



Testimony of

Rev. Lee de León

Templo Calvario Community Development Corporation  
Santa Ana, California

before

The House Government Reform Committee  
Subcommittee on Criminal Justice, Drug Policy and Human Resources  
The Honorable Mark Souder, Chairman

Monday January 12, 2004  
11:30 a.m.

Los Angeles Christian School  
2003 East Imperial Highway  
Los Angeles, CA

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It is a pleasure to be here with you today to share the many successes of the vast array of Templo Calvario's ministries.

Templo Calvario is a congregation based in the city of Santa Ana, California. Charisma Magazine has recently recognized Templo Calvario as the largest Hispanic church in America. Over 10,000 individuals weekly visit our church to worship and/or to receive assistance from our considerable number of outreach ministries.

Templo Calvario has a long history of compassion. For over 75 years, the church has ministered to families in need in a variety of ways. Although the church is located in the city of Santa Ana, California, its benevolent efforts have reached beyond its borders to other cities, states and countries. Cities like Miami, Florida have an outreach center planted by one of Templo Calvario's inner city missionaries reaching out to the poor of that city. Ensenada, Mexico and Buenos Aires, Argentina have our missionaries doing the same thing.

This long history of compassion comes as a result of the thinking that permeates every heart and mind at Templo Calvario. Regularly you hear members greeting each other with, "Soy bendicido, para bendecir" ("I am blessed, to bless others").

### **Obras de Amor**

In 1980, we took steps to formalize our benevolent work by establishing a ministry called

**Obras de Amor** (Works of Love). Obras de Amor weekly:

- Manages a warehouse that procures and distributes over 90 tons of groceries and other product.
- Provides counseling, referrals, groceries, emergency assistance and other services to over 250 families.
- Provides groceries, clothing, furniture and on occasion funding to a network of over 60 churches and community-based organizations.

**Story:** Angel arrived at our church hungry and unemployed. He was a single 19 year old alcoholic that needed more than food and a referral; he needed direction in his life. He not only received assistance, but also started volunteering in our warehouse. This provided him the opportunity of receiving needed counseling and basic life skills training. Today Angel is no longer drinking, his married and working as an apprentice with a plumbing company.

### **Kingdom Coalition**

This network of over 60 churches and community-based organizations extends from Los Angeles to San Diego. These organizations serve over 80,000 individuals each month.

These groups provide a multitude of services including food distribution to the hungry, counseling, after school centers, rehab homes, and much more.

For the past two years we have provided needed training to this network with the assistance of the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee, Nueva Esperanza and the Compassion Capital Fund.

### **After School Centers**

Templo Calvario operates three after school centers in the cities of Garden Grove and Santa Ana. Two of these centers are found in high density neighborhoods populated by low income Latino and Asian families that live in crowded apartment buildings.

These centers provide homework assistance, tutoring and mentoring for elementary school children. They also coordinate wholesome community building events that target the families of these children.

Story: Enrique is a 12 year old that attends our center in the city of Garden Grove (Buena/Clinton Center). He was having a difficult time with math at school. His parents could not provide the help he needed since they don't speak nor read English well and have 6 other children to look after one that was a pregnant fifteen year old. At our center,

he was able to get one-on-one tutoring that dramatically improved his grades. Not only that, but it has a brand new goal; he wants to go to college.

### **Other Areas of Service**

- **Summer Camp-** Annually we sponsor teens in those neighborhoods we serve by sending key teens to camp.
- **Back-to-School-** Each year hundreds of children receive back packs loaded with school supplies and many receive assistance with school uniforms.
- **Holiday of Hope-** Over 4,000 children receive Christmas toys every holiday season.
- **Esperanza-** An event that has not been held in years will be revived this year. Over 100 faith-based and community-based organizations and local businesses will gather at the Santa Ana Bowl to host a community fair.

### **Templo Calvario Community Development Corporation**

In November of 2002, our board of elders agreed to launch a new corporation that would focus on bringing long-term solutions to our community. Our elders agreed to birth Templo Calvario Community Development Corporation.

This new corporation will focus on:

- Affordable Housing

- Business and Job Creation
- Education
- Senior and Youth Programs

Since its inception, Templo Calvario CDC has started a:

- Charter School (120 students)- this is a partnership with the Santa Ana Unified School District
- Senior Service Enterprise (goal is 40 new jobs)- This new company will provide home care, transportation and other vital services to seniors in our community. The Office of Community Services has provided a pre-development grant that is helping us bring this business together.
- Project Esperanza (goal is to assist 25 groups annually)- This new effort is providing technical assistance to over 25 FBOs and CBOs in our area that service families in the Empowerment Zone of the city of Santa Ana. Technical assistance provided by We Care America and a grant from the Compassion Capital Fund are giving us the support we need to make this project a success.

Story- For many years, Marco Tierrablanca has served the youth of Santa Ana by organizing soccer leagues and providing fund raising events to help these children buy their uniforms. But his greatest desire has been to expand his work to the elementary

schools of our city. Project Esperanza will help him reach this next level of service to the youth of our community by helping him form his own 501(c)3, establish a formal board, providing training in other critical areas and organize a meeting with school district officials and Mr. Tierrablanca.

### **Obstacles**

For the most part, our city and county partnerships are developing well. But we're still challenged by some agencies at the local level that find it difficult to work with faith-based organizations. Every government employee has their own interpretation of "separation of church and state" and because some don't have a handle on it yet, often we get left out.

For example, it's interesting that we in the faith sector very often are better informed of new federal funding than local funding. I don't understand why we still do not get the emails or mailings that other nonreligious groups receive. Very often we rely on second hand information to keep abreast of new funding.

In early beginnings of the Faith-based Initiative, there was talk of expediting the application process to gain 501(c) 3 status. Well, to date things haven't changed...it's

still slow. Our new CDC is still waiting on approval after many months of waiting. This hampers our ability to seek additional funding both from government and private sources.

Can anything be done about the high cost of grant writing? So far we've been fortunate in this area, but startup groups cannot afford the high fees many writers request. I would encourage you Mr. Chairman to investigate the possibility of new funding that would provide training and technical assistance to new startups.

Thank you once again for the opportunity to appear before you today. I'm happy to answer any questions you might have.