

LOVE DISPLAYED: AN AMAZING TESTIMONY

It is such a blessing to hear what Jesus is doing in and through His body, the Church, to advance His Kingdom. He said the world would know we are His disciples by the way we love each other. This love is displayed in full colors when we take care of each other's needs. The relationship between **Crossroads Baptist Church** and **Iglesia Bíblica Bautista Emanuel de Leesburg** is a display of such love, and it has been an amazing testimony to their community.

In 2017, Pastor Richard Fuller (Crossroads) used SBCV's mapping center to learn about the community around the church. By meeting the neighbors, he realized that households within a 1.5-mile radius of the church in Leesburg were primarily Spanish speakers. He had been praying to reach everyone in the neighborhood, but he did not have the ability to reach them in their heart language.

God provided a way through Giovanni Ortiz. Ortiz shared how he and Fuller met, "[SBCV church planting team members] Raúl Santamaría and Larry Black (now serving in Georgia) asked me to meet with them and Pastor Richard. They told me that God had laid in Pastor Richard's heart to help start a Hispanic church at his church's building, and they also shared that they thought I was the

man God was calling for that congregation. I was not expecting this, but it was God's confirmation of His calling. I am thankful to Larry and Raúl for making this connection for me.

"Crossroads Baptist Church has blessed [Iglesia Bíblica Bautista Emanuel de Leesburg] very much," he continued, "and I consider Pastor Richard a close friend to me. I am so thankful that God joined our paths to bless our congregation."

Both Ortiz and Fuller shared how their brotherly friendship has grown and that their ministry relationship has gone beyond Leesburg. They have taken mission trips together to El Salvador, and Fuller has preached at Ortiz's dad's church there. They also have an ESL ministry in Crossroads' building and, together, these two pastors feed and serve the community.

Crossroads Baptist Church followed God's leading to help a Hispanic congregation start in its facilities, and they have gone the extra mile! In October and November of 2021, Fuller said he could see the Spanish congregation was growing in children and baptisms. He spoke with his congregation on how they could help the church plant grow even more. He then visited the Spanish-speaking congregation a couple of times and stayed to fellowship with them.

After his third visit, Fuller told Ortiz he needed to talk to him. "God has laid it on our hearts to let the Hispanic church meet at 11 AM. We will move our service to 10 AM so you can meet at 11 AM. The congregation voted and we agreed." Pastor Ortiz was in shock. "They were giving us their service time so we could grow. They were willing to get uncomfortable so that we could use the building at that time." What church would do that? A congregation that is following the prompting of the Lord.

Some years ago, God imprinted in Pastor Ortiz's heart this well-known verse: "But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you" (Matthew 6:33). God has honored His promises. "When we were in lockdown, God reminded us 'seek first My Kingdom, and I will add the rest.' In any difficult situation, the encouragement is to seek His Kingdom first. Our commandment as a church is to go and make disciples. We made that our priority, and we have seen that God adds anything else that we are lacking."

Surely the community of Leesburg can see these two churches working hand in hand and say, "Look how they love each other." ■