

Gatesville church helps Hispanic congregation move to new building

June 1, 2006

Posted: 6/01/06



Baptisms by Ruben Rios (left) will help fill the new sanctuary of Iglesia Hispana in Gatesville.

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GATESVILLE—Live Oak Baptist Church focuses on family. And in recent years, the family has expanded.

About three years ago, a group of Hispanics in the area joined several people at Live Oak Baptist Church and proposed to start a new Hispanic

church. After meeting on their own for a few months, they were led to a 71-year-old retired pastor, Ruben Rios. He quickly joined in their vision and became the pastor of the new Hispanic congregation, now called Iglesia Hispana.

Rios led Bible studies nearly every night, teaching and praying with the group. The group grew so large during the next year, the church moved into the old sanctuary of Live Oak Baptist Church.

Live Oak Baptist Church joined with Iglesia Hispana to start more Bible studies, English-as-a-Second-Language classes and a night of worship, games and preaching for youth and children on Friday nights.

“To me as a pastor, it’s not about programs and plans but about being available to the community and to the Lord,” said David Diggs, pastor of Live Oak Baptist Church.

Live Oak Baptist Church gave \$50,000 to Iglesia Hispana to buy three acres of land, and Habitat for Humanity helped build a parsonage for Rios and his wife.

“Our church doesn’t have a mind set at all of (Iglesia Hispana) being a mission,” Diggs said. “We look at it as just another church, and we’re just helping our brothers and sisters get started.”

After three years of raising money, Iglesia Hispana has raised almost enough money to finish its own facilities. The generosity of members from Live Oak Baptist Church and Iglesia Hispana has provided enough money to begin the construction of the new church.

Three weeks ago, Iglesia Hispana held its first Bible study in the frame of the church’s new building.

“They were so excited to finally have their own building they just couldn’t

wait to meet in it,” Diggs said.

Iglesia Hispana currently has about 25 members, including three families who recently joined, and church leaders expect the congregation to grow rapidly.

“We are missionaries who have united our dream with the dream of Live Oak Baptist Church to become one dream, and a church came out of that,” Rios said.

Primera Iglesia Bautista in Alice will send a group of their youth July 17-22 to work alongside the youth at Live Oak Baptist Church and offer Vacation Bible School for the children of Iglesia Hispana.

“It’s amazing how God works in ways we never dreamed,” said Diggs. “We’re here to reach Gatesville and everyone in our community and then reach out to the rest of the world. Our motto is: ‘Live Oak Baptist Church—The Family You’ve Been Waiting for.’”

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