

EDITORIAL: Offering touches lives across Texas

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The next time you pass an offering plate or pick up your checkbook, remember your fellow Texans. Think about your brothers and sisters in Christ who are being released from state penitentiaries, struggling to remain faithful as they step back onto the mean streets of their past. Focus on the seemingly endless stream of undocumented workers in Texas who desperately need a Savior. Try to imagine African-American cowboys, living a generations-old heritage but also finding new life in Jesus. And don't forget young mothers seeking to break the bonds of abuse while pointing their children to a better, safer future.

These are but a few beneficiaries of the Mary Hill Davis Offering for Texas Missions, which churches affiliated with the Baptist General Convention of Texas gather in the fall. The goal this year is \$5.1 million, and every dollar represents a story, a very real need:





- Sie Davis took his first breath in prison, because his mother gave birth to him while she was locked up. Years later, a bruising battle with drugs put him back in the same prison where he was born.

Eventually, the power of Christ helped Davis, a four-time convict, overcome the addictions that kept landing him in prison. Then he launched Church of the Called-Out Ones for ex-offenders, and he began teaching other people to start ex-offender churches. He also partnered with the BGCT to write a manual for operating ex-offender ministries.

The Mary Hill Davis Offering helps make his ministry possible. “A lot of people in prison, they reach for the Lord because they’re serious,” Davis explains. “We need to be there as a church to help them.”

- Undocumented workers’ physical, spiritual, educational and emotional needs are enormous. The solutions—like so many social and political challenges these days—are extremely complicated. And they’re often controversial.

But through the BGCT Immigration Taskforce, Texas Baptists are reaching out to them in Jesus’ name. In one initiative, the Mary Hill Davis Offering is underwriting an effort to train Texas Baptist church members to help undocumented workers change their citizenship status.

Backed by that same spirit of care, Texas Baptists allocate Mary Hill Davis Offering and Texas Baptist World Hunger Offering funds to provide a meal

for about 150 people each month at the Oasis in Ojinaga, Chihuahua, in the Mexican desert. In addition to food, volunteers distribute tracts and Bibles, share their faith and pray with Mexican travelers. “It’s one facet of fulfilling the biblical mandate to share the gospel in all the world,” explained Ed Jennings, director of missions for Big Bend Baptist Association.

- Minnehulla Cowboy Fellowship in Goliad, believed to be the first church for African-American cowboys, busted out of the chute this summer—offering a rodeo followed by worship. It’s sponsored by Minnehulla Baptist Church, assisted by BGCT affinity-group leaders and supported in part by the Mary Hill Davis Offering.

The idea for the western heritage church sparked in the mind of Minnehulla Baptist’s pastor, Ronald Edwards. He hated watching church members and prospects feel torn between worshipping in church and participating in rodeos. So, the congregation tapped into the cowboy church movement, allowing locals to cowboy up and also worship God. “We thought if we could identify with our roots and teach their children where their ancestors came from and to tap into their culture and their taste, maybe we could reach them more effectively,” Edwards reasons.

- Tanji Lamar didn’t want to move into My Father’s House, Lubbock. “But it was the only door I could go through,” she recalls. “My husband had just left. I had no way to pay my bills.” Like hundreds of other young mothers who were abandoned and abused, she participated in Christian Women’s Job Corps, a ministry sponsored by Woman’s Missionary Union and supported by the Mary Hill Davis Offering that teaches job skills and life skills in a Christian context. And it changed Lamar forever. “This place has radically changed my life,” she says.

Woman’s Missionary Union calls the Mary Hill Davis Offering “the cutting edge of Texas Baptist missionary thrust.” This year, the offering is allocated to 86 ministry causes. If funded, every one of them will bear eternal

benefits. And every one left unfunded will mean lives not touched by the gospel. The Mary Hill Davis Offering deserves our sacrificial support.

Marv Knox is editor of the Baptist Standard. John Hall of the BGCT Communications Team and Managing Editor Ken Camp contributed to this editorial.

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