

Texas Baptists evangelism team partners with Apartment Life

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Texas Baptists' evangelism director, Oza Jones, signed a memorandum of understanding with Pete Kelly, CEO of Apartment Life, Feb. 17 prior to the Baptist General Convention of Texas Executive Board meeting.

The partnership helps Texas Baptists churches to identify and send missionaries to Apartment Life's communities.

Apartment Life, a ministry birthed out of First Baptist Church in Euless in 2000, helps apartment owners care for residents by building relationships.

Apartment owners agree to pay half the rent to place missionaries, or Apartment Life coordinators, within their communities to organize events that build relationships among residents. Apartment Life coordinators currently serve about 700 apartment communities around the United States.

Kelly said 95 percent of people in apartments are unchurched, yet they are "incredibly spiritually open because so many of them are in some form of transition."

"I think we all know from personal experience, when you are new [in a community], you're exceptionally open to new relationships, and also, you're just receptive to God," Kelly said.

"Can you imagine how many spiritual opportunities you have in the context of relationships to influence people?"

Apartment Life also has an off-site model that allows Apartment Life coordinators to live close enough to provide services in the apartment

community on a regular basis. In these situations, coordinators are compensated hourly.

Caring for ‘our Jerusalem’ with Apartment Life

Jones, having experience as a former Apartment Life coordinator himself, said it is a “phenomenal organization” that will help “Texas Baptists churches leverage and actually do relational evangelism.”

“When I came in this position, I knew we’d be training churches in evangelism. But on top of training churches in evangelism, I was praying that we would be able to place our churches in places to actually do evangelism,” said Jones.

Kelly said one of Apartment Life’s biggest challenges is finding coordinators to live in their apartment communities.

He showed the evangelism council a map showing all the open communities across the state that are ready or soon to be open to receive Apartment Life missionaries.

“We need missionaries in these communities,” Kelly said.

“My guess is all of these are within a couple miles of a Texas Baptist church. Wouldn’t it be incredible if people from y’all’s churches were the ones that were being missionaries on these opportunities?”

Jones said the whole idea of working together is to have an “opportunity for us to not just train in evangelism, but to actually do it and see it within our churches.”

“We have empty communities that need local missionaries. We either get paid or pay half rent to go and share the gospel in a community that’s by

their church. It's just a no-brainer for me, for us to reach out to our pastors across Texas," Jones said.

"Apartment Life is across the nation, but we're just talking, we're going to take care of our Jerusalem first. ... I think we, a lot of times, go across seas, which is great, but we need to make sure we go across the street."

Exponential growth and relational evangelism

Julio Guarneri, executive director of Texas Baptists, said as we look at the "exponential growth going on" and lostness of our state, "we need multiple strategies to reach those [unreached]."

"I got a text this morning from someone who said they read a report that by the year 2045, Texas will surpass California in population. So, we have exponential growth going on, and we want to plant more churches.

"But we also want to find those pockets of people where, maybe, a church plant is not what they need, they just need relational evangelism that will get them to know Christ and then connect to a church or even to a church plant," Guarneri said.

Jones echoed this, saying he appreciates the relational aspect of Apartment Life's ministry.

"It's not like door-to-door. It's really relational. ... Every 12.5 minutes, a gospel conversation is happening through Apartment Life across the nation, and so that's what we really want to do. We want to build authentic, real relationships with people and to be able to disciple them in a place that's near to a healthy church, for them to eventually get plugged in to," Jones said.

Apartment Life will celebrate its 25th anniversary on March 27 with a

banquet in Dallas.

To learn more about becoming involved with Apartment Life, visit apartmentlife.org.