

Church hooks oilfield workers with fish fry

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[First Baptist Church in George West](#) tried luring oilfield workers a variety of ways, but the church had greatest success when it baited the hook with fish—the deep-fried kind.



Bruce Irving (center), pastor of First Baptist Church in George West, visits with an oilfield worker at a fish fry his church sponsored at a city park. (PHOTO/George Henson)The church’s missions committee tried multiple approaches to share the gospel with workers in the Eagle Ford Shale oilfields of South Texas. The church distributed Bibles tailor-made for oilfield workers, hung Christmas gifts on doorknobs at an RV park and provided cookies and other treats at a local hotel.

Previous efforts netted little success, Pastor Bruce Irving said. But he still viewed them as worthwhile because his congregation did its best to reach out and fulfill the Great Commission.

A recent fish fry and gospel bluegrass concert in a city park across the

street from the church building marked the latest attempt to reach people God brought to their community, Irving said.



The Blue Creek Gospel Bluegrass Band performs at the fish fry for oilfield workers. (PHOTO/George Henson) “It’s good for our church to get outside the four walls. We may be across the street, but it’s a step in the right direction,” he said.

While a few oil executives and administrators have attended First Baptist Church, reaching the laborers has been a more difficult task.

The challenge only seemed to excite missions committee Chairperson Kellie Rogers.

“We are here to spread the gospel of Jesus Christ,” she said. “When we thought of how these people are so far from home, we thought they might like a home-cooked meal.”



Melissa Nance (left) and other volunteers serve up the bounty of fried fish. (PHOTO/George Henson) In preparation for the fish fry, 35 volunteers spread out across RV parks in the city to publicize it, and another team stayed at the church to pray. Many more volunteers helped with organization, advertising, setting up tables and chairs, frying fish and baking cookies, Rogers added. All their effort was more than worth it to reach people with the gospel, she noted.

“I just get so excited to tell others about Jesus,” she said. “We want these oilfield workers to know that they are welcome here, and if they have needs, we would like help them with those things.”

Some people asked Rogers if the fish fry was a gimmick to get the workers to attend church.

“I tell them, ‘No, this is a chance to tell people about Jesus and for them to come to know him,’” she said.



Tully Blanchard, a World Wrestling Hall of Fame member and one of the original Four Horsemen who is now a speaker with Bill Glass Champions for Life Evangelism Ministry, shares the gospel at a fish fry sponsored by First Baptist Church in George West. (PHOTO/George Henson)Bobbie Waldron, another volunteer, agreed.

“I think this is a really positive thing,” she said. “Oilfield outreach is really necessary, but they’re hard to reach. This is just one more thing we can try.”

Tully Blanchard, a World Wrestling Hall of Fame member and speaker with the [Bill Glass Champions for Life Evangelism Ministry](#), told people at the fish fry he learned the hard way drugs, alcohol and fame offered no substitute for the saving love of Jesus Christ—a message members of First Baptist Church hoped would resonate with the oilfield audience.