

CBF urged to follow the word of God and wind of the Spirit

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Seeking to follow both the “word of God” and the “wind of the Spirit” is like rowing a boat, two ministers from a multiethnic church in Connecticut told the opening worship session of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship general assembly.

“If you only use one oar, you’ll find yourself going in circles for hours,” Daniel Martino and Antonio Vargas Jr. said. The pair preached together in English and Spanish—a back-and-forth, rapid-fire bilingual format they often use at the Church of the City in New London, Conn.

Beginning with the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, the early Christian church learned the key was “learning to use both oars and to use them both with the same intensity,” they emphasized.

The word of God—the Bible—provides a firm foundation and much-needed grounding in unstable times, they said. The wind of God—the Holy Spirit—provides direction and guidance into “new territory and uncharted lands,” they added.

“We cannot control where the Spirit blows,” they said. “But if it is the Lord’s will, there is nothing to fear.”

‘Not modification but total transformation’

If Cooperative Baptists fail to “catch where the wind is blowing,” they run the risk of remaining “right where we are today” at a time when God wants

to bring restoration, renewal and revival, they asserted.

“Renewal from the inside out is not modification but total transformation,” they stressed. The wind of the Spirit “aligns and adapts our models” to God’s heart, they added.

“We recognize the Lord renewing our minds and facilitating us to go into uncharted and unknown territory toward justice, a clear identity, growth and holistic diversity—racial, ethnic, ideological, theological, socioeconomic, gender and age,” they said.

CBF views itself as “*familia*,” they noted. But after three decades, they asserted, it is time to ask, “What kind of family are we aiming to become?”

“Have we extended our hand to new family members? Who is missing here?” they asked. “Who, from the family of God, has not received the invitation to fellowship? ... We often talk about expanding the table or even resetting the table. But as a fellowship, let us aspire in this season to rebuild the table.”

Moving forward, Martino and Varaga challenged CBF to recognize “bold dreams are given to bold people.”

“Our hope for CBF is that we can remember what God has shown us and make these bold dreams a reality,” they said. “We do not lose heart, because we are being renewed by the wind and the word. With or without us, God is doing a new thing.”