

Touching lives

Buckner Border Ministries offers Texas Baptists opportunities for hands-on missions experience close to home. Page 12

Onward Christian Soldier

Pastor Steve Munson returned recently to his church in Fort Worth after serving another flock for 14 months—the 607th Military Police Battalion in Iraq. Back page



STANDARD

BAPTIST

Churches minister to isolated Mexican Indians

By Ferrell Foster

Texas Baptist Communications
GUAGUACHIQUÉ, Mexico—Three Texas churches have their mission eyes looking steadily southward, and they've banded together to reach a people group that years ago fled to the isolation of Mexico's mountains.

The Tarahumara Indians live high in the Sierra Madre Mountains a day's drive south of El Paso. Many of them never have heard of Jesus Christ.

They worship multiple gods and hold a wide variety of spiritual beliefs that include some hints of Christianity but nothing of personal salvation available through the life and death of Christ.

"It is a different world," said Tony Garza, a member of First Baptist Church in San Marcos, who has ministered to the Tarahumara people.

Since a smattering of Texas Baptists started reaching out to them a few years ago, about 100 of 50,000 to 70,000 Tarahumara have become Christians, Garza estimated.

Bacon Heights Baptist Church in Lubbock and the First See TEXAS, page 12



Rex Campbell

Denise Cox of Bacon Heights Baptist Church in Lubbock assists a Tarahumara man in the village of Guaguachique with reading glasses.

Worshippers saddle up for new life at Open Range Church

By John Hall

Texas Baptist Communications
WHITNEY—Cowboys and cowgirls are finding new lives on the open range.

Farmers, ranchers and horsemen—and those attracted to that lifestyle—are encountering Jesus at the eight-week-old country and western-driven Open Range Cowboy Church.

Nearly 180 people came to the opening service of the church. On July 18, attendance had grown to a building-packed 280. In the first month, 14 individuals were baptized in a horse trough that sits near the altar.

The church attracts worshippers because it connects with their lifestyle, said Rick Pinner, one of the church's first members.

A country-western praise band leads the service, and many church leaders set the example for the rest of the congregation with Stetsons, jeans and cowboy boots.

Ushers do not pass a plate for an offering; they let worshippers drop off an envelope at the back of the church.

The invitation at the end of the service is a preacher leading a prayer of confession of sins, asking for forgiveness and inviting Jesus into a person's life.

The church may look different, but "we're basing this on something that is very powerful and that is God's word," Pinner said.

The congregation is a new ministry facilitated by the Bap-

tist General Convention of Texas Church Multiplication Center and First Baptist Church in Whitney and is partially supported by funds from the Mary Hill Davis Offering for Texas Missions.

Organizers said they watch people slowly become more involved in the congregation de-



MARY HILL DAVIS OFFERING

spite some initial skepticism. Visitors start out standing by the door.

After a few weeks they are sitting in the back of the church. Eventually, they are getting baptized and sitting in the mid-

dle of the congregation.

All ages are responding to the church's efforts. Babies through later generations attend the

services. Many of those who were baptized are adults.

The church holds trail rides where members can get to know each other better and is looking to relocate to seven acres with a roping arena, where they can hold events. Mike and Gail Warren donated the land before the church started.

"It's getting to a particular group of people that other churches are not ministering to," said Edwin Snelgrove, the band's drummer. "It's like it says—this is a cowboy church. We just want to get you in. We'll let the Lord clean you up."



The Open Range Cowboy Church band leads a packed worship service. About 300 people regularly attend the church, which baptized 14 people in its first month.

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This week's news

Buckner seeks parents for baby

A newborn African-American boy urgently needs parents to adopt him.

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Baylor regents consider future

Baylor University regents meet to consider the school's long-range vision—and possibly the future of President Robert Sloan.

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New Orleans considers options

New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary trustees indicate they will consider alternatives to sole membership.

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Editorial

Texas Baptists in 2004 face some of the same challenges they did in 1904, but at least they are settling differences without gunplay now.

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Learn from failed businesses

Lessons learned from failed businesses can spur the Baptist General Convention of Texas to success, says President Ken Hall.

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Hunger hounds track down funds

Hunger Hounds is on the trail, tracking down potential gifts to the Texas Baptist Offering for World Hunger.

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Homecoming sparks memories

Alumni of Baptist Child & Family Services swap stories and offer thanks at their homecoming celebration.

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African American Fellowship

This issue features coverage from the African American Fellowship/Church Health and Growth Conference.

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Learning to read and write

Baylor University is co-sponsoring an innovative family literacy program in Waco.

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VeggieTales transplanted

Larry the Cucumber, Bob the Tomato and all the VeggieTales crew from Big Idea Productions have moved to Nashville.

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Siren signals answered prayer

When a South Texas pastor shared a prayer request for a fire engine to serve his community, God answered the prayer through an Alabama church.

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