

BGCT mission and heritage ‘not for sale,’ Wade insists

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AUSTIN-Texas Baptists are a “blood-bought people” who must not be turned away from their divinely appointed mission, Baptist General Convention of Texas Executive Director Charles Wade emphasized during the state convention's annual meeting.

Reflecting on an offer from an equity group that mistakenly contacted Wade to inquire about brokering a sale of the BGCT, he said the convention already has been bought and paid for by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

BGCT Executive Director Charles Wade brings his annual report to the convention.

The BGCT is “not for sale. Not to people who want to buy us for money. Not to those who want to turn us away from our mission, nor to those who would have us pursue some lesser cause,” he said. “We have a passion to see people reconciled to God, to touch and reach people in Jesus' name, and we're not for sale.”

Using the acronym B-A-P-T-I-S-T, Wade outlined a seven-fold challenge to Baptists in Texas.

- ◆ Begin new churches.

At least 11 million Texans claim no church, and the state's population has grown by 4 million in the last 10 years and likely will grow by another 2 million within the next five years, he noted.

Wade challenged Texas Baptists to start 1,500 churches in the state by the end of 2010.

“We must start more churches in the next five years than we ever have because there are more Texans than there have ever been before,” he said.

- ◆ Affirm the children.

“How we treat children in our homes, churches, communities and state matters to Jesus,” Wade said. “I believe God is calling Texas Baptists to love and care for all the children of Texas.”

Some of the poorest children in the nation live in Texas, he noted. He challenged Texas Baptists to strengthen families, pray for teachers, provide ministries to benefit children and help elected representatives understand the needs of children.

Wade paused to pay tribute to Phil Strickland, longtime director of the BGCT Christian Life Commission, as “an example to all of us” in serving as a tireless advocate for children in need. Strickland, who has been battling cancer and has been hospitalized twice in recent months for pneumonia, was unable to attend the annual meeting.

“By working together, we can affirm the worth of every child,” he said. “And we can work earnestly and without ceasing to see that every child in Texas has a safe place to sleep, food enough to eat, quality education, medicine when they are sick—and know that Jesus loves them.”

- ◆ Pray for God's peace.

Wade urged Texas Baptists to pray for peace in families, churches, communities and nations, and he challenged them to work for justice.

“Praying for the salvation of souls, the unity of the church, justice in the land, harmony among the diverse communities and peace in the world is especially our work,” he said.

- ◆ Transform lives and communities.

Wade challenged every Texas Baptist congregation to be “a Jesus kind of church” that brings about transformation and reconciliation.

“Transformational churches expect change to happen in people's lives,” he said. “Transformational churches bring life and hope to the communities they serve.”

- ◆ Inspire courageous servant leaders.

“Servant leaders lead people to achieve great goals that bless the church and their community, rather than goals designed to bring reward and recognition to the leader,” he said.

- ◆ Share in giving.

In order to achieve other goals, Texas Baptists must work together and pool resources through the Cooperative Program unified giving plan, Wade insisted.

“You will know your church has caught the vision when they begin to see the Cooperative Program not as an expense to be borne, but as an engine by which your church can connect with thousands of other churches and become part of a great train delivering boxcar loads of eternal blessing to thousands upon thousands of people every day of the year,” he said.

- ◆ Touch the world.

Wade encouraged Texas Baptist churches to see ministry in their communities as the starting place, not the finish line.

“Every church can have at least one ministry in its local community and one ministry somewhere else in the world,” he said. “You can go local, and you can go global. And you can double that every two years.”

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