

## FLORIDA BAPTISTS PARTNER TO HELP DISPLACED CHILDREN

Iglesia Bautista Northside in Hialeah is known as a church “que practica el amor” or in English: “A church that practices love.” And through their partnership with His House Children’s Home, they are living up to their motto.



Four months ago, the church welcomed about 90 teenaged boys and girls from His House International to Sunday worship and have continued to do so every Sunday since.

“This was a blessing we were not expecting,” said Alberto Ocaña, Northside’s pastor.

A former member of the church who is also an employee at the organization arranged for the group to meet at Northside for worship.

“Before they used to visit a different house of worship every Sunday, but the staff has felt welcomed here and the children have pushed to continue coming,” said Ocaña.

His House Children’s Home is a private non-profit, faith-based organization dedicated to providing a safe, home-like environment to minors in state custody. Through His House International, the

organization also cares for unaccompanied minors who have fled their home countries due to homelessness, gang violence, economic hardship and abuse.

The boys and girls who attended worship on Sunday at Northside came from Central and South American countries like Guatemala, El Salvador, Ecuador and Bolivia. Some have faith backgrounds but many do not. So when the group arrived, the church quickly moved to start two new Sunday school classes to accommodate them and minister to their specific spiritual needs.

“They have been through an incredible journey to get to this country,” said Noel Morera, Sunday school teacher to the His House boys; “and my main focus is to share Christ and His love with them.” Already 10 boys and 5 girls have been baptized.

One of the questions Morera is asked most often is “why am I in this situation.” It is certainly a difficult question to answer, but Morera has found that by walking them through the book of Acts, their anxieties are comforted as they learn about the hardships the apostles also faced. “For some sleeping has been difficult because they have many worries so I tell them that God is in control and that has helped them.”

“One of the challenges we’ve faced has been classroom space,” said Ocaña. “The boys currently meet for class in the gazebos and the girls are in an air-conditioned classroom and we’ve also purchased 100 new foldable chairs to provide seating for them.”

The Florida Baptist Convention has come alongside the church with a grant to help cover the cost of serving hot lunch to the group every Sunday.

“Pastor Ocaña showed me the ministry to these children [and] it was really touching to see how the church embraced them,” said Al Fernandez, Southeast Regional Catalyst for the Florida Baptist Convention. “Not only did they embrace them but they also fed them.”

The result of the outpouring of love from the church into the His House boys and girls is hard to imagine, continued Fernandez. “They might stay or go back to their countries but their lives have been forever changed by the Gospel.”

By Keila Diaz, Florida Baptist Convention, July 31, 2018

### La Convención Bautista de la Florida se une para ayudar a los niños desplazados

La Iglesia Bautista Northside en Hialeah es conocida como “una iglesia que practica el amor” y a través de su colaboración con His House Children’s Home está haciendo realidad su lema. Desde hace unos cuatro meses la iglesia ha recibido en su servicio de adoración a unos 90 niños y niñas adolescentes procedentes de His House International. “Esta ha sido una bendición que no esperábamos!” dice el pastor Alberto Ocaña.

Fue un antiguo miembro de esta congregación, quien también trabaja para His House, quien hizo los arreglos para que esto ocurriera. El pastor Ocaña nos comenta que “anteriormente ellos participaban en el servicio de adoración del domingo con otra congregación pero el personal y los niños han sentido el calor de nuestra bienvenida y la atención que les hemos brindado y han pedido continuar asistiendo”.

His House Children’s Home es una organización religiosa, privada y no lucrativa, dedicada a proveer a los niños bajo custodia del gobierno de un entorno seguro y hogareño. His House también se ocupa de cuidar de los niños que llegan al país sin sus padres, huyendo de sus países de origen debido a la falta de un hogar, la violencia de las pandillas, la pobreza y el abuso.

Los niños y niñas que asisten a I.B. Northside los domingos vienen de países en Centro y Suramérica como Guatemala, El Salvador, Ecuador y Bolivia. Algunos tienen antecedentes de fe personal o en sus familias pero la mayoría no y ante esta realidad la iglesia se movilizó rápidamente para acomodar y comenzar dos nuevas clases de enseñanza bíblica y así poder ministrar a sus necesidades espirituales específicas.

“Ellos han hecho un increíble recorrido para llegar a este país” nos dice Noel Morera, maestro de los niños en la Escuela Dominical, “y mi tarea principal es compartir con ellos el Evangelio y el amor de Cristo”. Diez niños y cinco niñas han sido bautizados en este tiempo. Una de las preguntas que más frecuentemente los niños hacen a Morera es “por qué estoy en esta situación?” y esta es por cierto una pregunta difícil de contestar, pero él ha encontrado que yendo con ellos a través del libro de los Hechos sus preocupaciones y ansiedades se ven aliviadas mientras aprenden de las dificultades que los primeros cristianos enfrentaron. “Para algunos dormir ha sido difícil porque tienen muchas preocupaciones y temores , pero yo les digo que Dios está en control y eso los ha ayudado a ellos”.

El pastor Ocaña comparte que “uno de los desafíos que esta situación ha traído a la iglesia es el espacio para acomodar las dos nuevas clases. Los niños fueron acomodados en los gazebos exteriores mientras las niñas lo hacen en espacios climatizados interiores y compramos 100 nuevas sillas plegables para que pudiesen estar sentados con comodidad durante sus clases”.

La Convención Bautista de la Florida ha venido a respaldar este esfuerzo de IB Northside con una ofrenda que ayuda a cubrir los gastos de servir almuerzo cada domingo. “El pastor Ocaña me mostró el ministerio a estos niños y esto fue realmente impactante ver cómo la iglesia los ha acogido”, dice Al Fernández, Catalítico para la Region Sureste de la FBC. “No solamente los han acogido sino que también los alimentan.”

“El resultado de esta expresión de amor de la Iglesia Northside hacia los niños de His House es incalculable”, continúa Fernández, “Ellos quizás pueden quedarse o regresar a sus países pero sus vidas han sido cambiadas para siempre por el Evangelio.”

<https://www.ibnorthside.org/nuestra-historia>

Northside Baptist Church began its work as a small mission within the Anglo-Northside Baptist Church.

Its first pastor was Rev. Milton Leach, assisted by three other members. This work began in July 1955. Later that year, Rev. Francisco Páez took over as pastor, serving until 1957.

On March 1, 1958, Rev. **Eliseo Rodríguez** was installed as pastor. That same year, a property was purchased and the mission moved to a new location; on December 18, it received financial assistance from the Home Mission Board.

On October 12, 1961, the mission was formally established as a church, and it was officially constituted on March 16, 1962, becoming the second organized Hispanic church in Miami.

Pastor Evis Carballosa replaced Pastor Eliseo Rodríguez, serving until 1968, when he was succeeded by Rev. Edwin Díaz. After several months without a pastor, Rev. Díaz was replaced by Rev. Eduardo Hernández. During this time, the church experienced significant growth and flourishing. Rev. Pedro Pared, from Tampa, served briefly as pastor, resigning in 1982. That same year, Rev. José L. Molliner, recently arrived from Cuba with his wife and children, was invited to preach in Northside. Finding himself without a pastorate in the United States, he was offered the position, which he accepted for the glory of God. During his tenure, a property was purchased, remodeled, and renovated to serve as a church building. As time passed and the membership grew, the purchase of a property became a reality, which we currently own and where hard work and the perseverance of the brothers resulted in the construction of a beautiful, comfortable temple worthy of praise and work for the work of God.

In 1997, Pastor Molliner became ill and underwent heart surgery; he stopped working and was replaced as interim pastor by Rev. José Ruiz (who was retired at that time); and in the search for a new pastor, in 1999, Rev. P. **Alberto Ocaña**, a native of Cuba and from the First Baptist Church of Hialeah, where he served for 6 years as music minister and associate pastor, arrived at our church; accompanied by his wife Oneida and his children Aylín and Albertico.

On Saturday, July 24th, he was officially installed as pastor of Northside Church, an event attended by other pastors, friends, brothers and sisters, and teachers from the Western Cuba Baptist Seminary.

In these past years, God has greatly blessed us, and we can say: Ebenezer, thus far the Lord has helped us.

God has been faithful, and it has been a fundamental task of the pastor and all the members to cultivate good relationships and Christian love, thus contributing to many coming to know Christ as Savior. Currently, Northside Baptist Church has a membership of over 650 and an average attendance of 600 at Sunday services, all to the glory of God. Believing with faith and trust, as Scripture says, that He who began the good work in us will perfect it.