

BGCT plans to help churches provide Christmas gifts for children of inmates

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While many head to crowded malls and browse online stores for the perfect Christmas gift, churches across Texas are spending their holiday dollars on helping connect incarcerated parents and their children.

“We have partnered with Rick Vasquez, the North Texas field director of the Prison Fellowship Ministries, to provide Christmas gifts for children of prisoners,” said Tomi Grover, director of Baptist General Convention of Texas local transformational missions.

The BGCT is offering a \$250 grant to any BGCT-affiliated church that wants to be a part of the Angel Tree ministry that buys gifts for these children on behalf of their parents.

“We’re focusing on these particular children because a child of a prisoner is nine times more likely to enter the criminal justice system,” Grover said. “The whole campaign is to intercept and walk with them on their journey while their parents are in prison.”

The idea is that churches will not only buy gifts for these kids, but also become involved in their lives after Christmas.

“It’s proven that a child who grows up going to church has better grades and better life skills,” she said.

Not only is it important for children to have a connection to a spiritual family, but it also is vital that they maintain family ties—even through a

difficult situation, Grover said.

Angel Tree “shows the child that their parent still cares for them to have someone bring them a gift on their behalf,” she said. “It’s important for the parent and child to maintain their relationship so the child still knows the parent cares about them.”

No one knows that better than Vasquez, who witnessed the strengthening of his daughter’s bond with him and Christ through the Angel Tree program during his own time in the system.

“I was in prison for 10 years, and while I was there, I filled out the form for the Angel Tree program,” Vasquez said. “The church included a Bible in her gift every year, and she came to know Christ through those Bibles and the people at the church who talked to her.”

Now the director’s 20-year-old daughter is buying her own Angel Tree gift to help transform the life of another child whose parent is in prison.

“We want to be a holistic prison ministry, serving not only the people on the inside of the prison with mentors, but also the people on the outside—the families and children affected by those inside,” Vasquez said.

For more information on the Angel Tree program or Prison Fellowship Ministries, churches and individuals can contact Vasquez at rick_vasquez@pfm.org or call (972) 445-0091.

For more information about how you can help, contact rick_vasquez@pfm.org or call (972) 445-0091.