Latin Americans sent to other regions of the world should be recognized as the principal agents of this stage of missionary expansion. Missionaries serving in Latin America serve within a larger historical process of the maturation of global missions. The enduring legacy of this work will be defined not by

the achievements of foreign missionaries but by the emergence of Latin American leaders who carry the gospel to their own nations and to the ends of the earth.

Supporting Latin American missionaries sent globally

One important exception to the general caution against long-term operational dependency concerns missionaries sent by Latin American churches to other parts of the world. In such cases, ongoing support from churches in the Global North may serve not as an unhealthy OPEX dependency but as a stabilizing partnership that strengthens the sending capacity of Latin American churches.

As a general principle, churches should assume primary responsibility for supporting the missionaries they send. This applies equally to churches in North America and Latin America. Yet many Latin American churches operate in economies marked by currency instability, inflation, and limited access to long-term funding. These conditions can create vulnerabilities that threaten missionary continuity, even amid faithful ministry and strong home support.

For this reason, shared support arrangements between Latin American sending churches and partner churches in the North can provide valuable long-term stability. These partnerships do not replace home responsibility; they reinforce it, enabling churches to sustain missionary efforts despite the constraints imposed by fluctuating national economies.

A concrete example illustrates the point. Several years ago, Iglesia Crecer sent a missionary couple to India. Their ministry progressed well, but the severe depreciation of the Argentine peso threatened their ability to remain in the field despite their effectiveness and commitment. Although health concerns eventually required their return, the experience showed that currency volatility alone can jeopardize otherwise viable missionary work. Support from churches in more stable economies would have significantly reduced that risk.

Shared international support for Latin American missionaries serving globally should therefore be understood not as an operational subsidy but as a strategic investment in developing a truly multi-centered (polycentric) missionary movement. When churches in the North help sustain missionaries from the South, they are not creating dependency; they are strengthening the global church's long-term missionary capacity.

Such partnerships embody reciprocity rather than dependency. They reflect mutual responsibility within the body of Christ and offer a practical way to advance missionary maturity and strengthen sending across regions.

A Paradigm for Reproductive Missions

This capital-investment model offers several advantages. It breaks cycles of dependency while preserving meaningful partnership. It strengthens pastoral accountability. It fosters indigenous leadership. It promotes institutional maturity. And it prepares churches in the Global South to become missionary-sending centers in their own right. Over time, it replaces donor-recipient relationships with genuine collaboration in the global harvest.

The modern missionary movement was extraordinarily successful, yet its unfinished work now lies less in pioneer work and more in long-term church formation. While important areas in Latin America still require church planting, this work can increasingly be carried out by Latin American churches themselves if they are given the appropriate tools and resources. In many regions, the most pressing need today is to strengthen churches so they can sustain ministry and participate fully in the global missionary task.

The following section translates these principles into concrete proposals to strengthen the Córdoba Gospel Hub and expand its capacity for regional and global missionary participation.

Why Invest in Córdoba Now

Strategic moments in missionary history are not permanent. The institutional foundations of the Córdoba Gospel Hub are already in place, but their capacity to expand depends on timely reinforcement. Investment at this stage strengthens existing structures rather than building them from scratch, making it unusually efficient for missionary purposes in the long term. The opportunity before us is therefore not simply to begin a new initiative, but to accelerate one that is already bearing fruit.

PART VI

Strategic Direction

In brief: This Part outlines the strategic architecture of the Córdoba Gospel Hub: how the mother church, its network of congregations, and its shared financial instruments are organized to sustain growth and multiplication. The concrete, fundable projects that put this architecture into practice are detailed in the companion Strategic Implementation Plan.



STUDENTS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF CÓRDOBA

Iglesia Crecer: Structural Development Overview

The companion Strategic Implementation Plan sets out the specific line-item projects to strengthen and expand the Córdoba Gospel Hub. Before turning to those proposals, it is worth pausing to provide an account of the church around which the entire Hub is organized. Iglesia Crecer Córdoba has reached a strategic inflection point of its own. Several of the proposals in Categories A through F—facility expansion, the Crecer Fund, the multi-purpose retreat center, the church plants of the Crecer Family, and the strengthening of network resources—are most easily understood against the backdrop of the church's internal development plan. The following overview sets out that plan. Each of those proposals can then be read as an operational element of this larger structural vision.

1. Current Reality and Provincial Opportunity

Iglesia Crecer in Córdoba stands at a significant strategic inflection point. What began as a single congregation centered on the church property at Calle Lima has, without deliberate planning, grown into a church with a genuine provincial footprint. Groups and families connected to Crecer are now spread across the city of Córdoba and into several surrounding cities and towns. This was not the result of a formal expansion strategy—it has come about organically, driven primarily by the church's reputation for solid biblical teaching, sound ecclesiology, and Reformed theology. These convictions have drawn people from a wide geographic area seeking something substantive and grounded.

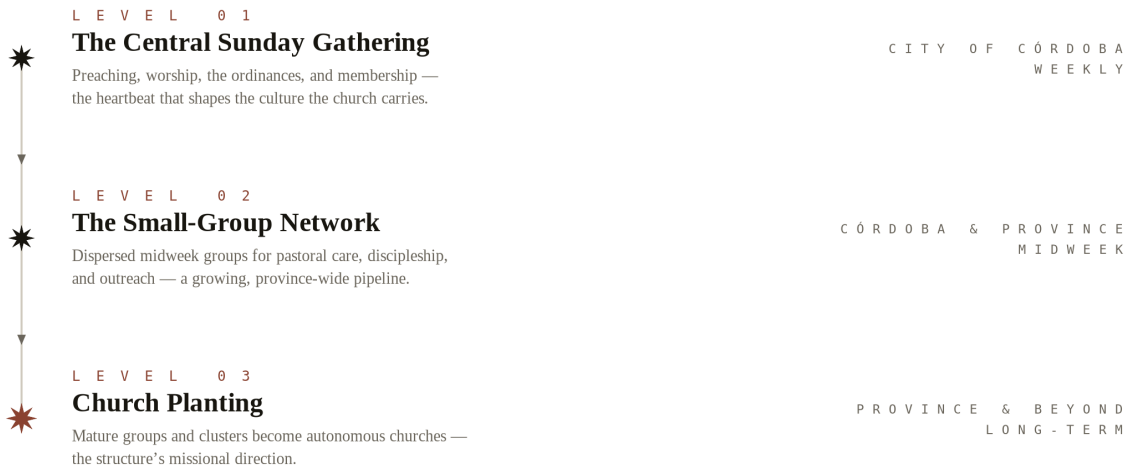
The unplanned nature of this growth does not diminish its significance. On the contrary, it represents a providential opening that the church would be unwise to leave unstructured. An informal provincial presence can either be consolidated into something durable and fruitful or dissipate without intentional development.

The foundation for provincial growth is already in place. The Calle Lima property is a recognizable, central hub. The church's theological identity—its commitment to expository preaching, biblical ecclesiology, and discipleship—is its primary draw and must be preserved and strengthened as the church grows. Any structural development must reinforce, not dilute, these distinctives. Growth for its own sake is not the goal; growth in service of a theologically grounded, disciple-making community is.

This document outlines a three-tiered development framework—local church infrastructure, small-group regionalization, and a family-of-churches network—along with a facilities strategy to support each level.

2. The Three-Level Church Structure

Iglesia Crecer already exists in embryonic form across three distinct yet interconnected levels. The task is not to invent a new structure but to recognize what already exists and bring it into greater coherence and intentionality. Each level serves a distinct function and operates at a different geographic and relational scale.



Three interconnected levels, each at a different scale — the citywide Sunday gathering, province-wide small groups, and church planting beyond.

LEVEL ONE: THE CENTRAL SUNDAY GATHERING

The primary weekly gathering of the congregation is the heartbeat of the church's corporate life. It is where preaching, worship, the ordinances, and formal membership are centered. Currently, the Sunday gathering is constrained by the capacity of the Calle Lima facility, and demand already exceeds available space. Addressing this constraint is one of the most urgent practical priorities of the development plan and is addressed directly in the Facilities Strategy section below.

The Sunday gathering is not merely a logistical event—it is the primary point of theological formation and communal identity. As the church grows and opens additional locations, the integrity of this gathering must be preserved. What happens on Sunday defines the culture that small groups and daughter congregations carry forward.

LEVEL TWO: THE SMALL GROUP NETWORK

The midweek life of the church is sustained by a dispersed network of small groups across the city of Córdoba and, increasingly, across other parts of the province. This structure is already in place and is one of Crecer's genuine strengths. Small groups provide the context for pastoral care, relational accountability, deeper biblical study, and community that a large Sunday gathering cannot provide on its own.

Critically, the geographic dispersal of small groups is not a weakness to correct but an advantage to leverage. Where concentrations of Crecer-connected people exist in other cities—Río Tercero, Alta Gracia, and others—small groups can be established there as well. The church's midweek life thus unfolds on a provincial scale, even as the Sunday gathering remains anchored in Córdoba.

The small group network requires a more sophisticated organizational structure than currently in place. A system of geographic regions, each with a regional leader accountable to a central small-groups director, is needed to ensure adequate pastoral oversight and to facilitate growth across the city and province.

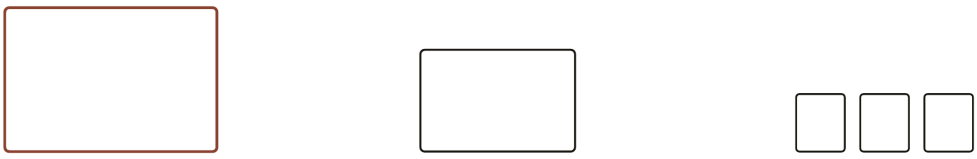
LEVEL THREE: CHURCH PLANTING

The third level is the natural maturation point of the structure: when a small group or cluster of groups has grown large enough, developed sufficient leadership, and achieved financial sustainability, it is ready to become an autonomous church plant. Several such plants already exist across the province, though many remain under-resourced and are not yet able to support a full-time pastor or fund their own growth.

Church planting is the long-term goal that gives the entire structure its missional direction. The small group network is not an end in itself—it is a pipeline. Every regional cluster is, in principle, a church in formation. The development plan at every level should be evaluated by how effectively it advances this goal.

3. Facilities Strategy

The current Calle Lima property is central, recognizable, and valuable—but it is insufficient to support the next phase of growth. A two-part facilities strategy is proposed: acquiring a large multipurpose property on the outskirts of Córdoba to serve as the primary Sunday gathering and ministry hub, while continuing to use Calle Lima and potentially renting two or three small-group centers distributed across the city.



Primary Campus
on the outskirts · the nerve centre
Main auditorium
Retreat & conference
Student & visitor housing
Multi-purpose spaces

Calle Lima
retained central hub · midweek
Replanted congregation
Small-group coordination

Small-Group Centres
2–3 rented · across the city
West of the city
Near the university

A two-part strategy — a large multi-purpose campus on the outskirts, with Calle Lima retained and small-group centres distributed across the city.

THE PRIMARY CAMPUS: A MULTI-PURPOSE PROPERTY

The central recommendation is to acquire a substantial property outside the immediate urban core—one large enough to accommodate a significant auditorium, allow for future expansion, and support the development of ancillary facilities. The rationale is straightforward: land on the city's outskirts typically offers far more space for the same investment than centrally located urban real estate. Moreover, the congregation has already shown willingness to travel for Sunday services. Although approximately 20% of the congregation still relies on public transportation, this is a significant decline from the church's early years three decades ago, when dependence on public transit was much higher.The vision for this property includes the following elements:

- A main auditorium capable of hosting a large congregation, with room to expand capacity over time.
- A retreat and conference center that can host training events, youth camps, annual gatherings, and multi-church meetings for the Crecer family of churches.
- Student and visitor housing—dormitory-style accommodation that reduces the cost and logistical complexity of multi-day events and supports a future university ministry.
- Flexible multi-purpose spaces for classes, training, rehearsal, and administrative functions.

This property serves as the nerve center of the entire three-level structure—the place where the Sunday congregation gathers, the Crecer family of churches convenes for shared training and events, and the network's pastoral and administrative leadership operates.

CALLE LIMA: RETAINED AS A MIDWEEK HUB

By retaining ownership of the Calle Lima property, we would retain the opportunity to plant a new church there in the future, preserving a strategic presence in the city while gaining the advantages of a larger, more flexible campus for future ministry growth. Its central location makes it well-suited as a gathering point for small groups and other midweek activities, providing greater accessibility for some city residents. While a

second congregation could be established there, the property would also serve as a coordination hub for small group ministry, allowing the church to benefit from both a strategic urban presence and an expanded main campus.

SMALL GROUP CENTERS: URBAN DISTRIBUTION

To support the growing, geographically distributed small-group network in Córdoba, the church would consider renting two or three dedicated small-group centers in strategic parts of the city. Rather than relying entirely on home hosting—which, while valuable, is not always practical or sustainable in the context of Córdoba—a rented space, for example, in the west of the city or near the university, could serve as a hub where multiple groups meet throughout the week within a regional structure.

This model follows the same logic as the decentralized study center model used by Seminario Carey, in which students gather in cohorts at distributed study centers rather than traveling to a single central location. The small-group center is not a church but a facilitated gathering point—a low-overhead, high-utility space that makes consistent small-group participation easier for a wider range of people.

A university-area center would also serve as the base for a campus ministry, providing both a gathering point for student small groups and a platform for outreach and evangelism within the university community.

4. Small Group Regionalization

As the small group network grows—both within the city of Córdoba and across the province—informal, centralized oversight becomes increasingly inadequate. A regional structure is required: the city and surrounding area should be divided into geographic regions, each with a designated regional leader responsible for the health, growth, and pastoral care of the groups within that region. These regional leaders would report to a central small groups director who coordinates the network as a whole.

Within the city of Córdoba, regions might be defined by compass quadrant or by neighborhood cluster, with adjustments based on where groups are actually concentrated. For areas outside the city—Río Tercero, Alta Gracia, Saldán, and other towns with developing Crecer connections—a regional leader can be appointed once a sufficient concentration of groups exists. The regional structure outside the city serves a

dual purpose: it provides pastoral oversight in the near term and positions those areas for eventual church planting as the groups mature.

The progression from small group to congregation to autonomous church plant should be clearly defined, with markers that indicate when a group or regional cluster is ready to move to the next stage. Clarity on this progression removes ambiguity for leaders and members and gives developing groups a positive trajectory to aim for rather than an indefinite status as a "small group that never becomes anything more."

This regionalized structure provides the benefits typically associated with a multi-site church model—shared identity, shared resources, coordinated growth—while preserving the clear goal of planting genuinely autonomous local churches rather than creating satellite venues indefinitely dependent on a central campus.

5. The Crecer Family of Churches

Beyond the internal structure of the Córdoba congregation, there is a second, equally important dimension to this development plan: the voluntary network of churches and congregations that together form the Crecer family of churches. This network includes not only the satellite congregations and developing church plants under the Córdoba church's direct oversight but also the fully autonomous churches already established across the province that share Crecer's theological convictions and ministry culture.

GOVERNING PRINCIPLE: VOLUNTARY COOPERATION WITH FULL AUTONOMY

The network operates on the basis of voluntary association. Established churches retain their full autonomy as Baptist congregations and are free to participate in shared resources and initiatives to whatever extent is beneficial to them, adapt shared materials to their local context, and withdraw from the network at any time. A memorandum of understanding among participating churches would formalize the relationship without creating hierarchical dependency. This model respects the ecclesiological convictions that Crecer holds and that each member church shares.

The model is analogous to what can be observed in healthy associational networks in other contexts: churches that are stronger together, not because they are controlled from a center, but because they choose to cooperate around shared values. The Córdoba church, by virtue of its size and resources, will naturally serve as the hub of this network, but the network is not the Córdoba church—it is a family of churches.

SHARED RESOURCES AND COORDINATED MINISTRIES

The network's practical value lies in economies of scale: resources that would be beyond the reach of smaller congregations can be developed once in Córdoba and shared across the family. These include shared Sunday-school and discipleship curricula; teacher, leader, youth, and worship training; joint youth and college events; preaching, music, and multimedia resources; evangelistic and outreach materials; a unified web presence; evangelism and mission training; coordinated missionary support; and the shared Crecer Fund for property acquisition. By developing each resource once and sharing it widely, member churches gain a quality and breadth that no single congregation could achieve alone. The full inventory and how each ministry is coordinated are detailed in the companion Strategic Implementation Plan.



Economies of scale for every congregation — governed by a pastoral council drawn from the member churches.

Across these initiatives, the common theme is that cooperation enables churches to accomplish together what many could not accomplish individually. The network does not replace the ministry of the local church; rather, it amplifies its effectiveness by creating shared resources, expertise, and opportunities for gospel advance.

The Crecer Family of Churches represents a practical application of historic Baptist ecclesiology to the ministry realities of Córdoba and the surrounding region. Baptists have long affirmed both the autonomy of the local congregation and the importance of voluntary cooperation among churches for the advancement of the gospel. The Crecer Family of Churches seeks to put these principles into practice. Each congregation

retains full authority over its own doctrine, leadership, membership, and ministry while partnering with like-minded churches in areas where shared effort can strengthen ministry effectiveness and extend gospel influence. Rather than creating a new ecclesiological model, the network applies the historic Baptist commitment to both congregational independence and associational cooperation in a contemporary setting.

GOVERNANCE AND COORDINATION

A pastoral council drawn from the leadership of member churches should govern the network's shared activities. This council would make decisions about shared resources, set the agenda for network-wide training events, and provide a forum for collaborative planning. Day-to-day coordination of shared ministries would be staffed by the Córdoba church, but the council would ensure that the network remains genuinely collaborative rather than centrally directed.

The leadership of each ministry area—youth, college, Sunday school, small groups, and worship—should actively recruit talent from across all member churches, not just the Córdoba congregation. This prevents the network from becoming lopsided and ensures that smaller churches feel genuinely invested in shared initiatives rather than merely receiving from the center.

Summary

This development plan charts a coherent path for Iglesia Crecer Córdoba to grow intentionally across three interconnected levels: strengthening and expanding the local church through a new multipurpose property and a distributed small-group infrastructure; regionalizing and deepening the small-group network to serve as a province-wide pipeline for church planting; and formalizing the Crecer family of churches as a voluntary network grounded in shared resources, coordinated ministries, and Baptist ecclesiological principles.

The goal is not organizational complexity for its own sake. It is a church—and a family of churches—that is more effective at making disciples, planting autonomous congregations, and serving the province of Córdoba with the gospel. Every structural decision should be evaluated against that measure.

A NOTE ON THE CRECER FUND

One of the most practical challenges facing every congregation in the Crecer Family of Churches is the same: growth is constrained by a lack of adequate facilities, and acquiring or building them is beyond the financial reach of most individual congregations. The Crecer Fund is the network's shared response to this problem.

The Crecer Fund originates with the main church in Córdoba, which has already begun setting aside a designated percentage of its monthly offerings for property acquisition and building development. The vision is that as established churches within the Crecer Family of Churches reach the point where purchasing property or beginning construction becomes feasible, those funds—accumulated over time—will be made available to support them.

Participation in the Crecer Fund is a defining commitment of membership in the Crecer Family of Churches. Each participating congregation agrees to contribute a similar percentage of its monthly offerings to its local Crecer Fund account, building reserves for the day when property investment becomes possible. The result is a network-wide culture of long-term, disciplined saving focused on facilities development.

This is also where partnership from churches and donors in the United States plays a catalytic role. An initial gift does not simply fund a single building; it primes the pump. Because the Crecer Fund is a revolving instrument, the capital that enters it is repaid, recirculated, and lent out again—so a donor's generosity is not spent once but multiplied across congregation after congregation. Priming this cycle now is precisely what makes it possible for the network to become self-sustaining over time.

Beyond the financial dimension, the network would also develop cooperative building teams—members drawn from across the Crecer Family of Churches with construction skills—capable of providing significant physical labor for building projects. This substantially reduces costs and turns a facilities project into an expression of the whole family's shared investment in one another's growth.

Together, the Crecer Fund and the cooperative labor model begin to solve a problem that no single congregation could solve alone.

The Role of ABRA in the Broader Strategy

When ABRA was first established, its primary focus was not to create a national association. Rather, the original vision more closely resembled the Crecer Family of Churches described above—a network of churches connected to and strengthened by the Córdoba church's ministry. As the work developed, however, it became clear that there was a significant unmet need for a Reformed Baptist association across Argentina. Churches from many regions expressed a desire for fellowship, cooperation, theological accountability, and shared ministry. As a result, ABRA grew far more rapidly than anticipated and required substantial attention during its formative years.

Today, ABRA has entered a new stage of development. New leadership has been established, and the association now operates through a regional structure with leaders serving in multiple areas of the country. This growing organizational maturity allows ABRA to function with greater independence and effectiveness while continuing to expand its ministry throughout Argentina.

The development of the Crecer Family of Churches should therefore be understood not as a departure from ABRA but as a renewed emphasis on an important aspect of the original vision. Crecer focuses on strengthening the churches that have emerged from the Córdoba ministry and on creating a framework for deeper cooperation, resource sharing, leadership development, and church multiplication within that sphere of influence.At the same time, ABRA remains a vital component of the broader strategy. It provides the national context for church planting, pastoral cooperation, theological education, and missionary mobilization throughout Argentina and, increasingly, throughout the Southern Cone. One of the strategic priorities in recent years has been cultivating stronger relationships between churches in the Pillar Network and churches in ABRA. These relationships create opportunities for mutual encouragement, shared learning, and coordinated ministry, particularly through church-to-church partnerships, which are discussed in the following section.



THE PASTORS AND WIVES OF ABRA AT THEIR ANNUAL RETREAT

In this sense, the Crecer Family of Churches operates as a network within a network. By strengthening the churches most directly connected to the Córdoba ministry, Crecer contributes leadership, resources, and momentum to ABRA's broader work. A stronger Crecer Family of Churches increases the Córdoba provincial ministry's capacity to serve and support the broader association.

This relationship is also essential to the next phase of the strategy outlined in this white paper. Future initiatives in northern Argentina and Buenos Aires—as well as the long-term goal of sending missionaries from Argentina to the nations—will require both the concentrated strength of the Crecer Family of Churches and ABRA's broader reach. The two structures serve distinct yet complementary roles within a unified vision for advancing the gospel in Argentina, the Southern Cone, and beyond.

The Church Partnership Model

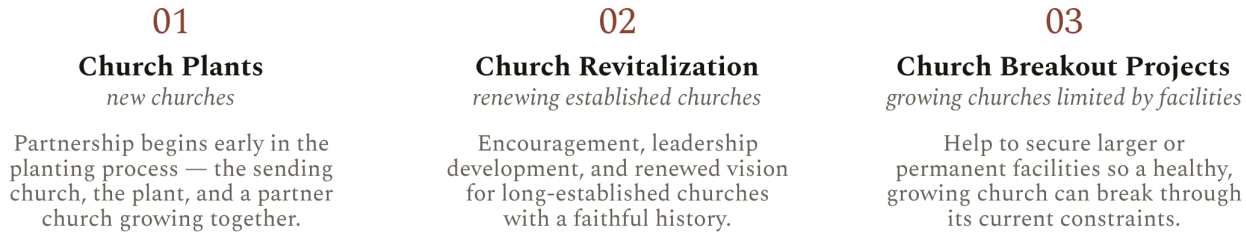
The strategic direction outlined above is sustained, in part, by structured partnerships between churches in the Pillar Network and churches in ABRA. These partnerships are intentionally distinct from conventional short-term mission engagement. Rather than being defined primarily by episodic gifts, mission trips, or ongoing subsidies, they are built as multi-year covenantal relationships oriented toward lasting outcomes: healthy congregations, strengthened leadership, permanent ministry facilities, and the multiplication of gospel witness.

Financial assistance is only one aspect of these partnerships. The greater objective is to build genuine relationships among congregations united by a shared theological vision and a common commitment to the Great Commission. Over several years, pastors, leaders, and church members have the opportunity to get to know one another, pray for one another, and labor together on strategic ministry initiatives. Vision trips, ministry exchanges, and cooperative projects can strengthen these relationships and deepen mutual understanding. While visiting teams may contribute meaningful service through construction projects, evangelistic efforts, leadership training, or other practical ministries, the partnership's most

The most enduring value of the partnership lies in the relationship itself.

✷ FIG. — THE CHURCH PARTNERSHIP MODEL

Three kinds of church that benefit from partnership



✷

THE GOAL

Healthy churches multiplying the gospel — through multi-year, covenantal partnership.

enduring value lies in the relationship itself and the shared commitment to Christ's mission.

A particular strength of this model is the opportunity to connect churches with similar convictions and comparable ministry contexts. Congregations of similar size and stage of development can grow alongside one another, learning from each other's experiences and encouraging one another over an extended period. Through repeated visits, regular communication, and shared prayer, partnerships can mature into long-term friendships that benefit both churches.

Three categories of churches are particularly well-suited to this partnership model.

1st Church plants can benefit from partnerships established early in the planting process. In such cases, an American church partners not only with the Argentine sending church but also with the emerging congregation itself. As the new church develops, the relationship grows alongside it, providing encouragement, accountability, and strategic support during its formative years.

2nd Church revitalization projects may benefit from partnership relationships. Some long-established churches possess a faithful history but require encouragement, leadership development, and renewed vision to reach their potential. A healthy partnership can provide

practical assistance, pastoral encouragement, and access to training resources that help

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3rd position the congregation for renewed growth and effectiveness.

Perhaps most distinctively, partnerships may support what could be called church breakout projects. These involve healthy, growing congregations that have reached a significant barrier to further expansion due to limitations in their facilities or property. In such cases, assistance with securing larger rental facilities, renovating existing properties, or eventually acquiring permanent facilities may enable a congregation to move beyond its current constraints and enter a new phase of ministry growth and stability.

These partnerships must be established with wisdom and patience. Maturity is required on both sides of the relationship. On the Argentine side, partnerships should be reserved for churches that demonstrate a proven record of faithfulness, sound doctrine, responsible stewardship, and pastoral leadership marked by growing maturity. Significant financial investments should generally not be made at the outset of a partnership. Rather, the relationship should develop over time, allowing trust, accountability, and mutual understanding to emerge before substantial resources are committed.

The governing conviction remains the principle articulated in Part V: the most strategic external assistance a maturing church can receive is capital investment rather than permanent operational support. When operational assistance is provided, it should follow a clearly defined tapering schedule that declines to zero, ensuring that every partnership moves toward self-sufficiency rather than dependency. The specific partnership structures, terms, and tapering schedules are detailed in the Strategic Implementation Plan.

In many cases, major investments involve multiple partners. For example, a church plant might receive support from the Argentine sending church, a partner church in the United States, and the Crecer Fund. These investments are intended to create durable assets rather than ongoing obligations. Consistent with the broader vision of multiplication, receiving congregations should be encouraged, whenever feasible, to "pay forward" the assistance they have received by contributing to future church plants, revitalization efforts, or property projects within the network.

Crecer Ministries USA plays a key facilitative role in this strategy. It is a registered 501(c)(3) organization with extensive experience serving churches and ministry partners across North and South America. Thanks to its long-standing relationships, organizational infrastructure, and familiarity with the cultural and logistical realities of international ministry, Crecer Ministries is well-positioned to help identify suitable church partners, coordinate communication, facilitate vision trips, assist with project administration, and ensure appropriate financial accountability. Crecer Ministries does not replace the direct relationship between partnering churches; rather, it serves as a trusted bridge that helps establish, strengthen, and sustain those relationships so that churches can focus on their shared mission and ministry objectives.

A Final Note on Leadership and Continuity

A strategic undertaking of this scope requires focused, dedicated leadership. To devote his full attention to implementing this plan, Sam Masters—founder and longtime pastor of Iglesia Crecer—will transition from lead pastor to Executive Director of the Córdoba Gospel Hub. While his primary role will change, he will continue to serve as an elder of Iglesia Crecer, providing general pastoral guidance and coordinating closely with the church as the Córdoba Gospel Hub develops. In his new role, he will focus on strategic development, partnership cultivation, institutional growth, fundraising, and regional coordination. This transition is not a departure from pastoral ministry but a natural extension of it, applying decades of ministry experience to strengthen churches and advance gospel work throughout the region.

This transition has been made possible by many years of intentional leadership development. Iglesia Crecer is governed by a mature team of elders, comprising both Argentine nationals and missionaries, who have been shaped by the same theological convictions, ministry philosophy, and strategic vision that have guided the church since its founding. As Sam assumes his new responsibilities, the leadership team will continue to provide pastoral oversight and day-to-day direction for the congregation.

The Córdoba Gospel Hub has been designed from the outset to be larger than any single individual. Its long-term strength rests not on the leadership of one person but on the institutions, partnerships, trained leaders, and shared convictions cultivated over more than three decades of ministry. The goal is to build structures that can continue to serve

churches, train leaders, and advance the gospel for generations to come, regardless of future changes in personnel or leadership.

In brief, the strategic architecture set out in Part VI is now in place—but it is not yet fully built. The model church still needs its expanded campus, the network still needs the shared instruments that will enable its congregations to grow, and the concrete projects that will bring this design to life remain to be funded. What follows should be read against that unfinished need: reaching the horizons ahead depends on completing the work begun.

PART VII

Expanding Horizons

In brief: The Córdoba Gospel Hub project exists to enable a broader work. This Part brings together the project's three forward horizons—the Salta and Northwest Initiative, the Buenos Aires Global City Project, and the sending of missionaries from Argentina to the nations—into a single widening movement from Córdoba to the ends of the earth.



CENTRAL CÓRDOBA — FROM THIS CITY, THE MOVEMENT WIDENS OUTWARD

The strategy set out in Part VI is not an end in itself. It is designed to build the institutional, financial, and leadership capacity required for broader work—three expanding horizons that carry the gospel hub model outward from Córdoba. The first reaches northward into Salta and the Argentine northwest; the second toward Buenos Aires, one of the great cities of the Spanish-speaking world; and the third beyond Argentina altogether, as the churches of ABRA take their place among the world's sending churches.

The horizons that follow are best understood as a single movement unfolding in three phases. The first is to complete the development of the Córdoba Gospel Hub, maturing it into both a fully realized model and the coordinating center of a national network of Reformed Baptist churches. The second is to reproduce that model in two strategic regional hubs: Salta, gateway to northwestern Argentina, and Buenos Aires, one of the

principal cities of the Spanish-speaking world. The third extends beyond these to the gradual establishment of gospel hubs in other key provincial capitals, until a connected network of sending centers spans the nation and, through ABRA, participates in the worldwide sending of missionaries to the nations.

Three commitments unify every phase. The first is evangelism—the patient, Spirit-dependent proclamation of Christ described in Part II—without which no church is planted and no hub takes root. The second is university ministry, described in Part IV, where the leadership pipeline begins by identifying future gospel workers. The third is church planting: the establishment of healthy, self-governing Reformed Baptist churches that become the foundation of each new gospel hub. Evangelism and university ministry together lead to church planting, through which the model multiplies from one center to the next.

Córdoba as Prototype and National Coordination Point

The first phase is already well underway. The proposals of the Córdoba Gospel Hub plan are designed to bring the hub to full maturity: an expanded model church, a strengthened family of churches, a growing seminary, a capitalized Crecer Fund, and a functioning missionary-sending structure. As it matures, Córdoba fulfills two complementary roles. It serves as a prototype—a proven, reproducible model of a gospel hub—and as the national coordination point from which church planting, leadership development, and shared resources extend across the ABRA network. The success of every subsequent phase depends on the strength of this center.

The Salta and Northwest Initiative

A second forward-looking horizon for the Córdoba Gospel Hub's work lies in northwestern Argentina, in the provinces of Salta and Jujuy. The northwest holds a distinctive place in Argentine geography, culture, and ecclesial need. Its cities serve as gateways to the Bolivian altiplano, the Andean highlands, and the indigenous communities of the Argentine north. Its intellectual and cultural orientation

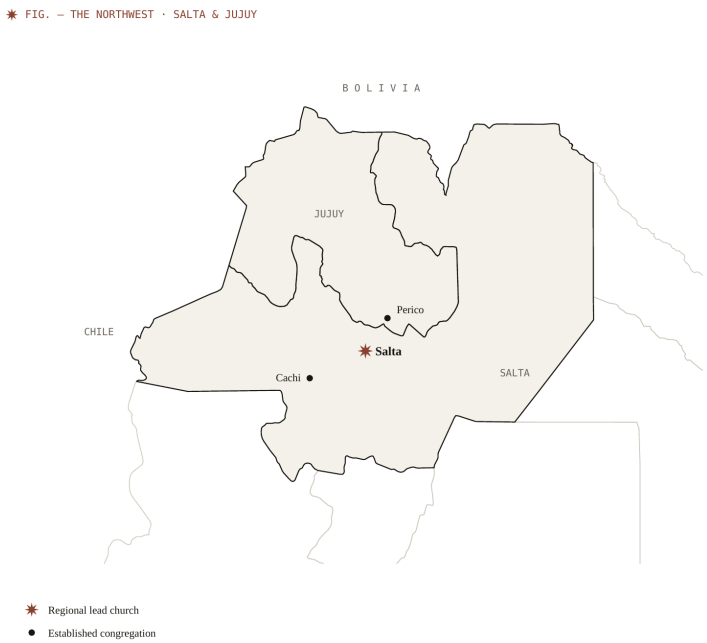


PLAZA 9 DE JULIO AND THE CATHEDRAL, SALTA

differs in important respects from that of Córdoba and the Pampean heartland, and its evangelical witness has historically been less developed than in other regions of the country.

This vision builds on a foundation more than seventeen years in the making. Iglesia Crecer established a congregation in the town of Cachi in the high Valle Calchaquíes, where an established church now serves the surrounding region under the leadership of a pastor trained through the ministry in Córdoba. That congregation is also planting a church in the neighboring town of Payogasta, extending its witness throughout the valley. From the beginning, this work has sustained patient evangelism and discipleship in a region with almost no historic evangelical witness. The valley's rugged geography, high-altitude isolation, and traditional Andean culture make it not only a continuing mission field but also an ideal setting for missionary formation, allowing future cross-cultural workers to gain practical experience within Argentina before serving elsewhere.

Building on this foundation, the Hub is developing a coordinated ministry throughout northwestern Argentina centered on four complementary initiatives: a Reformed Baptist church in the city of Salta, a university ministry serving the city's approximately 50,000 students, further development of Cachi as a missionary training center, and expansion of ministry in Perico, Jujuy. This regional project has been underway for several years and has gained significant momentum more recently. In Perico, a group of approximately twenty people is already being discipled under the leadership of an intern from the Córdoba church. Together, these ministries are designed to strengthen church planting, leadership development, theological education, and missionary formation throughout the region. As the Hub's institutional capacity



Salta and Jujuy — the Crecer family reaching into Argentina's Northwest, led from the city of Salta.

continues to mature, these initiatives are expected to coalesce into a fully integrated Northwest Gospel Hub. An important recent development is ABRA's decision to join Iglesia Crecer in this regional effort, providing a broader institutional base and strengthening the long-term prospects of the work. Although the cultural and demographic realities of northwestern Argentina differ substantially from those of Buenos Aires, this initiative represents the first opportunity to develop and evaluate a second Gospel Hub beyond Córdoba. The experience gained in coordinating multiple ministries across a new region, developing indigenous leadership, integrating theological education with university outreach, and fostering church planting will provide valuable lessons for the eventual establishment of a future Hub in the Buenos Aires metropolitan area.

Salta represents the first intentional reproduction of the Córdoba model in a new region.

Within this broader movement, Salta marks the first intentional replication of the Córdoba model in a new region. The same elements that have proven effective in Córdoba—a strong city church, a university ministry that develops future leaders, a missionary training presence, and a network of cooperating congregations—are being assembled and adapted to the distinct cultural realities of the northwest. Together, the established church in Cachi, the church plant in Payogasta, the growing ministry in Perico, and the planned ministries in Salta form an integrated regional strategy in which rural ministry, urban outreach, leadership development, and missionary training reinforce one another. Consequently, the northwest initiative is significant not only for its strategic value but also as the first practical demonstration that the Gospel Hub model can be successfully replicated outside Córdoba. If this model proves successful, it will set an important precedent for future regional Hubs, beginning with the planned expansion into the Buenos Aires metropolitan area.

The Buenos Aires Global City Project

The proposals developed in this paper are oriented toward a five-year horizon focused on strengthening the Gospel Hub in Córdoba and expanding its regional influence. Beyond that horizon lies the most ambitious phase of the long-term strategy: the

Buenos Aires Global City Project, a coordinated, multi-ministry effort designed to advance the gospel throughout the Buenos Aires metropolitan region.

With a metropolitan population exceeding fifteen million, Buenos Aires is one of the largest and most influential urban centers in Latin America. It is home to more than one-third of Argentina's population and hosts more than twenty universities and other institutions of higher education. It also serves as the country's principal cultural, economic, educational, and transportation center. At the same time, it presents unique challenges for gospel ministry. Rather than functioning as a single city, the metropolitan region comprises the Autonomous City of Buenos Aires and dozens of surrounding municipalities, each with its own identity, leadership, and ministry opportunities. The region is connected by numerous transportation hubs that shape patterns of work, study, and daily life, making strategic geographic planning essential.

An additional challenge will be securing ministry facilities. Commercial and residential real estate prices in Buenos Aires are generally comparable to those in Córdoba, but the metropolitan geography makes the strategy used in Córdoba largely unavailable. In Córdoba, purchasing property near the city's expanding edge allowed the acquisition of substantially larger sites at lower cost while remaining well positioned for future growth. Buenos Aires, by contrast, is a continuous metropolitan area spanning numerous municipalities, leaving few comparable opportunities. As a result, ministry locations will need to be selected primarily for strategic accessibility rather than affordability, making partnerships with existing churches especially valuable in the project's initial stages.



THE OBELISCO ON AVENIDA 9 DE JULIO, BUENOS AIRES

The Buenos Aires Global City Project will also build on an existing foundation, but one considerably broader than the foundation already established in northwestern Argentina. ABRA already has several congregations serving throughout the city and province (see the city map), while Seminario Carey has established study centers that provide theological education and leadership development. These churches and

educational centers serve as strategic anchors from which the project can develop, reducing the need to build an entirely new ministry infrastructure and allowing the work to focus from the outset on coordination, expansion, and multiplication. Nevertheless, the sheer size of the metropolitan region, its population of more than fifteen million, and the immense need for a stronger evangelical witness mean the work cannot be limited to strengthening existing ministries. New church plants, university ministries, and leadership development initiatives will be required across the metropolitan area. In a city of this scale, the long-term need is measured not in a handful of congregations but in scores of healthy, gospel-preaching churches. A vision of scores of such churches across Greater Buenos Aires is ambitious, but it more accurately reflects the magnitude of both the city and the opportunity before the churches.

The need is measured not in a handful of congregations but in scores across Greater Buenos Aires.

The experience gained from developing the Córdoba and Northwest Gospel Hubs will provide the organizational framework for this effort. Nevertheless, Buenos Aires will require a significant period of preparation before the project can be fully implemented. Among the first priorities will be to identify the ABRA congregation or congregations best suited to serve as strategic ministry centers; prepare those churches for expanded regional ministry; develop partnerships with compatible Pillar Network churches; identify the universities and institutions of higher education with the greatest potential for sustained university outreach; and recruit gifted national workers from across the ABRA fellowship to participate in the project.

The missionary component will likewise require careful long-term planning. American missionaries with experience in church planting, theological education, university ministry, administration, organizational development, or other strategic ministries will strengthen the project considerably, particularly those with Spanish-language proficiency. Additional missionary candidates should be identified well in advance so that language acquisition, cultural preparation, and ministry training can begin.

Given the size and complexity of the metropolitan region, the Buenos Aires Global City Project cannot be organized around a single Gospel Hub. Instead, it envisions a network

of four or five strategically located Gospel Hubs, each rooted in an ABRA church and integrated with its surrounding community. As in Córdoba and the Northwest, each Hub would combine evangelism, university ministry, leadership development, and church planting, drawing on shared resources from Seminario Carey, the missionary fund, and the wider institutional infrastructure of the Crecer Family of Churches. Working cooperatively rather than independently, these interconnected Hubs would extend gospel witness across a metropolis that no single congregation or ministry center could effectively serve.

The Northwest Gospel Hub will offer the first opportunity to assess the Córdoba model's transferability beyond its original setting. Although Buenos Aires differs dramatically from northwestern Argentina in scale, culture, and urban complexity, lessons from establishing a second regional Hub will prove invaluable as the strategy advances toward the nation’s capital. With Córdoba serving as the prototype and the Northwest as the first regional replication, the Buenos Aires Global City Project marks the first true global-city application of the Gospel Hub model. Its purpose is not simply to reproduce Iglesia Crecer or ABRA but to strengthen the broader advance of the gospel by helping establish, equip, and support faithful local churches throughout the metropolitan region. If successfully implemented, the Buenos Aires Global City Project will represent the mature expression of the Gospel Hub strategy and provide a platform for future expansion into other major urban centers across

✷ FIG. — GREATER BUENOS AIRES · THE ABRA CHURCHES



The ABRA churches across metropolitan Buenos Aires — from Campana on the Paraná to City Bell near La Plata.

Latin America and the Spanish-speaking world.

Replication in Other Provincial Capitals

Salta and Buenos Aires mark the first two reproductions of the Córdoba model, but they need not be the last. As the network matures and the Gospel Hub model proves reproducible, the same strategic approach can be extended to other key provincial capitals—cities that serve as the cultural, educational, economic, and ecclesiastical centers of their regions, much as Córdoba serves central Argentina and Salta serves the northwest.

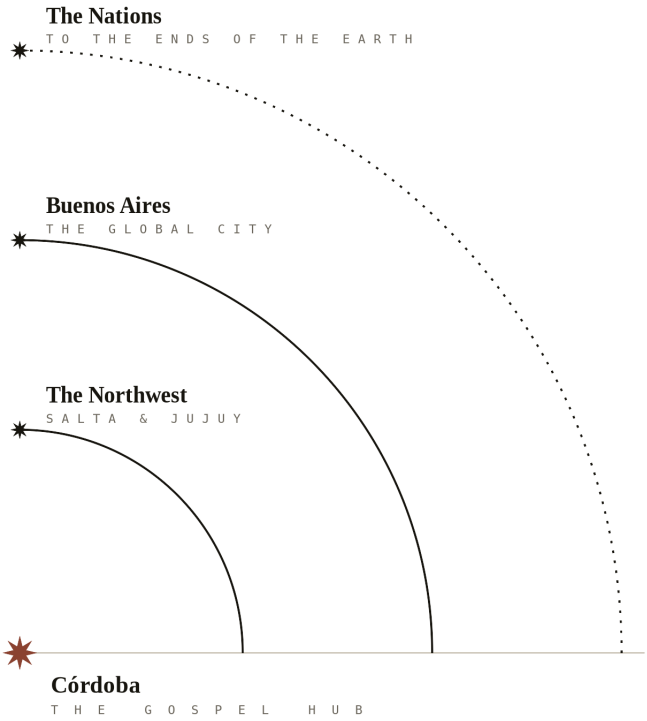
The long-term vision is the emergence of a connected national network of Gospel Hubs. Each Hub would be anchored by a strong sending church and surrounded by an integrated ecosystem of congregations, theological education, university ministry, leadership development, and missionary mobilization, while remaining closely connected through the cooperative structures of ABRA and the Crecer Family of Ministries. Such a network would enable Reformed Baptist churches throughout Argentina to exercise missionary and church-planting capacity far exceeding the sum of their individual efforts, creating a sustainable national infrastructure for the long-term advance of the gospel across the needy areas of Latin America and around the world.

Argentina and ABRA: Sending to the Nations

From its founding, Iglesia Crecer understood itself not merely as a church that would plant churches in Argentina but ultimately as one that would send missionaries to the nations. Part I described the broader shift that makes this possible: the center of gravity in world missions has shifted toward the Global South, and Latin America—with its cultural adaptability, its linguistic reach across the Spanish- and Portuguese-speaking worlds, and its growing points of contact with the peoples of the 10/40 Window—has become one of the world's most strategically positioned missionary-sending regions. Ultimately, the Córdoba Gospel Hub exists to serve that missionary calling.

That vision is no longer merely prospective. The Hub is already preparing its first international missionary for cross-cultural service, offering an early indication of the missionary pipeline this strategy aims to build. Rather than waiting for every institutional element to be in place, the work of identifying, training, and sending missionaries has already begun.

FIG. — THREE EXPANDING HORIZONS



From Córdoba the model expands outward — to the Northwest, to Buenos Aires, and to the nations.

Several institutions now provide the foundation for this missionary vision. At the center stands Seminario Carey. It intentionally bears the name of William Carey, reflecting its commitment to preparing leaders for a missionary church in a new missionary era. Like Carey himself, the seminary seeks to unite sound theology with an active commitment to the Great Commission, equipping pastors, church planters, missionaries, theological educators, and other Christian leaders for gospel ministry in Argentina and among the nations. Through its degree programs and growing network of extension study centers across Argentina and the Spanish-speaking world, Seminario Carey serves as the educational engine of the Gospel Hub strategy and cultivates a missionary vision throughout the churches of ABRA.

Complementing the seminary are two additional initiatives introduced earlier in this paper. The first is Reaching & Teaching Español, formed in cooperation with Reaching & Teaching International Ministries and designed to become a missionary-sending structure for Latin America. It provides the mission-agency infrastructure through which Latin American missionaries can be recruited, deployed, supported, and

sustained throughout their ministries, addressing one of the principal institutional needs that has historically limited missionary sending from Latin America.

The second is La Cumbre, the missions mobilization conference. By gathering Spanish-speaking young people and calling them to missionary service, La Cumbre serves as the entry point to the missionary pipeline. Together, La Cumbre, Seminario Carey, its expanding network of regional training centers, and Reaching & Teaching Español form an integrated missionary pathway. La Cumbre mobilizes future missionaries. Seminario Carey and its training centers provide theological formation and leadership development. Reaching & Teaching Español provides the sending structure through which workers can be deployed, supported, and sustained in long-term cross-cultural ministry. As these institutions mature alongside the expanding network of Gospel Hubs, Argentina and the churches of ABRA will be increasingly positioned to participate as an active missionary-sending movement in advancing the gospel among the nations

CONCLUSION

From Receiving Fields to Sending Centers

In brief: The global church is moving from receiving missionaries to sending them. Strengthening proven centers like Córdoba through patient capital investment is among the most strategic ways to advance that transition.



CÓRDOBA — A RECEIVING FIELD BECOME A SENDING CENTER

The global church is experiencing one of the most significant missionary transitions since the modern missionary movement began. Increasingly, the center of gravity is shifting from regions that once received missionaries to those now preparing to send them. Strengthening proven ministry centers, such as Córdoba, through patient, strategic investment is among the most effective ways to accelerate that transition.

The modern missionary movement demonstrated what sustained cooperation among churches, institutions, and sacrificial leadership could accomplish when united around the Great Commission. The Serampore Mission stands as one of the clearest historical examples of this pattern. Carey and his colleagues did not merely establish congregations; they built a durable missionary infrastructure to sustain theological education, Bible translation, publishing, leadership formation, and church planting across an entire region.

The present moment offers a comparable opportunity. In many regions of the Global South, the church has moved beyond its earliest stages of establishment. It is now

entering a period when theological depth, institutional maturity, and missionary-sending capacity are both possible and necessary. Strengthening these emerging centers is therefore one of the most strategic ways to advance the church's global mission in the twenty-first century. The Córdoba Gospel Hub is one such center in development. Over three decades, a network of congregations, leadership development, theological education, associational partnerships, and missionary institutions has emerged, with the capacity to support sustained regional expansion. The proposals outlined in this document are intended not to create an entirely new movement but to strengthen and integrate ministries already taking shape, enabling them to serve not only the needs of Córdoba but also the wider missionary calling of Argentina, Latin America, and the global church.

This strategy marks a shift in both perspective and practice. Missions in Latin America can no longer be understood primarily as resources flowing from North to South. Increasingly, churches in Argentina and across Latin America are positioned to participate directly in cross-cultural missionary sending. Strategic investment at this stage strengthens the institutions that sustain such sending and accelerates the emergence of missionary initiatives led by national churches. The goal is therefore not dependency but partnership. Churches in North America and Latin America share a common calling within Christ's global mission. When their resources, experience, and institutions are brought together in service of the gospel, the long-term fruit extends far beyond what any one of them could accomplish independently.

The Serampore vision cannot be confined to one place or one generation.

The Serampore vision cannot be confined to one place or one generation. It set a pattern that can be replicated wherever churches are willing to invest patiently in the organizations, institutions, and leaders that sustain missionary advance. The development of the Córdoba Gospel Hub—and its future expansion through regional hubs across Argentina—offers an opportunity to participate in that same pattern today. What began two centuries ago, with missionaries from the Global North carrying the gospel to the nations, now continues as churches planted through those efforts take their place in the global missionary advance.