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The Religious Community and Latinos in Alabama: Two Steps Forward

by

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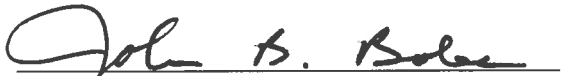

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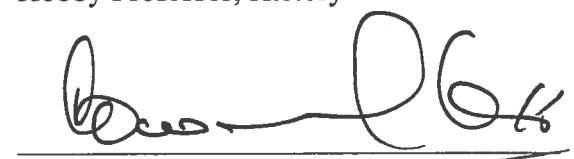

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ABSTRACT

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This dissertation explores the nuances of how the religious community of Alabama responded to the development of a Latino population in the state, beginning in the mid-1980s, as well as how Latinos found a place among the preexisting religious institutions. Much of the academic focus on Latinos in the South has explored the topic from the perspectives of labor, politics, housing, and other lenses that typically revealed negative interactions between Latinos and the long-term population. Also, studies of religious matters generally focus on the Catholic Church, which included the majority of the Latino population but left out much of the interaction with the mostly Protestant majority. Through interviews with congregation leaders, this study shows that the incorporation of Latinos was a complex process based in a history and experience of missions work. Beginning in the 1950s, the understanding of missions began to change from long-term missions undertaken by few Christians to mostly short-term missions experienced by many. That missions background made the possibility of ministering to Latinos in Alabama much more plausible and led to the partnerships discussed in the rest of the dissertation. The part of the state to first receive Latinos was the northeast corner where the religious community initially responded to migrant Latinos beginning in the 1950s and then to a permanent Latino population in the 1980s. The study also focuses on the city of Birmingham and finds that strong leaders were the crucial element in

developing Latino ministries. Such partnerships resulted in great variety among the structures of ministries based on the abilities and desires of the individual churches. The relationships formed in the church environment served as a counter to the state and national vitriol concerning illegal immigration and produced a state population with mixed feelings about its Latino component. Those relations also provided hope for the eventual partnership of all races.

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Introduction

On a sunny Sunday morning in Birmingham, Alabama, children at Dawson Memorial Baptist Church filed into their early 2010 Sunday school class just as others had done for more than eighty years. The traditions of religious education carried on much as they had for several generations, but beginning in the 1990s there was a noticeable change. As the teacher settled the class and began the lesson, the mix of faces looking up included both white and brown where in previous decades the class was monochrome. For these children the ethnic composition of their class was commonplace. The development of a multiethnic congregation was, however, quite new for Dawson, Birmingham, and Alabama in general. In the early 1990s Dawson incorporated a parallel Hispanic congregation on its own campus, and the children of both congregations attended Sunday school together, went on mission trips together, and acted as a single youth ministry. So among the youngest members of Dawson there was essentially one congregation, while their parents and other adults met in two congregations separated by the barrier of language but still connected within the same church with the same goals. This arrangement at Dawson was not a random anomaly but rather an example of a trend throughout the Christian community of Alabama where many churches reached out to the state's new Latino population.[1]

Like many states throughout the South, Alabama received a significant influx of Latino immigrants beginning in the late 1980s and continuing through the 2000s.

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[1] This study generally uses the term "Hispanic" in relation to church ministries and the term "Latino" to refer to the Latino population of Alabama or the U.S. in general. This identification follows the pattern used by Latinos interviewed, though it was not an absolute rule. Usage often differed from person to person, and many times the terms were used interchangeably.

Initially the newcomers were drawn to the rural parts of the region by jobs in industries such as chicken processing, but Latinos quickly branched out into other lines of work and moved into the larger cities of the South as well. Scholars have noted that the South experienced a significant globalization during this period both socially and economically. As the Latinos settled in the South, the community began to put down roots, send their children to local schools, and generally establish their lives—sometimes putting a strain on local resources.[2] This study follows this pattern by examining two areas in Alabama. It looks to rural northeast Alabama where after an initial encounter with the Latino migrants in the 1950s to early 1980s, DeKalb County, and then surrounding areas, began to receive a permanent Latino population in the mid-1980s. The study also looks to the Birmingham area which began to see a sharp increase in its Latino population shortly thereafter.

Latino numbers increased quickly in the 1990s with the official state population growing from 24,629 in 1990 to 75,830 in 2000, and soon the white religious community of the state began to recognize them as a potential area of ministry. Catholics were the first to do so with a few outreach efforts in the 1980s to the earliest immigrants, and the Protestants soon followed in the 1990s as the Latino population increased dramatically. Within a decade, all of the Christian denominations began to develop ministries to the Latinos—some much more so than others. But in this added outreach there was a

[2] Raymond A. Mohl, "Latinization in the Heart of Dixie: Hispanics in Late-Twentieth-Century Alabama," *The Alabama Review* 55, no. 4 (2002): 249–54, 257–58; James C. Cobb, "Beyond the 'Y'all Wall': The American South Goes Global," in *Globalization and the American South*, ed. James C. Cobb and William Stueck (Athens, Ga.: The University of Georgia Press, 2005), 2, 14–16; Raymond A. Mohl, "Globalization, Latinization, and the Nuevo New South," *Journal of American Ethnic History* 22, no. 4 (2003): 36–37, 42–44, 54.

question: how did Alabama, a state for so long split in religion along the lines of race, suddenly decide to start creating churches with multiple ethnicities in attendance?

Chapter one of this study explores how a heritage of and experience in missions prepared white Protestant Alabama congregations to reach out to the newcomers. But in that outreach, not all areas of the state had the same experience. Rural areas tended to receive Latinos earlier and in many ways felt the effect of Latino presence more strongly than larger cities. Thus chapter two examines an area in northeast Alabama, centered in DeKalb County, that had a surprisingly long history of Latino outreach.

Given the sheer size of population, significantly more ministry occurred in large cities. Chapters three and four focus on Birmingham and its surrounding area. Chapter three first addresses the ministries and their key element of leadership—particularly that of Latino and white pastors.[3] Then chapter four examines the structure of the ministries and how churches implemented such a significant change. Chapter five follows with an exploration of how those ministries in northeast Alabama and in Birmingham dealt with the challenges, such as illegal immigration and political and social vitriol, that came along with their new ministries.

Some aspects and limitations of the study are best addressed at the outset. The most immediate question is why only discuss white churches and Latinos. Black churches did not develop outreach ministries to the Latino community. The answer to why such ministry did not occur is complex. Whites and blacks shared the same evangelistic goals, so the reasons had to exist outside the basic tenants of faith. There have been several academic studies that have explored the reasons for a lack of

[3] Chapters two and three discuss census data for northeast Alabama counties and the Birmingham area respectively.

cooperation between blacks and Latinos in economics and politics. Observers of Latino immigration to cities in the South noted trends in sentiment and action that helped explain the two minority communities avoiding each other. In Atlanta and Memphis, negative sentiments erupted in the public arena as blacks and Latinos clashed over housing, jobs, and public benefits because, at least to some extent, the poor black community felt threatened by a growing Latino community. The two groups felt animosity over economics as the introduction of the Latino population created competition, both real and imagined, for low-paying jobs typically held by blacks. Such competition usually began with jobs and then extended to other areas of life. Those issues eventually revealed themselves in politics as Latinos gained enough numbers to create a voting bloc.[4] Another less tangible reason for the lack of interaction, especially in religion, was likely difference in culture. Black churches had a very distinct worship style developed over centuries, so trying to incorporate a Hispanic congregation with a similarly distinct style would have been difficult. Even if the two congregations met at different times in the same building, the ways of going about the business of church, such as leadership and administration, may have been too dissimilar. Along that same line, black congregations may have also been fearful of harming the bastion of black culture that they had created over generations. Money may also have played a part in the choice to not conduct outreach to Latinos. Many black churches served congregations that occupied low-wage

[4] Barbara Ellen Smith, "Market Rivals or Class Allies? Relations Between African Americans and Latino Immigrant Workers in Memphis," in *Global Connections and Local Receptions: New Latino Immigration to the Southeastern United States* (Knoxville, Tenn.: University of Tennessee Press, 2009), 299–302, 304–8, 312–16; Raymond A. Mohl, "Latinos and Blacks in the Recent American South," in *Migration and the Transformation of the Southern Workplace Since 1945*, ed. Robert Cassarello and Colin Davis (Gainesville, Fl.: The University Press of Florida, 2009), 80–113.

positions in society. The idea of serving another minority community with limited income may have been seen as too great a strain. These reasons for the lack of religious interaction between blacks and Latinos offer some explanation for the absence of outreach. When two groups feel they are incompatible in regards to basic resources, there is little chance they will choose to associate socially in their free time. Also, fear of changing or diluting culture regularly prevents different groups all over the world from interacting. Chapter one of this study adds a contributing factor by discussing how mission heritage and experience, which encouraged white ministry to Latinos, had a negative effect on black and Latino interaction.

Another major question for this project is why focus primarily on Protestant and heavily on Baptist ministries. Obviously a large majority of the Latino population was Catholic, so their natural religious home was the Catholic Church. The decision to focus primarily on Protestant ministries, however, was made based on religious affiliation demographics of Alabama and the denominational distribution of religious leaders working in ministry to Latinos. Most of the ministers were Protestant, and a majority was Baptist. Discussing numbers in relation to a Latino population with a large portion of undocumented immigrants is difficult, but it is possible to make a close assessment if not precise. A Pew survey found that Latinos in the U.S. were about 62 percent Catholic and 19 percent evangelical Protestants with the latter number on the rise. About 14 percent reported no religious affiliation. Among Latino Catholics nationally, immigrants made up two thirds of their numbers. But the Latino population in Birmingham was not representative of Latinos nationwide since it was much more heavily first-generation immigrant. Most pastors estimated the first-generation undocumented Latinos at about

75 percent or more of the overall community in the city compared to a little over 17 percent nationally in 2009. Since Birmingham had a much higher immigrant population and immigrants are heavily Catholic, the vast majority, likely 90 percent or more, of Latinos in Birmingham were Catholic. But in Alabama, the vast majority of Christians were Protestant, and the largest percentage of those was Baptist. Of the overall population of Alabama, Catholics were 6 percent (8.4 percent when focusing on the Birmingham's Jefferson County) while Protestants were 82 percent. White Protestants alone made up approximately 64 percent. In the total state population, the main Protestant denominations represented were Southern Baptist at 29.1 percent, United Methodist at 6.2 percent, Non-denominational at 4.6 percent, Presbyterian at just over 1 percent (if both PCUSA and PCA were included), and Episcopalians at just under 1 percent.[5] The Catholic Diocese and parishes ministered well by providing mass,

[5] "When Labels Don't Fit: Hispanics and Thier Views of Identity" (Pew Research Center, 2012), 35, http://www.pewhispanic.org/files/2012/04/PHC-Hispanic-Identity.pdf; "Changing Faiths: Latinos and the Transformation of American Religion (2006 Hispanic Religion Survey)" (Pew Research Center, 2006), 5, 9, http://www.pewhispanic.org/files/reports/75.pdf; "Statistical Portrait of Hispanics in the United States, 2009" (Pew Research Center, 2009), 1, http://www.pewhispanic.org/files/2011/02/2009-Hispanic-Profile-Final.pdf; "Unauthorized Immigrant Population: National and State Trends, 2010" (Pew Research Center, 2010), 1, http://www.pewhispanic.org/files/reports/133.pdf; "A Portrait of Unauthorized Immigrants in the United States" (Pew Research Center, 2009), i, http://www.pewhispanic.org/files/reports/107.pdf; Clifford A. Grammich et al., *2010 U.S. Religion Census: Religious Congregations and Membership Study* (Kansas City, Mo.: Association of Statisticians of American Religious Bodies, 2012), 59; *U.S. Religious Landscape Survey* (The Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, February 2008), 100. There was a Pentecostal presence in the state of approximately 3 percent spread over a few divisions. This study does not address Pentecostal outreach to Latinos because it was not a significant factor in northeast Alabama or Birmingham. There were a few small Latino Pentecostal congregations, but they were typically Latino-founded rather than outreach ministries from established churches. Also the presence of specifically Pentecostal ministries was not an important factor for most Latinos in their decision to attend a church. Latinos typically lumped all non-Catholic ministries together as

sacraments, and services to those Latinos that sought them out. The significant contributions the Catholic Diocese and parishes are discussed periodically throughout the study, and they receive the most attention in chapter four on the structure of ministries. But the greatest amount of ministry activity happened on the Protestant side due to the larger number of ministries—even if their Hispanic congregation numbers, which typically did not exceed 150, were relatively small. Since the majority of Alabamians were connected to the Protestant churches it was with those ministries that there was the greatest amount of interaction between Latinos and whites. Also it was in those congregations that the Latinos had the greatest impact on Alabama's primarily Protestant history. Thus this study puts more focus on those ministries and their leaders.

This study was inspired by the work of two scholars who explored the lives of Latinos in the South. In 2003 Leon Fink published *The Maya of Morganton: Work and Community in the Nuevo New South*. The monograph explored in detail the changes an immigrant population brought to a small town. In Morganton, North Carolina, Guatemalan refugees previously living in Florida were recruited by the local meat processing company as low-wage labor. Then more Guatemalans came directly from the

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evangelical, so the choice of a church depended on whether they liked the music, pastor, and congregation instead of the specific theology. Also, pastors to Hispanic congregations tended to design their worship services so that they took on many of the expressive elements of charismatic or Pentecostal congregations. Thus those Latinos familiar with those traditions in a previous country were likely comfortable in a Baptist Hispanic congregation in Birmingham. Two Pentecostal ministers were contacted for interviews on several occasions, but neither responded. Due to the very different nature of Catholic ministry to Latinos, the efforts of the Birmingham Diocese are primarily discussed in chapters four and five. Episcopalians do not receive a great deal of attention in this study, except in chapter two, because there was very little Episcopal ministry to Latinos. The denomination had a handful of such ministries throughout the state, but they were generally very small. Even the main Episcopal ministry in Birmingham struggled to survive.

home country due to links with the first wave of recruits. Fink argued that the culture the Maya took with them from Guatemala gave them community strategies in dealing with adversity. When the meat company tried to take advantage of its new workers, the Maya walked out, developed formal strikes, and even worked with a labor union in a struggle with management that lasted over much of the 1990s. Fink relied heavily on oral history to explore the complexity of the heritage, lives, and work of the immigrants. Another scholar, Raymond A. Mohl, published the article "Latinization in the Heart of Dixie: Hispanics in Late-Twentieth-Century Alabama" in 2002. Mohl took a broad look at Latino migration to Alabama as well as how they were adapting to the state and the state to them. In that article, Mohl noted the efforts by the Catholic Church to minister to the newcomers as well as the beginnings of the Protestant ministries. That brief description provided the idea of doing a more in-depth study of the relationship of the religious community in Alabama to the state's Latino population. Fink's monograph showed that relying on oral history would provide an effective way to explore the subject on a deep level.[6]

Quite often in academics the Latino community of the U.S. has been examined in relation to its work. It has received some explorations of its religious side as well—particularly focused on experiences of Catholics since the majority of Latinos adhere to that faith.[7] This study attempts to examine the religious community of Alabama as a

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[6] Leon Fink, *The Maya of Morganton: Work and Community in the Nuevo New South* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 39–40, 54–56, 63–69, 76–78, 109–10; Mohl, "Latinization in the Heart of Dixie: Hispanics in Late-Twentieth-Century Alabama," 259–62.

[7] Treviño, Robert R., *The Church in the Barrio: Mexican American ethno-Catholicism in Houston* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: The University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 4–8, 52–55, 59–61, 155, 174–75, 181–83, 192–95, 203–5.

whole with white leaders and congregations in various levels of partnership with Latino leaders and congregations. The mix proved quite complex and significant in Alabama's development.

Chapter One

A Heritage and Mindset of Missions

Alabama since the 1960s has been known for its troubled racial past, but in the 1990s and 2000s an unexpected trend developed that added nuance to Alabama's long-standing racial split. Churches in Alabama, both Protestant and Catholic, began ministering to Latino newcomers, and many actually incorporated Hispanic congregations under their own roofs. How did such a major change come to pass in a state known for racial divisions? Many of Alabama's old civil-rights-era wounds had healed by the 1990s, leaving visible scars but a general sense of racial progress. Still, despite success in public, the white and black communities generally remained separate in private matters—most clearly in religion. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. accurately called the traditional Protestant church hour, Sunday morning at eleven, the most segregated hour of the week.[1] A number of churches could claim some members outside their majority race, but overall the maxim remained true. Most Alabamians saw this Sunday separation as a product of choice in culture and church tradition. Whatever the reason for the separate black and white congregations, the trend of white churches starting in-house or affiliated congregations of other cultures and language groups, especially Spanish speakers, greatly altered the segregation dynamic of religion in Alabama. This shift affected only white churches because black churches saw no added ethnicities—a issue detailed below. As with any major change, the creation of these congregations within congregations resulted from several past factors, including a shift in recent Christian

[1] Martin Luther King, Jr., interview by James Miller, December 18, 1963, http://www.wmich.edu/library/archives/mlk/q-a.html. In this chapter there are numerous people, churches, and organizations mentioned in brief that will receive more detailed exploration in later chapters.

intellectual history that widened the concept of missions as well as the development of a network of pastors and missionaries who viewed the Latino newcomers to Alabama as a new mission field.

While a number of factors contributed to churches creating ministries to other cultures, the intellectual heritage and experiences of churches concerning missions served as an important impetus. Ultimately it was up to individual churches to decide whether or not they wanted to create a ministry for Latinos. Thus some churches jumped into ministering to Latinos fully while many did not participate at all. Those that did so, however, broke with both the tradition of racial separation in religion as well as the human tendency to prefer homogeneity. The change in the intellectual heritage of churches that helped create the desire to reach out to Latinos was a general redefining of the meaning of "missions" for churches and Christians throughout the U.S.

Centuries of support and experience with missions served as the overarching background to the new ministries to Latinos in Alabama. Most of the major Protestant denominations in the US followed similar patterns in sending missionaries to foreign lands in the tradition established by examples in the Bible. In missions work, Protestant Christians focused almost exclusively on developing and sending out missionaries with plans to serve in that position for life or at least the extent of their career. After World War II, the number of missionaries sent out from the US increased dramatically. This historical and increasing focus on missions included the two largest Protestant denominations in Alabama. The Southern Baptist denomination had a long history, predating and then following the split between Northern and Southern US Baptists in 1845, of sending missionaries to all corners of the world including Asia, Europe, and

Africa as well as Mexico and Latin America. That denomination also had a strong mission presence nationally through the efforts of its Home Mission Board, renamed the North American Mission Board in 1997, as well as the Women's Missionary Union (WMU). The United Methodist denomination as well had its own strong heritage of world missions going back more than two centuries. Missions efforts in the denomination were consolidated in 1972 into the General Board of Global Ministries which included the significant contribution of the Women's Division, counterpart to the Baptist WMU.[2]

For the average Protestant Christian before 1960, the experience and knowledge of missions was centered on collective efforts within their church to raise money to either send to the denomination for national or international projects or give to another large entity to distribute to missionaries. Some congregations even sent money overseas directly. Despite this involvement with missions, there was a split between the actions taken nationally or abroad and those efforts made at home. Locally the natural tendency of religious institutions, especially those in the South given racial taboos, was to continue ministering and reaching out to people much like those already in each individual church.

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[2] Winston Crawley, *Global Mission a Story to Tell: An Interpretation of Southern Baptist Foreign Missions* (Nashville, Tenn.: Broadman Press, 1985), 21–23; T. B. Ray, *Southern Baptist Foreign Missions* (Nashville, Tenn.: Southern Baptist Convention, 1910), 30–34, 51–53, 124, 132, 202–5, 218–21, 242; William R. Estep, *Whole Gospel Whole World: The Foreign Mission Board of the Southern Bapitst Convention, 1845-1995* (Nashville, Tenn.: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994), 226–30; Arthur B. Rutledge, *Mission to America: A Century and a Quarter of Southern Baptist Home Missions* (Nashville, Tenn.: Broadman Press, 1969), 237–8; "Historical Timeline," *North American Mission Board*, August 12, 2013, http://www.namb.net/History/; "Woman's Missionary Union, Southern Baptist Convention," *Southern Baptist Convention*, August 12, 2013, http://www.sbc.net/aboutus/WMU.asp; John Pritchard, *Methodists and Their Missionary Societies 1760-1900* (Burlington, Vt.: Ashgate Publishing Company, n.d.), 23–27; Jack M. Tuell, *The Organization of the United Methodist Church: 2009-2012 Edition* (Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon Press, 2009), 142–43.

Thus members of churches were typically socioeconomically homogenous, and it was very unusual for Protestant churches to build ministries at home for very different people groups. That tendency shifted for some churches as the definition of the word "missionary" began to expand in the 1960s and became a more complex concept in the 1980s and beyond.

In the 1960s the Protestant churches and denominations of North America began to experience a boom in short-term missions work that permanently expanded the concept of missions. The growth in short-term missions, or mission trips lasting up to a year but most typically less than a month, has increased exponentially to the present. Short-term missions work existed long before the 1960s with isolated efforts by individual groups and a few formal efforts beginning in the 1950s. In the 1960s the number of participants began to grow steadily, with the trend being led by youth and college organizations. In the 1970s observers of missions recognized the proliferation of short-term missions and began to try to quantify that growth. They showed that by 1978 the percentage of short-term missionaries among overseas missionaries jumped to 33 percent within formal sending organizations. Of the 53,494 total missionaries reported, 17,633 were classified as short-term. By 1988 the percentage climbed to 43, and by 1999 it reached 74 percent. The sending agencies in 1999 reported 97,272 short-term missionaries with a significant amount of that growth owed to young adults being sent by organizations such as Campus Crusade for Christ. Such a change was certainly dramatic. In forty years short-term missions grew to represent nearly three-fourths of all missionaries sent out by formal missions organizations. Those numbers gave researchers an understanding of the overall trend, but the figures represented just the missionaries reported by official sending

agencies. The actual change was much more significant as most short-term missions were not part of such organizations and thus not reported. The short-term missions movement in the U.S. included a grassroots dynamic centered in the local church. Congregations still sent out most long-term missionaries and some short-term missionaries via larger organizations and gave regular donations to those entities as well. At the same time, however, churches also organized and sent short-term missionaries on their own. One observer estimated that in the mid-2000s the U.S. sent out over one million short-term missionaries annually while others placed the number much higher at near four million.[3]

The reason for the sudden expansion of short-term missions is difficult to pinpoint. Several factors contributed to the growth of the movement beginning with World War II. The war sent large numbers of Americans abroad and brought them back with expanded perspectives on their ability to successfully travel overseas. Also

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[3] Samuel Wilson, ed., *Mission Handbook: North American Protestant Ministries Overseas*, 12th ed. (Monrovia, Ca.: Missions Advanced Research and Communication Center, 1980), 31–34; W. Dayton Roberts and John A. Siewert, eds., *Mission Handbook: USA/Canada Protestant Ministries Overseas*, 14th ed. (Monrovia, Ca.: Missions Advanced Research and Communication Center, 1989), 52; Roger Peterson, Gordon Aeschliman, and R. Wayne Sneed, *Maximum Impact Short-Term Mission: The God-commanded, Repetitive Deployment of Swift, Temporary, Non-professional Missionaries* (Minneapolis, Minn.: STEMPress, 2003), 242–53; John A. Siewert and Dotsey Welliver, eds., *Mission Handbook: U.S. and Canadian Ministries Overseas, 2001-2003*, 18th ed. (Wheaton, Ill.: Evangelism and Missions Information Service, 2000), 33–34; Robert J. Priest et al., "Researching the Short-Term Mission Movement," *Missiololgy: An International Review* 34, no. 4 (2006): 431–32; Don Fanning, "Short Term Missions: A Trend That Is Growing Exponentially" (Liberty University Digital Commons, 2009), 1, http://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1003&context=cgm_missions; Thomas L. Curtis, Sr., *From the Crossroads: A History of United Methodist Volunteers in Mission* (Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon Press, 2000), 16–17. Short-term missionaries from the official United Methodist sending organization, the United Methodist Volunteers in Mission, are called "volunteers" officially but serve the same functions as short-term missionaries from other denominations.

following the war came a dramatic increase in commercial air travel that, for the first time, many Americans could access. During the 1950s the idea of air travel expanded away from being primarily for those with wealth or government ties. Now average citizens could afford such travel that was also more readily available. Observers have also noted that the creation of the Peace Corps by President Kennedy in 1961 may have been a factor in legitimizing short-term missions. The Peace Corps was a new concept designed to help countries in need with volunteer work—basically short-term missions without the religious component. Also a great influence on the mindset of Christians concerning taking the gospel abroad came in the tours of evangelical preacher Billy Graham from the 1950s to the 1980s. Both in the U.S. and around the world Graham called people to become Christians, and he inspired many Christians by word and example to be active in evangelism. Graham's efforts were closely followed by both national and Christian media to the point that they became common knowledge. Another contributing factor to the rise of short-term missions among Christians was the development of the modern megachurch. The megachurch, while not terribly common especially outside the South, represented a trend toward larger churches that appeared even in small and medium-sized cities. Larger churches had the ability to fund missions more easily given their collective resources. Finally, the most recent development influencing the expansion of short-term missions was the advent of worldwide communications accessible by anyone. First, easy telephone access provided the ability to plan and execute short-term missions, and later the internet allowed the expansion of those abilities plus the capacity to share information on a massive scale.[4] All of these

[4] Peterson, Aeschliman, and Sneed, *Maximum Impact Short-Term Mission: The God-*

factors, and perhaps others, contributed to the globalization and democratization of the average Christian's understanding of missions so that they saw themselves as fully capable of participating in such ministry. Thus the organizations and churches had the ability to plan and execute short-term missions, and average Christians, not just the few exceptional long-term missionaries, could imagine themselves participating in missions work.

Those who chose to participate in short-term missions came from a variety of places within the church. Some adults chose the new work as part of a life phase or something they wanted to do for a while but not permanently. This type of commitment often occurred for adults at mid-life who wanted a change or adults reaching retirement who wanted to serve. Other adult participants did so in a very short timeframe of a few days to a few weeks simply because they wanted to. They often served while on vacation from their regular job, and such trips regularly included the children of the adults so that the service became a family activity. Thus school breaks at Christmas, spring break, or summer became opportunities where families entered the mission field together. Young adults typically went on short-term missions during college while on summer break or shortly after college—taking the opportunity to serve before committing to the job market. Also, children took part in short-term missions through their church youth

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commanded, Repetitive Deployment of Swift, Temporary, Non-professional Missionaries, 253–55; Curtis, Sr., *From the Crossroads: A History of United Methodist Volunteers in Mission*, 34; William Martin, *A Prophet with Honor: The Billy Graham Story* (New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1991), 143–44, 186–88, 231, 340–41, 592–93; Robert J. Priest, Douglas Wilson, and Adelle Johnson, "U.S. Megachurches and New Patterns of Global Mission," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 34, no. 2 (2010): 97–100. Priest categorized megachurches as those with 2000 or more in weekly attendance.

groups with the trips coinciding with school breaks. No matter the age or life stage of a church member, short-term missions developed so that all could participate.[5]

With the variety of missions participants, churches also developed many different types of mission trips. The travel often had an attached tangible goal that tied in with the overall objective of spreading the gospel. Churches organized building-focused trips to construct schools, churches, or homes for nationals. These construction trips provided roles for people at all skill levels and thus proved accessible to many who might feel intimidated by the prospect of such a trip. Other short-term efforts focused on medical ministry recruiting mainly church Christians with medical training. The medical side of the trips ranged from complex surgery to dental care to simple medical education. Then there were missions that specialized in education and children's ministry. Often these efforts took a shape similar to a vacation Bible school, incorporating activities with basic religious education.[6] There were many other types of mission trips that attracted a variety of participants, but most maintained the pattern of the overall gospel objective with the secondary tangible goal.

This change in the participation of Christians in missions could be seen in churches throughout the United States. Where in previous decades the typical involvement of most Christians with missions was praying for missionaries, annual and

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[5] Priest et al., "Researching the Short-Term Mission Movement," 433; Mike Shaw, interview by author, March 30, 2012.

[6] Peterson, Aeschliman, and Sneed, *Maximum Impact Short-Term Mission: The God-commanded, Repetitive Deployment of Swift, Temporary, Non-professional Missionaries*, 70–72; Michael J. Anthony, "Focusing on Priorities: People Versus Projects," in *The Short-Term Missions Boom: A Guide to International and Domestic Involvement*, ed. Michael J. Anthony (Grand Rapids, Mi.: Baker Books, 1994), 56–61; Laura M. Montgomery, "Short-Term Medical Missions: Enhancing or Eroding Health?," *Missiology: An Internaional Review* 21, no. 3 (1993): 334–37; Curtis, Sr., *From the Crossroads: A History of United Methodist Volunteers in Mission*, 91–92, 99, 105–7.

special occasion giving to missions organizations, and periodically hearing testimonies from visiting missionaries, the short-term missions boom brought missions work into the life of the average Christian. In the typical church with a multigenerational congregation it would be possible to find notes in the church bulletin advertising an upcoming mission trip. Members could join as volunteers or support those who wanted to go. Often such trips targeted certain groups within churches large enough to have congregations segmented by life stages. For example, the senior adults, singles, or high school youth might participate in groups. Trips typically required participants to raise their own funding. With youth participants this task often fell to families either working together to raise support or funding the child fully. Prepared groups would then go and come back and report on their trip to the entire congregation about the work they did and also about how they benefitted spiritually from the experience. This pattern repeated millions of times across the US from the 1960s to the present. Obviously the change was not immediate, but by the 1980s the new understanding of missions became ubiquitous.

All of these participants paved the way for missions to become a much more accessible and widely experienced aspect of Christians' worship life. Adults who had grown up understanding missions as a rare life choice for very few Christians had the new experience of seeing and perhaps participating in short-term missions opportunities. All were now called and sought out for service. Some with specialized skills such as medical training had specific opportunities for focused trips, but most of the trips were open to anyone willing. Thus the definition of a missionary shifted from an extremely devout Christian following God's call for lifetime service to all Christians with the will to serve, even if for a short time. For children growing up in the 1970s and 1980s, the idea

of short-term missions became commonplace. They grew up knowing of full-time missionaries and their work since mission conferences and homecomings continued just as they had for decades. But the church youth of the ‘70s and ‘80s understood missions quite differently than preceding generations did. For them, mission opportunities were, most commonly, short-term commitments that were part of the works aspect of a Christian’s faith. They also saw missions service as something fun or an activity shared with friends. Youth knew that missions as a lifetime choice was an option, but that was still a rare decision as it had been for centuries. Thus for Christians of all ages the definition of missions was greatly expanded in the late twentieth century to a type of service that all Christians could and should explore.

Some observers of missions within the Christian community of North America actually debated the effectiveness of short-term missions, asking questions about the motivation of participants, the effectiveness for nationals, the long-term results, and the effects on participants. Some questioned the reasons that non-career missionaries were sent in the first place, arguing that short-term missionaries never received sufficient training or lived in a foreign country long enough to develop true understanding and respect of the local situation. Others said that short-term missions proved ineffective and squandered resources better used by more experienced hands. These critics saw the missions as throwing money at a problem without offering sustainable help. Such tactics, they feared, might create dependency among nationals. In addition, short-term missions often distracted long-term missionaries in the area who acted as liaisons for the newcomers. Finally, the cost of sending a team of North Americans to a foreign country might reach tens of thousands of dollars with the goal of building a structure worth a

couple of thousand. Thus the trips failed a simple cost/benefit analysis. The argument went that it would be better for the short-term missionaries to stay at home and raise the same funds but then send the money to long-term missionaries or organizations already present in the region who could accomplish much more while also adding to the local economy by using local labor and resources. In 2006, 1 to 4 million short-term missionaries left U.S. shores. One observer conservatively estimated a cost of $1,500 per missionary, bringing the expenditure total to 1.5 billion dollars given 1 million missionaries.[7] With 4 million missionaries that number reached 6 billion dollars. Thus criticism of short-term missions came from a number of angles ranging from lack of preparation to wasteful spending, but others offered a very different reason for the continuation of the efforts.

The counter argument to the charges of ineffectiveness and waste was that the biggest benefit of short-term missions was not to the nationals who received medical care, new housing or churches, or even religious education. Actually the main beneficiaries of the short-term missions were the North American participants and their home churches spending the massive sum of money on the effort. One argued effect of short-term missions was that the experience might help more youths become interested in serving as career missionaries. But researchers found that among short-term missionaries there was no measurable increase unless the person went on multiple short-term missions. Another argument was that the experience would increase engagement with and giving to missions later in the person's life. Yet again, researchers found that levels of giving remained the same for those with the experience and those without. Ultimately the

[7] Fanning, "Short Term Missions," 7.

biggest positive effect of short-term mission came in its effect on a person's faith and that of their church. Participation, especially in multiple mission trips, produced positive results in discipleship or adherence to and participation in practices such as prayer and scripture reading to deepen a person's faith. Researchers cautioned, however, that after a short-term mission, some participants experienced a decline in their practice of such virtues and recommended follow up by leaders. Essentially the experience of participating in a short-term mission trip functioned similarly to the experiences of Christians in the distant past leaving their everyday lives and going on a pilgrimage or temporary journey to "pursue sacred goals." The participants of both the pilgrimages and short-term missions then returned home with a sense of spiritual rejuvenation and experiences to inspire others. In addition, the participants also brought back stories and experiences that would inspire their local churches to further commitment to missions work.[8] Despite the focus on the effects or lack thereof on participant lives, this final aspect of the short-term mission received little attention from observers but was mentioned more as a given. In fact, the impact of short-term missions on local sending churches proved tremendous.

The rapid expansion of missions experience among Christians affected more than just the place of missions in Christian intellectual history. Christians also grew, at least somewhat, in their understanding of other cultures rather than seeing them as vague, anonymous people groups spread out on a map who affected life in the U.S. only in news reports and long-term missionary accounts. With fellow church members, family members, or themselves experiencing missions directly, Christians gained intimate

[8] Priest et al., "Researching the Short-Term Mission Movement," 433–34.

knowledge of other ways of life. That understanding directly affected how they perceived people outside their own socioeconomic group. Obviously not every Christian received these same, or for that matter, any benefit from the increase in short-term missions, but the broadening of missions work among North American Christians did have a widespread effect on views of others, producing dramatic results. The lines between missions and those aspects of church work typically known as ministries began to blur so that some domestic and local ministries began to take on aspects of missions and vice versa. Nowhere was this trend more evident than in the South where the combination of recent breaks from old racial patterns, rapidly changing demographic patterns, and a new missions mindset brought very new missions, or ministries, to a region dominated by Protestant Christianity.

One very noticeable aspect of the outreach of Alabama churches to Latinos was the lack of black churches in the trend. As noted in the introduction, there have been several discussions by academics about why blacks and Latinos typically did not partner in economics or politics despite the numerical advantage and potential benefits of doing so. Differences in culture and the desire to preserve traditions likely played a role as well. From the religious perspective, there was another contributing factor for the lack of outreach from black churches to Latinos. While white Protestants experienced the short-term missions boom and its related effect on ministry at home as detailed above, black churches saw only a limited increase in short-term missions. Historically African American churches, denominations, and sending organizations developed limited long-term foreign, or intercultural, missions primarily focused on, but not exclusive to, countries with other black people including the various nations of Africa and the

Caribbean. One observer estimated that of the 250,000 to 300,000 American missionaries who worked in Africa between 1820 and 1980, approximately 600 were African American. A survey published in 1998 found approximately 102 living black missionaries who had served or were serving as long-term intercultural missionaries for more than a year. Beginning in the 1960s, white Protestants experienced the short-term missions boom discussed above. For African American Christians as a whole, the development of short-term missions, though strong in some black churches and communities, was very limited. Also, that increase mostly started in the 1980s. Many short-term missions from black churches likely resulted from members seeing the trend throughout the U.S. and wanting to take part. The late 1980s and beginning of the 1990s also saw the release of five videos by Destiny Movement, Inc. targeting black Christians with a call to greater missions involvement both nationally and internationally. The series grounded its message in the Biblical calling to missions as well as the significant heritage of black leaders and missionaries through Christian history with an emphasis on African American missionaries to Africa. The latter videos focused on current serving missionaries and the call of others to missions. Accompanied by two large mission conferences in 1987 and 1992 and several smaller ones in between, the Atlanta-based Destiny Movement was a significant influence on African American missions. It inspired a number of black churches to send out short-term missions—though it is difficult to gauge the extent of the effect. In 1989 the founder of Destiny Movement, Inc., Elward Ellis, noted concurrent increasing efforts by other black-led organizations around the country to recruit African American missionaries. Specifically he pointed to the Ambassador Fellowship based in Los Angeles and the Lott Carney Baptist Foreign

Missions Convention. Ellis also found that several black denominations, including the Progressive National Baptist Convention and the National Baptist Convention, U.S.A., were focusing their efforts on increasing missions awareness among members. Both the sending organizations and the denominations recruited and paid for black pastors to go on short-term missions trips to gain that experience and then inspire their congregations and communities. The American Baptist Churches denomination even provided funding to bring a choir of 100 to the U.S. from Zaire to help raise awareness of mission opportunities. Those short term missions from black churches and mission organizations generally continued the traditional focus on countries populated predominately by black people and numbers remained small. The continued lack of intercultural missions, both short and long, among African Americans was noted in the 1998 survey of black missionaries. The vast majority agreed that the black church needed significantly more emphasis on missions both in awareness and support.[9]

Three major factors played a part in shaping African American missions in the twentieth century. One issue was economics. Black median family income after World

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[9] James W. Sutherland, "African American Underrepresentation in Intercultural Missions: Perceptions of Black Missionaries and the Theory of Survival/Security" (Dissertation, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, 1998), 1–7, 221–2, 227–9, 238–9; Priest, Wilson, and Johnson, "U.S. Megachurches and New Patterns of Global Mission," 98; Vikki L. Ramsey, "Out of the Pews, into the Neighborhoods; The Destiny Movement: Its Mission Is to Bridge the Gap Between Inner Cities and Suburbs," *The Atlanta Journal and Constitution*, July 25, 1992; *It's Our Destiny*, VHS, 1987; Verne Becker, "A New Era for Black Missionaries," *Christianity Today*, October 20, 1989, 38, 40. The 1998 survey of African American intercultural missionaries based the total number of foreign missionaries on a percentage of the respondents that fit the criteria. It then applied that percentage to the total number of surveys sent out—both returned and not returned. The study found a positive correlation between the youth of a missionary and the likelihood that short-term missions played a role in their decision to become a long-term missionary. Thus short-term missions for African Americans played a significant, though limited, role. (pages 192-3)

War II was 51 percent that of white families. The number trended up over the next 60 years, peaking around 63 percent in 2000. Thus, the funds available to churches and families in sending missionaries or considering short-term missions were significantly less than their white counterparts and likely were a major factor in limited involvement in foreign missions. Second, for many years in the early 1900s there was a significant resistance in large, primarily white, sending organizations to recruiting black missionaries. This was likely due to cultural pressure. However, most of those organizations seemed to move ahead more quickly than the rest of the U.S. population in terms of being more racially inclusive—at least in theory. A poll of 55 sending organizations in 1945 found 41 with no policy regarding African Americans serving, 10 with a policy of seeking black missionaries, and 4 with a policy against such recruitment. In 1973 a poll of 450 Protestant sending organizations found that 137 had one or more black people on staff. There were black sending organizations, but those groups did not recruit missionaries in large numbers. Thus even with the possibility of working with missions organizations, few African Americans were recruited to such positions. This factor combined with the overall limited number of African American intercultural missionaries meant that there were few members of the black community to serve as missions role models. Without people to communicate their experiences and the practical and spiritual benefits of those efforts, missions among African Americans could not gain momentum. A third issue limiting black missions was the culture of community focus in black churches. In response to centuries of slavery and oppression, churches in the African American community developed a strong emphasis of local uplift along with their evangelical focus. No black Christians would deny a need for missions, but the

general cultural desire and thus focus of the church was on building up the black community which had its own significant needs. That emphasis guided where the black church invested its time, effort, and money—a direction with limited emphasis on missions.[10]

With limited missions emphasis by black churches, few examples of African American long-term missionaries, sparse experience in short-term missions, and a minority of missions to non-black people groups, African American Christians from the 1960s forward had a significantly different experience and understanding of missions than their white counterparts. The extensive experience with short-term missions provided a basis on which white churches began to create outreach efforts to Latinos. For black churches, the opposite proved true. A lack of emphasis on missions combined with other factors such as economic competition and cultural preservation to prevent outreach.

To explore the interaction of Latinos and white churches in Alabama, it is best to first look to the northeast corner of the state. This area had experience with Latinos going back several decades because of the annual presence there of migrant farm labor. Latino migrants began to visit DeKalb and Jackson Counties in 1956 or 1957 and continued coming to work the potato harvest for nearly thirty years. Their numbers peaked around 1969, after which the larger farms began to fully mechanize both the planting and harvesting. These migrants were primarily from Mexico and visited the area each summer as one stop on their harvesting route across the United States. The migrants

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[10] "Historical Income Tables: Table F-5. Race and Hispanic Origin of Householder--Families by Median and Mean Income: 1947 to 2009" (United States Census Bureau, n.d.); "Income, Poverty, and Health Insurance Coverage in the United States: 2010" (United States Census Bureau, 2011), 8; Sutherland, "African American Underrepresentation in Intercultural Missions: Perceptions of Black Missionaries and the Theory of Survival/Security," 1–2, 5–6, 69–76, 82–3.

mostly kept to themselves as they were there to work, but in the small farming communities locals easily noticed the newcomers who spoke a different language. Churches were accustomed to ministering to the local population, which was mostly white. Several churches responded to the presence of these migrants in a manner reminiscent of pre-1960s missions patterns, but with some influences from the beginning grassroots missions movement. This effort was encouraged by two of the local Baptist associations, the Sand Mountain Baptist Association (SMBA) and neighboring DeKalb County Baptist Association (DCBA). The two groups primarily identified the locations of the migrants, called on member churches to reach out to the workers, and served as resources for the churches that chose to do so.[11]

Individual churches reached out to the migrants through efforts that focused either on the adults or on the children. In efforts targeting the adults, the pastor of a church typically went to the farm and preached, with a migrant leader serving as an interpreter. This was not done by all pastors in the area, but several repeated the pattern in a way reminiscent of foreign missionaries ministering to other cultures. The women at one of the most active churches working with the migrants also put together health kits to be given out to the migrant adults, thus helping with their physical as well as spiritual needs. This effort was based on the common use of shoeboxes as a way for people in local churches to pack and give items for others, especially children, in need. In 1993 such ministries became a major international operation when the nondenominational Samaritan Purse ministry founded Operation Christmas Child which collected packed

[11] Rex Creswell, interview by author, September 22, 2011; Charles Smith, interview by author, September 19, 2011; Lillie Buckner and Steve Buckner, interview by author, October 12, 2011. Census figures for northeast Alabama are discussed in chapter two.

shoeboxes from local churches and then distributed them around the world. Shoeboxes typically provided health products, school supplies, or a combination of the two, and in the case of the migrants the kits included basic toiletries as well as writing materials and a New Testament track in Spanish. Several churches also invited adult migrants to both church services and annual revival meetings, but very few migrants actually attended due to the language barrier. One church even requested aid from the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board, now called the International Mission Board (IMB), in Atlanta in ministering to the migrants. The organization sent Spanish-language ministry materials, and for two summers the IMB sent Ruben Gonzalez, a missionary, to work with the pastor in translating and connecting with migrants.[12] Thus the ministries to the adult migrants, who for the most part spoke only Spanish, more closely resembled the traditional pattern of missions in Baptist churches before the short-term missions boom. A few missionaries were sent out, and the sending church worked behind the scenes to fulfill the needs of the minister.

For ministry to the migrant children, who generally could speak English, the churches followed the patterns that they would for ministering to any children of the local area who did not typically attend church. Since the Latino children were not black, there was no local taboo against them attending a white church. Thus churches made special efforts to include the children in their annual week-long vacation Bible school (VBS)

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[12] Smith, interview; "Operation Christmas Child," *Samaritan Purse International Relief*, August 12, 2013, http://www.samaritanspurse.org/what-we-do/operation-christmas-child/; Emmett B. Wheeler, *History of the Sand Mountain Association, 1917-1973* (Sand Mountain Baptist Association, 1973), 7, 19; "DeKalb County Association: Annual of 140th Session" (DeKalb County Association, 1980), 37, 40, Samford University, Special Collection.

either by holding an extra session at the farm or sending a van to bring the children to the church and then returning them each day.[13]

By 1980 the ministry to the migrant children also began to reflect the dramatic growth of short-term missions work in the United States. The local Baptist associations brought college student missionaries recruited from Auburn University and the University of Alabama who wanted to do mission work during their summer breaks. The Alabama Baptist State Office recruited students through campus Baptist Student Union groups, and the program sent students as missionaries to many locations throughout the U.S. as well as outside the country. Students received assignments in the various locations according to the desires and skills they listed on their applications. Because the students assigned to northeast Alabama worked primarily with Spanish speakers, the leaders looked for students who had strong skills in music and elementary-style teaching that served as bridges when words failed. The missionaries worked in small teams of two or three, grouped according to their complimentary skills. Each team traveled together and taught throughout the summer. These visiting missionaries were coordinated locally through the DCBA and housed with church members. The role of the missionaries was to travel to the many farms in the area and minister to migrant children while their parents worked in the potato fields. Much of the ministry took the form of simple religious education and music similar to a VBS or Sunday school. One former missionary to the area noted that change typically comes much slower to such rural areas—typically about ten years behind the rest of the state.[14] In the case of grassroots

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[13] Smith, interview; Anne Anderson, interview by author, October 3, 2011; Buckner and Buckner, interview.
[14] Jane Creswell, interview by author, October 6, 2011.

ministry, however, that delay had minimal effect. Given the small size of the rural churches, there was a relatively strong effort to reach out and minister to the migrants. In the 1950s and 1960s such ministry seemed to go against the racial mores of the day in Alabama, but those rules applied only to the lines between blacks and whites. In the case of Latinos the lines were not as absolute, and barriers were crossed in the mindset of missions.

By the mid-1980s very few migrant laborers came to northeast Alabama, but at the same time the region began to experience a new kind of demographic influx as Latinos other than the annual agricultural migrants permanently settled in the area. Spurred by the creation of a chicken processing plant near the DeKalb County city of Collinsville, a new Latino population settled there. In the 1990s this demographic exploded, bringing great diversity to Collinsville first and then to surrounding communities where Latinos began to work in other industries, attended schools, and generally created lives for their families. According to the census, by 2000 Collinsville became the most diverse city in the state. A common set of changes in small communities throughout the South, the demographic shift led many to express concern and even anger over the perceived threat of the newcomers. Others saw a new vitality brought by the Latinos and found ways to incorporate them into the community.[15]

For the mostly Protestant white religious community of northeast Alabama, this demographic change was generally seen as a ministry opportunity. With the experiences

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[15] Darrell Norman, "Collinsville Is a Diverse Alabama Town - and Proud of It," *The Gadsden Times*, May 29, 2005; Mary E. Odem and Elaine Lacy, eds., "Popular Attitudes and Public Policies: Southern Responses to Latino Immigration," in *Latino Immigration and the Transformation of the U.S. South* (Athens, Ga.: The University of Georgia Press, 2009), 147–49, 156–57.

of short-term missions permeating Christianity in the United States, some local congregations felt called to reach out to the Latinos—even if they spoke a different language. Many of the efforts were trial and error, and some found success and remained while others failed to make a connection and faded. Also, the efforts were affected by the relatively small size, and therefore resources, of the area churches. Overall the outreach by churches to Hispanics fell into two categories: individual and cooperative. Individual efforts were those done by a single church and were smaller in scale and something that a church was particularly suited to take on. Cooperative efforts came in the form of two Hispanic churches started by associations of churches pooling their resources to fund larger ministries that no individual church could afford on its own. All of these efforts fit in the new grassroots missions mindset of white Christians. The ultimate result was churches choosing to reach out to a new demographic group and finding the methods and resources to do so.

One of the first Protestant churches to begin to reach out to permanently settled Latinos in DeKalb County was First Baptist Church of Collinsville (FBCC). FBCC began ministering to Latino children around 1997 by holding backyard Bible clubs (small-scale VBSs) in the trailer parks or other areas where many Latinos lived. Then by the early 2000s the church began to reach out to the Latino adults by holding a Spanish-language service at FBCC on Sunday afternoons. This service featured a regular Latino pastor as well as fast-tempo music that appealed to the newcomers. Similarly, in 2006 the Church of Christ in nearby Fort Payne started a Sunday afternoon Spanish service for Latinos. The decision of this church to reach out to the Latino community was influenced by its pastor, Larry Kirby, who became minister to the congregation in 2005.

Kirby had been involved in short-term missions to Nigeria for twenty years and brought that experience and passion to his new work. His work in Nigeria informed his efforts with Latinos in Fort Payne as he realized that the ministry must be presented in a way understood by those specific people. For example, sermon illustrations that worked in America did not make sense in Nigeria. The same principle applied to Latino newcomers in the U.S. Thus the church brought in an experienced Latino preacher, but unlike FBCC, the Spanish service at the Church of Christ maintained the same structure and music style, a cappella hymns, as the regular congregation.[16]

Similar to churches that added Spanish services within their own facilities, other churches incorporated Latinos directly into their preexisting ministries. One church, First Baptist Church of Fort Payne (FBFP), focused on Latino children in its Sunday school program as well as annual VBS. This church's outreach was influenced by the early experiences of its pastor, R. Pat McFadden, who spent one year in language school in Costa Rica and then three years as a missionary to the Dominican Republic in the early 1980s before becoming pastor of FBFP in 1987. While in the Dominican Republic McFadden worked as a "general evangelist," developing Bible studies for the nationals and helping to expand the influence of the already-established mission. He developed general fluency in Spanish during his time in missions, but his strength in conversational Spanish faded over coming decades. Given the strong presence of Catholicism and what he saw as a general indifference to religion in Santo Domingo, the mission work was slow. Unknown to him when he became minister to FBFP in 1987, McFadden was particularly suited to pastoring one of the largest churches in an area that would soon

[16] John Morgan, interview by author, January 21, 2009; Larry Kirby, interview by author, August 11, 2011.

receive many newcomers who spoke Spanish. In coming years FBFP regularly sought out Latino children for its youth program, and its annual VBS attracted about one hundred Latino youths outside those in regular attendance. The church also held an annual Christmas angel tree ministry that primarily benefitted Latino children in local schools.[17]

The most unique effort by an individual church to minister to Latinos developed at St. Phillip's Episcopal Church (SPEC) in Fort Payne. Beginning in 2008 this parish was led by Judith Comer, who had become an Episcopal priest after her husband retired from serving as a minister. As a couple they always had a heart for racial reconciliation and served for several years in Greensboro, Alabama, in the heart of the black belt. This mindset of racial openness and awareness provided Comer with a background to open up her very traditional, aging congregation to Latino newcomers. Comer did not plan to create a multiethnic congregation, but the opportunity appeared when she received a call from a fellow priest in North Carolina who knew of a Guatemalan family that had moved to the Fort Payne area. He asked Comer to contact them. Soon the family began to come to SPEC, and by 2010 the church had a total congregation of about a hundred including twenty Guatemalans and one person from Honduras. The church also incorporated a monthly Spanish service although some of the Guatemalans did not fully understand the language because they primarily spoke an Indian dialect. The church member from Honduras also began to serve as the liaison for Comer in working with the Latinos.[18]

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[17] R. Pat McFadden, interview by author, August 21, 2011.
[18] Judith Comer, interview by author, September 12, 2011; Flava Parker, interview by author, September 12, 2011.

In individual churches reaching out to the new Latino population of northeast Alabama, the pastor's inclination towards missions proved critical. In most cases where churches chose to create ministries the pastor had previous experience in ministering to a socioeconomically different, and often foreign, group. In each case the minister proved critical in leading the church to begin working with people who were quite different and new to the area. All ministries in churches cost resources of time and money. In a small church both of those resources are in short supply, so the church has to focus particularly on a ministry to make it happen—especially if it could be controversial. Starting such a ministry required strong leadership so that the congregation could then get behind the push because they were supporting the pastor. Pastors could not build such a ministry on their own, but it was their leadership that was key. And in many cases it was the minister's experience in missions that influenced them to focus on Latino outreach.

Individual churches with strong leadership could produce effective ministry, but given the small size of most churches in the area, many congregations worked cooperatively to accomplish larger Hispanic ministry goals. Cooperative work produced two semi-autonomous Hispanic congregations supported through two of the area Baptist associations. Some churches such as First Baptist Fort Payne had the resources and grassroots missions mindset to start a small Hispanic congregation in their facilities, but instead they saw it as more effective to combine their resources with that of others to start a larger ministry. As a result the DeKalb County Baptist Association founded Primera

Iglesia Bautista Hispana in Fort Payne (PIFP) in 1998. [19] The ministry used a hybrid solution to maintain its finances while preserving agency for the Hispanic congregation.

At first the DCBA hired a Latino pastor who did not work out, and Ed Ables, a Spanish-speaking former career missionary to South America and minister to Latinos in northeast Alabama, assumed the duties of pastor of PIFP. Ed Ables felt called to missions as a youth in 1951 when he heard visiting missionaries speak at his home church in Fort Payne about their experiences ministering in Brazil. Later Ables and his wife, Linda, served as missionaries in Ecuador for sixteen years followed by Argentina for nine. After their service in South America the Ableses returned to northeast Alabama to begin ministering to Latinos. Then in 2003 the North American Mission Board (NAMB) of the Southern Baptist denomination appointed Ed Ables as the catalytic missionary of the North Alabama Baptist Hispanic Ministry Coalition. In that role the Ableses served as facilitators and helpers to churches that wanted to begin ministries to Latinos. They also served in Albertville teaching classes at the Hispanic Baptist Bible Institute, which provided religious classes to help Latinos be able to minister to others.[20]

In 2003 the DCBA completed a permanent location for PIFP with a building situated on four acres. That same year they recruited Adele Robayna from Venezuela to serve as pastor of the congregation. Robayna had visited the area as part of a short-term missionary exchange program with the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions. While Venezuelan pastors and some lay leaders visited the state, Baptists from Alabama

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[19] Adele Robayna, interview by author, October 6, 2011; Ken Clement, interview by author, August 2011.

[20] Clement, interview; Erin Webster, "Ables Named New Catalytic Missionary for North Alabama Coalition," *The Alabama Baptist*, May 1, 2003; Kay Campbell, "Hispanic Bible Institute Trains Church Leaders in Spanish," *The Alabama Baptist*, July 14, 2011.

traveled to Venezuela to evangelize, plant churches, and work with the Venezuelan Women's Missionary Union. One unexpected outcome of this exchange was Robayna being asked to make Alabama a long-term ministry. Robayna, who formerly worked in the oil industry, felt called to preach and attended a Baptist seminary in Venezuela where he later preached for four years. After the visit to Alabama, he felt called to move to the state and minister to the Latino population. His presence allowed the PIFP congregation to grow to the point where all expenses except for the pastor's salary were covered in-house. Thus with PIFP working well, the DCBA took another cooperative step in 2010 and founded a church in Kilpatrick under the leadership of a bi-vocational pastor with the plan of making him a full-time pastor once the congregation grew.[21]

Robayna, along with several of the Latino pastors discussed below, represented an added layer of complexity in the story of missions work. No longer were missionaries going from the United States to Latin American countries, but pastors and missionaries from those nations reversed the pattern and moved to Alabama to minister. This was hardly the first time that people from other countries had come to the United States to essentially serve as missionaries, but the Latino pastors were part of a significant trend that directly affected traditional sending churches. Missions work was no longer just something that happened elsewhere on missions trips. Instead it was happening right in the local Alabama church. In many ways the presence of the Latino pastors further blurred the lines of pastor and missionary as well as mission and ministry.

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[21] Clement, interview; Robayna, interview; Ed Ables, interview by author, January 23, 2009; Erin Webster, "Venezuela, Alabama Baptists Celebrate Achievements of Past Six Years," *The Alabama Baptist*, November 24, 2005; Lauren Brooks, "Fort Payne Hispanic Church Leaves the Wheels Behind," *The Alabama Baptist*, May 1, 2003.

Similar to PIFP, a nearby cooperative Latino outreach effort came from the Marshall County Baptist Association (MCBA). The church evolved from an existing Hispanic congregation started in 1995 at Chapel Hill Baptist Church in Albertville. A former director of missions for the MCBA, James Nelson, was a key leader in getting the fledgling congregation started. He recruited the congregation's initial pastor, Ramon Campos. By 1996 the small church moved to a trailer provided by the State Board of Missions of the Alabama Baptist Convention. Over the next few years the congregation continued in that capacity under Pastor Saul Cruz, but MCBA leaders, following the example of the DCBA creating PIFP, wanted to create a more permanent facility for the congregation. One leader in particular, Kenneth Munn, had originally planned to go on overseas missions with his wife, but they came to the realization that there was a mission field in their own county of Marshall. Thus they focused on the task of getting a church built. In December 2000, with the leadership of Munn and large donations from three families, Primera Iglesia Bautista Hispana (PIA) of Albertville was inaugurated at a cost of $115,000. Similar to PIFP in the DCBA, this church had the goal of providing as much funding as possible while the MCBA paid the pastor's salary. Then in 2004 the MCBA hired Edwin Velez to pastor the growing congregation at the permanent location. Velez came from Puerto Rico originally and was saved in a Baptist church in Florida. He felt called to the ministry and went to a Baptist Bible college for training. After pastoring in Florida for seven years, he felt led to change his ministry. He put in his resume with the state Baptist association and was called by the MCBA. He did not want to move to

Alabama at first, but once he saw the need for ministry, he made the decision to come to Albertville to serve as pastor.[22]

In both of these cooperative efforts, local churches and associations of churches saw the need for a ministry to Latino newcomers who constituted a new mission field in their immediate area. Because most of the churches in the two counties were rather small, their combined efforts allowed the associations to develop permanent locations for the ministries as well as pay the annual salary for a qualified pastor. Some of the churches in each county could have developed in-house ministries, but combined efforts proved more effective. The associations were able to create more extensive ministries than any one congregation could have done on its own. In addition, the focused efforts avoided potential competition where several small ministries at several small churches in the area might do more harm than good when ministering to the target demographic. The creation of two stand-alone ministries about an hour apart allowed the area churches to provide ministry to a large area and to engage in missions work with another language group—the single greatest barrier to developing such ministries and a quite difficult task for a small church. These cooperative ministry efforts fit in the overall thrust of grassroots short-term missions since the churches and associations sought to establish the ministries by building facilities and hiring someone who knew the language rather than raising up within the church long-term missionaries to Latinos who would require much training. These ministries gave the sponsoring churches a ministry outlet while also benefiting the Latino newcomers.

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[22] Edwin Velez, interview by author, October 12, 2011; Leigh Pritchett, "Marshall Hispanic Group Inaugurates New Building," *The Alabama Baptist*, January 11, 2001.

While serving as mission opportunities for area churches, the two ministries also allowed the two Hispanic congregations significant agency in running their own churches. With an in-house ministry at a small church, the Hispanic congregation would need to share facilities and worship at a separate time from the main congregation. Even if such an arrangement were completely amicable, it could easily leave one congregation, the one meeting at an unusual hour, feeling secondary. The separate ministries created by the DCBA and MCBA placed the congregations in charge of their own facilities and ministries and placed the pastors on equal footing with other pastors in the associations. Given the high level of agency afforded by the design, minus the source of the pastor salaries and official ownership of facilities, the physically separate churches allowed the Hispanic congregations to grow alongside their white counterparts within the associations. This arrangement had the drawback of lessening the chance of regular contact between Latinos and whites. But it increased the long-term connection of the Latinos to the community as their increased agency deepened roots in the area.

As in northeast Alabama, Birmingham and surrounding areas in central Alabama also saw a dramatic increase in their Latino population beginning in the 1990s. A few Latinos had been living in the area for much longer, but the ‘90s brought a new influx with the attraction of jobs in the food processing industry and, in Birmingham, the service industry. For many churches in Birmingham, the desire to minister to Latinos did not become a major force until the 2000s, but a few actually began ministry in the early 1990s. Dawson Memorial Baptist Church, located in the Homewood area south of downtown, was the earliest Protestant church to recognize the need for a ministry. Dawson began an ESL ministry in the 1980s, and by 1989 a small congregation of

Latinos had begun meeting there to worship in Spanish. Thus the church's desire to develop a full Hispanic ministry grew along with the number of Latinos in the area. In 1991 the church's mission board decided to focus on growing the Hispanic ministry and hired Brian Harper, a Beeson Divinity School student training to be a missionary, to serve for two years as minister to the Latinos. Harper graduated in 1994, and he and his wife Laura were sent by the IMB to serve as missionaries in North Africa. That same year, under the leadership of the church's new head pastor, Gary Fenton, as well as a few lay leaders, Dawson began searching for a pastor for its Hispanic ministry. Before Fenton came to Dawson, he had served at a church in Stillwater, Oklahoma, where he had an international congregation because of a college nearby. Thereafter, he pastored in Tyler, Texas, where his church had a Hispanic congregation. As a result of that local missions experience, it was natural for him to be aware of the ministry opportunity presented by Birmingham's growing Latino population. In the search for a permanent pastor for the Hispanic congregation, a surprising connection provided a lead. The father of Brian Harper, Harry Harper, was a long-term missionary in Ecuador, and he knew Byron Mosquera, a Baptist pastor in that country who might be a good candidate. Dawson contacted and got to know Mosquera and soon invited him to come and join their ministry.[23]

Mosquera had grown up in Ecuador and became a Christian in his mid-teens. After college in Quito he worked for the government in finance for fifteen years. Mosquera felt the call to preach at eighteen, but it took him a while to decide to leave his

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[23] Gary Fenton, interview by author, April 16, 2012; Ray M. Atchison and Doris Teague Atchison, *Light in the Valley: History of Dawson Memorial Baptist Church* (Birmingham, Ala.: Dawson Memorial Baptist Church, 1999), 320–21. Census figures for the Birmingham area are discussed in chapter three.

work with the government and begin serving full time in his local church as youth minister and local missionary. After the lead pastors resigned, Mosquera served as interim pastor for two and a half years. It was at that point that, with the recommendation of Harry Harper, Dawson contacted him about moving to Birmingham. The initial plan was for Mosquera to come to the US for four years, first ministering and training in English and then going to seminary. After four years of English training, Mosquera attended New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary and completed a masters of divinity in 2002.[24] For Dawson, bringing Mosquera to their church was a reverse of the traditional sending model of international missions. Since the Spanish-language mission field was now in Birmingham, it was in the best interest of their new ministry to bring in a pastor from a Spanish-speaking country. Their goal, however, was more complex than simply finding a pastor who could preach in Spanish. By sending Mosquera to language school and then seminary for formal training Dawson made an investment and strong statement of the church's commitment to its Hispanic ministry and desire for Mosquera to be more than just a minister to Latinos. His path also somewhat mirrored that of U.S. missionaries preparing to go serve in a foreign country except he was coming from outside the country to minister to Latinos. For long-term missionaries there is typically an extended period of language and cultural education before they enter the field. Mosquera was already able to serve in Spanish, but the church wanted him to be able to work in English as well to be a full part of the Dawson community. Thus Mosquera took the long path of both language training as well as a full seminary degree to be well prepared.

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[24] Byron Mosquera, interview by author, April 13, 2012.

Another church with an early start in ministering to Birmingham area Latinos was First Baptist Church of Center Point (FBCCP) in the northern part of the city. The Center Point area was one of the first sections of the Birmingham area to receive Latino newcomers in the early 1990s due to nearby chicken processing jobs. Churches in the Center Point area did not immediately begin ministering to the Latinos, but one church developed such a ministry in an unusual way. Most churches followed the pattern of deciding to have a ministry to Latinos and then searching for a Spanish-speaking minister. Under the direction of a new head pastor, FBCCP simply turned to one of its own members, Carlos Gomez, who already had the leadership skills and passion to create such a ministry. Gomez moved to Alabama from Puerto Rico during the 1960s to be near his sister, who had married a man from the state. With a bachelor's degree in business Gomez found work in Birmingham as a public accountant and later worked for the Alabama Department of Revenue as one of the first minorities to then make it that far in the state bureaucracy. Shortly after he began attending FBCCP in 1994, the church turned to him to lead the outreach to local Latinos. Gomez was able to attract other Latinos to the church and began teaching a Sunday school class for them. He noted that within three months, "I had me a church!" Thus the very traditional church had to adapt quickly to the presence of a younger Hispanic congregation that met on a delayed schedule in the same building. In 1998 Gomez retired from the Department of Revenue and became a full-time minister to the Latinos at FBCCP. By 1999 he began to hold a separate worship service in Spanish, and the FBCCP Hispanic ministry fully became a church within a church.[25] The work of Gomez fit the grassroots pattern of missionaries

[25] Carlos Gomez, interview by author, March 1, 2012; Ryan Whitley, interview by

being identified within individual churches and then sent to minister abroad. In this case, however, the need for ministry was local, and the church was able to add him as a minister with a different focus. As a small, aging congregation, FBCCP could have rejected the rapidly growing Hispanic ministry in order to maintain the status quo. But the new call to local missions maintained the focus larger ministry goals.

Another church driven by the desire for grassroots missions work was First Baptist Church Pelham, a city south of Birmingham in Shelby County, under the leadership of Pastor Mike Shaw. In the 1960s Shaw had attended FBCCP where Carlos Gomez later established his ministry. The pastor of FBCCP at that time, Ralph Field, was comfortable bringing in the Latino Baptist evangelist, Rudy Hernandez, to conduct a revival at FBCCP. Because Field did not enjoy Mexican food, he put Shaw and his then fiancée in charge of going to eat with Hernandez each night he was in town. They went to one of the two Mexican restaurants in Birmingham at the time, El Palacio, where Hernandez took the opportunity to witness to the restaurant kitchen staff and lead some of them to Christ. Hernandez could easily visit the kitchen and witness because he was Latino.[26] This experience with Hernandez, along with Field's desire to love other cultures and help them see Christ as relevant, made a lasting impression on Shaw and thus influenced the decision of First Baptist Church Pelham to create a ministry for Latinos.

Shaw started with FBC Pelham in 1979, and in the 2000s he participated in short-term missions to Peru that focused on church planting, evangelism, and medical care. In Shaw's tenure, FBC Pelham members went on missions in many parts of Central and

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author, June 18, 2013.
[26] Shaw, interview.

South America, including Peru, Ecuador, Guatemala, and Venezuela. Shaw noted that in Peru he could do things he trained to do in seminary but no longer experienced in the US. He found that he could preach effectively on the street corner through an interpreter and gather a crowd interested in the "big Norte Americano." The pastor planned to visit Peru again in 2012 as well as Africa, where the church bought a piece of property and drilled a well so a village would have clean water. Over spring break of 2011 FBC Pelham's high school youth went on a short-term mission to Tokyo, Japan, the middle school children went to Atlanta, and senior adults went to New Orleans. The church later heard reports from all the mission groups at a celebration service. Shaw said that the church had moved from being a "mission minded" church that did missions occasionally to one that was truly missional—focused on sending members on missions. Shaw noted that the church had not cut back on missions despite the difficult economy in the U.S. Annually FBC Pelham budgeted 20 percent of the money it received to missions, so the more they took in the more they could do.[27] FBC Pelham strongly exemplified the trend of Protestant, and especially Southern Baptist, churches developing grassroots missions in the 1980s through 2000s. It was with this mission mindset that the church recognized the need for outreach to local Latinos.

Pelham began to receive significant numbers of Latinos around 1995 as Shelby County in general gained notoriety as the fastest-growing county in the state. Between 1990 and 1998 the county grew 41.6 percent in population. FBC Pelham moved to a new location in 2000, and around that same time the church leaders began discussing the idea of starting a ministry for local Latinos. Coincidentally, a Latino minister, Luis Federico

[27] Ibid.

Garcia, soon came to the church and asked Shaw if he could partner with FBC Pelham since he already had a ministry in a nearby trailer park. He lived in one trailer and rented the one next door to serve as a church for thirty to forty people. Garcia initially wanted to rent space at First Baptist Church Pelham, but after talking to the man, Shaw saw an opportunity. Shaw and church leaders talked with the minister several more times and found that his theology leaned strongly Pentecostal, but they believed he preached the gospel. After consideration, FBC Pelham offered the minister the use of the church's old location behind Pelham city hall at no cost. Shaw saw the partnership as very beneficial for all involved. The Hispanic ministry had a good location and more space, while the main congregation of FBC Pelham had the opportunity to support a local mission especially by helping with ESL classes held at the old church location.[28]

The ministry grew for a couple of years, but it struggled overall. The number of attendees fluctuated between twenty-five and forty. Unfortunately the church suffered a great tragedy brought on by the minister. Garcia was accused of molesting three girls under the age of ten at the church, and the news soon reached Shaw. Shaw confronted the man, and after initially denying the accusations, Garcia finally admitted his guilt. Though never officially a part of FBC Pelham's staff, the church immediately removed Garcia from service and pressed charges since the Hispanic congregation was not inclined to do so. That hesitation most likely had to do with the fact that Latinos avoided interaction with the police as much as possible out of fear of immigration questions. Garcia was arrested and, after a lengthy legal process, pled guilty in 2006 to the three

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[28] "Shelby Leading in Growth," *The Gadsden Times*, March 12, 1999; Shaw, interview; Grace Thornton, "Pelham Hispanic Pastor Pleads Guilty to Sex-abuse Charges," *The Alabama Baptist*, December 21, 2006.

charges of first-degree sexual abuse. Shaw's immediate goal after Garcia's removal was to help the Hispanic congregation see that their church did not have to end due to the acts of one man. The FBC Pelham asked another minister, Alex Solito, to start quickly as pastor to the devastated congregation. Also they changed the name of the Hispanic congregation from Iglesia la Roca (The Rock Church) to Iglesia Casa de Dios (House of God Church) to help signal the new beginning. Solito partnered with a local missionary to Latinos, Dean Self of Central American Missions International, to provide some Biblical training at the church. With that basis, FBC Pelham then helped Solito complete some ministerial training through Covenant College in Chattanooga, Tennessee. The Hispanic congregation grew very well under Solito's leadership, and he received an offer of a full salary and ministry position from the Church of the Highlands, a large multi-site nondenominational church that wanted to start a full Hispanic ministry. Solito told Shaw that he needed to take the position, and when the pastor left FBC Pelham, the entire Hispanic congregation followed him to Church of the Highlands. Shaw said that the church did not have resentment towards Solito since their goal was to plant a Hispanic evangelical church in Pelham. They were glad to see it grow.[29]

The temporary preservation of the Hispanic congregation at FBC Pelham after the dismissal of Garcia was a testament to the strength of the church's overall dedication to the missions outreach to Latinos. Despite the tragedy involving the children, the church focused on providing leadership and support at a time when the relationship between the white and Hispanic congregations might have fallen apart. The white congregation could

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[29] Shaw, interview; Thornton, "Pelham Hispanic Pastor Pleads Guilty to Sex-abuse Charges"; "Former Pelham Pastor Pleads Guilty to Abusing Young Girls: Garcia to Be Sentenced on Three Charges of Sexual Abuse," *Shelby County Reporter*, December 20, 2006.

have given up on supporting the ministry, or the Hispanic congregation could have simply walked away and split apart to join other congregations in the area. Thus the goal of developing and maintaining the ministry was greater than the terrible acts of one man. The missions focus of the church and its pastor had a lot to do with the survival of the ministry. Later, under the leadership of Solito, it became the kernel of another successful Hispanic congregation at another church.

Thus for several years FBC Pelham did not have a Hispanic congregation. Then in 2011 Shaw was asked by Cary Hanks of the mission group Central Alabama Baptist Hispanic Coalition to look into starting a new Hispanic ministry. At first Hanks thought there was an opportunity to work with The Church at Brook Hills that had a Hispanic ministry, but a number of its members had to drive a long way from Pelham. Although the thought was for FBC Pelham to create a more local ministry for those Latinos, the plan never worked out. Then Hanks asked if the church could provide space for an already established ministry in the nearby city of Hoover that needed a new location. Shaw met with the ministry's pastor, Jorge Camacho, and FBC Pelham soon agreed. So Jorge Camacho and his ministry moved to FBC Pelham's main location.[30]

Camacho originally came to the US from Mexico in 1995 when he was fourteen years old and became a Christian in 1999 and a US citizen in 2000. In 2001 he felt called to preach and went to the University of the Americas in San Antonio for Biblical training. It was at this point he left a growing career in Norteño music in which he traveled in both Mexico and the US. He was a member of a church and lay leader in San Antonio for five years. Camacho wanted to start his own congregation but felt called outside San

[30] Shaw, interview; Carry Hanks, interview by author, April 2, 2012.

Antonio. His opportunity came when representatives from several Alabama churches came to his school to interview people who might want to come to the state to help them start outreach ministries to Latinos. These were churches of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship (CBF), a moderate offshoot of SBC that formed in 1990 in response to theological differences such as the role of women in ministry. The CBF created its Alabama division in 1994. While at the school in San Antonio, the CBF leaders invited Camacho to come and visit. After visiting Birmingham's Hoover area, Camacho and his wife decided to make the move, arriving in Alabama in June of 2007.[31]

The Camachos started the ministry at their apartment in Hoover by holding a regular Bible study while Jorge was working full time. The CBF churches offered some aid, but generally the Camachos functioned on their own. After three months, their group meetings grew enough to enable them to rent the clubhouse at their apartment, with attendance peaking at twenty-five. After about a year they rented a storefront on Lorna Road across from the police station. There they baptized thirty-seven. In three years, however, they started looking for a more permanent location since the $1,500 a month rent was difficult with a greatly fluctuating congregation. They hoped for a partnership with an established church, and Camacho started talking to Cary Hanks, the church planter and facilitator whom he had met about a year earlier. Hanks recommended moving the congregation to Pelham and specifically to his home church of FBC Pelham. Camacho felt fortunate that he had someone to work with in establishing the ministry

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[31] Jorge Camacho, interview by author, April 10, 2012; Pamela R. Durso, *A Short History of Hte Cooperative Baptist Fellowship Movement* (Brentwood, Tenn.: Baptist History and Heritage Society, 2006), 3–4, 7; Daniel Vestal, "The History of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship," in *The Struggle for the Soul of the SBC: Moderate Responses to the Fundamentalist Movement*, ed. Walter B. Shurden (Macon, Ga.: Mercer University Press, 1993), 264–67.

instead of trying to do it on his own. Pastor Shaw and the leadership at FBC Pelham liked Camacho and Camacho them, so the Hispanic congregation moved to their new location in November 2011. Unlike the previous Hispanic ministry under Solito, the Hispanic ministry under Camacho met at the new campus of FBC Pelham. Like Solito, Camacho was not part of the church staff, but he still had full access to the facilities. In this location the congregation was able to grow. In March 2012 the Hispanic congregation took the decision to make Camacho a full-time minister—a new experience since he had always worked forty hours a week in construction and landscaping while serving as a minister as well. With his expanded ministry time Camacho was able to work with two other ministers in establishing a mission in Maylene, Alabama, about fifteen minutes to the south of Pelham. Camacho continued to serve full-time at FBC Pelham, but he shared responsibility in shepherding the ministry that the leaders hoped would develop into a full congregation and then call its own pastor one day.[32]

Shelby County, in addition to the two examples of the thriving ministries above, also had a ministry that struggled to remain active. In 2003 two churches, including Wilton Bible Baptist and Southern Hills Christian Church, wanted to work together to develop a Hispanic ministry. They invited Jose Luis Leon to serve as minister to Latinos in the project. Leon grew up in Guatemala, where he got a bachelor's in theology. He then went to work with Central America Missions International and served as a missionary church planter in Mexico for four years. He then went back to Guatemala and obtained a master's in theology. It was during school that he heard about opportunities to go to Alabama and work in ministering to Latinos. Shortly thereafter Leon and his

[32] Camacho, interview; Shaw, interview; Lindsey Robinson, "FBC Pelham Opens Its Doors, Arms to Hispanic Congregation," *The Alabama Baptist*, January 5, 2012.

family moved to the state and began working with the project in Shelby County. In the ministry Leon was in charge of developing a congregation that the two existing churches financed, so he worked on visiting prospective members, distributing food and winter clothes, visiting Latinos in the hospital when they had no family in the state, and helping people obtain medical care. Eventually four churches ended up sharing sponsorship of the ministry. That ministry lasted about six years until finances became a problem for some of the supporting churches. In 2008 Leon moved the congregation he developed to under the umbrella of Westwood Baptist Church, which provided the Hispanic ministry with free use of their facilities but no financial support. Westwood also wanted to find a way to reach out to the local Latino population and saw the partnership as an opportunity. This arrangement allowed the Hispanic ministry to grow until Alabama passed a stringent immigration law in 2011. At that point the congregation of about seventy adults meeting on Sundays shrank to about four families as many fled the state. By 2012 the congregation had not recovered.[33] This challenging path for Leon's ministry reveals some of the difficulties associated with ministries to Latinos. As will be discussed in detail later, a strong structure and support are key to a ministry's survival. Even with a missions focus, sponsoring churches might face difficulties that make it impossible to continue helping a young congregation. Also, the mobility of the Latino population, especially in the face of hostile immigration laws can prove challenging at best when trying to establish a steady ministry with long-term goals. But Jose Luis Leon did exemplify the missionary nature of Latino outreach in the Birmingham area. The local churches wanted to join in the local missions effort but needed someone to act as a leader

[33] Jose Luis Leon, interview by author, March 3, 2012.

of the effort. As a trained missionary Leon came to Alabama with that mindset and persevered despite numerous struggles and setbacks. Missions were never an easy path in any country.

The Church at Brook Hills, mentioned above as a ministry FBC Pelham considered helping before Camacho, established its own ministry to Latinos in 2005. The Latino pastor of Brook Hills, Eduardo Torrez, took an unexpected path in coming to Alabama. He and his wife attended the Baptist Theological Seminary in Venezuela for four years, and Torrez then became a full-time pastor and worked in four churches in the country. He received a call from the secretary of the Baptist Convention of Venezuela asking if he would like to be part of an exchange program where Venezuelan pastors would visit Alabama, and Alabama Baptists would go to Venezuela to minister. This was the same program that brought Adele Robayna of Fort Payne's Primera Iglesia Bautista Hispana to the state. Torrez agreed and spent three weeks in the U.S. visiting and preaching in four to five churches each week. One of the churches he preached in was First Baptist Church of Center Point where Carlos Gomez served as pastor to the Hispanic congregation. Gomez was impressed and wanted Torrez to come to Alabama and work at FBCCP for a year, stating that he could easily end up staying for several years. Torrez asked Gomez to pray with him over the decision for a couple of months and communicate regularly. Torrez's church in Venezuela really did not want him to go, but eventually the leader of the church deacons told Torrez that he needed to go because the Latinos in Alabama needed ministry. Soon Torrez chose the mission to Alabama, and Gomez worked with him to get a ministry visa so he could enter the U.S. legally. Torrez

worked with FBCCP for a year and a half before he was offered the position with Brook Hills, a large contemporary church interested in starting a ministry to Latinos.[34]

Torrez began working at Brook Hills in 2005 with his ministry in a trailer beside the church. There Latino worshipers had Sunday school before attending the main worship service. The group grew so fast that within three months it was too large for the trailer, and with his increasing flock, Brook Hills made Torrez a full-time minister in 2009. In recent years, the Hispanic congregation at Brook Hills met in the student center, a separate building on the main campus. In 2011 Brook Hills also rented a building a few miles away so that the Hispanic ministry could hold a Sunday morning worship service that took place in between the morning and evening activities on the main Brook Hills campus as well as student and adult discipleship meetings on weekdays. In the future Torrez hoped to establish a medical clinic at their secondary location.[35]

Another church that started a ministry for Latinos was Brewster Road Missionary Alliance Church just a few miles from FBCCP. To do so, the church partnered with Marco Requena, who had come to Alabama from Venezuela to minister to Latinos. Requena had a career as a lawyer and part-time Missionary Alliance pastor when in 2002 he visited Alabama to attend a wedding and a graduation. When someone asked him why he did not move to the US, he said he had a good business at home and limited English skills. Nevertheless, Requena felt God's call to move to Alabama to minister and was bolstered by his heritage as a third-generation evangelical whose father was a pastor. Requena came to Birmingham in 2003 and started ministering in his home to a small

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[34] Eduardo Torres, interview by author, March 13, 2012; Grace Thornton, "Baptist Missionaries from Other Nations Share Gospel in Alabama, U.S.," *The Alabama Baptist*, September 29, 2005.
[35] Torres, interview.

group of Latino professionals that grew to about thirty. This group was mostly from South America and had a high level of education with careers in medicine, aviation, and administration. Soon, however, Requena had an opportunity to work with Brewster Road Missionary Alliance Church, and his teaching tactics had to change since the Latino population in that area of north Birmingham primarily came from Mexico and had a low level of education. The church wanted to start a Hispanic ministry because it was already sending missionaries to Chile and asked why they would expend so much effort to help those far away and not minister to those who were neighbors.[36]

The only Presbyterian church in Birmingham to start a ministry for Latinos was the largest Alabama church in the Presbyterian Church in America denomination, Briarwood Presbyterian, located in the southern part of the Birmingham area. Briarwood actually began working with Latinos around 1990 by creating a regular ESL class. This class remained the church's primary outreach for the next decade until leaders decided to start a full Hispanic ministry. To develop the new Hispanic congregation, Briarwood hired Brad Taylor, a former international missionary. During college Taylor had discovered his desire to go into missions when he attended a missions event called Urbana. This was the triennial missions conference and promotion event sponsored by Intervarsity Christian Fellowship, a college-focused group founded in 1941 that had chapters on campuses throughout the United States. For two summers during college Taylor went on short-term missions trips to France, and the experience cemented his decision to go into missions as a profession. After seminary, fundraising, and language training in Costa Rica for a year, Taylor and his family moved to Madrid, Spain, to join a

[36] Marco Requena, interview by author, March 10, 2012.

church planting team. The Taylors spent two terms or nine years in Spain helping to establish Iglesia Principe de Paz in northwestern Madrid.[37]

Then the Taylors felt it was time to return to the US. They were looking for opportunities to minister to Latinos and heard about Briarwood wanting to start a congregation. The missions' director at Briarwood, Tom Cheely, had visited the Taylors' church in Spain while on a short-term mission. Briarwood was committed to sending missionaries all over the world and wanted to make sure that the same effort went into ministering in their back yard. Through Cheely, who started with Briarwood in 1983, the church was working to establish several parallel ethnic congregations. Taylor, using his experience in church planting, focused most of his early efforts on gathering a congregation by visiting prospects, holding small Bible studies, and simply inviting people to try it out.[38]

Similar to Briarwood being the only Presbyterian Latino congregation in the Birmingham area, Riverchase Methodist, in the suburb of Hoover, was the only major outreach in that denomination. One of the larger Methodist denominations in the state, Riverchase began to develop its Hispanic ministry around 2002 when the head pastor, Jim Savage, felt that the church needed to expand its missions outreach and that Latinos were an underserved group. Savage contacted a missions leader, Rick Owen, in the Alabama denomination and told him that Riverchase needed to partner with a Hispanic

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[37] Brad Taylor, interview by author, February 22, 2012; "The History of Urbana," *Intervarsity Christian Fellowship*, August 12, 2013, https://urbana.org/history; "About," *Intervarsity Christian Fellowship*, August 12, 2013, https://urbana.org/about; "Vital Statistics," *Intervarsity Christian Fellowship*, August 12, 2013, http://www.intervarsity.org/about/our/vital-statistics; "Database of Megachurches in the U.S.," *Hartford Institute for Religion Research*, August 12, 2013, http://hirr.hartsem.edu/megachurch/database.html.
[38] Taylor, interview.

pastor. Owen put them in contact with Fernando del Castillo. Castillo was originally from Ecuador where he became a Christian and in 1998 he met a group called Servants in Faith and Technology (SIFAT) through a medical mission project they held in his area. SIFAT was a missions organization using technology to bridge cultures. After attending a SIFAT discipleship group Castillo came to know the leadership of the mission and they saw him as a potential asset. Typically the group sent people from the United States to other countries, but they had a recent goal of bringing leaders from places such as South America to the U.S. to help minister to immigrant groups. They asked Castillo if he would come to Alabama to help minister as well as teach life skills to help them integrate into the United States more easily. Castillo agreed, and the original plan was for him to serve with SIFAT for six months. His work with the group in Alabama actually lasted about three years in which time Castillo came to see himself as a missionary. By the end of the three years, Castillo was ready to move to the next phase in his own ministry, and Riverchase presented the opportunity to pastor a new congregation. At the very beginning the church had no concept of what form they wanted the Hispanic ministry to take. They just wanted to start and see where it went. Riverchase decided to first set up Castillo in the Hoover area at an apartment complex that was about 99 percent Latino. In ministry Castillo preferred to use a computer program he discovered through SIFAT that helped people learn English using Bible references. Thus he set up several computers in his apartment and began offering the aid to others. This method served as an inroad for Castillo to begin talking to the students and their families about faith. Within a few months he gathered a small group that began meeting as an informal congregation in the community room of the apartment complex. They soon ran out of space there and needed

to move again. It was at that point, in 2003, that the Hispanic congregation moved to the Riverchase Methodist campus.[39]

Castillo's path to ministry in Alabama was somewhat different from the other Latino pastors. Rather than being recruited to the state for the specific purpose of pastoring a congregation, he actually came as part of a sending organization reversing its process and bringing leaders to minister in the U.S. Although he did not originally plan to be a missionary, he came to see himself as such during his work with SIFAT. Castillo's transition from missionary to pastor displayed the fluidity of the position of many Latino pastors. In his work with Riverchase the minister used many of the same skills and techniques he learned in missions work, but he then began adding to that skill set in his role as pastor. Thus for Latino ministers the definitions of missionary and pastor overlapped so much that they really only served as official designations that had little bearing on the reality of ministry.

In addition to the efforts by individual churches, such as Riverchase, to start Hispanic ministries, a few other churches decided to combine their resources and efforts to create a single ministry, Iglesia Agape, in the Birmingham suburb of Hoover. Several congregations in the small city had seen a few Latinos visiting around 2002. Leaders from those churches discussed the trend and realized that they all had the desire to found a ministry for Latinos in the Hoover area— specifically for those along Lorna Road. In the late 1990s and early 2000s Lorna Road became a main residential location for Latinos in Birmingham. The leader from Shades Mountain Baptist Church, Jeremy Grimes, noted that the group of churches wanted to create the ministry in a "non-threatening"

[39] Jim Savage, interview by author, June 11, 2013; Fernando del Castillo, interview by author, June 5, 2013.

environment other than the campus of a large white church. They wanted Latinos to attend comfortably. For example, if someone from a rural part of Mexico visited a very large church like Shades Mountain, it might be too intimidating of an experience. Initially, the four churches that got together to discuss starting a ministry were Shades Mountain Baptist, Brook Hills, Hunter Street Baptist, and Green Valley Baptist. Brook Hills decided that it was not ready to commit to the project, so it backed out. The other three moved forward with planning. Shades Mountain had a Hispanic Bible study meeting on its campus since 2000. It began after business owners within the church who worked in the construction industry participated in the missions group Builders for Christ, formerly Carpenters for Christ. In doing so, they recruited some of their regular workers who were Latino. These church members realized that there was a need for ministry to Latinos. Another Bible study met at Hunter Street. In 2002 the cooperative work moved the Bible studies at Shades Mountain and Hunter Street to the rented clubhouse at an apartment complex on Lorna Road to serve as the kernel for the new ministry. The group soon grew to more than fifty, so they had to look for a new location.[40] This first step worked in much the same way as a church planting mission trip to another country. They wanted to establish a core congregation to build up into a church, so they began with a home-meeting type of setting. The partner churches also targeted the highest concentration of Latinos in the area so the fledgling ministry would have the greatest chance of success.

The search for a larger space for the young congregation proved difficult. Ultimately the supporting churches hoped to provide the church with its own separate

[40] Jeremy Grimes, interview by author, April 9, 2012.

property, but renting was a better option at first while still getting started. Business space owners did not want to rent to a church on a short-term lease, so the group eventually and reluctantly decided to move to a building on the Shades Mountain campus. The initial pastor hired to serve the group was Jonathan Bean, a Spanish-speaking child of missionaries or missionary kid (MK) from Mexico who had a Mexican wife. Bean looked Latino, so he was a good fit. He was hired part-time while he finished his last two years of school at Beeson Divinity School of Samford University. After that the Beans planned to become full-time foreign missionaries. The work also served as a good training experience for Bean since it was essentially a church plant—something he would likely do in the mission field. In 2004 the Beans left to begin mission work but first found their replacements at Beeson in Dennis and Leticia Chamberlin, who were both enrolled and had three semesters left. Dennis learned Spanish and had experience ministering to Latinos after serving for two years as a missionary in Uruguay where he met his wife. The Chamberlins committed to work with the fledgling church for the rest of their time in school plus a year, and under their leadership the church grew well. In 2005 a fourth church, Lakeside Baptist, joined the group of supporting congregations, and they offered their facility as a home for the congregation closer to the ministry's target area of Lorna Road.[41]

It was at Lakeside that the church was officially born and named Iglesia Agape. The new church received 501C3 nonprofit status, was officially chartered, and joined the Birmingham Baptist Association (BBA) as a trial member for a year and then as a full member. The BBA also provided some funding for the church during those initial two

[41] Ibid.

years. In the process of becoming official, Agape even added a sign in Spanish outside the church building. At Lakeside the congregation grew to about 75 to 100 each Sunday and took on some minimal staff members such as a worship leader. The goal of the supporting churches was for the group to have "as few white faces as possible" so that the congregation felt it was their own church. In creating the church, the supporting congregations moved forward without consulting anyone familiar with founding churches for Latinos in the US. As a result they quickly ran into an unanticipated difficulty with the children. Many families had started coming to the church services, which were conducted totally in Spanish. The children, however, used Spanish only at home and used English everywhere else, including school. Thus the church needed to provide bilingual instruction.[42]

When the Chamberlins left Agape in 2007, the supporting congregations were ready to hire a full-time minister. In the interim Harry Harper, a former foreign missionary to Columbia and Eduacor and now missions minister for Hunter Street Baptist Church, stepped in at Agape as the full-time pastor. Harper had been serving as a co-pastor as the Chamberlins were preparing to exit. The Church at Brook Hills also returned to the group and joined as a supporting partner. To avoid any missteps as the church was becoming more established, the group hired a consultant from the large Sage Mountain Baptist in Houston, Texas, to draw on the experience of someone who had planted Hispanic churches for thirty years in a state with a much longer history of Latino presence. The consultant was able to show the group how to avoid many potential problems. Then they conducted a national search for pastor candidates and chose Pablo

[42] Ibid.

Moscoso, who began with Agape in 2008. Harry Harper stayed involved regularly with Agape for about a year to help with the transition. Soon after Moscoso began his work, the group decided that it would be best to move the church as close to the Lorna Road target area as possible. They began talking to First Baptist Church of Hoover which was within walking distance from Lorna, and soon made arrangements so that Agape could function as a parallel congregation at that location.[43]

Pablo Moscoso came to the work at Agape steeped in experience with missions work in South America. Originally from Ecuador, Moscoso felt the call to Christian service in 1987 and began working in Southern Baptist churches. He was the first person in his family to move away from the Catholic tradition, which was personally difficult. In the early 1990s Moscoso joined with World Vision International and worked as a leader of a missionary project in Ecuador for six years. He then served as a missionary in Santiago, Chile, from 1997 to 1999. Then in 1999 he was recruited by the Southern Baptist denomination to come to the US to serve as a church planter and Latino pastor. From 1999 to 2008 Moscoso worked as a pastor in New Jersey until he decided to accept the position with Agape church in Hoover, Alabama.[44]

This cooperative effort was reminiscent of the two churches created by the DeKalb County Baptist Association and the Marshall County Baptist Association in northeast Alabama. Between the establishing leadership, pastoral leadership, and goals of Agape, the Hispanic congregation was fully versed in missions. The impetus for the church plant grew out of the local grassroots missions push evident in many of Birmingham's churches. The young congregation also benefitted from the experience of

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[43] Ibid.; Harry Harper, interview by author, March 14, 2012.
[44] Pablo Moscoso, interview by author, March 8, 2012.

several leaders and pastors with years of missions experience. The Beans, Chamberlins, Harry Harper, and Pablo Moscoso were all missionaries. The ultimate design of Agape resembled the northeast Alabama cooperative ministries of Primera Iglesia Bautista Hispana in Fort Payne and Primera Iglesia Bautista Hispana in Albertville, but it differed in significant ways. The congregation functioned as a parallel church at both Lakeside and FBC Hoover, though it did have the ultimate goal of having a separate location. Also, any of the founding churches, and especially the large Shades Mountain and Hunter Street, each could have fully funded a similar church plant on their own. In the DCBA and MCBA the decision to create one congregation came both from a need to pool resources as well as a desire to start a single strong congregation rather than several weak ones. Among the Birmingham group the issue was less about finances and more a concern of building a strong Hispanic church in a non-threatening location.

One of the churches that sponsored Agape, Hunter Street Baptist, had an interest in starting a Hispanic ministry, and the work with Agape allowed the church to expand its small group that had begun in the early 2000s. In 2005 Harry Harper joined Hunter Street after returning from the mission field. Born in Ohio, Harper felt called to the ministry early in life and focused on religious education with seminary training in New Orleans. Then following seminary he and his wife felt called to missions which he said came as a surprise to both of them. They ended up serving as long-term missionaries for 36 years, spending 1970 to 1982 in Colombia, a few years back in the US, and then 1985 to 2005 in Ecuador. While in Ecuador, Harper met Byron Mosquera, later connecting him to Dawson, and Pablo Moscoso, later providing a link between him and Agape. After Harper completed the transition with Moscoso in 2008 and 2009, Hunter Street

began looking for an opportunity to start a new Hispanic ministry in Bessemer, a city in southwestern Birmingham. The Hunter Street campus was located just to the east of Bessemer and had property in the city for sports facilities. After the experience of working with the Agape cooperative effort, Hunter Street Baptist Church was ready to start another solo ministry venture. Cary Hanks, a Latino ministry facilitator in the area, was also involved in helping start the new ministry since he knew so many people in Shelby County. Also, the Bessemer Baptist Association provided some financial and leadership support since it was interested in having a ministry for Latinos in the city.[45]

Hunter Street found a location for the ministry through a businessman in Bessemer who owned several tire stores. One of his buildings had a store front with a warehouse in the back. He heard about the ministry project and offered to pay to convert the store front to a space that could be used as a church. As that remodeling project began, Hunter Street and the Bessemer Baptist Association sought approval from the city government to rezone the space for a church instead of a business. The building was brought up to code for a church. But when the group made its first request to the zoning board, the motion failed. The group went back a second time to the board with the same request. Harper remembered it being a caustic atmosphere among the all-black board when the church zoning request came up. One board member asked if the group had talked to other churches. Another asked, 'Well how is this going to help us?' Harper asked them, "As in who?" Harper's question went unanswered, but he believed that the board was concerned with how the rezoning would impact blacks in the area. Again the zoning request failed due to a lack of quorum. Harper also noted that politics may have

[45] Harper, interview.

played a part in the decision somehow since an election was going on at that time. The group returned to the board one more time with a third request which failed as well, so they filed a petition to object and the case went to court. The man who paid for the building remodeling also paid for lawyer fees to have adequate representation on the issue. The judge was also black, but he saw no reason for the rezoning request being rejected. He read through the case materials and asked, "Am I missing something?" The judge called the lawyers together and said they would work something out. Within a day the group had the rezoning approval. After that long process, Harper began serving as the church plant's pastor with the goal of reaching out to Latinos in the Bessemer area beginning with the employees of the tire store.[46]

The efforts of Hunter Street and Harper in Bessemer took the form of more traditional missionary efforts. They identified an area in need of ministry, found the financing to build the church, and then established an experienced missionary to grow the congregation. The effort showed that in the massive growth of short-term missions and reverse trends of Latino ministers coming to the U.S. to serve as missionaries and pastors, churches continued to use their more traditional missions methods as well. With Harper's experience abroad, such techniques were well suited to the task.

In addition to pastors with missionary credentials, a major aid to the advancement of Hispanic ministries throughout the Birmingham area and beyond was the presence of two experienced long-term missionaries who worked in central Alabama as facilitators and advocates. The first missionary to work in Birmingham in this capacity was Dean Self. A native of north Birmingham, Self served in the Navy during the Vietnam War

[46] Ibid.

and then as a policeman in Vestavia, a suburb south of Birmingham's city center, for ten years. In 1980, Dean Self's wife, Linda, went on a short-term church-building mission to Bolivia, and the next year Dean returned to Bolivia with her on another mission. They saw the need for churches and the gospel, so Dean quit his job and the Selfs joined South American Mission (SAM) and worked in Bolivia as missionaries for twenty years. In 2002 the Selfs came home on furlough and saw that the Birmingham area had gained many Latinos. They saw the demographic change as a chance to minister. SAM did not have a U.S. mission, so they joined with the interdenominational missions organization Central American Missions which also had thirty-five to forty missionaries throughout the US. Typically those missionaries in the US were older and had extensive experience abroad. So the Selfs began working in central Alabama as facilitators and advocates of ministry to Latinos. They determined the needs of planting churches, trained leaders, and evangelized. To further these efforts and build camaraderie among ministers to Latinos, Self, along with other leaders such as Brad Taylor and Carlos Gomez, began the Alianza de Pastores Hispanos or Hispanic Pastors Alliance in 2004. This group opened its doors to all pastors who ministered to Latinos, and met monthly to worship, hear a presentation by one of the members, and share a meal together. Over the next few years this group grew to over forty pastors representing approximately 70 percent of the evangelical pastors to Latinos in the Birmingham area.[47]

[47] Dean Self, interview by author, February 27, 2012; CAM also has the distinction as a missions organization of not only sending North American missionaries to Central and South America but also sending Latino missionaries to both the US and other parts of the world—especially Muslim countries. CAM has found it much easier to establish Latinos as missionaries in Muslim countries since they blend in better with brown skin..

The other missionary who came to serve the Birmingham area in general was Carry Hanks. Hanks was born in Alabama but grew up in Killeen, Texas, where his family moved when he was five. In Killeen he was introduced to some Latinos whose families had been in the US for generations as well as some who had only recently come to the country. In addition, his first boss was a first-generation Mexican American. In that environment Hanks felt called to missions early in life. After attending college at Samford University in Birmingham and then seminary at New Orleans, he worked as a pastor in South Alabama and Northwest Florida. Then he began his missions work through the Southern Baptist International Mission Board. Hanks left the U.S. in December of 1988, first going to Costa Rica for language school and then to Ecuador where he served for fifteen years. There he worked in church planting, theological education, and as dean of a seminary. In 2003 Hanks returned to the US to serve in Indiana as part of the Southern Baptist North American Mission Board (NAMB) work in that state planting churches with specific focus on Hispanic ministry. Hanks noted that the makeup of the Latino population of Indiana resembled that of Alabama. While in Indiana Hanks also worked with other ministers to start a Bible Institute for Hispanics. Their institute was an extension of the Kentucky Baptist Bible Institute (KBBI) that started a religious education program and then began to offer its model and materials to others who wanted a proven way to offer religious education classes. When Hanks began with the KBBI model, the group had two locations in Kentucky and one in Cuba. These institutes essentially worked as franchises where the extensions sent a fee to the

main group in Kentucky for the use of their model. Also the main group also provided books for a fee.[48]

In 2009 Hanks moved to the Birmingham area to serve as a joint missionary and facilitator. He received support from the NAMB, Alabama Baptist Coalition, and the Central Alabama Baptist Hispanic Ministry Coalition. The latter coalition was a group organized in 2005 where eight Baptist associations worked together to promote ministry to Latinos. They had been looking for a missionary to support their work, and Hanks fit the position well. Primarily Hanks focused on central Alabama and also consulted with other ministries in the state that had need of someone with experience.[49]

In combination with much of the missions work going on in the Birmingham area, a number of the pastors worked with Dean Self to develop a theological training course, both lay and pastoral. After the Alianza began, the pastors realized the need to develop basic training for their lay leadership and others in their churches who wanted to be educated in theology. Most Latinos, especially those coming from rural areas of their home countries, were nominal Catholics who seldom attended a church—often only for sacraments. As a result, they had little education in basic doctrine in Christianity. To satisfy that need, the pastors worked with Dean Self to start offering a twelve-week course on basic doctrine at individual churches. At first they offered the classes so that people from nearby churches could come also, but there were worries by some that members going to other churches for training might lead to those members being recruited by the other congregation. Thus they held the training at a church for only that church's members, and twelve to fifteen people would attend each time. Classes focused

[48] Hanks, interview.
[49] Ibid.

on the basics of Christian doctrine including the trinity, second coming, and salvation. As of early 2012, the program had graduated over 400 students.[50]

The classes had the primary goal of simply providing basic theological education to the Latino community. But another, parallel goal was to prevent what the Baptist leaders called false doctrine from causing problems for individuals and churches. Self cited the Jehova's Witnesses as one major source of false doctrine prevalent among Latinos in many parts of the United States, but he had seen others. In one case, Self was invited to hold the doctrine classes at a small church, and about twenty members signed up. Self taught the doctrine that upon conversion a new believer receives the Holy Spirit. The pastor of the church was shocked because when he was saved in a jail in California, he was told that for believers to receive the Holy Spirit they had to go see one of two prophets, either in California or Florida, for the prophet to lay hands on them. So the pastor had been making monthly trips to Tampa to take new converts to receive the Holy Spirit from the prophet. Self said that he showed the pastor the relevant scripture concerning the doctrine, and he had not been back to Tampa since. In talking to peers throughout the country, Self found that so called false doctrine was a common problem for most areas, but he noted that in Birmingham there was little infiltration of false doctrine. He attributed the lack of non-standard faiths to influence provided by the Alianza, bolstered by the doctrine classes. There was a general commitment and influence of pastors with mainline doctrine, leaving little room for other movements to take root. Dean Self noted that another goal of the doctrine classes was to start the

[50] Self, interview. Though the worry about member poaching seemed petty, apparently such rivalries were common in small immigrant communities with limited people and resources.

process of putting Latinos on the road of learning more about theology so that one day they might write on theology for other Latinos. Most commentaries for Latinos were translations of commentaries written by white North Americans, so the illustrations did not work in Latin America.[51]

Around 2008, the pastors to Latinos of the Birmingham area also expressed the desire for potential leaders in their congregations to receive systematic training in both church leadership as well as theology. They wanted to train future leaders to manage church plants and other ministries in the area as well as providing quality religious education that students, if they chose to leave the U.S., could take with them back to their home country to be effective leaders. Then in 2009 Carry Hanks arrived in the Birmingham area after having worked in Indiana with an institute that had the same goals. The Birmingham pastors, in consultation with Hanks, considered several models of education available and chose to start a non-accredited extension of the KBBI. Locally the Birmingham branch was called the Hispanic Baptist Bible Institute. This model worked best because they found it to be theologically sound and it allowed them to use their already-established network of pastors as teachers since many students could not reach a traditional seminary. The institute worked as a three-year program with students receiving progressively more advanced diplomas each year. Numerous pastors of Hispanic congregations as well as Hanks shared the unpaid responsibility of teaching the courses. In 2010 the institute graduated its first class with a certificate in ministry, and in 2012 the institute graduated its first 3-year students.[52]

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[51] Ibid.
[52] Hanks, interview; Kristen Padilla, "Hoover's Hispanic Institute Graduates Its First Class," *The Alabama Baptist*, December 16, 2010.

The work of creating the Bible Institute, the in-church theology classes, and the various Latino congregations throughout the Birmingham area and in northeast Alabama all carried the single connecting thread of missions work. In doing so, many churches had head pastors with significant missions experience and partnered with Latino ministers who typically had strong experience in missions work and church planting. Such ministries took many forms, but they all originated in that belief in the ultimate goal of missions. The experiences of short-term missions permeated Christian churches in the U.S. to the point that by the 1980s the definition of the word "missions" had changed dramatically. No longer confined to lifetime commitments, missions was an activity accessible to all Christians who wanted to participate no matter their stage of life or occupation. This shift in the understanding of missions created a common desire and culture of grassroots missions among churches—especially evangelical congregations. The new mindset also expanded the interpretation of how Christians should minister at home. It was logical to realize that if you were willing to go thousands of miles to minister to those different from yourself, why would you not minister to your neighbor no matter their ethnicity? Thus in Alabama the new missions mindset combined with a growing population of Latinos to produce the trend of white churches reaching out and starting ministries for their Latino neighbors as well as a few other minority groups. Though it was not the only factor in their decisions, black churches did not have the same experience in missions over the preceding decades, so they were not prepared to minister to the changing minority population in the state. But grassroots missions provided the impetus for some white churches to move past their mono-racial and mono-cultural past and partner with a very different culture that even used a different main language.

Though it was not a leap in racial reconciliation and multi-ethnic congregations, this partnership was a significant step by many of the state's leading churches in several denominations.

Chapter Two

The Religious Community and Latinos in Northeast Alabama

Northeast Alabama, particularly DeKalb County and surrounding area, displayed the development of the state's race and cultural relations with the addition of Latinos to the area's traditional black and white system at two separate times in recent history, one from the mid-1950s to the early 1980s and then another beginning in the late 1980s. The racial troubles of the region are well known. While not all whites who lived there held racist sentiments, the prevailing social norm maintained a strong line against the racial changes happening throughout the U.S. and Alabama as well as the mere presence of blacks in the area. The most famous and extreme example of this belief was a sign posted by a man called Nig Nelson on the main road going up to Sand Mountain that warned black people to not be caught there after dark. In reality many white rural residents of the area rarely, if ever, had contact with blacks. The son of a DeKalb County farmer recalled not meeting a black person until he faced another sports team with black players in high school. At the same time, individuals and families chose how they responded to the predominant racial sentiment. Some chose to embrace it while others intentionally lived differently.[1]

In the mid-1950s and 1960s, however, when Alabama experienced significant racial upheaval between black and whites, another demographic group came to the northeastern part of the state. Temporary Latino migrant workers began to visit the area in the summer of 1956 or 1957 and continued coming to work the harvest for nearly thirty years. In the mid-1950s a local farmer had experimented with growing potatoes

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[1] Robert Johnston, interview by author, August 23, 2011; Rex Creswell, interview by author, September 22, 2011.

and made a great return on his investment. As a result, about fifteen local farmers began to grow the crop over the next few years. The farmers needed extra help at harvest to gather the potatoes, so they turned to migrant labor as the answer. For the migrant groups that worked on the potato fields, the location became a major mid-growing-season stop in their annual route that typically included sugarcane and more potatoes to the west and south early in the season and tomatoes or beets to the north late in the season. The larger farms began to fully mechanize in the late 1960s, allowing farmers to plant, dig, gather, load, wash, and grade their potato crops with minimal human intervention. The biggest benefit of completely mechanizing was the ability to process the crop quickly for immediate orders. The downside was the poor quality of the product, since machines scuffed the potatoes. Mechanization also began eliminating the need for migrant workers. Though the larger farms mechanized, others continued operating and hiring migrants in much the same way into the 1980s. The DeKalb-area potato harvest typically began around the first of July and continued through late August. Thus the migrants spent between three and six weeks in the area depending on labor needs. Other crops that attracted migrant farm labor to DeKalb and surrounding counties including some pepper and watermelon farms, but overall, potatoes served as the largest draw.[2]

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[2] Creswell, interview, September 22, 2011; Lillie Buckner and Steve Buckner, interview by author, October 12, 2011; Charles Smith, interview by author, September 19, 2011; Jane Creswell, interview by author, October 6, 2011. It is difficult to determine an estimate for the size of the annual immigrant population in the DeKalb area. The number of migrants varied by need which varied by farm. Some farms needed only a few workers and others needed hundreds. Also migrants might shift from one farm to another if worker needs changed during the harvest. Thus a few thousand migrants in DeKalb and adjoining counties is the best rough estimate. DeKalb County was mostly rural and had a total population 45,058 in 1950. Of that total 837, or less than 2 percent, were black with the rest being white. The overall population grew steadily to 53,658 in 1980 with the demographics essentially remaining the same. The decade of 1970 to 1980 saw

Some of the migrants came from Mexico in the Nuevo Laredo or Monterrey areas, but the majority came from the border area between Texas and Mexico—specifically from the geographic triangle formed by Laredo, Brownsville, and Corpus Christi. Crew leaders, who typically spoke both Spanish and English and received a commission on each worker in addition to the pay for their own work, recruited whole families to travel and harvest. Often the same families worked with the crew leader for years and thus returned to the same farms many times. The number in a crew typically ranged between three and twelve families depending on the size of a farm and harvest, and a few older migrants, typically grandmothers, traveled with the groups to cook food for the rest. Larger farms had as many as three hundred migrants. One minister estimated that as many as two thousand migrants came to the DeKalb area annually. Sometimes families shifted between farms at the beginning of harvest to provide labor where needed. On average, migrants started field work between the ages of eight and twelve depending on the farm and a migrant family's preferences. Therefore in a group of fifteen field workers, five or six fell between twelve and fourteen years of age. Young children typically stayed near the field and played under the trees while their parents worked.[3]

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a total of 271 residents, most likely Latino plus a few other ethnicities added to the county as permanent residents. Marshall County adjoining DeKalb to the west was quite similar in its population figures. It grew from 45,090 in 1950 to 65,622 in 1980. Interestingly it's black population remained essentially the same, right at 1,000, for more than 50 years. Thus as the overall population grew, the percentage of blacks shrank from a little over 2 percent in 1950 to 1.5 percent in 1980. Marshall, like DeKalb, also saw a jump of 357 permanent Latino residents in the 1970 to 1980 decade. See the U.S. Census 1950-1980.

[3] Creswell, interview, September 22, 2011; Smith, interview.

The migrant potato harvesters gathered the potatoes from the field after the farmer used a machine to dig them up. Workers picked up potatoes and put them in burlap bags that, once full, they loaded onto a cart. This process ran six days a week from sunup to about 10 A.M. when the workers took a break until about 3 P.M. to avoid the heat of the day. After the break, they continued harvesting until dark. The migrants at one farm were paid per bag filled, which meant they received between $25 and $30 a day or $200 to $300 a week—very good pay when in 1960 the median annual U.S. income spread over 52 weeks made for a weekly income of just under $108. The migrants typically said they were happy with their pay since it was significantly more than they could earn in other work. This rate of pay applied to local whites if the farmer hired them to harvest, and it was more than was paid to the local whites who worked in the potato shed as graders and packers. Supply and demand led to good pay for the migrant workers since farmers needed efficient workers at a specific time each year. The migrants offered the best source for that labor.[4]

On the farms, living conditions for the migrants generally met the basic requirements established in state law though arrangements likely varied greatly from farm to farm. The farmers typically outfitted a barn or building with blanket-partitioned sections for each family, a hose hung up with running water for a shower, and bathroom facilities. Some farmers chose to rent housing rather than create space on their farm. Air

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[4] Creswell, interview, September 22, 2011; *Current Population Reports Consumer Income: Income of Families and Persons in the United States: 1960*, P-60 (Bureau of the Census, January 17, 1962), 1–3. This was the pay at one farm reported by the son of a farmer. It does not reflect variations over the years or variations from farm to farm. It is possible that the reported pay may have been at the height of the height of prices for potato farming which allowed better pay for workers. Leaner years likely produced lower pay—even by good employers.

conditioning was not part of the regulations and thus was not expected by the migrants or farmers. Some stories of the period recalled migrants sleeping on the backs of trucks with tarps, but one farmer noted that poor conditions for migrants were the exception. The workers often slept on trucks at the beginning of the growing season when the labor was sorted out between the farms, but a place was usually found for all the families. One minister who worked closely with the migrants in the DeKalb area said they never reported any abuse to him, and the son of a farmer who was young when the migrants worked at his family's farm recalled no mentions of migrant abuse at the time. He did, however, hear stories later in life that indicated some farmers in the region treated workers poorly.[5]

The migrants came to the country for agricultural work, and the busy harvest schedule left little time for other pursuits. They were not inclined to engage locals since they had their own small community. Nevertheless, some churches and individuals in the area felt the need to reach out to the transient population. These efforts came in three forms. A religious association, in this case Baptist, encouraged churches and individuals

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[5] This account is from the son of one of the potato farmers. It is likely that the recollections from both Rex Creswell and his daughter-in-law, Jane Creswell who was a short-term missionary to the migrants, portray the general situation of the migrants in DeKalb and surrounding counties in an overly positive light. The situation at the Creswell farm may have been quite good, but documentary evidence, often from medical and sociological studies, from around the U.S. has shown that migrants often lived in deplorable conditions and faced significant hazards, such as pesticides, in their work. See Carol Sakala, "Migrant and Seasonal Farmworkers in the United States: A Review of Health Hazards, Status, and Policy," *International Migration Review* 21, no. 3 (1987); Carla Littlefield and Charles L. Stout, "A Survey of Colorado's Migrant Farmworkers: Access to Health Care," *International Migration Review* 21, no. 3 (1987); Holden, C., "Bitter Harvest: Housing Conditions of Migrant and Seasonal Farm Workers," In *The Human Cost of Food: Farmworker's Lives, Labor and Advocacy*, eds C. D. Thompson and M. F. Wiggins, 169-194 (Austin, Tx., University of Texas Press, 2002). Creswell, interview, September 22, 2011; Smith, interview; Jim Griffin, interview by author, September 23, 2011.

to seek out and minister to the migrants. Churches took action on the encouragement of the local religious associations as well as on their own accord and reached out to both the adult migrants as well as the children. Some individuals also felt the need to offer aid and friendship to the temporary groups.

The Sand Mountain Baptist Association (SMBA) and neighboring DeKalb County Baptist Association (DCBA) primarily ministered to the migrants by coordinating church efforts. The SMBA had operated in the Sand Mountain area since 1917 as a voluntary association of Baptist churches and in 1965 had a membership of twenty-eight churches with 4,459 members. The DCBA had served the area to the east and south of the SMBA since 1905 with previous forms of the association dating back to 1842. The groups served as communication and cooperation links between independent churches, and both organizations worked to increase the amount of ministry to migrants among their member churches. During most of the years the migrants came to DeKalb County, David Paitey served as missions coordinator for the SMBA. He visited farms to see the migrants and determine if they would be willing to receive outreach from churches. This allowed preachers to go to farms and have services at night and for teachers to work with the children during the day. The DCBA officially began encouraging ministry to migrants in 1969 and continued that focus into the mid-1970s.[6]

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[6] Smith, interview; Emmett B. Wheeler, "History of the Sand Mountain Association, 1917-1973" (Sand Mountain Baptist Association, 1973), 7, 19, Samford University, Special Collection; "DeKalb County Association: Annual of 140th Session" (DeKalb County Association, 1980), 37, 40, Samford University, Special Collection; Ed Ables, "A History of the DeKalb Baptist Association: Early Struggles and Growth" (Samford University, 1984), 15–17. The DCBA likely had membership numbers similar to that of the SMBA.

These efforts by the DCBA and the SMBA were part of a larger ministry effort by the Southern Baptist Convention's Home Mission Board to encourage outreach to migrants. Such work had begun in 1947 in Mississippi with a couple that simply wanted to minister to migrant workers in their immediate area. Between 1951 and 1957 four other couples joined the effort and the group began following the migrants as they traveled. They asked local churches to help minister in each location they stopped. Then in 1960 the Home Mission Board created the position of director of migrant missions and chose Robert R. Harvey to serve. The goal was to grow the ministry overall and move the focus away from traveling missionaries to ministry by local churches, both as individual efforts or in concert with others, as the migrants arrived. The types of ministry promoted by the Home Mission Board included a number of activities seen in the DCBA and SMBA plus a few others: holding worship services to preach the gospel, classes to teach reading, child care, showing films of religious content, offering vacation Bible school for the migrant children and Bible classes for migrants in general, and holding events for the migrants both at and outside of where the migrants lived. In 1967 the Home Mission Board recorded seventeen Southern Baptist associations involved in migrant ministry.[7]

One potential hindrance for the outreach to migrants was that the religious community in DeKalb County and surrounding areas was overwhelmingly Protestant and largely Southern Baptist. They planned to minister to a group that was mostly if not completely Catholic. Thus there was potential for a negative reaction or at least indifference on the part of the migrants towards those offering a different brand of

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[7] Arthur B. Rutledge, *Mission to America: A Century and a Quarter of Southern Baptist Home Missions* (Nashville, Tenn.: Broadman Press, 1969), 174–75.

religion. But despite the theological differences the Latinos were generally receptive to the local religious community. There were several possible reasons for that result. It is likely that, given the very short time the migrants were in that area, that the ministers and churches were not trying to convert them to Protestantism. Their goal was to offer a basic gospel that translated across cultures which likely still fit within the faith of the migrants. On that point, some of the migrants were from rural areas of Mexico with limited access to Catholic priests. It was probable that Latinos from those places had only basic theological training if their relationship with the church centered mostly on life events such as weddings and deaths rather than weekly services. In DeKalb County the churches also regularly offered physical aid to the migrants in the form of food or other personal items, so there may have been some sense among the migrants that they had to listen to the people bringing gifts. Plus after a long day at work on the farm the Latinos likely welcomed a preacher as entertainment. One factor originating on the side of the Latinos was their cultural deference towards both religious leaders as well as anyone, especially men, of advanced age. Thus pastors, particularly those older than the migrants, may have commanded respect and attention by default. Finally, the churches formed a connection to the migrants' children through enrichment activities provided at both churches and farms. This link was one that extended beyond faith to the basic human choice to trust someone with your child. It is likely that that connection, that in some cases continued from summer-to-summer for returning migrants, extended to the relationships between adult Latinos and the white church members.

The ministries provided by individual churches varied. One church in the SMBC, Bethlehem Baptist, invited local migrants to come to church. Only a few of the adult

men and women came. Bethlehem was more successful with the migrant children. A church member took a car or van and picked up the migrant children and brought them to church on Sundays. One member who worked with the migrants a great deal noted that she never heard any negative sentiments from other church members concerning the presence of the migrants in the church; she reported that the congregation had ample opportunity to air concerns since the church leaders brought the idea of ministering to the migrants before the church. She also remembered that the children loved to come to Sunday school. For many church members, this was their first exposure to the Spanish language. The time that migrants spent at the church was the greatest opportunity most local whites had to interact with the temporary population.[8]

As did several other area churches, Bethlehem invited the migrant children to participate in their annual vacation Bible school (VBS). Lillie Buckner, a local school teacher who also taught state-provided classes to migrant children at a nearby school and worked as a social worker who helped migrants, initiated this outreach to the farm workers at Bethlehem Baptist. Ten to twelve migrant children rode on the large church van and joined the same VBS classes as the church member kids. They typically had good English skills and understood lessons. The VBS ran Monday through Friday, 9 A.M. to 12 P.M., for two weeks. Each year's VBS had a specific theme and lesson materials provided by the SMBA, and teachers developed crafts to go along with the lessons. Each day began with a lesson and a craft followed by play time and a snack

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[8] Buckner and Buckner, interview; Ken Clement, interview by author, August 2011. Bethlehem Baptist was actually located in Jackson County in the community of Flat Rock, just across the border with DeKalb County. The farms there shared the same potato farming as those in DeKalb county, so they serve as a good example of the churches involved in migrant ministry. Bethlehem Baptist was also part of the SMBA which crossed county borders.

supervised by another teacher. Then the children returned to their main teacher for another lesson and craft time before riding back to the farm. In addition to the VBS at Bethlehem, the church also held a scaled-back VBS or Backyard Bible Club (BBC) for the children at the farm who did not come to the church VBS.[9]

A congregation from the DBCA that worked with migrants was Liberty Baptist in Crossville. Under the leadership of Pastor Charles Smith from 1972 to 1977, this church put a great deal of effort into annual migrant ministry. Each summer Smith checked with local farmers on when they expected to hire migrants and asked if his church could come and minister to the workers. He found that most farmers were glad to allow the ministry. Typically Smith and his congregation worked with two farms per summer. For the adult migrants, Smith visited the farm at night after their work day. He preached and the crew chief translated, so a fifteen minute sermon took about thirty minutes. Smith distributed Spanish materials on faith and offered the migrants the opportunity to commit their lives to Christ. Some raised their hands and accepted. As noted in the missions chapter, the church also ministered to the adult migrants by creating and distributing health kits. For the migrant children, Liberty Baptist conducted a five-night VBS at each farm. Unlike Bethlehem Baptist, Liberty chose to hold the VBS at the farm rather than transport the children to the church for their regular VBS that typically happened the week before or the week after. For the farm VBS they used the same lesson materials, crafts, and snacks as with the regular VBS, and the number of migrant children averaged about forty-five at large farms and ten at small farms. Smith was proud that he made an impact on the lives

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[9] Buckner and Buckner, interview; Anne Anderson, interview by author, October 3, 2011. Up through the 1970s it was common for a VBS to run for up to two weeks. In the 1980s Southern Baptist Churches moved to a more limited schedule of Monday through Friday during one week of the summer.

of the migrants, and on a couple of occasions he received letters from some who converted and joined Baptist churches when they returned to Mexico or South Texas.[10]

The work of Smith and Liberty Baptist fit in with the overall push by the DCBA to encourage churches to minister to the migrants. The association efforts were led by the DCBA Superintendent of Missions, Milton H. Pope, who worked closely with local pastors on creating the ministries. By 1971 twenty DCBA churches conducted VBS programs for area migrants, and the association reported an average daily attendance of 202 for forty-two days that summer. The DCBA also worked with churches to show Spanish films at the farms. The association noted that migrants at several farms made professions of faith. In 1971 the DCBA also created a day care for migrant babies. The year 1977 brought the addition of a temporary clinic set up at the DCBA offices, where two nurses attended to migrant health needs. Most of these activities continued for about a decade until the number of migrants dropped dramatically in the early 1980s.[11]

In conjunction with the efforts by local churches to minister to migrants, missionaries also traveled to DeKalb County and the surrounding area annually to bring religious opportunities to the migrants. These missionaries were, as noted in chapter one, college students recruited from state universities. The logistics of the missionaries living in the DeKalb area for the summer were coordinated by the county local Baptist association. Families volunteered to house and feed a missionary or two during their time in the area. The association also scheduled musical performances for the missionaries in local churches that had revival weeks, and at least one church had a

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[10] Smith, interview.
[11] "DeKalb County Association: Annual of 140th Session," 40–43; Smith, interview.

revival each week of the summer. Thus the missionaries kept quite busy as they worked with migrants during the day and attended revival meetings at least one night a week.[12]

One of the young missionaries in the summer of 1980 was Jane Aiken. She partnered with another female college student, Miriam Wood, and the two took their backyard Bible club to twenty-five farms throughout the summer. They spent about three days at each farm teaching biblical principles, doing art work with paper and crayons, and singing with the children to the music of an autoharp. Typically they held class in the potato shed or at the side of the field where the parents worked. During their journeys in DeKalb County and surrounding areas, Aiken and her partner were accepted by the migrants at most farms but rejected at some. A few groups of workers went so far as to hide their children when they recognized the missionary car from previous years. Jane Aiken wanted to discover the reason behind these rejections, given the warm receptions at so many other farms. Over the course of their work that summer she kept notes on how many farms rejected them and possible reasons why.[13]

After comparing the farms where they received rejections with those that received the missionaries well, Aiken discovered that their reception related directly to how a farmer treated the migrants who worked for him. Thus she developed the two classifications of "good farms" and "bad farms." Two-thirds of the farms received the missionaries openly. These same farms shared the characteristics of giving workers fair pay along with adequate housing and generally good treatment. The other one-third of migrant groups rejected the missionaries. These farms typically mistreated the migrants in their pay, accommodations, and overall regard. Aiken found that the migrants at the

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[12] Creswell, interview, October 6, 2011.
[13] Ibid.

bad farms associated the missionaries, as whites, with the farmer, so they avoided any contact with whites outside their work. It is also likely that the owners of the bad farms told their workers to stay away from outside contact to avoid scrutiny of their living and work conditions. For Jane Aiken, Charles Creswell, who died in 2008 at age 74, served as an example of the good farmers who treated migrants fairly. She believed that good treatment directly affected the willingness of the migrants to build relationships with the missionaries as well as with other local whites. Later Jane met and married the son of the Charles Creswell.[14]

The stories of the late Charles Creswell and his treatment of migrants were recounted by his family members and thus have to be viewed as overly positive without matching stories from the migrant workers. Still, it is plausible that, given the environment of churches and missionaries mixed in with the economic exchange of farmers and workers, there were some farms that treated migrant workers fairly. This does not diminish the plight of the many migrants regularly mistreated throughout the U.S. In fact, the bad farms as noted by Jane Creswell likely fit in that category. But the stories do suggest that in some instances there were pockets of fair treatment. With the peer pressure of efforts from the SMBA, DCBA, individual churches, and missionaries all seeing to the welfare of some of the migrants, farms that allowed religious influence also likely had less abuse. Without stories and examples from bad farms it is difficult to compare. Preachers and missionaries deferred to the wishes of farmers and workers and stayed away, so there is a survivorship bias in the oral history. The possibility of a more

[14] Ibid.; "Mr. Charles W. Creswell," *The Fort Payne Times-Journal*, March 21, 2008.

complex relationship between owners and migrant workers in areas throughout the South and rest of the U.S. with strong religious outreach to migrants merits further study.

Even though much of the ministry to migrants came through association and individual church actions, some efforts came from individuals or families acting on their own. Charles Creswell hired migrants for his potato farm in DeKalb County up through 1969. An act that gave him a good reputation with the migrants was that he helped a sick migrant girl. One day the migrant crew leader came to Creswell and said one of the children of his crew was very sick and needed medical care. Creswell took the girl and her parents to a doctor in a nearby city and then paid the bill for her care while Mrs. Creswell watched after the migrant couple's other children back at the farm.[15]

Another example of everyday kindness as outreach came from Lillie Buckner, who helped Bethlehem Baptist Church begin its ministry to the migrants. She knew the migrants through their children since she taught a state-funded migrant school during the summers for several years. Between 1964 and 1972 Buckner conducted remedial classes on basic subjects to migrant children when they were in the area. The Alabama Department of Education created the program. She first taught the classes just north of DeKalb County at Flat Rock and later moved to Skyline to the west when the demand shifted to that area. After she changed locations, her son took over teaching the classes at Flat Rock. On average the classes had six to eight children younger than ten years old. Older children attended on days when it rained too much to work in the fields. The children came in the morning and showered at the school gym before beginning lessons. The class emphasized reading, writing, and math proficiency. Along with this role, Lillie

[15] Creswell, interview, October 6, 2011; Creswell, interview, September 22, 2011.

Buckner also served as a social worker beginning in 1970. Her role focused on the migrant children whom she visited at the farms to see if they had needs. If the children needed medical care, Buckner arranged visits to Dr. Joel Hall, a local physician who provided his services to migrants in need.[16] These activities gave Lillie Buckner a unique perspective on the migrant population and encouraged her efforts in encouraging Bethlehem Baptist to begin ministering to the migrants. Her concern for the migrants also led her to engage in some one-on-one ministry.

On a few occasions Lillie Buckner had the opportunity to get to know migrants as a peer and potential friend. One evening, a migrant woman who found herself in a difficult situation personally came to the Buckner house and asked for aid. Lillie and her husband insisted that the woman stay the night. On another occasion Lillie had the opportunity to invite some of the migrant women to her home to cook together. They taught her how to cook some Mexican dishes, and she shared some of her cooking knowledge with them. Later that year, Lillie received a few letters from Mexico thanking her for her hospitality and promising to visit again. Lillie Buckner recalled the key to developing a relationship with the migrants was treating them the same as anyone else. The migrant women greatly appreciated the simple gesture.[17] Such direct actions by individuals such as Buckner and Creswell proved the exception rather than the rule, however. Few whites on an individual level invited migrants to their homes or made it a point to spend time with them outside the structure of church efforts. The fact that Charles Creswell's kindness for a simple act became known proves few whites engaged the migrants in such a way.

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[16] Buckner and Buckner, interview.
[17] Ibid.

With the recollections of those who worked with the migrants, it is possible to draw conclusions about the response of the migrants to the efforts of the local association, churches, missionaries, and individuals. Barring interference from an employer who treated workers poorly, the migrants generally received the outreach efforts openly. For the adults, this typically meant allowing preachers to come and preach to them at the farm where they worked. Adult migrants seldom visited local churches or religious events. They were willing, however, to listen to preachers teach lessons that were translated by someone on the migrant team who spoke English. This openness toward local religious leaders displays the willingness of the migrants to associate with and get to know the white locals. They showed the same sentiment even more dramatically by allowing the white missionaries and VBS leaders to teach the migrant children. By doing so the parents placed a great deal of faith in people they only knew a short while and displayed their openness to forming positive relationships. These actions on the part of the migrants showed that there was a possibility of moving beyond the unfortunately common narrative of migrant abuse if there were both fair farm owners as well as strong presence of religious outreach.

The intentions of the local whites were also clearly visible in their actions. The racial lines of the region ran between blacks and whites, but those lines had little effect on the interactions of the Latinos and whites. It took effort on the part of the whites to house and send missionaries, preach to the migrants, and incorporate the migrant children into the church VBS while having nothing to gain in doing so. By the actions and the statements of those involved in such ministries, it is likely that the adult migrants would have been welcome in church as well. This attitude was very likely not shared by all

whites in the area, but overall the attitude towards the Latino migrants on the part of whites was welcoming—especially since they were only there temporarily and were doing needed work. This sentiment added a layer of complexity to the racial attitudes of the period.

The difference in the overall white attitude towards migrants and the overall attitude towards blacks came from two factors. First, the migrants fell into a racial category other than black or white. Latinos in the U.S. had long faced a contested place in the country's racial structure. Mexican Americans were included with whites in the census until 1930 when the government added the nebulous "Mexican" category lumping together anyone not white and not black in the opinion of the census worker. Self-identity was a much more complex matter and typically had much more to do with class as those Latinos who reached the middle class sought social status as close to that of whites as possible—often identifying themselves as white with the perceived benefits of that status. But in the 1970s that identity for many Mexican Americans changed as the politics of the time resulted in the Chicano movement which rejected whiteness and embraced the identity of "brown"—somewhere between black and white. Across the U.S., however, that new identity was applied unevenly based on local politics and personal preferences.[18] Also, in the case of the migrants to northeast Alabama, racial status was established by the preconceptions of permanent residents. The local whites generally saw the migrants as different culturally but not unacceptable or inappropriate to

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[18] Neil Foley, *The White Scourge: Mexicans, Blacks, and Poor Whites in Texas Cotton Culture* (Berkeley, Ca.: University of California Press, 1997), 209–13; Guadalupe San Miguel, Jr., *Brown, Not White: School Integration and the Chicano Movement in Houston* (College Station, Tx.: Texas A&M University Press, 2001), 72–73, 146, 173, 198–207.

associate with. The migrants were mostly Catholic, had brown skin, and spoke Spanish, but they were not black physically or culturally. That was the great difference that made the outreach permissible according to local social norms

The second factor influencing the reception of the migrants was that they only lived in the DeKalb County area for a short time each summer; so without putting down roots, they offered no competition on housing, permanent jobs, and resources that might cause resentment. Their presence also only affected the difficult, temporary job that did not appeal to whites. Harvesting potatoes was taxing work that involved stooping and being in the direct sun for hours on end. Whites who wanted temporary harvest jobs preferred those in the shed where they graded the produce. Thus without sources of resentment, especially among low-wage whites who would have felt the competition if the migrant population became permanent, the white community reached out more readily.

The two factors of racial acceptability and short duration of stay combined with the missions focus of the local religious community to create an experience with Latino migrants that most other migrant-receiving areas of the U.S. likely did not share. But for DeKalb and surrounding counties that complex background proved helpful as the area received a very different influx of newcomers beginning in the late 1980s. The original location in DeKalb County to receive a permanent population of Latinos was the small city of Collinsville. This had been a thriving location on a regional railroad line until 1966 when it was demoted to a flag stop, a location where the train only stopped if someone wanted to get off. Then the stop was permanently closed in 1970. With the demotion and eventual closing, the Collinsville economy shrank until 1972 when the

Cagle's chicken processing company opened a plant there. A little more than a decade later the plant began recruiting Latinos as workers, and the Latino population grew exponentially spreading to other cities in the area. This demographic shift, a set of changes common to other rural communities throughout the South, led many to express concern and even anger over the perceived threat of the newcomers. Yet others found ways to incorporate the Latinos into the community.[19]

As the area's experience with Latino migrants ended, but before the second permanent influx became noticeable, the largest DeKalb County newspaper ran several articles that gave some residents at least a small amount of familiarity with the broader world of Latinos—particularly those from Mexico. It also highlighted the personal experiences of some locals that would have made the coming demographic changes much less of a shock. The first article of note came in 1986 and reported that Fort Payne High School Spanish teacher, Martha Banks, took sixteen students on an overnight camping trip to celebrate La Fiesta Primaveral or Spring Festival. The instructor saw the classroom setting as too "artificial" and said the students needed to put their Spanish to

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[19] Mary E. Odem and Elaine Lacy, "Popular Attitudes and Public Policies: Southern Responses to Latino Immigration," in *Latino Immigration and the Transformation of the U.S. South*, ed. Mary E. Odem and Elaine Lacy (Athens, Ga.: The University of Georgia Press, 2009), 147–49, 156–57; Annie Koger Young, *Early History of Fort Payne and DeKalb County* (Centre, Ala.: Stewart University Press, 1980), 16–17; Lucy A. Lawrence, "Collinsville: An Ethnographic Instrumental Case Study of Social Capital" (The University of Alabama, 2003), 70–74; *Coming to a Crossroads* (Tuscaloosa, Ala.: Alabama Center for Public Television, 2003). DeKalb County in 1990 had an overall population of 54,651. Likely due to the census not seeking out Latinos, their number in the country officially dropped by 66 from 1980 to 1990. But by 2000, the official number of Latinos in the county jumped to 3,578 and then to 9,690 by 2010. The dramatic growth in Latinos fueled much of the growth for the county which increased to 71,109 by 2010. Whites made up the difference, and black numbers rose slightly over the twenty years to 1,078. Marshall county saw similar results. See U.S. Census 1980-2010.

use. On the trip the students could only use Spanish, and students received prizes of posters and other materials the teacher obtained from the Spanish embassy.[20]

In 1987, the kindergarten and first grade students at Plainview School, about ten miles west of Fort Payne, celebrated Cinco de Mayo under the direction of teacher Joanne Pearson, who was born in Honduras and grew up in Miami. The county school system had no foreign language program, so Pearson pushed for the celebration as a way to introduce the students to another language at an early age when it was easy for children to absorb that knowledge. She said, "This is a way to teach them another language, and to teach them about other peoples, to break down the barriers that keep us all apart. Besides, the kids are having a great time." The children wore sombreros and flowing dresses as well as bandannas and flowers, and they learned to sing Spanish songs and perform the Mexican hat dance. Then they ended the day with the excitement of breaking piñatas. The newspaper article on the festivities included a front-page picture of the children all dressed up for the celebration as well as a lengthy paragraph explaining the significance of the holiday in Mexican history. The writer concluded the article by recounting the sound of the children counting as classmates swung at the piñatas and commented that, "It might have been the sound of those ancient barriers falling down.[21]

That same year, fourteen seniors of Fort Pane High School concluded their year with a trip to Mexico led by their teacher, Martha Banks. The brief write up under a picture of the group noted that they visited the Mexican states of Yucatan and Quintana Roo and saw a colonial city as well as Mayan ruins. Beyond Mexico, some of the DeKalb exposure to Spanish-speaking countries came when the National Guard unit

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[20] "La Fiesta Planned," *FPTJ*, April 24, 1986.
[21] "Cinco de Mayo Celebrated," *FPTJ*, May 6, 1987.

based in Fort Payne traveled to Ecuador to help with road building following major earthquakes in the region. The Guard members joined the 151st Engineering Battalion in a project long hindered by rain and mud and considered "nearly impossible" according to guardsmen already on the project. They were originally assigned to work near a beach and then moved to the jungle project. The *Times-Journal* provided some political context in citing Vice President George Bush as the U.S. representative on the aid. The mayor of Fort Payne, David Stout, was invited to travel with Alabama government leaders to Ecuador, and he planned to go. The paper noted that most of the "peasants" in the country remained friendly to U.S. troops, but some city-dwellers resented the presence of foreign forces as an attack on Ecuadorian sovereignty. They wrote "Fueras Tropas Yankis" or "Yankees Get Out" on the sides of buildings.[22]

One aspect of the Fort Payne *Times-Journal* of the late 1980s and 1990s was that it gave local readers a curated view of world events by including syndicated stories of international news and opinion. In one instance the paper published the article "Mexico's next leader may come to the rescue," which extensively described the state of Mexican politics including the dominance of the PRI political party for fifty-eight years at that point as well as hopes that the pragmatism of the newly appointed president would help relations with the United States as he focused on ways to cut costs as well as help the country grow economically. Another of these syndicated articles on Mexico came in 1989. It discussed the arrest of the boss of the Mexican oil workers' union by the new president discussed in the previous article. Previous administrations dared not attack the

[22] "Seniors Visit Mexico," *FPTJ*, July 1, 1987; "Local Guardsmen Off to Ecuador," *FPTJ*, July 25, 1987; "Guard Lends Aid after Earthquake," *FPTJ*, July 25, 1987.

powerful figure.[23] The inclusion of these world news articles in the *Times-Journal* is of interest since the newspaper had to make the choice to use them. In a small newspaper these articles were included with others that would have been deemed worth the attention of the readership—as something to expand knowledge in an important subject. Given the inclusion of a number of articles on Mexico in the late 1980s it is likely that the newspaper felt its mostly rural subscribers needed to have a better grasp of the U.S. neighbor to the south.

In conjunction with the reports on local school efforts and periodic syndicated articles, the *Times-Journal* also published a series of field dispatches from a local couple who were traveling in Mexico in 1988. This essentially educational series offered readers an excellent first-hand view of contemporary Mexico and discussed a variety of topics ranging from the work of Protestant missionaries to agriculture. Taylor and Catherina Collins began their long trip to Mexico as a pair with a great deal of international experience. Taylor had served as both a military and commercial pilot as well as a sea captain around the world, and Catherina, a native of Holland, spoke fluent Spanish. They left DeKalb County the first week of December 1987 with their dog in a Volkswagen van. Their first article described their journey along rural roads south of San Luis Potosi where they met a number of "Indians" who were selling various animals from the local area. They traveled to Queretaro, four hours south of Mexico City, to visit a language school run by Baptists. This visit would have been of particular interest to the heavily Protestant and Baptist population of DeKalb County. Language schools are institutions run by various denominations to provide intensive language training to future

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[23] "Mexico's Next Leader May Come to the Rescue," *FPTJ*, October 14, 1987; "Mexican Union Boss Finds a Formidable Foe," *FPTJ*, January 23, 1989.

missionaries. The students at this school were primarily Independent Fundamental Baptists from the U.S. South who came to Mexico through the sponsorship of individual churches instead of a larger organization. The language school estimated that there were approximately 1,000 practicing Mexican Baptists in the immediate area and 150 to 200 Mexican Baptist congregations in the country. The article detailed the rigorous training provided by the school as well as the precarious situation of the missionaries who had to renew their visas every six months by traveling to the Mexican border. The nation's law stated that traveling visitors could not conduct missionary activities, but the government rarely enforced such rule. Still, the religious visitors could be deported in a day if politics changed.[24]

The couple continued their reports as they carried on their journey. They visited the town of Altacolumo in in central Mexico and discussed the local political structure. They explained to everyone in DeKalb County that the dominate PRI political party appeared leftist, but it was actually controlled by the conservative rich of the country with the backing of the local police and national military. That dominance was maintained by many officials, including the president, representatives, and local mayors, choosing their replacement at the end of their term. The couple also revealed the darker side of Mexican politics with the activities of local police as well as the difficulties the country faced in the incredible poverty of rural areas. Another dispatch focused on Mexican health care and how, despite its simplicity, it proved rather effective in their experience with low costs and clean facilities. Interestingly this article took a more revolutionary stance toward the end as the couple said that those who stand in the way of change are swept

[24] "Local Couple Visits Mexico," *FPTJ*, January 6, 1988.

aside throughout history, and if the rural folk decided to stand up, they could not be stopped.[25]

Taylor and Catherina provided the *Times-Journal* with three more articles during their trip. They visited a cultural center in Altocomulco for the pre-Christmas festival, Fiesta de Guadalupe. In the report they provided a short tutorial on the ethnic breakdown of Mexican society into Spanish, Meztisos, and pre-European Indian with the Meztisos making up the largest group and the middle class. They also noted that the Indian population had been allowed little progress in the past forty years. Another article discussed the varied agriculture of Mexico with the couple visiting an agricultural center. The farmers in the area used mostly small farming plots as opposed to the large ranches of the north. Mechanization was being introduced to Mexican farming practices from the top down, with some communities beginning to buy shared equipment. They also noticed some of the diverse agricultural products such as cactus juice and roses. Finally the couple reported on an attempted trip to Guatemala. They traveled to the border to cross over, but the political situation of the country was unstable. The border officials only gave them trouble and tried to make them give up as much money as possible. To avoid the hassle, Taylor maneuvered their vehicle around the line of cars and back into Mexico.[26] This series of reports was a very unusual feature in the *Times-Journal*, but since they focused on rural and religious aspects of Mexico, it would have been of interest to the newspaper's mostly rural and religious subscribers.

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[25] "A Look at a Prosperous Mexican Town," *FPTJ*, January 13, 1988; "Health Care Cheaper in Mexico," *FPTJ*, January 20, 1988.
[26] "Mexican Festival Held," *FPTJ*, January 27, 1988; "Unusual Farming Done in Mexico," *FPTJ*, February 3, 1988; "Visit to Guatemala Cut Short," *FPTJ*, February 16, 1988.

One other direct introduction of Mexicans and Mexican culture to DeKalb County came in 1990 with the visit of a Mexican man to a third-grade class at a school in Fort Payne. Alvaro Solis Rodriguez, a native of Chihuahua, Mexico came, likely at the invitation of the teacher, to tell the students about his home country and show them a variety of materials ranging from money to publications and answering any questions the class might have. His visit was timed to follow a social studies section on Mexico so the students would be prepared to learn more. Rodriguez came to the United States from Mexico when he was eighteen by swimming across the Rio Grande river and working his way across Texas, the gulf coast, and finally up to Nashville in 1984. There he was able to work at a restaurant until 1989 when he finished his naturalization. He said that his life was much better now that he could easily travel back to Mexico. Of the publications he presented, the children were most surprised by the similarities between their own culture and that of Mexico. Rodriguez pointed out that people there wear the same clothing styles as Americans. He said, "It's not like the ancient pictures you might see in books and movies, we wear Levis, Reeboks, and button-down shirts." He also offered similarities in the availability of United States food and music. At the end, the paper reported that many of the students were ready to "bridge the cultural gap a little more" and visit Mexico themselves. They would do so "By going south rather than bringing Mexico to Fort Payne."[27] The newspaper did not realize that Mexico and Latin America were already on their way to Fort Payne and neighboring communities.

Taken in concert these articles in the *Times-Journal* as well as the educational efforts of a few local teaches gave many citizens of DeKalb County and the surrounding

[27] "Mexican Visits Third Grade Class," *FPTJ*, May 15, 1990.

area some knowledge and understanding of the Mexican people and their culture prior to the large-scale immigration of Mexicans and other Latinos to the region. Obviously not everyone read the paper, and those who read it did not always do so thoroughly. Nevertheless it was the main publication that covered several small towns and communities in the area with a circulation of around 7,000.[28] Therefore the publication served as the main source of local news. It is likely that many residents read the articles and gained an expanded view of the world. The reports also point to a strong introduction of the Spanish language and Mexican culture by a few teachers. Their impact on increasing understanding would have spread well beyond the pupils to immediate and extended family and friends with an interest in what the young person was learning or doing. Thus formerly foreign concepts such as Mayan temples became family stories. As a result local residents had some preparation for the large demographic changes coming to their part of Alabama.

There really was no recognition in the *Times-Journal* of the growth of the county's permanent Latino population. Likely there was a general understanding among locals that more culturally different people had begun to settle in the area, but the first official recognition in the local newspaper came in 1990. A front-page article told the story of a woman from Fort Payne, Margaret Richardson, who taught an English as a Second Language (ESL) class in Collinsville for Latino workers at the Cagle's chicken processing plant. Richardson served as a part of the Fort Payne Altrusa Club, a community service group that had partnered with the Northeast Alabama Adult Basic

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[28] *The IMS '84 Ayer Directory of Publications* (Fort Washington, Pa.: IMS Press, 1984), 108; *Ulrich's International Periodicals Directory, 1994-95*, vol. 5, 33rd ed. (New Providence, N.J.: R.R. Bowker, 1994), 2.

Education Program (NAABE). Richardson's goal was to teach the group "functional English." Although she spoke no Spanish, a bilingual helper, Connie Illescas, who had moved to the area from Texas, was present at the meetings. The class had seven students who attended the weekly two-hour session at the home of a local woman who formerly worked at the plant. They generally used gestures and word/picture association to try to form sentences. Richardson noted that the students learned quickly and let her know once they grasped a concept. The newspaper also spoke with Randall White, the director of NAABE, who said that the teaching methods they promoted were similar to any adult education class. The focus was associating words with what the student already knew so they could learn the "official language" of the United States. The article said White was working to "bring the world closer together" and provided White's phone number so people could contact him if they knew of anyone in need of ESL aid. Toward this same end, the newspaper also printed a small rectangle box at the corner of the article that looked like a common advertisement. Actually the box had the words, "ATENTO AVISO SE ofrecen a todas las personas Que desen aprender Ingles como Segundo Lenguaje has clases son completamente gratis Call – 845-0465." Then the box at the bottom of the paper added the sentences, "This is what English looks like to those who cannot read it. The message announces English classes in Spanish."[29]

This article served as a generally positive view of the Latino newcomers offered in a very public, front-page way by the *Times-Journal*. It showed local long-term residents beginning to reach out to Spanish speakers in much the same way that the religious community ministered to migrants years earlier. The article also showed that

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[29] "Collinsville Volunteer Teaches Hispanics English," *FPTJ*, June 28, 1990.

Latinos were mostly associated at the time with being chicken plant workers. Though this was true in many cases in the early years of Latino immigration to the area, it was an image that remained prominent many years later even after the Latino population had developed much deeper roots in the community. The good coverage of the students was the last article mentioning Latinos for almost two years, and the next several instances all cast the newcomers in a negative light.

The next discussion of Latinos came in June 1992 when the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) began to make raids against illegal aliens in the DeKalb County area. The first of three raids occurred in Powell, Alabama, a town just east of Collinsville and south of Fort Payne. The local police chief worked with the United States Border Patrol agents, who enforce INS policies, and arrested seven undocumented individuals from Mexico who were allegedly employed by the town councilman's wife. The DeKalb County Sheriff's department acted as a backup for the operation. The officers found the group of workers in a trailer home on the property of the councilman Eugene Byrum, and they reported working at a nearby sock mill and some for a regional chicken-catching business. They had been living in DeKalb County nearly a year and a half at the longest. The *Times-Journal* made the point that while legally employed, all had entered the United States illegally as long as six years ago. The councilman's wife, Linda Byrum, was present during the raid, and she provided the final cash payment to the workers for their labor before they were taken away. The police chief said that local officers recently took note of the undocumented workers through several traffic stops where individuals had no identification as well as incidents of driving under the influence and leaving the scene of accidents. The chief spoke with the state Border Patrol

headquarters in Mobile, and they arranged the raid. The newspaper interviewed the senior agent of the Border Patrol, Mike Kilgare, who said that this was the second time the illegal aliens had been caught working for the Byrums. The first incident occurred five years before when one individual was arrested. This time, the financial records of the Byrums were subpoenaed for evidence in a civil investigation. The Border Patrol said that those arrested had the opportunity to either leave the United States on their own or be deported.[30]

About two weeks after the first raid, the cities of Collinsville, Fort Payne, and Gadsden in neighboring Etowah County worked with the Border Patrol and arrested fourteen undocumented workers from Mexico. The first three arrests came in Gadsden. Then in Collinsville they arrested seven as several locations while avoiding businesses. This move was preceded by local investigation identifying several individuals believed to be illegal aliens. Speaking of Latinos, the police chief said, "I had noticed that several had moved into the area." The police there also noticed that some of the documentation the men provided was fake and poorly made, with their photos being added to old cards. After Collinsville, the Border Patrol officers moved on to Fort Payne and arrested the others. Most of the fourteen individuals had been in the local area approximately a year and worked in businesses in the three cities. Once the three-stage raid was complete, the Mexicans were placed in a van and taken to Mobile for deportation.[31]

One more story of Border Patrol raids came in August 1992 when another arrest was made in Powell. The story focused on a single undocumented worker who was arrested at the same business where the others were caught in June. After recounting that

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[30] "Several Aliens Found in Raid," *FPTJ*, June 6, 1992.
[31] "Fourteen Illegal Aliens Arrested in the County," *FPTJ*, June 16, 1992.

story and its somewhat scandalous implications for local politics, the article noted that the new Powell raid was part of a much larger, multi-county operation conducted by the Border Patrol in north Alabama. The overall effort, led again by senior agent Mike Kilgoar, resulted in forty-six arrests of undocumented immigrants from Mexico. The *Times-Journal* ended the article by quoting the police chief of Powell who said, "Folks are concerned."[32]

These raids targeting illegal immigrants were fairly common when looking at the U.S. as a whole. The INS often investigated and Border Patrol often raided locations and companies looking for undocumented workers, but the application of INS policies was inconsistent at best and opportunistic at worst. The three 1992 raids in DeKalb County show the haphazard nature of such raids. They made for great newspaper headlines and sounded like military operations, but over the three raids the agents collected nineteen undocumented immigrants. In a county with a quickly-growing Latino population there were many more immigrants who could have been targeted. The 1990 census showed an official count of 215 Latinos in DeKalb. The real number was much higher since the census did not make a special effort to count Latinos until 2000, and undocumented immigrants made a special effort to not be counted. In addition to these seemingly half-hearted efforts, the raids also specifically targeted the workers connected to Powell councilman Byrum. It would have been much easier for the Border Patrol to simply set up a roadblock near the chicken plant and check identification. It is likely that there was unspoken political or personal motivation in organizing such raids. If so, Border Patrol enforcement was being manipulated by petty local issues. Finally, the 1992 raids fit in

[32] "Another Illegal Alien Caught in Powell Raid," *FPTJ*, August 5, 1992.

the overall pattern of the INS and other authorities denouncing illegal immigration but then ignoring its biggest draw—jobs. The most public example of this duplicity came in the late 1990s when the INS investigated the plants of the Tyson Corporation for knowingly importing illegal immigrants to work in chicken processing. After much investigation and a trial the case ended with a few lower-level Tyson managers taking the fall. One observer pointed out that neither Tyson or the Federal Government were willing to admit that they ignored the illegal immigrant issue to supply affordable chicken to the U.S. population.[33]

With these three images of illegality as part of the Latino introduction to DeKalb, the population was off to a rocky start in developing connections with the long-term population. – Despite some early positive images in the *Times-Journal* of the Latino immigrants, these negative additions were seriously damaging to the image of the population as a whole. The mass raids of increasing size were conducted in much the same fashion as those reserved for much more serious crimes such as prostitution rings and drug busts. Giving such attention to undocumented workers made them seem like dangerous criminals. Thus DeKalb residents who only had the news for reference had to ask themselves how many other illegal aliens were in their midst? Were they dangerous?

Though the newspaper did not address the topic, the lack of articles about Latinos for two years after a significant series of positive views Mexicans and Mexican culture but before the series of reports on illegal alien raid likely indicated a shift in the mood of the local long-term population concerning Latino immigration to the area. Latinos were

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[33] Steve Striffler, *Chicken: The Dangerous Transformation of America's Favorite Food* (New Haven, Ct.: Yale University Press, 2007), 97–100; U.S. Bureau of the Census, *1990 Census of Population*, vol. 1, part 2 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1992).

generally seen as good workers, which is why the chicken plant recruited them, and most long-term residents did not mind their presence initially. But it is likely that some locals began to become uneasy about the changing demographics. Whites who dominated local culture might have felt threatened if their tradition of small-town life was disrupted. Also the city of Collinsville had the only significant black population north of Gadsden in Etowah County. The African American residents may have felt threatened economically by the Latinos who filled low-wage jobs. Such possibilities are speculation, but the conspicuous lack of articles on Latinos followed by a sudden shift in coverage and tone suggests a likely souring in local sentiment.

The story of local reaction to the growing Latino population in northeast Alabama was, however, more complex than increasing negativity. While some long-term residents resented or feared the presence of newcomers of different culture and language, others embraced the change and saw it as an opportunity. The numerous efforts put forth by the local religious community to reach out to the Latinos revealed a more positive and accepting side of the story of demographic change in that region of Alabama and the South as well. Ministry by churches typically fell into two categories: individual undertakings and group efforts. Some churches chose to do outreach of various types on their own while others worked together on larger projects. Groups of churches working together could provide a scale ministry that was not be possible if attempted by a single church working alone. In DeKalb and surrounding counties this option of working together on a ministry appealed to many of the small congregations. Some churches that chose to team up with others on particular ministries also tackled smaller-scope outreach projects on their own. The combined amount of outreach to Latinos from individual and

group church efforts added up to a large ministry push by the religious community in a deeply-religious part of the state.

Since the vast majority of Latinos are Catholic, the default religious community for them to seek out was the local Catholic parish. But in Alabama Catholics made up only about 10 percent of Christians, and in rural areas such as northeast Alabama that number was even smaller. As a result, the small Catholic presence saw a significant jump in the number of faithful seeking its aid. The Catholic structure in the area was based at St. William Catholic Church Guntersville, in Marshall County to the west of DeKalb. That church oversaw two small missions. One by the same name was a twenty-minute drive to the southeast in Albertville. St. William was also responsible for the ministry at Our Lady of the Valley Catholic Church (OLV), an hour drive east in the DeKalb County city of Fort Payne. Founded in 1958, this parish served as a major point of ministry to Latinos in DeKalb County and surrounding areas. Due to its size, OLV did not have its own priest but relied on visiting priests, or sacramental advisors, to administer sacraments and conduct mass. The day-to-day ministry of the parish was led by others. During the early and mid-1990s there was ministry to Latinos at the parish, but incorporation of Latinos into the church body really began under the leadership of Sister Deborah Kennedy, who led the congregation at OLV as parish director from 1998 to 2008. Over her ten-year tenure Kennedy saw the parish shift from ministering to Latinos as a separate segment of Catholics in the area to merging the new population into the main congregation. Early in her work at OLV Kennedy told the white congregation that they would no longer use “us” and “them” language when referring to the Latinos in the parish, but instead they should make a conscious effort to use “we.” Thus she led the

congregation to see themselves as one body. This incorporation extended beyond mass to social activities as well. The standing tradition of a monthly covered-dish dinner continued as white-only at first, but soon the Latinos of the church began to come as well. They sat by themselves at first. Then, after about a year, the groups began to sit together and entered what Kennedy called the "pleasant nodding" phase. They enjoyed sitting with one another but could not communicate effectively. Soon that phase gave way to attempts at talking, learning new words in another language, and saying "hello" at the grocery store. Thus the Latinos slowly blended into the congregation and became a new source of energy for OLV.[34]

In fact, the new Latino parishioners brought a number of changes and enhancements to the church. Kennedy explained it best when she noted that, for Latinos, church is "the center of life." This proved especially true since the newcomers now lived in a new community and had to rely on people they knew and trusted. As the congregation melded together at OLV some characteristics of the Latino members began to influence the congregation as a whole. Kennedy noted the Latino commitment to spirituality and making that outlook a part of everyday life introduced a new vitality. The newcomers also brought a renewed commitment to family values and community best represented by Latino gatherings where adults cared for all the children—not just their own. As part of the family focus, whites adapted to the Latino desire to have children in services rather than taking them to the nursery or cry room. Overall, there was simply more activity at the church. Since the Latinos typically held shift-work jobs, they often had free time during the day. The sanctuary therefore remained open all the time for

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[34] Sister Deborah Kennedy, interview by author, October 6, 2011; Lindsay Slater, "Head of the Church," *FPTJ*, July 22, 2010.

parishioners to come and pray. The church also worked with the Latinos on their immigration status since the majority lived as illegal immigrants. When possible, the church worked with a local Cuban-American knowledgeable in the legal aspects of immigration and citizenship. Within the parish, Latinos also developed several bilingual leaders who served as bridges between the newcomers and white parishioners. They also played an instrumental role in the church project of building a new sanctuary. Over the 1990s and 2000s the congregation continued to grow at OLV until 2010 when the Diocese of Birmingham appointed the parish's first full-time priest, Mark Spruill who had previously served as OLV's sacramental advisor for two years. To strengthen the OLV congregation and help it grow, Spruill focused on three areas. First he pressed the concept that Catholics should attend mass each week. He noted that everyone was susceptible to being lax in attendance, but for Latinos this was a bigger issue since many came from rural places in other countries where they did not have a regularly-staffed parish. In addition Spruill told his congregation that because religious education was very important they needed both mass and Catechesis. The priest's third area of focus was that he wanted parishioners to evangelize since all were called to do so—not just the clergy.[35]

The demographic and cultural changes at OLV due to the incorporation of the Latinos closely resembled that of many Catholic parishes throughout the South. Small parishes suddenly had large Catholic Latino populations due to the draw of jobs. Some parishes like OLV succeeded in incorporating the newcomers, while others generally ignored the changes. About two decades before Deborah Kennedy's work at OLV, the

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[35] Kennedy, interview; Slater, "Head of the Church"; Emily Hayes, "Churches Looking for Answers to Dwindling Attendance," *FPTJ*, November 2, 2012.

city of Dalton in Georgia experienced an influx of Latinos similar to that of DeKalb County. The local Catholic parish, St. Joseph's, had little contact with the new population for several years until a few Latinos started attending in the first half of the 1980s. Slowly the parish began to offer Spanish mass and other programs for Latinos—essentially ministering to them as a parallel congregation. But with the addition of a parish leader, like Deborah Kennedy, who embraced the new population, the congregation fully integrated the Latinos by the mid-1990s. The newcomers to Dalton became the driving force for the parish. Unfortunately for St. Joseph's, many of the white members of the congregation came to feel culturally out of place at the parish and chose to attend other parishes in surrounding communities with primarily white congregations.[36] The congregation failed to achieve the same level of incorporation and community as OLV.

One other church in Fort Payne that unexpectedly gained a significant number of Latinos in its congregation was Saint Phillips Episcopal Church (SPEC). Due to similarity in liturgy and style, the Episcopal Church often served as an acceptable alternative for Latinos seeking a religious community or sacraments. In 2008 Judith Comer took over as rector of SPEC, and shortly thereafter she received a call from a pastor in North Carolina who told her about some of his Latino parishioners who moved to Fort Payne. Comer contacted the family, and since they were having a difficult time in the new location, they appreciated her concern. Soon the family began attending SPEC. Within a short time the number of Latinos attending the church grew to about twenty via

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[36] Father Daniel Stack, "The Religious Response," in *Voices from the Nueva Frontera: Latino Immigration in Dalton, Georgia*, ed. Donald E. Davis et al. (Knoxville, Tenn.: The University of Tennessee Press, 2009), 62–64, 70–71.

word of mouth and a sign outside the church welcoming people in Spanish. The congregation numbered about eighty before the Latinos came, so the additional demographic brought a significant change for the church.[37]

The Latino members of SPEC attended the Sunday English service despite the fact that they primarily spoke a mixture of Spanish and a Guatemalan Indian language. The church offered one Spanish service a month when a bilingual pastor traveled from Birmingham to speak there. One church member, Flava Parker who came from Honduras originally, spoke English fluently and served as the lay leader for the Latino community in the church. Parker taught a catechism class in Spanish to help those with a background of Catholicism adapt to the Episcopal Church. SPEC adopted a denominational program called Via that offered lessons specifically designed to help Latinos make that transition. Parker taught the lessons in Spanish and translated them to English when it helped individuals understand.[38]

The addition of Latinos to the congregation of SPEC presented new challenges and opportunities to the long-time members. For many years SPEC conducted church in much the same way with little deviation. The addition of Comer and the Latino members, however, added many new ideas to the mix. Judith Comer came from a background of working specifically on racial reconciliation with her Episcopal priest husband in the black belt area of Alabama. In Honduras, Flava Parker had worked in the Episcopal denomination on developing programs for youth in the church. Comer asked Parker what changes at SPEC would attract the unchurched. Parker pointed to more upbeat music as well as activities such as sports and camps to attract young members.

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[37] Judith Comer, interview by author, September 12, 2011.
[38] Ibid.; Flava Parker, interview by author, September 12, 2011.

Comer agreed with both of these ideas but noted that implementing them posed a challenge given the deeply established traditions of SPEC.[39]

While OLV and SPEC took the bold step of directly incorporating Latinos into their congregations, other churches in the area took a variety of different paths in outreach. Two individual Protestant churches of DeKalb County ministered to Latinos by developing parallel congregations that used the same facilities at different times. The first effort came from First Baptist Collinsville (FBC), which, given its proximity to the early Latino chicken plant workers in the 1990s, first began holding backyard Bible clubs for Latino children in the late 1990s and then started a Spanish church service in the early 2000s. The church set up a Sunday afternoon Spanish service with a regular preacher and fast-tempo music intended to appeal to Latinos. Despite these efforts, the service averaged only between five and ten adults each week. The FBC pastor, John Morgan, did note that one Latina girl began coming to the church when she was seven or eight years old and was now a young woman. She fully integrated into the congregation. The second, and more successful, individual Protestant church ministry came in 2006 at the Fort Payne Church of Christ. There the head pastor, Larry Kirby, began a Spanish service by asking a traveling Latino minister in the area, Carlos Perez, to preach. Pastor Perez worked in several ministries in DeKalb and surrounding counties. Latinos knew they were welcome at the regular English Sunday morning service, but if they preferred Spanish, they came to the Sunday afternoon service at 4 P.M., where the music and preaching followed the same format as the Sunday morning service. Kirby noted that the church used a cappella music and preaching that focused on teaching. With an average

[39] Comer, interview; Parker, interview.

attendance of thirty, the Latino congregation represented a mix of nationalities. To address the issue of multiple cultures in the same congregation, Perez and Kirby preached on the theme that all are one in Christ. The financial collections from both congregations went to the church, and Kirby noted that the question of how to properly fund the Latino congregation caused no problems since they maintained an open door policy in using the facility. In 2011 the church worked toward paying Perez a salary for his work at the church instead of just covering his travel expenses[40]

Other individual protestant churches ministered specifically to Latino youth on a regular basis. The pastors found it difficult to attract Latino adults who primarily spoke Spanish and were committed to Catholicism. But with Latino children, forming connections was much easier. First Methodist Fort Payne as well as First Baptist Fort Payne (FBFP) both incorporated Latino children, often school friends of white church children, into their Sunday school programs. In addition, FBFP held an annual VBS that attracted many Latino children in addition to the regular attendees. FBFP provided the best example of how to adapt an already-established ministry to serve the parallel purpose of ministering to a new segment of the population. During the 1990s FBFP began reaching out to Latinos in the Collinsville area by holding BBCs in trailer parks with high Latino populations. They set up the meetings outside and ministered to any black, Latino, or white children who might come. The ministry done at the clubs resembled that of foreign missionaries when they work with children in South America and other regions. Bible lessons mixed with songs and crafts. Around the year 2000

[40] John Morgan, interview by author, January 21, 2009; Larry Kirby, interview by author, August 11, 2011.

though, for unknown reasons, attendance at the Backyard Bible Clubs dropped off, so FBFP focused its resources on VBS.[41]

For decades, the VBS served as the major event each year of the children's department at FBFP and required the majority of that ministry's budget. Doris Elliot headed the event, which regularly had an attendance of several hundred. Beginning in 2000, however, the attendance figures also included Latino children, who added up to seventy-five students. The church used materials from the Life Way company with a new theme each year and different plans for each grade level. Church vans picked up Latino children with permission slips signed by guardians and later took them home. Each day began in the church sanctuary with pledges to the flags and then music with accompanying arm motions. The children then went to the first of two or three classroom sessions of the day interspersed with crafts, refreshments, music, and recreation. The VBS divided all activities by grade level. In addition to teaching Biblical principles, Doris Elliot also noted that VBS served as a witnessing tool. Since the weekly Sunday school lesson plans called for children to hear the gospel or plan for salvation twice a year, VBS offered another opportunity for regularly attending children as well as visitors to hear the gospel.[42]

The VBS at FBFP also provided the church with an opportunity to reach out to the parents of the Latino children who attended. Church volunteers took the permission slips for the children who rode on vans and compiled names, addresses, and phone numbers into a list of "prospects." For a number of years Virginia Ellis, a retired school

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[41] Clement, interview; Reagin Brown, interview by author, August 19, 2011; Doris Elliot, interview by author, September 13, 2011; R. Pat McFadden, interview by author, August 21, 2011.
[42] Elliot, interview.

teacher, headed up this effort as the children's outreach director. When Ellis had an address, she visited the family and extended welcome to them in person. She tried to determine whether they were more comfortable with English or Spanish with the goal of directing the family to either FBFP or a local Latino congregation, Primera Iglesia Bautista Hispana (PIFP). When Ellis knew that a family only spoke Spanish, she coordinated her visit with Pastor Adele Robayna from PIFP to bridge the language gap. The outreach director found it difficult to locate some families because they either provided limited identifying information due to their immigration status or they had moved since filling out the form. Undocumented Latinos often made it a policy to give out little information to people or organizations they did not know well. They always erred on the side of caution to avoid interactions with the police or government. Despite Latino hesitance in providing information to the church, Virginia Ellis found that whenever she visited Hispanic families, they typically welcomed her into their homes despite language barriers.[43]

The focus of FBFP on ministering directly to Latino children as well as their parents revealed the desire of the church to reach outside its typical attendees to northeast Alabama's newest population. Through experience the congregation found the greatest success by concentrating on ministering from their area of strength. The church had a strong children's program but limited ability to minister in Spanish. Thus the church leaders focused on Latino children who could speak English and utilized local a local Spanish-speaking pastor to reach others. First in BBCs and later in Sunday school and VBS, FBFP saw the relationships the youth built as the future of the church and DeKalb

[43] Virginia Ellis, interview by author, September 26, 2011.

County. This focus meant that FBFP members had limited interaction with Latino adults, but the church saw Latino ministry needs conducted outreach as they were able to do so.

Several churches in DeKalb County also chose to minister to the new Latino population through compassion ministries or programs to provide for the needs of the poor in the community. Typically the ministries applied to people of any cultural background, but several focused their attention on providing for Latinos. Area churches supported a local soup kitchen ministry called Bread of Life that operated every Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday in Fort Payne. Each of the participating churches, including FBFP and SPEC, prepared meals once a month and then carried them to the Bread of Life location. Attendance ranged from twenty to eighty. Each person receiving a meal signed in and had the opportunity to receive written materials on faith. Many of the participants came to see the other recipients as family. Another food-specific ministry came from SPEC, which offered its "Beans and Rice" outreach once a month. Particularly popular with Latinos in need, the monthly ministry gave away 800 pounds of beans, rice, and chicken to anyone who wanted such staples. Many area churches including SPEC, OLV, and FBFP also developed food banks or pantries of shelf-stable goods as well as clothes closets to help the needy. The food pantry at OLV was called Casa Maria.[44]

Along with food-related ministries, some local churches directly support the needy, and especially Latinos, with funds for immediate financial responsibilities such as bills. The most prominent of such ministries occurred at First Methodist Fort Payne, which set aside an annual budget of $50,000 for their compassion ministry. Interviewers spoke with applicants, mostly Latinos, about their needs. Then they worked to fulfill

[44] Elliot, interview; Comer, interview; McFadden, interview; Kennedy, interview.

those needs if possible. Individuals or families never received cash directly, but instead the church paid the rent or utility directly. At First Methodist, pastor Reagin Brown found that his white congregation actually had significantly more compassion for their Latino neighbors whom they perceived as working to make a life for themselves in a new place. Much less compassion was given to poor whites in need who, barring unusual circumstances, had many more opportunities to succeed. SPEC also conducted a similar compassion ministry two Tuesdays each month. In this case most of the applicants were white, but Pastor Comer noted that the reason was most likely that the interviewers were not bilingual. Instead of developing a specific ministry staffed with interviewers, other churches in the area chose to support a local ministry called the Christian Care Center that fulfilled a similar function.[45]

One local compassion ministry focused on the Christmas holiday. Each year since 1997, FBFP, in its continuing focus on ministry to children, held a type of toy drive called the Angel Tree. The church contacted counselors at local schools to identify children in need, and forms were made available in Spanish and English for parents to register beginning in October. The church wrote the needs of each child on a piece of paper shaped like an angel and hung them on a Christmas tree in the church. The church had no budget for the ministry, but instead members chose one or two angels that they wanted to help. Since the Latino population of the county exploded in the 1990s, the number of angels on the tree representing Latino children increased and remained at approximately 95 percent of the total. On a specific day before Christmas, the church

[45] Brown, interview; Comer, interview.

held a party where the children received their wrapped presents as well as a box of food with a turkey or ham for their family.[46]

FBFP and Primera Iglesia Bautista Hispana also helped the Latino community by allowing the Adult Education Program at the North East Community College (NECC) to use their facilities to hold classes for those in the community who wanted to learn English. The lead teachers at the classes were paid by NECC, while the helpers were volunteers from the churches. Participants ranged greatly in skill level from no English proficiency to very proficient. The teachers focused on a variety of topics ranging from basic alphabet and vocabulary to communicating with doctors—all while trying to build up the self-confidence of the students in navigating U.S. culture. The teachers noted that in addition to Latinos who typically made up all of the student rosters, the classes over the years also hosted students from Japan, Czechoslovakia, and elsewhere.[47]

Several other ministries from the churches of DeKalb County indirectly went to Latinos, although the ministries themselves focused on all in need. These ministries included the Council on Aging, Community Action Group, and DeKalb Interfaith Medical Clinic. Churches also orchestrated relief efforts when disasters such as tornadoes hit the area. Such relief efforts applied to anyone in need.[48]

The many individual efforts by the religious community in DeKalb and surrounding counties provided significant ministry outreach and aid to Latinos, but two of the most prominent efforts were Latino-led churches established by preexisting

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[46] Elliot, interview; McFadden, interview. Schools did not have a problem working with a religious institution on the Angel Tree since the ministry only offered aid rather than promoting a specific religion.
[47] Ellis, interview; Observations by author, "ESL Class" (Primera Iglesia Bautista Hispana, September 27, 2011).
[48] Elliot, interview; Kirby, interview.

associations of churches—both Baptist. In 1998 the DeKalb County Baptist Association (DCBA) created Primer Iglesia Bautista Hispana (PIFP) in the city of Fort Payne. It started with a congregation of fifteen people (adults and children) made up of three or four families. The idea was to create a church that could serve the needs of and reach out to the Latinos in Fort Payne, the economic center and largest city of the county, as well as those in Collinsville to the south and Kilpatrick to the southwest. The original pastor of PIFP came from Guatemala, but that arrangement did not last for long. Ed Ables, an experienced missionary, stepped in and served as pastor until the DCBA found a suitable replacement.[49]

During the early period of leadership challenges for PIFP, the DCBA also learned a lesson from the experience of another church in the city of Gadsden in Etowah County, a city about thirty-five miles south of Fort Payne. Cross Point Church decided to plant a church for Latinos in Kilpatrick near Fort Payne, so they bought the land, built the building, and hired a preacher. But not long after the new church began to grow, the minister led a majority within the church to vote to switch to the Church of God denomination. Since the church in Gadsden had given the Kilpatrick church full control and ownership of the land and building, Cross Point had no legal recourse. And as a Baptist church the congregation could make such a decision by simple vote. The choice was final. Obviously such an outcome was not part of the original plan of the parent church, which viewed the Kilpatrick congregation's choice as theft. The DCBA saw these events as an example of what not to do. The organization eventually negotiated for some land from a local business owner and received a manufactured mobile home from

[49] Clement, interview; Ed Ables, interview by author, February 9, 2010.

the Southern Baptist Convention to help in the process. The DCBA retained the ownership of the land and buildings to prevent future problems. They also began to look for a preacher who fit well their doctrinal beliefs.[50]

Given the drama concerning the Kilpatrick church and the uncertain early leadership at PIFP, an observer might expect churches within the DCBA to have shown some concern over the wisdom of continuing with the ministry. In fact, when asked about the churches and their responses, R. Pat McFadden, pastor of FBFP, remembered no one second guessing the project. Instead of backtracking, the DCBA hired a new Latino preacher for PIFP, a move that allowed the church to grow significantly over the next decade. Adele Robayna worked in the oil industry of Venezuela for seventeen years before he felt the call to preach. After attending a Baptist seminary in Venezuela from 1993 to 1997, he pastored in Caracas for another four. From 2000 to 2006 the Alabama Baptist State Convention partnered with the National Baptist Convention of Venezuela (NBCV) to send Baptists from Alabama to that country for missionary work, including church planting, aiding the Venezuelan Women's Missionary Union, and spreading the gospel. At the same time the NBCV sent lay members to help groups such as the Alabama Women's Missionary Union effectively reach out to Latinos as well as pastors to work with churches to the same end. A few of these pastors decided to make Alabama their home and place of ministry. Adele Robayna and his wife, Yadira, chose to stay.

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[50] Adele Robayna, interview by author, October 6, 2011; Clement, interview; Ables, interview, February 9, 2010.

Through this program, Robayna became known to the DCBA, and the association invited him to serve as pastor at PIFP.[51]

Once Robayna came to pastor the church in 2001, it began to grow in both membership and ministries. Attendance at the church slowly increased and reached a stable level where the church had an attendance of 100 each Sunday. On average, these attendees hailed from five countries with the majority originating in Mexico and Guatemala. Robayna used Spanish as the common language for the congregation, but periodically the church held trilingual services where Robayna preached in Spanish while his daughter translated into English and another member translated into a Guatemalan Indian language. The Sunday school classes at PIFP also reflected the diversity with classes in three languages. Since Robayna's start at PIFP, the church and pastor also became a central hub of community for its members. The landowner next door allowed the church to use the adjacent tract as a soccer field, where the church league trained and won three area championships. The same field also served as the location for a church-sponsored international food festival beginning in 2008. The event served as a chance for non-members to visit and for members of the different cultures represented to visit different country-specific tents and sample traditional foods. Outside the church, Robayna's schedule also included several Bible studies as well as a ministry to Latinos in the county jail.[52]

Financially, PIFP also took on more responsibility. The church began its ministry totally dependent on the DCBA for funding with only a small contribution from its

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[51] Robayna, interview; Erin Webster, "Venezuela, Alabama Baptists Celebrate Achievements of Past Six Years," *The Alabama Baptist*, November 24, 2005.
[52] Robayna, interview.

members. After Robayna took over as pastor, the church grew its finances and contributions to the point that the DBCA only supplied the pastor's salary while PIFP took care of all of the bills associated with running the church. The director of missions for the DCBA, Ken Clement, noted that he had spoken with associations in other parts of the country to have some idea how to make the new ministry work. His conclusion was that it was very unusual for a Hispanic church to be completely financially autonomous. Due to a mixture of low wages, irregular work, and money sent to family outside the United States, most Hispanic churches were small and struggling—even in Texas. Thus he said that the challenge for Baptists and other denominations who wanted to create Hispanic ministries was how to do so without creating dependency.[53]

Beginning in 2001, PIFP partnered with FBFP to provide a VBS at the church. Doris Elliot noted that while in the 1990s many Latino children in the area could not speak English, but a decade later most area Latino children were bilingual. As a result about fifty FBFP volunteers, many who did not teach at the VBS held at FBFP due to time constraints or wanting to specifically work with the Latino children, taught and orchestrated the VBS at PIFP. Some volunteers from PIFP also participated. Usually the PIFP event occurred the week after the one at FBFP, and the teachers used the same materials and crafts. About 100 children attended the Latino VBS with very little overlap with those who went to the one at FBFP. Children with permission slips rode vans to the church. Some of the members of FBFP questioned why PIFP never took over the running of its own VBS, but after one experiment with PIFP taking the reins and seeing

[53] Ibid.; Clement, interview.

poor results, the Latino church preferred the experienced team from FBFP to continue to help.[54]

The greatest challenge for PIFP came in melding multiple cultures into one church body. To unite his congregation, Robayna focused his teaching on the gospel and love. He noted that "when you love the people you can understand how they think and feel." Thus love allowed someone to see the perspective of their neighbor and have compassion for them. Robayna also discovered the importance of every person in the congregation having a role in the church. The pastor listed many possible activities for church members, "If you cannot teach, you can cut the yard. If you cannot teach, you can cook. If you cannot teach, you can paint. You can visit other people. You can pray." He held up each of the alternative roles as equal in importance to jobs, such as teaching, that often carried a higher status in the minds of congregations, and he specifically noted the importance of those who could not read or write but accepted the role of prayer. The pastor gave the example of the Guatemalans in the congregation who specialized in lawn care in their daily work and took pride in overseeing that part of church maintenance. With Robayna's instruction and the bonds of participation, the church has not had a major internal struggle for many years.[55]

Robayna also faced a challenge in ministering to a congregation composed of about half legal residents and half illegal immigrants. He discussed how he approached the paradox of the two Christian mandates of ministering to the alien while also calling on people to obey the law of the land. The pastor said that overall he preached to his members that they should "respect the law." From the pulpit he explained the legal place

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[54] Elliot, interview; Robayna, interview.
[55] Robayna, interview.

of illegal aliens as a matter of fact, but he told them that he would not force them to leave. Instead he left it up to them as a matter of choice. In fact, the only times he specifically instructed a person to leave was when he found that someone, typically a man, was supporting a spouse and children in his home country but had been in the U.S. so long that it hurt his family. On these occasions, Robayna told them to go back and that he did not want to see them again because protecting the family took precedence.[56]

Robayna's delicate approach to discussing the topic of illegal immigration revealed the challenges of his position as a pastor of a Latino congregation with half its members living as illegal aliens. He specifically told those members that their legal status put them in the position of being outside the "law of the land" and therefore in conflict with Biblical principle. Nevertheless most of those in the U.S. illegally had the goal of making money and supporting family either in Alabama or in a home country, so the pastor did not press the issue. Robayna chose to let his undocumented members choose their path on the issue of their legal status and instead focus his efforts on ministry and community. This balance allowed the pastor to speak Biblical truth to his congregation without dividing the members over the issue and therefore destroying the ability of PIFP to carry out its mission.

In 2010 the DCBA took another step in ministering to Latinos by planting a church in Kilpatrick. The association rented some land and hired Gabriel Silva as a part-time pastor with the plan to begin paying him full time in a few years. As a bivocational

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[56] Ibid. The Bible verses often cited as calls to minister to aliens are Duteronomy 1:16 and Jeremiah 22:3. The Biblical passage dealing with obedience to national or local law is Romans 13:1-7.

pastor, Silva also worked in construction. That young church quickly developed a regular congregation of twenty to thirty attendees.[57]

Similar to PIFP being created by the DCBA, the Marshall County Baptist Association to the west of DeKalb created Primera Iglesia Bautista Hispana of Albertville (PIA) in 2000. Following a split in the church membership in 2003-2004, the MCBA sought out a new Latino minister and hired Edwin Velez. Velez noted that it took him about four years to get his ministry at PIA fully established and stable. In many ways the church operated similarly to PIFP. Six to seven churches in the association took care of the salary for Velez while PIA funded building operations. The church also operated mostly in Spanish with some English classes for the children and youth. Velez said that they tried to do all Spanish at first but found that it just created confusion for the young members. They were used to working in English all week in school, and then to try to do an hour of school on Sunday in Spanish was too much of a shift. Their Spanish was strong in conversation but not in classwork. Also the church had members from Guatemala who spoke Indian dialects, but they also spoke Spanish well enough to just use that language at church. One area where PIA seemed to differ was its focus on teaching its congregation practical skills for life in the U.S. Velez said that they often had classes for members on how to manage money, and the church's women who were part of the Baptist Women's Missionary Union also worked specifically with Latino women to operate in the U.S. as well as efficiently manage a household. The pastor also noted that people from different countries had differing concepts on how relationships in

[57] Clement, interview; Robayna, interview.

marriage should work. He specifically worked with Latino men and taught Christian principles of relationships with spouses.[58]

The creation and support of PIFP, and the church in Kilpatrick, and PIA revealed the commitment of the DCBA and MCBA churches to reaching out to Latinos. For small churches with limited capacity for individual ministry, supporting the work at the two ministries presented an opportunity to help outreach occur where they could not do so alone. PIFP and PIA helped this outreach work effectively because it provided a Latino-specific location for religious instruction and community. It had the ability to circumvent both the cultural and language barriers that prevented many individual congregations from ministering directly and many Latinos from joining or even visiting those congregations. The downside of the cooperative ministries came in some white churches putting resources into a corporate project but not giving their own congregational members the opportunity to get to know and minister to Latinos. Some churches chose to minister on their own as well, but creating PIFP and PIA had the effect of concentrating much of the Baptist ministry to Latinos into two locations and therefore segregating that ministry. Still, without the two Latino congregations, outreach to Latinos by area churches would have been much more limited as a whole.

The reactions of the religious community of DeKalb County to the presence of Latinos displayed the extent and limits of change in the attitudes of long-term residents concerning race and culture. Most of the pastors had, in their lifetimes, seen the state of Alabama and DeKalb and surrounding counties in particular shift from racism as public policy to a much more inclusive society. In fact, many pastors viewed racism as a

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[58] Edwin Velez, interview by author, October 12, 2011.

generational issue that reduced with time. Pastor McFadden of FBFP noted that all Christians change over time, but often "the heart can only go so far." Where fundamental understandings of the way the world works are concerned, a generation that lived before the change might only accept the new way life to a certain extent while still holding on to some old beliefs—even if they are hidden from sight. For example, another pastor noted that his parents considered themselves "not racist," but like many others in their generation, they had problems with interracial dating. With younger generations such issues were simply not concerns.[59]

Even if people felt negatively towards Latinos, they rarely expressed it directly for concern that they might be labeled racist or hateful. Instead, concerns focused more on tangible negatives that the population came to associate with the Latino community and particularly illegal immigrants—often with the aid of opportunistic politicians. The biggest concern focused on jobs. The average Alabama voter expressed concern that the presence of Latinos in the state directly resulted in jobs going to illegal immigrants rather than citizens. The belief carried the most weight with blue-collar workers who often saw Latinos as direct competition. This claim was widely held and repeated, but it was disproven by experts. Most observers of immigration in both the U.S. and Europe found that rather than taking jobs and displacing workers, immigrants tended to complement existing workers by seeking employment in undesirable manual roles. Also their presence allowed certain sectors such as farming and construction to expand and they served as more customers to local businesses. Another major concern was that illegal immigrants hurt the state by accepting aid and using resources such as food stamps

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[59] R. Pat McFadden, interview; Denny Mashburn (Pastor of Wills Valley Community Church in Fort Payne), interview with the author, August 23, 2011.

without contributing to the system—though the critics never recognized that Latinos paid sales taxes just like everyone else. The Assistant District Attorney of DeKalb County, Bob Johnston, noted that reports of such fraud were false. Since the actions constitute a crime of fraud, he would have seen those cases pass through his office, but he had seen none in the fourteen years he had worked in the position. A small criminal element focused on drugs and gangs, especially in the Kilpatrick area, hurt the image of the entire Latino community for many whites and blacks. Concern even extended to the personal living habits of some in the Latino community. For whites the one-family-per-dwelling standard of their culture clashed with the common multi-family dwellings in the Latino community. While the situation might not be preferred for Latinos, it was necessary for many. Nevertheless, such living arrangements were looked down upon by some whites as unusual and undesirable. Reagan Brown, pastor of First Methodist Fort Payne from 2007 to 2011 and an outspoken advocate for Latinos in the state, noted that in many of these concerns, issues of race and class intertwined to the point of being indistinguishable. For example, some whites looked down on multi-family living arrangements less as a Latino problem but more as lower-class or trashy behavior. Brown also made the point that Latinos with more education and higher skill levels had little trouble integrating more easily into the larger community.[60]

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[60] Francesco D'Amuri and Giovanni Peri, "Immigration and Productive Tasks: Can Immigrant Workers Benefit Native Workers?," *VOX: Research-based Policy Analysis*, October 31, 2010, http://www.voxeu.org/article/how-immigration-can-benefit-native-workers; Michael Greenstone and Adam Looney, "What Immigration Means for U.S. Employment and Wages," *The Brookings Institution*, May 4, 2012, http://www.brookings.edu/blogs/jobs/posts/2012/05/04-jobs-greenstone-looney; David Card, "Is the New Immigration Really so Bad?," *The Economic Journal* 115 (November 2005): F321–F322; Johnston, interview; Parker, interview; Clement, interview; Brown, interview.

These trends in the perceptions of Latinos, especially illegal immigrants, and the reception of those Latinos who fit more easily in the preconceived notions of the long-term residents of DeKalb County, revealed opportunities for distinct segments of the population to move beyond many racial and cultural divides to new levels of community and interaction. In DeKalb County the religious community provided several examples of ways that churches extended a hand of friendship to Latinos. From fully integrating Latinos into the congregations of OLV and SPEC to the varying efforts of individual churches and church associations, congregations discovered that simply getting to know people previously regarded as too different to engage led to a changed understanding of the area's newcomers. Pastor Brown noted that the most inclusive and openly multicultural environments in the county were the schools—particularly those in the Fort Payne area. Children grew up together and bypassed many cultural barriers that their parents might experience.[61] The result of this was seen in the FBFP youth department that maintained a strong Latino presence due to school friendships despite the adult departments of the church having no Latinos except for a handful of visitors over the years. Such relationships among the children made endeavors by the churches worth it in the long view. Twenty years later those children would be the young adults adding their understanding and beliefs of race and culture to the area.

Above all other hindrances to that outreach, spoken language blocked cross-cultural interaction the most. Many white religious leaders simply stated that the inability to communicate prevented many potential ministries. They and their congregations expressed the desire to engage the Latino community but felt that they could not due to

[61] Doris Elliot, interview; Deborah Kennedy, interview; Judith Comer, interview.

the language barrier. For the most part, this sentiment proved true. Few established white churches engaged Latinos directly. Those churches that tried to incorporate Latinos had to develop ways to work around the language barrier. Fort Payne Church of Christ and First Baptist Collinsville developed parallel congregations for Spanish speakers with limited success. OLV and SPEC integrated Latinos directly into their congregations, but to do so they developed bilingual lay leaders who acted as intermediaries between the Spanish-speaking members and the pastor. Those two churches also incorporated services and events conducted in Spanish for their new members.[62]

Despite the language barrier, the efforts of the churches of DeKalb County showed that challenges could be overcome. In the long-term view, the prevalence of English speakers in the Latino community grew as families put down roots and children entered school, grew up, and then had children themselves. Doris Elliot of FBFP recognized this trend over the course of twenty years of outreach to Latinos. With multiple generations English would surpass Spanish in the Latino community—a change that would eventually sidestep the language barrier problem. Ed Ables, interim pastor at PIFP and former missionary, compared the generational shift in language preference to that experienced in Argentina during the 1980s when he served there as a missionary. Following World War II, Argentina developed three separate Baptist groups as Germans, Eastern Europeans, and Russians moved to the country. Churches for each of the groups operated in native languages, but by the third generation the grandchildren of the original immigrants wanted church services in Spanish, the language they lived with daily as

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[62] Kirby, interview; Denny Mashburn, interview by author, August 23, 2011; Comer, interview; Parker, interview; Kennedy, interview.

citizens of Argentina. As these grandchildren grew up, they gained influence in their churches, and by the early 1990s those congregations conducted services in Spanish and provided special Sunday school classes in the native languages of the grandparents. Ables pointed to this scenario as a likely outcome for the northeast Alabama religious community. Other pastors echoed the same conclusion without the historical reference. Judith Comer noted that several of the children in her congregation spoke a Guatemalan Indian language at home, some Spanish to communicate in the Latino community, and then English at school and everywhere else.[63]

The experiences of the religious community in engaging the Latino community showed that they had the ability to reach out and minister to the newcomers despite the language barrier. The various effective outreach activities of the churches, congregations, and individuals carried a common theme that led to success. They all extended the hand of welcome. More than a single word or action, the outreach that allowed Latinos and whites to interact in religious institutions carried the idea of welcome—the sentiment of embracing newcomers despite differences. Flava Parker of SPEC noted that in the home countries of most Latinos, the concept of welcoming others pervaded the cultures. In her home country of Honduras, guests were invited into homes and offered coffee and bread as a custom.[64] Therefore when Latinos came to the U.S. with certain expectations of how they would welcome a stranger and then experienced a culture where people often remained standoffish until they have a chance to get to know someone, the newcomers felt unwelcome.

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[63] Elliot, interview; McFadden, interview; Ed Ables, interview by author, January 23, 2009; Comer, interview.
[64] Parker, interview.

In northeast Alabama, people commonly understood that standoffish nature and assumed that it took two generations for newcomers of any culture to fully integrate. The churches that broke through these assumptions found ways to offer welcome so that Latinos felt they were being received genuinely and openly. Fort Payne Church of Christ successfully developed a parallel congregation for Spanish speakers and increased attendance in the second congregation through limited road-side advertising in Spanish and the personal relationships of those who came. They created an atmosphere of welcome by keeping the relationship between the two congregations simple and open so that the newcomers felt fully part of the church and welcome at any language service or church function. At FBFP they had the most success in their youth department where Latino youths consistently attended for years. The youth based their decisions to attend on personal relationships they had with the white church youth at school. Then, once they visited the church, the leadership and congregation made the Latino youth feel part of the group.[65]

The two biggest success stories of welcome came in the Catholic and Episcopal churches, OLV and SPEC. OLV faced a unique challenge since most Latinos claimed Catholicism in their faith. Thus a much larger segment of the Latinos in DeKalb County saw OLV as the natural religious institution for them to attend. After Deborah Kennedy came to OLV, she led the congregation to consciously welcome Latinos to the church. That decision created awkward meetings of cultures at first, but slowly and organically OLV developed a merged congregation. After a couple of years, some of the whites in the church even began participating in the church's Guadalupe celebration around

[65] Kirby, interview; McFadden, interview.

Christmas. During Kennedy's time at OLV, several religious leaders in the area asked her how they could help their white congregations learn to want to minister to the Latino population. In response Kennedy explained to them how her congregation went about creating a welcoming atmosphere for the newcomers.[66]

SPEC also developed a blended congregation on a much smaller scale. Judith Comer made the initial contact with the Guatemalan family and they began to come to the church. Soon afterward, the pastor put out a Spanish sign on the road near the church welcoming Spanish speakers to SPEC. From this small advertisement another family began to come, and Latinos soon made up approximately a fifth of the small church's congregation. Comer came from a background of work in racial reconciliation between blacks and whites. As a result she actively worked with the congregation to welcome the newcomers and made executive decisions to help the process as well. Comer noted that the preexisting congregation members did not mind the new Latino members, but the long-term members resisted the change that the new members brought to the way SPEC went about having church. Not long after the Latinos began to attend the church, Comer tried to introduce more fast-tempo music as well as a posada, or celebration of the journey of Mary and Joseph, at Christmas. Long-time members resisted because the experiments did not fit with their traditions of conducting church. Rather than have a posada at the church in Fort Payne, Comer traveled with the Latinos to Birmingham to a large posada there. Over time however, the Latinos integrated and began to participate fully in the congregation with a blending of traditions. At one point, three of the Latino children served as church acolytes. Also, some of the adult Latinos who enjoyed cooking

[66] Kennedy, interview.

often helped in the kitchen to prepare for church dinners. Comer emphasized the importance of helping the newcomers feel comfortable or welcome enough to participate in these ways. It made them feel good to "have their gifts accepted." In fact, Comer noted that many of the Latinos felt excited to be part of a community with whites and be fully accepted.[67]

This concept of welcome served as the key to all the interactions of the religious community of DeKalb County with Latinos both in the time of the migrants and with the more recent permanent residents. In all the interactions, approaching the newcomers as equals and with a willingness to try to connect led to the greatest successes in crossing the linguistic and cultural barriers. Those ministries by the religious community helped the area move past some of its heritage of racial animosity and led to much more interaction between cultures than would have existed at just work and school. Unfortunately area blacks were not part of that process due to long-standing area social barriers, traditions of whites and blacks attending separate churches, and the experience in missions discussed in chapter one. But the changes in church outreach offered some hope that blacks would be included in future interconnections as barriers broke down with each passing generation.

The ministry in northeast Alabama served as an example of the type of outreach that likely occurred in many parts of the state and the South as Latino immigrants arrived and created lives in rural areas. But the large cities of the South received Latinos as well, and their religious communities responded similarly to that discussed above but on a

[67] Comer, interview.

much larger scale. Birmingham, Alabama, serves as a city where the religious community chose to minister to the newcomers and move past some of its own heritage.

Chapter Three

The Key of Leadership

Though it was not a receiving city for the initial influx of Latinos in Alabama, Birmingham later served as the state's leading hub of growth and culture for the recent arrivals. Economics and personal networks drew Latinos to the largest city in Alabama just as it first drew them to the smaller rural towns. As new Latino residents found work, created lives, and developed roots in Birmingham, they also became part of the religious tapestry of the city. Unlike the rural areas of Alabama, Birmingham had a number of robust Catholic parishes to serve the overwhelmingly Catholic Latino population. But as in the rest of the state, the vast majority of churches in the city were Protestant with most of those being evangelical. Thus a strongly religious ethnic group settled into a strongly religious city, but the denominational preferences of the two were opposite. The Catholic Diocese responded to the demographic change similar to the way Catholics had responded in other parts of the South. Change and accommodation was slow at first, but adaptation occurred; and leaders with skills in Spanish were put in place to see to the needs of those Latinos seeking to be part of local parishes. (The Catholic response is detailed in chapter four.) For the Protestant churches, however, the presence of the Latino population presented a very different challenge. The city had few Catholic residents, so much of the traditional outreach experience of the local churches focused on a population already predisposed to Protestantism. As noted in chapter one, the churches had to call on their mission traditions and experience in reaching out to the new Latino

population, and many responded by creating ministries specifically for those efforts and partnering with Latino pastors to serve the new congregations.[1]

In creating the Hispanic ministries at the various churches in the Birmingham area, religious leaders, both white and Latino, proved critical to the process. They provided the impetus, direction, wisdom, energy, organization, resources, and networking necessary to bring the ministries to life. Each of those factors was needed in varying degrees due to the differences in each individual church as well as differences between leaders. Within ministries many parts had to work together to effectively reach out to the local community. Lay leaders had to help organize and give their time and energy, facilities had to be scheduled and set aside, finances had to be arranged, and the congregation had to participate. Still the pastors were the essential element to make the overall endeavor work. The best analogy for such ministry is a lock in a door. A lock is designed to turn and has a number of parts including pins, springs, a cylinder, and a bolt. But without the proper key, the lock will not function. The key lines up all of the pins correctly and makes the assembly turn. In the Latino ministries of Birmingham, the pastors served as the necessary keys to open ministry doors. In doing so they began to move past some of the old stereotypes and barriers of a city with a dark racial past while also helping promote Birmingham church diversity. These efforts followed similar trends seen in other U.S. cities with much longer histories of a Latino presence.

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[1] Jefferson County, comprised largely of the city of Birmingham and its suburbs, had an overall population of 671,324 in 1980 and grew to 658,466 by 2010. In 1980 the demographic breakdown recorded in the census was 66 percent white, 33 percent black, and less than one percent Latino. By 2010 the Jefferson County demographics were 53 percent white, 41 percent black, and nearly 4 percent Latino. The change was due to white flight primarily to Shelby County to the south which saw its white population jump by almost 100,000 from 1990 to 2010. See the U.S. Census 1980-2010.

The creation of these ministries by many churches of the city and surrounding area went against the tradition of generally segregated religion. Supporting and promoting diversity placed the church leaders, both white and Latino, in stark contrast to the past leaders in Alabama and the South who maintained the racial status quo. Blacks generally continued to remain segregated in religion from every other race or ethnicity—a position that likely would require another generation of children with no memory of the civil rights era or its aftermath to reach leadership age before barriers might diminish. But efforts between the other groups began to move Birmingham away from its segregated history to some extent. Even though societal pressures periodically arose in the form of negative media and conservative politicians to create a stigma concerning Latinos (as will be discussed in chapter five), many leaders and churches persisted in developing ministries and embracing moderate diversity. The extent of this cooperation and merging had limits in the generation beginning the process. Concerns about cultural loss, mostly on the part of whites, and language barriers prevented fully mixed congregations at the beginning. Nevertheless, the leaders showed a strong tendency to move their churches in a progressive direction based on the missions directive discussed in chapter one. In doing so they refused to accept the status quo and more closely aligned with the religious dissenters of the South's past.

During the civil rights era of the 1950s and 1960s the white religious leaders of the South largely resisted integration or at least remained silent on the issue. Even if the leaders privately wanted to support the civil rights movement, doing so risked the backlash of the community and loss of their position. The prevailing belief of white southerners at the time was against integration with that sensibility whipped into fear and

anger by segregationist politicians, promoters, and some religious leaders. At the height of massive resistance, even a moderate position taken by a pastor likely led to dismissal and personal threats from the community if not their own congregation. Still, despite the risks, some religious leaders chose to speak as their conscience dictated with almost all feeling the negative effects directly in their professional and personal lives.[2]

An even stronger voice against segregation came from Christian missionaries. Among Baptists, those who were charged with and supported in the task of spreading the gospel on the religious front lines in both the U.S. and foreign lands consistently spoke against segregation and racism from the 1940s to the 1960s. Within the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC), progressive leaders first focused on addressing racism as a belief outside God's will. As the civil rights movement progressed, they spoke specifically against segregation since that practice prevented the races from working together. Likewise the Women's Missionary Union took up the call in an understated way by urging members to not neglect any neighborhood children when holding vacation Bible schools. Ultimately the beliefs of the racially progressive Southern Baptists became the commonly held tenants of most in the denomination. The change took decades, with conservatives in the convention generally accepting the new beliefs by the 1980s. Even then the leaders of the Southern Baptists avoided stepping into debates on social concerns and preferred limited government intervention on issues of race. Overall, however, the

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[2] Michael B. Friedland, *Lift up Your Voice Like a Trumpet: White Clergy and the Civil Rights and Antiwar Movements, 1954-1973* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: The University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 20–2, 29–32, 46–8; Numan V. Bartley, *The Rise of Massive Resistance: Race and Politics in the South During the 1950s* (Baton Rouge, La.: Louisiana State University Press, 1969), 295–300, 304–5; S. Jonathan Bass, *Blessed Are the Peacemakers: Martin Luther King Jr., Eight White Religious Leaders, and the "Letter from Birminghma Jail"* (Baton Rouge, La.: Louisiana State University Press, 2001), 224–26.

mindset of Southern Baptists made a long journey from the racial vitriol at the height of the civil rights era to an official apology by the SBC in 1995 for the unchristian racial attitudes of many Southern Baptists in the past. Thanks belonged to progressives, chief among them missionary leaders, who pushed their fellow Christians to change.[3] This process exemplified that of most southern Christians though not all followed the same path.

From the late 1980s to the early 2010s many of the church leaders of Alabama and Birmingham in particular learned from the lessons of their predecessors during the civil rights era and responded to the changing demographics of the state in a positive way. In fact, their words and actions more closely aligned them with the dissenters of that period—the moderates and progressives. Rather than settle for continuation of segregation by tradition, some leaders deliberately applied the missions charge to their congregations and started ministries to reach out to communities in Birmingham unlike themselves. Several factors allowed this trend to occur: the growing focus on both domestic and international missions as discussed in chapter one, the increasing acceptance of minority cultures through exposure on television and the internet, and white congregations being generally more receptive to having members of other ethnicities despite societal negativity. Without moderation of the beliefs of the congregations concerning integration, the creation of Latino ministries would have been much more difficult if not impossible. But churches, especially those of significant size, found a period where the right mix of elements allowed new ministries.

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[3] Alan Scot Willis, *All According to God's Plan: Southern Baptist Missions and Race, 1945-1970* (Lexington, Ky.: The University Press of Kentucky, 2005), 149–53, 195–200; "Resolution On Racial Reconciliation On The 150th Anniversary Of The Southern Baptist Convention," June 1995, www.sbc.net/resolutions/amResolution.asp?ID=899.

Such efforts typically appeared initially at large churches with the resources and size to incorporate a new ethnic community without risk to the established group. Smaller congregations tended to see such moves as too big a commitment or a threat. The creation of the Latino ministries helped Birmingham fit in the national trend of large-church diversity growth. The proportion of churches in the U.S. with 20 percent or more minority attendance stayed the same for much of the 2000s. About 7.5 percent of churches could claim that distinction. But with high attendance numbers of more than 1,000, large churches saw significant growth. From 1998 through 2007 large congregations with 20 percent or more minority presence grew from 6 percent of all churches of that size to 25 percent.[4] Many of the ministries in Birmingham were created at some of the largest churches in the city—most of which had an attendance on Sunday of well over 1,000. Birmingham was, however, different from other cities with much longer histories of Latino presence. Where cities like San Antonio and Los Angeles had a Latino presence stretching back many generations, Birmingham had a first and a young second generation Latino population. Thus Latinos at Protestant churches in the city typically went to a separate worship service with a separate pastor to hear a message and music in Spanish. Also, the Latino proportion of those churches stayed well under 20 percent with attendance reaching 100-150 for most of the large congregations. Nevertheless, the churches did fit the trajectory of the trend. Most of the large white congregations in the Birmingham area made some effort of outreach to Latinos and other ethnic communities.

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[4] Emerson, Michael O., "Michael O. Emerson: Cracks in the Christian Color Wall," *Call & Response*, February 1, 2010, http://www.faithandleadership.com/blog/02-01-2010/michael-o-emerson-cracks-the-christian-color-wall; David Vann Biema,, "Can Megachurches Bridge the Racial Divide?," *Time*, January 11, 2010.

For the white pastors considering the addition of a ministry to Latinos in the 1990s and early 2000s, there were some literary resources available to help develop understanding of Latino culture as well as challenges churches might face in ministering to a group with different traditions and expectations. Such ministry resource books were common among Christian church leadership and particularly evangelical Protestants. Their topics ranged widely from building effective leadership to leading worship to guidance on specific events such as leading a mission trip abroad. The ideas presented in such ministry aids had a way of becoming part of the collective knowledge of church leadership through one-on-one discussion among peers or corporately at conferences or denominational meetings. As pastors and other leaders engaged their peers, knowledge spread. Thus even if none of the pastors in Birmingham read a particular work, the knowledge still permeated the Christian community leadership collectively to some extent. And while having a conversation or hearing a lecture would not impart all of the detail that comes from reading a book, it could pass on an understanding of the need for outreach to Latinos as well as a general grasp of the challenges and possible solutions. For the pastor seeking knowledge from a peer with more experience in a subject such as ministry to Latinos, that information would become a kernel of understanding as they crafted their own ministry.

In 1987 Zondervan, a major publisher of Bibles as well as other Christian literature, published *Hispanic Ministry in North America* by Alex D. Montoya as part of the company's "Ministry Resources Library" line of books. Publishers such as Zondervan made their materials widely available either through direct sales to churches or through Christian book stores. Much of Montoya's book served as a how-to manual

detailing the challenges and possibilities in structuring a ministry to Latinos. It discussed the specifics of developing a ministry including separate services versus bilingual services, music styles, and administration. But more importantly Montoya, as a Latino pastor, sought to explain the culture and theology of Latinos to pastors who might want to begin a ministry to that population.[5]

The author began with a chapter called "The Hispanic Community" in which he detailed the aspects of Latino culture generally with acknowledgement of the great diversity within the larger community. Montoya first addressed the topic of language. For white pastors this would have been the key point to understand before any other. Although a person new to the subject might assume that immigrants came to the U.S. and either learned English or not, Montoya explained the language issue as a much more complex concept. The author viewed language ability as a range spanning from Spanish speaking with no English skills to English proficient and minimal Spanish skills. A variety of proficiency levels existed between those two extremes based on education and employment as well as whether that person's family had been in the U.S. more than one generation.[6]

Montoya went on to explain several aspects of Latino culture that would prove useful to someone new to such ministry. First he noted the general economic and educational condition of many Latinos, explaining that a pastor typically ministered to the poorer side of society with little education rather than professionals. The importance of family above all else, the concept of time known as *Mañana*, the cultural machismo,

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[5] Alex D. Montoya, *Hispanic Ministry in North America* (Grand Rapids, Mi.: Zondervan Publishing House, 1987), 10, 79, 135.
[6] Ibid., 11–13.

respect for elders, and the importance of emotion in life and religion all came up as additional important aspects of Latino culture. The author also took time to explain aspects of evangelism that pastors would find different among Latinos. He started with the fact that most Latinos identify as Catholics but noted that in his experience, obviously as a Protestant minister, the majority only maintained their Catholicism out of cultural deference. The author also noted the maternal nature of faith for many Latinos, with women doing most of the religious work both in church ministry and the family.[7]

Another book on ministry to Latinos came in 1993 when Manuel Ortiz, a Latino pastor from Chicago as well as a professor at Westminster Theological Seminary, published *The Hispanic Challenge: Opportunities Confronting the Church* through Intervarsity Press, a peer company to Zondervan. Ortiz examined the relationship of Latinos to both Catholic and Protestant churches and gave religious leaders perspective based on his experience and discussions with other ministers. In the last third of the book Ortiz discussed the development of religious leaders among second and third generation Latinos along with the complexities of language and culture that accompanied that development. Overall he and other pastors identified language as the key hurdle in creating second generation leaders. The successive generations could often function in Spanish, but it was not their preferred language: English was. As a result, second and third generation Latinos often left their original church to join with large churches typically pastored by whites. Bilingual church operations helped the second generation maintain its own identity. Second generation leaders also need bilingual skills to maintain the connection to the first generation and preserve the community. One pastor

[7] Ibid., 13–20, 39.

from San Antonio argued that the second and third generation Latinos did not have sufficient role models for maintaining their Latino heritage while fitting into the broader culture. Too often Protestant Latino ministries focused exclusively on the first generation, leaving the successive generations to lose their heritage as they assimilated.[8]

These points addressed by Montoya and Ortiz were all concepts that the white pastors, like those in Birmingham, wanting to start Latino ministries had to learn or come to understand by one method or another. Some might have sought written pastoral resources, but the majority likely learned through peer discussions of outreach ministry concepts as well as first-hand experience through partnering with a Latino pastor and having Latinos in their church. While each ministry had its own way of accomplishing the goal of outreach, most exhibited four similar qualities including strong pastoral leadership, full partnership of white and Latino congregations, use of the "heart language" of Spanish while accommodating bilingual members, and the way the pastors approached both doctrine and tradition.

One key to white churches beginning Hispanic ministries was the leadership of the church's main pastor or pastor in charge of missions. A religious leader put it best when he said that pastors of any ethnicity serve as "permission givers" to their congregations. In the case of Latino ministries, a missionary to the Birmingham area stated plainly that, "It really depends on the pastor in the pulpit." If the pastor was pro-Latino, then the church ministered to the Latino population. If the pastor was anti-Latino or simply not concerned with that community as an area of ministry, the congregation

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[8] Manuel Ortiz, *The Hispanic Challenge: Opportunities Confronting the Church* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 130–39.

typically followed suit.[9] Congregations looked to their pastors to provide leadership on whether certain actions, including different types of ministry, were permissible and acceptable in their faith. Pastors influenced their congregations in almost every area of life including marriage, child rearing, finances, and personal morality. But it is important to remember that pastors also affected the opinions of their church members in less concrete areas including how accepting they should be of people different from themselves. For many congregation members such grey areas might prove tricky. In their daily lives they might hear a barrage of negative news or political rhetoric coming from seemingly reputable sources painting Latinos, especially undocumented immigrants, as undesirable. Churchgoers often looked to their pastor to put such issues in perspective on Sunday by affirming or denouncing the ideas. In the case of Latinos a few words from the pastor about loving a neighbor and ministering to those in need regardless of their situation would go a long way towards reducing fear and resentment. Even if the congregation was not looking for perspective, a pastor might choose to address a current topic in biblical perspective. Ministers either spoke directly on the subject from the pulpit or showed their congregation what they thought by engaging with people of other ethnicities personally. In the long-term the pastor might also choose to lead by example in ministries such as starting or partnering with a program for Hispanics at the church.

Several of the pastors, both white and Latino, also noted that a key aspect of white pastors' leadership was the root mindset with which they went about their outreach to Latinos. Gary Fenton, pastor of Dawson Baptist Church, which had one of the city's oldest Latino ministries, believed that the pastor and church had to approach such a

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[9] Kevin Moore, interview by author, February 27, 2012; Dean Self, interview by author, February 27, 2012.

ministry with an attitude other than sympathy or pity. He found that, "Pity builds a wall." If a pastor and church began reaching out to Latinos by feeling sorry, the church body effectively diminished the newcomers rather than saw them as equals. That pity hurt the ministry from the beginning. Instead, outreach needed to be ministry "with" rather than a ministry "to" another people. Pastor Fenton noted that, "Many mission activities fail because we talk down to people." A church could not create an effective partnership by saying, "We know what's best for you even though we've never been where you are." Similarly churches failed when they said, "We want you to change to be like us." This was the reason that Fenton and Dawson partnered with a Latino minister, Byron Mosquera. Fenton found that having Mosquera as the leader of the ministry allowed the church to incorporate people with different language and culture without asking them to change dramatically to fit in the overall structure.[10]

Fenton's views on Latino ministry revealed his beliefs about the ministry mixed with more than two decades of practical experience in such work. Theologically the work was missions. It was the work of outreach to spread the gospel and bring new Christians into the fold as equals. But Fenton had seen other attempts not work due to incorrect motivations that negatively affected the relationship of white and Latino groups within the church. In his view only a spirit of full partnership of equals would work, while an attitude of pity or even viewing the culture or worship style of the newcomers as incorrect would choke off any chance at healthy relationships. For a ministry to work between the blended congregations, that harmony had to be modeled by the church leadership—in this case the close partnership between Fenton and Mosquera. Their

[10] Gary Fenton, interview by author, April 16, 2012.

understanding of mutual respect and common goals directly influenced the attitudes and actions of the congregation, which looked to them for direction. Few church leaders articulated their beliefs about blended congregations as succinctly as Fenton, but the actions and decisions of those leaders concerning ministry and partnerships revealed very similar convictions.

Cary Hanks, a former missionary and active church planter and ministry facilitator, agreed with Fenton and summed up the relationship of white and Latino congregations with, "Paternalism kills mission outreach." As a missionary Hanks experienced this firsthand in Ecuador. During the 1980s U.S. churches typically planted churches through the expensive process of buying land and building the building. But nationals never had ownership in the process. In the mid-1990s the church-planting model changed to more equal partnership with nationals in the process. Hanks found that the same principle applied in the partnerships of white and Latino congregations in Alabama, except on a much more intimate level since they also shared space. In his work with congregations he found that successful partnerships required white congregations to not view adjoined Latino congregations as stepchildren.[11] Instead they had to partner fully and in doing so begin to think differently about how they did ministry and improve their flexibility.

Part of that adaptation came in dealing with language. As noted by Montoya and Ortiz, language trumped all other issues as a core element to deal with correctly in a ministry. Within each Birmingham Latino ministry a core principle developed—the concept of a "heart language." The origin of the actual phrase is unclear and seemingly a

[11] Carry Hanks, interview by author, April 2, 2012.

recent development in the larger Christian community of the United States, but the overall idea was pervasive in Christian missions. Essentially Christians wanted each language group to hear and read the gospel in their native language so that they understood completely. For much of Christian history this meant sending missionaries to foreign lands to learn the local language, preach, and possibly translate the Bible into that language. Since the 1940s the largest effort of Bible translation came through the Wycliffe Bible Translators, which funded translation missionaries in many lesser-known languages. This organization received donations from Christians all over the world, and in 1996 took in over ninety-five million dollars to support its efforts.[12] Such a number revealed the importance Christians placed on the work of the group. The more recent heart language term applied to the same concept of spreading the gospel in a native tongue. In individual churches with ministries for various ethnic groups, the term came to mean that those smaller congregations used their own language that worked best to carry out ministry.

The leaders of the various ministries to Latinos in Birmingham took a very functional approach to language. Obviously Spanish was essential for the first generation immigrants, so the pastors conducted much of the ministry in Spanish. Plus more new first-generation immigrants arrived all the time, keeping the need for Spanish as the primary language. But Spanish was needed less and less for subsequent generations as

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[12] William Lawrence Svelmoe, *A New Vision for Missions: William Cameron Townsend, the Wycliffe Bible Translators, and the Culture of Early Evangelical Faith Missions, 1896-1945* (Tuscaloosa, Ala.: The University of Alabama Press, 2008), 315–17; The push to make the gospel available to all in all languages primarily came from the great commission in Matthew 28:16-20 when Jesus tells his disciples to take the gospel to all nations. For some Christians Bible translation also connected to prophecy of end times when in Matthew 24:14 Jesus said that the end would arrive once the gospel was delivered to the entire world.

they grew up in Alabama and adopted the dominate culture and language. Thus most ministries had at least some bilingual elements to accommodate all attendees. Ministers took the approach of simply doing what worked best for their situation. The choice to use Spanish primarily was easy and practical, but churches also included bilingual options in Sunday school, youth programs, and worship to avoid alienating the younger generations. For Latino ministries partnered with large churches, the bilingual offerings came easily as Latino children could simply go to Sunday school with the children of the main congregation in English and then attend the worship service with their parents in Spanish.[13] This arrangement was a benefit of the full partnerships discussed above. Attendees could easily move between ministries of the church just as easily as some members might switch Sunday school classes to follow a teacher they found engaging.

The deeper reasoning for heart language ministry was best expressed by Brad Taylor and the leadership at Briarwood Presbyterian Church. That church specifically based its ethnic ministry philosophy on the Bible passage in Acts 2 and the description of Pentecost, when the apostles were filled with the Holy Spirit and began speaking in tongues so that people from different ethnic groups were able to understand. With the same intent pastors wanted to create ministries so that people of various ethnicities would have the opportunity to hear the gospel in the language they found most comfortable. Thus Briarwood first began a Korean ministry in 1998 with a Korean minister. Then in 2000 the church also created its Hispanic ministry as well as a Japanese ministry with each conducted in their heart languages. The thought process for the creation of the ministries was that the church already sent more than two hundred missionaries around

[13] Byron Mosquera, interview by author, April 13, 2012; Jorge Camacho, interview by author, April 10, 2012; Carlos Gomez, interview by author, March 1, 2012.

the world working in the local language. For immigrants to the U.S., the same type of ministry was needed to be effective. Brad Taylor compared it to Americans moving to Germany long-term and looking for an English-speaking congregation where they would feel at home.[14] Although not expressed in the same way, other churches took the same approach to their ministry. They understood that the outreach was most effective when presented in Spanish, the dominate language for most Latinos, but adapted as language needs changed.

Along with partnership and language, leaders also showed similarities in how they approached doctrine and tradition. This tendency was true overall but varied with each preacher. On doctrine most preachers followed the denominational norms as was expected in their position. Some were theologically trained for their specific denominations, so it came naturally in those situations. Often, however, denominations had norms of tradition as well as doctrine. On these points of tradition, some Latino pastors chose to follow such practices while most did not. But as in dealing with language, most pastors took a 'whatever works' approach to tradition as long as they felt activities and worship were within biblical bounds.[15] Typically Latino pastors worked with a population of Christians with little or no doctrinal education who desired a religious experience similar to that in their home country. Often the style leaned toward what Christians in the U.S. considered charismatic. Thus the Latino congregations, unlike some of their white partners, tended to have a relaxed atmosphere that invited energetic worship and warm expressions of friendship.

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[14] Brad Taylor, interview by author, February 22, 2012.
[15] Self, interview; Camacho, interview; Harry Harper, interview by author, March 14, 2012; Pablo Moscoso, interview by author, March 8, 2012.

While traditions were quite flexible, doctrine proved a challenge for Latino pastors in certain situations. In Central and South America as well as Mexico, religious divisions were clear. Generally people in those regions viewed Christian religion as split between Catholics and evangelicals. They typically used the terms *Católico* or *Evangélico* to describe someone in regards to their faith. Catholics generally followed the religious dictates of Roman Catholicism with some openness to the incorporation of the traditions of a particular country or locality.[16] Evangelicals, however, carried much more complexity as a group since the term, in those regions, encompassed all non-Catholic Christians including Pentecostals, Baptists, Methodists, Presbyterians, and many others. Differences between Protestant groups might matter to some, but in the larger Latino culture the divisions mattered very little.

This understanding of Catholics and evangelicals moved with Latinos who immigrated to the United States and affected their choices in churches as well as the way that they conducted church. Catholics made up the vast majority of immigrants to Birmingham, and they had a fairly simple set of choices about which parish to call home. Evangelical Latino immigrants similarly sought out nearby Spanish evangelical groups with little regard for the denomination that the group might be connected to. If a white evangelical American family moved between cities in the U.S., the typical process once settled in the new location was to visit churches, with a main focus on those within their own denomination. Some might take the opportunity to switch denominations, but most stayed in the same. Proximity to home was a factor, but families also put great emphasis on style of worship, strength of the children's or youth programs, recreational facilities,

[16] Self, interview; Eduardo Torres, interview by author, March 13, 2012.

and missions programs. Unlike U.S. evangelicals who typically looked for churches through lenses tinted by denominational or nondenominational doctrine and traditions, the choice for Latinos had more to do with personal network, proximity, and whether they liked the pastor and members. Latino families cared about such things as youth programs, and Protestant Latino pastors focused on all of those aspects. But with more limited choices in Latino congregations, families typically focused on more basic considerations to guide their decision. Latino pastors, as a group, generally accommodated that mindset and often incorporated elements of worship with broad appeal that leaned much more toward the charismatic than the churches that they partnered with. Overall this fit the style of evangelical worship most common in Latin America.

The Protestant pastors to Latinos in Birmingham faced a challenge in the religious demographics of their target population. The Pew Research center determined the religious preferences for U.S. Latinos. In a 2012 survey the overall Latino population of the United States was 62 percent Catholic, 19 percent Protestant, and 14 percent unaffiliated. For first-generation immigrants the numbers were 69 percent Catholic, 16 percent Protestant, and 9 percent unaffiliated. But Birmingham, with approximately 75 percent first-generation immigrants according to pastor estimates, had a higher ratio of Catholics. In 2010 the U.S. Census counted 48,530 Latinos in the Birmingham metro area. Observers noted that the number was more accurate than the previous census due to new methods added to the counting process. Nevertheless, the count could not include the shadow population of undocumented immigrants living in the area and unwilling to deal with government agencies when not absolutely necessary. According to the

estimates of pastors and others familiar with the Latino community, the actual number was likely 25-50 percent more than official estimates. Taking the more conservative range, a rough estimate of approximately 75,000 Latinos would be appropriate for the Birmingham metro area. Given that number and the estimate of 75 percent first-generation immigrants, the Latino population of the city and surrounding areas was made up of a little more than 50,000 Catholics; 12,000 Protestants; and 7,000 unaffiliated.[17]

Thus if the Protestant ministers only focused on working with Latinos identifying themselves as evangelical, their target was small in comparison to the overall Latino population. As a result, the evangelical ministers regularly worked with Catholic Latinos who might be open to new religious experiences. Dean Self, a former international missionary in Bolivia and missionary to Latinos in Alabama, noted that people are particularly open to changing their preconceptions and beliefs three times in life: at the birth of a child because the parents want the best for them, at the death of someone close forcing survivors to contemplate the afterlife, and when a move makes someone start over again in a new place. It was the third instance that fit the lives of most Latinos in Alabama. Also, most Protestant ministers to Latinos believed that the majority of the Catholic Latinos they encountered had only a nominal connection to a local parish for sacraments or events once or twice a year. They had very little church experience and no

[17] This calculation is rough at best due to several steps being based on estimates. Changes to the total Latinos in Birmingham and the proportion of first-generation immigrants both would strongly affect the final numbers. It is really best to take the estimates as a guide to the general size and distribution of Latino faith preferences. The final numbers do not add up to 75,000 because the Pew survey had a few percent that did not respond or chose not to answer questions on religious affiliation.; "When Labels Don't Fit: Hispanics and Thier Views of Identity" (Pew Research Center, 2012), 35–6, http://www.pewhispanic.org/files/2012/04/PHC-Hispanic-Identity.pdf; Val Walton, "2010 Census: Hispanic Residents up 161% in Birmingham Area," *The Birmingham News*, February 11, 2011.

doctrinal training. Thus the connection of many Catholics to Catholicism, in the view of the Protestant ministers, was one of family tradition and culture.[18]

The claim that many Catholic Latinos were on the verge of becoming evangelical seems to have limited validity based on the slow growth of evangelical Latino congregations. The larger Protestant Latino ministries drew about 150 attendees weekly at their peak. With a large pool of willing converts, an observer would expect that number to rise over time, but most ministries remained the same or struggled to maintain numbers.

Protestant Latino pastors faced a challenging task since the larger community they served preferred Catholicism. All of the pastors recognized their disadvantage in this area but persisted in outreach to all Latinos. When working with individuals and families from a Catholic background, Protestant Latino ministers generally agreed that the best approach was to not enter into the Catholic versus evangelical debate. The first challenge was to get Catholic newcomers to visit the church. In the Latino community the most effective means was simply a personal invitation from the pastor or a congregation member. Ministers noted that this process worked more easily than with whites in the U.S. Where Anglos might feel threatened by an invitation to church, Latinos often welcomed the opportunity because of their greater desire for community with friends. In their home countries a natural part of daily life was interaction with friends and neighbors. In the U.S. they had fewer daily opportunities for interaction. But church was a great way to be social. Thus Latinos were responsive to invitations.[19]

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[18] Self, interview; Gomez, interview.
[19] Ibid.

But to delve into Biblical topics, pastors necessarily touched on theology different from that taught to Catholic Latinos. Two of the concepts that most challenged beliefs were salvation by grace alone and reduced significance of the Virgin Mary. Harry Harper, former international missionary to Ecuador and missions pastor at Hunter Street Baptist Church, noted that much of the concept of salvation for many Latinos was based on works—that their salvation in the afterlife depended on what they did in this life. In contrast to that belief, the evangelical ministers regularly taught that salvation came only through acceptance of Jesus as their Lord and savior. That is, salvation was something given and accepted but not earned. They felt it was important to address that issue with Catholics since it was foundational to the ministers' conception of faith. But pastors also stressed that their goal was not to shame or attack people for their Catholicism. They wanted to make the topic a discussion because they knew that if a person was going to become evangelical, it might take a long time due to Catholicism being a core part of Latino cultural and family identity.[20]

Outreach to Catholic Latinos was one of the topics covered by Montoya in *Hispanic Ministry in North America*. He offered several suggestions for ways to effectively evangelize despite the inherent challenges. The author believed that, in 1987, those Latinos breaking away from the Catholic Church to attend Protestant churches were in a very receptive position. With such seekers, the best gospel preaching was clear and biblically focused. Outside of sermons, Montoya found that it was best to use the unique social qualities of Latino culture to aid evangelism. With the closely connected communities of Latinos it was important to focus on "friendship evangelism" or

[20] Ibid.; Self, interview; Torres, interview; Camacho, interview.

evangelism via personal networks. In his own church 90 percent of visitors came as the guest of someone else. Similarly, Montoya stressed the importance of evangelism among Latino youth. He noted that many traditional programs such as vacation Bible school were particularly effective for Latinos, but bus ministries providing rides to church events also helped a great deal since they allowed children to attend when parents were not available. Film evangelism also provided opportunities for spreading the gospel since many Latinos were willing to go see a film when they were not inclined to go to church. Montoya found that one of his church's biggest successes had been holding film nights for the community. His congregation had invested significant money into better equipment to show the films. Life events also presented opportunities for evangelism. Montoya specifically pointed to weddings, funerals, and baptisms, all of which held special significance among Latinos and drew in people who might not typically attend church.[21] Each event was an opportunity for outreach. The Protestant Latino ministries of Birmingham took a similar approach to ministry to Catholics by focusing on social aspects initially and dealing with doctrinal topics as they developed relationships.

Another doctrinal point the Protestant pastors addressed was the strong connection of many Latinos to the Virgin Mary and particularly the Virgin of Guadalupe—the incarnation of the Virgin Mary celebrated in Mexico as well as Central and South America. For many Latino Catholics from Mexico and Latin America, the veneration of the Virgin Mary held incredible significance, even rivaling that of Christ. Most pastors found it best to not ignore the importance of the Virgin Mary to their

[21] Montoya, *Hispanic Ministry in North America*, 40–45, 47–48.

congregations. Harry Harper taught his congregation about the aspects of her life, but he also addressed the issues he saw as fallacies believed about her.[22]

Two other differences also regularly surfaced as Protestant pastors taught Latinos with Catholic backgrounds. Pastors dealt with beliefs concerning purgatory since that point of doctrine differed greatly from Catholicism. They typically addressed such topics by focusing on what the Protestant Bible says about the afterlife. Pastors viewed the process of dealing with such concepts as helping newcomers and even long-time congregation members have a correct view of their faith. But one hurdle for pastors was getting Latinos to read the Bible for themselves. For many Catholics this was not part of their upbringing and religious education. It was the role of the priest to work with the Bible. Also some people simply did not have strong enough reading skills to deal with scripture.[23] This was typically a first-generation immigrant issue since subsequent generations were more comfortable with the idea of Bible reading as well as more educated.

Most of the Protestant church ministries to Latinos shared all or most of the key elements of strong pastoral leadership, full partnership of white and Latino congregations as equals, use of heart language, and common approaches to doctrine and tradition. The individual ministries, however, showed great diversity in the ways leaders went about developing ministry.

Overall the Baptist outreach to the Latinos proved the strongest force from the established religious community. Baptists had a strong tradition of missions and excelled at growth nationally. Thus it was natural for Baptist churches to collectively have the

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[22] Harper, interview.
[23] Hanks, interview; Marco Requena, interview by author, March 10, 2012.

strongest presence in ministry to Latinos in Birmingham. Among the Baptist churches, Dawson Memorial essentially served as the flagship ministry model for several others. At Dawson, the leadership of creating, sustaining, and growing a ministry for Latinos centered around Gary Fenton, the head pastor since 1991. In 1996 the church called an African American pastor to serve the congregation. Fenton believed that the move was a "defining moment" for Dawson. He noted that there was some concern as to whether such a move would work in Birmingham, but once it happened, no one protested. The black minister spent a couple of productive years at Dawson before transferring to the Southern Baptist Convention. In 1994 the church brought on Byron Mosquera to serve as pastor of the small Hispanic ministry that began there in the 1980s as a Bible study. Very early on after Mosquera arrived, Fenton met with a man who was part of the Latino congregation. In broken English the man told the pastor, "When my children grow up I want them to be in your church. I need a Hispanic congregation so I can understand, but when my children are teenagers I want them to be in your youth choir. Some day I hope my son will be a deacon in your church." Fenton said that this moment was formative in his vision for the Hispanic ministry. Before it was a good thing the church was doing, but now he came to see it as a major event in the life of the church. He considered how the church could make it so that Latinos would be comfortable and their children could grow up there just as any others. The answer was not for the Latino congregation to eventually split off as he initially thought it might but for it to become even more integrated into the whole. Thus Fenton and Mosquera worked out a plan and announced it to the church. This was an atypical move for a Southern Baptist head pastor, since such congregations tend to follow a democratic voting process in making decisions. Rather

than a desire to circumvent congregational input, Fenton decided to make a unilateral call on the ministry because he felt so strongly about it. After nearly a decade with Dawson, he believed he had enough trust built up within the congregation to make such a choice. Also, Mosquera was well-established as a part of the church and the congregation liked him. Fenton was correct in his assessment since the congregation had no problem with the proposal.[24]

For Byron Mosquera, his leadership role in the church took on unexpected aspects. At the very beginning of his ministry at Dawson the pastor worked solely with Latinos and saw himself in the tradition of the biblical apostle Peter who in the book of Acts tailored his ministry very carefully when preaching specifically to Jews. But with the Latino congregation fully integrated into the structure of the church, Mosquera found himself leading both whites and Latinos as the lines between the two congregations began to blur. There was still a clear distinction between the two groups in regards to the main language, but whites visited the Spanish service and Latinos visited the English service. This ebb and flow between the two congregations was especially pronounced among the youth seeking to be with friends. As a result, Mosquera regularly had a translator in the Spanish service to provide an English version for those less confident in the main language. He also noted that their youth worship team had several white members and regularly alternated between choruses in English and Spanish. Laughing he added, "Welcome to my world."[25] Ultimately, Mosquera maintained a very flexible mindset of just doing what worked. He taught that same mindset to his congregation—to remain open minded and flexible in how they went about doing church. His style of

[24] Fenton, interview.
[25] Mosquera, interview.

leadership was representative of that used by several of the pastors to Latinos. Flexibility allowed them to adapt to a constantly changing ministry inside and outside the church.

At First Baptist Center Point, it took a newly-hired pastor, Ryan Whitley, to help his congregation fully recognize that the demographics surrounding their campus had changed dramatically. When the church determined that it wanted to minister to local Latinos, a member named Carlos Gomes, a well-established Puerto Rican in Alabama and natural leader, to begin inviting Latinos to the church. Unlike the relaxed style leadership exhibited by Mosquera and others, Gomez was a whirlwind of activity. First Baptist Center Point's ministry to Latinos was more unlikely than most in Birmingham. Where most churches were large and growing, Center Point's congregation was aging and on the decline. Gomez credited Whitley and the pastoral staff of the church at the time for having the foresight to accept the Latino newcomers and leading the older white congregation to do so as well. As a result of that choice, the church changed its trajectory from decline to growth.[26]

Agape church in the southern Birmingham suburb of Hoover was unique in its beginning, as several church leaders came together to establish a ministry to Latinos. Each of the churches had contemplated starting their own ministry similar to Dawson, but ultimately they felt that there was more sense in combining their efforts. After a slow start and a few changes in leadership, Agape church received its long-term pastor in Pablo Moscoso who came in 2008. The church represented most of the key aspects of leadership mentioned previously except for that of full partnership. It had partners in the founding churches that continued their support, and Agape met at First Baptist Hoover.

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[26] Ryan Whitley, interview by author, June 18, 2013; Gomez, interview.

But Agape did not have the experience like that of other Hispanic congregations where they mingled easily with a white congregation.[27] Considering the overall path of Agape, the early leadership decision to not establish multiple competing ministries in the Hoover area was a significant event for Latinos in the Birmingham area. Over just a few years Moscoso was able to establish a stable ministry in an underserved area of the city as well as provide peer leadership among the other pastors to Latinos. Without that focused ministry the Hoover area might have been split among several tiny ministries struggling to survive or have no Protestant ministry at all. The thought process of Moscoso and the leaders behind establishing Agape worked similar to that of the leaders in northeast Alabama who established the two cooperative ministries in Fort Payne and Albertville under Latino leadership.

At First Baptist Pelham, which played host to two Latino congregations over the course of a decade, Pastor Mike Shaw led an outreach to Latinos by simply being open to hosting such efforts. He never sought to start a ministry but accepted them as good opportunities came. The ministries were not full partnerships, but the second could best be described as a semi-partnership as the two congregations shared almost everything except finances and membership. Shaw also regularly aided Latinos in word and deed, thus serving as an example in the community. His most public role was his work as the chaplain for the Pelham police department. On several occasions over more than a decade Shaw helped the police in working with Latinos. On one occasion in 1998 Shaw was called to Oak Mountain State Park to serve as chaplain when three Latinos drowned in a boating accident. To console survivors, he called in a Latino minister he knew.

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[27] Jeremy Grimes, interview by author, April 9, 2012; Moscoso, interview.

Shaw noted that the incident taught him the extent of the distrust Latinos had for whites in bad situations. Only the Latino minister was able to really help. That lesson stuck with Shaw and informed his ministry. A few years later Shaw was willing to stand up to the police when a Latina in the first partnered congregation at First Baptist Pelham reported her son being arrested and beaten by the police. Shaw went to the police department to determine how the situation came about. In the end, it turned out that the son had actually resisted arrest and was hurt in the process. Still Shaw wanted to use his influence to maintain good relations in the small city.[28] These are just a few examples from one pastor, but the trend proved true for many of the religious leaders of the Birmingham area. Most pastors to Latinos and some head white pastors became part of the social network that could be called on in times of trouble.

Jorge Camacho, though new in his ministry at First Baptist Pelham, recognized the leadership older pastors in the area took with younger pastors. In the case of Camacho, Carlos Gomez and other long-time pastors served as mentors, meeting with him as a member of the Hispanic Baptist Fraternity. With the extra ministry hours provided by his new full-time position, Camacho planned to begin lay leadership training in his congregation on Saturdays. His goal was to build on the leadership that had already developed in the congregation with a core group that attended each Sunday, along with one deacon.[29] Camacho's plans for his congregation revealed the power of leadership as a guiding force for ministry and as something to be taught and passed on. Older pastors regularly discussed the successes and failures they had in their own

[28] Mike Shaw, interview by author, March 30, 2012.
[29] Camacho, interview.

ministries, and other pastors, especially those with fewer years of experience and less-established ministries, often took note.

Two churches, Briarwood Presbyterian and Hunter Street Baptist, actually used white, Spanish-speaking pastors as their main ministers to Latinos. In both cases the leaders were former missionaries to Spanish-speaking countries. For Briarwood the church established its Hispanic ministry in 2000 as one of several ethnic ministries fully integrated into the church structure, similar to Dawson and Frist Baptist Center Point. The minister was Brad Taylor, a former missionary to Spain. Given the hierarchical structure, Taylor's ministry relationships within the church focused more on the missions department and its staff. The church's goal was to find good ministers and allow them to do the work as the saw fit. So Taylor became the "*Gringo con corazon Latino*," or the white guy with a Latino heart as his congregation liked to joke.[30]

The other "gringo" pastor was Harry Harper, a former missionary to Ecuador. Harper had served as an interim pastor for Agape before Moscoso arrived. He then started Hunter Street's ministry in the Bessemer area of the Birmingham metropolitan area. After Agape—where several leaders had input on the running of the ministry—Harper enjoyed the simplicity of his new endeavor. Of all of the pastors, Harper was the most specific in his beliefs about the importance of cross-cultural ministry. The Bessemer ministry started out focusing on Latinos, but the pastor hoped that it would become a model for a multicultural congregation. He pointed to the example of a multicultural church in Memphis that was 65 percent white and 35 percent African American and noted that a key in the future would be the relationship with Latinos due to

[30] Taylor, interview.

their increasing numbers. Harper even sounded like the southern missionary leaders during the civil rights movement when he said that Christians had to live out the gospel when it came to working with other cultures. The pastor particularly was concerned for children who were born in another country but raised in the United States for most of their lives. Under the current immigration laws they had few options and faced a life of limitations due to their status. Harper believed the wisest course would be for the government to give those children some path to legitimacy.[31]

Harper and the other white former long-term foreign missionaries involved in ministry in Birmingham tended to, like their missionary predecessors of the 1940s-1960s, take a more vocal stance on issues impacting Latinos. Other pastors, even some of the Latino pastors, took a more measured approach in discussing issues such as the fairness of national immigration policy—even if they might have stronger opinions personally. The missionaries were trained to see their ministry at the world, state, and local levels, so they seemed to have a firm grasp on the political and social currents affecting Latinos. They also passionately identified with the people they sought to help.

Despite diverse methodology and personality in ministry, most of the ministers to Latinos maintained working relationships with their local peers as well as many friendships. In Birmingham there was a pastoral organization dedicated to maintaining those connections—the *Alianza de Pastores Hispanos*, or Hispanic Pastors' Alliance that was founded in 2004. This group met monthly to share a meal and hear a message from one of the members. Though the Alliance did not have Catholic or Episcopal members, those groups were not excluded. But as a result of their absence, the group tended to use

[31] Harper, interview; Willis, *All According to God's Plan*, 195–200.

an evangelical style worship and preaching when it met. Since the Alliance represented a majority of the area ministers to Latinos, most members agreed that it had a positive effect on the relationships between the pastors. Its greatest benefit outside the actual meetings was the maintenance of relationships between pastors. They avoided problems such as jealousy and animosity as well as the common problem of member poaching that often occurred in small minority communities. As new pastors came to the Birmingham area, members of the Alliance typically invited them to be a part and join in the network. Most accepted the offer, while some preferred to remain independent or simply felt they did not have time. That way the Alliance maintained an influential place in the Latino religious community. One pastor, Pablo Moscoso, found that the meeting was beneficial, but that the greatest benefit came from the friendships it created that helped the pastors all the other days of the month when issues arose and a pastor might need support. Pastor Gomez observed that ministers are often alone in their ministry without peers to provide support and council.[32] The Alliance offered the community that Latinos often sought as a regular aspect of life, but at a level accessible to pastors who might otherwise feel alone in their role. It also allowed members to share in their experiences as well as seasoned ministers to impart wisdom to younger counterparts both in formal and informal settings. Pastors associations occurred in all ethnicities and denominations at local, state, regional, and national levels, so the monthly meeting in Birmingham was far from unique. Nevertheless the overall beneficial effect to the community of ministries proved significant likely due to a majority of the pastors to Latinos participating. Though limited in scope, the results made the effort worth it.

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[32] Requena, interview; Mosquera, interview; Self, interview; Moscoso, interview; Gomez, interview.

The Alliance membership represented a majority of the Latino pastors in the Birmingham area, but some chose not to participate with the group or reduced their participation over time. Since 2010 the Alliance sponsored a few events focused on entertainment and bringing congregations of the many churches together to fellowship. This had been done by having a concert with a well-known singer as well as bringing in a famous South American evangelist. Some pastors did not agree with taking the Alliance in that direction. Eduardo Torrez at The Church at Brook Hills felt that the organization needed a more active evangelistic vision for its role in the city. He noted that the group's primary focus on prayer and fellowship was good, but he wanted it to be more directly involved in missionary work and church planting. He believed it needed a greater purpose. Harry Harper also felt that the new efforts in entertainment did not align with what he wanted for the group. In both cases the pastors felt their time and efforts were better spent elsewhere, so they ceased attending the monthly meetings of the Alliance but maintained relationships with members.[33]

The participation in and benefit of pastoral networks was common throughout the U.S. Most denominations reported that 60 to 70 percent of their pastors participated in minister associations. Surveyed pastors praised networks for helping avoid burnout and isolation. Just having the prayer and support of others meant a great deal to their overall wellbeing. Also, however, the problem faced by the Alliance in Birmingham was one common to many such organizations. All of the members worked full time on their own ministries and thus had little time and resources to expend on outside projects unless they were a single event periodically. Sustained collaborative efforts were very difficult to

[33] Torres, interview; Harper, interview.

start and keep going if they happened at all. Of the surveyed national pastors, only 38 percent reported collaborating with others outside of worship.[34] Thus there was little possibility of establishing large-scale efforts along the lines desired by Torrez and Harper.

Similar to the Alliance, the Hispanic Baptist Fraternity, founded in 2006, also focused on the networking of leadership. This smaller group met quarterly and focused on developing relationships between ministers to Latinos who worked within the Baptist denomination. As a statewide organization the Fraternity claimed 45 members in 2012, but the actual meeting number was usually smaller due to the distance many had to travel to attend. Most of the meetings were held in Birmingham due to the city's central location in the state, and Pablo Moscoso and Carlos Gomez had both served as presidents over the years. For some pastors, this denomination-specific organization had more appeal than the Alliance. Byron Mosquera had been involved with the Alliance periodically, but he noted that he was more active in the Fraternity. Similarly one of the newest pastors, Jorge Camacho, visited the Alliance a few times but connected more to the Baptist Fraternity. Even though he came to Alabama through his connection to the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, which differed theologically from the Southern Baptist Convention, he partnered with a SBC church in 2011. By 2012 he hosted a meeting of the Baptist Fraternity at First Baptist Church Pelham.[35] Some of the Latino pastors felt more connection in the Baptist Fraternity since they all had the Baptist denomination in common. Mosquera and Moscoso had both trained in Baptist seminaries, so they had

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[34] Milagros Peña, Edwin I. Hernandez, and Melissa Mauldin, "Latino/a Good Ministry as Community Work," in *Emerging Voices, Urgent Choices: Essays on Latino/a Religious Leadership*, vol. 4, Religion in the Americas (Boston, Mass.: Leiden, 2006), 21–3.
[35] Gomez, interview; Moscoso, interview; Mosquera, interview.

specific Baptist theological understanding. The Alliance took a nondenominational evangelical approach that appealed to a broad set of ministers as well as the general sense among Latinos that denominations mattered little. But some pastors with more invested in their denominations obviously had a greater connection with the Fraternity and less with the Alliance—though some like Gomez chose to continue attending both.

Whether active in the Hispanic Pastors Alliance or the Hispanic Baptist Fraternity, all pastors agreed on the imperative for further leadership development at both the pastoral and lay levels for ministry to Latinos. As noted in the chapter on missions, one of the major efforts by the network of pastors to Latinos was the creation of the non-accredited Bible Institute in 2010 for the training of both lay leaders and future pastors in the doctrine and skills valued by the Protestant community. The institute offered three years of course work with progressively more advanced degrees awarded each year. Much like a regular seminary, this institute taught a mix of Biblical classes, theology, and practical skills such as preaching. The teachers at the institute were primarily Baptist ministers from the Birmingham area who had received seminary training and thus had the ability to teach at that level. Pablo Moscoso initially had the idea to create the school since he went through the same program in Kentucky. He led the push to get a franchise of that institute established in Birmingham. Other teachers included Eduardo Torrez, Harry Harper, Cary Hanks, Byron Mosquera, and Carlos Lemos among others who rotated into teaching as needed. Typically seven teachers were working with the institute at any one time. Even though the school was arranged as a seminary, the course work was designed so that people of any level of education could attend in some capacity and thus expand their ability to lead. Some lay church members who simply wanted more

knowledge to be able to serve better in their congregations came for the first-year diploma. Some of these individuals were barely able to read and write, but the teachers worked with them so they could succeed. At the more advanced levels the institute taught the students at the level of a regular seminary. Typically those students wanted to be able to work as pastors in the future.[36]

The institute served as a culmination of the efforts many of the leaders had put into building the networks of relationships among ministers to Latinos in Birmingham. Looking back, each step was necessary to achieve the goal. At first a handful of pastors worked in a few ministries. As their number grew, several leaders decided to form the Alliance to build and maintain peer relationships. Shortly thereafter the Baptist Fraternity also formed with the same goal. With the foundational networks established, new pastors could arrive in the area, connect quickly, and being to make an impact. This effect was seen in Pablo Moscoso, who came to Birmingham in 2008 and only a few years later led the pastors to realize the dream of establishing a formal place of education for future leaders of Latinos.

The Birmingham institute fit in the national trend of Latinos seeking various levels of religious education depending on their socioeconomic status. In *The Hispanic Challenge* Ortiz addressed this issue when he interviewed pastors. Several mentioned the need for the mentorship of young potential leaders of second and third generations by older leaders of the first. They found it effective to identify youth in the congregation who seemed to possess talent for leadership and then foster those abilities by giving them more responsibility. In the same vein one pastor recommended allowing young leaders to

[36] Mosquera, interview; Gomez, interview; Moscoso, interview.

"go and do" to gain experience but recommended that the lead pastor check in with them through periodic counseling and debriefing to guide them on their path. In Birmingham, Carlos Gomez championed this approach to leadership development. He regularly had several young men in his congregation under his tutelage. They took on leadership roles and helped Gomez in the church to determine if they wanted to pursue ministry full time. If they chose the ministry path, Gomez then worked to get them into an appropriate educational institution given their immigration status, goals, and time frame for starting ministry. Some went to the Birmingham Theological Seminary—a more formal institution focused on individuals wanting to earn a master's or doctorate degree while working full time. It was accredited through the Association of Reformed Theological Seminaries. Others went with the more informal Bible Institute that offered a non-accredited diploma program that was still useful to some due to lack of resources or prior education.[37]

Ortiz discussed the specifics of how a pastor could begin to develop such leaders within a congregation. Latinos in the U.S. typically followed a different pattern of entry into ministry than did their white counterparts. Of course some did follow the educational path culminating in seminary, but for the majority of first through third generation Latinos, there was a different path specific to the Latino community. Typically young Latino leaders developed from calling to having their own ministry completely within a congregation. The process usually followed the pattern where the pastor of the church recognized members as active members who were "faithful." These members received the pastor's attention as well as leadership responsibilities in the

[37] Ortiz, *The Hispanic Challenge: Opportunities Confronting the Church*, 131–33; Gomez, interview.

church, ranging from simple coordination to full preaching on occasion. Training occurred as the person participated in a task. Then at some point when the church felt that the individual was ready, the church planted a daughter church with the young leader as the pastor and often some members of the mother church moving to the daughter church as the kernel of the new congregation. Often the leader might seek some formal education once he had begun his ministry work. Ortiz stated that due to the typical Latino pattern of leadership development not fitting into the typical path for whites, Latinos needed more options to access education. Much of this explanation fit well with the experience of Gomez at First Baptist Center Point. Over nearly twenty years with the church he developed a number of leaders, and several entered the ministry. On four separate occasions a new leader left the church and took part of the congregation with him.[38]

Ortiz also spoke to leaders about education options. To help the young leaders be firmly established, the pastors saw education as an important step. One pastor found that at the most basic level the young leaders needed a theologically sound background to not be swayed by false beliefs. This level of education was a benefit of being part of a solid church. A pastor from New York also discussed the importance of formal religious education for young leaders. He noted several paths students could take. A shorter path was Bible institutes, often attended by young leaders at night just after they finished high school. At the writing of the book, four to five thousand students had made use of such institutes over the previous three years in the city. The more formal option was for students to first attend college and then seminary—the traditional route for many church

[38] Ortiz, *The Hispanic Challenge: Opportunities Confronting the Church*, 143–44; Gomez, interview.

leaders in the U.S. At the time of the interview, fifty to one hundred Latino students were enrolled at New York Theological Seminary.[39]

A problem for Latinos, however, came in the limitations on achievement due to immigration status and finances. If potential leaders were undocumented, they could not enter a traditional path to higher education required for the status of clergy. The best options in such situations were alternate programs provided by groups such as the Bible Institute in Birmingham. They gave the new leaders a foundation in theology and a chance to seek pastoral positions in some denominations. Finances also proved difficult for Latinos interested in ministry. One survey found that scholarships to attain M.Div. degrees were readily available, but Latinos struggled in finding funding for the prerequisite four-year degree. As a result, many simply accepted a position in a "lesser order" of clergy.[40]

For the Birmingham institute the goal, as stated by Carry Hanks, was to "develop leadership and extend the witness." Thus the course work was more functional and wasted little time. The institute was not accredited, which would have been a problem for pastors in a more established community such as the whites of the state. But for the Latino community, a pastor simply having some formal training was enough to give them superior credibility and the ability to effectively lead a congregation. Given immigration status and financial resources, the institute provided the best option for many Latinos who wanted to go into ministry. But by choosing to serve as pastors, many leaders chose a difficult path. They faced significant financial challenges. Full-time ministry positions

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[39] Ortiz, *The Hispanic Challenge: Opportunities Confronting the Church*, 131–33.
[40] Adair Lummis, "Hispanic Ministry in Fourteen Protestant Denominations," in *Emerging Voices, Urgent Choices: Essays on Latino/a Religious Leadership*, vol. 4, Religion in the Americas (Boston, Mass.: Leiden, 2006), 98–101.

for Latino pastors were few and often went to individuals with strong qualifications. Thus a bi-vocational ministry was likely. Also the pastors ministering outside of large churches with benefit packages had to take care of their families, deal with emergencies, and plan for their own retirement—often on limited income. Marco Requena, president of the Alliance, recognized the difficulty pastors faced financially and discussed the desire to establish some kind of mutual contribution fund to aid them as they retired.[41] Such an idea had merit despite its implementation being very unlikely due to the challenges of coordination and no guarantee of cooperation. Still the idea highlighted the plight of both established and new ministers. Though the institute provided excellent education opportunities for Latino leaders, it was important to take practical concerns into consideration.

Another major question for the Institute was what would happen as the demographics of Latinos changed in future years. The majority of the Latino population was first generation, with little education at the founding of the Institute. But much of that generation had already been in the state for a decade and had children who were typically bilingual and more comfortable in the mainstream culture of the US. The issue for the institute was what it would do once it began serving the younger generation. Would it develop a bilingual program as many churches had for their youth? Or would other education opportunities serve the youth better? Harry Harper noted that Birmingham already had two options in the Birmingham Theological Seminary and Southeastern Bible College that might serve the needs of the second generation Latinos. The pastor speculated that the institute might go one of several directions in serving

[41] Hanks, interview; Requena, interview.

future needs. It could simply serve the needs of the first-generation Latinos and then disband once it was no longer needed. The institute might also merge with a larger institution in some fashion. Or the school could adapt and add the ability to serve the second generation and beyond.[42] Still, in 2012 the institute had another five to ten years before those needs would become significantly more pressing so that a decision would have to be made.

A tangential aspect of leadership connected to the institute was that many leaders hoped to raise the level of theological knowledge among the Latino community so that one day Latino theologians would develop to serve as religious intellectual leaders. Ortiz noted the concern of observers of theology that Latinos in the U.S. had, in 1993, relatively few publishing Latino theologians. He knew of one among the Roman Catholics and three among Protestants. Ortiz believed that the solution to the lack of specifically Latino theological leaders was for the local church to put all its effort into developing leaders of the second and third generations. The lack of Latino theologians was a particular concern of Dean Self, who taught basic theology classes at Latino churches in the Birmingham area. He believed Latinos needed commentaries written by other Latinos rather than translations of those written by whites. The missionary noted that a commentary relevant in Bolivia would not translate directly and be understood in the U.S. He believed the problem was low Latino educational attainment in general and hoped the institute would help stimulate the larger community.[43]

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[42] Harper, interview.
[43] Ortiz, *The Hispanic Challenge: Opportunities Confronting the Church*, 144–45; Self, interview.

All of these ministries and educational opportunities discussed above were led by pastors. Nevertheless it is important to also recognize the contribution of lay leaders to the effort. In the adage that 90 percent of church work is done by 10 percent of the congregation, lay leaders were typically the 10 percent. The majority of lay leadership for Latino congregations came from the Latino population, but in several churches there were a few members from the white congregation who wanted to help. At Dawson Memorial Baptist, the head pastor, Gary Fenton, noted that at the very beginning of their Latino congregation, even before he came to serve at the church, several "champions" or white advocates worked to get the new congregation established.[44] These were well-respected church members who felt that the church needed to go in a certain direction and used their personal influence to help found the ministry. With their backing of such a project, others who might be more hesitant would feel that it was ok. Similar to the way that pastors often served as permission givers to the broader congregation, well-established and respected lay leaders also wielded such influence to bring significant change. In fact, several of the Latino congregations in Birmingham grew out of Bible studies and ESL programs started by lay leaders with a desire to reach out to the underserved community. Dawson, Shades Mountain, and Hunter Street, and Briarwood all began with small outreach efforts at the lay level, such as ESL programs in the 1990s, that later grew into full ministries. In every case individuals or groups made bold efforts to reach out to an unfamiliar population that often spoke a different language.

The leadership involved in creating and teaching at the Bible Institute paralleled a need for growing well-trained leaders in the church who could then serve and teach

[44] Fenton, interview.

others. At the lay level this training was to add to the ranks of individuals who already served their congregations in a wide range of capacities from cook to Sunday school leader. In some churches the pastor recruited people to participate when they showed initiative, while in other congregations individuals joined the effort out of personal concern. At First Baptist Center Point, Carlos Gomez specifically recruited individuals, mostly men, he felt would be good leaders and possibly ministers. At Briarwood, Brad Taylor initially used structured levels of discipleship for training lay leaders but he later switched to an informal method of giving people responsibility so that they gained experience, and then he added to or changed their role to stretch them further.[45]

Lay leadership was crucial to the function of ministries, but Latino outreach almost always needed a pastor's backing for basic efforts to become full ministries with an established Latino congregation. Congregations sometimes suffered from group-think mentality where fears led to decisions to not engage in ministry. In the case of ministry to Latinos, the specters of illegality, language barriers, or the fear of the church being demographically overrun might turn a congregation off to the idea of such ministry.[46] A pastor had the ability to recognize such challenges ahead of time and lead the congregation to begin the ministry despite misgivings that always disappeared with the experience of getting to know others personally.

Speaking of lay leaders, Kevin Moore of the interracial Christian cooperation group Mission Birmingham observed that lay leaders played a key role in ministries because they regularly saw the pastor's vision through to completion. A pastor alone could not develop a ministry or serve in all capacities while also acting as leader of a

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[45] Gomez, interview; Taylor, interview.
[46] Mosquera, interview; Gomez, interview.

congregation and dealing with church business.[47] The real work happened with the congregation and often with the lay leadership. Thus their relationship was symbiotic. Pastors could not do the work alone and still lead the church, and lay leaders needed the pastor to give permission and provide the driving force and vision. With those two components in place, Latino ministries found success.

One minister who held a unique position among all the others was Gene Lankford who had served as the Hispanic Ministry Coordinator for the North Alabama United Methodist Church (UMC) Conference. This was the only denomination-supported ministry promotion position. Lankford worked in locations throughout north Alabama over twenty years and focused on Hispanic ministry for much of that time. He began as a minister in Decatur, Alabama, in 1996 where he saw an impoverished Latino community developing and sought to help with children's programs and eventually Spanish services. He then brought in a pastor from Puerto Rico to serve as a full time minister to the growing Latino congregation. Soon the UMC Conference took notice and made Lankford the Hispanic Ministry Coordinator. In that capacity he traveled the state helping churches develop ministries for Latinos and generally educating Methodists about the new Hispanic population. Unique among all the other evangelical denominations, Lankford also developed a social justice aspect to his ministry when he and two others received accreditation from the state Board of Immigration Appeals so that they could help illegal immigrants argue their cases before the official body.[48]

Lankford noted that he received much criticism from within the church for his aid to undocumented Hispanics. He explained the hesitation of church members as a lack of

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[47] Moore, interview.
[48] Gene Lankford, interview by author, February 10, 2009.

understanding. Most church members, in any denomination, believed that they would be doing something illegal if they aided the immigrants. Lankford said that the only illegal action was helping the undocumented cross the border of the United States. Beyond that point ministries are free to help in any way they can. The reverend also said that church members and even leaders thought in what he called a dichotomy. They believed ministries could either focus on spiritual issues or social issues where Lankford believes that the two do not have to be separate. He said that he supported a more holistic approach that he believed followed more closely with the example set by Jesus. Lankford cited the example of Christ dealing with a woman who was caught in adultery and said that Jesus saw the woman as a human in need over someone committing a crime. Also, Lankford added his view that Jesus was also an immigrant as a child and would not have survived childhood if subject to the immigration laws of the United States. The reverend blamed society and media influence for much of the anti-immigrant sentiment that created fear in the church.[49]

Outside the confines of individual churches, pastoral networks, and lay leadership, Birmingham also hosted individuals and organizations that worked as parts of the larger ministry ecosystem that supported or augmented the Latino ministries of churches. Two individual leaders who had significant impact were the missionaries Carry Hanks and Dean Self. As a facilitator of ministry, Hanks saw his role as working between cultures and helping bridge the two. Sometimes he worked with churches establishing ministries to Latinos, making sure those congregations had the understanding and resources necessary to succeed. Other times Hanks attended the meetings of area

[49] Ibid.

church associations as a representative of Latino ministry in general. From him they heard news of different ministry events and opportunities and how they could participate if they chose to do so. Hanks noted that in Alabama he never encountered overt resistance to Latino presence or ministry, except on a few occasions when churches expressed concern over ministering to undocumented immigrants. He called his role "a ministry of presence," regularly reminding churches and church organizations of the need to minister to the Latinos in the local community. In fact Hanks found his new role surprisingly similar to that he had as a missionary in Ecuador where he facilitated ministry, visited pastors to see how he could help them, and spent a lot of time on the phone and email. He liked to think of his role as similar to that of Paul in the Bible, where the apostle reported back to Antioch after journeys to tell the church what was going on in ministry.[50]

Similar to Hanks, Dean Self served the area as a facilitator and educator. Churches often contacted him when looking for advice on ministering to Latinos. He also spent much of his time "educating future leaders." Self offered to come to individual churches and give lessons on basic theology. This was separate from the Bible Institute and geared toward just raising the level of theological education of the congregation. When he began such classes, he sometimes had members from one church come to another to teach both at the same time. But he heard complaints from a few pastors about potentially losing members to other churches as a result. Though that was not the goal, Self decided to teach one church at a time. He also taught whites about Latino culture so they could better understand the newcomers in the area. The missionary found his

[50] Hanks, interview.

personal life somewhat affected by his ministry when concern over Latino presence grew during the 2000s. Some pastors and Christians he had known his whole life would not speak to him.[51] But generally he was well received and served a vital role in the community of Latino ministry.

Along with the two facilitator missionaries, two Christian non-church organizations also served as ministry facilitators though they were not directly focused on Latino ministry. Such organizations were known as "bridge organizations" because they often served as the connecting point for congregations and cultures. Mission Birmingham was founded in 1998 as an interdenominational organization focused on facilitating dialogue and cooperation between churches and cultures and providing tools to help in that process. The group created an online interactive map of Birmingham based on census data so that ministries could focus their efforts effectively based on demographics. Monthly the organization held a prayer meeting called Cry for Birmingham that hosted clergy from several cultures including Latinos. It was one of the few chances in the religious life of the city for interaction between blacks, whites, and Latinos all at the same time. Latinos also held a special place in Mission Birmingham since the Alliance was structured as a nonprofit under the Mission Birmingham umbrella. The other bridge organization was the Christian Service Mission, which was founded in the early 1970s and in the last decade reorganized to shift its focus from providing the poor with food and clothing to community development. The mission led projects to aid underserved communities, and churches partnered with the group as part ministry outreach. Tracy Hipps ran the Mission, and as a former leader of Mission Birmingham

[51] Self, interview.

knew the Latino church community well. The Latino ministries sometimes partnered with the mission.[52]

Quite separate from the complex network of Protestant Latino ministry efforts, the Catholic churches quietly served a majority of the Latino population. Leadership of the Catholic Latino efforts worked differently from the Protestants since the Catholic Diocese of Birmingham ran the Office of Hispanic Ministry, a central source of support for any parishes engaged in Latino ministry. The diocese had a vicar in charge of supporting ministries to Latinos as well as social services. Beginning in the 1980s the diocese focused on bringing in priests from Spanish-speaking countries to accommodate the needs of the growing Latino population—primarily migrant workers at the time. In the late 1990s Spanish became the standard foreign language for seminarians, so between 1997 and 2005 the diocese was able to phase out all of the foreign-born priests and install U.S. natives. These trends fit with a survey of Catholic priests that found only 2-3 percent of all priests nationally self-identified as Latino. But the number was better at 8 percent for priests who graduated since 1991. Both measures, however, were far below the overall proportion of Latinos among U.S. Catholics, which was 28 percent.[53]

Ultimately, like the Latino-serving Protestant churches and their instrumental pastors, the responsibility of a parish putting energy into a Latino ministry fell to the individual priest. The flagship Catholic Latino congregation in Birmingham was part of

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[52] Moore, interview; Tracy Hipps, interview by author, March 16, 2012; Michael O. Emerson, *People of the Dream: Multiracial Congregations in the United States* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2006), 94.

[53] Thomas Ackerman, interview by author, April 9, 2012; Mark M. Gray and Mary L. Gautier, "Latino/a Catolic Leaders in the United States," in *Emerging Voices, Urgent Choices: Essays on Latino/a Religious Leadership* (Boston, Mass.: Leiden, 2006), 65–6, 79.

St. Francis Xavier parish and had been meeting there since 1988. Brenda Bullock, who had served in the diocese Hispanic Ministry Office from 1988 and later moved to be the Hispanic ministry coordinator for St. Francis, noted the importance of having a priest interested in Latino ministry. The parish had had a Latino congregation for well over two decades but significant progress in the cooperation of the Anglo and Latino congregations really only began after the arrival of Father Robert Sullivan in 2007. Bullock found that a parish followed the attitude of its leader. Father Bob as she called him was open to the Latino congregation, so the parish as a whole began to work better as one.[54] Thus a local area might have a Latino population with a desire to attend the nearest Catholic church, but the priest led the congregation in whether or not to accommodate that population.

At the diocese level, one of the main assets in developing Catholic lay leadership was the Guadalupe Sisters, who were members of a religious order based in Mexico and similar to the better known Franciscan Monks. Members of the Guadalupe order served all over the United States, and in the Birmingham diocese five of the sisters had served since around 2000 with the actual individuals rotating out over time and new members arriving. Four of the sisters served in the Hispanic Ministry Office of the diocese, while one served in social services. They were based out of St. Peter's Catholic Church very near Lorna Road, which was home to many Latinos. To help in the development of lay leadership, the sisters worked with individual parishes to provide workshops in leadership training, including the instruction on lecturing. The women also aided the Hispanic Ministry in its various needs.[55]

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[54] Brenda Bullock, interview by author, April 18, 2012.
[55] Ackerman, interview.

For the Catholic diocese of Birmingham, lay leadership worked similarly to that in the Protestant churches but with additional levels of structure. Like the Protestant churches, the Catholic parishes relied on core groups within each congregation to accomplish much of the ministry work. Bryan Lowe, who served as Vicar of Hispanic Ministries for the diocese and later priest for Sacred Heart parish in Anniston with a Latino congregation, noted that in each parish there were a few people who accepted the role of leaders. He believed that the core parishioners were key to successful ministries. At his previous parish in Huntsville, he had four members who served in leadership roles. With his Latino congregation in Anniston he had about ten parishioners who regularly helped him. One Latino man aided Lowe with preparing individuals for baptism or couples for marriage when they did not speak English well. Lowe could speak functional Spanish, but he wanted to make sure that he communicated everything well. Other leaders in the church stepped in as needed to make sure ministries happened. Lowe also found that most people responded well for immediate tasks such as setting up for or taking down after an event. The priest simply asked for help in the moment.[56]

The Christian denomination that served as an anomaly in the split between Catholic and evangelical Latinos was the Episcopal Church. This denomination maintained many of the same, or at least similar, traditions, teachings, and rituals of the Catholic Church, making it the closest to Catholic without being within Catholicism. As a result, some Latinos sought out religious experiences in this denomination typically for one of two reasons. First they wanted the familiarity of the rituals but for some reason did not want to be a part of the Catholic Church. Or second, individuals or families

[56] Bryan Lowe, interview by author, April 23, 2012.

found themselves, due to life circumstances, outside the acceptable moral bounds of Catholicism and thus had to find religious experience elsewhere. The most common example of the second group was couples living together outside of marriage who had a child and wanted the sacrament of baptism for the infant. A leadership decision of Episcopal Latino ministers was to accommodate those seeking such sacraments no matter the circumstances of the seeker. As a result, the ministers also might have the opportunity to reach out in other ways. The one Episcopal priest in Birmingham, Hernan Afanador-Kafuri, noted that even when Latinos began to attend his congregation on a regular basis, most continued to identify themselves as Catholic due to family and cultural traditions. Kafuri also served as the leader of the few Episcopal Latino ministries of the state that met quarterly. In his own congregation Afanador-Kafuri had difficulty establishing a core of lay leaders since the community he served was quite poor and had a high turn-over rate.[57]

The religious leadership of Birmingham ultimately responded reasonably well to the influx of the Latino population. The churches shed past connections to segregation and embraced the incorporation of Latinos within their own congregations. Such efforts primarily happened in large churches, but the sentiment was pervasive in much of the general population. Many of the churches discussed above served as leading congregations in their state denominations, so other churches of all sizes looked to them for inspiration even if they did not copy their efforts. Though the leadership of the Birmingham ministries took many unique forms, the churches generally developed the core concepts of the need for strong leadership, close partnership between leaders as well

[57] Hernan Afanador-Kafuri, interview by author, March 6, 2012.

as congregations, the use of “heart language” for effective ministry to different generations, and similar methods of addressing both doctrine and tradition.

The leaders also showed their concern and desire for a strong community of Latino ministries by developing and maintaining the Alliance. The organization had its faults and detractors, but in its core function it succeeded. It gave a majority of the ministers to Latinos a network of mutual support and reduced or prevented potential rifts in the community by helping pastors maintain connections to each other. Such a group could easily have fractured along the lines of young and old or rich and poor, but the leaders kept it together for the most part. That simple success then paid dividends in allowing the group to establish the Bible Institute in 2010 to help form future religious leaders. The institute served a very specific purpose for the first-generation students, but questions remained in how it would adapt to future generations.

Also, the Protestant Latino ministries were not alone in the religious community of Birmingham. Several missionaries and organizations existed to facilitate ministry but also made the interconnections of various ministries much more complex as they tried to assess needs and divert resources. In addition, the Catholic Diocese of Birmingham served a large majority of the Latino population, with the Episcopal Church serving a few who did not fit in the Catholic fold. All of these efforts by the religious leaders of Birmingham comprised much of the impetus for ministry to Latinos. They revealed a city very much connected to its religious heritage in thought and deed, but also one quickly adapting to a new South with vastly more complex cultural and social norms.

Chapter Four

Structure of Ministries

In starting new endeavors most leaders and organizations prefer a plan. This was true for those Birmingham churches that began ministries to Latinos. Most laid out designs of how they expected to begin, grow, and sustain the new congregations. The plans affected the overall structure of how each ministry functioned in its partner church. The details, however, developed organically and proved unique for each congregation. In negotiating the many ways to set up such ministries, the churches drastically changed the face of how religion and faith worked in Birmingham.

Overall the churches of the Birmingham area that developed ministries for Latinos did so in varying levels of partnership. These ranged from fully integrated ministries that had no distinction from the rest of the church other than the use of Spanish to loose partnerships that only involved the sharing of facilities and nothing else. Between those extremes there were a number of arrangements based on forces and circumstances that were either part of individual churches or beliefs about how such a ministry should be structured.

On one end of the scale was the fully integrated Hispanic congregation or the "church-within-a-church" design. In most of these churches the Hispanic congregations functioned as full components of the church body. They were simply another ministry within the church similar to an addition of outreach for single mothers or other underserved groups. In some cases the Hispanic ministries fell under the umbrella of the missions department—especially in the largest churches. The flagship Hispanic ministry for Protestant churches in Birmingham and much of the state was that at Dawson

Memorial Baptist Church in the Homewood area just south of downtown Birmingham. In its earliest stages the ministry was simply a group of Spanish speakers gathered in the church and led by a part-time minister. Brian Harper served in that capacity just before he left for the mission field in the early 1990s. After Harper left Dawson, the head pastor, Gary Fenton, and the church leadership wanted to develop that ministry further and bring on a full-time Hispanic minister because they believed that the Hispanic population in the area would continue to grow. Thus in 1994 the church hired Byron Mosquera. Originally Fenton and Mosquera both believed that the Hispanic congregation would develop to the point that it would eventually leave Dawson and form its own separate church. After a couple of years, however, the leadership began to see that system as unhealthy for the church body. Fenton had experienced a modified version of a "church within a church" at his previous pastoral position in Texas, where the Hispanic ministry occupied a building on the corner of the property. It was never fully a part of the church. At Dawson the Hispanic congregation was becoming thoroughly integrated—a "church within a church" as Fenton put it. In fact, Pastor Fenton used the term "church within a church" for about four years among the church leadership before he and Mosquera worked out a plan for the Hispanic ministry to become a full and permanent part of the church body. Fenton grew to see the white and Hispanic congregations remaining together as much more beneficial to both compared to separation. The whites benefitted from having a different culture at the church as well as Hispanic friends for their children. The Hispanics benefitted by being full members of an established church and connected to the larger community. The social boost helped Hispanic parents and children fit in Birmingham society more easily. Byron Mosquera

also found that making the Hispanic congregation a permanent part of Dawson was a "response to our reality." A completely separate ministry might have survived, but developing a self-supporting Hispanic congregation would have been difficult due to fluctuations in membership and finances. Also, there was no way to set a timetable of the Hispanic ministry moving on by a certain date. Thus with the benefits of joint congregations and the realities of attempting a separate congregation, the Dawson leaders made the Hispanic ministry a full part of the church structure.[1]

Under the new plan the Hispanic congregation truly worked as a "church within a church" with significant autonomy in its direction and function. Mosquera worked alongside Fenton and the other leadership as a minister of Dawson, but he had the freedom to mold and adapt the ministry to fit the needs of the Hispanic congregation. This type of authority was given to much of the leadership of the church in their respective areas, with Fenton setting the overall path of the church. Latinos who joined the Hispanic ministry did so as full members of Dawson, just as anyone else who became part of the church. And unlike many other Hispanic ministries in the Birmingham area, the congregation at Dawson maintained the same schedule as the rest of the church by holding worship and Sunday school at the same hours. This simultaneous scheduling was facilitated by Dawson giving the Hispanic congregation use of a large chapel. Within that context Mosquera developed unique programming, worship services, and Bible study programs appropriate for a Latino audience.[2]

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[1] Gary Fenton, interview by author, April 16, 2012; Byron Mosquera, interview by author, April 13, 2012.
[2] Fenton, interview; Mosquera, interview.

As Fenton and Mosquera began the new plan for the Hispanic ministry, they had no expectations of it having the kind of success that it saw among the Latino community. For Fenton one of the biggest benefits produced by having the Hispanic congregation at Dawson was that it reinvigorated the church's drive to pursue missions. Having such a close partnership with a different culture focused their mission efforts on the purpose of spreading the gospel rather than on pity. This effect was particularly strong with Dawson's white children. When they went on missions trips to places in Mexico and South America, they felt like they already had a connection due to their relationship with Latino friends at Dawson. Working with someone from another culture was less of a foreign concept. But Fenton was also quite realistic about the ministry's success. He noted that it would be easy to fall into the mindset of thinking that Dawson was doing a good job and had somehow perfected the process of having such a ministry. Instead, he believed that "Rather than the perfect storm, we had the perfect calm." The church began its ministry at just the right time when the Hispanic community in Alabama was growing but had not yet drawn the ire of the politicians, media, and other negative forces. Thus it had time to develop roots and become an integral part of the church without backlash.[3]

The pastor believed that the church-within-a-church model was the "future for large churches." But he cautioned that the plan might not fit every congregation. The key was that churches had to want a partnership for it to work well. Otherwise the extent of the relationship would be just sharing keys to the same buildings with little connection or benefit to each other. Fenton believed that two denominations were particularly suited to partnerships with Hispanic congregations. Baptist churches, due to their complete

[3] Fenton, interview.

autonomy within the denomination, could make such drastic decisions and changes to fit their particular church body. Charismatic—primarily Pentecostal—churches could also readily form such partnerships. White Baptists found emotional expression in worship unnatural, so they struggled in adapting to Latinos in that area. But Pentecostals readily understood the style of Latino lives, and their emotional freedom in worship fit well with that appreciated by most Latinos.[4]

Dawson's Hispanic congregation was seen as the flagship example of such ministries in Birmingham and much of Alabama for several reasons. It was one of the first on the scene, starting five to ten years before most others. But more importantly, the church successfully implemented the church-within-a-church model that broke the one-ethnicity-per-church mold of the vast majority of churches in the city. It did so by making whites and Hispanics one church body but providing enough freedom of worship and administration to allow the Hispanic congregation meaningful autonomy. Thus Dawson served as a model of partnership that other churches looked to for inspiration.

Around the same time that Dawson began to develop its ministry, First Baptist Church of Center Point, north of Birmingham's downtown, started a Hispanic ministry that also grew into a fully integrated church within a church. Unlike Dawson, however, the initial development of the ministry at Center Point was much more organic. From approximately the mid-1980s to the mid-1990s, First Baptist Center Point had ceased to grow and shifted to a church-wide attitude of maintaining the status quo in ministry and membership. This change in the church coincided with a slow shift in its surrounding

[4] In 2012 Dawson Baptist Church expanded its outreach by helping found a new Hispanic congregation in Fultondale in north Jefferson County. It was a multi-church effort similar to Agape Church in Hoover. The new congregation began in a trailer park.; Ibid.

area from a desirable and economically vibrant part of Birmingham to an area in decline. Toward the mid-1990s this shift in economic fortunes also brought a change in demographics as that part of the city went from mostly white to mostly black, with a significant population of Latinos mixed in. In the midst of that transition period, First Baptist Center Point had its own shift as its head pastor stepped down and in 1996 it hired a young pastor, Ryan Whitley.[5]

As an outsider to the church and its community, Whitley could see the economic and demographic shift happening that long-time members of First Baptist Center Point were reluctant to acknowledge. The pastor took on the task of helping the congregation understand the magnitude of the change and then develop ministries accordingly. He also noted that in its history the church was actually a pioneering congregation, being the first in Birmingham to develop such ministries as a Christian daycare and a family life center. Whitley wanted to help the membership remember that heritage and began by having a drive to meet the new community. Each member or group of members received an assignment to visit a street in the surrounding area, meet each household to introduce themselves and the church, and then write down relevant demographic information for each address. Their goal was to knock on 3,000 doors in one month, but the congregation got excited about the project and ended up canvassing 8,000 households. The result of the drive was a more clear understanding in the congregation of how their area had changed. The demographic data also allowed the church to begin to plan for its future ministries. First Baptist Center Point brought in a consultant from the Home Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, who helped the leadership develop goals for

[5] Ryan Whitley, interview by author, June 18, 2013.

the future based on the changes in the community. Ultimately the church, under Whitley's leadership, decided on the three goals of starting a separate black congregation on the Center Point campus, starting a Hispanic congregation on the Center Point campus, and starting a second campus in the fast-growing Trussville area further northeast. Over the next decade the church accomplished two of its three goals. Trying to plant a black congregation on an established white campus was too much of a stretch, with the white congregation essentially fearing that it would be overrun. But in establishing a Hispanic ministry, First Baptist Center Point was quite successful.[6]

A natural leader, Carlos Gomez was already a member of the church, and Pastor Whitley worked with him to begin drawing other Latinos to the congregation. Quite quickly the church had a Hispanic ministry whether it was ready for one or not. Though not a minister by education or other training, Gomez became the Hispanic pastor unofficially as he led the Sunday school class and then a worship service. In 2000 he became an official pastor within the church, leading the Hispanic congregation. His place in the church was similar to that of Mosquera at Dawson—a minister among the others except he focused on Hispanics and led a separate worship service. The creation of the ministry was a great benefit to First Baptist Center Point, which had an aging population until the infusion of the Latinos. The white congregation was dwindling, as churches in depressed areas tend to do, but the Latinos brought many children. Gomez noted that when people saw children and liveliness in the church, they wanted to visit. Without young blood, churches die.[7]

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[6] Ibid.
[7] Carlos Gomez, interview by author, March 1, 2012; Whitley, interview.

The creation of the Hispanic ministry at Briarwood Presbyterian was similar to that at Dawson. The church wanted to create a few ministries to local minorities in the heart languages of those people. Thus it created Korean, Japanese, and Hispanic ministries. The Hispanic ministry began as a small Bible study in 2000 and developed slowly into a church within a church on the Briarwood campus. About a year after its creation, the congregation moved to the church gym where it remained for the next ten years. Over that decade Pastor Brad Taylor served as the congregation's pastor. The ministry functioned under the church's missions department along with the other heart language ministries. Overall the Hispanic congregation generally stayed in its own space at the church, but there was some crossover with the white congregation on classes and resources.[8] The Hispanic ministry at Briarwood was the only one among the Presbyterian churches in Birmingham.

Quite similar to Dawson and Briarwood, the Church at Brook Hills, a Baptist church, also chose to create a ministry. Brook Hills was a very large church in the suburbs of Birmingham. Its members explored the landscape of Hispanic ministries in Birmingham and considered several options. At one point they collaborated with Shades Mountain and the other partner churches in helping form Agape, a sponsored Hispanic ministry. After those initial explorations of ministry options, the church decided to form its own Hispanic ministry on the Brook Hills campus. In 2007 the church recruited Eduardo Torres, who had been serving as an assistant pastor with Carlos Gomez at First Baptist Center Point, to begin working with Hispanics on the church's behalf and start forming a congregation. Gomez had met and then recruited Torres from Venezuela and

[8] Brad Taylor, interview by author, February 22, 2012.

worked out the legalities of him coming to Alabama. The new Hispanic ministry officially started at Brook Hills in 2008. As minister of his congregation, Torres had great autonomy in determining how his ministries worked. He developed his own plan to fit the needs of his congregation. Overall, since the Hispanic congregation met in a separate building on the Brook Hills campus, there was little interaction between the Hispanic and white congregations. Torres also found that Hispanics had trouble identifying with the whites though that opinion differed by place of origin. For Central and South Americans there was less trouble connecting with the general culture of the main congregation, but for Mexicans the cultural rift was greater.[9]

Riverchase Methodist in the Hoover area began to develop its Hispanic ministry around 2002 when it partnered with Fernando del Castillo who, after growing a small congregation, moved to the Riverchase Methodist campus in 2003. Once on campus the ministry developed differently compared to other Hispanic ministries such as Dawson or Center Point. It was a full part of the church but ran its own ministries and programs quite separately. Castillo functioned as a minister of Riverchase, and the members of the Hispanic congregation were full members of the larger church. The Hispanic congregation began by first meeting in a separate building on campus, the "Brown House," so they would have their own space. In 2012 the church constructed a new missions building and sanctuary on the upper floor of the main church—both used by the Hispanic ministry almost exclusively. In creating the "upper room," as Savage called it, the Hispanic craftsmen did much of the finishing work from sheetrock to building the

[9] Eduardo Torres, interview by author, March 13, 2012.

stage. Castillo felt that it was important to encourage the contributions of the group to their new space to help them feel ownership.[10]

Overall Pastor Savage felt that having the Hispanic ministry as part of Riverchase Methodist was a very positive development in the life of the church. It had encouraged the church to be more mission focused. Some of their projects included funding an orphanage in Kenya, ministering to teenagers in Honduras, ministering in Jamaica, and helping support a Russian orphanage. In 2007 Riverchase began sponsoring the creation of Hispanic ministries at other Methodist churches in Alabama. Pastor Fernando, to facilitate ley leadership development, set up and taught a religious training institute for his congregation specifically at Riverchase. From this training he developed several lay pastors who were later sent to the new daughter congregations. The first was at Huffman United Methodist, which later moved to partner with another church. Riverchase also established another at Alabaster United Methodist as well as one at Fairview United Methodist, where the white congregation was dwindling so badly that they essentially turned over the keys to the Hispanic newcomers to help the church continue to survive and hopefully grow. Also in 2008 Riverchase again ventured into missions work by starting a Korean ministry with a Korean pastor.[11]

In addition to the missions focus, Savage also noted that even though the congregations did mix on a weekly basis at Riverchase, he had been surprised by the number of personal connections that had formed. Many interactions began by members of the main congregation calling Pastor Castillo and asking him if he knew of anyone

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[10] Jim Savage, interview by author, June 11, 2013; Fernando del Castillo, interview by author, June 5, 2013.
[11] Savage, interview; del Castillo, interview.

who needed work in cleaning houses or caring for lawns. He would pass along the information to people in his congregation who worked in those areas and soon friendships formed between the whites and Hispanics that then continued on at the church. These connections then spawned other connections through word of mouth, forming large networks of interactions outside of Sunday.[12]

Catholic churches developed their Hispanic ministries organically. As the Latino population of Alabama began to grow, the diocese was one of the first groups to notice the demographic change. Unlike the other ministries to Latinos in Birmingham, the Catholic Diocese first created its Office of Hispanic Ministry to see to the needs of and outreach to Latinos. The actual Hispanic congregations at various parishes developed with a mixture of location, priest openness, and personal networks playing a role in where, when, and how. Five Catholic parishes in the Birmingham area developed Hispanic ministries, which at a base level meant offering mass in Spanish as well as some Sunday school, or catechism, classes. Two churches in particular served as the main campuses for such ministry. St. Francis Xavier operated as the flagship ministry with the largest congregation of Latinos. St. Francis had a Latino presence and Spanish mass beginning in 1988, but it was not until Father Robert Sullivan became priest there in 2007 that the ministry was fully accepted as an integral part of the parish. Prince of Peace was the campus where Father Thomas Ackerman, Vicar of Hispanic Ministry, served as priest and thus drew a number of Latinos there. It also benefitted from its location in Hoover.[13]

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[12] Savage, interview; del Castillo, interview.
[13] Brenda Bullock, interview by author, April 18, 2012; Robert Sullivan, interview by author, June 7, 2013; Thomas Ackerman, interview by author, April 9, 2012; Bryan Lowe, interview by author, April 23, 2012.

Unlike most of the Hispanic congregations that were connected to churches as partners and ministries, one church chose a different path best described as a partially connected Hispanic ministry. First Baptist Pelham in Shelby County set itself up as a church willing to support the ministry to Latinos in the Pelham area. The church did not specifically start Hispanic ministries but opened its doors to such ministries that could benefit from having a location. The first ministry came in 2000, but its leader fell to the misdeeds recounted in the chapter on missions. That ministry transferred to the leadership of Alex Solito, who later went on to serve as Hispanic minister for the Church of the Highlands. That first ministry functioned as a fully separate ministry simply borrowing a separate building provided by First Baptist Pelham. The second Hispanic ministry at First Baptist Pelham, a partnership with Jorge Camacho, began in 2011. That ministry integrated into the main congregation without being a technical part of the church. The members of the Hispanic congregation were not members of Frist Baptist Pelham, but they shared space with the main congregation and benefitted from the resources available. Basically they could use the facility at will, as long as they scheduled their use of rooms or other spaces on the church calendar just as any other ministry had to do. The head pastor, Mike Shaw, as well as Pastor Camacho viewed the situation as a partnership. First Baptist Pelham continued on its missions focus, and the Hispanic congregation benefitted from the physical space and the connection to the white community. The Hispanic children attended Sunday school alongside the white kids, and the two congregations even regularly shared in special events such as the annual church festival. The Hispanic congregation came to the regular worship service a few times a year to celebrate baptisms and then stay for the sermon by Shaw. The church saw the

Hispanic congregation as one day likely moving off on its own once it was self-supporting, but there was no timetable.[14]

Another structurally unique Hispanic ministry in Birmingham was that of the Church of the Highlands. It was a full part of the larger church but physically separate from its inception as part of a vision for expanding the ministry of Highlands. Similar to Brook Hills, the Church of the Highlands chose to create a Hispanic ministry by recruiting locally. Alex Solito had served as the pastor of the Hispanic congregation partnered with First Baptist Church Pelham for about two years when the Church of the Highlands asked him to join their ministry full-time. Solito and his congregation moved with the blessing of First Baptist Pelham. The Church of the Highlands was a multi-site church, which meant that it had a main campus which was in the eastern part of Birmingham as well as satellite campuses, like the new Hispanic ministry in Shelby County, in other parts of the city and state that followed the direction of the main. That format of church structure began in the U.S. in the 1990s and became a phenomenon in church growth like the megachurch had earlier. The Church of the Highlands was the only long-term multi-site church in the Birmingham area. First Baptist Center Point attempted to implement the model when it founded a new site in Trussville, but that arrangement only lasted a few years as the two campuses grew apart.[15]

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[14] Mike Shaw, interview by author, March 30, 2012; Jorge Camacho, interview by author, April 10, 2012; Carry Hanks, interview by author, April 2, 2012. The original leader of the first Hispanic ministry at First Baptist Pelham was Luis Federico Garcia who sexually abused three girls at the church and was arrested and then pled guilty to charges in 2006.
[15] Alex Solito was contacted for an interview for this project, but he said that the Church of the Highlands had made the decision to not allow any of its staff to do interviews concerning the Hispanic ministry to avoid increased scrutiny in the wake of hostile debate and legal action in the state over illegal immigration.; Shaw, interview; Brian Nathaniel Frye, "The Multi-Site Church Phenomenon in North America: 1950-2010"

The next category of Hispanic ministries came in two churches that were sponsored but physically separate. Agape Church was unusual among the Hispanic ministries in Birmingham due to its origin as a collective effort between churches. Where all of the other ministries were connected to single churches, the founding churches of Agape chose to create a single ministry together rather than several competing ministries within close proximity. Thus the partner churches founded Agape in 2002 and tried to determine the best way to set it up. They wanted the ministry to function as a separate entity with as many Latino faces as possible in leadership positions. After moving several times, the congregation eventually received an offer of space by First Baptist Hoover, which became its long-term location. Up to 2008 the pastoring of Agape was provided by Jeremy Grimes and Harry Harper, who were both white Spanish speakers, and the partner churches wanted to transition to a Latino pastor. The churches conducted a pastor search and hired Pablo Moscoso. Under Moscoso, Agape continued to receive support from the partner churches but was completely under the pastor's leadership as far as direction and ministry goals. The interaction of Agape with the main congregation as First Baptist Hoover was minimal.[16]

Another sponsored ministry was that of Harry Harper in Bessemer. After Harper was no longer needed at Agape, he worked with Hunter Street Baptist Church to begin a Hispanic ministry in the underserved area of Bessemer in 2011. Harper continued as a minister of Hunter Street under the church's missions department but acted as the pastor of the Bessemer church plant, putting as much time into that effort as needed. This

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(The Southern Baptist Thelogical Seminary, 2011), 4–5, 94–6, 285–86; Whitley, interview.

[16] Jeremy Grimes, interview by author, April 9, 2012; Harry Harper, interview by author, March 14, 2012; Pablo Moscoso, interview by author, March 8, 2012.

congregation remained fully separate from Hunter Street with Harper, a former missionary to South America, building his congregation for Latinos in that underserved section of greater Birmingham.[17] Similar to the way other area Hispanic ministries developed, Hunter Street started with a basic plan to found the ministry but then left it to Harper to grow it organically.

In 2011 the Briarwood Presbyterian Hispanic ministry actually shifted from functioning as a fully integrated ministry to being a member of the sponsored but physically separate category of congregations. Briarwood needed more room on its main campus for growing classes and asked the ministry to either move to the afternoon or evenings or to find a location off campus to meet. The group tried an evening service, but it did not work for everyone; so they began looking for a place to rent. They eventually settled on a small vacant church location further south on Highway 119 and close to Shelby County—a growing location for Latinos. Though the transition off of Briarwood's main campus was difficult for the group at first, Taylor found that the new situation gave the group a much greater sense of ownership that could never have happened while meeting in a gym. There was a sense of "this is our church." In the move and settling in to the new location, the women of the church took a leadership role in making the best of the change. The men then followed them in getting excited about the new church location. Though the relationship and Briarwood membership remained, the physical split separated the two congregations.[18]

Finally there was the category of Hispanic ministries that were connected to white churches only in that they shared space. The churches typically wanted to help out but

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[17] Harper, interview.
[18] Taylor, interview.

did not want to be directly involved in ministry. Thus they allowed Hispanic groups to meet at their facilities at times when they were not in use, such as Sunday afternoon. The best example of this arrangement was the ministry of Jose Luis Leon at Westwood Baptist Church in Alabaster of Shelby County. Leon and his congregation met at that location beginning in 2007. They simply used the church facilities on Sunday afternoon when the main congregation left but before evening activities. In this arrangement there was the benefit that Leon had complete autonomy in making decisions for his congregation, but it also meant that his attendees felt membership and financial setbacks even more sharply. Other area Hispanic ministries had the safety net of support from partner congregations.[19] There were actually few congregations in Birmingham that only shared space because they tended to have a higher failure rate.

The level of integration of Hispanic ministries in their respective churches ranged widely and depended on a number of factors. One important issue as mentioned in the previous chapter was leadership. Another related factor was how the church viewed the place of the ministry in the church body. Was it to be a church within a church, a partnership, or a sponsorship? Even those words had different meanings for different leaders and churches. For some, partnership meant congregations without seams, while others saw it as necessitating more separation. Leaders and churches had to make decisions concerning whether the Hispanic ministry should be less separate within the larger church and participate with everyone else as much as possible or should be more on their own—even on the same campus—to allow them a sense of ownership. A related factor was the space for or physical placement of the Hispanic ministry within the church

[19] Jose Luis Leon, interview by author, March 3, 2012.

family. Did they meet in a place where their members crossed paths with the rest of the congregation, thus promoting interaction, or did they meet quite separately and interact with few outside the Hispanic attendees? All of those issues influenced the experience of the Hispanic congregations within their churches and the churches' experiences of having Hispanic congregations as part of their body.

No matter how the structure of Hispanic ministries was designed or developed, they all dealt with the common issue of mobile congregations. Since Alabama in the 1990s through early 2010s only saw the second generation of Latino residents beginning to reach adulthood and continued to receive first-generation immigrants, the population had not reached a state of permanence. Unlike places such as Texas or California with long histories of Latino presence and families living in the same areas for generations developing deep roots, the Latinos of Alabama primarily came to the state looking for work. Their lives and that of their children were dictated by work availability, which was influenced by the economy, immigration status, and state and local politics. Thus individuals and families often had to move from city to city or state to state with little notice when work opportunities dried up, better options appeared elsewhere, or an area became hostile to Latinos. For Hispanic ministries this meant that their congregations were constantly in flux, and the high turnover greatly affected how they developed ministries.

Most of the larger, established Hispanic ministries had the benefit of time. They typically developed a core of families that formed a point of stability. These families were often financially secure and had legal residence in the United States. Thus they were able to keep jobs and raise their children in the same area. The children also

provided a stabilizing force. Parents were much more likely to uproot younger children from their school arrangements than teenagers who formed deeper connections to their friends and schools.[20] Thus the periphery attendees in congregations were often singles who more easily took on new jobs in other places or families with parents who had to deal with uncertainties of employment or immigration status.

The turnover in a church depended on a couple of factors. First was how long the Hispanic congregation had been established. The earliest ministries developed their strong core families over time. Then those members attracted even more families looking for good churches for their children. Three examples of such ministries were Dawson, Center Point, and St. Francis Xavier. Congregations with shorter histories tended to have much higher turnover rates. Even at the Briarwood Hispanic ministry, which after operating for just over a decade had a few core families, most of the congregation saw complete renewal every few years. The other major factor was the location of the ministry. Those ministries in areas that had high concentrations of first-generation, mostly undocumented immigrants tended to have many more transient attendees. For example, the Agape congregation in Hoover was located beside Lorna Road, a landing area for many first-generation immigrants—especially singles in the area looking for work. When Jorge Camacho of the Hispanic ministry at Frist Baptist Pelham had his ministry on Lorna Road, he saw constant turnover as well. At one point his attendees reached about forty, but in one week six left for Atlanta and twelve left for Oklahoma. Thus his congregation suddenly fell by half. At the ministry of Pastor Jose Luis Leon in Shelby County the congregation was relatively new and ministered to many first-

[20] Mosquera, interview.

generation immigrants. Thus most were there for work specifically, and he saw constant high turnover. A congregation with the opposite situation proved the rule. In Anniston there was a longer-established Hispanic ministry at Sacred Heart under Father Bryan Lowe. That area had little immigration but a small established Latino community. As a result, turnover for that congregation was rare.[21] With more transient groups a downturn in the economy or a change in state or local attitudes toward illegal immigrants could quickly shift fortunes and force individuals and families to leave a congregation.

The transient and often unpredictable nature of ministry to Latinos in Birmingham was one reason that partnerships between white and Hispanic congregations were useful on a practical level. A Latino minister deciding to develop a self-sustaining ministry faced an almost insurmountable set of hurdles. The minister had to cope with all of the costs of solo ministry with a highly unpredictable income stream. Therefore developing a budget and even having a permanent meeting location were quite difficult. As a result, most solo ministries met in the homes of ministers and never reached the level of providing enough income to allow the pastor to transition from bivocational to full-time ministry. By partnering with an established white congregation, a Hispanic ministry removed many of the burdens that came with a transient congregation. In those arrangements the base costs of ministry such as facilities and utilities were covered, and the Hispanic congregation could more easily function on the funds provided by its stable core with some financial aid from the larger congregation. This freedom allowed the Hispanic congregations to grow much larger than they would have been able to do as solo ministries in constant struggle.

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[21] Ibid.; Gomez, interview; Bullock, interview; Sullivan, interview; Taylor, interview; Moscoso, interview; Camacho, interview; Leon, interview; Lowe, interview.

The various Hispanic congregations handled finances differently, depending on a mixture of how the church worked and how the Hispanic pastor and congregation wanted to operate. Even among the full-partnership ministries there was a significant amount of financial diversity. At Dawson Memorial Baptist Church Pastors Fenton and Mosquera set up the Hispanic ministry as a department of the church but one with great decision-making autonomy within that department. The Hispanic ministry submitted an annual budget from its own finance committee and then worked out if its own church account through the year. Contributions from the Hispanic congregation went to the general church fund. But the Hispanic congregation of Dawson did financially operate as a "church within a church" to the extent that some of its expenditures duplicated those of the main congregation but focused on the local Latino community. Just as the main congregation had a budget for benevolence, the Hispanic congregation had a benevolence fund. Also the Hispanic congregation had a budget for its adult Sunday school that paralleled the Sunday school budget of the main congregation. Thus the church within a church played a balanced role of being a fully integrated part of Dawson but also acting, in many ways, independently.[22]

Two other churches worked similarly to Dawson. At Frist Baptist Center Point, the Hispanic ministry under Carlos Gomez functioned as a department of the church with its own budget. All of the tithes from the congregation went to the main church fund. The Hispanic ministry's budget allowed it to see to Latino-specific causes such as helping a pastor from Mexico where his church had burned down. The Hispanic ministry at Center Point sponsored that pastor from Mexico to come to Birmingham and be a guest

[22] Mosquera, interview; Fenton, interview.

preacher at several churches. In those services he received "love offerings" or special collections from the attendees who wanted to help his church. Another Birmingham ministry that worked similarly to Dawson was that of Eduardo Torres at the Church at Brook Hills. That ministry also contributed to the general church fund and then set an annual budget. This allowed the pastor to pay an assistant and to make decisions to add common church elements such as a communion table at his discretion. The pastor also used the budget to cover the ministry's secondary location, which required a lease, cleaning, and stocking with supplies. Other budgetary concerns were quarterly publicity within the community, bringing in a medical clinic periodically to the church, and specific advertising for the annual Easter celebration.[23]

The Catholic parishes of Birmingham that had Hispanic ministries actually worked quite similarly to their Protestant counterparts. Each parish collected tithes from its members, both white and Hispanic, which went to the general fund. Part of that money went to the diocese to fund the administration there, which included the Office of Hispanic Ministry. That office also received special funding from an annual Catholic charities drive among the diocese parishes. At individual parishes with Hispanic ministries, the parish budget then allocated funds for those ministries just like any other. Ministries could also choose to do specific fundraisers to bolster their budget or reach certain goals. At St. Francis Xavier the Hispanic ministry held an annual tamale and flauta sale in November. In 2011 that sale brought in $5,000 to the ministry, and the

[23] Gomez, interview; Torres, interview.

annual drive also gave the Hispanic and white congregations a chance to work together on a project.[24]

Other Hispanic ministries in the Birmingham area went the route of maintaining some support from their sponsoring church but trying to fund as much of their own ministry as possible. The ministry of Briarwood Presbyterian started by being fully funded by the church and worked that way for more than a decade, with the Hispanic ministry contributing to the church and developing its own budget but also working to pay for some of its own expenses. But when the congregation moved to a separate location in 2011, they took on a much more independent financial structure. Now the Hispanic congregation took care of the rent and operations of the new location and Briarwood provided the pastor's salary. The Hispanic ministry at Riverchase United Methodist funded as much of its own needs as possible with the tithes and donations of its congregation. Led by Pastor del Castillo, the group paid for maintenance and electricity for the buildings it used as well as purchased any equipment needed, such as new speakers for worship and a vehicle to provide transport to those in need. The giving also provided the salary for the Hispanic church plant minister in Ensley. Over time the Hispanic group even began to give a portion of their offerings back to the main church fund as a symbol of partnership. The main congregation still provided the salary of del Castillo and basic operations of the campus, but the pastor saw the support of the main congregation more as backup in case of emergencies.[25]

The Hispanic ministries at First Baptist Pelham, as partially connected ministries, worked similarly but even more independently. The main congregation provided the

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[24] Ackerman, interview; Bullock, interview.
[25] Taylor, interview; del Castillo, interview; Savage, interview.

location and some non-monetary resources, but the Hispanic congregation did not receive funds directly from the main congregation. Thus they took care of the Pastor Camacho's salary and any other needs on their own. When Camacho's congregation originally rented a location in Hoover, almost all of their resources went to that one expense. Once at First Baptist Pelham, however, they were able to direct that money elsewhere. In fact, Camacho preached a month-long sermon series on the topic of finances once they were at the new location. He told the congregation that having those costs eliminated was a blessing, but even though their basic expenses were covered, it was not the time to stop giving. In fact, it was time to be more financially faithful so they could expand their ministry. Shortly thereafter the congregation was able to purchase a van for church use, and in 2012 the lay leaders told Camacho that they wanted to set aside enough funds for him so that he could move from being bivocational to focusing solely on ministry.[26]

Another ministry similar to that at First Baptist Pelham was the one led by Marco Requena at Alliance Church that eventually shut down due to loss of members and finances. When Requena partnered with Alliance, the plan was for the church to allow the use of their space as well as provide a third of Requena's salary. Another third would come from the denomination, and the final third would come from the tithes of the Hispanic congregation. At first tithes were sufficient, so that the main congregation did not have to provide funding. But the congregation was small, thus leaving it vulnerable to small changes in its congregation producing big changes for the whole group. In 2008 one of the Hispanic families providing a large tithe left to go to a church closer to their home. Then on the side of the main congregation there was significant loss. In the span

[26] Shaw, interview; Camacho, interview.

of a year one family left the main congregation, seven people died, and the rest of the retirement-aged congregation were significantly affected by the economic downturn. As a result they also lost the ability to sustain the Hispanic ministry, and the Hispanic congregation at Alliance had to disband due to loss of finances.[27]

Agape church was an example of a Hispanic ministry that received support from several churches but supplied as much of its own finances as possible. Early on in establishing Agape the partner churches split the costs of fully financing the ministry and the host churches provided the physical location. Over time, and especially after Moscoso took over as head pastor, the Agape congregation provided much of its own operating finances, including the pastor's salary, through tithes. As Agape continued to fund itself as much as possible, the partner churches continued their support by giving to a fund for Agape that would eventually allow for the purchase or construction of a permanent location for the Hispanic congregation. Following the economic downturn in 2008, however, those plans were put on hold to avoid making financial mistakes that would harm Agape. Also, when Alabama passed a stringent immigration law in 2011, Agape went through an extended period of very low attendance and even permanently lost some of its membership. Thus the nest egg put away by the partner churches came into use temporarily to fund the congregation's expenses. They had to wait to see how laws would play out before making a decision on the church's future physical location.[28]

The Episcopal Hispanic ministry in Birmingham, La Gracia, functioned similarly to Agape in that it was partially sponsored, but it had a very difficult time financially. La Gracia ministered to a very poor segment of the Latino community that was also very

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[27] Marco Requena, interview by author, March 10, 2012.
[28] Grimes, interview; Moscoso, interview.

fluid in attendance. Thus there was never a consistent stream of giving. The ministry was supported by several Episcopal churches each giving some funds and the Episcopal diocese paying the salary of Pastor Afanador-Kafuri. Previously one member of St. Luke's Episcopal church provided La Gracia a thousand dollars annually, but they had to stop giving with the financial downturn in 2008. Not until 2012 did the diocese began budgeting money for La Gracia specifically.[29]

At the most difficult end of the scale were the small Hispanic congregations that shared space with white congregations but were fully separate and responsible for their own finances. One example of these churches was that of Jose Luis Leon. Over the years the ministry of he and his wife had been sponsored by several white churches, and in 2007 they partnered with Westwood Baptist Church, which allowed the use of space. Leon continued as a bivocational pastor. During the week he worked with his wife cleaning houses, and on the weekend and at various points of the week as needed he served as pastor. He did work on teaching his congregation about tithing but found that it was a big stretch to ask them to give when they had their own bills and families to take care of. Nevertheless, in 2011 the congregation began providing some support to Leon.[30]

In addition to simply expecting attendees to give to churches, pastors also had to take into consideration the relationship of Hispanic congregations and Latinos in general to money in the realm of their faith. For the majority of first-generation immigrants, their background was poverty and Catholicism. They were raised in their home countries with very little money, and they had little to no training in budgeting and in the biblical management of money taught by churches in the U.S. In their home countries Latinos

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[29] Hernan Afanador Kafuri, interview by author, March 6, 2012.
[30] Leon, interview.

were rarely if ever asked to give a tithe of their income. In Mexican parishes the primary giving was for alms for the poor. Most of the money given to those parishes actually came at special occasions such as *quinceañeras* or the announcement of godparents. For those events people asked the priest what they owed to the church. With that financial background, many Hispanics had no expectations of regular giving in U.S. churches and often had difficulty with the concept if a pastor introduced it. For that reason some Hispanic ministries—especially those with high turnover—struggled to receive regular income.[31]

Finances played a significant role in the formation and implementation of Hispanic ministries as with any other modern human interaction. The churches all worked to put spiritual matters first, but in practical terms they simply could not function without money. Thus finances were a major reason that so many white churches had Hispanic congregations. Since Alabama's Latino population was so new, it had not become fully established and was thus very fluid. As a result, most ministries could not fully support themselves in terms of paying for a pastor's salary, purchasing or renting a location to hold services, and providing funds for ministries. This was a major reason that whites and Hispanics partnered together. White churches could provide the necessary resources as part of their outreach. Had money not been an issue, it is likely that many Hispanic congregations would have had their own locations and separate ministries. Nevertheless, money provided an impetus for partnership, and the ministries were born.

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[31] Dean Self, interview by author, February 27, 2012; Requena, interview; Father Daniel Stack, "The Religious Response," in *Voices from the Nueva Frontera: Latino Immigration in Dalton, Georgia*, ed. Donald E. Davis et al. (Knoxville, Tenn.: The University of Tennessee Press, 2009), 67.

Worship was the aspect of church life where Hispanic ministries were the most on their own and fully immersed in their own culture, across the spectrum of churches. During worship times congregations engaged in styles and formats most connected to their heritage and tradition. Due to both language and differences in culture the worship services of whites and Hispanics were separate. The only exception to this rule came in the special occasions when churches maintained the connection of their congregations by holding bilingual services. Language was an obvious separation. Worship was when all of the adults in the church gathered together, so a separate Spanish service was needed to serve the primarily first-generation immigrant congregations. This is where the concept of heart language worship was the most important. The churches wanted to give their Hispanic attendees the opportunity to worship and hear preaching in the language they found most comfortable. While a separate worship service in another language was an accommodation of the Spanish speakers, the service also served as an accommodation of both Hispanics and whites in regards to traditions of spiritual expression. Latinos who came from Protestant traditions in other countries tended to use styles of worship that, in the eyes of Americans, fit among the charismatic denominations. Thus Latino worship services adopted a very energetic style. White southerners among the Baptists, Methodists, Presbyterians, and several denominations had their traditional style of worship as well which, in comparison to the Latinos, looked staid. Even without language as an issue, combining first-generation Latinos and whites into the same congregation would have been a major challenge if not impossible due to preferences of tradition.

The traditions of white services in the South varied by denomination, but all had similar elements. Overall they maintained a quite reverent nature with the pastor and worship leader leading that tempo. Early parts of the service typically included prayer, corporate reading of the Bible, worship with three to five songs that often came from the hymn book, a greeting time of saying hello to those seated nearest, and collection of tithes and offerings. The middle part focused on the sermon from the pastor. The service then typically concluded with a benediction and a verse of a song. Not all denominations had every element, and some had more. But overall most denominations followed a similar pattern. Even more similarity was found in the attitude and energy of worship. The congregation followed the lead of the pastor or worship leader very closely in regards to when they should sit or stand and when to participate in general. In worship most attendees simply sang along, with a few choosing to raise their hands as part of the act of worship. Sometimes as the minister preached an attendee might offer an "amen" to agree with a point, but the vast majority chose to remain silent as they listened.

White congregations also had very specific expectations concerning the length of worship services. The entire service typically ran between one hour and a hour and fifteen minutes depending on the church, and services running over time was not typically appreciated except on certain occasions when the pastor felt it necessary. This fairly strict concern over time came from a mixture of other events at the church happening on a schedule, people's attention span waning after about an hour, and simple expectations due to tradition. The energy of white worship services was also affected by the structure put in place for children. In general children were allowed to remain in the service if the parents wanted them to do so, but the collective expectation was that

children remained well behaved and quiet. If a baby or child became disruptive to the rest of the congregation, which in the silence of a service meant a very small amount of noise, the parent usually removed them quickly to a room outside the sanctuary. To help parents worship, churches typically provided child care for babies up through elementary school. The elementary school age children often attended a separate "children's church," where a leader would provide a simple lesson and music designed for the age group. Again, not all of these elements appeared at all Protestant churches, but they were part of most. And many churches had begun to make adaptations by including contemporary worship services to cater to younger generations that preferred more modern and energetic music or even simply mixing in contemporary music into their existing worship times alongside classic hymns. Other elements, however, typically remained the same.

Hispanic worship services contained many of the same elements as white services, but the energy differed quite dramatically. In fact, the order of events mirrored that in white services. Prayer, Bible reading, worship, greeting time, and offering collection were all there followed by the pastor's sermon and closing elements. But the individual elements took on a different life in the traditions of Latinos. The most vibrant and central element of Hispanic worship services was music. Most churches had a worship leader as well as a band that played upbeat and energetic songs expected and appreciated by the congregation. Worship times typically went much longer than in white services—often lasting ninety minutes or even two hours. As most elements in Hispanic services took significantly longer, except for the sermon which was shorter, those congregations had no problem with services running two hours or longer.

Individual participation in worship also differed as the expectations on expression were much looser. Some only sang while others raised their hands and even danced. Typically the style of expression had to do with a person's country of origin. Mexicans typically were more reserved, while individuals from other countries often took a more energetic approach. Also, a Hispanic service in general was simply more boisterous. The greeting time was a much anticipated period when people moved around the congregation saying hello to friends and strangers. Children had a greater presence as well. Unlike white congregations where there was a collective expectation of children to remain quiet and still, Hispanic congregations simply accepted the movement and noise made by children. Obviously a parent would calm an extremely disruptive child, but Hispanic services generally had a higher base noise level that did not bother attendees.

With their differences in worship style, music preferences, overall service length, and expectations of child behavior, churches found it best to have separate services for whites and Hispanics based on style and tradition as well as language. Trying to meld traditions would have been possible, as was seen in periodic joint worship services, but doing so might have reduced the number of white congregations with the desire to have Hispanic congregations as part of their church.

An integral part of each worship service that provided religious education and exhortation was the pastor's sermon. A church or congregation was typically guided in its spiritual growth and ministry goals through the minister's weekly exposition. Sometimes pastors chose sermons based on a spiritual discipline that they felt their congregation should learn on a deeper level. Other times sermons might address a goal of the church and how that goal fit into spiritual matters or how spiritual matters call for

that goal. Either type of sermon might be preached as a standalone work, or they might be part of a larger collection of sermons, called a series, that could continue over two to ten or more Sundays. These single or series of sermons guided the congregation along the path that the pastor felt the church should go.

In the partnerships between white and Hispanic congregations there was a challenge when it came to sermons. Was it better for Hispanic pastors to copy or at least base their sermons on that of the main pastor so that the two congregations traveled the spiritual and ministry development road together, or was it better for the pastors to simply do what each thought was better for their congregations separately? Though some congregations differed, the vast majority followed the plan of Hispanic pastors developing separate topics and sermons specifically for their congregations. Primarily the reasoning behind this decision was that culturally the mostly first-generation Hispanic congregations were quite different from their white counterparts. Much more than language, most pastors felt that the issue was one of needs and understanding. Latinos had concerns and personal trials that whites dealt with little if at all, and the reverse was true in some cases. Also, several pastors stressed that examples used for American audiences did not translate well culturally. You could change the words to Spanish, but the meaning and significance was lost. Shakespeare references were useless if a person never heard or read Shakespeare. It was also important for Hispanic pastors to consider the level of education in their audience. White pastors could generally assume their congregations had a high school level of education, and the median level was often much more. For Hispanic pastors, many of their attendees had been working since a young age and had little formal education. Many immigrant parents had young children with higher

levels of education than their own. Thus forms of argument and abstract concepts that might work for an average white congregation did not serve a first-generation immigrant audience. With those issues in mind, most church partnerships made the decision to develop sermons separately. Sometimes the pastors of main and Hispanic congregations collaborated for special occasions, but separate was the general rule. Pastor Moscoso at Agape noted that the Gospel was the same for all, but different people responded to different presentations.[32]

Eduardo Torres at the Church at Brook Hills was an excellent example of this issue of sermons. When he began at Brook Hills he wanted his congregation to follow along with the main congregation. So each week he would translate and adapt the main pastor's sermon to Spanish and then present it to his congregation. Torres did that for six to ten sermon series until he decided that it simply did not work for his audience, which had a much different culture. It was easier and more effective for Torres to develop his own sermons. Even the pacing of the sermon differed, as a Hispanic congregation preferred an energetic preacher. They also preferred shorter sermons at less than thirty minutes rather than those of the main pastor who often offered sermons closer to forty-five minutes. Pastor Gomez at Center Point also noted that for many Latinos, Sunday was their only day that they could make time to come to church, so he made sure that they got enough scripture, explanation, and application in each sermon. Catholic priests faced the task of leading both white and Hispanic congregations within the same parish. The typical plan for most was to develop a topic and general plan for the sermon but flesh out the details differently for the two audiences. They recognized the cultural differences

[32] Taylor, interview; Torres, interview; Gomez, interview; Camacho, interview; Mosquera, interview; Moscoso, interview.

and adapted to each. The only exception to the rule of separate sermons was at The Church of the Highlands. That church preferred the Hispanic pastor, Alex Solito, to translate the head pastor's sermon for the Hispanic congregation.[33]

Beyond worship preferences and sermons, culture also played a role in expressions of traditions. One of the great challenges for the pastors of Hispanic congregations was the sheer diversity of their members. Most white Southern congregations likely had few attendees of significantly different cultures or ethnicities. The vast majority were quite homogenous. But Hispanic congregations represented the other extreme. The larger congregations of Latinos in Birmingham had attendees from as many as eighteen countries. Mexican and Guatemalan nationals often made up the largest contingents of members for most congregations, but the mixture of Mexican, Central American, and South American cultures proved a significant challenge. Individuals from Mexico spoke a significantly different version of Spanish and maintained quite different traditions than others from Argentina, Ecuador, or Nicaragua. Sometimes members found it difficult to understand one another due to differences in dialect and traditions. Over the years Pastor Gomez at First Baptist Center Point, who was originally from Puerto Rico, found that he had to expand his Spanish vocabulary to accommodate words and phrases that only existed in other countries or carried quite different meanings than what he intended. Pastor Mosquera at Dawson likened the situation to a church created from individuals from the U.S., England, and Ireland. They all might speak the same language, but the cultural divisions would prove challenging. In sermons Hispanic pastors regularly returned to the topic of unity and family among

[33] Torres, interview; Ackerman, interview; Sullivan, interview; Lowe, interview; Taylor, interview.

Christians to help bridge the cultural gaps in their congregations. They found that focusing on Biblical teachings on unity had the greatest success in rallying the congregations together. But pastors differed in how they went about promoting unity. Brad Taylor made special efforts to downplay groupings by country and guide the congregation to do everything together as one. Fernando del Castillo took a somewhat opposite approach, at least during worship, when his congregation had a weekly procession of national flags and celebrated the diversity of the congregation very deliberately. Pastor Jorge Camacho had a different perspective on the matter, given his background as a minister in Texas. He found that in the older receiving areas of the country such as Texas or California, people were generally set in their ways and split off into groups. In Alabama he found it much easier to pastor a diverse congregation. Since most were first generation and had much smaller support systems, they tended to work well with others in the congregation despite cultural differences.[34]

For Catholics in Birmingham the parishes faced many of the same challenges as the Protestants in finding ways to merge people from various cultures into congregations that worked well. Brenda Bullock at St. Francis Xavier found that one of the best ways to incorporate everyone was to make the differences fun rather than problematic. People could learn from one another when there were different words for the same fruit, for example. The same congregation also found it best to let those inclined to certain tasks thrive in those areas even if it meant those parts of ministry being dominated by a certain group. The most prominent example was that the St. Francis choir was primarily Guatemalan, so the musical selections often included some songs unfamiliar to attendees

[34] Gomez, interview; Mosquera, interview; Taylor, interview; del Castillo, interview; Camacho, interview; Torres, interview.

from other countries. Bullock also found, as a coordinator for the diocese, that parishes often received attendees from similar backgrounds due to personal networks drawing people, often family and friends, from one place in a home country to the same area in Alabama. For example, St. Francis and Birmingham in general had large contingents from three areas of Mexico: Guanajuato, Salvatierra, and Jalisco. North of Birmingham, in the Fultondale area, the largest contingent was from Acambay. Rather than a rule for each parish, such groupings were a regular trend seen in the diocese.[35]

Unlike the Protestant churches, Catholic parishes generally had an easier time incorporating Hispanic traditions into their congregations. For the Protestant churches such traditions tended to take place near but not directly in the space used by the white congregation. This was typically due to Hispanic congregations meeting at different locations or times. The only times traditions mixed came during collaboration services. In the Catholic parishes Hispanic congregations typically had one hurdle to cross before they and their traditions were quite fully incorporated into the life of the church. For a number of years parishes were slow in accepting Latinos as full members, instead seeing them more as ministries. Early on the diocese moved progressively by setting up a Hispanic office, but in individual parishes the responsibility of incorporating the Hispanics into the church body fell to the priest. The priest could either choose to make the Hispanics full members by recognizing their particular needs and traditions or choose to generally ignore them. Over time the number of priests ignoring Hispanic congregations dwindled with uninterested priests either retiring or being reassigned. New priests willing to serve the Latinos were placed in parishes with Hispanic congregations.

[35] Bullock, interview; Lowe, interview.

The best example of this movement was at St. Francis Xavier. Up to 2007 the parish priest, likely out of tradition and deference to the long-term members, did not fully incorporate the significant Hispanic congregation into the church. Then in 2007 Father Robert Sullivan was assigned by the bishop to the position of priest at St. Francis. After that point Hispanic traditions were given full weight and celebrated.[36]

For the Catholic parishes that worked to integrate Hispanic congregations into the body, the incorporation of Hispanic traditions was still a challenge but worked more seamlessly than with Protestant congregations. Since many Latino traditions centered around the church and had roots in Catholicism, the parishes simply added the traditions to their own. For example, a major celebration for Latinos each year was the celebration of the Lady of Guadalupe around Christmas. At Prince of Peace parish led by Father Ackerman in the Hoover area, the church held a rosary nine days before the festival along with special services and a feast. Over the years a few white members of the parish visited these events. At Ackerman's previous assignment in the northeast Alabama parish of Guntersville, the Hispanic congregation there held a public procession as part of the Lady of Guadalupe celebration. Their event was recognized by the local white Knights of Columbus group, which provided an honor guard. In Anniston, a city an hour east of Birmingham, the Sacred Heart parish of Father Bryan Lowe, former vicar of Hispanic ministry, had rosaries and special prayers leading up to the celebration. Then on the closest Sunday before the celebration, the church held a bilingual mass at eleven in the morning. Lowe found that it was a good way for the Hispanics and whites to share some experiences and connect the two congregations. One year the Hispanic

[36] Ackerman, interview; Bullock, interview; Sullivan, interview; Lowe, interview.

congregation even presented Father Lowe with a Lady of Guadalupe—decorated vestment as a Christmas present. Father Robert Sullivan at St. Francis Xavier also found that the Lady of Guadalupe celebration was a good way for the two congregations to share experiences. That church set up a shrine to the Lady of Guadalupe for the duration of the celebration period, and it stayed there for all of the masses both white and Hispanic. Father Sullivan found that the trappings of the celebration were a visual reminder of the fact that the Church was truly global and thus included many types of peoples with many traditions.[37]

The parishes also incorporated the Hispanic tradition of the *quinceañera* or the recognition and celebration of a girl turning fifteen. This event was based on the story that Jesus's mother, Mary, was visited by the angel Gabriel at that age, and it was a tradition especially prevalent for congregations with Mexican families. Prince of Peace, St. Francis Xavier, and Sacred Heart all held such celebrations. At Sacred Heart the priest chose, rather than a special service, to do the recognition during a mass of the family's choosing, which sometimes meant a bilingual mass. After the homily, the girl offered a prayer of devotion, and the priest then gave her a special blessing at the end of the mass. Lowe found that the girls liked the idea of getting dressed up and doing prayers of dedication. They had the option of doing prayers in Spanish or English depending, on what they preferred. Lowe had a bilingual book of prayers to accommodate those needs. For the mass and following celebration much of the Hispanic congregation would typically attend in support. One associated tradition for some families was for the girl to wear low-heeled shoes to the mass, and then at the celebration her father presented her

[37] Lowe, interview; Ackerman, interview; Bullock, interview; Sullivan, interview.

with high heels and danced with her to symbolize that she was now a young woman. Along the same line of tradition as the *quinceañera* was that of the presentation of girls on their third birthday. This event was connected to the story of Mary being presented by her parents to the temple at that age. The presentation was less involved than the *quinceañera*. During or at the end of mass the priest offered a special blessing on the child.[38]

For some Protestant pastors, however, some traditions might conflict with traditions of conduct within certain denominations. The primary example of this conflict was that Latino celebrations often traditionally included dancing. For some Baptist churches that adhered to that denomination's traditional moratorium on dancing, such celebrations could not be held at the church. At First Baptist Pelham, Pastor Shaw felt that it was best to maintain the no-dancing rule to avoid lapses in judgment in the congregation. Since the Hispanic congregation under Jorge Camacho used the Frist Baptist Pelham facilities, that congregation fell under and abided by the rules of the church. Agape church under Pastor Moscoso had a similar rule, but the decision against dancing came from the Hispanic pastor rather than the church that provided the facilities. Similar to Shaw, Moscoso felt that the church was not an appropriate place for dancing. Thus the traditional post-wedding and *quinceañera* dances were not held at the church but might be moved to another location.[39]

The placement of the Hispanic Catholic elements in Catholic churches as well as the performance of Hispanic Catholic traditions were a significant departure for parishes that for many decades celebrated only a single culture. This was a change repeated many

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[38] Ackerman, interview; Lowe, interview; Bullock, interview; Sullivan, interview.
[39] Shaw, interview; Harper, interview.

times across the South. In some cases, as in Dalton, Georgia, the white congregation actually became the minority congregation, making the Hispanics the dominate culture at the parish—a challenge not faced by any of the Birmingham parishes. But even the addition of a minority of Hispanic Catholics brought new experiences to parishes that challenged the status quo. One way to view those changes was the concept of sharing sacred spaces. Other communities in the South had experienced an influx of Latinos who brought new cultures and traditions that overlapped and shared the same space—sometimes space considered sacred. In the case of Siler City, North Carolina, it was the downtown area where the city had in the past held its July 4th parade and the Latino newcomers held their Good Friday Procession. The white Protestants actually brought back their parade to continue some claim to their sacred space.[40] That analysis of the Siler City parades could be also applied to the white and Latino Catholics sharing the sacred space of parishes in Birmingham and throughout the South. Latinos brought new elements and traditions such as the Virgin of Guadalupe, *quinceañeras*, and child presentations that were unfamiliar to white Catholics. No priests reported hostility toward the Hispanics and their traditions, but all of the parishes had to make decisions in how they negotiated the use of the sacred space of the church so both groups felt at home. The same was true to a lesser extent for Protestant churches with Hispanic congregations, but in those churches the two congregations did not interact as much when it came to traditions.

[40] Stack, "The Religious Response," 70–1; Chad E. Seales, "Padres and Processions: Protestant and Catholic Ritual Performances in a Nuevo New South Town," *Numen* 55 (2008): 44–7, 58–64.

Overall, however, Protestant churches generally were accepting of the traditions of Hispanic congregations. For most churches the traditions of upbeat music and even dancing with worship were accepted for the congregations of Latinos. Sometimes Protestant Hispanic pastors did field questions concerning religious traditions from Catholic upbringings that still carried weight in the people's lives. One of the biggest points was the worship of the Virgin Mary—a very important figure in Latin American Catholicism and Catholicism in general. Some attendees would ask their pastors why Mary did not receive more emphasis. Pastors typically used such questions as teaching moments to guide the people in their spiritual development without driving them away by attacking beliefs. In the case of the Virgin Mary, Harry Harper typically responded that she was very important in the overall story of Jesus's live, death, and resurrection. Jorge Camacho found that it was best to ease into such discussions. He preferred to discuss the importance of Mary and then help his congregation grow by pointing to Bible verses that called on Christians to not worship humans.[41]

The two factors that separated Hispanic and white congregations were language and culture. Language was a barrier of practicality. Separate worship services made sense as bilingual services were time consuming and difficult except on special occasions. But the other factor, culture, was a barrier of preference and choice. Both congregations preferred to worship according to their traditions except on special occasions. When Birmingham churches began to reach out to Latinos in the 1990s, that population was almost all first generation. Thus both language and culture were absolute barriers. But within twenty years the pastors who began those first ministries were seeing

[41] Harper, interview; Camacho, interview.

the children of the first generation, the second generation, preparing to enter adulthood.[42] The pastors and churces with Hispanic ministries recognized that children were the key to crossing both of the barriers between generations. Some churches responded to that possibility by choosing to fully integrate the Hispanic children into the existing children's program, while others chose to maintain a separate Hispanic ministry that had its own children's activities and let the integration take place at its own pace.

Children proved a complex issue for churches. Often they were born in the U.S. or were brought to the country at a young age. In either case the U.S. was their home country, no matter their citizenship status. This second generation assimilated more easily than their parents, but they often found themselves in a position between cultures. At home they spoke Spanish with their parents and engaged in the traditions of their parents' home country. But everywhere else they were fully part of the majority culture, typically speaking perfect English and grasping American traditions as well. Subsequent generations rarely faced such issues as they assimilated into the majority culture more and more. In places such as Texas where Latinos had long lived, a large portion of the modern Latino population did not even speak Spanish. But for the second generation in Alabama, assimilation was much more of choice, and use of English over Spanish was one of the first places that that differentiation took place as children easily absorbed language. Within families this change often created disruption as parents tried to maintain Spanish use in the household while children pushed back with their preferred English. This was the same process experienced by numerous national, cultural, or

[42] Mosquera, interview; Gomez, interview.

language groups that had come to the US in the past.[43] Then for the second and subsequent generations the issue of language was the reversal of the heart language ministries created by the churches. Generations after the first typically wanted their church services and classes in English because that was the language in which they were most comfortable expressing themselves. The Spanish ministries in Birmingham continued to be needed as more first-generation immigrants arrived, restarting the process; but greater numbers of later-generation children led to greater need for English ministries as well.

Several churches took the path of fully immersing children in the main program with classes based in English. Often the Hispanic congregation in these churches set up Spanish Sunday school classes for the smallest children not yet English proficient. This process worked the same for the older children known as youth. At Dawson Pastor Mosquera found it quite natural for the Hispanic children and youth to be fully included in the main church program. He said that they grew up in Birmingham or at least within the US, so they were very comfortable with English. They were included in weekly Sunday school classes, vacation Bible school, and youth trips such as the Spring trip to the Christian youth rally, Breakaway, at the Gulf Coast. The Hispanic congregation also held its own VBS in addition to the VBS of the main congregation that some Latinos attended. The purpose of the Hispanic VBS was less for the children but more for the parents who could not speak English and were more comfortable interacting with the VBS workers from the Hispanic congregation.[44]

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[43] Hanks, interview; Mosquera, interview; Lowe, interview; Harper, interview.
[44] Fenton, interview; Mosquera, interview.

Similar to Dawson, the children of the Hispanic congregation at First Baptist Center Point also fully integrated into the children's and youth programs of the main congregation. For the children and teenagers, English was a native language, but Pastor Gomez enjoyed teasing the teenagers about speaking Spanish with a southern accent. He understood that it was simply part of the process for that generation. Another church that fully integrated the Hispanic children was one that was not a fully integrated Hispanic congregation. At Frist Baptist Pelham the Hispanic congregation shared much with the main congregation but was not technically part of the church. Pastor Camacho was not on the church staff, and the attendees were not members of First Baptist Pelham. The Hispanic congregation did, however, share almost everything else with the main congregation including Sunday school classes for children and youth. The main congregation held three services, and the Hispanic congregation held one. During the third hour the children of the Hispanic congregation went to Sunday school alongside the white kids. Both Pastor Shaw of the main congregation and Pastor Camacho of the Hispanics found that the children were happy with the arrangement. Many of the Hispanic and white kids attended weekday school with each other in Pelham, Hoover, or Helena, so the children found it fun to see each other on the weekend as well. Shaw and area missionary Cary Hanks believed that being in the classes helped the Hispanic children as it further mainstreamed them in the dominate culture. Also since the long-term outlook for Shelby County was continued growth of the Latino population, it was important for the church to serve that group. Hanks believed it was a key step so that the children would not want to move away later in life.[45]

[45] Gomez, interview; Shaw, interview; Camacho, interview; Hanks, interview.

It is important to not underestimate the significance of the children and youth of the Hispanic congregations being a part of the main children's and youth ministries in the churches discussed above. Even though they likely did not realize it at the time, their participation served an astonishing number of functions. On the surface it allowed them to simply be part of a larger group when they could easily have been excluded. Their participation also gave them an innate sense that they belonged—a strong belief that could impact many of their decisions in life including future education, jobs, marriage, and many others. It also gave them a way to access the majority culture of the area in which they lived. This familiarity went far beyond what they could gain in regular school relationships but extended into the much more intimate realm of religion and faith. By growing up with white kids as equals in school and church, they began forming roots and connections in the larger community. The participation was also important for the parents of the children and youth. Parents often learn and grow through the experiences of their children, and in the case of church the parents got to see how integrated their children could be. Where they, the parents, often had to be in separate services and Sunday school programs out of necessity, their children could pass between languages and cultures with ease and be accepted in both. Those parents then felt a bit more accepted as well. Such positive interactions allowed parents to be more comfortable with being part of a church alongside whites. Also, the presence of the Hispanic children was incredibly important for the white congregations. The white children and youth became friends with Hispanic peers and easily crossed ethnic barriers that their parents found difficult. This positive experience encouraged the parents to reach out to their own Hispanic peers and continue their interest in partnering with a Hispanic congregation.

Also for the white children and youth, the early positive experience in the church setting would influence how they responded to Latinos as they became adults. As the Latino population grew and matured in Alabama, the lines between it and the white community would likely blur as a result of good will developed during experiences of youth.

One other church included children of the Hispanic congregation in the main children's program, but later it actually changed locations and had its own Sunday school program. Briarwood Presbyterian began its Hispanic congregation in 2000 and included those children fully in the children's and youth programs on the main campus. In 2012, however, the Hispanic congregation of Briarwood moved to a new location further south. As a result, that congregation developed its own Sunday school classes. They determined the language used in each class on a case-by-case basis depending on the desires and preferences of both the teacher and the students. Pastor Taylor found that parents very much wanted the children to retain Spanish abilities and thus wanted them to get some instruction in the language. But Taylor also recognized that the children simply preferred English and thus took a bilingual approach that served the needs at the moment. Taylor believed that churches had to accommodate and adapt for the second generation. If one did not "find a way to minister to the second generation kids, you're going to lose them . . . It's a big issue."[46]

A 2006 study by Michael O. Emerson of multiracial churches pointed to integrated congregations as the future but noted that it was much easier to start such a congregation than to adapt an existing one. The study also found that within multiracial congregations one of the benefits was that members had much more racially diverse

[46] Taylor, interview.

social ties.[47] The churches in Birmingham proved these points quite well. The parallel congregations were started at long-standing churches, so the adults had some connection but not much. But the children of the congregations that used the same Sunday school classes for all youth saw very strong connections between the Latinos and whites. With that experience as the social norm for the younger generation, religious leaders hoped that it would lead to more diverse congregations in the future—much as Emerson described.

The Briarwood Hispanic congregation became a separate children's program, but several churches maintained separate children's programs from their inception. At the Church at Brook Hills the Hispanic ministry, though fully a part of the church as a ministry, maintained a separate children's and youth program. In fact, the Hispanic ministry had two part-time ministers who worked with the children and youth specifically. During worship time the ministry provided a separate children's worship service in English. Pastor Torres noted that the ministry used teaching materials equivalent to that of the main congregation. Similarly, the Hispanic congregation at Riverchase United Methodist functioned as a full ministry of the church, but it maintained a separate children's and youth ministry. Pastor Castillo found that many of the parents in his congregation wanted their children to be in class using Spanish to preserve their Spanish skills. Thus that congregation focused on Spanish-based Sunday school. But the Hispanic congregation did participate in the main congregation's vacation Bible school each summer with the Hispanic children attending in English-language activities, classes, and services alongside everyone else.[48]

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[47] Michael O. Emerson, *People of the Dream: Multiracial Congregations in the United States* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2006), 6, 20, 87, 96.
[48] Torres, interview; del Castillo, interview; Savage, interview.

At the Catholic Hispanic ministries of Birmingham the general plan for children's and youth ministries was for the Hispanic congregations to mostly work separately with some crossover, particularly among the youth, if the individuals wanted to do so. The focus for parishes was on religious education and not language training, so they used bilingual efforts to suit needs as they arose. In fact, at St. Francis Xavier, which had the largest Hispanic congregation in Birmingham, Father Robert Sullivan noted that he had not heard parents expressing a desire for the religious education of their children to be in Spanish to reinforce the language. To engage parents, who mostly spoke Spanish, in the process of religious education the parishes provided information for them in their primary language. Then for the children, catechism classes were bilingual. In other children's and youth activities outside of catechism, the parishes primarily functioned in English. For example, at Prince of Peace parish in Hoover some Hispanic children attended the parish school as well as the annual vacation Bible school, but their numbers were few. The Catholic parishes had not developed youth programs specifically for their Hispanic congregations primarily due to difficulty in participation levels. It was a challenge to get the first-generation immigrant parents involved in the religious education of their children due to either lack of concern or work schedules that did not allow them to ferry their children to church outside of Sunday. The few Hispanic youth who did want to participate got involved with the main congregation program. But all of the Catholic parishes with Hispanic ministries recognized that the interaction of the children was the best opportunity for integration between the Hispanic and white congregations. As a

result, they continued to focus their efforts in developing ministries for children and youth as generational changes would bring the two closer together over time.[49]

Other Protestant congregations had separate children's programs simply because they were fully separate from the white congregations with which they shared their facilities. At Agape the Hispanic congregation shared the facilities of First Baptist Hoover but maintained a completely separate children's program. It was just after the founding of Agape that the sponsoring churches realized that they had to attend to the second generation differently. It came as a bit of a surprise to the fledgling congregation. Suddenly they had a number of children who had English as their primary language, and the church had to adapt. When Pastor Moscoso took over, he realized the need and believed in heart language ministry. Thus he made sure that Sunday school classes were bilingual when they needed to be. The other separate but sponsored Hispanic ministry in the area was the one created in Bessemer by Hunter Street Baptist Church, and led by Pastor Harry Harper. That congregation, as a very new effort in 2012, worked to be a "family-oriented" ministry. Though it saw only twenty-five adults on Sunday mornings, that number doubled with the addition of children and youth who had their own classes. Similarly, the congregation of Pastor Leon at Westwood Baptist also shared the facilities of a white congregation but maintained a separate class for the children. There the teacher used bilingual methods as needed. At the episcopal Hispanic congregation in Birmingham, Pastor Afanador-Kafuri taught the Sunday school for the children and also used a bilingual method.[50]

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[49] Ackerman, interview; Bullock, interview; Lowe, interview; Sullivan, interview.
[50] Grimes, interview; Moscoso, interview; Harper, interview; Leon, interview; Kafuri, interview.

In addition to ministries such as worship services and youth programs geared for their own attendees, each of the Hispanic congregations also engaged in outreach to the larger Latino community. One way was outreach to local children who were not part of the congregation. To do so, several congregations held events in trailer parks or outside near their church to make it easily accessible. In one case the events took the form of an informal VBS or Backyard Bible Club where church volunteers set up a sort of day camp at a local trailer park where a large number of Latinos lived. Pastor Harper's ministry in Bessemer used this method and held a five-day event. Each day involved Bible lessons, music, snacks, and crafts. He had recently seen such an event work on mission trips to Chile. On one trip they did not see a big response, but on the second trip they had over fifty children show up. Harper felt that the event was a great way to reach both children and adults. For the children it was about learning while having fun. But the event also served as an outreach to Latino adults who had a chance to see church volunteers working with their children. Rather than a threat, the church became a group of people who could be trusted. This led to deeper connections and possible ministry opportunities in the future. When Pastor Camacho of First Baptist Pelham first began his ministry in the new location, he began holding small parties for local children in the trailer parks. His congregation would pass out invitations and then show up at a certain time with food. It was a way to become familiar to the people in that location and begin building relationships. Camacho planned to begin doing summer Bible schools in local trailer parks during the summer. Other churches in the Birmingham area used similar techniques periodically as outreach efforts. One other example was the weekly sports ministry used by Pastor Gomez at Center Point. On Fridays there was a standing

invitation for local youths to come to First Baptist Center Point and play basketball or volley ball. Gomez often provided hot dogs for everyone and also used the time to instruct. He encouraged the use of Spanish during the games to help the youths retain their parent's language. As part of the gathering the pastor offered a five-to-ten-minute devotional time so that the attendees received some religious instruction as well.[51]

Probably the most common type of community outreach by churches was English as a second language (ESL) training. Most churches ministering to Latinos used ESL over the years as part of their ministry efforts. It was always a challenge because unlike a single event, regular ESL classes required much more of volunteers. They needed consistent participation from either Hispanic congregation members who were English proficient or main congregation members who wanted to help. Volunteers were needed since most ESL classes typically had a group session with the main teacher and then individual work times where each attendee or couple of attendees were paired with a volunteer who worked with them on English skills. For some churches the ESL efforts preceded their creation of a Hispanic congregation. This was the case for both Dawson and Briarwood, and those efforts helped them begin forming a small congregation even if that was not their original intent with offering ESL. Other ministries also offered it as an ongoing ministry. Pastor Castillo at Riverchase United Methodist took the unique approach of offering computer-based ESL that included Bible references. He had a dedicated room in their ministry building that was lined with computers. The classes touched on biblical topics and gave him the chance to speak to the attendees about the subject of faith. Over the course of his ministry in Alabama, Castillo found that format

[51] Harper, interview; Camacho, interview; Gomez, interview.

quite effective. At the newer ministry of Harry Harper in Bessemer, the congregation made ESL a focus and offered it once a week with childcare provided so that mothers could take advantage of the opportunity. But in offering ESL it was important for churches to consider their location and gauge the interest of the population they were trying to serve. Ministries in areas with more stable populations of families saw more success in ESL programs, but those ministries serving very transient populations of singles had great difficulty. Though the Agape congregation had a stable core of families, it served the area along Lorna road that attracted many of the newcomer Latinos in Birmingham. As a result it tried to develop an ESL ministry but found attendance too sporadic to be effective. Similarly at the Episcopal Hispanic ministry in Birmingham, Father Afanador-Kafuri tried to maintain an ESL ministry with little result. Every Saturday he had a volunteer ESL teacher at the church, but no one attended. The minister believed that the Latino population around his church simply wanted to work and send money back to their home country. Thus they had little interest in learning English.[52]

Hispanic congregations and their partner churches were involved in a number of other ministries that reached out to the larger Latino community. Many held toy drives at Christmas. Some were involved in ministries to prison inmates. Others visited the sick in hospitals. One unique ministry of Agape church was counseling. Many established churches in Birmingham employed staff counselors who helped people with emotional and spiritual issues and offered their services to anyone in need. But for Latinos in Birmingham who could only speak Spanish, this sort of ministry was something unavailable without translation. Typically such duties fell to the Hispanic pastor of a

[52] Mosquera, interview; Taylor, interview; del Castillo, interview; Harper, interview; Kafuri, interview.

congregation who usually had no specific training in counseling. But the addition of Pastor Pablo Moscoso among the ministers in Birmingham provided a unique opportunity. Both Pablo Moscoso and his wife, Yadira, had backgrounds in counseling, so they were able to offer such aid to many Latinos living in the Lorna Road area.[53]

One point of concern for some Hispanic congregations in offering ministries was who to or to not partner with in providing services. Most churches offered their ministries through in-house volunteers. But some ministries that pastors and congregations might want to offer were outside of their realm of expertise. Aiding people with visas or taxes or medical care took special skills that congregations might not have among their members. Thus pastors often had to look to the larger community for places to either refer people in need or bring people with those skills to the church to offer special events. But in partnering with individuals or groups, pastors had to make sure that the public policies or goals of the partners did not go against their beliefs or that of their partner churches. Such potential conflicts especially came with Latino advocacy groups, the largest of which was the Hispanic Interest Coalition of Alabama (HICA). This group regularly aided Latinos in Alabama and Birmingham in particular with a myriad of issues ranging from ESL to immigration and legal counsel. But the group also lobbied state and local politicians concerning Latinos and immigration issues. Thus many churches chose to not partner with HICA on providing aid to avoid becoming politically involved by association. One pastor, Harry Harper, noted that joining with

[53] Leon, interview; Grimes, interview; Moscoso, interview.

HICA or similar organizations was similar to joining a political party and was best avoided if a church did not want to be part of their entire platform.[54]

The ministries offered by churches correlated directly with the size of their congregation and the resources available to the pastor. In larger congregations partnered with larger white churches, the pastors had sufficient staff, volunteers, and money to see that ministries happened even if they had no direct involvement. But the smaller a congregation, the more a pastor had to take on to provide out of their own schedule and resources. Thus such pastors had much difficulty sustaining services because it was their responsibility to make sure that they happened. This was in addition to all of their other ministry duties and typically their bivocational job. As a result, ministries were often difficult to maintain long-term. If a pastor's personal expenses grew, they might have to devote more time to their paying job, which then took away time from their ministry work.[55]

The experiences of the Protestant Hispanic ministries of Birmingham in offering services to the broader community generally confirm the findings of sociological surveys of ministries across the U.S. Those studies found that about 73 percent of Hispanic ministries engage in some type of community outreach if not multiple forms. The study did not distinguish between ministries that were self-supporting or partnered with larger churches. Overall Hispanic Protestant congregations focused on short-term or "relief-oriented programs" rather than long-term or "development-oriented ministries." Thus they generally focused efforts on food and clothing aid, helping families in need, and arranging medical care more than projects that took multiple visits such as ESL,

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[54] Harper, interview.
[55] Leon, interview.

counseling, and prison ministry. Yet many still did make long-term efforts when possible. Pastors always had to be the driving force in making such ministries happen, but the study made a surprising point in that all of the pastors surveyed said they had no problem getting involved with local government to achieve goals in providing services.[56] The Hispanic Ministries of Birmingham followed the same pattern of providing many short-term ministries with some long-term efforts such as ESL and counseling added sparingly. But overall the rate of participation in providing services seemed much higher with all pastors reporting at least some outreach to the broader community. The pastors in Birmingham did differ, however, in engaging more cautiously with entities outside of the church in providing services. Perhaps it was the partnership that most had with an established white congregation that both gave them the necessary resources to achieve desired goals as well as restrained them in their outside partnerships to accommodate their church and its policies and preferences.

One often unrecognized aspect of the service provided by Protestant Hispanic ministries to both the congregation and the greater Latino community was the network of shadow services. These were the instances of aid church members and the pastor provided to neighbors, friends, and friends of friends who had a need. Often such needs filtered to the church through personal networks to get to the right person to handle the situation. For example, a person might park in the wrong place and have their car towed. They might not speak English and call friends to get someone who could help. The situation might escalate as far as someone calling the pastor who would go and give the

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[56] Amy Sherman, "The Community-Serving Activities of Hispanic Protestant Congregations," in *Emerging Voices, Urgent Choices: Essays on Latino/a Religious Leadership*, vol. 4, Religion in the Americas (Boston, Mass.: Leiden, 2006), 105–7, 109, 113–4, 123.

person a ride to get their car back and make sure everything went smoothly in the transaction. Such services were the sort that always went unreported but likely made up the majority of the aid offered by Hispanic congregations. Most pastors reported some version of essentially being on call all the time to deal with needs in the community.[57]

For the Catholic Diocese and parishes of Birmingham, ministries worked quite differently compared to their Protestant peers. Beginning in the 1980s individual parishes provided various services as needed to their Hispanic congregations or local Latino community, or they made arrangements so that individuals could get the aid they needed. Also the diocese Office of Hispanic Ministry, coordinated by Brenda Bullock, assessed needs and facilitated ministry and the distribution of information including legal aid to Latinos in Alabama when amnesty became available in 1986. Some aid also came through the Catholic Social Services department, which served the community of Birmingham in general. At the end of 2002 and beginning of 2003 the diocese had an opportunity to expand its ministry to Latinos. The city of Hoover wanted to create a place for day laborers to gather away from a local road and its businesses. To do so the mayor, Barbara McCollum, and her administration reached out to the religious community to find a solution. The Catholic diocese recognized the opportunity and proposed the creation of a center to oversee the day laborer location as well as provide much-needed services to the Latino community. Thus the Multicultural Resource Center was created in a building owned by the city. At the center the volunteers provided ESL classes, aid with immigration paperwork, citizenship classes, food and clothing pantries, family counseling, medical care, and access to lawyers for free legal advice. The staff

[57] Gomez, interview; Mosquera, interview; Moscoso, interview.

was a mixture of the Hispanic ministries coordinator for the diocese, the center director, Guadalupe Sisters, and volunteers. On a daily basis the center even provided some employment. Previously Latino workers had been standing on Lorna Road at a gas station waiting for people to come by and offer employment for the day—a scene common in many cities across the U.S. The plan of the center was for the day laborers to gather there and wait for employers to arrive. Some employment was even provided by the city when it had needs of workers for the day. Those not part of that group would spend the day helping at the center with cleaning and other tasks. The next day those who helped previously would go out and work, and those who worked would stay and help. The diocese saw this system as a way to protect the workers from being treated unfairly by employers. The center quickly became very popular and served large numbers of Latinos, with some driving in from far away to receive aid. But in 2004 Hoover politics changed with the election of a new mayor and city council, and the multicultural center had to close in 2005. It first relocated nearby in Hoover and then to a permanent location in Homewood, closer to the center of Birmingham. It continued to provide the same aid minus the work program. In 2010 the parish vicar of Hispanic Ministry, Father Thomas Ackerman, began a pilot program at Prince of Peace to increase Catholic aid by offering more parish-based social services to make them more accessible. A committee of whites and Hispanics from the parish oversaw the operations. Prince of Peace began offering parenting classes, medical screenings, and lawyers to help teach Latinos about their rights. Father Ackerman saw this step as a way to further integrate the white and Hispanic congregations at the parish level.[58]

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[58] The politics concerning the development and then closure of the Multicultural

Overall structure, worship, finances, youth participation, and community ministry were all practical concerns of how to establish ministries, but one vital aspect of Hispanic ministries, welcome, could not be established by a program. Welcome was a concept present in white communities to a small extent and in different ways, but among Latinos it was a key part of the church experience. Though difficult to define simply, welcome was both the overall inviting attitude of the Hispanic congregations toward both newcomers and members as well as the specific acts associated with welcoming a new visitor or someone they had known a long time. For Hispanic congregations as well as other Latino organizations, the concept was often associated with the term *bienvenidos* or "welcome." One pastor noted that welcoming someone gave people a reason to come back. There was no set format for the structure of interactions, but common themes regularly appeared. The process of newcomers being invited to church was much more casual and responsive. Where in the white community an invitation to church likely produced little result, an invitation between Latinos regularly resulted in a visit. At the church, interpersonal greetings were typically very warm with hugs and kisses more common than not. The particular expression of welcome by individuals, however, varied greatly by culture. One pastor noted that for many South Americans the level of greetings was very European, with affectionate kisses being the norm. For Mexican and some other Indian cultures, however, the "macho" version of personal interactions was the norm for men, so handshakes were the extent of greeting. In each church service in

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Resource Center in Hoover will be discussed in the next chapter. Ackerman, interview; Bullock, interview; Lowe, interview; Eric Velasco, "Immigrants Get Site for Help - Hoover Center Place for Laborers to Come to Seek Work," *Birmingham News*, February 18, 2003; Dawn Kent, "Hoover to Close Hispanic Center Pickup Location for Day Laborers the Sticking Point," *Birmingham News*, August 2, 2005; Erin Stock, "Social Services Expand at New Multicultural Center," *Birmingham News*, September 13, 2006.

both white and Latino congregations there was a time set aside specifically for attendees to greet one another. The approach was quite different, however. For white congregations greetings often happened quickly with handshakes to those seated nearby. For Latinos the greeting time was an extended element of the service. Once the pastor asked them to greet one another, attendees and the pastor moved around the room greeting friends and newcomers alike. In fact one pastor found that it was "hard to get them to sit down." During the service there was also a different atmosphere associated with the concept of welcome. In white congregations reverence during the worship service was typically observed by everyone remaining very quiet during the pastor's sermon. If anyone came in late to the service, they typically did so with as much stealth as possible to avoid the notice and disturbance of others. Children who were not in the children's service were expected to remain quiet. In Hispanic congregations the atmosphere of the service was often much more relaxed and boisterous. Pastors sometimes stopped the service and recognized late arrivals from the pulpit in an effort to make them feel welcome. Also, the congregation was much more at ease with the noises of children and thus welcoming to families. Finally, after services ended, white and Latino congregations differed in their approach to next activities but had one similarity. The post-service element the two shared was the role of the pastor. The minister in most cases remained available after the service to greet people as they left. This time was especially focused on newcomers. In the case of one church the pastor gave visitors a Bible along with the message that 'our house is your house.' For the congregations the period after the service worked differently. White congregations typically kept post-service conversations short and either moved on to Sunday school or to the parking lot.

Hispanic congregations spent much time after service talking to friends. They often stayed a long while.[59]

The perspective of the white congregations on welcoming others to church seemed simple and generally matter-of-fact on the surface, but it carried a deeper complexity. Gary Fenton at Dawson Memorial Baptist, as someone originally not from the South, made several astute observations about white southerners and the concept of welcome. He noted that, "There is a gentle kindness to southerners, but there is a paradox to the southern interpretation of Christianity." Southerners almost always exhibited great kindness to strangers. But in depth of relations, southerners were often not welcoming. Typically the deeper relations were among the tight-knit inner circle of the church family. But often newcomers found it difficult to become a part—especially those who differed culturally. In Fenton's view the paradox had much to do with varying levels of spiritual maturity among Christians. He noted that the Bible speaks much more often of welcoming and ministering to strangers than it does of working with your own kind. He found that, "The Biblical command is how to receive the stranger." Thus he often used this topic as a refrain in his sermons. From the human perspective the easiest and most natural thing to do is to focus attention on others in the same socioeconomic group. As a result, those who were merely culturally Christian without studying and implementing Biblical teachings would respond to strangers with indifference or hostility. But for mature Christians the call to welcome the alien was a given aspect of being Christian even if their human side pushed them to do otherwise. Fenton called the unwelcome attitude of some Christians "Frank Burns theology" in reference to the

[59] Taylor, interview; Gomez, interview; Leon, interview; Self, interview; Requena, interview; Harper, interview; Mosquera, interview.

character on the television show *M.A.S.H.* Burns once said, "It's nice to be nice to the nice." Fenton found that many cultural Christians in the South worked the same way. They were truly welcoming and kind to people like themselves but not to those who were different. He found that it was a very human viewpoint.[60]

For Hispanic congregations the desire to welcome others was rooted in a mixture of cultural traditions. For Latinos, family—both nuclear and extended—was a most important aspect of life. Since many of the Latinos in Alabama left their extended and often close family members in another country, the church congregation became their family. It filled a gap in their lives. Another cultural tradition was that of the personal network. This went beyond acquaintances who a person might speak to on rare occasions. A personal network for Latinos was the web of people they could truly rely on in times of need. A U.S. cultural reference point would be the list of people a person would call if they needed to be bailed out of jail. One missionary noted that the average white American had a list of about three people in such a close personal network. For Latinos the network was closer to twenty. Typically a person would be in contact with each person in their personal network about once a week to check in on how they were doing. Such networks aided in emergencies but also helped in day to day needs as well. One person might have skills in plumbing and help a friend with a maintenance issue while that friend would be ready to return the favor in some other way. Even if there was a request to be made, a phone call always began with discussion of family and friends, leaving the business aspect to the last—thus prioritizing community. At the church level the importance of personal networks was critical. Congregation members often invited

[60] Fenton, interview.

people from their network to visit, and congregations often became mixes of interwoven networks.[61]

Fellowship outside of the church hour was closely connected to the concept of welcome. Congregations at most churches got together regularly as families for celebrations and meals. Traditions observed sometimes differed based on the group's countries of origin, but there were several commonalities. These times might see visitors, but they primarily served the regular attendees. Several congregations had fellowship time on Friday nights when they shared a meal and celebrated birthdays. Meals were a very important aspect of the church community. Often prepared by women in the congregation, meal preparation served as an act of love, and the receiving and appreciation of the meal represented an act of love as well. Turning down the offer of a meal could be seen as a rejection of the individual or group who did the work. Birthdays also held a special place for Latinos. They were a reason to celebrate and often involved the ritual of meal sharing. For the children a *piñata* regularly made an appearance. The prevalence of all this fellowship in congregations even extended to the newest of the Hispanic ministries in the city—the small church started in Bessemer by the Church of the Highlands. Once a month the small group made time to have fellowship and a meal as well as celebrate birthdays. On those occasions the pastor, Harry Harper, took the opportunity to challenge his congregation to extend their welcome attitudes to newcomers by specifically choosing to not sit with just friends and spread out among the others to make them feel part of the group.[62]

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[61] Hanks, interview; Self, interview.
[62] Shaw, interview; Camacho, interview; Torres, interview; Harper, interview; Mosquera, interview.

Birmingham churches took many paths in how they structured their Hispanic ministries. They differed in level of integration, finances, worship, children's ministries, inclusion of traditions, and service efforts in the community. The most pressing concern was how much the Hispanic ministries should be integrated with their white peers. Due to the factors of language and tradition, the adult worship services were not viable points of integration, but issues such as finances and children's ministry represented places where ministries could be more or less separate. Churches spread across a wide range from integrating as much as possible to being fully separate while sharing the same space. But those churches with the greatest success, defined as Hispanic ministry growth and the development of camaraderie between the white and Latino congregations, were the ones that integrated their church body as much as possible on all points. Some churches like Dawson designed their ministries that way from the start, and others like St. Francis Xavier came to that arrangement over time.

The biggest result of developing the Hispanic ministries was that many of the leading churches in the largest city in Alabama deliberately integrated very different ethnicities into their own bodies. That change was a massive departure from the past for a city with a history of single-race worship. The ways churches went about integrating the Hispanics represented their desire to do what they thought was best for those groups in regards to autonomy and growth. Some felt that full integration was more beneficial since both congregations helped the other more by being connected rather than apart. But other churches believed that the Hispanics needed to be separate to develop as they wanted and needed to rather than being attached to another culture. For those churches integration was seen as something that would happen in the natural course of events. In

either case it was very significant that churches chose to break the mold of the past and choose a path they knew would be difficult but correct.

The most difficult issue in those negotiations of interconnection was the place of the children. The second generation was one between cultures but which actually needed both in their lives. Was it better for those children and youth to be mainstreamed with the white kids or set apart so they could keep more of their parents' culture? Churches typically took a "whatever works" approach when it came to language, but the level of integration among the children was the most important judgment call made by the churches. The pastors were correct in recognizing that early experiences would greatly affect both the future of the church and the larger community of Birmingham. Though preservation of culture was important, the children and their parents benefitted most from being a full part of the church's main youth ministry. In doing so the entire Hispanic congregation gained a stronger place in the overall community of Birmingham. It made them more comfortable interacting and participating with whites in everyday activities. And in determining how Hispanic ministries were structured, this was the ultimate result of those decisions. How integrated a part were the Hispanics at church and, by association and experience, a part of the broader culture of the city?

Chapter Five

Paradox, Politics, and HB56

Alabama Christians generally followed the rules. In their everyday lives they abided by the laws of the local, state, and federal government concerning practically every aspect of existence from taxes to speed limits. At church, too, they followed the rules. There they knew the big ten, the ten commandments, that served as a sort of baseline for conduct in their life and faith, but they also listened to their religious leaders on the guidelines for life that could be gleaned from study and interpretation of the Bible. Such lessons covered a number of areas from tithing to how to respond to those in need. Thus the people of Alabama were well enmeshed in a set of life rules that worked in concert most of the time. But in the 2000s the people of the state were presented with a paradox in their rules of life. Quite suddenly many of the conservative national, state, and local leaders began to heatedly denounce Latino illegal immigration and illegal immigrants as a problem in society. Apparently those immigrants were taking American jobs, committing crimes, and absorbing public resources without giving anything back to society. Politicians and much of the national media as well gave the public the impression that something had to be done. But at the same time the people of Alabama were hearing such hostile messages from their political leaders, they were receiving a very different sermon at many churches. There they heard from their religious leaders that they should love their neighbor and especially welcome the alien—those less fortunate and new to the state. In fact, many Alabamians saw examples of such actions in their own churches as one after another began ministries for Latinos, with that mission movement being led by some of the largest and most respected churches in the state.

So what were Alabamians to make of these mixed messages? As generally law-abiding citizens, they did not like the sound of illegal immigrants with the emphasis on the illegal aspect. And they did not want their state to suffer from the ill effects highlighted by political leaders. At the same time, they either personally saw or knew secondhand of churches working directly with the Latinos of the state, and their trusted religious leaders certainly would not choose to minister while inadvertently supporting immorality. What was the truth in this situation? Was one side correct and the other wrong? Could both sides be correct? The debate over the undocumented flared periodically; and in Alabama, critics ultimately created the harsh anti-illegal immigrant law called HB56. At the same time churches continued to start and strengthen ministries to Latinos. In the end there was no clear resolution, but the ways that the people of Alabama their and churches dealt with the paradox revealed much about how it responded to its racial heritage, how it coped with its demographic present, and what it wanted for its ethnic future.

Overall the pastors of Alabama with connections to Hispanic ministries believed that national, state, and local laws should be followed in regards to immigration, but their job and the job of their ministries was to serve people in a spiritual capacity that did not include checking for proper paperwork at the church door. All of the pastors agreed that it was not good for people to enter the U.S. illegally because it placed them and their family in a precarious position, and it forced them outside the bounds of U.S. law. But the churches could not do anything about the person's legal position. Thus ministries focused on spiritual status. Missionary Dean Self said, "I'm not after their green card. I'm after their soul." Pastor Brad Taylor noted that, "I am not here to enforce the law."

All pastors would advise congregations to follow the law, but they prioritized the spiritual. If by their spiritual growth Hispanics felt the need to change their legal status, that was their business. Pastor Marco Requena likened the situation to dealing with any other sin. Yes, a person might be sinning by being outside the bounds of the law; but to religious leaders, there was no scale or degree when dealing with sin. Undocumented individuals were no different from alcoholics, liars, adulterers, or anyone else who sinned—which, pastors reiterated, included everyone. Thus it was best for undocumented immigrants to be in church and grow in their spiritual depth. Also there were other spiritual maxims to consider. Pastor Self noted Jesus' teaching that Christians were to serve and care for "the least of these." And in Alabama the Latinos were generally the most impoverished, poorly educated, and politically disadvantaged socioeconomic group. They were the state's "least of these." Shaw also pointed to Jesus' greatest commandment of loving God and the second greatest, which was to love your neighbor as yourself. He saw these two commands as trumping any concern the church might have over immigration papers.[1]

A member of Pastor Shaw's congregation once asked him what he thought about illegal immigration. Shaw told him that, speaking for himself and not First Baptist Pelham or the Alabama State Convention, of which he was president at the time, "I believe there is a higher law that says I am my brother's keeper. And if I see somebody hungry and don't feed him, if I see somebody thirsty and I don't give him water, if I see somebody that's spiritually lost—separated from God—and I don't share the gospel, I'm

[1] The Christian call to follow the law of the land was based on Romans 13:1-7. Dean Self, interview by author, February 27, 2012; Brad Taylor, interview by author, February 22, 2012; Marco Requena, interview by author, March 10, 2012; Mike Shaw, interview by author, March 30, 2012.

gonna be accountable to God for that." Self noted that he said the same thing to the state convention the previous year when he was speaking about how he was much more concerned for the spiritual state of people in Alabama than their legal state. He remembered that he got some "amens" and clapping on that point but was sure there were some who were not happy with it. In fact, the state convention went as far as passing a nonbinding resolution in June 2011 stating that it did not support amnesty but believed that people should be treated with decency. It also stated that churches should minister to people "regardless of country of origin or immigration status." Pastor Shaw also recognized that there was much anger about illegal immigrants but pointed out the fact that anyone who came to the United States in the past who was not Native American was an immigrant. Thus the ancestors of those most enraged on the issue were likely in a similar situation many years before. Cary Hanks, as a state missionary to Latinos and observer of the larger movement of church ministry, believed that the ministry of the churches to Latinos played a more important role than most realized. Taking the long view, he noted that by 2050 the United States would not have a racial majority. He believed, "We are in a fastly changing population, and I think the churches that are opening their doors today—twenty or thirty years from now, when they look back, will be glad they did." Many pastors agreed with this sentiment.[2]

Religious leaders typically viewed providence as the reason the immigrants were in the state. Pastor Taylor cited a similar biblical example from the book of Acts in which God determined the exact places people lived so that they would in some way find Him. Several other pastors simply stated that it was God's timing for the Latinos to be in

[2] Shaw, interview; Bob Terry, "Churches Caught in a Dilemma," *The Alabama Baptist*, June 30, 2011; Carry Hanks, interview by author, April 2, 2012.

Alabama, and it was also His timing that the churches were open to ministering to the Latinos. But in assigning the timing to God, the pastors raised the theological point of whether God caused immigrants to be in sin by bringing them to the U.S. and thus being illegal. Overall pastors seemed to deal with that question by seeing God as not causing people to sin but allowing them to make the choice to go through the challenging situation for greater purposes including their spiritual growth. Pastor Jose Luis Leon put it most vividly when he said, "I do not believe that God is [a] coyote." He was referring to the human traffickers who for decades provided passage into the U.S. from other countries, especially Mexico, and notoriously charged exorbitant fees and extorted families for more money. Leon had heard individuals, in recounting their spiritual testimony, essentially place God in the position of making them illegal. He saw it as a very small view of God. Instead he saw God as allowing their illegality as part of much larger designs for their lives.[3]

Churches generally took the intellectual path of choosing not to worry about the immigration status of attendees, but most did make sure that their staff were above reproach when it came to legal status. The institutions did not want their ministries to be jeopardized by the potential of a staff member being unable to perform his or her duties if they were suddenly deported. Also churches did not want the message of their ministries compromised by their staff not being fully compliant with the law. This policy was most evident in the insistence of the leading churches with Hispanic ministries in Birmingham that their Hispanic pastors had proper documentation. Two major examples of this process were Byron Mosquera at Dawson and Eduardo Torres at the Church at Brook

[3] Taylor was referring to Acts 17:26-27. Shaw, interview; Taylor, interview; Requena, interview; Jose Luis Leon, interview by author, March 3, 2012.

Hills, who came to the state via ministry at First Baptist Center Point. Both Dawson and Center Point could have easily picked just any preacher without regard to immigration status, but both chose to take the time to get the person they wanted and make sure all of the necessary legal measures were taken so that they had the proper paperwork. At Riverchase Methodist, Fernando Castillo actually had to leave the U.S. for a year because there was a problem with the renewal of his legal status. It greatly affected his ministry, but it was important to him and the church that he had legal status for the ministry.[4]

This policy of churches applied even beyond the level of pastors. Pastor Shaw at First Baptist Pelham had a janitorial staff member who was from El Salvador. The woman came to the U.S. on refugee status and then continued on a green card. But due to political issues her refugee status was not renewed, and she technically became illegal. It took six months for her to work out her legal status with the help of a lawyer, but by church policies she could not be an employee. They did keep up with her to make sure she was ok. One pastor even extended these policies to those in his congregation who wanted to serve as ley leaders. Pablo Moscoso of Agape Church in Hoover, which had the area's greatest stigma for being unfriendly to Latinos, maintained the policy that anyone in a position of leadership had to be above reproach in their immigration status. Those carrying out ministry in the church's name had to have legal status. This was especially applicable if they were ministering in such a way that they might interact with local officials. He gave the example of someone driving a church van. If they were

[4] Gary Fenton, interview by author, April 16, 2012; Byron Mosquera, interview by author, April 13, 2012; Carlos Gomez, interview by author, March 1, 2012; Eduardo Torres, interview by author, March 13, 2012; Fernando del Castillo, interview by author, June 5, 2013.

stopped for a traffic violation, that person and the church did not need the extra problems and scrutiny that would come from not having the proper paperwork.[5]

If anyone received blame from the pastors for encouraging Latinos to come to the U.S. undocumented, it was the national and state governments. Most identified the lack of immigration opportunities for individuals and families who simply wanted to come to the U.S. to work. They also deplored the opportunistic nature of government in its focus on the undocumented and enforcement of law. During strong economies the presence of illegal immigrants was ignored because they bolstered the work force and provided cheap labor. But in a bad economy, illegal immigrants became an easy target or scapegoat for politicians to blame for the systemic troubles. In contrast, pastors pointed to the biblical teachings on dealing with strangers. Gary Fenton noted that the Bible spoke much more often of how to deal with strangers in a welcoming fashion than it did in how to deal with a person's own kin. Pastor Gomez spoke of the biblical teachings on responding to travelers well. The pastors saw these lessons as applicable in assessing the national treatment of immigration. Pastor Harry Harper noted that during the housing boom of the late 2000s the construction industry heavily utilized the Latino work force, thus drawing more and more illegally to the U.S. seeking high-paying jobs. But with the economic downturn, the U.S. quickly soured on the undocumented Latinos who were, instead of helpers, now seen as leeches of resources and hindrances to Americans having jobs. Harper, as well as other pastors, believed that the immigration system needed to provide opportunity to people who wanted to work to come to the U.S. legally. To Harper the system of desirable and undesirable people was not working. He also noted that it would

[5] Shaw, interview; Pablo Moscoso, interview by author, March 8, 2012.

not be a problem if the richest country in the world was not situated right next to some of the poorest.[6]

Thomas Ackerman, vicar of Hispanic ministry for the Birmingham Catholic diocese, believed that the U.S. needed comprehensive immigration reform. The current system was not providing the needed workers since the native citizens of the country were not producing enough working-class laborers. Missionary Dean Self agreed, saying that the U.S. needed a legal path for someone who wanted to come and work but not stay, but Self was not sure how they should go about doing so. Under the current system the only way to guarantee entry to the country was to be very rich and have good lawyers. Self noted that the problem in developing any sort of reform was that immigration had become an "untouchable subject" in the world of politics. Carlos Gomez agreed, saying that any call for reform that was perceived as amnesty was political death. He believed that reform would have to begin with securing the border to first stem the source of the issue. Gomez also pointed to another problem in the system. The costs associated with individuals trying to gain legal status had become enormous for people who were typically not wealthy. In the past a person could pay $1,000 and not have to go back to the immigration office. In the late 2000s, the cost of simply filing forms rose sharply to $200-300 each time a new form was filled out. If a person changed residences, which was common among Latinos who often moved two to three times a year, they had to fill out a new form and pay a new fee. Gomez pointed out that if you multiply that scenario

[6] Fenton, interview; Gomez, interview; Harry Harper, interview by author, March 14, 2012; Taylor, interview.

by millions of applicants, the money involved suddenly became a major factor in the politics of the issue.[7]

Pastor Gomez also pointed to the problem of immigration for children who were brought to the U.S. at an early age by their parents. They might be thirty years old and undocumented, and yet they knew no other country. What were they supposed to do? They could not go back to their technical "home country" because they could not function there. It was easier to live as illegal Americans. Gomez believed that in many ways the U.S. had forgotten that it had always been a nation of immigrants and was no longer giving newcomers a chance. Many pastors saw the need for a way that illegal immigrants could seek citizenship. Pastor Taylor believed that most of the undocumented "would give their right arm if they could become legal." Giving them a path would help them follow the law, which the vast majority did on every other count, including the payment of taxes, other than their citizenship status. A couple of pastors noted that the only option for many was to marry a citizen to gain status—not a practice that should be encouraged.[8]

The words and actions on the part of the ministers in regards to illegal immigrants showed that the leadership of the white religious community of Alabama had changed a great deal in the past half-century. During the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s, all of the white Christian denominations in the South had internal groups and individuals who argued for or against civil rights and segregation. In general, however, white religious leaders and their churches bowed to the cultural beliefs of the members by

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[7] Self, interview; Gomez, interview.
[8] Fenton, interview; Gomez, interview; Harper, interview; Taylor, interview; Hernan Afanador-Kafuri, interview by author, March 6, 2012.

a few blatantly supporting segregation, some taking moderate stances and encouraging Christian unity, or in most cases simply staying out of the fight and focusing their ministry on issues such as encouraging personal piety rather than social engagement.[9] In the 1990s, 2000s, and beginning of the 2010s, the religious community revealed the change in its mindset as it actively reached out to the Latino population despite the numerous illegal immigrants. This move was of interest since most Alabama churchgoers could have been classified as anti-illegal immigrant—especially if they were influenced at the time by negative political rhetoric and media coverage of the topic as is discussed later in this chapter. Obviously the issue did not hold nearly the visceral meaning as segregation many years before, but it still showed that religious leaders were willing to create and continue ministry that they thought was good and necessary even when a significant part of their flock would have questioned the wisdom of dealing with illegal immigrants and likely would have terminated the outreach if a popular vote were held a certain points of heightened concern. Rather than bow to the prevailing public sentiment, religious leaders instead knowingly chose to continue.

National politics and media during the 1990s and 2000s had an ebb and flow relationship with Latinos and immigration. The subject of illegal immigration served as a

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[9] Peter C. Murray, *Methodists and the Crucible of Race, 1930-1975* (Columbia, Mo.: University of Missouri Press, 2004), 139–40; Donald e. Collins, *When the Chruch Bell Rang Racist: The Methodist Chruch and the Civil Rights Movement in Alabama* (Macon, Ga.: Mercer University Press, 1998), 49–52,79, 84–86; Joel L. Alvis, Jr., *Race & Religion: Southern Presbyterians, 1946-1983* (Tuscaloosa, Ala.: The University of Alabama Press, 1994), 57–60, 63–67; Gardiner H. Shattuck, Jr., *Episcopalians and Race: Civil War to Civil Rights* (Lexington, Ky.: The University Press of Kentucky, 2000), 116–22; Harvey, Paul, "Religion, Race, and the Right in the South, 1945-1990," in *Politics and Religion in the White South*, ed. Glenn Feldman (Lexington, Ky.: The University Press of Kentucky, 2005), 105–6; Charles Marsh, *God's Long Summer: Stories of Faith and Civil Rights* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1997), 111–16, 127–34.

favorite subject for any public figure who wanted to whip up sentiment around election time or when television ratings were getting low. Thus the drum beat on the subject was never gone. It was just drowned out by other topics of more interest until it was needed again. On a few occasions, however, certain events brought immigration back to national attention and quickly fired up public sentiment. One example was the May 2006 rallies and marches by Latinos across the U.S. to protest the passage of national legislation increasing penalties associated with illegal immigration as well as the failure of a bill to provide a path to citizenship for illegal immigrants. A secondary goal was to temporarily remove Latino immigrants from the workforce to show their importance to the U.S. economy through loss of productivity. Most of the major cities of the U.S. saw large events with some, such as Los Angeles and Dallas, including hundreds of thousands of participants. Even in tiny Albertville in northeast Alabama, where Latinos typically kept away from the spotlight to avoid scrutiny, 5,000 marched. Birmingham saw a march of 3,000. These protests were covered with great interest by news outlets and commented on by a variety of political and cultural leaders. In the end, the only result was an increase in hostility. The marches did not produce change in national immigration policy though bipartisan efforts continued to be made over the next year, and all of the coverage and commentary of the rallies increased resentment among non-Latinos who viewed the marches as more harmful than helpful. In Alabama the response even turned to hate and violence in some isolated incidents with the remnant of the Ku Klux Klan holding a rally and some businesses and a church being vandalized. For most state citizens, the immigration rallies led them to feel less inclined to back efforts to aid or reach out to

Latinos. The pastors of Hispanic ministries in Birmingham and throughout the state generally agreed that 2006 was a low point for support for their work.[10]

Like national and state politics, local governance was not immune to using illegal Latino immigrants as pawns. Municipalities might have a significant Latino population for years with few if any problems. Then, suddenly, such communities break into a fervor of sentiment over the issue of illegal immigration. Often local opportunistic politicians led the contingent of concerned citizens. An excellent example of this pattern came in the Birmingham suburb of Hoover in 2002. The local government under one mayoral administration collaborated with a religious group to provide services to the Latino community. But shortly thereafter, political opponents used that effort and the Latino community in general as targets to score political points.

The Birmingham suburb of Hoover contained Lorna road, which was an area of concentration for Latinos in the southern part of the greater Birmingham area. In 2002

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[10] Rachel L. Swarns, "Immigrants Rally in Scores of Cities for Legal Status," *The New York Times*, April 11, 2006; Teresa Watanabe and Hector Becerra, "500,000 Pack Streets to Protest Immigration Bills," *Los Angeles Times*, March 26, 2006; Thomas Korosec and Cynthia Leonor Garza, "Huge Immigration Rally in Dallas; March in Houston Today," *Houston Chronicle*, April 10, 2006; Oscar Avila and Antonio Olivo, "A Show of Strength," *Chicago Tribune*, March 11, 2006; Randal C. Archibold, "Immigrants Take to U.S. Streets in Show of Strength," *The New York Times*, May 2, 2006; Kent Faulk, "5,000 Hispanics Parade through Albertville, Say They Support Economy," *Birmingham News*, April 11, 2006; Kelli Hewett Taylor, "3,000 March Downtown for Immigration Reform," *Birmingham News*, April 10, 2006; Rachel L. Swarns, "Senate, in Bipartisan Act, Passes an Immigration Bill," *The New York Times*, May 26, 2006; Robert Pear and Carl Hulse, "Immigration Bill Fails to Survive Senate Vote," *The New York Times*, June 28, 2007; David D. Kirkpatrick, "Demonstrations on Immigration Harden a Divide," *The New York Times*, April 17, 2006; Rachel L. Swarns, "Growing Unease for Some Blacks on Immigration," *The New York Times*, May 4, 2006; Kent Faulk, "Immigration Issues Get Hateful," *Birmingham News*, May 30, 2006; Kent Faulk, "Vandals Target Hispanic Businesses," *Birmingham News*, July 27, 2006; Gomez, interview; Gene Lankford, interview by author, February 10, 2009. The *Birmingham News* had a 2009 circulation of 147,068. See *Gale Directory of Publications and Broadcast Media*. (Detroit, Mich.: Gale Research, 2009), 4253.

the city of Hoover purchased for $265,000 a large house that was located near Lorna as well as city government buildings, including the courthouse and fire station. The mayor at the time, Barbara McCollum, along with the city attorney, Steve Griffin, led the drive to use that newly purchased location to reach out to the fast-growing Latino community. The largest and most visible Latino issue for the city was that up to 200 day laborers gathered on Lorna each morning looking for work from local building contractors and landscapers. The city received complaints from concerned citizens as well as Lorna Road businesses that were affected by the laborer presence. The mayor said that the city wanted to provide a safe location for laborers to congregate and set up a system so that both laborers and those hiring would register to keep dealings professional and avoid exploitation. McCollum wanted to aid the workers who she viewed as admirable in their efforts to create a better life for themselves, but she also acknowledged the point brought up by critics of the workers who believed that most were illegal immigrants. The mayor believed that the new center and its registration system would settle the issue of illegality.[11]

To meet the staffing needs of the endeavor, McCollum's administration put out a general call to the local religious community to serve as volunteer workers. In December the administration met with seventeen churches and Latino organizations to discuss the new center and its goals. The Catholic Diocese of Birmingham submitted a proposal to the city of Hoover. The idea of the diocese was to use its Catholic Family Services ministry to offer outreach services to the Latino community in addition to overseeing the job pickup site. The proposal was accepted by the city, and over January the building

[11] Eric Velasco, "City Seeks Support for Hispanic Outreach," *Birmingham News*, November 28, 2002.

was prepared for its new function. The first day of operation of the Multicultural Resource Center of Hoover (MRC) was February 17, 2003. The director of the location was Kristen Coombes from the Catholic Diocese. Over the next few months the center served about 100 people a day with translation services, healthcare screenings, providing information to visitors about opening bank accounts and other financial services, and hosting meetings of a women's group. The McCollum administration recognized the demand for such services and saw the response to the center as positive.[12]

But a problem for the MRC was that, despite its positive record of providing needed aid to the underserved Latino community, it was not terribly effective in its other stated goal of reducing the number of day laborers standing on Lorna road. This would become a constant source of criticism. The McCollum administration saw that issue as something that would take time to change since both the employers such as builders and landscapers as well as the day laborers had to accept and begin using the new site as the common pickup point. But as one official noted, there was a "chicken-and-egg" problem in that the day laborers did not want to miss days of potential work by coming to the center, and the employers wanted to go where the workers were. Thus neither made the first move. The city contacted the Birmingham Builders Society to encourage its members to use the MRC, but that effort produced little result. The MRC found that most of the workers coming to the center did so after nine in the morning when any chance of work for the day had passed. Those workers who did come to the center early

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[12] Eric Velasco, "City Plans Pilot Job Center to Aid Immigrant Workers," *Birmingham News*, December 18, 2002; Eric Velasco, "Immigrants Get Site for Help - Hoover Center Place for Laborers to Come to Seek Work," *Birmingham News*, February 18, 2003; Eric Velasco, "Demand for Service - Hispanics Can Get Assistance at New Center," *Birmingham News*, April 2, 2003.

to participate in the signup list for employment found that often there was not enough work for everyone. There might be work for 22, but 50 had shown up. Once laborers realized there was not enough work, they would go back to the nearby old pickup points, which were gas station parking lots. Legally the city of Hoover could not force the day laborers to use the MRC since they were loitering on private property. The owners of the gas stations could request officers to disburse the crowds, but that was a difficult decision since the waiting workers were also paying customers of the markets. In June 2003 the gas stations did decide to remove the laborers from their premises by partnering with the police department, which provided off-duty officers to patrol the lots and tell laborers to move to the MRC. The push was temporarily effective, with Mayor McCollum noting that she drove down Lorna twice that day and saw no large groups of workers. Nevertheless, the same pattern returned once the police ended their patrols.[13]

As these challenges with the day laborers continued, the city also received a steady stream of complaints from a vocal segment of the Hoover population that worried about the center encouraging illegal aliens to come to the city. A related point of conflict was the issue of school rezoning. The Hoover School System in early 2004 made plans to completely rezone its school district to deal with a problem it perceived in the "apartment children" who were heavily represented at certain schools. The generally accepted line of thought was that apartment dwellers did not help the city's tax base and

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[13] Eric Velasco, "Center Reports Success; Laborers Still Spark Complaints," *Birmingham News*, June 4, 2003; Eric Velasco, "Few Welcome Day Laborers but Hoover Crowds Persist - Hispanic Job Seekers on Lorna Road Bother Some; Others Sympathize with Plight," *Birmingham News*, June 10, 2003; Eric Velasco, "Hoover Cracks Down on Lorna Day Laborers Polics Steer Workers to Resource Center," *Birmingham News*, June 11, 2003; Jeremy Gray, "Center Aids Immigrants; Some Say It Hurts Business," *Birmingham News*, February 25, 2004.

thus were a drain on the city's school system. Also, apartment dwellers moved more often and their children had significantly lower test scores. When a lot of apartment children were concentrated in one school, they hurt that institution's overall performance. To help the whole system, the school officials planned to distribute the load of apartment children across the schools of Hoover through rezoning.[14]

The two issues of Latino outreach and school rezoning played a major role in the race for mayor of Hoover and seats on the city's council that took place from about March 2004 through August of that year. School rezoning was not a decision of the mayor, but it was still the topic of greatest concern that candidates were compelled to address. There were other issues discussed by the candidates, including major facility purchases made by the McCollum administration as well as the criticism that the administration dealt with too many issues behind closed doors, but Latinos and schools were the topics of greatest debate. The four major candidates were the incumbent, Barbara McCollum; a former representative in the Alabama House of Representatives, Tony Petelos; a media consultant and sports commentator, Bob Lochamy; and city council member, Jody Patterson. McCollum defended her leadership and decisions as mayor. Petelos, Patterson, and Lochamy took a similar approach in the race by campaigning against the work of McCollum as well as calling for tougher action against illegal immigrants.[15]

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[14] Peggy Sanford, "New Problems in Hoover Need a Tender Touch," *Birmingham News*, February 25, 2004.
[15] Troy Goodman, "Candidates Discuss Hot Issues," *Birmingham News*, March 17, 2004; Troy Goodman, "The Next 4 Years - Mayoral Candidates Talk Up Ideas for City's Future," *Birmingham News*, July 21, 2004.

The issues of Latinos, schools, and apartments combined to produce a race that was heavily negative toward Latinos. All of the candidates, even McCollum, agreed that illegal immigrants were a problem, but the question was how to deal with that challenge. Petelos called for Hoover and nearby cities of Pelham and Helena to fund a local Immigration and Naturalization Service officer since the state only had two. He also stated that the MRC had exacerbated the problem by encouraged illegal immigrants with its "open-door policy." Patterson wanted ten to thirty Hoover police officers trained to serve as an immigration enforcement team. The mayoral candidates differed in their level of accommodation of the Latino community in general. Many of their comments focused on the issue of apartments and schools, but the underlying meaning was directed at the perceived Latino problem. Lochamy said that the MRC had done good work but believed that three apartment complexes along Lorna Road should be torn down to prevent the area from becoming a ghetto. Petelos believed the city should pass new housing regulations placing limits on the maximum number of occupants for apartments. That proposal was shared by an outspoken candidate for the city council, Daniel Whitman. Whitman also wanted the city to pass a law against loitering to deal with the problem of day laborers on Lorna Road. The issues and rhetoric directed at Latinos reached a high level of fervor. In August, a week before the election on the 24th, the *Birmingham News* scolded the candidates in an editorial. The author noted that the campaign in Hoover had reached a point of xenophobia in playing on the fears of the population concerning Latinos.[16]

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[16] Troy Goodman, "Hopefuls Tout Immigrant Crackdown - Patterson Seeks Police Immigration Enforcement Team; Petelos Wants Local Federal Agent," *Birmingham News*, September 1, 2004; Goodman, "The Next 4 Years - Mayoral Candidates Talk Up

During the campaign the candidates for mayor and city council fell back on a legacy of segregationist political tactics to fight the illegal immigrant threat. The most prominent of those strategies was coded language. The candidates did not hold back when it came to talking about illegal immigrants since they were essentially criminals, but when it came to the other Latinos in the area, other words such as "apartment children" came into use. Obviously there were a few black, white, and other ethnicities mixed in, but overall the apartments in question were heavily populated by Latinos. Thus when candidates discussed apartment dwellers they were essentially talking about the Latino community of Hoover. Such coded language had been pioneered by Alabama's Governor George Wallace during the 1960s and 1970s as a way to indirectly make statements on race and tap into the racial fear and anger he recognized in a large portion of the American public. That language was adopted by Richard Nixon. But over the next twenty to thirty years the tactic took on more complex aspects as Ronald Reagan and then the conservatives of the 1980s and 1990s used coded language to discuss issues such as welfare. The language maintained racial undertones and its ability to play on fears and anger, but it also carried legitimate political concerns of financial effectiveness and morality.[17] Similarly, the candidates in Hoover used coded language to talk indirectly about undesirable, particularly Latino, elements in the city that many citizens feared and even hated, but candidate remarks also conveyed real concerns about financial solvency

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Ideas for City's Future"; Jeremy Gray, "Whitman: Protect Property Values," *Birmingham News*, August 11, 2004; Peggy Sanford, "Education May Solve Hoover's Xenophobia," *Birmingham News*, August 18, 2004.

[17] Dan T. Carter, "Legacy of Rage: George Wallace and the Transformation of American Politics," *The Journal of Southern History* 62, no. 1 (1996): 9–12, 17–20 22, 26; Dan T. Carter, *From George Wallace to Newt Gingrich: Race in the Conservative Counterrevolution, 1963-1994* (Baton Rouge, La.: Louisiana State University Press, 1996), 28–30, 121–3.

and school quality. Hoover had a reputation for good schools, and falling test scores was a real concern. To fight the perceived threats, the candidates simply adapted the coded language technique to their local concerns both racial and legitimate.

The non-coded topics of the candidates also placed them in the tradition of past segregationists updated for a new generation. Hoover was a suburb of Birmingham incorporated in the 1960s that enjoyed very strong growth during the 1980s and 1990s. It had thus developed a high tax base of residences and good schools. It had also created the Hoover Galleria, a very large shopping mall, in the late 1980s as a regional destination shopping experience. Like most suburbs, Hoover focused on maintaining and improving quality of life and fought against changes that would affect it negatively. This same process had occurred for decades throughout the South and much of the U.S. as well. As integration became a federally mandated reality in the 1960s and 1970s, white southerners moved from the cities to the suburbs. A byproduct of that move was a political transition away from the racial vitriol that previously permeated politics towards a focus on the rights of families and communities to live as they wanted to live. This included maintaining property values and good schools by keeping out people who would drag down everyone else. The suburban communities achieved that protection through attacking school desegregation busing plans, fighting annexation and even physical connection to central cities via public transit, resisting the construction of public or even low-income housing, and generally keeping out any of the problems that came with the urban environment. Inherently the policies of the suburbs carried racial undertones as they typically excluded minorities, but the criteria of exclusion were economic in nature. Historians have noted that it was this process of white suburbanization that gave rise to

and powered much of the modern conservative movement in the U.S.[18] For the candidates in the Hoover election, the issues were a continuation of the suburban protection of community quality. They believed that bad apartments were creating ghettos, apartment dwellers had many children who hurt school performance, and that the MRC was exacerbating the problems it was created to fix. None admitted, or likely even personally believed, that their proposals were racially motivated. It was simply an unfortunate fact that those affected by the policies would be mostly Latino. The goal of the candidates was, like that of all other suburbs, to maintain and improve the quality of life in Hoover by removing Hispanics or at least making their lives more difficult to discourage other Latinos from moving to the city.

In the election of August 24 Barbara McCollum and Bob Lochamy were defeated and Petelos and Patterson went into a runoff, which Petelos went on to win in September. But the results of the election with all of its negative rhetoric placed the MRC and the Latino community overall in a precarious position. Both Petelos and the city council, which had seen all of its members but one defeated in the election, would soon have the power to affect the MRC and Latinos once Mayor McCollum and the current council completed their terms at the end of September. The MRC expected to close in October since it had not received a contract renewal, but McCollum and the lame-duck council gave the MRC a parting gift of extending its contract with the city for two years. The council voted 3-2 to do so, and McCollum stated that she had waited until after the election so that the MRC renewal would not become a political football. The MRC

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[18] Kevin M. Kruse, *White Flight: Atlanta and the Making of Modern Conservativism* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2005), 246–51, 254, 257–66; Matthew D. Lassiter, *The Silent Majority: Suburban Politics in the Sunbelt South* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2006), 165–9, 182–4, 226–7, 232–3, 283–4, 308–10.

hoped to develop new good relations with the new mayor and council as their administrations began, and they essentially maintained the status quo until the summer of 2005.[19]

In July the MRC alleged but could not prove that it was being targeted for harassment. Kristin Coombes, the leader of the center, said that police were not allowing patrons to park in the area where they had been parking since the center opened. In addition, the center received a letter from the city Building Inspections department stating that the Jefferson County Health Department had found feces on the MRC premises and that they had to provide easier access to indoor facilities or add portable toilets outside. The MRC charges of being targeted were denied by city officials. But the discussion of those issues in late July lit the fuse of the powder keg packed during the mayoral race. Mayor Petelos stated that he believed the city contract with the MRC established by the outgoing council in 2004 could be terminated early. He also noted that the MRC had departed from its original goal of serving as a pickup site for day laborers. The new council also reacted with members saying that they were weary of the regular complaints the city received about day laborers. The members also noted that the laborers were

[19] Troy Goodman, "Hoover Center for Aliens Closing - Works with Day Laborers; Contract Expires Oct. 2," *Birmingham News*, September 10, 2004; Troy Goodman, "Immigrant Center May Stay Open in Hoover," *Birmingham News*, September 15, 2004; "Immigrant Center Gets Reprieve in Hoover," *Birmingham News*, September 20, 2004; Troy Goodman, "Hoover Immigrant Center Gets Extension Outgoing Council OKs 2 More Years," *Birmingham News*, September 21, 2004; Jon Anderson, "Some See New Hoover Council Too Close," *Birmingham News*, September 22, 2004; "Multicultural Center to Stay Open," *Birmingham News*, September 23, 2004; Troy Goodman, "Mayor Ends Term - Barbara McCollum Leaves Office on High Note, Despite Critics' Complaints," *Birmingham News*, September 29, 2004; Troy Goodman, "Immigrant Center Urges Support from City Council," *Birmingham News*, September 29, 2004; Dawn Kent, "Hoover Cultural Center Feels Community Heat Hispanic Laborers Harassed, Critics Say; Future in Limbo," *Birmingham News*, July 24, 2005.

arriving at the center before it opened and staying after it closed each day. One council person stated that the issue with the toilets revealed the MRC to be a haven for the laborers. A proposal to end the MRC contract was quickly developed and placed on the agenda of the August 1 meeting of the city council. Going into the preceding weekend the mayor and council added to the narrative on why the MRC should close. Petelos stated that the city should not be party to a pickup location for day laborers. Also the council president claimed the MRC was more a labor site than a center of service. Both also noted that the Hoover area had plenty of churches providing similar services to the Latino community, so they could do the work if the MRC closed. On Monday the council voted 6-1 to terminate the contract, and the MRC closed on August 15. It later reopened at a privately owned location.[20]

National, state, and local politics concerning Latinos affected the opinions of many Alabamians, but among churchgoers in the state, negative or positive sentiment toward Latinos tended to follow the level of interaction a church had with the Latino community as well as the outlook of the leadership on the matter. As Thomas Ackerman noted concerning Catholic parishes, the reaction to Latinos was determined at the parish level. Did they see the newcomers as a threat or opportunity? Some churches, often smaller ones, tended to fear being overrun. Others saw the presence of Latinos as a new opportunity to fulfill the great commission. Pastor Fenton at Dawson agreed, saying that once churches got to know Latinos, they had no problem with them. He compared the

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[20] Kent, "Hoover Cultural Center Feels Community Heat Hispanic Laborers Harassed, Critics Say; Future in Limbo"; Dawn Kent, "Hoover's Immigrant Center May Lose Contract," *Birmingham News*, July 29, 2005; Dawn Kent, "Hoover to Close Hispanic Center Pickup Location for Day Laborers the Sticking Point," *Birmingham News*, August 2, 2005; Erin Stock, "Social Services Expand at New Multicultural Center," *Birmingham News*, September 13, 2006.

change in sentiment to that in the civil rights movement. If they actually got to know black people, whites were often much less intransigent. He noted that at Dawson discussions of Latinos were not about "anonymous Hispanics" but about people who they knew in their own congregation. Fenton and Byron Mosquera of Dawson both also noted that sentiments of churchgoers were a function of generation. Among the youth there were fewer concerns of race and ethnicity. Fenton pointed out that marriage between whites and Hispanics was much less taboo than for whites and African Americans to intermarry. Few Christians would call interracial marriage a sin, but culturally it was problematic. Even if parents wished that their children would not marry someone outside their ethnicity, some choices were preferable to others. Fenton believed that marriages between whites and Hispanics would occur more and more in coming years, reducing the barrier even further.[21]

As noted above, churches generally split along the line of size as to whether they favored ministry to Latinos, but within churches that had such ministries there were some negative sentiments as well. Several white pastors acknowledged that it was likely that they had people in their congregations who disliked the idea of ministering to Hispanics. Generally those people kept their opinions to themselves, but on certain occasions when the rhetoric outside the church against illegal immigrants and even Latinos in general reached a very high volume, people with negative opinions spoke up in church as well. One spike in negative sentiment came in 2006 during the walk outs and marches held by Latinos throughout the U.S. Carlos Gomez at First Baptist Center Point found that the Latino community becoming vocal and the white congregations seeing media coverage of

[21] Thomas Ackerman, interview by author, April 9, 2012; Fenton, interview.

Latinos marching in the streets put a strain on the relationship between whites and Latinos. Gomez said, "I know how Americans think, 'Who is this guy who comes to my country and waves his flag?'" Another period of fear and uncertainty leading to heightened negative sentiment was in 2011 with the passage of the anti-illegal immigrant law HB56. All of the public rhetoric in politics and the media heated sentiments among Alabamians tremendously. This atmosphere similarly affected churchgoers. Even churches that were among the first in Birmingham to establish Hispanic ministries had white members questioning the wisdom of continuing to do so given the possibility of illegal aliens in their midst. Pastor Gomez experienced this when one of the church deacons who had worked with Gomez for years and even taught in ESL classes came to Gomez very irritated and asked why the pastor supported illegality. Gomez had to explain that he was against illegality but felt that the law was "purposefully doing harm" to Latinos and thus should not be supported by Christians. Afterward the deacon was less concerned with the church's position. Carry Hanks, in his work as a missionary facilitating church ministry to Latinos throughout central Alabama, said he only occasionally encountered resistance to his efforts until the HB56 passed in 2011. At that point he saw, at least for a while, an increase in fear and decrease in interest in ministry to Latinos in some churches. Pastor Fenton at Dawson believed that if his church tried to start a Hispanic ministry in 2012 rather than 1996, it would have been much more difficult given the politicization of the issue. In 1996 "there wasn't a blink" when the church began its outreach.[22]

[22] Shaw, interview; Fenton, interview; Gomez, interview.

Carry Hanks noted that the problem with HB56 was that it allowed anyone with hidden prejudices to see it as acceptable to express those beliefs.[23] Even those who were not prejudiced but just fearful of the undocumented had more reason to express those concerns publically. Both instances stemmed from the opposite of the "permission giving" discussed in the chapter on leaders. Where religious leaders who supported ministry to Latinos served as permission givers providing congregations confidence that the ministry was biblical and correct, the politicians, media outlets, and other vocal individuals who stoked fear and prejudice during heated times such as 2006 and 2011served as negative permission givers. In their positions of authority the public figures essentially told Alabamians that it was good, necessary, American, and even Christian to act on their latent fears and prejudices that otherwise would have remained silently stored within as concerns contradictory to current teachings.

In 2010 the state legislature of Arizona passed and the governor signed the toughest state immigration law up to that point. The measure targeted illegal immigrants by making the lack of immigration papers illegal as well as giving police the ability to hold people on suspicion of undocumented status. The opponents of the law believed the only result would be the profiling of the entire Latino population of the state since skin color was the only way to guess a person's immigration status. Legal challenges to the law were filed, including one from the Obama administration, and on the day before the law was to go into effect a federal judge issued a preliminary injunction against the parts

[23] Hanks, interview.

of the law instructing police to check immigration status as they went about enforcing other laws.[24]

The temporary freeze of the Arizona law was celebrated by Latinos throughout the United States. Even in Birmingham a small gathering was held in Linn Park the day following the ruling. But the concern over the Arizona law would soon shrink in comparison to the fight over immigration in Alabama. The state elections in 2010 gave Republicans a chance to capture both the House of Representatives and Senate of the state legislature as well as the governorship. That trifecta of Republican control would be unlike any the state had seen in more than a century. Alabama had a modern history of supporting Republicans nationally but giving Democrats a more fighting chance at home. Less than four months out from the November election, the state Republican party promoted its platform that included a mixture of promoting business in Alabama, passing legislation to hinder the federal health care law developed by the Obama administration, and passing a bill to criminalize the presence of illegal immigrants. The Republican candidate for governor, Robert Bentley, echoed many of the same themes, including taking a tougher stance on immigration. The Democratic candidate for governor, Ron Sparks, also said that Alabama needed to address illegal immigration but gave it a lower priority. Where Bentley believed that the state needed to crack down immediately by following the example of Arizona, Sparks said that issues such as education and jobs in Alabama took precedence. He saw following too closely in Arizona's footsteps as a "knee-jerk reaction" that would drive international business away from Alabama and

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[24] Randal C. Archibold, "Arizona Enacts Stringent Law on Immigration," *The New York Times*, April 23, 2010; Randal C. Archibold, "Judge Blocks Arizona's Immigration Law," *The New York Times*, July 28, 2010.

result in the state being caught up in expensive law suits. On November 2 the people of Alabama responded favorably to the Republican message by giving them control of the state legislature for the first time since 1874 as well as the governorship.[25]

Once sworn into office in January of 2011, the Republican-controlled legislature wasted no time beginning work on their agenda. By March several bills based on the Republican election platform, including an immigration bill sponsored by Senator Scott Beason and Representative Micky Hammon, were in House committees and being readied to go to the floor for a vote. This was not the first time the Alabama legislature had considered measures against illegal immigrants. In 2006, in response to the previously-discussed national and state rallies and marches, both Republican and Democrat state legislators proposed nine anti-illegal immigrant bills with goals including the criminalization of employing an undocumented worker, the limitation of some public services and benefits to those with legal status, and the seizure of the personal property of illegal immigrants. The bulk of the bills were proposed by Micky Hammon. Despite some initial progress, none of the bills reached the House or Senate floor for a full vote. After the bills died, Hammon promised to reintroduce such measures in the future. The 2006 legislation failed to pass due to lack of support, but that issue was remedied by the 2010 election. The original incarnation of the 2011 immigration bill, House Bill 56

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[25] Jeremy Gray, "City Immigrant Rally Cheers Judge's Ruling on Arizona Law," *Birmingham News*, July 29, 2010; David White, "State GOP Takes Aim at D.C., Promises New Laws If in Power," *Birmingham News*, August 17, 2010; Charles J. Dean, "Candidates Stress Their Differences, Bentle, Sparks Also Sharpen Their Tones," *Birmingham News*, September 17, 2010; Challen Stephens, "Immigration Priority Divides Candidates, Both Would Penalize Illegal Employers," *The Huntsville Times*, October 10, 2010; Charles J. Dean, Kim Chandler, and Thomas Spencer, "BIG WIN FOR BENTLEY, Doctor Goes from Nearly Unknown to Victor in Months," *Birmingham News*, November 3, 2010; David White, "GOP Poised to Take Control of State Legislature," *Birmingham News*, November 3, 2010.

(HB56), that left the committee carried harsh penalties: one year in jail for an illegal immigrant being in the state, one year in jail for anyone intentionally providing transportation to the undocumented, and permanent loss of business license if found hiring illegal aliens on two occasions. The intended purpose of the bill, as stated by Hammon, was "to discourage illegal immigrants from coming to Alabama and prevent those that are already here from putting down roots." The state senate developed a version of the bill that maintained almost all of the same features but reduced some of the penalties and requirements. The final bill, entitled the Beason-Hammon Alabama Taxpayer and Citizen Protection Act, passed both the House and the Senate on June 2 with votes of 67-29 and 25-7 respectively, and it was signed into law by Governor Bentley on June 9, 2011[26]

HB56 made the presence of an undocumented immigrant in Alabama illegal and subject to thirty days in jail and a $100 fine. If an illegal immigrant applied for work in Alabama, they faced a $500 fine. The bill stated that a person driving a vehicle to hire someone on the side of a road and the person being hired could each be fined $500 if they affected traffic on that road. U.S. citizens could face a year in jail if they were found to

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[26] Kelli Hewett Taylor, "7 Bills Target Illegal Immigration - They Include Cutting Social Services," *Birmingham News*, February 9, 2006; Kelli Hewett Taylor, "Panel OKs Bill on Seizing Illegal Immigrant's Property," *Birmingham News*, March 2, 2006; Kelli Hewett Taylor, "Nine Bills Relating to Illegal Immigration Die," *Birmingham News*, April 18, 2006; David White, "GOP Starts Working on Handshake, Immigration, Health Care on Agenda," *Birmingham News*, March 2, 2011; David White, "Panel Delays Voting on Illegal Immigration Bill," *Birmingham News*, March 3, 2011; David White, "Illegal Immigration Bill Clears Committee, Would Give Jail If Undocumented," *Birmingham News*, March 9, 2011; Kim Chandler, "Senate Panel OKs Bill Like Arizona's," *Birmingham News*, April 29, 2011; David White, "Senate Passes Immigration Bill," *Birmingham News*, May 6, 2011; David White, "Illegal Immigration Bill Passes, Bill Requiring Documents Awaits Governor's Signature," *Birmingham News*, June 3, 2011; Eric Velasco, "Immigration Law Draws Praise, Scorn, Both Sides See Changes Ahead," *Birmingham News*, June 10, 2011.

be harboring illegal aliens or providing them transport despite knowing the individuals were undocumented. Also all businesses in Alabama had to use E-Verify, the federal government system for checking residency status, to make sure that their employees were documented properly. Businesses knowingly employing illegal aliens would have their license or permit suspended for ten days on the first offence and permanently rescinded for the second. Also, public schools were given the charge, at the time of enrollment, of determining the citizenship or residency status of each student. Those not present legally would possibly be placed in English-as-a-second-language program or remedial schools. Schools were required to compile data on all undocumented students; and districts had to submit that information to the state board of education, which would submit it to the legislature. One other key part of HB56 was less well-defined. The bill instructed law enforcement, in the course of stopping or arresting individuals for any other offence, to "make a reasonable attempt" to check the person's immigration status if the officer had "reasonable suspicion" that the individual was undocumented. Such investigation required that the officer or their department contact federal officials to determine immigration status. But the bill also said that the officer could not "consider race, color, or national origin" in determining suspicion of undocumented status.[27]

When Alabama's governor signed HB56 into law, the Latino community went into a state of panic. Many assumed that the state was soon going to be rounding up all illegal immigrants for deportation. And those not discovered as illegal would have a much harder life in the state due to restrictions on employment, housing, and driving.

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[27] White, "Illegal Immigration Bill Passes, Bill Requiring Documents Awaits Governor's Signature"; Velasco, "Immigration Law Draws Praise, Scorn, Both Sides See Changes Ahead"; Scott Beason and Mickey Hammon, *Beason-Hammon Alabama Taxpayer and Citizen Protection Act*, 2011.

The initial reaction from the state's Latinos was swift. Some went home, gathered the things they could easily move, and left the state that same day. Others went and pulled their children out of school due to reports that the state was going to use the children to identify parents without proper paperwork.

For Hispanic congregations, the immediate reaction was equally extreme. Directly following the passage of the law, many Latinos simply stopped driving since they were afraid of the possibility of being stopped by the police. Many stopped coming to church, at least temporarily, until they determined how the law would actually be implemented. In the most extreme forms, some attendees pulled their children out of school while others quickly left the state and a few even left the country. To do so was a complicated decision since some members in a family, often the children, were citizens while others were illegal. Thus a whole family might leave the state just to protect one member.[28]

Pastors became the nexus of both informing their congregations of the actual state policy and serving as local anchors for their members considering relocation to other states. Even when families did leave the state, they typically kept in touch with their pastor to tell the church family that they were doing well in the new location. In northeast Alabama, Pastor Robayna at Primera Iglesia Bautista Hispana entered crisis mode for several days and fielded questions from individuals and families around the clock. Most other pastors had the same experience. At Dawson in Birmingham the Hispanic ministry held a congregational meeting just before the law passed and invited a lawyer to answer questions as well as tell them the precautions to take. After the law

[28] Bryan Lowe, interview by author, April 23, 2012; Moscoso, interview; Jeremy Grimes, interview by author, April 9, 2012; Edwin Velez, interview by author, October 12, 2011.

passed, the church had a similar meeting to tell the congregation where the implementation stood. The greatest role pastors played was to simply encourage and reassure their congregations in the time of great fear. Pastors asked their congregations to remain level-headed in the matter and delay moving away until they determined just how the law affected their lives. The leaders also told their congregations that they would not lose the support of the church no matter what.[29]

Churches differed greatly in how they were affected by the passage of the law. The one common thread was simply fear. No one had a clear idea of what would happen since most of the implementation of the law was left up to the discretion of local police. But the reaction to the law differed based on the makeup of the church's congregation and its location. For some churches there was little-to-no drop in attendance outside perhaps the first week due to confusion. Established congregations with higher numbers of legal immigrants as well as those in areas with little expectation of voluntary harassment from police were more stable. At St. Francis Xavier parish Brenda Bullock noted that the passage of the law had little effect. A number of families in their congregation moved out of state in the immediate aftermath, but they soon moved back once they saw the actual implementation. Overall the numbers at mass remained consistent. At First Baptist Pelham with the smaller congregation of Jorge Camacho there was also little change. His attendees had a much high ratio of single people instead of families, and Camacho believed that individuals had much less to fear since they did not have to worry about the welfare of children. Also the congregation was in Pelham, were there was a better rapport between the Latino community and local police. At

[29] Adele Robayna, interview by author, October 6, 2011; Moscoso, interview; Lowe, interview; Mosquera, interview.

Dawson Baptist in Homewood Byron Mosquera's congregation felt the same fear as everyone else in the Latino community, and some attendees even considered moving before the law passed. But following the meeting at the church with the immigration lawyer as well as assurances from Mosquera, the congregation lost no members.[30]

Other congregations saw a moderate effect. Despite efforts from pastors as well as the location of churches, some families chose to leave anyway. At First Baptist Center Point Pastor Gomez saw his church roll shrink somewhat. Some left and then returned while others left permanently. Hernan Afanador-Kafuri of La Gracia Episcopal congregation noted a significant decline as well. Pastor Leon at Westwood also saw some leave and come back while others chose to move permanently. And a few congregations were affected quite dramatically. The most telling example was at Agape Church in Hoover. That church had a congregation that was about 90 percent undocumented. In addition, it was located just off of Lorna Road in Hoover, an area notorious for strained relations between Latinos and the police. The fear of the law took its toll and reduced attendance severely at first, with the church slowly recovering about 70 percent of its pre-law attendance. Before the law the congregation averaged about 140 to 150 each week. After the fear of the law settled, the attendance was about 80. Around the time of the law's passage, Pastor Moscoso preached to his congregation that they should "feel free" to seek God's guidance in how they should each proceed. Some chose

[30] Brenda Bullock, interview by author, April 18, 2012; Jorge Camacho, interview by author, April 10, 2012; Mosquera, interview.

to leave permanently and later contacted Moscoso to tell him that they were in their home country and felt happy and free.[31]

The churches with Hispanic ministries generally reacted the same in response to the passage of HB56. Most tried to remain steadfast in their plan to continue ministry and support to the Latino population—a fixed point for the Latinos who felt their world was in chaos. Hispanic pastors told their congregations not to fear, to be cautious, and to rely on God and the church for support.[32]

Pastors took a small range of positions on the true purpose behind the creation and passage of HB56 that revealed the complex mixture of beliefs and emotions that led to the law. Thomas Ackerman and Bryan Lowe of the Catholic Church both noted that there was real fear in claims that the law would protect native Alabamians and legal residents from illegal immigration and its effects on labor as well as the effect on public services used without paying taxes. But the ministers questioned the timing of the law since there had been a strong Latino presence in Alabama for twenty years. Pastor Pablo Moscoso said that the lawmakers were trying to solve problems that they saw in the immigration system, but HB56 was more harmful than helpful. Missionary Cary Hanks and Minister Hernan Afanador-Kafuri agreed that the intent behind the law was primarily political. Hanks believed that the lawmakers were using fear of illegal immigration to score political points as well as send Washington D.C. a message in hopes that the U.S. Congress would take action on a national scale. Minister Afanador-Kafuri added that the move was one against Obama by the Alabama Republicans. Hanks also noted that he

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[31] Gomez, interview; Afanador-Kafuri, interview; Leon, interview; Moscoso, interview; Grimes, interview.
[32] Ackerman, interview; Bullock, interview; Hanks, interview; Moscoso, interview; Gomez, interview; Leon, interview.

believed that the passage of the law was an example of the changes in the Republican Party which was no longer concerned with its long-held belief in the separation between federal and state jurisdiction.[33]

Following the passage of HB56 and amid the confusion over its implementation, the denominations and churches of the state began to push back. There were differences in how churches went about opposing the law based on the historical preference of denominations in publically working on issues of social justice. The Methodist, Episcopal, and Catholic denominations were much more publically vocal in opposing the legislation. On June 14, 2011, United Methodist pastors from throughout the state issued an open letter to Governor Bentley and the two authoring senators calling for a repeal of the law. They began by citing the precedent of Martin Luther King, Jr., in the Birmingham jail where he wrote that Christians had a moral duty to disobey unjust laws. They then stated that HB56 was such a law. It was a bad law on the grounds of doing more harm than good for the state as well as placing churches in the position of breaking the law by carrying out ministry, and it was unjust in that it went against the tenants of biblical teaching to not oppress the alien and to love the alien. The letter said that the pastors would not stop ministering to those in need no matter their "immigration or citizenship status." They would not be checking identification at the church door. Ten months later, on April 26, 2012, another open letter was published as a full-page advertisement in the *Montgomery Advertiser* by 200 religious leaders from Alabama. This group was a wide mixture of Methodist, Catholic, Episcopal, and a few other denominations represented to a lesser extent. That letter, similar to the one from the

[33] Ackerman, interview; Lowe, interview; Moscoso, interview; Gomez, interview; Camacho, interview; Hanks, interview; Afanador-Kafuri, interview.

Methodist leaders, called for a repeal of HB56. It said the law had caused "grave injustices" including children not attending school out of fear as well as parents not being able to work to provide for their families. They reiterated the point of biblical teachings to "welcome the stranger in our midst and to love our neighbor regardless of race, country of origin, or immigration status." They ended by saying that the "honorable and noble action" was to repeal the law, and the leaders supported working through the national congress for comprehensive immigration reform. Beyond the public denouncement through open letters, the Methodist, Episcopal, and Catholic denominations actually sued the state to stop the implementation of HB56.[34]

Other denominations, most notably the Baptists, took a behind-the-scenes approach to opposing the legislation. The tradition in Baptist churches was, generally, for the pastor to not directly guide their congregation in politics. The leader might speak to the morality of certain issues, but the pastor did not tell the people how he would vote or how they should vote—particularly in regards to specific candidates. But pastors did lend their moral weight to certain issues as they deemed necessary. In the case of the 2011 immigration legislation, many Baptist pastors worked privately to influence public policy. At Dawson Baptist Pastor Gary Fenton noted that, "There are people who can march and it's effective, but I don't think for most Baptist ministers that makes much difference." He believed that getting involved publically in a political debate made the pastor a "lightening rod." Once the church got involved politically it placed a target on the Hispanic congregation that invited increased scrutiny. Fenton said that "I have met

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[34] R. G. Lyons et al., "An Open Letter to Governor Robert Bentley, Senator Scott Beason, and Rep. Mickey Hammon," June 14, 2011; Tommy Morgan et al., "A Call to Alabama's Legislators from Church and Faith Leaders Across the State," *Montgomery Advertiser*, April 26, 2012.

with legislators privately. I have written letters. I've made phone calls. But you won't see my name on a petition." He added, "I think that's the least effective way for ministers to work."[35]

The negative response of many churches and denominations to the passage of HB56 was not the first time the religious leadership of the state opposed legislation and took action to influence the ultimate outcome. In 1999 some of the churches and denominations in Alabama fought against and helped defeat a proposed state lottery. In November 1998 Alabama elected Don Siegelman, a Democrat, as its governor. During his campaign Siegelman promised to transform the state's educational system by creating a lottery to fund college scholarships and other programs similar to the system Georgia created in 1992. The governor had the plan drafted by the end of his second month in office, and by April both houses of the state legislature passed the amendment to the state constitution so that it could be voted on by Alabama citizens in a special election on October 12. Polls in June and August by the *Mobile Register* and University of South Alabama found 62 percent of adults would vote for the lottery with 33 percent saying they would vote against it. The survey found that approximately 50 percent of church attendees would vote for the amendment.[36]

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[35] Fenton, interview.

[36] An unusual aspect of Alabama law was that all questions of taxation, even local taxes, were handled at the state level and codified in the state constitution. As a result, any time a new tax law was passed it was a constitutional amendment that was then voted on by all Alabamians. This complex process resulted in a very long constitution and was one aspect of many calls over the years for the state to rewrite its constitution. Michael Sznajderman, "New Governor Ahead, New Hopes Rising," *Birmingham News*, January 3, 1999; Robin DeMonia and David White, "Siegelman Unveils Lottery Plan, Amendment Filfills Promise, Governor Says," *Birmingham News*, February 27, 1999; David White, "Senate Approves Lottery, Voters Will Give Final Verdict on Plan in Special Election," *Birmingham News*, April 15, 1999; "Poll Says over Half Surveyed

As fall neared, however, opposition to the lottery grew, and it maintained a strong voice leading into the election. Those groups expressed concern with the lottery proposal directly following the passage of the amendment, but much of their actual work happened in the four months before the state voted. Among religious groups, there was a split in opinion concerning the lottery. While the United Methodist and Southern Baptist denominations opposed the lottery completely, Catholic and Jewish leaders took a neutral stance. Many parishes and synagogues used bingo or raffles as fundraisers, and they did not see a lottery as inherently problematic. The denominations in opposition claimed that a lottery encouraged immorality and took the heaviest financial toll on the poor. The denominations were joined by the Alabama branch of the Christian Coalition, the organization founded by the religious television personality Pat Robertson. The Coalition provided automated phone calls, printed materials, and its clout. In June the Southern Baptists set an anti-gambling Sunday for three weeks preceding the lottery vote. The state convention sent information on the issue to every Southern Baptist pastor in the state. Many churches planned to use the Sundays leading up to the vote to preach against the amendment. There was a question at the time of whether it was allowed for churches to get involved in a political fight, but religious leaders claimed that the lottery was a non-partisan issue. The Baptist women's group, the Woman's Missionary Union, also sent out materials to churches with information on how church women could impact the vote. They suggested including information in Sunday worship and church bulletins, informing people in Sunday school classes, calling church members directly, making sure

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Would Vote for State Lottery," *Birmingham News*, June 21, 1999; Robin DeMonia, "Lottery Gets Strong Support, Poll Shows 61 Percent of State Voters Favor Siegelman Proposal to Fund Education," *Birmingham News*, August 29, 1999.

church members were registered to vote, and making sure that seniors and the less mobile received absentee ballots. The WMU also suggested driving people to polls on election day.[37]

The final push of both pro and anti-lottery forces in the last two months caused a great stir of sentiment in the state. The governor campaigned throughout Alabama calling on undecided voters to support the amendment for the sake of education. He also used 1.4 million dollars raised specifically to fund television and radio ads as well as other advertisements. Churches gave significant amounts of money to a group called Citizens Against Legalized Lottery, which aired television ads. Republican political leaders in opposition to both Siegelman and the lottery met with their constituents to rally opposition. In the final month the religious opposition seemed to gain ground with churches making their push, local groups holding rallies and distributing information, and preachers offering anti-lottery sermons. Ten days out from the election a poll by the *Birmingham News* showed that the gap between proponents and opposition had narrowed since the summer. Of likely voters, 51 percent said they supported the lottery and 42 percent opposed with 7 percent undecided. But on election day those opposed to the lottery were victorious. Of a total 1,241,091 votes cast, 45.8 percent supported the lottery

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[37] Stan Bailey, "Gambling Foes to Battle the Lottery," *Birmingham News*, January 8, 1999; Michael Sznajderman, "Siegelman Fails to Persuade Baptists at Prayer Luncheon," *Birmingham News*, March 4, 1999; Greg Garrison, "Denominations Divided on the Lottery," *Birmingham News*, March 15, 1999; Tom Gordon, "Christian Coalition Activates to Defeat Lottery, Video Poker," *Birmingham News*, April 7, 1999; "Christian Leaders Set Anti-gambling Sunday," *Birmingham News*, June 22, 1999; Robin DeMonia, "Lottery a Touchy Issue for Churches, Questions Raised About Funding Active Opposition," *Birmingham News*, August 9, 1999; Robin DeMonia, "Lottery Opponents Urge Anti-scholarship Pledge," *Birmingham News*, July 29, 1999; Robin DeMonia, "Lottery Foes Launch Drive, Paint Backers as 'a Mighty Goliath,' Claim State's Poor Would Suffer Most," *Birmingham News*, August 3, 1999.

and 54.2 percent opposed. The voter turnout represented the largest percentage ever in a state referendum at 53 percent. The lottery actually lost in many counties that supported Siegelman in his own election in 1998, so for many voters there was a differentiation between the issue and the politician. After the hype of the vote settled, the general consensus was that it was the grassroots efforts of the churches that led to victory for the opposition.[38]

After its passage HB56 did not see full implementation or keep its original form for very long. In addition to the suit filed by the Episcopal, Catholic, and United Methodist denominations, the U.S. Justice Department as well as another group led by the Hispanic Interest Coalition of Alabama both filed suit against the law. A U.S. District Court judge had placed an injunction on parts of the law while it faced three suits. The judge also chose to combine the three suits into a single group for consideration as one case. On the front lines of implementation the local state troopers, police, and sheriffs did not receive immediate information or training in how to enforce the law. Most law

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[38] Robin DeMonia, "Siegelman, Anti-lottery Forces Gird for Media, Pulpit Battle," *Birmingham News*, September 5, 1999; Robin DeMonia, "Lottery Opponents Begin Airing Their First TV Spot," *Birmingham News*, September 23, 1999; Russel Hubbard, "Windom Says Approval of Lottery Would Open Road to Even More Legalized Gambling in State," *Birmingham News*, August 16, 1999; Bill Poovey, "State GOP Gears up to Stage Assault on Proposed Lottery," *Birmingham News*, August 22, 1999; Bill Poovey, "Baptists Swing at Siegelman's Lottery Position," *Birmingham News*, September 17, 1999; Mary Orndorff, "Family Alliance Uses Video in Effort to Derail Lottery," *Birmingham News*, September 17, 1999; Mary Orndorff, "Lottery Foes Rally in Gadsden," *Birmingham News*, September 20, 1999; Greg Garrison, "Pulpit May Affect Lottery Outcome," *Birmingham News*, October 3, 1999; Robin DeMonia, "51% for Lottery, Poll Says 42% of Likely Voters Oppose Plan," *Birmingham News*, October 3, 1999; Robin DeMonia, "Lottery up to Voters Now, Both Sides Campaign Around State," *Birmingham News*, October 12, 1999; Robin DeMonia and Tim Gordon, "Lottery Loses, Proposal Defeated in Areas That Backed Siegelman's Election," *Birmingham News*, October 13, 1999; David White, "Lottery Vote Fails to Win in Official Certification," *Birmingham News*, October 28, 1999; Greg Garrison, "Lottery Vote Shows Power of Church," *Birmingham News*, October 14, 1999.

enforcement officials decided to put implementation efforts on hold until they knew the final result. In October 2011 a county judge blocked a section of HB56 as unconstitutional. He found that the section making it illegal to enter into contract with an illegal immigrant conflicted with part of the Alabama Constitution that said the state legislature could not pass laws hindering contracts by blocking their enforcement. With multiple parts of the law in jeopardy by the end of 2011, the political backers of HB56 introduced a modified version in April 2012 that provided clarifications and eliminated some of the most controversial provisions. The new bill modified the role of police by saying that they were to check immigration status of someone if they were making an arrest or writing a ticket for a traffic violation. This was a change from the original law which said immigration checks were allowed for any traffic stop. The new law also clarified that proof of legal status was only required in applications for driver's licenses, car license plate applications, and business licenses but not for common dealings with local governments such as obtaining city water. The new bill also removed the requirement that schools develop records on the immigration status of all of their enrolled students as well as language that defined harboring of illegal aliens. Before, HB56 made any aid given to illegal aliens an illegal act of harboring. This was the provision attacked by churches as criminalizing ministry. The new law specified that churches were not guilty by an undocumented person being involved in mission work as long as that person was not an employee of the church. On May 20, 2012, the revised bill was signed into law by Governor Bentley. The harboring provision had been blocked by both district and

appeals courts, and Alabama filed an appeal in January 2013 with the U.S. Supreme court to overturn that decision. In May 2013 the Supreme Court declined the appeal.[39]

Faced with an onslaught of negative politics concerning Latinos, the churches of Alabama served as a countering force that tempered the periodic fire of sentiment stoked by those seeking to score political points. Churches seldom entered into political fights but chose to do so when they saw a specific threat to Christian values. The churches and their leaders displayed their moral influence after the passage of HB56, but it was not the first time they responded negatively to state legislation. Their reaction to and defeat of the state lottery in 1999 showed that they were not just concerned with policies that affected the church directly but also issues impacting the community. In their response to the attack on Latino immigrants, the churches showed that they had grown significantly since the era of the civil rights movement. At that time white church leaders generally bowed to public and political sentiment and either worked against civil rights or remained silent. In the case of illegal immigration, the church leaders wrestled with a paradox of how to follow the law of the land while supporting and ministering to those in clear violation of that law. All came down on the side of viewing immigration outside their jurisdiction and focused on ministry. In fact most, even if they did not discuss it directly,

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[39] Carol Robinson, "New Law Would Stretch Limited Law Enforcement, Officials Put Off Trainign as Law Is Challenged in Court," *Birmingham News*, August 24, 2011; Eric Velasco, "Jeffco Judge Blocks Part of the New Law, Says Provision Dealing with Contracts Unconstitutional," *Birmingham News*, October 25, 2011; Kim Chandler, "Lawmakers Introduce Immigration Law Rewrite, Clarifies, Expands, Softens Parts," *Birmingham News*, April 6, 2012; Kim Chandler, "Supporters, Critics Differ on Revisions, Bill Meant to Clarify, Strengthen Controversial Law," *Birmingham News*, April 7, 2012; Kent Faulk, "Latino Leaders Unhappy Bentley Signed Revised Bill," *Birmingham News*, May 21, 2012; Brian Lawson, "State Asks U.S. Court to Allow Harboring Provision," *Birmingham News*, January 18, 2013; Greg Garrison, "Bishops Say They Feel Vindicated on Immigration Lawsuit," *Birmingham News*, May 3, 2013.

seemed to see government policy and law concerning immigration as unjust and thus it was less of a concern to the church if someone was living outside that law.

For the people of Alabama the split between political pressure and moral pressure resulted in a paradox as well. Many did not know whether they should be as angry about illegal immigration as the politicians said they should. The influence was split between permission-giving authorities. Political leaders said that it was good and right to give in to fear and anger about illegal immigration. In doing so those authorities used many of the same tactics employed since the 1960s by politicians who wanted to stir up sentiment. Such efforts were typically very effective as they captured the public's attention for months at a time. But on the other side the leading religious forces in the state gave their followers permission to embrace Latinos including those in the state illegally. They said that it was important to follow the law, but their words and actions said that it was even more important to minister to everyone no matter where they came from or how they got to Alabama.

The politics and religious responses created a complex web of rules and moral pressure that split public opinion in Alabama concerning Latinos and illegal immigration. HB56 remained in effect, but following the court challenges and the lack of implementation by authorities, it was a shadow of its original form. Ultimately its greatest effect was to add to the questions Alabamians had about what was right. As a state Alabama had already experienced the repercussions of being wrong about civil rights, and more than fifty years later it retained its stigma as a place of bigotry. The presence of Latinos presented a new challenge and possibly an opportunity. The politics of the state and Alabama's religious leadership presented very different paths. The

response of Alabamians split accordingly, making uncertain the state's future as a place of persecution or a leader of inclusion.

Conclusion

By creating outreach ministries for Latinos, the many leading ministers and churches in Alabama made significant steps toward a more inclusive religious community that broke away from the state's long-held tradition of single-race churches. The primary impetus that encouraged the Protestant churches to begin ministry to Latinos was their long heritage of missions bolstered by the exponential growth of short-term missions and heart-language ministry over previous decades. This was an experience that crossed all the denominations and provided a new understanding of missions work as something that anyone and everyone should take part in. Most of the pastors interviewed for the study had at least some experience in missions, and their churches regularly sent members abroad. With that experience it was easy for leaders and their congregations to view the newcomer Latinos in Alabama as another mission opportunity. That success was far from a radical boom in multiracial congregations with everyone attending the same services and Sunday schools, but it was a significant step, and many pastors believed that such mixed congregations were only a generation away as the Latino and white children had already begun the process.

In those ministry efforts, Southern Baptist churches had the most success due to two main factors. They had superior numbers in the state with approximately five times as many members as the next closest Protestant denomination, the United Methodists. Also they had the most extensive experience in short-term missions work. But all of the major denominations created outreach efforts of some sort. The decision of churches to create Latino congregations on their own campuses was primarily influenced by two interrelated factors: size and money. White congregations were more willing to have

parallel ethnic congregations if there was no threat of that second congregation overrunning the church. This concern was never expressed directly as a racist fear as Alabama's past might dictate. Instead it was a concern of culture or traditions being lost. As a result, most of the parallel congregations were created at churches with a regular Sunday white attendance of well over a thousand. Directly related to the size of the congregation, money was also a major factor. Churches needed significant funds to contemplate hiring a pastor to serve a small congregation. In cases where churches lacked those funds congregations tended to turn to other forms of ministry such as supporting cooperative efforts as in the DeKalb area or by offering a Latino congregation the free use of Church facilities without them actually being members.

The ministry outreach to Latinos in northeast Alabama revealed the unique but challenging nature of cross-cultural ministry in a mostly rural area. The religious community first responded to the migrants of the 1950s through early 1980s in accordance with their understanding at that time of how to do so. They offered VBS participation as well as visiting pastors. Then in the mid-1980s the community responded to the permanent Latino population with a new sense of mission based on their newly-acquired missions experience and a growing awareness of Latino culture through local media and teacher advocates. Local efforts were restrained by limited funds, but by working together the religious community was able to establish several strong ministries to Latinos.

Even if churches were large enough and had enough funds, the one indispensable element in conceiving of and creating a ministry to Latinos was a leader open to the idea. They gave their congregations permission to want to minister to the underserved

community even though politics and media might tell them to look down on a community filled with illegal immigrants. Leaders served as the nexus where all of the other aspects of ministry, from administration to evangelism, connected. The white ministers wanting to start ministries also in many cases established and nurtured a good working relationship with a Latino pastor who was directly responsible for the actual outreach. Latino pastors were crucial in their willingness to form such alliances and develop pastor networks to strengthen ministry to Latinos throughout the Birmingham area as well as Alabama in general.

Those partnerships allowed the Hispanic congregations to remain viable long-term since the consistent funding allowed them to weather difficult times as well as the variations in attendance that came with a highly-mobile population. Churches tended to develop parallel congregations that primarily mixed at the children and youth level. It was how the churches structured their new ministries that showed the break with the tradition of single-race heritage in religion. The leading churches of the state were actively seeking members who were not white.

But the presence of the partnerships was far from easy for all involved. The national and state attention on illegal immigration called into question the wisdom and even legality of ministering to a population with a significant percentage of its members outside the law. In dealing with the issue theologically the religious leaders consistently downplayed the concern and said that the greatest charge of the church was to minister to the alien. This move by the leading misters of the state was dissimilar to their predecessors in the civil rights movement who generally gave in to public opinion. On a practical level the churches and ministries simply continued to do their work and speak

out on issues such as HB56 in ways that they felt appropriate to do so. This was a difficult place for the religious community since public opinion was so split and heated on the issue of illegal immigration. The words and actions of the denominations, churches, and religious leaders of the state served as a countering force to the vocal opposition.

The experience of the religious community, both white and Latino, revealed a community not just reacting to the forces of globalization or general increased diversity in society. Instead, many of the leading churches and ministers in the state actively tried to shape their congregations and thus directly affected the relationship of race and religion in Alabama's history. These actions were based on the community's heritage and experience of mission, ministry, and evangelism and resulted in a variety of partnerships that benefitted both whites and Latinos. The deliberate efforts to diversify, within the ability of each generation, offered hope that that diversification would one day extend to all races.

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