

Del Rio church leads ministry to Haitians under bridge

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DEL RIO—The ministry City Church in Del Rio provided last month to hundreds of migrants camped beneath a bridge prepared the congregation for a much more extensive response to a surge of Haitians at the border.

The first week in August, City Church prepared and provided [more than 2,000 sandwiches in four days](#) for migrants at the request of the U.S. Border Patrol. The migrants found shelter beneath a bridge while they waited to be processed.

At the end of that crisis, Pastor Matt Mayberry said: “Lord willing, we won’t have to do this again anytime soon. But when there is a need, we want to be obedient.”

After a reprieve of little more than a month, the church learned about an even greater need.

Shon Young, associate pastor at City Church and missionary with Texas Baptists’ River Ministry, received word from Border Patrol on Sept. 11 that 1,500 Haitians were camped beneath the bridge. Young also is president of the [Val Verde Border Humanitarian Coalition](#), a broad-based group of citizens and organizations that provide assistance to refugees.

The numbers escalated each day, reaching 10,000 by Sept. 16. The [Washington Post](#) reported the Haitians are part of an even larger wave, including many who first arrived in Brazil and neighboring countries after the 2010 earthquake.

“It’s surreal,” Mayberry commented after seeing firsthand the thousands

camped under the border bridge.

‘We immediately reached out to other churches’

In light of the overwhelming numbers, City Church is getting by with a little help from their friends.

“We learned from last time,” Mayberry said. “We immediately reached out to other churches.”

Churches in the area began providing sandwiches. Congregations in South Texas, West Texas and Central Texas provided financial support and pledged prayers. Within a week, about 20 congregations were working in partnership with City Church.

Alto Frio Baptist Camp in Leakey, about an hour and a half drive from Del Rio, also began preparing sandwiches in its cafeteria for distribution to migrants at the border bridge.

This time, City Church and its partners have no illusions of feeding all those camped beneath the bridge. U.S. Border Patrol is using federal funds to purchase meals from local restaurants, but the sandwiches help fill gaps and provide emergency help when demand exceeds supply.

The local Del Rio processing center is capable of serving about 1,100 new arrivals a day working at maximum capacity, Mayberry said. Some sources expect another 20,000 to arrive at Del Rio within the next couple of weeks.

While that could mean several weeks of continued service—perhaps more than a month—Mayberry remains hopeful.

“We’re not alone. Others are serving alongside us,” Mayberry said. “It’s a

real picture of the body of Christ working together.”