

# Valley investigation could cost \$150,000

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**By Ken Camp**

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DALLAS—The Baptist General Convention of Texas Executive Board will learn Oct. 31 the results of an [investigation](#) into alleged mismanagement of church-starting funds in the Rio Grande Valley—a probe that could cost up to \$150,000.

At the board's Sept. 25-26 meeting, Chairman Bob Fowler of Houston announced a called board meeting from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Oct. 31 at the Baptist Building in Dallas. At that time, Brownsville Attorney Diane Dillard will present findings from the five-month investigation she has headed.

**See Previous Articles:**

- [Called board meeting focuses on Valley](#)
- [Executive Board endorses ongoing probe in Rio Grande Valley](#)
- [Attorney hired to guide church-starting fund investigation](#)
- [BGCT launches probe of church-planting funds in the Valley](#)

She initially will present her complete report to the Executive Board officers and to the BGCT executive leadership staff Oct. 24.

Directors will not receive findings from the investigation until their called meeting.

“After the (September Executive Board) meeting and because of discussions held with others, (Vice Chairman) Jim Nelson and I have determined that it will be best for us to distribute the summary to board members when they arrive in Dallas for the special called meeting,” Fowler explained.

“This will enable board members to receive the summary and hear the explanation directly from our investigators at the same time and avoid a widespread sharing of this information until that can occur. The board authorized the funding of this investigation and has been assured that its results would be brought to the board first, after an initial presentation to the officers and to Executive Director Charles Wade. We operate as a board and not as individual directors. We need to hear the results together, as a board, whatever those results may be.”

The full printed report will be made available after the called meeting to any director who requests it.

In May, the Executive Board approved \$50,000 from contingency funds for the investigation and granted the board’s chair and the BGCT executive director the ability to authorize another \$50,000, if needed.

At the time, the attorney and her associates expected to complete their work prior to the board’s September meeting.

“This has proven to be more complex and involved than we or they anticipated,” Fowler told the board, noting the probe has involved two attorneys, a private investigator and a forensic accountant.

In addition to completing numerous interviews, they also have requested 11,000 pages of financial documents from the Baptist Building for review, and billable hours were approaching the \$100,000 mark, he noted.

As a result, the board approved a recommendation from its Administration Support Committee authorizing up to an additional \$50,000 for the investigation.

The investigation centers on suspicions regarding the large number of cell-group missions reported as church-starts in the lower Rio Grande Valley from 1996 to 2003. Critics allege some church-starts that received financial help from the BGCT never existed except on paper. They assert some individuals may have profited by claiming to start multiple, nonexistent “mystery missions.”

In addition to authorizing additional funds for the investigation, the Executive Board also:

- Approved an additional \$350,000 grant to the WorldconneX missions network from the J.K. Wadley Mission Fund.
- Approved up to \$300,000 to continue providing a limited number of Baptist Standard subscriptions to leaders of BGCT-affiliated churches.
- Recommended a special agreement that would allow Valley Baptist Health System to elect up to three non-Baptist Christians on its 15-member board of trustees. The agreement is subject to approval by messengers to the BGCT annual meeting, Nov. 13-14 in Dallas.
- Affirmed the decision to retain Grant Thornton to conduct the 2006 financial audit.
- Filled vacancies and approved terms of service members of several councils and committees.

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