

TWO CHURCHES

One Mission

It might be hard to imagine that two churches with two different cultures and languages could blend as one to go on mission together. But God can do it! In August of 2019, under the leadership of Pastor Giovanni Ortiz, **Iglesia Biblica Bautista Emanuel (IBBE)** of Leesburg was birthed. God granted favor to Pastor Ortiz and to IBBE when the leadership of a very small but willing **Crossroads Baptist Church (CBC)** in Leesburg offered space for worship services to this infant church.

By 2021, the relationship between the two churches began to blossom as CBC asked Pastor Ortiz to become its associate pastor. In September 2022, the need for a lead pastor at CBC arose. This predominantly older, Anglo congregation approached Ortiz and asked if he would consider becoming the pastor.

Ortiz immediately began to pray and seek godly counsel. He wondered what CBC would expect from a lead pastor. “They were looking for a pastor who preaches the Gospel, who disciples, evangelizes, and shepherds the congregation,” Ortiz

recalled. “That response brought confirmation to my life since that is what I love and have been called to do.”

In the past year, Crossroads Baptist Church and Iglesia Biblica Bautista Emanuel of Leesburg have functioned as one church on mission together. The two churches have fellowshiped through combined Easter, Thanksgiving, and Christmas services. They have sung praises simultaneously in English and Spanish and preached the Gospel with translation at each combined service. Pastor Ortiz currently disciples 6 members from Crossroads, ranging from 50 to 82 years of age.

The churches prayed and prepared for a month for an outreach opportunity to their community. On May 7, 2023, 50 people from the churches (some doing so for the first time) took the Gospel to their community in Leesburg. The Lord supernaturally gave them the opportunity not only to evangelize area apartment complexes but to receive permission from an area Latino Festival coordinator to share

the Gospel with 400–500 people in Spanish and English.

In the summer of 2023, a church in Texas sent 40 volunteers to help CBC and IBBE with a Vacation Bible School. They were able to engage more than 60 children from the community through this Gospel outreach.

What does the future hold for these two churches on mission together? “As we celebrate our fourth anniversary this coming Sunday, we are looking forward to doing more mission Kingdom work together with Crossroads Baptist Church,” Pastor Ortiz shared. “We are planning a combined service every first Sunday of the month and will celebrate communion together as one church. We are praying that God will continue to guide us where He wants us to go. If, in the future, His will is for us to merge as one church to continue to reach English and Spanish speakers for His glory, we will do so as one church. Our purpose is to preach the Gospel and make disciples that make disciples.” ■





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