

# **Texas students hit the road on mission during Christmas holidays\_122203**

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## **Texas students hit the road on mission during Christmas holidays**

**By John Hall**

*Texas Baptist Communications*

While Texas Baptists are celebrating Christmas with warm fires and loving families, many college students will be taking the holiday spirit beyond their campuses.

In what is developing into a trend, more college students are taking foreign mission trips between the fall and spring semesters through the Baptist General Convention of Texas Student Missions program, commonly called Go Now Missions.

Three years ago, the BGCT Center for Collegiate Ministry facilitated a foreign trip for one team. Last year, there were three teams. This year, there are six mission teams incorporating 55 students from 10 Texas campuses. An additional 10 semester missionaries will leave by Jan. 5.

Along with the overseas efforts, Baptist Student Ministries are getting involved in stateside and local missions between semesters. BSMs at the

University of Texas at Austin and Tarleton State University are going to Santiago, Chile. South Plains College students are going to Mexico. West Texas A&M students are going to New York City, and a Navarro College BSM group is working at Mission Arlington. Several BSMs will do local work.

Brenda Sanders, BGCT Baptist student missions consultant, is excited to see more young adults looking to take advantage of their time between classes and believes missions involvement will continue to escalate.

The overseas trips provide missions opportunities for students who cannot give up an entire semester or summer, Sanders said. For others, the holiday efforts are another chance to spread Christianity before their upcoming summer-long missions experience.

"They're saying: 'I have free time. Why wouldn't I go?'"

Five of the six Texas mission teams are headed to East Asia, where members will share the Christian message of Christmas through drama and song at universities.

Although it can be difficult to express Christianity in this area, missionaries can freely share the story of Jesus' birth through a dramatic presentation because the production is viewed as an avenue to educate East Asia students about American culture, Sanders explained.

This trip is especially meaningful to the team from First Baptist Church in Canyon, said Brian Sullivan, college minister. The congregation made a covenant with workers in the area to send students annually, but a team was held back last year because of the SARS virus threat.

In early January, the sixth mission group will travel to St. Vincent in the Caribbean Sea, where college students will lead Bible studies and worship services for children and youth in local Baptist churches. The volunteers

also will do some minor construction and painting.

News of religion, faith, missions, Bible study and Christian ministry among Texas Baptist churches, in the BGCT, the Southern Baptist Convention ( SBC ) and around the world.