

TOGETHER: Details about the '08 budget process

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Baptists love to do our Lord's work. Generally, we would much rather focus on that work than on the detailed finances that lie behind the work of missions, evangelism and ministry.

This year, in Texas Baptist life, the reality of our financial situation has seized our attention. As messengers prepare to consider the proposed 2008 budget, it is good to share some details about this process.



Executive Director
BGCT Executive
Board

The past few years, we have had to deal with basically a flat rate of growth in Cooperative Program giving. In 2000-01, we lost about \$5 million in CP

giving as more than 400 churches pulled away from the BGCT. That stabilized in 2002, and CP giving began to grow slightly over the next years.

As we have restructured our staff, there has been a time of transition in which we have moved people to new assignments, emphasized getting our staff into the field and closer to the churches and their concerns, and committed ourselves to be servants of the local churches.

This has not been a simple, straight-ahead path to negotiate. We faced two pressures:

First, to make the best decisions we could in light of priorities and goals for programming and personnel. Our priorities and goals are highlighted in the mission, vision, values and priorities statements adopted by the convention.

Second, the limitations of funding had to be considered. For the past two years, we have accessed funding from our available earnings and allocated funding in excess of what we could do on a continuing basis. This was done with the full knowledge and approval of the Executive Board. It was the appropriate thing to do, but we made it clear to the board and to our staff a year ago that we would not be able to recommend as much extra support for the budget on a continuing basis.

Now the board brings this proposed budget to messengers at the annual meeting for their consideration. They can approve it as presented or change it.

Any messenger can move to amend the budget, and the body will decide whether or not it is a wise amendment. It does not happen often for two reasons: (1) Messengers to previous annual meetings have selected highly competent Texas Baptists to serve on the Executive Board, and these board members deal with the budget in a detailed fashion; and (2) it is hard for a gathering of thousands to deal with the intricacies of a large budget.

As messengers consider this year's proposed budget, I pray they will remember their board already has agonized over it. Those board members proposed and discussed possible changes but, in the end, approved this proposal because it seemed to be the best approach given current circumstances.

At the annual meeting, as there has been over the past few years, there will be a breakout session where the budget will be discussed and questions answered.

In the end, the convention can vote down the budget, amend the budget and/or approve the budget. I pray for God's will to be known and done in each messenger's vote.

We are loved.

Charles Wade is executive director of the Baptist General Convention of Texas Executive Board.

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