

# HISPANIC BAPTIST NETWORK

*Newly elected leaders of the Hispanic Baptist Network. Pastor Vernig Suarez (left) was unanimously chosen to serve as president for a two-year term.*



The *MISSION* of the Hispanic Baptist Network is to work together in unity, connect through mission efforts, share resources, and celebrate what God is doing among Hispanics.

**S**outhern Baptist churches fellowship and collaborate for the glory of God by reaching Hispanics across the United States, which now has a population of more than 64.5 million, according to the 2024 census.

Recognizing this growing reality, the Hispanic Baptist Network elected new leaders for its executive committee, ahead of the Southern Baptist Convention's annual meeting held in Dallas on June 8–9, 2025. Pastor Vernig Suarez was unanimously chosen to serve as president for a two-year term.

Pastor Vernig Suarez, originally from Venezuela and now a naturalized U.S. citizen, trusted Christ as his Savior in 1989. He brings approximately 30 years of experience in pastoral ministry, leadership, and church planting in Florida, Texas, and Virginia. He currently pastors **Iglesia Bautista del Camino**,

the Hispanic ministry of **First Baptist Norfolk**, where Dr. Eric Thomas serves as senior pastor.

The mission of the Hispanic Baptist Network is to work together in unity, connect through mission efforts, share resources, and celebrate what God is doing among Hispanics. This mission is based on the biblical vision in 1 Kings 8:60 (CSB): “May all the peoples of the earth know that the LORD is God. There is no other!”

The Network's core values include clear communication, mutual respect, personal integrity, sound doctrine, cross-cultural work, and ongoing restoration.

Dr. Bruno Molina, executive director of the Hispanic Baptist Network, celebrated Pastor Suarez's election with the board. He pointed out that one of the greatest challenges facing Hispanic congregations is the need to develop strong leadership to reach second- and

third-generation Hispanics, who are growing rapidly and are at risk of leaving the church in adulthood.

This concern has been known for years and was highlighted at the Hispanic Leaders Celebration held prior to the SBC annual meeting in Nashville in 2021. There, it was shared that seven out of ten young Hispanics from the second and third generations leave the church before age 30—representing a generational loss of 70 percent.

Pastor Suarez has connected with Hispanic ministry leaders from the SBC of Virginia (SBCV) to explore ways to advise Hispanic leaders in other states within the network who lack ministry structures. Thanks to the generous support of *Vision Virginia* offerings in recent years, the network has been able to provide training, coaching, advising, and support for church planting, as well as care for the wives of Hispanic pastors and planters across the state.

We celebrate the election of Pastor Vernig Suarez as president of the Hispanic Baptist Network, representing churches within the SBCV family and beyond across the United States! ■

