

Border, upstate churches team up to press gospel deep into Mexico

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Emmanuel Roldan of Northwest Hispanic Baptist Church in San Antonio used magic tricks to bring smiles to children and create an avenue for God's love to be shared during a BGCT Border/Mexico Missions trip to central Mexico.
(Photo/Whitney Farr)

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By Whitney Farr

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A LUZ, Mexico—Sixty-two indigenous people groups call Mexico their home. And after 100 years of Baptist mission work, half of them still have not heard the Christian gospel.

The Baptist General Convention of Texas' Border/ Mexico Missions program is changing that by connecting Texas Baptist churches along the Mexico border with Baptist churches in other parts of the state for mission trips to unreached people groups. The partnerships allow border churches with cultural and linguistic expertise to cooperate with churches that have money to support extensive mission efforts.

“For 38 years, Texas churches have gone to the border for mission trips,” explained Dexton Shores, director of BGCT Border/ Mexico Missions for the past eight years. “We thought it was time that the border churches be senders instead of recipients.”

Members of New Hope First Baptist Church in Cedar Park, Northwest Hispanic Baptist Church in San Antonio and Trinidad Baptist Church in Laredo traveled 29 hours by bus to the state of Oaxaca, Mexico, where they reached out to people through Vacation Bible School, leadership training, medical and dental clinics, hair cuts and evangelistic films in Santa Maria, San Marcos and La Luz.

“We made history here,” said Saul Roldan of Northwest Hispanic Baptist Church. “They had never experienced anything like this before.”

Just a week earlier, Christian evangelicals were kicked out of nearby Juquila, dumped 50 miles away and threatened with death if they ever came back.

Amazingly, city officials in San Marcos allowed the Texas Baptists to conduct their outreach from a basketball court in the center of the community, just behind the Catholic church, Shores reported.

“And even more amazing than that, ... the village’s mayor offered his personal bathrooms for us to use, came to the Vacation Bible School and participated in the pledge of allegiance to the Bible and the Christian flag,” he added. “There was no hostility toward us as Christians, whatsoever.”

The BGCT’s effort to evangelize unreached people groups in Mexico is supported in part by the Mary Hill Davis Offering for Texas Missions.

In the three villages, Guillermo Lozano, a physician, treated 218 patients; 129 people received dental attention; 101 people got haircuts; 85 Christians were trained in church leadership; and 131 people made decisions to become Christians.

A 27-year-old woman who visited the clinic described how extreme pain from arthritis had stolen her will to live. Elizabeth Ochoa of Trinidad Baptist Church told the woman how God healed her arthritis.

“She had given up on life,” Ochoa said. “We were able to minister to her and tell her about the Ultimate Healer. She accepted Christ and left happy. To see the expression on her face change was so rewarding. We saw the hand of God that day.”

In San Marcos, a five-foot-deep ditch in the road made travel to the clinic difficult. So, Saul Juarez of Northwest Hispanic Baptist Church and some men from the village brought two truckloads of rock and another load of dirt and filled in the hole.

“They were amazed that we would serve them like that,” Juarez said with a huge smile. “I attribute the salvations that night to all the hard work those men did that day.”

A drunken man who wanted to stop drinking alcohol because it was destroying his life and his family visited with Roldan and Rudy Cantu of Northwest Hispanic Baptist Church.

“Seeing him hand his life over to Jesus—that was something else,” Roldan said.

Something strong enough to offset many Texans’ reluctance to go deep into Mexico because of the long travel time, rough conditions and financial costs, Shores said.

“Not only is it worth the visible results and the privilege to minister to churches who feel so forgotten, but it is worth it for the change we will see in the people who were served,” he said. “You can’t put a dollar amount on that.”

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