

# Hispanic Texas Baptists urged to stand firm in faith

July 3, 2015

AUSTIN—Speakers at the Hispanic Baptist Convention of Texas annual meeting urged 1,100 affiliated churches to respond to the challenge of reaching 11 million Hispanic Texans with the gospel.

✘ Hispanic Baptist Convention of Texas officers are (left to right): Joel Ake, secretary; Bea Mesquias, president; Rolando Aguirre, first vice president; and Ruben Chairez, second vice president. (PHOTO/Kalie Lowrie)The 2015 [Convencion Bautista Hispana de Texas](#) drew 1,529 registered participants, including 487 messengers, to Hyde Park Baptist Church in Austin. Austin-area church members also joined for worship services, with about 2,100 gathering Sunday evening.

“If the church does not know who Jesus is, how will the world know who Jesus is?” asked Samuel Rodriguez, president of the National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference. “Do we know who Jesus is? How can we reach people for Christ if we do not know who he is?”

✘ Jesse Rincones, who has served as volunteer executive director for the Hispanic Baptist Convention of Texas three years will become the Convencion’s first paid staff member, working from an office on the campus of the Baptist University of the Américas. (PHOTO/Kalie Lowrie)Preaching from Matthew 16:13-19, Rodriguez encouraged Hispanic Baptists to stand firm in their faith, not responding to questions about Jesus’ identity based on what culture suggests, but rather what the Scriptures proclaim.

“We are believers, followers of Jesus Christ,” he said. “We are who we are because Jesus declared our identity. His word defines us. Christ is our

center.”

Executive Director Jesse Rincones will assume a full-time position for the Hispanic convention in San Antonio this summer. Rincones has volunteered in this position for three years and will become the Convencion’s first paid staff member, working from an office on the campus of the [Baptist University of the Américas](#).

“My first responsibility will be to move forward with our long range planning effort that we started several months ago in collaboration with Rolando Rodriguez and the (BGCT) office of Hispanic ministries,” Rincones said. “I will work to increase the amount of Spanish language resources available to our churches, and foster partnerships that will resource Hispanic Baptist work in Texas. The mission is to help build stronger Hispanic Baptist churches, pastors and leaders. The result is that Texas Baptists will have stronger partners in kingdom work.”

✘ About 100 volunteers at the Hispanic Baptist Convention of Texas participated in a mission project with Texas Baptists’ Disaster Recovery ministry to package and prepare 10,000 meals to ship to Sierra Leone through Meals 4 Multitudes. (PHOTO/Kalie Lowrie) During the business session, messengers approved a budget increase from \$65,000 in 2015 to \$93,700 for 2016 to fund the executive director’s position.

Messengers also elected as officers for 2015-16 Bea Mesquias from United Baptist Church in Harlingen, who will serve a third term as president; Rolando Aguirre from Calvary Baptist Church in McAllen, serving a second term as first vice president; Ruben Chairez from Primera Iglesia Bautista Del Rio, second vice president; and Joel Ake from Primera Iglesia Bautista Mexicana in Dallas, secretary.

During the convention, 100 volunteers participated in a mission project with [Texas Baptists’ Disaster Recovery ministry](#) to package and prepare

10,000 meals to ship to Sierra Leone through Meals 4 Multitudes. This project is part of an ongoing initiative to ship more than 1 million meals to victims of the Ebola crisis this past winter.

✘ Samuel Rodriguez, president of the National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference, encouraged Hispanic Texas Baptists to stand firm in their faith. (PHOTO/Kalie Lowrie)The convention recognized 30 Hispanic students as recipients of \$1,000 Hispanic Education Initiative scholarships. Director Gabriel Cortes noted it marked an increase of 10 scholarships from the previous year. The family of Leobardo and Isabel Estrada were recognized for establishment of an endowment that provided \$10,000 for scholarships this year.

Harold Aguirre and Bethany Morales received scholarships to [Dallas Baptist University](#), totaling \$100,000. In recognition for his ongoing support for Hispanic education, DBU President Gary Cook received a servant leadership award.

The convention recognized 19 students as Hispanic Education Initiative summer missionaries, who will work in churches around the state to encourage school-aged students to pursue educational goals, including college and university studies.

Also, 57 students graduated from Entrena-T, a leadership program co-sponsored by BUA and the [Baptist General Convention of Texas Hispanic ministries](#) office.

*Editor's Note: The 7th paragraph was added after the story originally was posted.*