

FAMILY REUNION: Hispanic Baptist Convention of Texas_71204

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FAMILY REUNION: Hispanic Baptist Convention of Texas

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SOUTH PADRE ISLAND-The Hispanic Baptist Convention of Texas annual meeting is called “convencion,” but leaders and participants say it's more aptly called a family reunion.

Participants typically bring their families to convencion for a vacation. A strong tradition of attending the meeting is carried on from generation to generation.

Intergenerational worship is typical at the Hispanic Baptist Convention of Texas.

Resolutions and controversial decisions that have become commonplace in

many Baptist meetings are replaced with smiles, hugs and stories between people who have been friends since seemingly before they were born.

Families bond with other families. Participants share stories about past generations of other families as if they were their own.

Anastacia Molina of Las Milpas Baptist Church in Las Milpas, a 96-year-old former missionary, said the family atmosphere has kept her coming to convencion more than 50 years.

"I have always liked it because I always see old friends I know from the ministry," she said.

Eddie Sanchez, pastor of Ross Avenue Baptist Church in Dallas, told his children convencion enables them to reap blessings they have not sown. Just like when he grew up going to convencion, older generations will care for and encourage them because of connections made by their parents.

"It's a wonderful experience," he said.

The meeting is the primary place for Hispanics, especially first-generation immigrants, to network and discuss ways to meet their challenges, said Rudy Camacho, a longtime Hispanic Baptist leader.

"It is an opportunity for Hispanics, with our language and culture, to come together and worship together just as the BGCT does once a year," Camacho said.



Worship, praise and fellowship take center stage at the Hispanic Baptist Convention of Texas.

The Hispanic Baptist family enjoys a unique status between independent convention and BGCT-supported fellowship.

The name Hispanic Baptist Convention of Texas is largely tied to history, explained Dexton Shores, director of the Baptist General Convention of Texas River Ministry, who has attended the Hispanic gathering 30 years.

The Mexican Baptist Convention existed long before coming under the wing of the BGCT in 1960, and it has retained the convention title even though it functions more like an ethnic fellowship, Shores said. The name later was changed to Hispanic Baptist Convention of Texas.

The Hispanic convention is largely funded through the BGCT Cooperative Program. More than \$100,000 was sent from the BGCT for the Hispanic convention through the Texas Cooperative Program this year.

Mateo Rendon, consultant for BGCT Hispanic ministries, noted the Hispanic convention always has retained its own identity. Many of the people who attend convention refer to it as "our convention" and do not attend BGCT annual meetings, he noted.

The Hispanic Baptist Convention has its own officers and constitution. It

also has formed its own partnership with the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship.

"This is their convention," Rendon said. "It's tailored to meet a specific niche, and those needs are met."

Cooperation between the BGCT and the Hispanic convencion has strengthened and focused the work of the Hispanic convention, Camacho said.

"We have been more productive," he said. "We have been more purpose-driven. But at the same time, we have kept our identity."

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