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By Marv Knox

Editor

Strategic proposals to reorganize the Baptist General Convention of Texas are overdue, dramatic and necessary, BGCT President Ken Hall believes.

Recommendations offered by the BGCT's strategic planning committee to re-state the convention's mission, vision, values and priorities—and to reorganize the convention to meet those objectives—are encouraging, Hall said.

“What the committee agreed to do was to go back and imagine: If the convention were being started in 2004 with its mission to help our churches, what would it look like?” he explained.

Ken Hall

“I'm enthusiastic about the recommendations, particularly the priorities

and core strategies,” he added. “They put the central focus of the BGCT on our churches and not on the denomination and its institutions and agencies.”

Hall leads one of those BGCT agencies. He is president of Buckner Baptist Benevolences, which operates ministries to children, families and the elderly across the state.

“The strategy committee's recommendations say, 'We exist to serve the churches.' They focus on how we can encourage, facilitate and connect churches to do their work,” he said. “I like that.”

A key outcome of the strategy committee's recommendations will be accountability, Hall predicted. As the convention follows the new church-focused strategy, every component of the convention structure—the Executive Board, agencies and institutions, affiliated organizations and all their employees—will be evaluated by how well they help the convention and the churches meet their priorities, he said.

“The convention is going to hold us accountable for how well we encourage, facilitate and connect churches to do their work,” he stressed. “That is the central difference in what the convention is and what it will be. It's not subtle; it's dramatic.”

Philosophically, the convention always has thought the churches should be paramount, Hall said. “But our structure, staffing, funding and political activism haven't always focused on strengthening, encouraging, facilitating and connecting churches,” he acknowledged.

“The new strategic plans should lead every institution and every department of the BGCT Executive Board to ask: 'What is my action, my strategy? What impact is it having on the churches?'" he said.

“If we are negatively impacting the churches, or if we are not helping them,

then I question if our activity is what it should be.”

The need for a new BGCT structure reflects the changes that have impacted culture, Hall noted.

“Over the last generation or two, we have allowed our bureaucratic and organizational systems to not keep pace with the world we live in,” he claimed. “BGCT leadership and employees, as well as institutional and agency leadership and employees, are not that reflective of our culture. And that needs to change.

“We must reflect the cultural, ethnic, gender, geographic and demographic diversity of our state. You can't get there until you decide strategically to get there.”

The current need for dramatic change should not reflect negatively upon BGCT leadership during the past couple of generations, Hall insisted.

“We've had unbelievably godly leaders, or we would be in a lot worse shape. They have been committed to Christ and visionary,” he said.

“But we've come to the issue of cultural diversity late, and we've got to catch up.

“The opportunities that are before us—we've got to take on a new strategy. It's not just racial and ethnic. It's all kinds. We've got to reflect a broader perspective of life. Our tent has to be larger.”

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