

Houston-area Latino association broadens its vision

December 12, 2018

The Asociación Bautista Latino Americana knows its efforts now can prepare Houston-area churches for better outcomes later.

With expectations Hispanics will make up [60 percent](#) of Houston's population in 2050, the association met recently at Baptist University of the Américas in San Antonio to cast a vision for the future.

Since Hispanics already make up a large portion of Houston's diverse population, the 52 Hispanic Baptist churches that are part of ABLA need to do more, said Bulmaro Luna, elected this year as the association's executive director.

ABLA officially was organized as an independent association distinct from Union Baptist Association in 2003. The association has its own board of directors and budget, and it creates its own resources, Luna explained.

Many churches in the association already have developed networks to serve the community, but ABLA must do more to facilitate collaboration, he insisted.

Focus on discipleship and church starting

The association plans to focus on two areas—making disciples and planting churches, he said.



Pastor Johnnie Musquiz teaches a Christian ethics class at the Baptist Bible Institute at Iglesia Bautista Houston. (Photo / Isa Torres)

“The motto of ABLA is ‘to make disciples,’ and with more disciples, we should also plant more new churches,” Luna said.

Through [theological institutes](#) in Houston—like the ones he and pastor Johnnie Musquiz lead—the association can prepare more people for Christian service, with a particular focus on discipleship and starting churches, Luna said.

The association also wants to respond to pastors’ emotional, physical and financial needs, he noted. A new ministry for pastoral care ABLA plans to implement this year will offer resources for pastors to find health insurance through networks like GuideStone, and also will coach ministers to budget for emergencies, retirement and other savings, he said.

Modeled after Texas Baptists, ABLA has created a network of ministry departments that range from missions and evangelism to pastoral counseling and the regional Unión Femenil Misionera, he said.

“The association is essential for Houston, a very big city where there are a lot of Hispanics,” Luna said. “If the purpose of the association is to work together, then we must come together as churches, as an association.”

Catalyst for collaboration

To broaden the association's vision, Luna scheduled its most recent board meeting in San Antonio, so members could learn more about BUA, the Hispanic Baptist Convention and Unión Femenil Misionera.

"Hispanic churches like to collaborate together, but sometimes someone needs to start the process," Luna said. "This is what we must do to be able to do the work we have been called to do."

As executive director of ABLA, Luna believes it is his responsibility to enhance communication and establish connections between available resources and Houston area churches involved in a variety of effective ministries.

"We do have to start from the relationship we have with God and from the vision God has given us," Luna said. "Everything begins there, and if we seek to have a good relationship with God, then we will also seek to have a good relationship with others."