

Dolls enable Christians inside, outside of prison to join in missions

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WHARTON—Handmade dolls provided a means for Baptist women in South Texas and incarcerated women in Central Texas to share the gospel and bring joy to children in Mexico and a low-income Hispanic neighborhood in West Dallas.

Displaying the witnessing dolls made by volunteers at two Baptist churches in Wharton and by female offenders at a correctional facility near Gatesville are (left to right) Paulette Kirkpatrick from First Baptist Church in Wharton; Carole Ross, a home missionary and founding president of Cross Prison Ministries; and Christina McCracken, an attorney and volunteer who works with El Calvario Bautista in West Dallas. (PHOTOS/Courtesy of A.C. Shelton)

The project began when women at [First Baptist Church in Wharton](#) saw an article in *Missions Mosaic*, a Woman's Missionary Union publication, about a church-based group that made witnessing dolls, Paulette Kirkpatrick from First Baptist explained.

Every doll wears a necklace with six colored beads, each representing a spiritual truth. A card printed in English and Spanish attached to every doll

uses the colored beads to explain the Christian plan of salvation.

The dolls have two sides—each featuring a face representing a person’s spiritual condition. On one side, eyes are closed, symbolizing spiritual blindness. On the other, eyes are wide open—representative of spiritual insight.

Since [Colorado Baptist Association](#) supports home missionary Carole Ross and her Cross Prison Ministries, the women at First Baptist in Wharton saw an opportunity to link with female offenders to make the dolls.

More than two dozen women from First Baptist and College Heights Baptist churches in Wharton cut out fabric and assembled the dolls.

“Jerry Joines sewed most of the dolls—probably about 500 of the 600 we made,” Kirkpatrick noted.

Next, [Cross Prison Ministries](#) provided the incomplete dolls to offenders in the special projects section of the Mountain View Unit near Gatesville—a maximum-security facility for women— who stuffed them, attached hair to them and gave them unique facial expressions.



Joining in a time of dedication and celebration marking the completion of witnessing dolls that will be distributed to children in Mexico and a Hispanic neighborhood in Dallas are (left to right) Mack Mathis, pastor of First Baptist Church in Wharton; Jerry Joines, chief seamstress for the doll-making project; Carole Ross, founding president of Cross Prison Ministries; and Paulette Kirkpatrick, a volunteer missions coordinator from First Baptist in Wharton. (PHOTOS/Courtesy of A.C. Shelton)

“You could see the personality of the offenders in the faces of each of the dolls,” Ross said. “When you look at the freckles, the tears, the teeth, they are distinctive. The Lord’s hand was on them.”

First Baptist in Wharton will send many of the dolls—along with about 1,500 Christmas stockings stuffed with toys and a simple gospel presentation—to Edweina Peroni of Christ the King Baptist Church in Mission for distribution to children in Mexico.

The church presented the rest of the dolls to Christina McCracken, a Dallas attorney who volunteers with El Calvario Bautista in west Dallas. “We plan

use them in Vacation Bible School this summer,” McCracken said.

During a presentation service at First Baptist Church in Wharton, the dolls lined the front of the sanctuary. Ross saw particular meaning as she looked at the dolls surrounding the Lord’s Supper table.

“We’re committed to healing the broken body of Christ—believers behind bars who are separated from believers in the free world,” she said. “Through these dolls, the church behind bars got to be part of missions, even though its members are incarcerated.”