

# **Colleyville church feeds the needy, draws 138 to professions of faith in Christ\_122004**

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**By Gregory Tomlin**

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COLLEYVILLE (BP)—It wasn't quite comparable to the New Testament feeding of the 5,000, but an army of volunteers served hot meals and passed out sacks of groceries to more than 2,800 people.

Even so, the real miracle occurred in the sanctuary of First Baptist Church in Colleyville, where 138 people came forward to accept salvation in Jesus Christ, ministers at the church insisted.

"At the end of the service tonight, we are going to give you good gifts. Your money is no good here. We are not taking up an offering, and we will not accept donations," Pastor Frank Harber told the 800-plus families at the event. "The gift of eternal life is just like that. It is free, and you would offend God if you tried to buy it."



Jesse Avila, 19, is baptized by Eric Vaughan, associate pastor of First Baptist Church Colleyville, after the church's Mission Colleyville outreach. Eight of the 138 people who made decisions for Christ were baptized at the end of the evening. (Gregory Tomlin Photo)

The dinner, grocery distribution and gospel presentation were part of the

church's third annual Mission Colleyville outreach. Attendance at the events has doubled in three years, since one of First Baptist's deacons conceived the idea of feeding and providing for the community's most-neglected residents.

Ron Cogburn, deacon chairman when the idea of the mission was developed, said people in the area have embraced the mission because they see in it true compassion.

"Compassion without action is nothing. True mercy is compassion with action," Cogburn said. "We are not only telling the people here that Jesus loves them; we are showing them. Where else could they get a meal, groceries and toys for their children? This makes a lot of difference in their lives."

This year, more than 400 volunteers from the church participated in the mission. Bilingual pastors and ministers from area Hispanic churches also took part.

Carlos Flores, a minister at Highland Meadows Church, strolled around inside the tent on the church grounds where dinner was being served, greeting the families that carpooled from as far away as Irving. Several school buses also transported community members to the church.

Flores, wearing a bright red shirt with the word "bilingual" in white, shook hands, prayed with families and encouraged them to listen closely to the gospel message they would hear in the church's sanctuary.

"The people here at the church are doing this because they have a heart for people. They have a heart for the lost in the Hispanic community," Flores said.

Eric Vaughan, associate pastor at First Baptist Church, said he expects Mission

Colleyville to continue its growth. And he expects his church to seek more assistance from Hispanic churches.

"Each year, we have an increase in the number of Hispanics involved in this outreach. They are our brothers and sisters in Christ. As our population grows, we will need to partner with Hispanics to reach into their communities to share the gospel of Jesus Christ with them," Vaughan said.

"We have a heart and a passion to reach out to our Jerusalem, or northeast Tarrant County. It all boils down to the fact that this church body at its core, at its heart, is evangelistic."

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