

FAITH & VALUES 3B

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FAITH IN ACTION

Message of Christian unity bridges churches' racial divide

By ANITA WADHWANI
For The Tennessean

Two Tennessee pastors will spend Sunday sending a message of Christian unity to their racially different congregations.

The Rev. German Castro, pastor of the predominantly Hispanic congregation at El Shaddai Christian Church in Brentwood, has invited the Rev. Enoch Fuzz, pastor of the predominantly African-American congregation at Corinthian Missionary Baptist Church in north Nashville, to speak at his church.

Castro invited Fuzz, he says, to show his Spanish-speaking congregation "that there are Christian people who welcome them no matter what their legal (immigration) status."

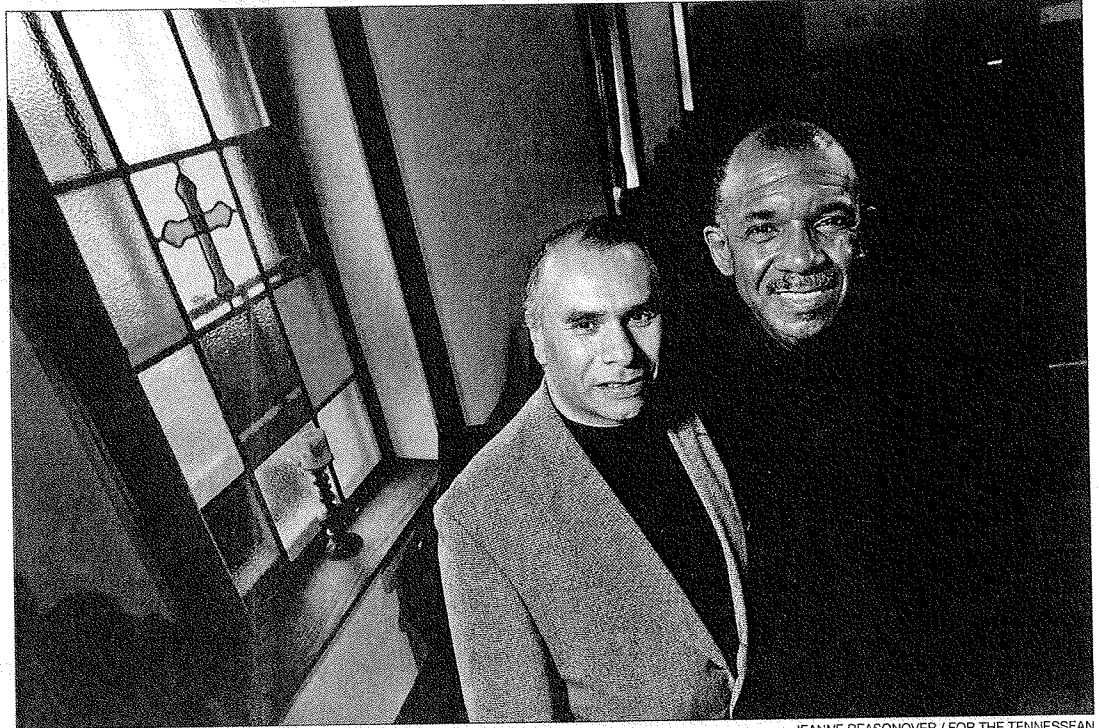
Castro is inviting as many local pastors as will accept his invitation.

Fuzz accepted, he says, because "Christian people are unexcused for omitting to embrace each other. We don't have to live, worship or work together in order to love together. Our God is a master of diversity. Just look to the beauty of fall time, changing of the leaves, or the many varieties of roses, rocks and rivers."

The two pastors are keenly aware of the debate over illegal immigration swirling around them, but both say political argument has little to do with their calling.

Castro's 250 congregation members come from 20 countries in Central and South America. Most speak no English. Many are poor. Some are in the country legally. Some are not, he says.

"People feel isolated," says Castro, an immigrant who left Colombia eight years ago to



JEANNE REASONOVER / FOR THE TENNESSEAN

The Rev. German Castro, left, and the Rev. Enoch Fuzz face similar challenges. Fuzz, pastor of Corinthian Missionary Baptist Church in north Nashville, has accepted Castro's invitation to speak Sunday at his El Shaddai Christian Church in Brentwood.

Pastors provide bridges

With immigrants facing barriers to obtaining legal driver's licenses, difficulty finding work and the everyday discomfort of living in a city without knowing the language, Castro believes it is his role to both nurture faith and provide a bridge for the congregation to the larger Nashville community.

He wants to help members feel like they belong and help them find jobs and paths for their children to succeed.

Fuzz has pastored a congregation in the heart of

20 years.

He has also served as a bridge for low-income, African-American church members instituting youth programs, serving as an officer with the NAACP, organizing interracial dialogues and helping many in his congregation navigate encounters with the court system and jail as well as connecting them with jobs and affordable health care.

The two pastors met through joint work with Operation Andrew, an organization that seeks to unite

tions and racial and ethnic backgrounds.

The service, open to the public, will be in English with Spanish translation.

On Sunday, Fuzz will preach about the "Stairway to Heaven."

It's a sermon, based on the book of Genesis, that Fuzz has preached many times to his congregation.

It's a message, says Fuzz, that applies to everyone: If you're going to make the climb to heaven, you have to work hard and show love and faith, no matter your circum-

IF YOU GO

Service at 11 a.m. Sunday at El Shaddai Christian Church, 10604 Concord Road, Brentwood. For more information, call 941-8377 or go to www.elshaddaicc.org.

ABOUT FAITH IN ACTION

In this spot we present the stories of people of all ages, denominations and creeds whose faith has led them to exemplary or unusual actions. If you know someone like this, we'd like to hear from you. Please call Toni Dew at 259-8204 or e-mail your ideas to

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