

Baptist Briefs

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Texas Baptist volunteers honored for Scout activity. The [Association of Baptists for Scouting](#) awarded the Silver Good Shepherd Cross and Staff to three Texas Baptists—James and Dorothy Gebhart of Mission, members of Trinity Baptist Church in McAllen; and Inez Eggers, former administrative assistant at Plymouth Park Baptist Church in Irving. The award denotes a minimum 50 years service to children, youth and families through churches and Cub Scout, Boy Scout, Explorer or Venturing units.

Baptists launch ministry for Caribbean immigrants. A group of Baptist ministers has launched a fellowship to minister to former residents of the Caribbean now living in English-speaking countries. According to the [Baptist World Alliance](#), the fellowship has been discussed since at least 1993. Delroy Reid-Salmon, pastor of Grace Baptist Chapel in the Bronx, is president of the new Caribbean Diaspora Baptist Clergy Association.

Georgia pastor to be VP nominee. Bruce Barber, pastor of First Baptist Church in Roanoke, Va., announced he plans to nominate John Connell, senior pastor of Calvary Baptist Church in Savannah, Ga., for first vice president of the Southern Baptist Convention. Connell has been senior pastor at Calvary since 2003. He previously served churches in Muscle

Shoals, Ala.; Hammond and Ferriday, La.; Atlanta; and Brunswick, Ga. In the Georgia Baptist Convention, Connell has been chairman of the Committee on Order of Business, the Resolutions Committee and the strategy team for Cooperative Missions Champions. He has been a trustee of Brewton-Parker College in Mount Vernon, Ga., including a term as the board's vice chairman. He served on the Southern Baptist Convention Tellers Committee in 1996 and 2007.

SBC 2nd VP nominees announced. A Dakota Baptist denominational executive and a Georgia evangelist will be nominated for second vice president of the Southern Baptist Convention. Fred MacDonald, pastor of Westside Baptist Church in Rapid City, S.D., announced he will nominate Jim Hamilton, executive director-treasurer of the Dakota Baptist Convention, and Rusty Newman, pastor of First Baptist Church in Snellville, Ga., said he will nominate Brian Fossett, a vocational evangelist from Dalton, Ga. Hamilton has led the Dakota convention since Jan. 1, 2004. Prior to that, he was pastor of First Baptist Church in Sellersburg, Ind., four years. Hamilton has served as president of the Baptist conventions in Indiana and Alaska and chaired the Executive Committee of the Alaska Baptist Convention. He also has served on the SBC Committee on Nominations. Fossett is president of the Conference of Southern Baptist Evangelists and immediate past-president of the Conference of Georgia Baptist Evangelists. A member of Liberty Baptist Church in Dalton, Fossett has served as a member of the North American Mission Board's National Evangelism Strategy Taskforce.

SBC baptisms lowest in two decades. The number of people baptized in Southern Baptist Convention-affiliated churches fell for the third straight year in 2007 to the convention's lowest level since 1987. According to

[LifeWay Christian Resources](#)' Annual Church Profile, baptisms in 2007 dropped nearly 5.5 percent to 345,941, compared to 364,826 in 2006. Membership in Southern Baptist churches fell from 16,306,246 in 2006 to 16,266,920. On the other side of the ledger, the number of SBC-related churches grew by 1.1 percent to 44,696; primary worship attendance increased slightly to 6.15 million; and total mission expenditures topped \$1.3 billion.

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