

JULY 2016

“Man of Honor” Award



Name: Samuel Aleman

Profession: Pastor

Location: International Baptist Church (Iglesia Bautista Internacional)

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From: Cuba

Studied at:

Havana University (Bachelor of Architecture)

Luther Rice University (Masters Degree Divinity / Ministry)

“He believes that part of the work that churches should do is to promote unity and love”

NOTE:

Ask him about his anecdote about how his face ended up painted on one of the main downtown hotel’s wall during the Olympic Games in Atlanta in 1996 along with some of the most important social figures of our city as a way to welcome the world to the games.

1) His origins:

His father was a pastor in Cuba

He grew up being as a minority in his own country because of his Christian beliefs in a communist society

He grew up longing and loving freedom and that is why when he had the opportunity to leave Cuba and come to USA he took it

He became an architect even though it was not his first choice

He really wanted to be a psychologist but in Cuba, everything that had to do with the study of the mind was ok... at least during the late 60’s

When he was 12 years old his father was put in jail because he was a pastor in a Baptist church

He came to USA in 1989

He was already close to 40 years old, married and with three kids

As an immigrant he did everything he needed to do to support his family

His first job was in landscaping worker, second as an electrician helper and finally as an architect and that was a huge opportunity for him

He did not come to USA in a boat as most Cubans do but with a visa because his dad was already living here as a political refugee due to the fact that back in Cuba he was a government prisoner

He had to wait about three years first for the government to allow him to come to America

He came directly to Atlanta and the church, in which he is actual pastor, helped him to relocate and build a new life

This was his first contact with this new community

2) How long has this church being opened?

This church was the first not-English-speaking official church in Georgia during the late 60's

They started as a small mission at the First Baptist of Atlanta Church

The majority of the congregation members where Cuban refugees that were relocated here in Atlanta

In 1973 they became an official church

In 1992 he became a member of the church

In 1993 when the pastor at that time resigned he was asked to be the interim associated and volunteer pastor while they were looking for a pastor

He was very active in the church and help with teachings

Time came by and they did not find a pastor and so he became "THE" pastor although he was working as an architect during that time and traveling a lot

It was hard for him to make that kind of decision because he had a career and doing well in the company

He had a spiritual battle trying to understand the reasons why he was here in USA, if he came here to make money or to find out what God really wanted from him

At the end they understood that the reason God brought them here was not to be famous and rich

He quitted his job and became a full time pastor at the beginning of 1993

He is still trying to do the best he can to serve God and the community

3) What are the top three things that are most important to you in your role as a pastor?

The first one is to glorify god with everything he does

Second is to love God and to love others, to see the spiritual, intellectual and spiritual needs in people and to help them

Third his family,: His wife, his 3 children and his 4 grand children

4) What are the three hardest things you have been able to accomplish in life?

Your worst enemy is our own human tendency to do wrong things... so, fighting against himself to always do what is right and of course that is not only for him but for every person

As a Christian to recognize that he can always win by himself and to be humble enough to admit that he can win only he has God with him all the time

To love people just as they are even though there are many cultural differences within a Hispanic church because the different nationalities

The generational gap and to relate to the new generation of Hispanics born in USA to try to embrace their culture and accept the differences by understanding and accepting them
American Culture vs Latin Culture

5) The work he leads at the church:

Something important is what they do in other cities...

One of the church's mission is to always do something in Georgia, in another state and in another country

As a church... many ministries

At the same time they try to teach that church is not a building but a lifestyle... the same way it was for Jesus

As a church they try to be organized to meet the needs to the world outside the church

They help people to relocate here specially Cubans, Colombians and now Venezuelans even providing them a place to live, food, clothing, jobs, etc

Visitations to Hispanics in jail and helping them understand what is happening and why they are there because most of them do not speak English and to talk to them a about God

Once at month they bring food and reading material to mostly Hispanic illegal workers standing around Home Depots waiting for someone to pick them up to give them jobs

Visitation to cancer patients (he even did that to my own aunt before she passed away)

They just coordinated with another organization in the state to visit jails in South Georgia where they hold people that will be deported to establish connection between the prisoners and their families so they can connect

They have helped many small Hispanic churches to get organized and to get started

With the "Cross Over Program" they go to other cities to help rebuild people's homes in very poor Hispanic neighborhoods

This year they went Saint Louis, Missouri

And at least one or tow times in other countries

This year they did it in Nicaragua

They went there and brought supplies but also helped them build a school, a church, homes and a well

6) What are your top three goals?

He started to think about retiring... but

He is about to finish a PHD in ministry and his plan is to apply his theory in his own church because it is about the power of prayer and how to help people through how to effectively utilize prayer

To write about his results

To see the younger generations more involved in the work that the church does in the community

To develop new leadership that can communicate and relate better with the new generations

A more diversify church

To continue growing the bilingual worship (English and Spanish) in this way everyone feels welcome and can understand the messages

7) Final Thought!

His personal mission is about helping people in need more than just the work done inside the church building. He feels very committed to his responsibility as the pastor and wants to be able to continue making an impact in the community he represents.