

## DOWNTOWN MINISTRY

During the current economic downturn, First Baptist Church of Dallas has been on the cutting edge of ministry to jobless people throughout the Metroplex.

Dr. Robert Jeffress, Pastor, has appeared on national outlets such as CNN “Money,” MSNBC and “Fox and Friends” to discuss First Baptist’s ministry through Career Solutions, a national training program based on biblical principles, and proprietary resource, Career Link.

First Baptist hosts Career Solutions workshops, featuring 12 weeks of job-search skills training for the “unemployed, under-employed or unhappily employed.” Career Solutions workshops are also held elsewhere in the Dallas-Fort Worth area and at churches in Michigan, Ohio and Georgia.

“We’ve hired several people who have gone through Career Solutions to work in our church,” Dr. Jeffress said. “I like to think of it as finding a job God’s way.”

Career Link is an exclusive First Baptist resume database designed to introduce job seekers to potential employers. For legal reasons, it is limited to the 10,000-plus church family, but in general, First Baptist offers help finding a job to anyone who asks.

“We take a very practical approach,” Dr. Jeffress said. “How do you tell a person that God loves them and wants to help him or her when they are hungry and can’t afford their rent or a house payment? By connecting both those who need work and those who need workers, we can help build bridges and minister to individuals and organizations with lasting impact.”

Meeting people where they are is one of the hallmarks of First Baptist’s ministry. Twenty-one of its mission chapels have become autonomous churches, and the church currently has eight area mission chapels, including Spanish, Japanese and Laotian congregations, as well as outreaches to the Jewish community, the deaf and ex-convicts.

In addition to its ministries for businesspersons working downtown, such as the monthly PowerLunch, First Baptist has a number of programs for people in need, including:

- **Apartment ministry** – Volunteers live in a lower-income apartment facility for at least 24 months to build community within the complex; organize events; develop friendships; disciple residents; hold children’s programs and Bible studies; invite residents to church; and share the message of Christ. This is affiliated with Apartment Life, a Dallas-based ministry.

- **Celebrate Recovery** – A Christian eight-step program created by Saddleback Church in Lake Forest, Calif., for people who suffer from destructive lifestyles, such as drug and alcohol abuse, depression, anxiety and anger.
- **Conversational English** – Approximately 70 students have already attended one of the weekly Thursday morning meetings since this program began Sept. 10. Because students read and write English proficiently, leaders do not teach grammar or punctuation – rather just lead conversation. The ministry has been very popular in Asian-language communities, mainly Korean, Chinese and Japanese, across Dallas.
- **Downtown Pregnancy Center** – Clients receive open and honest responses to their questions regarding pregnancy, fetal development, lifestyle issues and related concerns. Free services offered include pregnancy tests, sonograms, labor and delivery classes, STD screening and treatment, Medicaid verification, counseling, and medical and housing referrals.
- **Gangs4Christ** – This program focuses on prevention, bringing messages of hope to at-risk youth at schools, in juvenile detention centers and on the streets.
- **Pathways Counseling Center** – The center offers biblically based counseling for people dealing with issues such as loss, depression, anxiety, stress, anger, and marriage and family conflict.
- **Prison Ministry** – Three chaplains, along with a group of volunteers, visit prisons, jails and juvenile detention centers, where they hold Bible studies and church services. First Baptist also has a prison after-care program, helping ex-convicts assimilate back into society – preparing them for employment, helping them deal with anger and other issues.