

# **Text of Charles Wade's address to the BGCT staff**

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As I have said to Texas Baptists in many places and many times: "I thank my God every time I think of you. I pray for you with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now."

Especially, I am glad to say that to this staff who serve Texas Baptists in myriad ways with steadfast faith and impressive skill. No leader of Texas Baptists could ever hope for a more dedicated and able group of women and men to serve alongside than I have enjoyed the past seven years.

Charles Wade
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We have accomplished much together, and there is more to be done. We will continue to give our full energies to the task Texas Baptists assigned to my care and God called me to do when I began this journey with you in November 1999.

It is now time to announce that I will retire from the role of Executive Director of the BGCT on January 31, 2008. Though I will continue to give leadership and encouragement to you, the Executive Board of the Convention, and Texas Baptists for the next 9 1/2 months, it is necessary

for me to give this advance notice so there can be adequate time for the Executive Board to initiate the search process to find the next Executive Director whom I believe God has already been preparing to take up this critical and special calling.

In my letter to the chair of the Executive Board today, I wrote: “It has been an honor to serve Texas Baptists these past seven years. I felt the calling of God in the invitation by the Executive Board in 1999 to serve our convention in this role and across the years of my service I have had the deep and abiding sense that God and his people have walked alongside me in this journey of leadership and faith. Now, I have that same gracious sense from God that this is the time for me to begin the next phase of my obedience to his call issued fifty-five years ago.”

Our Constitution and Bylaws give good direction to this task. The officers of the Executive Board—Bob Fowler and John Petty—will nominate seven members of the Executive Board to serve on the Search Committee, and the three officers of the Convention—Steve Vernon, Joy Fenner, and Roberto Rodriguez—will nominate eight others from the convention as a whole to make up the fifteen members of the Executive Director Search Committee. The Executive Board in its May meeting will be asked to approve this committee of fifteen. It is my hope that this committee will be able to bring back to the Board in September a nominee for Executive Director who will be God’s person to lead us into the future.

No matter before us deserves more earnest and unceasing prayer than that God will guide Texas Baptists in every step of this journey to seek and discover the one whom God has prepared for this assignment.

I know that you will join me in daily prayer as the officers nominate this committee, the Executive Board assigns them the task, and the Search committee patiently and prayerfully works to present to the Executive Board the person they believe God has led them to recommend.

There will be time enough before I lay down this responsibility to recount the achievements of our service together, but for a moment I want to express what I will be working to help us achieve over the next nine and a half months.

First - I intend to work diligently to imbed in our organizational culture the gains we have made:

- We are moving our staff to the field and communicating to local churches and associations that the BGCT is here to serve them. We are providing access to specialists in church life and growth, resources to assist them in ways that cannot be matched anywhere, leadership development opportunities, and institutional relationship connections that put them in touch with ministry and mission needs throughout Texas and the world. The BGCT has a kingdom vision and we are committed to advancing all the interests of the Redeemer's kingdom.
- We are breaking down any sense of private agendas and narrowly focused goals that build up individual priorities or program dominance. We are learning to value every ministry of a local church and every type of church and support them in achieving their kingdom goals.
- We are working with the churches and associations to connect them to a worldwide vision and a truly kingdom-size vision. For example: starting of vital new churches, growing mission passion and involvement, revitalizing evangelistic zeal, energizing understanding and giving through the BGCT Cooperative Program.
- We are working with the new governance structures of the Executive Board, groups, teams, councils, committees, and commissions to ensure excellence through continued training, the development and implementation of policies, and the achievement of a high level of understanding and confidence in their new roles.

Second - I will work with our Baptist institutions and Baptist Student Ministries that are dealing with particular challenges as they move to the future. The Baptist University of the Americas is in a search process for a new President that is critical for their future. Baptist Child and Family Services of San Antonio is working diligently to achieve a debt free status for the Breckinridge Village in Tyler. And we are completing the funding of a new BSM center for the University of Texas at Tyler and laying groundwork for a strategic plan to fund the refurbishing or rebuilding of BSM centers across the state which are, in some cases, forty to fifty years old.

Third - I will work to encourage a productive Missions Exchange meeting later this month to help churches, institutions, associations and our BGCT staff to craft an approach to strategic planning for mission ministry that involves all of our partners in a synergistic and collaborative manner. The goal is that significantly more mission impact can be achieved by our people than ever before. This will include hands-on mission involvement paired with long-term presence and critical analysis to ensure we are using our energies, time, dollars and prayers in a thoughtful, faithful, and effective manner.

We will work intentionally with convention officers, committees and staff to put mission calling, vision, strategy, and opportunities at the heart of our annual meeting in Amarillo this October.

Fourth - I will work with the Executive Board and staff in helping our Texas Baptist people be involved in the Celebration of a New Baptist Covenant in Atlanta, January 30-February 1, 2008. This first in our lifetime opportunity has arisen because of our involvement in the Baptist World Alliance's North American Baptist Fellowship. For several years now we have been working to establish awareness and friendship between the Baptist bodies of North America.

For the first time ever, the four great National Baptist Conventions making up the majority of African-American Baptists are gathering with the Anglo conventions from the North, South, East, and West to celebrate our unity in Christ, to worship together, to be inspired by one another, to be challenged by the prophetic words of our Lord as He set forward His agenda for life and ministry, to voice a Baptist witness to our common faith and hope in Christ Jesus and our Baptist response to the critical needs of our nation and the world.

We will take home with us practical, hands-on ideas and ways to encourage one another in preaching the gospel with new fervency, righting wrongs, speaking a Jesus word into a culture that hasn't heard Him in a while, in expressing our unity in obeying the commands of our Lord to love God and to love our neighbors.

I have been asked to be a co-chair of the Prayer Committee charged with preparing for this meeting by getting the Baptist people of America to pray for God to get hold of our lives and conscience, our plans, our hopes and turn them to His vision, His passion and His great gospel. I will need your help in this assignment.

I want to express deep appreciation to Myla McClinton and Sandra Sewell for their direct help in managing our office. Chris Liebrum is an extraordinary associate in helping me move forward the important work of our convention. Don Sewell has represented us faithfully in building mission relationships with Baptist bodies around the world.

I could not have led us to this place without David Nabors and Ron Gunter, who have served remarkably during this transition as our CFO and COO. I thank them.

I began by saying how much all of this staff means to me, but I want again to say that you and your dedication to God's calling in your life has been a

source of unceasing inspiration to me. Thank you, everyone.

I am grateful for Bob Fowler, Jim Nelson, and now John Petty, who have and are giving extraordinary leadership to our new Executive Board. Their prayers, assistance, and wise counsel have been and are greatly needed and appreciated.

I have served with wonderful Convention officers through the years, and I am deeply in their debt. Steve Vernon, Joy Fenner, and Roberto Rodriguez are especially to be mentioned because they have been especially helpful as we have considered the approach of this announcement. They love you, and they love Texas Baptists.

All five of these current leaders sense the enormous potential of Texas Baptist people, churches, institutions, and associations. They hold as a sacred trust the challenge they now have to seek God's will as they appoint the new search committee. In God's timing he has brought them together to help lead us to the future.

I express appreciation to the Executive Board of the Baptist General Convention of Texas and to all of our pastors, ministers, leaders, and people in our churches across Texas. You are a great people and God will use us beyond our ability now to even imagine. I have observed that Texas Baptists believe there is nothing that cannot be done if God is in it and someone will lead the way. Our churches, institutions, and convention are a historic testimony to the truth of that happy statement.

To my wife, Rosemary, my children and their families, I must also express special appreciation. With their support, prayers, encouragement, and presence I have been able to do what I never could have done without them. They are part of what prepared me for this task, and they are part of the reason I am now ready to move forward in the journey God has called me to walk. There are no words adequate to say how their love for God and

for our Baptist work has encouraged, blessed and inspired me all these years.

There is much to be done. Together we will do what God has given us to do. I look forward to these next months, and I look forward in helping the one whom God will call to take up this work as we move to the fullness of God's future, "being confident of this, that He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus."

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