

# **BGCT casts new vision for evangelism\_32105**

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**By John Hall**

*Texas Baptist Communications*

The Baptist General Convention of Texas is casting a new vision for its evangelism efforts that focuses on a church-oriented regional approach rather than on an annual statewide evangelism conference.

The convention is eliminating the annual conference to offer several regional meetings a year that will follow the model of the statewide gathering. These conferences will include evangelistic preaching, worship, fellowship and an emphasis on "soul winning," said E.B. Brooks, coordinator of the BGCT Missions and Evangelism Section.

Each regional event will be supplemented by an evangelism summit, which will focus on evangelism training. The summits also will offer resources for churches.

Epicenter, a BGCT "forum on global Christianity," took place this year during the period the evangelism conference typically was held. That event will continue.

"We're going to take the kind of event the evangelism conference was to regions of the state," Brooks said.

Regional events will be better tailored to people's needs, said Rick Davis, director of the BGCT Center for Strategic Evangelism. Each conference can reflect the effective methods and styles of evangelism in the area.

Davis emphasized the BGCT will continue providing resources for churches and a variety of events that meet their needs.

The Hispanic Evangelism Conference will continue, focusing on the needs of Spanish-speaking Texas Baptists. Other events such as the Youth Evangelism Conference and the Hispanic Baptist Youth and Singles Congreso also will continue.□

“We certainly are remaining committed to evangelism,” Davis said. “It's our life blood.”

The weekend of Epicenter included a Willow Creek Association small-group seminar, a tsunami-relief summit and the Epicenter event itself and drew more than 650 people, Brooks said. The gathering featured author and professor Dallas Willard.

“Everything we have gotten as feedback has been positive,” he said. “It appeals obviously to a younger constituency. It speaks to the real situation of Baptist churches' intention to touch the world. Our churches no longer see their neighborhood as the limit of their calling.”

The move to regional meetings is the result of several factors coming together, Brooks noted. Attendance at the annual evangelism conference has dropped drastically in the last 10 years. The BGCT is trying to serve closer to churches, emphasizing consultants who spend more time in the field. Texas Baptists also have been asking for more regional evangelism events for several years.

Brooks said the convention plans to move resources allocated for the annual conference to the regional meetings and create a new budget line

for Epicenter, increasing the BGCT's budget for evangelism.

“We're not decreasing our emphasis on evangelism,” he said. “We're increasing it.”

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