

Texas ranks No. 2 in terms of hunger, USDA reports

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AUSTIN—Hunger in Texas has increased slightly, making the Lone Star State the second hungriest in the nation and underscoring the need for Texas Baptists to continue their commitment to live out Christ's call to feed the hungry.

From 2007 to 2009, 17.4 percent of Texas households were at risk of hunger, an increase of 1.1 percent from the prior three-year period, according to the [U.S. Department of Agriculture report](#) released Nov. 15.

A volunteer at Clear Lake Baptist Church, near Houston, sorts canned goods at the congregation's ministry to provide food for hungry people. New data shows Texas ranks No. 2 nationally in hunger. (PHOTO/John Hall/BGCT)

The findings include data from 2009, the heart of the recent economic downturn. Hunger typically lags behind unemployment, so the need possibly is greater today, according to the USDA. Nationwide, 14.7 percent of households were deemed food insecure in 2009, roughly the same as 2008 and among the highest on record.

Suzii Paynter, director of the Baptist General Convention of Texas [Christian Life Commission](#), said the figures stress the importance of Texas Baptists' commitment to feed the hungry in the state.

“God continues calling Texas Baptists to minister to those who are hungry and hurting,” she said.

“In tough economic times, he asks us to be that much more generous with our time and our resources in order to care for those around us. When we obey that call, God uses us in mighty ways to share the hope of Christ.”

In recent years, Texas Baptists have stepped up efforts to help the hungry. In the past two years, they have given more than \$1.8 million to the [Texas Baptist Offering for World Hunger](#). Congregations also have started and expanded hunger ministries, including outreach programs that distribute food and those that serve hot meals.

Through the [Texas Hunger Initiative](#)—a CLC and [Baylor University School of Social Work](#) partnership that seeks to end Texas hunger by 2015—congregations mobilized last summer to provide meals for children who otherwise would go hungry. Due in part to their efforts, Texas served 2 million more meals for children last summer than the previous year.

The Texas Baptist Christian Life Commission is a convener of the Texas Food Policy Roundtable working to improve policies for access and effectiveness of feeding programs and healthy food in Texas. Regional groups of Christians have come together to create strategic approaches to end hunger.