

Mentoring: A person-to-person ethnic ministry

By Ronald E. Piedmonte

Each year the United States accepts more immigrants than all nations of the world combined. People from all nations are coming with the potential to return to their homelands as indigenous witnesses for Christ.

A strategy the local church can use to tap into this great potential is mentoring. A mentoring program recruits volunteers from the congregation and matches them with newcomers to the country. It can be the beginning of a larger ethnic ministry for a congregation.

With the help of World Relief of the National Association of Evangelicals, our congregation began a mentor program. Over 50 mentors from our congregation have been matched with foreign newcomers to our community.

Mentors spend time weekly with recent arrivals and help them become acquainted with the American culture. Thus they learn from each other and build a relationship. Most foreigners are anxious for such an experience, especially those who arrive with no family or friends.

Mentors are encouraged to share their faith with these friends and invite them to church activities. Special times of fellowship for them are also encouraged.

One mentor felt burdened to start a special Sunday school class for recent arrivals to attend with their mentors. Two such classes now have 80 to 100 in attendance. At our last water baptismal service, eight mentored immigrants gave their testimonies and followed the Lord in water baptism.

Another congregation here mentors Chinese students who attend the local university. Over 20 of them attend the church each Sunday morning. Many have made commitments to Christ through their mentors' influence.

They now have their own Sunday school class and are also ministering to other Chinese in the area. Several are anxious to return to China to share the gospel in their homeland, which is currently closed to missionaries.

A mentor program is an opportunity for every congregation, large or small, to have a ministry to ethnics. It costs no money and yet extends the immediate influence of a congregation across the street and around the world. It is a hands-on missionary experience every congregation should be involved in to win America and the world to Christ.

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