

# Hispanic pastors discuss leading a church out of COVID

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ANAHEIM, Calif.—Hispanic pastors from California, Florida and Texas discussed strategies to lead the church in a post-COVID world during a panel discussion in the exhibit hall at the 2022 Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting.

Luis Lopez, executive director of Hispanic relations and mobilization of the SBC Executive Committee, moderated in English the panel formed by Victor Solorzano, Eloy Rodriguez and Tony Miranda.

The pastors answered questions about how the COVID-19 pandemic affected their ministries, how they recovered and how they are moving forward.

Solorzano, pastor of Vida en Victoria in Bell Gardens, Calif., lost a dear church elder to the virus, as well as seven family members. As he led his church through the pandemic, he found returning to the basics of prayer and discipleship was the best way to weather the storm.

“We adapted our small groups and giving to be online, and now we have more people in small groups and more people giving,” he said.

Rodriguez, the pastor of Idlewild Baptist Church in Spanish in Lutz, Fla., said as horrible as the pandemic was, it laid at the church’s door the opportunity to share the gospel even more than before. “Death was very present, and speaking to eternal life was easier, because people were open to it.”

Between 2020 and 2022, Idlewild Español planted two other Spanish-

speaking churches—testimony to how the Lord moves even in the most difficult of circumstances, he said.

## **‘Going back to the basics’**

Miranda, pastor of Primera Iglesia Bautista in Austin, said the pandemic caused many church members to leave and never come back, and it exposed a need for spiritual maturity in the church.

As the church emerged from the crisis, leaders evaluated what things they would keep and what things they would discard to make ministry more effective, Miranda said.

“We are taking more care to keep in mind our online audience while we prepare our worship services,” he said. Some ministries have been eliminated, he said, because even before the pandemic they were not essential.

“It’s been about going back to the basics.”

Going back to the basics has proved to be a successful strategy for these pastors and their churches. The youth are more involved in ministry as they take on the responsibility of church technology, more people participate in small groups as they become more accessible during the week, and people give more now that they can easily do so from their phones, the pastors agreed.