

PASTORS Supporting PASTORS

We have all felt lonely at some point in our lives. But what happens when loneliness is not only an emotional problem, but also a geographical one? Geographical loneliness adds to the ministry burdens that already exist for pastors, church planters, and ministry leaders.

God called Pablo Hernández and his family to plant **Iglesia Cristiana Sigueme** (Follow Me Christian Church), a Hispanic church in the city of Harrisonburg, VA. According to 2020 statistics, more than 10,000 Hispanics live in that area, and there was no Baptist church.



Pastor Pablo Hernandez (center) with Pastors Julio Peredo and Julio Velandia

With no other Hispanic SBCV church nearby, they felt isolated geographically. Two new church planters from the southwestern part of the state met Hernández at an SBCV event and learned about his situation. These brothers decided to pray for and visit the Hernández family.

Pastor Julio Peredo of **Fellowship Community Church Español** in Salem and Pastor Julio Velandia of **Franklin Heights Church** in Rocky Mount coordinated a visit. They contacted Pastor Hernández and began meeting periodically to encourage each other.

As the two pastors visited Pastor Hernández and his family in Harrisonburg, they got to see where the church meets, pray together, share food, and spend time at the Hernándezes' home. They ended the evening with prayer. "We went to bless our brother with a visit, and I think I was the most blessed one," recalled Pastor Peredo. Hernández also went to Roanoke to spend time with Peredo and Velandia. Pastor Hernández told us that these times are special to talk about all topics—not just about ministry, but to talk like brothers who are strengthening friendships.

Pastor Peredo explained, "Being a friend implies breaking down certain barriers that we naturally or intentionally build around ourselves; it implies going beyond the comfort of an agenda or location; it means showing ourselves

to be trustworthy and friendly with brothers who are not a competition but a complement for the expansion of the Gospel."

"Serving the Lord makes us increasingly busy serving people, and we can neglect ourselves and our families," said Pastor Velandia. "Loneliness is a silent monster that, in the ministry, consumes us from the inside out, drying us up, subtracting from us to the point of abandoning ourselves, our families, and perhaps considering abandoning the most beautiful experience in our lives—that is, to serve our God. It can also sink us into the sin of depending on ourselves. Prevention is better than a cure, and I consider that friendship between pastors and their families is a preventive practice that will help us share in a safe environment based on trust and respect."

These meetings have resulted in the desire to support each other's ministries. Julio Peredo and Julio Velandia have already exchanged preaching opportunities, and Pablo Hernández will soon visit Salem to preach there. Pastor Hernández explained that these relationships help them know that the SBCV's *not alone* motto is a practical reality. "Our churches are learning from this. How good it is when we pastors share together in the harmony of the Gospel and support each other in our lives!" ■