

Executive director committed to ‘clean up the mess’

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DALLAS—Drawing inspiration from the story of Jesus’ baptism and subsequent time of temptation, Charles Wade, executive director of the Baptist General Convention of Texas Executive Board, urged Texas Baptists to listen to God’s voice and discern his will for churches and individuals.

Wade acknowledged failures at some points—particularly addressing the [scandal](#) regarding misused church starting funds in the Rio Grande Valley.

Executive
Director
Charles
Wade
brings a
report to
the Baptist
General
Convention
of Texas
annual
meeting.
(Photo by
Eric Guel)

He assured the messengers and visitors at the annual meeting that steps were being taken both to alleviate the damage done by the misappropriation of church starting funds in the Rio Grande Valley and to prevent future damage from occurring.

He also expressed a desire to support South Texas church leaders who suffered from the incident and its fallout.

“I want to state how much we admire the pastors in the Rio Grande Valley Association. They face an incredible challenge,” Wade said.

“The failures identified by the report are limited to a very few and do not reflect the faith, integrity and passion for the gospel shared by many of the pastors in the Valley.

“I am committed to leading the staff and the Executive Board in righting the wrongs and taking responsibility to make sure we don’t forget our main priorities while we clean up the mess.”

Wade committed to respond to the challenges the state faces, both in the Valley and beyond.

“Everything I do will be prayed over, designed to hold us together ... and assist our churches in being transforming communities of faith,” he said. “Together, with God, we are and we will do more.”

Wade noted Jesus obeyed God’s command to be baptized and was able to hear his Father’s voice of affirmation. Likewise, while being tempted in the wilderness by Satan, Jesus leaned on God for guidance and followed his will during those rough days.



“When you tie yourself to Jesus and commit yourself to follow him, ‘Thy will be done’ is not an empty phrase,” Wade said. “What you learn when you follow him is to listen to the voice so you will know his purpose in your life and his will for your life.”

Even from their early days, Wade said, “Texas Baptists have heard that voice.”

“We have said in more recent days, ‘We are the presence of Christ.’ Wherever there is a local congregation, the body of Christ is present and real, and we become the arms of Jesus, touching people and hugging them up close to God,” Wade said. “Most recently, we have said our goal, our mission, our commitment is to facilitate, connect and encourage churches. We are about helping every single church be the best it can be in being the presence of Christ.”

Citing population data, Wade said the changing makeup of the state is being reflected in the Texas Baptist churches, and the convention as a whole is learning to work with groups they may not have encountered previously. A meeting with ethnic leadership across the state was a good example of those lessons.

“I can tell you that when you never talk to each other, you don’t offend each other, but when you sit down and talk, the chance of offense goes up,” Wade said.

“When people work together, listen to one another and pray together, you understand better. We watched as Texas Baptists became more aware of truly who we are in Christ.”

Wade said the changing picture of Texas has led the BGCT into five areas of ministry previously uncharted. The state convention now has two theological seminaries, a Bible study curriculum for use by churches that Wade said is also finding an audience in other parts of the nation and a chaplaincy endorsement program that has more than 300 active participants.

The BGCT also has a relationship with Baptist ministries globally through the [Baptist World Alliance](#), and it has developed a strategy for connecting mission entities and other ministry opportunities “that move beyond Texas to touch the nation and the world.”

Giving by Texas Baptists to the [Cooperative Program](#), the [Mary Hill Davis Offering](#) and the world hunger fund is up due to those efforts, he said.

News of religion, faith, missions, Bible study and Christian ministry among Texas Baptist churches, in the BGCT, the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) and around the world.