

# **Regional convocations for Hispanic laity seek to inspire, train and equip\_30804**

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## **Regional convocations for Hispanic laity seek to inspire, train and equip**

**By Orville Scott**

*Texas Baptist Communications*

TYLER—About 200 East Texas laymen and pastors were challenged at Hillcrest Hispanic Baptist Church recently to join hands and hearts with others in missions and ministries to reach an estimated 7 million Hispanics in Texas.

The meeting is one of a series of regional Hispanic Convocations of the Laity being held across the state this year under sponsorship of Varones Bautistas (Hispanic Baptist Men), said Eli Rodriguez of Dallas, statewide coordinator for the sessions.

Besides making men aware of the evangelistic challenge, the meetings train them to start new churches and Brotherhood and Royal Ambassador chapters in churches, Rodriguez said.

The first convocation Jan. 17 drew 65 men to Dickinson in Southeast Texas.

Similar regional meetings will challenge and train Baptist men March 27 at

First Mexican Baptist Church, Fort Worth; April 24 at the Baptist University of the Americas, San Antonio; May 22 at Bethania Baptist Church, Austin; July 31 at a site to be arranged in West Texas; and August 28 at First Mexican Baptist Church, Lubbock.

For the second year in a row, a statewide Convocation of Hispanic Laity will be held Oct. 15-16 at Highland Lakes Camp and Conference Center at Spicewood near Austin, Rodriguez said.

Keynote speaker for the convocations, Alcides Guajardo of Mineral, president of the Hispanic Baptist Convention of Texas, urged laymen and pastors to share their faith through personal evangelism and missions ministries.

He said the fast-growing Hispanic population of Texas, which has surpassed the 7 million mark, is expected to increase to more than 50 percent of the state's population by the year 2013.

In a special meeting with pastors, Guajardo stressed the necessity of training laypeople to reach their communities for Christ.

Javier Rios of Dallas, president of Varones Bautistas, told the group: "God has sent a vision to make us aware of the evangelistic needs and opportunities across our state.

"Varones Bautistas are responding with joy and dedication as they train to reach the state for Christ."

The training of men to share their faith actively is gathering steam, said Ray Carrillo of the Hillcrest Church, one of the coordinators for the East Texas convocation.

"They're learning how to establish Brotherhood and Royal Ambassadors chapters and help their pastors grow churches."

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