

# Meals provided by Texas Baptists arrive in West Africa

January 9, 2015

The holiday season grew much more joyful for many people in Liberia and Sierra Leon when they received 997,920 pre-packaged rice and high-nutrition meals sent by Texas Baptists' Disaster Recovery program, working in partnership with multiple ministries.



Children assemble at Zion Praise Baptist Church in Bentol, Monserrado, near the Liberian capital of Monrovia, to receive food packets made possible by Texas Baptists' Disaster Recovery. (PHOTO/ Courtesy of Liberian Baptist Missionary & Educational Convention)The first container of 142,560 meals, trucked in from South Africa in partnership with Virginia Baptists, arrived just in time for Christmas and New Year's Day. Grateful Liberian families received the food packets at Zion Praise Baptist Church near Monrovia, the capital city.

When the Ebola epidemic struck Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea early last year and took the lives of many farmers, it created a major food shortage.

Since September 2014, [Texas Baptists' Disaster Recovery office](#) arranged for multiple shipments of pre-packaged meals, and all have safely arrived. Partnering with Convoy of Hope in Springfield, Mo., and ABC Foods, they shipped two 40-foot containers holding 285,120 meals each to Liberia and one to Sierra Leone.

Olu Menjay, president of the [Liberia Baptist Missionary and Educational Convention](#) reported churches already have begun distributing food from the containers.

“The crisis is huge, and the needs are huge,” he said. “I think this initiative is helping us reach the grassroot people in a real way, because we’re using our churches. This partnership is putting hands and feet to what God has called us to.”

Aaron Pierce—director of community development and relief for [Restore Hope Sierra Leone](#), a ministry of First Baptist Church in Arlington and the [Global Connection Partnership Network](#) —reported distribution of meals began before Christmas.

Coordination between Texas Baptists and in-state ministry partners made the shipments more cost-effective, said Marla Bearden, disaster response specialist for Texas Baptists. Bearden has been making the connections through partners in [National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster](#).

It has also created opportune moments for West African Baptists to share the gospel, she said, as the food is distributed directly from churches and ministries.

“These churches become a mission point in the community,” Bearden said.

“To me, that’s a tremendous benefit. Because we sent the food, West Africans can begin attending these churches and reconnect or come to know Christ anew.”



Families receive much-needed food, distributed at Zion Praise Baptist Church and provided by Texas Baptists’ Disaster Recovery. (PHOTO/ Courtesy of Liberian Baptist Missionary & Educational Convention) Although the Ebola crisis has subsided to some degree, the effects of starvation remain. Texas Baptists’ Disaster Recovery currently has plans for seven more shipments of 40-foot containers which, when combined with what has already arrived, will total to almost 3 million meals to Liberia and Sierra Leone.

Texas Baptists’ Disaster Recovery also continues to raise funds and support to send the food. The group is sponsoring hosting a Day of Service Jan. 19 to pack nutritious rice and soy meals to ship from Texas Baptist Men’s Dixon Mission Equipping Center in Dallas. Volunteers can register here for \$20. Funds are needed for food and shipping costs.

Officials with Texas Baptists’ Disaster Recovery office also encourage Christians who live outside the Dallas area to plan packing parties of their own. For \$3,000 a church, association or community can pack 10,000 meals

given by Meals4Multitudes, an organization related to [First Baptist Church in Athens](#) that helps churches send food to Africa.