

# EDITORIAL: Care earns our right to share

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If Texas Baptists will be friendly, and if we don't forget our families, Texas Hope 2010 should have a huge impact on the Lone Star State.

Texas Hope 2010 is the Baptist General Convention of Texas' audacious campaign to share the Christian gospel with every person in the state and to feed every hungry person within our borders by Easter Sunday of next year.

The challenge is staggering. Texas is home to 24 million people. At least 11 million of them are not affiliated with any church. They speak a cacophony of languages, and many have immersed themselves in subcultures far from the reaches of churches. At least 3 million residents are classified as hungry. They live in rural hamlets and dense inner cities, along rivers and in the shadow of expressways.

Editor Marv Knox

Fortunately, as one former pastor said, "Texas Baptists would take on hell with a water pistol." We don't back down from a challenge. In fact, our history demonstrates we tend to fall head-over-heels in love with outlandish goals, particularly if they have to do with telling people about Christ and helping people who hurt.

Recent research indicates we should get a receptive audience. A new survey conducted by LifeWay Research and the North American Mission Board revealed 67 percent of Americans say a direct invitation from a family member would get them to visit church. Almost that many—63 percent—say a friend or neighbor who invites them to church will be successful.

That's the good news: Two out of every three of your non-Christian family and friends will come to church with you if you ask them to.

The bad news, of course, is that collectively we don't know millions of our fellow Texans. So, they fall outside the realm of the survey. They can't be invited to church—or have a meaningful conversation about Christ—by a Texas Baptist (and perhaps any Christian, for that matter) because they don't even know one.

That's where the vision of Texas Hope 2010 comes in. The campaign involves three areas of focus—prayer, care and share. Each of them is crucial.

Thousands of us are setting aside time at noon each day to pray for our fellow Texans—particularly those who do not know Christ as their Savior and those who are hungry and hurting. Prayer for them is wonderful and proper. But most likely, God will answer our prayers by changing our own hearts. As we think about these fellow Texans day after day, we will grow increasingly burdened for their spiritual and physical needs. Burdened enough to do something about them.

Share always has been a major goal for Baptists. We're evangelistic people. We don't hoard salvation. We want others to enjoy a saving relationship with Jesus, just as we do. That's why we want to present the gospel in a variety of ways to each Texan in her or his own language. We're focusing like a laser on sharing.

Ultimately, care will be the key to sharing. We fight hunger and poverty because it's the right thing to do, because we believe every person—created in God's image—should have the physical essentials for healthy life. We feel this burden because we love people.

In the next year, caring for fellow Texans will earn our right to share the gospel with them. By asking them how we can meet their physical needs

and then doing something about it, we will earn the right to be their friends. And the research shows our efforts to share the gospel will be received much better after we become their friends.

Like most Texas Baptists, I need this emphasis on caring to go with my praying and sharing. It's easy to curl up in a cocoon of wonderful Christian friends and not even know many lost people. Caring pushes us out of that cocoon and into the lives of people who need all we have to share.