

TOGETHER: Missions requires balanced approach

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Missions has changed. Churches no longer see missions as simply something a select few do while the churches provide the money and prayers. More and more church members are getting involved in missions themselves, and this is a powerful engine for kingdom advance, which I applaud.

I want our churches to do more direct missions, but I also want every church to remain committed to cooperative missions through the BGCT. There is a temptation for a church to lower its support for cooperative missions in order to fund efforts they know on a more personal basis. When churches do this, it can create a serious lack of support for cooperative missions.



Executive Director
BGCT Executive
Board

Ironically, the motivation and encouragement for the increased emphasis on local and global efforts by a congregation often has come about because of the efforts of our convention. For example, our efforts to develop key mission churches by helping them call ministers of missions and to expose our churches to Partnership Missions opportunities in countries around the globe has created an unbelievable explosion of local-church involvement in missions.

In Texas, we can see the power of cooperative effort. Through the BGCT Cooperative Program, you support missionaries around the world, theological training for our future pastors and leaders, and church starting in Texas and throughout the United States. Last year, we started 204 churches in Texas. And we now have 103 cowboy churches—80 of them started since October 2004.

Our BGCT staff provides a wide variety of services to churches—evangelism support, Bible study development, disaster response, leadership development, intentional interim ministries, church facility planning, church loans, stewardship and music ministry. Our Missions, Evangelism and Ministry Team alone helped churches 11,563 times last year; that's an average of about two touches per BGCT church.

We have 131 Baptist student ministers serving more than 120 college campuses touching more than 80,000 students, involving more than 16,000 students and making more than 27,000 evangelistic contacts this past year.

Additionally, the BGCT has 23 institutions, which touch almost 2.5 million people each year. That is 10 percent of the Texas population. Our institutions are spreading their mission wings as well and now are working

in many countries.

Our BGCT strategy is to encourage local churches to be more involved in mission outreach than ever before. WorldconneX is now ready to help a church or a group of churches even put missionaries on the field.

The challenge we face is twofold. One, that we remain strong denominationally while working with other Christians. Second, that we continue to support with our giving the broad and far-reaching ministries we do together through the BGCT Cooperative Program while raising additional mission dollars for local-church missions.

Can we do both? I believe we can and we will.

We are loved.

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

News of religion, faith, missions, Bible study and Christian ministry among Baptist churches, in Texas, the BGCT, the nation and around the world.