

Wade to release Valley probe to law-enforcement officials

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MCALLEN—Baptist General Convention of Texas Executive Director Charles Wade will give law-enforcement officials complete copies of a BGCT-commissioned investigative report and all relevant exhibits regarding alleged misuse of convention church-starting funds in the Rio Grande Valley.

BGCT leaders are attempting to schedule a meeting with law-enforcement officials in an effort to gauge their interest in the documents.

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

“I have made the decision with the advice of counsel to ask the legal

authorities to consider making a thorough investigation of the allegations that have surfaced,” Wade said during a trip to the Rio Grande Valley.

The BGCT-commissioned report is 42 pages long and contains the names of people accused of wrongdoing. Investigators examined more than 10,000 pieces of evidence in their efforts.

The report indicates a portion of \$1.3 million in BGCT church-starting funds was misused between 1999 and 2005 by three pastors in the Rio Grande Valley—Otto Arango, Aaron de la Torre and Armando Vera.

BGCT President Steve Vernon, who is accompanying Wade on his trip, said convention leaders want to address this alleged misuse of church-starting funds thoroughly and return to their focus on expanding God’s kingdom.

“We want to address this situation, learn from it, and then we want to go about our business,” he said.

Convention leaders are considering options to recover funds that were allegedly misused.

“We’re going to seek restitution,” Wade said.

Wade and Vernon are visiting pastors throughout the Rio Grande Valley, including a stop at Iglesia Bautista Getsemani in McAllen, where Arango formerly was pastor. Wade expressed his appreciation for the congregation’s commitment to missions. The church gives more through the BGCT Cooperative Program than any other Hispanic congregation.

Wade affirmed the congregation and its leaders as individuals who are committed to growing God’s kingdom. They should not be associated with any wrongdoing, he insisted.

“This church itself did not do anything wrong,” Wade said.

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