

IN BETWEEN: Welcome, all Texas Baptists

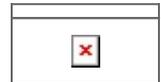
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I want to thank Chairman John Petty, the Baptist General Convention of Texas Executive Board and Texas Baptists for allowing me the privilege to serve you during these three months. Also, I want to thank the Executive Board staff, which in my opinion is the world's best denominational staff.

March 31 marks the day when Randel Everett begins his ministry as our executive director. He has asked me to serve with him for a few weeks after his arrival, and I am honored to do so.



One discovery I made in these few weeks is the overwhelming need for all Texas Baptist leaders to continue welcoming those who align with the Southern Baptist Convention. I am not speaking of our brothers who have formed another state convention in Texas with SBC in its name. I am speaking of the hundreds of churches who identify with the BGCT and the national SBC and who send their offerings to both organizations.

Yes, it is important to be on guard for those who would lead us away from Baptist distinctives—religious liberty, priesthood of believers, authority of Scripture and the autonomy of the local church. Thankfully, there are those

among us who watch carefully so we don't walk down the path of creedalism.

Yet is it OK for a church that supports what we do as Texas Baptists also to support missionaries serving with the International Mission Board or the North American Mission Board? I believe it is not only OK; it's commendable.

Yes, there are some Texas churches that identify completely with the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship. That is OK and commendable, as well.

But the overwhelming majority of churches working with the BGCT are what a pastor friend, Danny Dowdy from First Baptist Church in Memphis, uses to describe his church—"we are historically a Southern Baptist church." I think he means the church is conservative in theology, evangelistic with lost folks and missionary from a kingdom perspective.

There have been some nasty rumors circulating that the nominating committee that recommended Randel Everett as executive director was dominated by "CBF folks." The truth is that the committee members' churches gave more than \$1.4 million to SBC causes in 2007 (\$442,470 Cooperative Program, \$708,529 Lottie Moon and \$308,287 Annie Armstrong); while their churches gave \$193,550 to CBF (\$174,800 CP and \$18,750 CBF Global Missions Offering). Only two of the churches gave no money to the SBC. (These figures reflect the dollars channeled through the BGCT.)

Bill Pinson was right when he said, "We must be inclusive with all believers as we work among our churches—small and large, black and white, Hispanic and Asian, vocational and bivocational, rich and poor—all of us are on level ground when standing at the cross."

It is time for us to make sure the welcome mat is out for all who go by the name Southern Baptists. Really, evangelism and missions bind us.

Welcome, Texas Baptists and Southern Baptists. Welcome.

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