

Church and nonprofit offer model of community partnership

June 20, 2018

DALLAS—A Baptist church and a nonprofit agency, both in Indianapolis, Ind., worked together to help make their community a place “where the world is welcome.”

Joel Vestal, director of [Migros Aid, Inc.](#), and Mark McClintock, pastor of Speedway Baptist Church in Indianapolis, led a workshop during the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship exploring ways churches and nonprofits can work together to minister in an increasingly multicultural community.

Vestal created Migros Aid in 2016 to assist refugees after they resettled in the United States. He began by visiting the apartments where refugees lived to meet them.

Meanwhile, Speedway Baptist was noticing changes in the community around its church, McClintock said. The predominantly Anglo congregation realized it needed to respond to the community as it was, and that included being faithful to refugees in an increasingly xenophobic environment, he noted.

‘Do this in an empowering way’

Vestal connected with McClintock, who helped him understand the importance of beginning any ministry among refugees by assessing strengths rather than looking just at needs.

“We wanted to do this in an empowering way,” McClintock said. “This is

Christians simply doing the things Jesus himself did.”

Rather than coming into the refugee community with an agenda and with programs to offer, Migros Aid and Speedway began with an asset-based assessment, Vestal said.

“We needed to see what is going on in the community that is working,” he said.

Vestal’s organization now offers a variety of programs to refugees, including English-as-a-Second-Language classes, summer camps for children and youth, and a tutoring club. Members of Speedway Baptist participate in the ESL and tutoring classes every week.

Their collaboration provides a model for how churches and nonprofits can partner together, Vestal said. While nonprofits can create and provide resources, churches can bring in volunteers to give continuity to the work, he said.

While a church cannot provide for all the needs in a community, congregations can learn about organizations that may offer what individuals in their neighborhoods need.

“We can be a resource connector,” McClintock said.