

Change in plans provides Hispanic church room to grow_50205

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Change in plans provides Hispanic church room to grow

By George Henson

Staff Writer

FORT WORTH-Space constraints were hemming in Iglesia Bautista El Buen Pastor. Now that the church has elbow room, it has seen marked growth, Pastor Robert Arrubla said.

Pastor
Robert
Arrubla
serves
Iglesia
Bautista
El Buen
Pastor
in Fort
Worth,
a
church
that
found
the
growing
room it
needed
in a
facility
formerly
used by
South
Hills
Baptist
Church.
(Photo
by
George
Henson)

While some members felt emotional ties to the congregation's former

building along Interstate 35W, Arrubla said his congregation is thrilled to have a new address.

“We were ready. When we had fellowships in the Fellowship Hall after church, some people had to go home. We wouldn't all fit,” he explained.

Sunday school rooms, particularly in children's areas, were packed, and some Sunday school classes had to meet in different corners of the sanctuary.

The church bought 8.5 acres of land and raised about \$200,000 in preparation to building a new facility.

The week after the congregation had a prayer service on the undeveloped building site, plans began to change. Arrubla learned South Hills Baptist Church in Fort Worth also had purchased land to build a new facility and was looking for a large Hispanic congregation to buy its facilities.

Since the two congregations had worshipped together on several occasions, El Buen Pastor was first on the list.

After moving into their facilities in February, instead of having 12,000 square feet of space, the congregation now has 40,000.

While the additional space also brought higher utility and insurance bills, Arrub-la said, average attendance has increased by about 80 people, to 460, and tithes and offerings have in-creased about 18 percent.

Still, the congregation is holding onto the land in case the church outgrows the facilities it has now.

“There are a lot of Hispanics in this community,” he said. “This was an excellent move for us, whether it will turn out to only be a transition to the land or a permanent move for us.”

To get to know that community, members of the church went door-to-door and passed out 1,900 light bulbs. Each bulb box was imprinted with the church's service times and other information.

Members also offered door-to-door invitations to the church's Easter play.

A team of 40 members is being recruited for evangelism training. Once those people have been trained, Arrubla plans a door-to-door canvas of the area.

One of the most attractive aspects of the move was the relatively low cost. The South Hills facility was purchased for \$600,000.

The initial phase of the building plan on the land the church bought was a multipurpose building that could also be used as a gymnasium that would have cost \$400,000 by itself.

“We never could have afforded to build anything like this,” Arrubla said.

Still, Arrubla was reluctant when he first was approached about buying the property.

“When you lead a congregation in one direction and then say, 'We're going over here now,' it doesn't look good for a pastor. They might ask, 'Were you listening to God before or what?'" he admitted.

Getting the property was not easy, however. The church had the money from its building campaign and a loan from the Baptist General Convention of Texas, but it still was short of the amount needed to buy the property.

Arrubla took a second lien on his home, and a handful of other members also came up with additional funds, either through bank loans or savings accounts, to raise the additional \$100,000 needed.

Sale of the church's former building to another Hispanic congregation soon

should have those members repaid, Arrubla said.

As for what lies ahead, only God knows, he said.

“We're just going to keep following the Lord and see where he takes us.”

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