

Revisioning process to move BGCT forward, put controversy behind, leaders tell board 30804

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By Ken Camp

Managing Editor

DALLAS-The Baptist General Convention of Texas must seek from God a compelling vision and then organize people, processes and resources around it, Texas Baptist leaders told the convention's Executive Board.

BGCT President Ken Hall and Executive Director Charles Wade outlined for the board at its March 2 meeting their plan for a "revisioning" process to move the convention forward.

Hall told the board he loved being a Texas Baptist because Texas Baptists emphasize the local church, give priority to missions, exhibit a cooperative spirit, are growing in cultural sensitivity, are committed to Christian

education and are dedicated to human justice and meeting human needs.

BGCT Executive Director Charles Wade emphasizes a point during his report to the Executive Board. (John Hall Photo)

But he also cited concerns, underscoring the need for renewed vision.

“The denominational struggle has affected our confidence and trust. We need to move on beyond the fight. We need to accept new challenges,” said Hall, CEO of Buckner Baptist Benevolences.

“Our current system and organizational structure needs reworking. ... We must build on our strengths and improve the areas of weakness.”

Hall affirmed Wade's leadership and the work of the BGCT Executive Board staff, BGCT-affiliated institutions and a “great heritage that affords us the resources to make change.”

Texas Baptists need to “be courageous,” not defensive, “believe the best about each other,” and “separate ourselves from things that keep us from extending Christ's kingdom,” he said.

Wade echoed Hall's desire to "move forward" beyond ensnaring controversies. But he expressed his personal desire for the BGCT to continue passing along church-directed missions gifts to national Baptist groups, such as the Southern Baptist Convention—a practice some elected Texas Baptist leaders have urged the BGCT to consider discontinuing.

Many "good and faithful Texas Baptists" who have been hurt by denominational turmoil in the last two decades have cut ties with the SBC, "and they want everybody to feel the way they do," he said.

But those are decisions best made by local churches, not the state convention, he asserted.

"We honor and affirm the autonomy of the local church," Wade said.

Proposals for revisioning and reorganization grew out of the convergence of several events, he said. Some key staff positions needed to be filled, and the responsibilities carried by the people in those posts needed to be reconsidered.

"At the same time, convention officers began to reflect the concerns of many in our state about issues that needed to be addressed," Wade said, noting events created a climate in which Texas Baptist leaders needed to move "deliberately but quickly."

They created four teams— one of lay leaders with business experience, one of Executive Board staff members and two groups of pastors, one for ministers age 40 and older, and the other for younger pastors.

One team met the day before the board meeting, and the other three were slated to meet before March 5.

Sherrill Spies, a seminary graduate and member of First Baptist Church in The Woodlands with experience in strategic planning and organizational

design, was enlisted to work as a facilitator with the four teams.

Wade told the Executive Board he would bring a progress report on the revisioning process at the May 25 board meeting and present an organizational plan at the Sept. 28 meeting.

"You and I seek from God a new and passionate vision for Texas Baptists, a vision born in prayer and compelling enough that we will give our lives to see it accomplished unto the glory of God," he said.

"The vision will be bold enough that without God's blessing, it cannot be done. But with God's help, every Texas Baptist can find a place to make a lasting difference in the world."

Churches are the "key component" in turning the vision into reality, he stressed.

"We celebrate what God is doing in the churches and recognize the deep hunger of many congregations to become all that God dreams for them. We call on the convention, associations, institutions and related ministries to stand with the churches in fulfilling the vision God has given them," Wade said.

"We want to be a convention fully committed to historic biblical truths and Baptist principles, positioning ourselves to be a convention for the future. We must embrace change both for the short term and long term in order to meet the great challenges and opportunities we have to do evangelism, start missional churches and develop faithful disciples who will change Texas and the world."

In other business, the BGCT Executive Board:

- ◆ Elected four trustees to fill vacancies on institutional boards: Hardin-Simmons University, Elaine Gabbert from Park Cities Baptist Church in

Dallas; Wayland Baptist University, Peggy Wall from First Baptist Church of Plainview; the University of Mary Hardin-Baylor, Martin Knox, pastor of First Baptist Church in Temple; and the Baptist University of the Americas, Brad Russell, pastor of The Springs Baptist Church in San Antonio.

- ◆ Approved \$750,000 from unrestricted current funds to be placed in contingency funds to help with missions and ministry needs this year, and ratified a similar Administrative Committee action for 2003.
- ◆ Authorized the creation of the Center for Christian Leadership, comprised of the office of minister/church relations, the Texas Baptist Leadership Center and the office of counseling and psychological services.
- ◆ Changed the name of the minister/church relations advisory committee to the Center for Christian Leadership advisory committee.
- ◆ Adopted a resolution of support and congratulations for Buckner Baptist Benevolences on its 125th anniversary.
- ◆ Approved resolutions expressing appreciation and pledging prayers for Janice Coley, executive assistant to the executive director, and Nadine Henderson, administrative assistant to the BGCT chief financial officer and treasurer. Both are on medical leave from their posts.
- ◆ Recognized four retiring associational directors of missions: Jack Calk from Del Rio-Uvalde, Paul Strippling from Waco, Forrest Smith from Corpus Christi and Olin Boles from Gulf Coast.

BGCT Revisioning team members

- ◆ **Laity team**

Jim Adams, Trinity Baptist Church, San Antonio; Ed Alvarado, First Baptist Church, Donna; Mike Caraway, Southland Baptist Church, San Angelo; Bob Fowler, South Main Baptist Church, Houston;

John Hicks, First Baptist Church, Amarillo; Dale Jones, Park Cities Baptist Church, Dallas; Clifford Martin, Bethlehem Baptist Church, Mansfield; Camille Miller, First Baptist Church, Austin; and Margarita Treviño, First Baptist Church, Keller.

♦ **Pastors team 1**

Mario Gonzalez, Iglesia Primera Bautista, El Paso; Stephen Hatfield, First Baptist Church, Lewisville; Travis Hart, First Baptist Church, Plainview; Don Higginbotham, First Baptist Church, Harlingen; Carl Hudson, Little River Baptist Church, Rockdale;

Charles Johnson, Trinity Baptist Church, San Antonio; Peter Leong, Southwest Chinese Church, Stafford; Phil Lineberger, Williams Trace Baptist Church, Sugar Land; David Mahfouz, First Baptist Church, Port Neches;

Rodney McGlothlin, First Baptist Church, College Station; Joseph Parker, David Chapel Missionary Baptist Church, Austin;

Randall Scott, Immanuel Baptist Church, Paris; and Candy Smith, First Baptist Church, Richardson.

♦ **Pastors team 2**

Carlos Alsina, Iglesia Primera Bautista, Austin; Ann Bell, Wilshire Baptist Church, Dallas; Ken Blake, Westside Baptist Church, Lewisville; Tony Celelli, Second Baptist Church, Corpus Christi; Russell Diwa, Biblical Community Church, Garland;

John Durham, First Baptist Church, Irving; Lance Freeman, LifePointe Baptist Church, The Woodlands; Kevin Hall, First Baptist Church, Haskell;

Kyle Henderson, First Baptist Church, Athens; Mark Newton, First Baptist Church, San Marcos; John Petty, Trinity Baptist Church, Kerrville; and Bruce Webb, Central Baptist Church, Jacksonville.

. ♦ **BGCT staff team**

Carol Bowman, Colleen Brooks, Keith Crouch, Jan Daehnert, Michael Evans, David Guel, Ron Gunter, Patty Lane, Milfred Minatrea, Andre Punch, Gus Reyes, Tom Ruane and Rhonda Walden.

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