

Church finds its ministry reaching out to neighborhood_50205

April 28, 2005

Posted: 4/29/05

Members
and
visitors
gather for
fellowship
outside
South
San
Filadelfia
Baptist
Church in
San
Antonio.
(Photos
by Eric
Guel)

Church finds its ministry reaching out to neighborhood

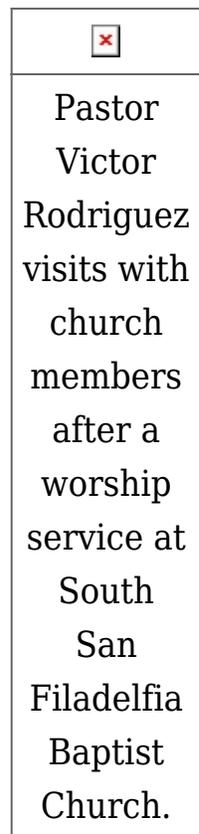
By John Hall

Texas Baptist Communications

SAN ANTONIO—South San Antonio residents insist South San Filadelfia Baptist Church is not simply part of its neighborhood; it's a member of the community.

The church, created last year when Iglesia Bautista Filadelfia and South San Baptist Church merged, has made an intentional effort to reach out to the neighborhood around it.

The congregation threw a block party shortly after the merger.



It also put together teams to visit homes in the surrounding community.

Members got to know many of the people around the church and built relationships with them.

The church also started a food pantry that now feeds about 45 families a week. Along with providing food, church members visit recipients at least one other time during the week to make sure needs are met.

Relationships are the key to sharing the gospel and helping people, said Pastor Victor Rodriguez. Friendships break down barriers between people and allow Christians to share their faith naturally. Non-believers may eventually want to come to church because of the faith they see in their new friends.

“This would work anywhere,” he said. “It is a biblical principle.”

It clearly is working at South San Filadelfia, where church attendance has grown to about 600 each week. The congregation drew more than 900 in worship and 700 in Sunday school during a high-attendance emphasis.

The church is serving people with different worship preferences, as well. It holds a contemporary Spanish service, traditional English service and contemporary English service each week. First-generation through fourth-generation Hispanics have a place in the congregation.



A
member
of South
San
Filadelfia
Baptist
Church
bows in
prayer
during a
worship
service.

South San Filadelfia recently started a skate park to minister to youth. They also have a place for the young people to play video games. These emphases on youth have led to the formation of a youth group that serves about 150 people.

More than 20 people reached through the church food pantry have made professions of faith in Christ, and the church has started two missions.

“I'm delighted to see this work going on,” said Lois Angel, who runs the food pantry.

Rodriguez attributes the church's rapid growth to God's timing and a clearly communicated vision of sharing its faith with the community.

“God was involved in all this. We never planned it. It was perfect timing.”

Leaders believe there still is much ministry to be done. There are more people to meet in the community.

A demographic study done with the help of the Baptist General Convention of Texas revealed 150,000 people living within three miles of the church.

That is a lot more doors to be knocked on, but the church looks forward to building each new relationship.

“Our ministry is in the neighborhood,” Rodriguez said.

News of religion, faith, missions, Bible study and Christian ministry among Texas Baptist churches, in the BGCT, the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) and around the world.