

TOGETHER: Valley situation leads to new process

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It's good to be a Baptist for many reasons. One of those reasons is we seek to acknowledge our mistakes, fix them and move on.

The Baptist General Convention of Texas Executive Board has worked with me for more than a year in trying to understand what happened with our church-starting efforts and what needed to be done to fix any problems. Because of the ongoing nature of the investigation and our response to it, I have not spoken much about the details. I wanted to let the process work. Now, I would like to give a brief recap.

When told there were problems in our church-starting efforts in the Valley, I sought to get answers and explanations. I paid attention to a variety of voices on my staff and to pastors and leaders in the Valley. Although there were differences of opinion expressed, I trusted the words of my staff, as well as the affirmations of several in the Valley, and decided to go forward with our efforts.



Executive Director
BGCT Executive
Board

I did, however, keep my eyes and ears open. I continued to listen and went through another round of visitation and conversation with those in the Valley. I continued to work to resolve the concerns and was assured again that our approach was right.

In the fall of 2005, another round of criticism arose. I gathered several of our staff, not just from the church-starting area, for a frank discussion and assigned some steps to be taken. Within a week, there was a storm of criticism.

I realized I needed someone with fresh eyes to look at this. I began by approaching a bright, experienced, but now retired, consultant in my church with a background in such matters. He was willing to do some preliminary work to see what might be the problem.

As we were beginning the process, however, an association asked the Executive Board to look into the accusations. Immediately, I initiated a process that allowed the board to respond independently, professionally and thoroughly to the request from the association. In conference with convention officers, our board officers accepted the responsibility to identify an appropriate investigator, and Diane Dillard was chosen.

The investigator's report was given verbatim to the board Oct. 31. The shock was palpable in the room, and it was impossible to come to a consensus regarding actions to be taken. It was decided another called board meeting was needed.

The full report was placed on our website and was available to anyone anywhere.

The second called meeting was held the Monday morning of the BGCT annual meeting. At that time, five motions were adopted, and an oversight group of directors was chosen to monitor my response to the motions.

The Executive Board staff worked diligently and energetically from that week forward to respond to requests and directions given by the board. I am proud of how they have focused on getting this done right while maintaining their commitment to serve our churches and move forward in their assigned tasks.

Because of the excellent work of our leaders in the congregational strategists team, we have a new church-starting process, approved unanimously by the Executive Board, that will help us continue the much-needed work of beginning more congregations and doing it in a way that provides clear channels for accountability.

We are loved.

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

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