

# **STRATEGY FOR EVANGELIZING PORTUGUESE LANGUAGE SPEAKERS**

**IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA AND CANADA**

**04/17/2008**

**PROFILE OF PORTUGUESE LANGUAGE SPEAKERS**

## ***General Background***

More than 1.3 million people in the United States indicate that they come from “Portuguese Ancestry.” These people have come from the countries of Portugal, Brazil, Cape Verde Islands, Mozambique, Angola and the Azores. These countries are found on three different continents and each one has its own particular culture and customs. While there are similarities, the common link is the Portuguese language.

Portugal, itself, was the earliest of the great colonizing states with a 16<sup>th</sup> century reach around the world. Portugal is a developed country, and although having one of the lowest GDP per capita of Western European countries, it has a high Human Development Index and is in terms of quality of life, among the 20 highest rated in the world. It is a member of the European Union (since 1986) and the United Nations (since 1955); as well as a founding member of OECD, NATO, CPLP (Comunidade dos Países de Língua Portuguesa — Community of Portuguese Language Countries), and the European Union's Euro zone.

Brazil was granted independence from Portugal in 1822 and covers half of South America and is emerging as a great world power with an exploding population of over 180 million people. Brazil is the world's 8th largest economy in terms of purchasing power and the 10th largest economy at market exchange rates. The country has a diversified middle-income economy with wide variations in development levels and mature manufacturing, mining and agriculture sectors. Technology and services also play an important role and are growing rapidly. Brazil is a net exporter, having gone through free trade and privatization reforms in the 1990s. In spite of important economical achievements, many social issues still hamper development.

**The Cape Verde Islands are located about 385 miles off the shore of Senegal in West Africa, and were colonized by the Portuguese in 1462. Full independence from Portugal was granted in 1975. Prior to that, citizens held Portuguese citizenship and even today have special status with the Portuguese government. Most of the citizens are “mulatto,” that is, a mix of African with Portuguese, though some 30% is African. Cape Verde is a small nation that lacks resources and has experienced severe droughts. Agriculture is made difficult by lack of rain and is restricted to only four islands for most of the year. Most of the nation's GDP comes from the service industry. Cape Verde's economy has grown since the late 1990s and it is now considered a country of average development. Cape Verde has significant cooperation with Portugal at every level of the economy, which has led it to link its currency first to the Portuguese escudo and, in 1999, to the euro.**

**Angola and Mozambique are two large nations located on opposite sides of the South African continent. Both were colonized by Portugal, and both have suffered severely from movements of independence and civil wars. Though the average citizen of these countries is unlikely to migrate to North America, there are many Portuguese citizens who have either served military time, or engaged business ventures in these two countries, who have settled in the U.S. or Canada.**

**The Azores with a history much like the Cape Verde Islands, is located further into the Atlantic, 950 miles due west of Lisbon, Portugal. On its nine small island live a quarter of a million inhabitants. It is a popular vacation spot for many people all over the world.**

**The Portuguese language, closely related to the other Romance languages, is the 6<sup>th</sup> most extensively-spoken language in the world (after Chinese, English, Hindi, Spanish and Arabic), with around 300 million speakers in seven countries. It is most like Spanish with about an 80% recognition level, though the spoken language varies greatly from country to country and region to region, often inflected quite differently so that mutual understanding between the languages is difficult. Because the Portuguese language has a greater variation of**

sounds, and because some of those sounds are nasalized (as in French), a Spanish speaker is probably unable to understand Portuguese while a Portuguese-speaker can pick up a portion of the meaning in Spanish. It is important to remember that these are recognized as two very distinct languages and those Portuguese-speakers are insulted when they dismissed as just offering “Spanish poorly spoken.”

## ***Immigration Patterns***

For reasons of this survey, the two major immigrant groups that represent most Portuguese-language ministries are the Brazilians and the Cape Verdians, however, with very different histories and cultural backgrounds.

### ***Brazilians***

Brazilians are very warm, fun-loving and out-going. They enjoy being with friends and any occasion is a reason to celebrate. Conversation is very animated and close. Friends are greeted with an embrace or by kissing on both cheeks. Brazilians have strong family ties and enjoy the blend of the elderly and the young. They have a great passion for soccer and are also very proud of “the Brazilian ways,” which is the ability to always find a way to resolve any problem.

A growing population of Brazilians has been immigrating to the US in recent years. There is an estimated of 2,000,000 Brazilians living in America; many have settled in the Northeast. Metropolitan New York, including New York City and parts of New Jersey and Connecticut. There is an estimated number of 230,000 Brazilians that are living on these areas. Greater Boston has 150,000, while more than 150,000 live in south Florida.

There are an estimated of 20,000 Brazilians living in Canada .Major concentrations are in Toronto-ON, Montreal-PQ, Vancouver, BC and Calgary, AB, but there are Brazilians living in all Provinces and Territories, including Nunavut.

## ***Cape Verdians***

Cape Verdians are generally hospitable, generous and friendly. They take life at a relaxed pace and enjoy visiting with friends. A common greeting among friends is the cheek kiss. The success of the family is emphasized over the individual and great care is given to those in the extended family who are less fortunate

Cape Verdians came to the United States primarily to settle because of severe economic, educational limitation in their tiny homeland which, combined is smaller than Rhode Island, and numbers just under a half million inhabitants. They came primarily as Roman Catholics but often with ideas infused by indigenous beliefs.

Most Cape Verdians are in North America either from earlier migrations and are well integrated into the dominant culture, or are culturally “updated” by the infusion of extended family immigrants. They are a very cohesive cultural unit that, despite their assimilation, retain their institutions, their language (sometimes a Creole version), and their religious identity. Because geographically they are confined primarily to the Northeast corridor, they exercise substantial political and social clout.

## **The Missional Task of Evangelizing Portuguese Language Speakers**

### ***Missional Priority:***

To spread the gospel in a dynamic way, raising disciples and creating possibilities that will bear fruit for the Kingdom of God and His church through planting and developing churches.

To develop missional projects on the Portuguese language for districts and churches that inspires a global vision of planting churches and developing mission outreach.

To identify and train 100 new leaders for Portuguese speaking ministries in the US and Canada to plant and develop new churches.

## ***Missional Vision***

**Through evangelism, the Multicultural Ministries of the Church of the Nazarene is committed to reaching the multitudes in North America for Jesus Christ, and we believe that the Portuguese speaking people are a key segment of this great commission.**

**Our goal is to work with pastors and key lay leaders in the PSC (Portuguese Speaking Communities) as partners to be able to plant additional churches in areas of the US and Canada where the population of Portuguese speaking immigrants is strong.**

**Our vision is to serve the needs of Portuguese speaking immigrants, change lives, and see communities of people transformed as they come to Jesus Christ.**

**We believe that God, by His Grace and for His own glory, will transform the PSC into a grassroots church planting culture that is:**

- Exponentially reproducing a growing number of biblically healthy churches**
- Seeing these churches characterized by significant conversion growth and ministries of mercy**
- Reaching the diverse communities and people groups of North America**

**Through a variety of means, the PSC staff provides assistance to churches in developing this culture, including:**

- Vision that directs and shapes church planting activity**
- Strategic planning, including values, goals, and action plans**
- Prayer mobilization that encourages prayer for the harvest (Matt. 9:38)**
- Forming and equipping teams to move the vision forward**

- Developing and cultivating potential church planters
- Recruiting church planters
- Assessment in the areas of calling, competencies, and character of potential church planters
- Training and mentoring men in effective church planting principles
- Placing church planters in suitable opportunities
- Coaching and care of the church planter and his family
- Celebrating what God is doing in Kingdom expansion through church planting in the PSC

We call the above the "Essential Functions in Church Planting."

### ***Missional Objectives***

- Raise awareness in the PSC of the ministry among members of Brazilian and Portuguese speaking churches and missions.
- Identify potential areas for church plants, lay plans for these new works, and assist in selecting church planters.
- Meet regularly and share resources with pastors and others focused on planting new PSC churches to assist in vision casting, planning, and evaluation.
- Champion fund raising and supervise progress.
- Interface with key people in locations where Portuguese speaking works might be needed.
- Develop a strong partnership with other PSC churches in the USA/Canada/Brazil/Cape Verde/Portugal/Other PSC around the globe, individuals, and institutions with shared interests.

**THE MISSIONAL TASKS FOR THE DISTRICT AND LOCAL CHURCH IS TO:**

- Work with denominational leaders and strategy coordinators as partners to develop in unity the new Portuguese speaking ministry in the USA/Canada.**
- Understand that the missional call is not limited to a specific culture and that God wants to see the unity of His servants, for the growth of His church.**
- Be aware of the fact that some of our strongest international churches are in Portuguese speaking areas such as Brazil and Mozambique and that many immigrants from these cultures may have Nazarene connections that might be useful for church-planting.**
- Anticipate the further migrations of Portuguese-speaking people who will come to North America with both short-term and long-term intentions. Churches may supply names and addresses of people either who have migrated or intend to. There is constant movement between the countries that often results in people being lost to their denominational connections.**
- Identify, locate, connect, assist, invest and prepare those Portuguese speaking people that may represent a pool of potential leadership for the new Portuguese speaking ministries in the USA/Canada.**