

# Church starting policies designed to ensure accountability

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Executive  
Board  
staff  
members  
Tim  
Randolph  
and Ron  
Gunter  
explain  
proposed  
church  
starting  
policies.

## Church starting policies designed to ensure accountability

**By Barbara Bedrick**

*Texas Baptist Communications*

DALLAS—A workshop during the Baptist General Convention of Texas

annual meeting provided a peek into new, strengthened church starting guidelines that include more accountability and frequent assessment meetings.

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The session—originally billed as a discussion of the BGCT [Valley investigation](#) but changed when the Executive Board called a special meeting at the same time—provided pastors and associational directors details of the strategic church starting guidelines, which will roll out officially next February as proposed policy.



Jimmie Auten, director of missions for Greater Forthood Baptist Association, looks at proposed BGCT church starting policies.

The BGCT Executive Board [passed a motion](#) Nov. 13 that requires BGCT staff leaders to show the church starting guidelines to the board for approval.

“Sometimes the ball gets fumbled, and we want an intentional process from Day 1 so that all parties—the churches, the sponsors and all involved—have a clear understanding of their roles,” said [Ron Gunter](#), chief operating officer of the BGCT Executive Board staff.

“A disconnect exists between church planters, starters, associations and the BGCT, which called for a dialogue and establishment of new starting process.”

To cultivate and train church planters more effectively, the BGCT has strengthened its process with a strategic plan developed during the past nine months by 300 Texans involved in church planting.

The scope of the BGCT church starting project was to develop a process for congregational strategists, church starters and affinity groups to use when starting and developing churches that are reproducing and contributing to the convention.

“The new strategic process will provide a consistent, repeatable and accountable process when starting and developing new churches,” said [Andre Punch](#), BGCT Congregational Strategists Team director.

“We want to establish a baseline from which to measure future accomplishments, to qualify what works and what does not, and to determine strength and weaknesses.”



- [See complete list of Valley funds scandal articles](#)

Eleven components will be assessed at every step of the new church start. One of the most critical elements of the new BGCT church starting process

will be the qualification and selection of church starters.

“If this is not done, it cripples the whole church starting process,” said Tim Randolph, a BGCT congregational strategist.

The church starting process is built around strong relationships between the various partners committed to achieving the same goal—new healthy churches that reproduce and replenish church starting funds through the BGCT Cooperative Program.

The process will start with an online BGCT application, followed by a call from a BGCT church starter—the start of a relationship. A resource assessment will take place, and the BGCT will see where it can fill the gaps.

The church planter enlistment starts the process of discovering and involving leaders in the church starting experience.

Prayer and spiritual vitality are pillars of the new BGCT church starting process, which includes determining whether a church starting leader demonstrates maturity, growth and spiritual life, Randolph said.

A new more-explicit covenant will list the roles of each person in the church starting process with mutual understandings that clearly guide relationships, teachings and behaviors aligned to the Bible.

Another important component is intentional mentoring and coaching relationships that befriend, teach and advise leaders in the church starting process.

Other components include:

- Core group development—Establishment and maintenance of the essential group of people who are committed to the church starting experience

- Vision development—how a God-driven dream continues to support the church starting experience
- Church type—a unique identification through ministry and worship designed for a group or given body of baptized believers
- Lay leaders.
- Training and development.
- Funding.

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