

El Paso Baptists launch migrant ministry center

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The changing needs of an El Paso church and the increasing needs of newly arrived individuals at the U.S.-Mexico border coincided to help launch a new associational ministry.

During an earlier immigration surge, Senior Pastor Patrick Six at Scotsdale Baptist Church in El Paso began thinking about how his church could be involved in a ministry to migrants.

He and a few other pastors in El Paso Baptist Association discussed whether the church might host such a ministry. However, dramatic shifts in immigration policy and the COVID-19 pandemic put those plans on hold.

In the meantime, throughout the pandemic, [El Paso Baptist Association](#) [partnered](#) with the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Farmers to Families program to meet food needs in the area. In one year, the association helped distribute more than \$8 million worth of fresh food to families through 150 churches and local organizations.

One door closes, another opens



Larry Floyd, executive director of El Paso Baptist Association

About the time the association's involvement with that program expired, associational leaders became aware of a renewed influx of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers—and an opportunity to assist one particular group.

“These are people who have been thoroughly vetted and been granted temporary legal status that allows them to be in the United States, but they need help connecting with their sponsors in this country,” said Larry Floyd, executive director of El Paso Baptist Association.

While some other agencies and organizations in El Paso assist in linking new arrivals to their sponsors in the United States, most offer that help “minus the gospel,” Floyd said. From previous experience, he was convinced providing the service offers an avenue to share the love of Christ.



Shon Young with the Val Verde Border Humanitarian Coalition talks to El Paso Baptists about ways to minister to migrants, refugees and asylum seekers. (Photo courtesy of Larry Floyd)

When Floyd was pastor of City Church in Del Rio from 2015 to 2019, he worked with mission pastor Shon Young to launch the [Val Verde Border Humanitarian Coalition](#). So, Floyd recognized the opportunity for ministry to newly arrived individuals and families, and he knew the process involved in starting this kind of organization.

Floyd presented to associational leaders his vision for a ministry center that could offer a range of services. The center could help new arrivals connect with their sponsors and facilitate travel arrangements. It also could supply food, clothing and personal hygiene items; offer a place to shower; provide limited overnight lodging; organize activities for children; and present the gospel both through word and deed.

“I have received calls from Washington state, Tennessee, Alabama, North Carolina, South Carolina, Idaho, New Mexico and—of course—all parts of

Texas. The reason for the calls—to see how they can help with the border crisis in El Paso,” Floyd said.

Short-term volunteers and some financial assistance from outside the region appeared to be available. However, the association needed a core group of committed local volunteers to staff the center—and, most significantly, a site to house it.

Church makes facility available

At that point, Scotsdale Baptist Church re-entered the conversation. When the congregation was significantly larger, it built a Christian life center the church no longer was using on a regular basis that could be used for ministry to migrants.



Patrick Six, senior pastor of Scotsdale Baptist Church in El Paso

“We’re not as big as we used to be,” Pastor Six said. “But it’s like the question God asked Moses: ‘What is that in your hand?’ What does Scotsdale have? We don’t have the members to provide the manpower for this kind of ministry, but we do have a building.”

Six met with his church's elders to present the idea of making the Christian life center available as the host site for the El Paso Migrant Ministry Center. Once that group endorsed the proposal, Six invited Floyd to attend the church's next business meeting, to respond to questions and concerns.

"The church voted overwhelmingly in favor of offering the Christian life center for this ministry," Six said.

The church made the offer to the association with no predetermined end date, recognizing the migrant ministry would occupy the entire facility seven days a week, potentially providing 24-hour-a-day services to guests.

"It's like the rule for a mission trip: Be flexible," Six said.

'Trusting in the Lord'

While short-term volunteers already have expressed an interest, Floyd recognizes the key to a sustainable ministry center is committed local volunteers. So, he organized interest meetings to answer questions, enlist volunteers and solicit support.

"After much prayer and securing a venue to begin this enormous ministry, we believe the time is now to move ahead and create a Migrant Ministry Center that will be bathed in the love of Christ," Floyd wrote in a [recent blog post](#).

The El Paso Migrant Ministry Center launches on July 7. The association has established a portal for [online donations](#) and set up an [Amazon Wish List](#) of items the center needs, such as simple recreation equipment for children, cleaning supplies, personal hygiene items, baby care items and office supplies.

While the center is preparing for up to 200 guests per day, that number could vary widely, and ministry leaders will not know exactly what to

expect until the center is operating fully, Floyd acknowledged.

“It’s an interesting day in the life of a border city,” he said. “We are just trusting in the Lord and having faith he will bring the people we need for this ministry.”

For more information about the center and volunteer opportunities, contact El Paso Baptist Association at (915) 544-8671 or epba@elpasoba.org.