

Church seeks to be ‘hands and feet of Christ’ to immigrants

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McALLEN (BP)—Most Americans sees the border crisis on the nightly news, but leaders at [Calvary Baptist Church in McAllen](#) recognize it as a mission field in their own backyard.



Chad Mason, pastor for mobilization and global impact, recalled a meeting where Calvary Baptist leaders agreed: “We have to do something. We have to be involved in this. These people are here, and it’s incumbent on us to be the hands and feet of Christ with our actions.”

That response characterizes the nature of the church, Mason noted.

“I just love this church’s heart,” he said. “Even the people who had practical concerns, their heart was totally right. There was not one time that someone said we shouldn’t do it based on political agenda. I was very proud to be a part of this church, where their faith is influencing their stance. Their faith is the leading part of who they are.”

In facing what he described as a “massive humanitarian need right here in our community,” Mason said church leaders have had conversations with White House staff and Border Patrol at many levels trying to find ways to provide ministry to unaccompanied minors. Currently, the congregation is

providing volunteers for refugee relief and laundry service for hundreds of children who have immigrated with their families.



Immigrant children are receiving food and other necessities through a cooperative arrangement between Calvary Baptist Church in McAllen, Catholic Charities and other nonprofits in the Valley. (Photo: www.southtexasrefugees.org)“As of the moment, we have no access” to unaccompanied minors, he said. “That’s probably the biggest piece of information that is misunderstood nationwide. We keep being told that any day that might change, and we have hope that we will have access to the minors.”

So, Calvary Baptist is focusing on other aspects of relief work and ministry.

The church has discussed responding to the needs of Border Patrol personnel, Mason noted.

“That is one of the things that we really would love to be doing. We are trying to start an intentional effort to thank and care for the Border Patrol agents” in a greater way. In August, the church hopes to host between 200 and 300 Border Patrol agents in an event partnering several organizations to say “thank you” and to show the church’s concern for how the agents’ work can be overwhelming.

Through cooperation with various organizations, Calvary leaders have had

opportunities to communicate to government officials what the workers and refugees are experiencing at the border.

“This last weekend, we had three senators and seven congressmen who were in town, and they wanted to hear from the volunteer faith community. I was blessed to go and sit in this meeting and speak and share as an equal voice. ... We got to tell them what we were doing. We got to ask for their help.”



Clothing is collected for immigrant children at a relief center started by Catholic Charities. Calvary Baptist Church in McAllen has started a website at www.southtexasrefugees.org to help volunteers and donors connect with churches and nonprofits helping immigrants. (Photo: www.southtexasrefugees.org) With the influx of refugees, the need for showers, laundry services and other basic needs was so high, the government asked Catholic Charities to open a relief center. Days later, Calvary began assisting, along with the Salvation Army and other humanitarian organizations. Calvary's volunteers focus on laundry service by using mobile laundry units provided by the [Texas Baptist Men](http://www.texasbaptistmen.org) missions organization.

Calvary also has launched a website, southtexasrefugees.org, to facilitate communication among people interested in helping.

“We feel that we are being stretched, to become more like Christ,” Mason said. “God is using this opportunity tremendously.

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