

New radio signal has impact throughout Americas

By Kenneth D. MacHarg

A relatively new radio signal is making a mighty impact throughout the Americas. It's Voz Cristiana, or Christian Voice, a newcomer to the shortwave spectrum that is also popping up on local stations throughout the region with its satellite service.

Tune your dial across the international band in a Mexico City hotel room or at a lakeside resort in the middle of Brazil and you will hear the clear signal and professional sound that Voz Cristiana beams from a mammoth shortwave facility built by the controversial Chilean dictator, Augusto Pinochet. The shortwave outlet will begin broadcasting in Portuguese to Brazil later this year. In addition, Voz Cristiana programming is also heard on 66 local AM and FM stations throughout Latin America.

The station's parent company, Christian Vision, also operates a shortwave radio station, Christian Voice, in Zambia and is developing a large international broadcasting facility in Australia that will reach all of Asia and the Pacific.

"Businessman Bob Edmiston started Christian Vision in the United Kingdom in 1988," explains Terry Bennett, the organization's Director of Operations. "Despite success in the secular world, Bob had a desire to use the gifts that God had given him to introduce people to Jesus, especially in areas where the gospel needed to be heard." The organization is funded by profits from Edmiston's business activities.

The result has been the development of the Christian Vision network of radio stations and satellite affiliates carrying Christian programming. "Africa was the first target, with its vast population and the largely English speaking audience," Bennett says in an interview from his office in England. "Latin America and Spanish were next. With English and Spanish being among the most widely spoken languages in the world, it makes the broadcasting audience immense. Add to this Mandarin and a large percentage of the world's population is catered to."

"We are serving a combination of people," reports Juan Mark Gallardo, the Regional Manager of Voz Cristiana. "We reach non-Christians who are seekers at the same time that we are helping people who are Christians to deepen their faith."

Gallardo explains that many listeners throughout Latin America have grown up in a Catholic background so have some knowledge of Christianity even if they are not active in their church. "We are reaching them with a professional style of broadcasting that includes music, news, sports, a total blessing without preaching at them," Gallardo says.

Using a blend of Bible-based teaching and contemporary Christian music, Christian Voice programs tend to be similar to that of a local station. "Other international broadcasters switch from one language to another to provide for as many different people as possible," Bennett explains. "Christian Vision broadcasts in one language and tries as much as possible to relate to the local audience."

“Our station is predominantly presenter led and we have presenters airing shows 24 hours a day,” he adds. “This is our favored format and we feel that it works alongside the other styles of Christian radio.”

The station’s daily schedule involves a wake-up program in the morning, plus youth oriented shows, a men’s release, and several programs for women, including *The Woman of Today*, hosted by Norma Pinzón from the station’s Miami studios. “The program serves to build the basis of the family that the Lord established in His word,” Pinzón explains. “By means of different segments (such as Christian psychology, improving a Christian marriage, how to make yourself beautiful on the outside and the inside, health, etc) we demonstrate that with Jesus, we are able to have a happy home.” Pinzón was an actress and radio presenter in Colombia and Miami before beginning work at Voz Cristiana when it went on the air three years ago. “At this time, I am using my talent only in the service of the Lord, to His glory,” she says.

That people are responding is evident to Gallardo and his team. “We are receiving around 500 letters a month here, mostly in response to our shortwave broadcasts and the streaming audio on the internet,” he says. “Then, the local stations that carry our programs also receive response from listeners.”

Christian Vision offers the radio enthusiast a number of opportunities to DX and collect those valued QSL cards.

“There are 8 Harris SW-100 shortwave transmitters (100kW) of 1970s vintage, previously belonging to Radio Nacional de Chile,” says Andrew Flynn, Christian Visions’ chief engineer. “Christian Vision acquired the site in 1996, and brought up the facilities with services to Latin America, launching officially in 1998.”

“By way of antennas, there are 3 TCI 527 directional log-periodic arrays, 4 TCI 611 4x4 curtains, 2 of which are slewable, and a home-built 2x1 dual band, bi-directional dipole with slew,” Flynn explains. “Presently the log-periodics and home-built antenna are used for our services to Latin America, but it is intended that in the future the curtains will be used for additional services towards Africa and Europe as well as Brazil. Voz Cristiana presently only broadcasts in Spanish, but plans are underway to introduce a Portuguese service to Brazil.”

The site is at Calera de Tango, about 35km to the southwest of Santiago. Flynn, who served as the Chile transmitter site manager for several years, says that reception reports are welcomed, and QSL cards are sent for those reports that can be verified.

At the organization’s original shortwave site in Zambia, Christian Vision uses a single Continental 418-E 100kW transmitter (1994) which is used with a TCI 615 (omni-log) antenna for English services to central and southern Africa, on 4965kHz, 6065kHz, and 9865kHz.

“Christian Vision has acquired the former Radio Australia facility at Cox Peninsula near Darwin, Australia,” Flynn says. “This facility includes a Thomson 2320 (300kW), two Thomson 2326 (250kW) and three Collins 821A (250kW). By way of antennas there are 7 TCI 611 slewable curtains pointing in an arc across Asia, giving superb coverage to that region. Christian Voice Australia provides English services to targets in Asia, with services in Hindi and Mandarin to follow.”

While Christian Vision continues to spend considerable energy on its growing number of international shortwave outlets, Gallardo is also excited about the organization’s increasing presence on local radio stations throughout the Americas, including the United States.

“We’re on 55 stations in Central and South America now, and adding more every week,” Gallardo exclaims. The organization’s programming can be heard on local stations in Argentina, Bolivia, Peru, Colombia, Paraguay, the Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Panama and Venezuela.

In addition, Voz Cristiana has added an affiliate in North Carolina and two stations in Miami. One of the Florida stations, Radio Luz, at 1700 on the AM dial, can be heard well throughout the southeastern United States in the late evening. “Miami is an international city,” Gallardo says. “For us, there are many resources, including people, who come here from many countries and many Christian leaders who pass through and are available for interviews.”

As the Spanish-speaking population continues to grow in the United States and expands to areas of the country where there is enough Spanish to justify radio programming, Gallardo is looking to sign up new affiliates across the country. “Voz Cristiana provides 24 hour radio programming especially for radio stations that want to add a variety of styles and segments to their existing outreach,” Gallardo explains. “We try to be as versatile as we can so that any radio station can take down hours at a time or just a short segment of only a few minutes.”

“If a station needs programming to reach the women, men, young people or children then they could take a two to three hour block of programs we have to meet that need,” he says. “We offer complete flexibility because we believe only the local station knows what would work best for their local audience.”

The service is free of charge to non-profit organizations. Commercial stations are charged a monthly fee depending on their monthly revenue in proportion to how much of the service they would use. Voz Cristiana offers eight minutes an hour for local commercial or program insertion.

With a C-Band satellite dish of no less than 2.4 meters and the purchase of a Comstream Decoder any station can receive the signal of Voz Cristiana.

“We are wanting local AM and FM stations throughout the Americas including the United States, Mexico, the Caribbean, Central and South America to contact us if they are interested in becoming an affiliate of Voz Cristiana,” Gallardo says. Interested stations can contact VozCristiana at Voz Cristiana, 15485 Eagle Nest Lane, Suite 220, Miami Lakes, FL 33014.

Gallardo says that he is very fulfilled in his ministry. “I think this is a fulfillment of God’s call on my life. Because we don’t have to raise funds or sell commercial time, we can hire a professional staff to bring the good news of Christ throughout the world.”

SIDEBAR:

Listeners in North America can hear Voz Cristiana in Spanish on the following shortwave frequencies:

Mexico, Central America and the Caribbean, 1:00-13:00 UTC (9 p.m. – 9 a.m. EDT)	
11690 kHz	
	13:00-1:00 UTC (9 a.m. – 9 p.m. EDT) 21550 kHz
Northern South America and Central America, 00:00-14:00 UTC (8 p.m. – 10 a.m. EDT)	
15375 kHz	
	14:00-00:00 UTC (10 a.m. – 8 p.m. EDT) 17680 kHz
Brazil	21:00 – 11:00 UTC (5 p.m. – 7 a.m. EDT) 11745 kHz
	11:00 – 21:00 UTC (7 a.m. – 5 p.m. EDT) 21500 kHz
Southern Cone	22:00 – 12:00 UTC (6 p.m. – 8 a.m. EDT) 6070 kHz
	12:00 – 22:00 UTC (8 a.m. – 6 p.m. EDT) 9635 kHz

Portuguese:

11:00-21:00 UTC	21500 Khz.
21:00-07:00 UTC	11745 Khz.
07:00-11:00 UTC	11890 Khz

Many of the frequencies directed towards Central America can be heard well in North America.

Voz Cristiana can also be heard over portions of the southeastern U.S. at 1700 kHz on the extended AM band after 9 p.m. Eastern time (later some evenings).

In addition, Voz Cristiana programming can be heard on the internet at www.VozCristiana.com.

An English-language website for Christian Vision can be found at www.christianvision.com.

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