

# Obituary: Melchor “Mel” Gomez

January 5, 2026

**Melchor “Mel” Gomez**, pastor, community leader and longtime Hale Center restaurateur, died Jan. 2, 2025, in Hale Center. He was 70. Gomez was born Jan. 18, 1955, in Brownsville to Manuel and Amelia Gaona Gomez. He graduated from Homer Hanna High School in Brownsville in 1974 and later moved to Hale Center in 1994, where he became deeply involved in both church and civic life. He served in pastoral ministry for more than 30 years. His ministry included service at Primera Iglesia Bautista in Pasadena, Jerusalem Baptist Church in Hale Center, and for the past eight years at Date Street Community Baptist Church in Plainview. In addition to congregational ministry, Gomez taught seminary courses through the Baptist University of the Américas Bible Institute Certificate Program, equipping pastors and church leaders for ministry. His service extended beyond the local church. Gomez was a former member of the Hale Center City Council, president of the Hale Center EMS Association, a member of the Hale Center Lions Club, and a former president of Compañerismo los Planos. In the Hale Center community, Gomez also was known as the owner and operator of Owl’s Café for more than two decades, a gathering place for residents and visitors alike. He was recognized for his approachability, steady leadership, and sense of humor. He was preceded in death by his parents; two sons, Steven Gomez and Jose Israel Gomez; and a sister, Rita Lopez. He is survived by his wife, Francisca Gomez of Hale Center; a son, Santos “Rudy” Torres and wife Evelia of Lockney; brothers Manuel Gomez Jr. and wife Rosie of Brownsville, and Gaspar Gomez and wife Mary-Catherine of San Antonio; a sister, Cruz Rynazewski of California; four grandchildren; and four great-grandchildren.