

Texas Baptists join prayer for Uvalde prior to first day of school

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Texas Baptist leaders are joining the Uvalde Ministerial Alliance in calling churches across the state to participate in a time of prayer on Sunday, Sept. 4, for the community's families and children as they prepare for the first day of school on Sept. 6.

The call to prayer is in response to the mass shooting on May 24, when 19 students and two teachers were fatally shot at Robb Elementary School.

The Uvalde Consolidated Independent School District delayed the first day of school to Sept. 6, but as students and teachers prepare to return to school, worries over safety, grief and student development remain.

"The [Uvalde Ministerial] Alliance is urging churches to pray for the people that are grieving. It's a process, and the whole city [was affected]," said Rolando Rodriguez, director of Texas Baptists en Español.

Families who were affected directly will need particularly high levels of support during this time, he added.



Photo courtesy of TBM

Since the tragedy at Robb Elementary School, Rodriguez has been involved with local Uvalde churches in planning long-term care strategies. In partnership with Pastor Neftali Barboza of Iglesia Bautista Nueva Jerico, he hosted a training event for children's ministers the weekend immediately following the mass shooting.

Recently, Baptist General Convention of Texas Executive Director David Hardage met with pastors and church leaders to discuss how Texas Baptists can continue best supporting the churches and community.

The Uvalde Ministerial Alliance hopes churches will join them in praying for all of the families affected, as well as children and teachers returning to school. Churches also are encouraged to pray for the Uvalde authorities as they make decisions, particularly those regarding safety and security.

Carlos Gutierrez, pastor of Primera Iglesia Bautista in Uvalde, agreed, saying only God can bring healing to the community.

"There are so many things that we as human beings cannot do, that we cannot accomplish. In fact, we rely totally on God to get through so many things, and there are so many things that only God can do for the church, for our communities, for the families," Gutierrez said.