

# **Hispanic Southern Baptists hear calls to unity**

June 14, 2018

DALLAS—Hispanic Baptists heard calls for unity—organizationally and in individual relations—throughout multiple gatherings held in conjunction with the Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting in Dallas.

## **Need for umbrella organization**

Throughout the meetings of several Hispanic organizations, leaders affirmed the purposes for which they exist and the need to create an umbrella organization to bring them all together.

“No organization can cover all of the needs of all Hispanics,” said Bobby Sena, a Hispanic relations consultant of the SBC Executive Committee.

Sena announced an umbrella organization will be revealed during next year’s SBC annual meeting in Birmingham, Ala.

## **Let go of differences**

At the Church2Church fellowship, the first Hispanic event of the annual convention, Co-founder Robert Lopez urged participants let go of differences.

“We must break every chain that could separate us,” Lopez said.

Ramon Osorio, national Hispanic mobilizer for the North American Mission Board, said too often the church focuses on other things instead of God.

“We must understand God is sovereign over the body of Christ,” Osorio

said. "That is the first thing we must understand for the church to have unity."

Divisions are caused when Christians put their faith in anything else rather than Christ, Osorio added, including leaders, pastors, associations or conventions.

"Nobody owns the church, not its founders, its pastors, or even the convention," said Osorio.

Diversity is intended as a gift from God so the body of Christ will effectively function, Osorio said.

"We often act like the church in Corinth and say, 'Because I am not a hand, I am not part of the body,'" he said.

## **'Go on the offensive'**



Keynote speaker Otto Sanchez, pastor of Iglesia Bautista Ozama en Santo Domingo in the Dominican Republic, urged pastors at the Hispanic Baptist Pastors Alliance to take an offensive position with the

gospel instead of the defensive position it has been stuck in during recent decades. (Photo / Marc Ira Hooks / SBC Newsroom)

Otto Sanchez, pastor of Iglesia Bautista Ozama in the Dominican Republic defended the division that resulted from the self-identified “conservative resurgence” as a necessary step to affirm the Bible’s inerrancy.]

However, he called on Hispanic churches today to move forward.

“While it was necessary to produce a defensive theology, we have also forgotten to go on the offensive,” Sanchez said during the Hispanic Pastors Alliance meeting.

After church and convention leaders have fallen, and division has been created among Baptist churches, Sanchez said, the hope is still in God’s plan for the church to emerge victorious.

## **Rising generations, different culture**

In order for the church to be the victorious light God has called it to be, Jesse Rincones, executive director of the Hispanic Baptist Convention of Texas, said the Hispanic church needs to reach the nations already present in the United States.

“We do not have to just look at other countries around the world to see other cultures,” Rincones said at the National Hispanic Fellowship of Southern Baptist Churches. “Among us we have Millennial and Generation Z Hispanics who are already part of a different culture.”



Jesse Rincones, executive director of the Hispanic Baptist Convention of Texas, addresses the the National Hispanic Fellowship of Southern Baptist Churches. (Photo / Isa Torres)

More than half of all Hispanics in the U.S. fall under those two generations, Rincones noted.

Just like missionaries would use contextualized ministry to reach people in other nations, the Hispanic church needs to do the same to reach younger generations, he insisted.

“The missionary needs to be willing to change himself to reach others,” Rincones added. “We must do the same to reach that nation in our pews.”

Because no single church or pastor working alone can accomplish the mission, Rincones called for Hispanic congregations to come together under the only One who can make this possible.

“What we need is the Spirit of the Living God,” Rincones emphasized. “Only then will we show the light of Christ to the nations.”