

Light in the Valley



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Serve one another humbly in love. Galatians 5:13b

The “Roanoke Star,” constructed in 1949, was intended to be an attraction and decoration for the Christmas season. Throughout its history, this beautiful star has become a symbol of this region and one of Virginia’s most attractive and representative icons.

Something else that makes Roanoke City very unique is that it is one of many sister cities, all of which are spread out in countries such as Russia, Kenya, Poland, France, Brazil, China, and South Korea.

In recent decades, Roanoke has received thousands of immigrants looking for a better future for their families in this land of opportunity. According to the 2020 census, there are 12,000 Hispanic immigrants, not including other ethnic groups and languages.

All of these people, many of whom had never left their homeland before, face

challenges coming here: learning a new culture, adapting to complex laws, learning an entirely new language, and adjusting to a new way of life.

Four years ago, Pastor Pedro Alvarado started to plant **Primera Iglesia Bautista Hispana de Roanoke**. Pastor Alvarado brought a wealth of experience with him as a missionary to his homeland of Costa Rica and other countries. He has also worked as an assessor in evaluating new Hispanic churches planted by the SBC of Virginia. Seeing the need to support the community through Christian love and

service, Pastor Alvarado and his team have responded to the urgent call of evangelism guided by principles of discipleship and kindness.

God has blessed his work, his team, and his family in this long journey. Thanks to the Gospel partnership of **First Baptist Church of Roanoke**, the SBC of Virginia, and North American Mission Board, the church is growing and serving faithfully and enthusiastically within the community.

In the early days of Primera Iglesia Bautista Hispana de Roanoke, there was a need to begin a ministry dedicated



to social connection. It was at this moment that El Faro, meaning the Lighthouse, was born. It has been a shining light to give help and direction to many immigrants coming to a new land. Lucy and Eduardo Tamez, long-time members of the original **First Baptist Hispanic Church of Roanoke**, took the initiative for this ministry in social connections. With Lucy Tamez as the director and with support from all the members, El Faro began its mission in January 2022.

Primera Iglesia Bautista Hispana de Roanoke is the first Hispanic church in the state to dedicate itself permanently and intentionally to the immigrant community, serving all ethnic and language backgrounds. This recent church plant has an average of a hundred attendees in its Sunday service; many participate as volunteers from Thursday to Sunday to help the community and see lives change through evangelism, no matter their origin. The church offers ESL classes, literacy classes for kids and adults, document translations, and advice on immigration situations, finances,

and general health.

Apart from that, they also provide workshops for job improvement as well as meetings with the Roanoke authorities to prevent interfamilial violence and support women who have suffered from domestic violence. They also help locate housing and other resources for refugees along with other organizations in the valley. Throughout every process, workshop, or opportunity to assist, the priority of the priority of Primera Iglesia Bautista Hispana de Roanoke is always to share

Christ and His Word with every child and adult they meet.

The Roanoke Star shines bright every night, acting as a landmark of the city. But the Primera Iglesia Bautista Hispana de Roanoke, along with the social connection ministry El Faro, is a shining light of hope for people through its preaching of the Gospel and support to those most in need, thereby offering help and a firm foundation to build their new life upon. ■

INTERESTED IN FINDING OUT MORE?

If you would like to support this ministry as a volunteer or financially, contact Pastor Pedro Alvarado or Lucy Tamez:

-  Pastor Pedro Alvarado: 276-233-0719
-  Lucy Tamez, Director, El Faro Connection Center: 540-315-6887
-  lucy_tamez1977@yahoo.com

More information is also available on:

-  [El Faro Connection Center | Roanoke, VA](#)