

Juarez violence points to continuing need for prayer by Texas Baptists

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Unabated violence in the border city of Juarez underscores the continuing need for prayer by Texas Baptists, said a Tyler physician who is seeking to mobilize a statewide response.

Various news sources have reported the number of people killed in Ciudad Juarez this year by mid-September had topped 1,600—more than in all of 2008. Many of the homicides have been drive-by shootings and gangland-style killings associated with drug cartels.

And many of those deaths hit close to home for Baptists in Juarez, said Dick Hurst, a medical doctor from First Baptist Church in Tyler who is spearheading a statewide effort to link Texas Baptist congregations to sister churches in Juarez.

“I received an e-mail reporting that nine young people in three of our churches in Juarez were murdered recently,” he said.

Earlier this year, representatives from the Baptist General Convention of Texas, the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, Buckner International, Baylor University and several churches met to explore ways Texas Baptists can respond to the needs of churches in Juarez.

The group agreed to seek Texas Baptist churches to enter a relationship with each of the 44 Baptist churches in Juarez. They also agreed to look for ways Texas Baptist schools could help the churches in Juarez with leadership development.

So far, between 30 and 40 Texas Baptist churches have agreed to become sister churches with congregations in Juarez, Hurst reported. Some large Sunday school classes also have expressed an interest in developing an ongoing relationship with a small Juarez church, he added.

Pastors in Juarez received an initial box of Texas Hope 2010 multimedia compact discs with gospel presentations and Scripture, made possible by the BGCT, he noted.

One pastor, who only received 30 CDs, noted it would not begin to be enough to distribute on the city's streets, Hurst said. "So, his church established discipleship groups in homes. They are using the CDS in those groups as people work their way through them over 10 weeks," he said.

For more information about the sister-church program with Baptists in Juarez, contact Hurst at crbhurst@hotmail.com.