

First woman BGCT president elected

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AMARILLO—Messengers to the Baptist General Convention of Texas annual meeting narrowly elected the first woman president of the state convention—and continued a two-decade string of officers endorsed by the moderate Texas Baptists Committed organization.

Mike Massar

Fenner, a former missionary to Japan, executive director emeritus of Woman's Missionary Union of Texas and incumbent BGCT first vice president, was elected over Panhandle pastor David Lowrie. Fenner received 900 votes (52 percent), compared to 840 (48 percent) for Lowrie.

Fenner's election marked another in a series of presidential elections demonstrating BGCT diversity. In recent years, the state convention has elected its first Hispanic president and its first African-American president.

Many convention messengers attributed the close margin of Fenner's election less to her gender and more to dissatisfaction with current BGCT leadership, as well as the other nominee's West Texas ties.

Lowrie—who would have been the first second-generation BGCT president—had been endorsed by several Baptist bloggers who called for an end to what they saw as the Texas Baptists Committed organization’s control over the BGCT.

They also called for change in BGCT leadership in light of a church-starting fund scandal in the Rio Grande Valley, a recent round of layoffs at the Baptist Building in Dallas and a ruling by the presiding officer at the 2006 BGCT annual meeting that essentially allowed the Executive Board to trump the decision-making authority of convention messengers.

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