BGCT gets ready for first annual meeting in Rio Grande Valley

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MCALLEN—Texas Baptists will gather in the lower Rio Grande Valley for the first time for their annual meeting Nov. 8-10, spreading the hope of Christ throughout the region, as well as being encouraged and empowered to share the gospel when they return home.

In another annual meeting first, messengers to the gathering are being encouraged to participate in local mission projects ranging from feeding hungry children to providing books for children in the region, as well as exploring service opportunities and extended partnership possibilities.

The efforts give Texas Baptists an opportunity to live out the meeting's theme, "Spreading Hope," Baptist General Convention of Texas Executive Director Randel Everett said.

By partnering with churches throughout the Rio Grande Valley, Baptists from across the state can help strengthen existing ministries that have a long-term impact in the area.

"The Rio Grande Valley is one of the most exciting and challenging areas of Texas," Everett said. "Texas Hope 2010 was launched here in September of 2008, and now we have re-turned here to kick off Hope 1:8."

Messengers will celebrate how God worked through Texas Baptists in Texas Hope 2010, an effort to share the hope of Christ with every Texan by Easter 2010 and alleviate hunger in the state.

Through the initiative, Texas Baptists shared more than 860,000 multimedia gospel compact discs, increased efforts to feed people in need and raised a record amount of more than $1.5 million for hungry people worldwide through the Texas Baptist Offering for World Hunger.

Building upon the momentum of Texas Hope 2010, convention leaders hope to encourage every Texas Baptist to be involved in Hope 1:8, an effort based upon Christ's command in Acts 1:8 that his followers will be his witnesses throughout the world. Organizers are seeking to help each Texas Baptist understand he or she is a missionary, whether locally, in another city, in another nation or in another country.

To help accomplish that goal, annual meeting messengers will consider a total budget of $48 million, including anticipated income from investments, Mary Hill Davis Offering for Texas Missions, to Texas Baptist worldwide mission efforts and giving to missions through the Cooperative Program, the primary giving channel for Texas Baptists. Convention leaders anticipate $35.85 million will be given through the Texas Baptist Cooperative Program in 2011.

The budget aids Texas Baptists in sharing the gospel throughout the state and around the world through churches, health care systems, aging care facilities and child care institutions. It helps congregations start congregations, assists churches in feeding the hungry and undergirds mission and evangelism efforts.

Messengers also will consider a motion that would change the planning and execution of future annual meetings, affecting their schedules, locations and focus.

Convention officers also will be elected during the meeting. Candidates who have announced they will be nominated during the meeting are Victor Rodriguez, pastor of South San Filadelfia Baptist Church in San Antonio,

for president; Jerry Carlisle, pastor of First Baptist Church in Plano, for first vice president; Ed Jackson, member of First Baptist Church in Garland, for second vice president; and Sylvia DeLoach, member of First Baptist Church in Richardson, for second vice president.