

# **IN FOCUS: Pray for revival of Christ's hope in 2009**

January 9, 2009

2008 was quite a year. In case you have forgotten, we had a presidential election. After what seemed to be hundreds of debates and thousands of ads and daily polls, a winner finally was selected. Sen. Barack Obama will become our first African-American president.

We remember the China Olympics, with the spectacular ceremonies and the inspirational athletes, including Michael Phelps, winner of eight gold medals, and Texan Nastia Liukin, who won the gold medal in women's gymnastics.

In the Baptist General Convention of Texas, there was a change of staff leadership, a reduction of the budget, the election of the first president whose father also served as president and the launching of Texas Hope 2010.

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Unfortunately, there were times when the bad news appeared to dwarf the good news. Hurricanes pounded the Texas coast. Hundreds of our Texas Baptist churches were hit; some still face significant damage and loss of membership.

The biggest story of the year for most of the world was the economic crisis. Never since the Great Depression has there been more global bad financial news. Companies and even industries that appeared stalwart crumbled. People lost jobs, houses, businesses, insurance and retirement.

Violence continued around the globe. The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan persist. Terrorism hit dozens of countries, including India, Pakistan, Congo

and Sudan. The year ended with war breaking out between Israel and Gaza. More than 1,300 people were killed in Juarez, Mexico, last year as drug violence continued. The family still is a dangerous place for many in Texas through abortions, abuse and neglect.

We need a revival of hope. Not a revival of hype with political and religious sound bites. Not a Pollyanna isolation that ignores the problems of others. Not trivial distractions that bring temporary relief. We need something solid, substantive and authentic that pulls us out of the doldrums of depression and creates courage and persistence.

Our hope is Christ. In 1 Timothy 1:1, the Apostle Paul says he is an apostle according to “the commandment of God our Savior and of Christ Jesus, who is our hope.” Last year taught us that our treasure is not in earthly wealth. We can lose it overnight. While we should be hopeful in political and religious leaders, leaders are certain to disappoint. We can see the good in others, but we still live in a world where evil exists.

Much of the hope of a Christ follower is eschatological. Christ may heal us of our illnesses, or he may not. We may be spared from the downsizing in our jobs, but we may not. Either way, our hope in Christ is secure. Paul wrote, “... for I know whom I have believed, and I am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him until that day.” I’m convinced many in our world are ready for this kind of hope.

Texas Hope 2010 is “... Christ in you the hope of glory.” Pray for God to use us to usher in a revival of Christ’s hope in 2009.

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