

# **IN FOCUS: Good news for prisoners in Texas**

October 16, 2009

As Texas Baptists prepare to gather in Houston for our annual meeting, we cannot neglect the needs that plague Texas' largest city. Half of Harris County does not belong to a church. With a population estimate of 4 million, there are approximately 2 million unchurched people in the Houston area.

As part of City Reach 2009, the Baptist General Convention of Texas will conduct several activities to share the hope of Christ throughout Houston. With God's help, we can reach out to Houston's unchurched and those in need.

Randel Everett

Our Texas Hope 2010 challenge is to communicate the hope of Christ with every person in Texas. Thousands of men and women, and even youth, are in prisons and jails across our state. Reaching them with the good news of Christ requires unique training and access.

As part of the City Reach initiative, the BGCT is partnering with Bill Glass Champions for Life to bring prominent sports figures to area prisons to meet with and minister to prisoners. Our goal is to recruit 700 volunteers to visit more than 15,000 incarcerated in Houston.

Bill Glass, an all-pro defensive end, has spent his post-football years preaching in prisons throughout the world for decades. Glass said he has spent so much time in prisons, if he is ever convicted of a crime, he already will have served the time.

He is a member of First Baptist Church in Waxahachie and was the first

professional athlete I met. I was a seventh grader in Iredell, where my father was the pastor. They both were students at Southwestern Seminary, and Glass preached a revival in our church. He was the biggest man I'd seen. His powerful preaching stirred the hearts of our community, and many made commitments to Christ.

Even though his football career ultimately came to an end, he continued his calling to evangelism, preaching in citywide crusades but primarily equipping churches to reach out to prisoners through evangelism and discipleship. His team is committed to working with Texas Baptists in Texas Hope 2010, including equipping volunteers to share their faith in Houston prisons as part of City Reach.

Henry Blackaby recently related to the Bill Glass organization that he sees God's greatest activities at this time in the Fortune 500 CEO's group he has been facilitating and in the revivals occurring in the nation's prisons. Tomi Grover of the BGCT staff said, "This work of God is no surprise to those of us who work in restorative justice ministries and who go to prisons for ministry on a regular basis."

Champions for Life brings evangelism training to the churches, igniting their folks to share their faith within the environment of the prison. Volunteers are required to participate in training events Thursday and Friday, Nov. 12-13. Volunteers will receive valuable training in prison evangelism as well as the rules and regulations required in these institutions.

If you wish to be one of the 700 volunteers, register to participate by Oct. 21. Additional information may be found at [www.bgct.org](http://www.bgct.org) under the Annual Meeting/City Reach.

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