

Missions takes hit in proposed 2007 BGCT budget

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DALLAS—The proposed \$50.6 million budget the Baptist General Convention of Texas Executive Board will consider at its Sept. 25-26 meeting cuts \$700,000 from the missions, evangelism and ministry area.

The recommended 2007 budget eliminates three positions. If the proposed budget is approved, staff whose positions will be cut effective Dec. 31 are Missional Church Director Milfred Minatrea, who has served with the BGCT since 1995; Community Missions Director Jim Young, who joined the BGCT staff in 1999; and Tommy Goode, a specialist with the BGCT City Core Initiative, an urban missions strategy launched in 2003.

Funds would be redirected to the Baptist Building's service center, the research & development office, congregational strategists and affinity groups.

“It can be hard for Texas Baptists to hear that we are moving some funds away from the missions, evangelism and ministry team, but it's good to remember that virtually everything the BGCT does is centered on missions,

evangelism and ministry,” Executive Director Charles Wade said. “That’s what Texas Baptists care about, and that’s what the BGCT helps them do.”

About \$4.9 million in the proposed budget would fund congregational strategists, church starters and affinity group leaders—an amount roughly equal to the total budget for missions, evangelism and ministry.

The shift in funding reflects the BGCT emphasis on shifting resources to respond more directly to the needs of churches, Treasurer and Chief Financial Officer David Nabors said.

“It reflects the reorganization and is in direct response to what the churches asked us to do,” he said.

Nabors declined to provide information about how much of the redirected money will go to field personnel such as congregational strategists and how much will fund the service center and the research & development office at the Baptist Building.

“The Executive Board has the responsibility of recommending the budget to the convention’s annual meeting, and until they have had an opportunity to review and discuss the budget, it is inappropriate to release details,” he said.

A news release by the BGCT communications office, however, indicated BGCT-related institutions would receive about \$19.9 million and collegiate ministry close to \$4.1 million according to the proposed budget.

The budget adopted by messengers to last year’s BGCT annual meeting earmarked \$23,577,559 for institutional ministries, including \$3.89 million for collegiate ministries.

The proposed budget is a \$1.163 million increase over the 2006 operating budget. Of the \$49,437,000 budget for 2006, \$41.297 million is funded

through the Cooperative Program and \$8.14 million through interest income on wills, trusts and investments, the Mary Hill Davis Offering for Texas Missions and other sources.

Roberto Cepeda, chair of the Executive Board's Church Missions & Ministries Committee, said he initially was concerned when he learned about apparent cuts in missions and ministries, and he discussed the issue with BGCT senior administrators.

"As it was explained to me, the money is being moved around to different areas. I was assured the same ministries will be taken care of but in different ways," said Cepeda, pastor of First Baptist Church in Los Fresnos.

"My understanding is that some of the tasks will be picked up by the congregational strategists, but I don't know all the specifics yet. ... I have been told a lot of the (missions, evangelism and ministry) responsibilities will be shifted to other people."

Cepeda said he has asked Baptist Building staff to present a clear, detailed presentation to his committee when they meet immediately prior to the Executive Board meeting.

"I know the committee will want to know how the jobs will be done. I've been assured we will get an explanation when we get to the board meeting."

Chief Operating Officer Ron Gunter confirmed many of the responsibilities of discontinued program areas will be reassigned to other staff.

In some instances, the BGCT will shift some job assignments that were part of a larger portfolio of responsibilities to a staff member who will take on a specific task full-time. One example is disaster relief response—a job that involves coordination with Texas Baptist Men ministries and various BGCT program areas.

Immigration ministry—a new job assignment previously assumed by community missions—will be reassigned to the Christian Life Commission.

“This has gained a large amount of interest and now needs a full-time staff member,” Gunter said.

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