



## Many hands • Planter finds ample help with big task

“When I entered the pastorate, we planted this church with the idea that we had to do it alone,” **Jonathan de la O** said. With his wife, Emely, the young planter wanted to reach people like themselves, first and second generation Latinos in Chicago. Nine years ago, the couple walked hand-in-hand past a fence with a large sign that read Starting Point Community Church. The fledgling congregation was meeting at the Rockwell St. building that housed Chicago Metro Baptist Association.

Launch Sunday in 2014 drew 50 people, however the planting task seemed large and lonely. But no more.

Walking down another sidewalk past another church building today, the couple holds hands with their three children (pictured below). But the de la O family is supported by a much larger family as they build a healthy congregation in the nearby Belmont-Cragin neighborhood.

“We wanted to be a community church, so we’ve always done evangelistic outreaches,” the pastor said. “We know in the Hispanic community there’s a lot of needs. So we supply those needs with resources, groceries and food, backpacks, and Christmas trees and gifts.”



WESTBROOK

Outreach has become an open door. So has their recent ministry to immigrants. It’s literally an open door, as the church provides shelter until refugees can get established in jobs and homes.

“We are seeing many migrants coming to the United States, and especially in our city—people from Venezuela, Colombia, Nicaragua, Honduras, from many countries,” he said. “The Word of God tells us to serve, love, and to meet the needs of foreigners.... While we are ministering to them, we are preaching the gospel to them through deeds and words.”

In a similar way, de la O found support with Baptist collaborators along the way—first with meeting space and sound systems, later with the purchase of an existing church building. Plus connections and encouragement and friendships with fellow pastors.

That multi-lingual work continues today among multiple people groups.

“When I first started meeting with pastors, I think they were a little stunned that we were giving them that kind of time and attention, and that it was somebody that could speak the language,” said **Paul Westbrook**, IBSA Associate Executive Director. Westbrook was a missionary kid in Argentina who wondered if his Spanish language skills would someday benefit the kingdom.



“God is giving me this opportunity to enter into relationships with (Hispanic) pastors. And it’s a very special thing for me to be able to do with them, and I hope it’s a good thing for them, too,” he said.

In a state with nearly nine million lost people and two million immigrants, it’s all hands on deck for the gospel.

“We benefitted from resources through the Association, and we want to be part of that,” de la O said, “not only for Hispanic churches but for all churches. When churches are supporting in this way, we can see the hand of the Lord and know that God is there.”

