

Violence in Mexico sparks missions efforts on Texas side of the border

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Violence on the Mexico side of the border is pushing teams to minister on the Texas side of the Rio Grande this summer.

In the wake of media reports about increased violence in Mexican border towns—particularly Juarez—a significant number of churches that have ministered for years in Mexico are moving their efforts to the Texas side of the border, said Daniel Rangel, Baptist General Convention of Texas [River Ministry](#) director.

Church leaders indicate they are working in Texas for the safety of their members, Rangel said. BGCT and Buckner International had discouraged congregations from serving in Juarez but have said other border areas are safe to minister in if mission teams exercise caution.

More teams

As a result of the shifts, Texas Baptist ministry is being strengthened along the Rio Grande, Rangel said. More teams are going to serve in El Paso and Brownsville, in particular.

The Baptist Student Ministries at the University of Texas Southwestern Medical School in Dallas had conducted medical clinics in Juarez each year for about a decade. When violence escalated, BSM Director David Griffin began looking at projects in Matamoros. A week before the team's scheduled departure for Mexico, there was a shooting in the city, and the BSM reconsidered.

BGCT River Ministry coordinators guided Griffin and his students to El Paso, where two teams served 800 people through medical clinics in 18 locations. Twenty-three people, including one person who went on the trip, made professions of faith.

Hand of God

“I see it was the hand of God that led us to El Paso,” Griffin said. “Obviously, those people needed to hear.”

Brownsville has a population of about 140,000 people in its city limits and roughly 335,000 people in its metro area but only 11 Baptist churches. About 230,000 people live in Laredo city limits. It has 11 Baptist churches, as well.

“There is a tremendous need to start churches there,” Rangel said.

River Ministry coordinators are trying to capitalize on the increased interest in working in the Rio Grande Valley by connecting churches with projects and initiatives linked to Texas Hope 2010— an effort to share the gospel with every Texan by Easter 2010. Rangel is asking each church taking a trip to the Rio Grande Valley to consider bringing Bibles with them to distribute. The BGCT is attempting to put Scripture in every home in the state.

“What has been a detriment to the Mexican side of the border has been a plus to this one,” Rangel said.