

‘All you need is love’

Congregation brings new life to Menoken church

- **Former school house new home of Verdad y Vida**
- **Previous church supports mission**
- **Keeping the faith, history**

By KATHARIYNN HEIDELBERG

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There’s a sense you get when you know something is meant to be. For Joanna Zuniga, that came when she walked into the former Menoken Christian Church and saw a hym-nal lying open.

After prayers, partnerships and a loan, the bright red, former schoolhouse off of U.S. 50 will be the home of her and her husband Mauro’s church, Iglesia Verdad y Vida (the Church of Truth and Life).

“I was just happy to see this is where we’re supposed to be, because it (hymn) was talking about the Lamb of God, that He was wound-ed for our transgressions, and when I saw this, it was just confirming to us that’s the vi-sion that we have and that we want to share it with others,” Zuniga said Aug. 23, as she touched the old book.

“It’s a huge blessing,” said Mauro Zuniga, who has been an ordained Baptist minister

for about five years. “We’re going to use it for the glory of the Lord to reach all the people.”

Verdad y Vida will serve the Spanish-speaking communities of Montrose and Olathe, as well as Cora-speakers who came from South America’s indigenous people. The hope is that one day the Cora-speakers will also be able to conduct services there in their own language.

“Our ministry is toward the Spanish-speaking community, but my husband’s vi-sion has gone beyond that,” Joanna Zuniga said, hours before Verda y Vida hosted an ap-preciation dinner in Olathe for migrant work-ers and their contributions to the economy.

“We do know this building is part of the community. It’s special. We’re open to peo-ple meeting here again, not just the Spanish-speaking community,” she added.

The old Menoken building gives the church a permanent home — and, for the previous church there, a sense of peace.

“We were looking for another church that would like to buy it and we found one,” said Keith McCay, pastor of the former Menoken Christian Church. “The Spanish church in Olathe was looking. We were glad for the purposes that they wanted it, that they want-ed to buy it.”

The Zunigas were inspired after pass-ing by the Menoken church and noticing

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Showing off some of their books, Joanna Zuniga talks about how the new congregation turning the downstairs room into a nursery at what once was a old school on Aug. 23. (Sydney Warner/Montrose Daily Press)

the for sale sign.

“We prayed about it, if it was God’s will to put in an offer. We had our congregation pray,” Joanna Zuniga said.

The church reached an agreement with the owner and property brokers, Renfrow Realty.

“We are a small congregation and we are a mission church. We live in a smaller town. We weren’t sure if we would qualify for a loan, but the Colorado Baptist Foundation asked us to share our story on why we wanted a building,” Zuniga said.

The foundation subsequently qualified Verdad y Vida for a loan — and also prayed on its behalf.

Zuniga told of how John Renfrow and his team had a shared vision for expanding ministry services to Spanish speakers and, with McCay, reached an agreement despite the involved parties’ different backgrounds.

“We all come from the same God. We all came to the same vision. Only God can do that,” she said.

McCay’s own congregation numbers had dwindled as members moved on, or departed life. It reached the point where keeping it open no longer was feasible.

“It’s been a long process trying to get this accomplished. We’d been praying out it a lot. We just wanted somebody to come in and continue to use it in a way that honored God,” McCay said. “That prayer was answered when this church came in. We’re very pleased and excited to see what is going to happen.”

McCay said the money from the sale will be applied to the Andes Christian Nation mission in Columbia, as well as to Good News Jail and Prison Ministries.

“We’re really grateful and blessed they’ve allowed us to come in here and to now become a part of the community here, in this area,” said Zuniga, who noted the past congregation left the building in good shape, and even provided some fixtures for Verdad y Vida.

The church building is also of historical value, as it once housed a community school built in the early 1900s. Local historical society member Zilla May Brown said she was pleased the building will stay in use.

“My children went to school there (after it was taken over by the school district). . . . I’m delighted. I hate to see those old buildings torn down, because when history is lost, it’s lost for-ever. A church is a good use for it,” she said.



A ‘sold’ sign showing that the old school has been bought to house a new church. (Sydney Warner/Montrose Daily Press)

classrooms, pointing out what were originally the school’s cloakrooms, and other features. These will become church classrooms, a nursery, and, near the spacious kitchen, a fellow-ship area.

The glass window panes, affording a view of rows of corn in back of the church, will be replaced, but the original windows are being retained, she said.

“It’s a blessing. The building, the way it is, I think it’s just perfect for a church. All we need is a little bit of love on it,” Zuniga said. “. . . All you need is love.”

Mission groups from Pueblo, Tennessee and Texas are on tape to help with some light repair work. Additionally, Zuniga thanked the Rosemont Baptist and Trinity Baptist churches for their support.

The sale was finalized Aug. 15. Verdad y Vida anticipates opening its doors in the historic building sometime this fall.

“We enjoyed our time and the people we had there and studying the Word with them, but at the same time, it will be sweet to see what else God is going to do with this new congregation and what He’s got in store for them, and what this money we will be allowed to have to give to these missions, what it will do for them as well,” McCay said.

The whole arrangement is an answer to prayers, Zuniga said.

“Our vision is to be able to share our vision of Christ to those who don’t know Him,” she said.

“. . . We are honored that we have a special place here in Montrose, because this is not just any building.”

The church can be reached at 970-457-7015.

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