

BGCT Executive Board affirms GC2 strategy preview

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ABILENE—Texas Baptists' Executive Director Julio Guarneri previewed his new GC2 Strong plan, fielded questions and received a unanimous vote to affirm the initiative he brought to the Baptist General Convention of Texas Executive Board at the close of his May 19 address.

While Jesus and the gospel do not change, in a changing world, "our approach to ministry sometimes needs to change," Guarneri said.

Assumptions about how conventions operate may need to be questioned, along with the idea that conventions do "missions on behalf of the church," when missions should be church-driven.

"Conventions should facilitate churches, but not do it for them," Guarneri asserted.

Assumptions that churches have uniform programming also may need to be challenged. Conventions may be looked to for mentor/practitioners more than as experts.

So conventions may need to shift, providing customized resources and support to individual churches, in contrast to the "plug-and-play" model of the past.

Guarneri said Texas Baptists are building on the [Pastor Strong Initiative](#) piloted in San Antonio by beginning cohorts in College Station, Houston and Dallas-Fort Worth to invest in the lives of pastors and encourage them. The expectation is the pastors will be transformed and in turn, so will their churches.

New GC2 initiative introduced

In addition to these expanded cohorts, Texas Baptists are in “the process of developing and launching something we’re calling GC2 Strong,” Guarneri said. The initiative will be led by Guarneri, Associate Executive Director Craig Christina, Treasurer and CFO Ward Hayes, and Sergio Ramos, director of the GC2 network.

GC2 Strong will have three areas of focus: churches, leaders and missions. Convention leaders want to see “multiplying churches.”

Currently, 85 percent to 90 percent of Texas Baptists churches are plateaued or declining, but to reach Texas for Christ, churches need to be revitalized—church strong, Guarneri said.

“We want to focus on leaders, develop ministers, connect them so that they can be encouraged. We want to be leader strong,” he said.

Convention leaders also want the BGCT to be mission strong and “our churches getting involved in local missions, partnering with others,” he said.

A GC2 church is a church that loves God, loves their neighbors and is making disciples. GC2 was originated by David Hardage, past executive director of Texas Baptists, as a “missional mindset,” Guarneri said.

The Great Commandment found in Matthew 22:37-38 and the Great Commission found in Matthew 28:19 fuel the new strategy for GC2—to love God, love neighbors and make disciples.

Guarneri explained GC2 has been understood as applying to churches outside of Texas who cooperate with the BGCT, but “we don’t want to have two categories of churches. We want to have one category of churches,” whether in Texas or beyond.

One component of GC2 Strong will be an assessment, or “discovery process,” of walking alongside churches to help them discover where they are in the “process of being a Great Commandment, Great Commission church” and customizing support to help them move to the next level.

A small group of churches will comprise the first group of GC2 Strong churches, who want to take on the commitment to go through the process, while “we continue to have a big family of Texas Baptists churches.”

“Hopefully, it’ll be the kind of thing that other churches get excited about and want to be a part of in the future,” Guarneri said.

Action items

Guarneri asked the BGCT Executive Board to take up two action items related to the new GC2 Strong initiative: to promote Texas Cooperative Program giving in the churches where they serve and to pray.

The BGCT staff plans to develop a resource to help Texas Baptist churches join in a season of prayer next spring, initiated by the Baptist World Alliance.

Texas Baptists will join the global Baptist family in prayer from Easter Sunday to Pentecost Sunday in 2026—praying for God to move as he did in the first century and “to help us reach the nations in our state and around the world,” Guarneri said. “So, be looking for that resource.”

In a time for questions, Guarneri addressed when GC2 Strong will begin, noting he hopes to roll it out at the BGCT annual meeting in Abilene in November.

He fielded several other questions, clarified GC2 Strong churches would have no special status within the convention, and noted the initiative is still under development.