

# IN FOCUS: What will it take to reach Texas?

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Looking back on Texas Hope 2010, we recognize the most effective way to reach our state for Christ is through the local church. Only the church has all the gifts of the Spirit needed to share the hope of Christ and nurture new believers to maturity.

In a conversation, Tom Billings, the executive director of [Union Baptist Association](#), shared statistics that reveal the challenge of reaching Texas. The population of Dallas-Fort Worth grew from 4 million in 1990 to 5.2 million in 2000. In 1990, 1.76 million were unaffiliated with any religion, and in 2000, there were 2.5 million—50 percent. In 1990, 2.64 million were unclaimed by evangelicals, and that number grew to 3.9 million in 2000—75.2 percent. It would take 26,182 new churches averaging a membership of 150 to reach these 3.9 million people.

Randel Everett

The situation in Houston was similar. The population grew from 3.7 million to 4.7 million. In 2000, 3.7 million—79.4 percent—were unclaimed by evangelicals. So, 24,710 new churches averaging 150 members would be needed to reach them. If the cost per new church were \$2 million, more than \$52 billion would be needed in D-FW and \$49.4 billion in Houston.

If these numbers don't frighten us enough, remember this was for 2000. By 2010, both the population and percentage of unchurched increased. What will be the challenge in 2018?

- **How will we do church planting?**

Starting churches in Texas will require some to follow a traditional model,

but obviously we need new models as well. Where will we get the trained pastors? Do all churches need buildings? Can multiple congregations share pastors and buildings? How do we begin congregations within each of the ethnic groups in Texas, with more than 200 language groups in Houston alone?

- **Who will be our pastors?**

It will not be possible for every church to have a full-time pastor with a seminary degree. The pastors of new churches in the colonias may be individuals who are new believers living there. Mission Arlington has used this model in many of their multihousing churches. Some pastors may be second-career, bivocational or even retired. Others could serve several churches at one time.

Schoolteachers, seminary faculty, denominational workers and students are great resources to be pastors or interims.

- **How will we train our pastors?**

Texas Baptists have some of the finest universities and seminaries. They need to offer training at the most basic level of ministry certification all the way through Ph. D. programs to meet this need. Classes must be offered in multiple languages and in locations all over Texas, as well as online.

Every church should be planting new churches. They may be in your own community reaching out to new language or social-economic groups, or in remote areas of Texas. Churches that are at a plateau or declining can be rejuvenated best when they see new life emerging from new churches.

This is not a Texas-sized task; it is God-sized.