

# **Laredo minister benefits from previous pastor's preparation**

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LAREDO—John Delgado knows from experience that pastors who look forward help their churches prepare for the future when they no longer are on the scene.

When Delgado first arrived at United Baptist Church in Laredo, he knew the previous pastor, Jonathan Aragon, had prepared the church to continue moving forward with the next pastor.

Aragon announced his retirement at the end of last year, so United Baptist initially prepared to call an interim pastor for a prolonged time, Delgado said.

But by December, the church and Delgado were finalizing their interviews. And by January, he and his family moved to Laredo.

“The previous pastor retired. It wasn’t like he left poorly or on a bad note. He is actually missed. The church loved him and still loves him,” Delgado said.

United Baptist and First Baptist Church of Laredo are the only Baptist churches in the city founded as English-speaking churches from the beginning, Delgado noted.

## **Foundation laid to move forward**

However, United Baptist offers services in both English and Spanish.

Under Aragon’s leadership, the church transitioned to a more

contemporary worship style and focused more on young families. So, the foundation to move forward had been set by the time a new pastor arrived, Delgado said.

Delgado, who has a background of ministry to college students and young adults, quickly saw United Baptist's investment in young adults and realized God was calling him there.

"It really was like all the ministry experiences I've had were preparing me to come here," Delgado said.



Before coming to United Baptist Church, Pastor John Delgado noticed the congregation's desire to serve a multicultural and bilingual community, and he noted their willingness to welcome the input of young families. (Photo courtesy of United Baptist Church)

Transition in ministry may prove difficult for both the minister and the church, but when pastors help churches prepare for what will come before they leave, then those who will follow can hit the ground running, he added.

“A lot of the hard work in creating a culture that wants to reach out to young families had already been done before I got here,” Delgado said.

In the months since he arrived, Delgado said the church continues showing him the commitment they have by inviting new people to join them in church. And when someone new visits the church, they quickly receive a follow-up call from a church member or an invitation to another church event, he noted.

## **Always in transition**

While Delgado is thankful for all the work Aragon did and the church’s desire to serve God in Laredo, he said the good things he shares about United Baptist Church only demonstrate the faithfulness of God.

As pastor of United Baptist, Delgado said he must walk humbly and constantly remind himself that only God makes the calls.

“Sometimes my prayer is: ‘Lord don’t let me mess it up. You’re at work here, so don’t let me be the stumbling block,’” he said.

Delgado said he yearns to continue to help the church prepare for the future. That only happens when a pastor reminds the church of its goal, and it means the church always will be in transition, he noted.

Transition requires sacrifice, and sometimes it takes the strenuous effort to restructure how churches have organized, he said. But churches and pastors should see transitions as “opportunities to grow and become more of what God called us to be,” he said.

In many ways, Laredo could provide one example of what cities in the state will look like in the near future—an increasingly multicultural and bilingual community where churches must adopt a multicultural and bilingual approach, he said.

While worship style preferences may change, what cannot change is the church's focus towards others, Delgado added.

While it may be easier for a church to become inwardly focused, an externally focused church "is where we need to be," because the church's purpose is to reach those who are outside its walls, he said.