

God works in middle of change, McAllen pastor tells rally

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MCALLEN - On the eve of the first Baptist General Convention of Texas annual meeting in the Rio Grande Valley, Texas Baptists gathered to worship, celebrating where God has moved in the past and looking toward the future.

Preaching during the rally, Julio Guarneri told participants the world is changing. Change of any sort makes people uncomfortable, and individuals struggle with how to respond to what is going on around them.



Praise was part of the Hispanic and African-American rally that preceded the BGCT annual meeting in McAllen.

Guarneri, pastor of Calvary Baptist Church in McAllen reminded Texas Baptists that God is moving in the midst of change. God is changing hearts and lives, revolutionizing families and communities, he said.

"He is a God of new things," Guarneri said. "He specializes in that."

Change is constant, and so is God's activity in the middle of it, Guarneri

said. Both have existed throughout human history, he noted. God showed himself in dramatic ways—using a burning bush, delivering the Israelites from bondage in Egypt and revealing himself most fully through the life and actions of Christ.

And 100 years ago, Guarneri said, God brought together a small group of Hispanic Texas Baptists to form the Hispanic Baptist Convention of Texas to cooperate in missions and ministry. Decades later, the Hispanic Baptist convention signed a unification agreement with the Baptist General Convention of Texas. This year, both conventions reworked that agreement.

God “is the God that led (Hispanic Texas Baptists) to plant churches, to organize their work,” he said. “That led to us.”

Guarneri pondered what God is doing in the midst of change now. Missiologists have noted Christianity is booming in the Southern Hemisphere, where Christian groups are expanding by leaps and bounds. More than 400 South American groups sent more than 10,000 missionaries around the globe last year.

“This is a new world,” Guarneri said. “God is doing a new thing.”

Hispanic Texas Baptists can learn from Latinos in the Southern Hemisphere, Guarneri said. God is calling his people to share the gospel. Texas Baptists may find new ways of doing that from South American Latinos.

To learn from what God is doing in the Southern Hemisphere, Hispanic Texas Baptists first must be willing to open their hearts to God’s work and calling. That action can change the way people think and act, seeking to share the hope of Christ.

“If we expect God to do new things, it must start in our hearts,” he said.

