

EDITORIAL: Look to horizon for BGCT perspective

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“Just keep your eyes on the horizon,” my friend Brent advised me the first time I went deep-sea fishing. “If you start feeling queasy, look at a fixed point—like trees on the tip of a peninsula or the top of a condo on the beach. That will help you keep your equilibrium, and you’ll be OK.”

Brent gave good advice for a breezy outing off the Florida coast. We didn’t catch many fish, but we had a great day.



That’s good advice for Texas Baptists these days, too. Our Baptist boat is bouncing on a sea of controversy. Folks are looking a little green around the gills. They’re responding in various ways. Some feel sick; others are mutinous.

So, we’d all benefit by looking to the horizon. Here are some fixed points on

which to gaze. They'll help us ride out the stormy seas:

- **The Baptist General Convention of Texas is more than the BGCT Executive Board.**

A huge part of our problem is an identity crisis. For ages, we've said "BGCT" when we meant the convention's Executive Board and the staff who administer its programs—the Baptist Building. They're not the same thing. The BGCT includes the Executive Board, but it also includes almost 5,700 churches, more than 100 associations, 27 institutions and agencies, and Lord-knows-how-many Baptist people. All together, that's the BGCT.

Unfortunately, our shorthand language has stuck, and when people talk about the Executive Board, they say "BGCT." Worse, the Executive Board is the weakest part of the BGCT right now. It's the part that's making so many Texas Baptists heartsick, if not seasick. So, we tend to think the convention is much worse off than it actually is.

Fortunately, the other components of the BGCT are resilient and vital. Sure, they're not perfect. But we have enormous human, material and spiritual resources. And the Executive Board can be repaired. The "BGCT" is much stronger than we've been letting on.

- **The BGCT political process is opening up.**

For years, when Southern Baptist Convention-style fundamentalism threatened to gain control of the state convention, Texas Baptists Committed provided a valuable service by galvanizing so-called moderate Texans around one slate of candidates for BGCT leadership. In recent years, that political threat has diminished. Consequently, some among us have chafed at the specter of one relatively small group choosing the convention's officers in advance of the annual meeting. This year,

messengers will pick from at least two strong candidates for president. And Texas Baptists Committed has indicated it will discontinue the recent practice of nominating a first vice presidential candidate to become the next year's presidential nominee. So, all messengers have an equal voice in selecting officers.

- **\$50 million still is a lot of money.**

Although the proposed BGCT budget is diminished and should be larger, Texas Baptists still can do a powerful lot of ministry with \$50 million. We should not belittle legitimate financial strength.

- **BGCT institutions are vitally strong.**

Our state convention provides the denominational home for 27 agencies and institutions—more than any other Baptist body and most other religious groups. What's more, most of them are tremendously creative and effective. Yes, we need to support them better and collaborate more closely with them. But when you think "BGCT" and realize the convention includes our institutions, you begin to recognize its strength and relevance.

- **We're living in the middle of a mission field that calls for outstretched hands, not wringing hands.**

Much of our malaise has been brought on by hand-wringing and navel-gazing. Those are hardly worthy endeavors for Baptists who live in a state with more than 10 million neighbors who make no claim to faith, plus millions who are hurting and needy.

Look to the horizon. We've got fish to catch.

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