

# INVESTING in and ELEVATING Others

**In** May of 2020, SBCV leaders met with Dr. Troy Temple (dean of the School of Divinity at Liberty University) to dream about the chance of providing higher education for Hispanic leaders in Virginia and surrounding states. These dreams developed into the Hispanic cohort for a Master of Arts in Christian Ministries. These students committed to spending a week on Liberty University's campus twice a semester. They would have intensive classes with the professors and work on their homework before and after the class. The classes were done in English, with some translations into Spanish, and part of the homework was done in English and part in Spanish. It was a tremendous effort to listen to a graduate class in a different language than your mother tongue, and these students gave their best. Two years later, five SBCV leaders who are involved in different areas of ministry



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in our state graduated from the cohort with a master's degree.

Pastor Pablo Claros began in the cohort with the rest of the group, but he got sick and was hospitalized several times. He thought he would not be able to finish, but the group encouraged him to continue, and the professors worked with



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him to enable him to submit his homework while he was in the hospital. Before this program, Pablo was a missionary for nine years with Word of Life Bolivia, and he completed a bachelor's in pastoral leadership at Liberty University.

Pastor Claros explained how the master's degree helped him gather all the previous biblical and ministry information and organize it in a way that provided the structure for his present ministry. "I am grateful that SBCV invested in us so that we can be better leaders for our congregations. The master's program gave me the tools to accomplish a vision that God gave us. I feel prepared to shepherd the congregation God has entrusted me."

Right after Claros finished the program, he was invited to help a church without a pastor, and he was able to use what he had learned in the two years he'd been studying. In February 2022, **Iglesia Bautista El Camino** voted for him to be its pastor. "I am grateful for SBCV's and Liberty University's investment in me. Our vision is to be a connected church serving our community in Richmond and to become a church that comes alongside other churches to help them accomplish the mission."

Pastor Luiggi Reggiardo has been the pastor of **Primera Iglesia Bautista de Woodbridge** for more than 20 years. In years past, Reggiardo

had dreamt about going to Liberty University, but it seemed like a distant reality. When he was invited to be part of the cohort, he couldn't believe his dream was coming true. Thanks to the Vision Virginia Offering, this pastor has been able to fulfill a desire and be sharpened in his ministry. "Pastors need to keep learning so they can teach better, and I am grateful that I was part of this fantastic program. I was given tools on how to develop disciples and discipleship programs, small groups, evangelism, and pastoral counseling."

Pastor Reggiardo is about to start a small group program in his church, and there is a buzz in the congregation about what's coming! Reggiardo also wants to encourage pastors not to give up on the vision and dreams God has given them. "There are many opportunities to keep growing. We need to ask, get involved, and seek, and we shall find."

"I want to thank SBCV for walking with us during this time. You really feel you are not alone. The convention encourages us to be on the mission, and not only that, but it provides the tools to accomplish it." ■

*Background photo, left to right: Pablo Claros, Diego Buchamer, and Isaías Rocha*