

# Ministry is Bigger in Texas

By PAUL J. SCHARF

“What do you think about going to Texas?”

Chris Katulka, director of North American Ministries for The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry, posed that question to me in the summer of 2020.

“To live?” I think that was my response.

Well, he explained, at least initially it would just be for a visit. I was given the task—the test?—of lining up and then executing my own ministry trip to Texas.

Chris shared with me how Texas is, not surprisingly, home to a large base of support for The Friends of Israel. However, we have no one located there as a church ministries representative for FOI.

So, that’s where I came in. Now, in case you haven’t been there, Texas is indeed a big place! So where would I begin?

Since most of the people I know in ministry connections are clustered in Greater Houston, it was an obvious choice to attempt to begin there.

Still, it took me a while to get that first trip lined up. When Chris first talked to me about it, my response was, “That sounds like a good trip for the winter.” But I didn’t make it until the beginning of winter a year and a half later, in November of 2021.

This month, I concluded my fourth ministry trip to Texas—having gone two times each in November and March. My first trip was just over a week in length, and the rest have been on the order of 10 days. I have gone to Houston on each of them and, just once, this past November, added in an extension to Dallas.

Thus far, I have spoken in a total of nine different churches in Texas, along with one home Bible study group, and appeared on two different radio programs.

I’d be remiss if I did not share a special word of gratitude to the following:

- Dr. Andy Woods and Sugar Land Bible Church, where I have spoken four times (two men’s breakfasts and two full Sunday mornings)
- Dr. Robert Dean and West Houston Bible Church, where I have spoken four times (two Tuesday night services and two Chafer Theological Seminary Pastors’ Conferences)
- Bruce Munsterman and the KHCB Christian Radio Network in Houston. Bruce and his staff have interviewed me now on all four trips—two interviews each time, for a total of eight—and also invited me to contribute one-minute radio spots for the holidays this winter.

Many others have also gone above and beyond what might be expected and have graciously helped me on my way during these trips to Texas.

All of these connections bear evidence of God's *unusual providence* (as the Pilgrim Fathers would term it) upon my trips. I think especially of Bruce coming up to me after the first men's breakfast at Sugar Land—the first time I had ever spoken on Texas soil—and inviting me on the radio.

So many people since then have told me they heard me through that means. And it is so nice to go back now and see people I have met before, and be remembered and accepted by them. It begins to feel more and more like going home.

I would also be remiss here not to offer credit to Dan Dark, a ministry advancement representative for FOI. He has worked extensively in Texas himself, and has given me invaluable advice, direction and assistance.

I end with my own word of advice to all travelers in Christian ministry—going to Texas or anywhere else. Leave early! I am always amazed when a Christian leader has to cancel his first speaking session at a conference because he planned to arrive just in time ... and the travel plans just didn't pan out.

Perhaps there was a time when that might have worked, but not anymore.

On my most recent trip, I left on Thursday to speak on Sunday—and, boy, I am so glad that I did. My flight schedule had to be changed first due to weather, then the new flight was, of course, delayed. Instead of arriving in the evening just after rush hour, I finally got to my hotel room in the middle of the night. Imagine if I had traveled on Saturday with the intention of speaking on Sunday morning!

Well, many people are traveling—and moving—to Texas, and “the fields” there truly “are already white for harvest” (John 4:35). I have seen opportunities for ministry there that are very different from what I am used to at home in the Midwest. And I believe that God has uniquely blessed my trips there.

If you're located in Texas, give me a shout! I just might be headed your way.

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